

Getting Ready For Your Annual Physical

Many visits to the clinic are reactive: you feel sick and you need your provider to help you feel better - quickly! Your annual exam, though, is a great opportunity to have a proactive, in-depth conversation: How is your overall health? Is there any additional information that your provider needs to help determine that? What lifestyle changes do you want or need to make? What resources would help you to do that? Do you have any other concerns? What are your next steps?

Here are some things you can do to make sure that you're getting the most good out of your annual exam.



Questions, Lists, and Supplies for an Effective Exam

1 Make (and keep) your annual appointment! Routine preventative services and a regular check-in are important for your health and helps build a relationship with your provider. This puts you in the driver's seat of your own wellness.

Be sure your provider has as much information as possible: immunization records, results of past screening and labs, details of any ER visits. Family history of any medical conditions is important information to share too.

2

3 Tell your provider about all prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, herbs, vitamins, and nutritional supplements that you take. This will help avoid potentially dangerous interactions.

Make a list of your health questions. In the weeks before your appointment, jot down anything that you want to talk about. Don't worry about it seeming small or silly. Your provider is there to help you get information you need.

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5 Show your list to your provider so you can prioritize your time together. If you have an issue that you want to talk about, bring it up right away. Then you'll have more time to visit about what's most on your mind.

Make sure that you can see, hear, and remember as well as possible. If needed, bring reading glasses, wear hearing aids, and ask a friend to come with you. These can all help you to process a visit that will cover a lot of information.

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7 Be honest - even about the sensitive topics such as drug use, alcohol consumption, or having unprotected sex. Your provider isn't looking to lecture you. She or he just wants to make sure they understand your whole health picture.

**TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES CAN TAKE A LOT OF SUPPORT. WE'RE HERE TO HELP!
ASK A NURSE OR PROVIDER IF YOU'D LIKE TO TALK.**



Discussing Your Health



Not sure where to start? Here are some prompts that will help you plan what you'd like to talk about when you're with your provider.

Topic **Health** Note

- Bone/joint pain or stiffness
- Bowel problems
- Chest pain
- Feeling dizzy/lightheaded
- Headaches
- Hearing changes
- Losing urine/feeling wet
- Recent hospitalizations/ER visits
- Shortness of breath
- Skin changes
- Vision changes

Topic **Everyday Living** Note

- Accidents, injuries, or falls
- Advance directives
- Daily activities
- Driving/transportation/mobility
- Exercise
- Living situation

Topic **Diet Medication, & Lifestyle** Note

- Alcohol use
- Appetite changes
- Diet/nutrition
- Medicines
- Tobacco/nicotine/drug use
- Weight changes

Topic **Thoughts and Feelings** Note

- Feeling lonely or isolated
- Feeling sad, down, or blue
- Intimacy or sexual activity
- Problems with memory/thinking
- Problems with sleep/changes in sleep patterns

What Else? Any other topics or concerns?

- _____
- _____
- _____

Medications/ Vitamins & Supplements/Over-the-counter

If you're taking several of these, it can be difficult to keep track of them all. In the days leading up to your physical, jot them down as you take them. Then you'll have a complete list for your visit.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

For more information on good provider/patient communication, visit <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/doctor-patient-communication>