

Healthy People

Your Annual Physical Exam The Basics

For some people, having an annual physical examination is a source of reassurance that they're as healthy as they feel. Others see it as an alarm system, to catch health problems before they become serious.

The value of the routine annual exam has been debated recently, but it remains a cherished tradition among many doctors and patients. What can you expect from your annual physical exam?

PREVENTion



The physical exam is an essential part of any doctor's visit. Surprisingly, though, there are no absolutes in a routine physical. A good doctor may be thorough or brief, but he or she will spend time listening to your concerns and provide counseling for your particular needs.

Annual exams usually check your:

History. This is your chance to mention any complaints or concerns about your health. Your doctor will also likely quiz you about life-style behaviors like smoking, excessive alcohol use, sexual health, diet, and exercise. The doctor will also check on your vaccination status and update your personal and family medical history.

Vital Signs. These are some vital signs checked by your doctor:

- **Blood pressure:** Less than 120 over 80 is a normal blood pressure. Doctors define **high blood pressure** (hypertension) as 140 over 90 or higher.
- **Heart** rate: Values between 60 and 100 are considered normal. Many

healthy people have heart rates slower than 60, however.

- **Respiration rate:** From 12 to 16 breaths per minute is normal for a healthy adult. Breathing more than 20 times per minute can suggest heart or **lung** problems.
- **Temperature:** 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit is the average, but healthy people can have resting temperatures slightly higher or lower.

General Appearance. Your doctor gathers a large amount of information about you and your health just by watching and talking to you. How is your memory and mental quickness? Does your skin appear healthy? Can you easily stand and walk?

Heart Exam. Listening to your heart with a stethoscope, a doctor might detect an irregular heartbeat, a heart murmur, or other clues to heart disease.

Lung Exam. Using a stethoscope, a doctor listens for crackles, wheezes, or decreased breath sounds. These and other sounds are clues to the presence of heart or lung disease.

Head and Neck Exam. Opening up and saying "ah" shows off your throat

and tonsils. The quality of your teeth and gums also provides information about your overall health. Ears, nose, sinuses, eyes, lymph nodes, thyroid, and carotid arteries may also be examined.

Abdominal Exam. Your doctor can use a range of examination techniques including tapping your abdomen to detect liver size and presence of abdominal fluid, listening for bowel sounds with a stethoscope, and palpating for tenderness.

Neurological Exam. Nerves, muscle strength, reflexes, balance, and mental state may be assessed.

Skin Exam Skin and nail findings could indicate a skin problem or disease somewhere else in the body.

Extremities Exam. Your doctor will look for physical and sensory changes. Pulses can be checked in your arms and legs. Examining joints can assess for abnormalities.

Source: WebMD
Source: RedCrossBlood.org

January: Blood Donor Month

Why Donate

You don't need a special reason to give blood. You just need your own reason.

- Some of us give blood because we were asked by a friend.
- Some know that a family member or friend might need blood some day.
- Some believe it is the right thing to do.

Whatever the reason, the need is constant and your contribution is important for a healthy and reliable blood supply and you will feel good, knowing you have helped change a life.

When you donate, you receive a mini physical to check:

- Pulse
- Blood Pressure
- Body Temperature
- Hemoglobin

Come prepared when you donate:

- Have a light meal and plenty to drink.
- Bring your donor card, drivers license or two other forms of identification.
- Bring the names of any medications you take.

Benefits of Donating

- It feels great to donate!
- You get free juice and a delicious snack.
- You will help ensure blood is on the shelf, when needed. Most people don't think they will ever need blood, but many do.
- You will be someone's hero, in fact you could help save more than one life with just one donation.

