

Mercy Clinics, Inc.

Preventive Health Care *Recommendations for you if you are age 40 – 64*

What you do can really affect your health. The five major causes of death for this age group are: cancer, heart disease, motor vehicle accidents and other injuries, HIV, suicide and homicide. Inside this guidebook you'll find recommendations from the physicians and staff of the Mercy Clinics to help you maintain your health.

Specific portions of this booklet are recommendations made by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, American Cancer Society, American Academy of Family Practice, American College of Cardiology, American Academy of Ophthalmology, and the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologist.

This booklet is divided into three main sections: Screening Tests, Treatment to Prevent Disease, and Counseling. Refer to these areas as your health guidebook.

Screening Tests

These tests are recommended for people with no signs or symptoms of disease. Health screenings are done to detect problems early or prevent problems from occurring. If you have known diseases or symptoms, you may need additional tests based on your medical history.

Some insurance companies will not pay for “routine screening tests” even though they are recommended. Testing done to follow-up known diseases or symptoms is usually covered. We will help you determine what your insurance will pay for, but cannot guarantee what your insurance will cover.

This booklet is intended to provide you with general guidelines and information regarding your health and health screening. General information of the type provided here is intended for informational purposes only. It is not a substitute for medical advice provided by a treating health care practitioner who can adequately evaluate your individual needs and circumstances.

Treatments to Prevent Disease

Some immunizations should be considered for everyone from age 40 – 64. This section will guide you regarding disease prevention and treatments.

Counseling

This section contains recommendations you can follow to prevent illness or accidents. It covers diet and exercise, injury prevention, substance use and sexual behavior.

Preventive Health Exam

This examination is useful to evaluate for symptoms of disease in all body systems, assess all health risks and make certain that all needed screening tests are done. The preventive health exam also is useful to be sure that proper follow-up is being done for all your known chronic health conditions.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have a complete physical exam every one to two years if you are age 40 – 64.

Blood Tests

These blood tests can detect abnormalities of the internal organs.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have a blood glucose test to screen for diabetes every 3 years and a lipid profile, which includes cholesterol, every 5 years. Other blood tests should be done at the discretion of your physician.

Urinalysis

This is useful to detect infection, kidney disease and diabetes.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

This test is not ordered with each preventive health exam. It may be ordered periodically at your physician's discretion.

Occult Blood Test

This test checks your bowel movements for small amounts of blood that might suggest colon cancer.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have this test done every year after age 50.

Pap Test

This test can detect and prevent cancer of the cervix (the opening of the womb).

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Women who have had three previous normal tests, should only have a Pap test every three years (or more often at the discretion of your physician). Most women who have had a hysterectomy do not need to have a Pap test.

Sexual Diseases

Diseases that can be passed by sexual contact include: AIDS, herpes, chlamydia, syphilis, hepatitis and gonorrhea. Those at highest risk of spreading diseases are persons who inject drugs or persons with multiple sexual partners. The safest sex is between two people who are only having sex with each other and who don't have a sexually transmitted disease.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Avoid sexual contact with high-risk individuals or abstain from sex. If you feel you are at risk for getting a sexually transmitted disease you should discuss this with your doctor and be tested.

Pregnancy

Women who are still having menstrual periods may become pregnant regardless of their age. The incidence of birth defects increases after the age of 40.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

If you are considering a pregnancy, you should visit your doctor prior to conception to help assure a healthy baby. You should discuss any questions you have about pregnancy with your physician.

Tobacco

Tobacco use causes heart disease, lung disease and cancer of the lung, mouth, esophagus, pancreas, kidney, bladder and cervix. Tobacco is an addictive drug. If you don't smoke, don't start. The use of nicotine gum and patches can help. There are many stop smoking programs in the community.

Alcohol

Moderate use of alcohol (up to two drinks per day) has not been linked to any health problems. Excessive alcohol use can cause liver disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, brain shrinkage, nerve damage, ulcers, malnutrition and increased falls and accidents. Alcohol can harm your baby if consumed during pregnancy.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

If you smoke you should make immediate plans to stop. If you have tried to quit smoking and failed, you should try again.

One program is sponsored by Mercy Medical Center, the Iowa Heart Center and the American Lung Association. To register, call the Mercy Nurse 24 hours a day at 2-HEALTH (243-2584).

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

If you use alcohol you should limit it to two drinks per day. You should never use alcohol during pregnancy, while driving, swimming, boating or engaging in any other potentially dangerous activities.

PSA (*Prostate Specific Antigen*)

This test is very controversial. It can detect prostate cancer in an early state. No one has ever demonstrated that early treatment of prostate cancer improves the outcome of the disease. (This may be because the treatments have not been studied enough at this time.) The treatment of prostate cancer will cause impotence in 60 percent of men, the inability to control urine in 30 percent and death in one percent.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Mercy Clinics feels the decision whether or not to do this test should be made after discussing the pros and cons with each patient. The American Cancer Society recommends that this test be done yearly on all men over 50 and to consider starting at age 40 in African Americans and men with a close family history of prostate cancer. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force feels this test should not be done for routine screening.

Thyroid Test

This is a blood test that evaluates the thyroid gland, which controls metabolism. An underactive thyroid can cause you to be tired, feel cold, have dry skin, have increased cholesterol or become constipated. An overactive thyroid can cause sweating, irregular heartbeats, weight loss, nervousness, or tremors.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

This test should be done at the discretion of your physician.

Sigmoidoscopy

This is a screening test for colon cancer. It involves using a flexible scope to examine the lower colon for polyps or tumors that may indicate cancer or pre-cancer.

Colon cancer will develop in eight percent of all people. If detected early, it is curable.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

If you are older than age 50, you should have a sigmoidoscopy at least every three to five years as recommended by the American Cancer Society and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force.

Smoke Detector

If your home does not have a smoke detector, you are two to three times more likely to die during a home fire than someone who has detectors in the home.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

All homes should have correctly installed smoke detectors. Check the batteries at least twice each year to make certain the smoke detector is working properly.

CPR Training

Do you know how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)? CPR courses will help you learn how your heart and circulatory system work. This information also is helpful in learning how to avoid a heart attack.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should learn this life-saving technique, especially if you are caring for elderly persons or children or are around a home that has a swimming pool. Learning techniques to assist persons who are choking (Heimlich maneuver) also can reduce the risk of death from choking.

Firearms

Firearms caused 1,740 accidental deaths in 1993 and cause as many as 30,000 non-fatal accidental injuries each year. Firearms being kept for protection (i.e. shooting an intruder) are 10 times more likely to cause unintentional injury. Many of the injuries are to children.

Domestic Violence

Injury from domestic violence has become a serious health issue. The injury can be physical or emotional. The victims come from all social and economic groups. Domestic violence cannot be tolerated. No one deserves to be abused.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Unload firearms and store them in a locked compartment or remove them from the home.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

If you have been physically hurt (e.g. hit, slapped, kicked, punched), threatened, or made to feel afraid by your partner, family member, or caregiver — you should discuss this with your physician or contact the Family Violence Center at 515-243-6147.

Mammogram

This is an x-ray for detecting breast cancer. Breast cancer will develop in 12 percent of all women. If breast cancer is detected early, it is curable.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Women should have a mammogram every one to two years from age 40 to 50 and each year after age 50.

EKG

This test traces the electrical activity of your heart and is useful to detect heart disease.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

All patients older than age 40 should have a baseline EKG. It should be repeated periodically at the discretion of your physician. It should especially be considered in patients who have three or more risk factors for heart disease (age over 50, high blood pressure, diabetes, positive family history, smoker or high cholesterol).

Osteoporosis Testing

Osteoporosis is a loss of bone that will affect one of every three women after menopause. It causes major disability and increases a woman’s risk for hip and spine fractures. Osteoporosis can be detected by simple x-ray tests. There are now effective treatments available to prevent or reverse osteoporosis.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Most women after menopause should be tested for osteoporosis if they are not taking estrogen replacement therapy.

Eye Care

Poor vision is associated with an increased risk of falling and automobile accidents. Glaucoma is a preventable cause of vision loss that can be detected with simple tests.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have periodic eye exams for visual acuity and glaucoma.

Seat Belts

Using seat belts has been shown to reduce the risk of serious injury and death by greater than 50 percent. Unrestrained children are 10 times more likely to die in a motor vehicle crash than are restrained children. Beginning with all 1998 model vehicles, both driver-side and passenger-side airbags are required. A review by the National Traffic Safety Administration estimates that air bags increase the effectiveness of lap-shoulder belts by about 5 - 10 percent.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

All people in automobiles should use safety restraints. You should use seat belts and shoulder harnesses. Children should be in the back seat and those children age 4 and younger should be secured in child safety seats.

Motorcycle and Bicycle Helmets

Persons who wear helmets when riding motorcycles or bicycles have more than a 50 percent lower chance of sustaining a head injury than persons who do not wear helmets. Research also shows that helmets reduce the rate of death by more than 25 percent.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

If you ride a motorcycle or bicycle, you should wear a helmet.

Vitamins

There is no evidence that vitamin supplementation benefits people who eat a balanced diet. Certain vitamins may have a protective function, but they have not been studied enough to prove this.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Look for things that may prevent you from eating right (i.e. chewing problems, medications, busy schedules, etc.). The Mercy Nutrition Specialists may be reached at 247-4336 to help you develop a more balanced diet.

Exercise

Regular physical activity has been proven to reduce the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity and diabetes.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Engage in moderate physical activity each day. These activities include walking, cycling, swimming, raking leaves, mowing the lawn or racket sports. Walking for 30 minutes a day is a good way to exercise. You should consult your health care practitioner before implementing an exercise plan.

Rubella Vaccine

This vaccination protects against German measles. The children of women who get German measles while pregnant may be born with serious birth defects.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

All women who could possibly become pregnant should have one rubella vaccination unless they can document they have had German Measles.

Measles Vaccine

Measles was a common viral infection of children until this vaccine was introduced.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

All people born after 1957 should have at least one measles immunization. Persons born before 1957 are presumed to have had measles and to be immune from this disease. Health-care workers born before 1957 should have documentation of having had measles or an immunization against measles.

Varicella Vaccine

This vaccination protects against chicken pox, a common viral infection in children.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Adults who have never had chicken pox should receive this vaccine.

Hepatitis B Vaccine

This vaccination protects against one of the viruses that cause hepatitis.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have this vaccination if you are at increased risk to get hepatitis. This would include men who have sex with men, IV drug users and their sex partners, persons with multiple sexual partners or who have acquired a sexually transmitted disease, persons at risk of blood exposure on the job and people on dialysis.

Tetanus Diphtheria (Td)

Tetanus (lockjaw) and diphtheria (a serious throat infection) are diseases we don't see as much because of preventive shots that can be given.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have the Td shot every 10 years to prevent tetanus and diphtheria.

Dietary Sodium

Sodium is found in salt. It can cause high blood pressure and fluid retention. Sodium intake should be limited to less than 3 grams per day. Hidden sources of salt are in pickles, soups, canned food, processed meats (hot dogs, bacon, etc.) and softened water.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Your use of table salt should not exceed a half teaspoon each day.

Dietary Calcium

Calcium helps make stronger bones and prevent osteoporosis. The major source of dietary calcium are in dairy products such as milk (8 oz.), 300 mg; yogurt (8 oz.), 400 mg; and cheese (4 oz.), 200 mg.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Women after menopause need 1500 mg of calcium a day. All other (age 40 – 65) need 1200 mg a day. You should take calcium carbonate supplements if you are not getting adequate amounts of dietary calcium.

Dietary Fat

Reduced intake of dietary fat will reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity and possibly cancer. Fat has a calorie content of nine calories per gram while starches (carbohydrates) and protein have four calories per gram. Reducing your fat intake will reduce your calorie intake and help you lose weight. You should be aware of the fat content of foods you eat.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

The Mercy Clinics agree with the U.S. Government guidelines and advises that no more than 30 percent of calories should come from fat. That would be 60-80 grams per day for most people.

Dietary Fiber

Increasing the amount of dietary fiber in your diet will improve your bowel function and may lower your blood sugar, weight and cholesterol. High fiber foods are low in fat.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should eat more grains, fruits and vegetables to increase your fiber intake.

Influenza Vaccine

Influenza is a virus infection that occurs in December through March each year causing cough, fever and muscle pain. Influenza can lead to pneumonia and death.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have the flu shot every year if you have any chronic illness (especially a respiratory disease) or are likely to be in contact with people that have chronic illnesses. Flu shots may be given to anyone who requests one.

Pneumococcal Vaccine

This vaccination protects you against one cause of pneumonia—the pneumococcus bacteria. Pneumococcus causes about 15 percent of the cases of pneumonia in the United States.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

You should have this vaccine if you have chronic lung disease or an immune system disorder. High risk patients may need a booster at the discretion of their physician.

Aspirin

Aspirin can reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. It can cause ulcers, intestinal bleeding and cerebral hemorrhage.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Most persons who are older than age 40 should take one Aspirin tablet (325 mg.) daily if they have risk factors for cardiovascular disease. Because of the risk of stomach trouble or bleeding problems, consult your physician before starting Aspirin.

Folic Acid

Folic Acid is a vitamin that can prevent nervous system disease in unborn babies

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

If you are planning a pregnancy, you should begin taking Folic Acid one to three months before conception and continuing through the first trimester.

Hormones

Estrogen hormone replacement therapy has been shown to reduce the risk of osteoporosis, fractures and heart disease. Estrogens can relieve hot flashes, reduce bladder infections and leakage, reduce vaginal irritation, improve sexual function and reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease. Estrogen therapy can cause cancer of the uterus, but this is eliminated by giving progestones (another female hormone) with the estrogen. Estrogen probably causes a small increased risk of breast cancer (about one percent increased risk), but the exact relationship of estrogen to breast cancer is uncertain. The most common side effects of estrogen therapy are breast tenderness and irregular vaginal bleeding or resumption of menstrual periods.

Mercy Clinics recommends . . .

Estrogen hormone replacement therapy should be considered for all women who are past menopause unless there is a specific reason not to take hormones.