

What is a physical examination?

A physical examination is a routine test your primary care provider performs to check your overall health. The exam is also known as a wellness check. The physical exam is a good time to ask questions about your health or discuss any changes or problems that you have noticed.

Depending on your age or medical or family history, there are different tests that can be performed during your physical examination.

The purpose of an annual physical exam:

A physical examination helps determine the general status of your health. The exam also gives you a chance to discuss any ongoing pain or symptoms that you're experiencing or any other health concerns that you might have. A physical examination is recommended at least once a year, these exams are used to:

- Identify any issues that may become medical concerns in the future
- Check for possible diseases so they can be treated early
- Update necessary immunizations
- Ensure that you are maintaining a healthy diet and exercise routine

These exams are also a good way to check cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar levels. These levels may be high without you showing any signs or symptoms. Regular screening allows your provider to treat these conditions before they become severe.

How to prepare for a physical examination

Proper preparation for your physical examination can help you get the most out of your time with your provider. You should gather the following information before your physical examination:

- List of current medications you take, including over-the-counter drugs and any herbal supplements
- List of any symptoms or pain you are experiencing
- Results from any recent or relevant tests
- Medical and surgical history
- Names and contact information for other doctors you may have seen recently
- If you have an implanted device such as a pacemaker or defibrillator, bring a copy of the front and back of your device card
- Any additional questions you would like answered

You may want to dress in comfortable clothing and avoid any excess jewelry, makeup, or other things that would prevent your provider from fully examining your body.