



## Twelve Essential Tests for Menopausal Women

So many things are changing during perimenopause and menopause that it can be difficult to know what is normal and what is not, and many important things happen that are initially silent or invisible. That is why it is so important to keep a close eye on your health - it's much better to stay well than get well. Here are 12 things that you and your healthcare provider should check regularly.

1. **Blood-glucose or Hemoglobin A1C** to screen for diabetes, pre-diabetes or hypoglycemia. Over 25 million Americans have diabetes and of these, 7 million don't realize that they do. The latest studies suggest that there are 79 million US citizens that are pre-diabetic. That means that their blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to have diabetes. Hemoglobin A1C does not have to be drawn after fasting.
2. **Blood-pressure** test to screen for high blood pressure.
3. **Breast exam** monthly by you and yearly by your healthcare provider. Get mammograms yearly after age 40, or sooner if a strong family history.
4. **Vitamin D blood test** - Low vitamin D levels are extremely common and may increase the risk for breast cancer, heart disease, pancreatic cancer and osteoporosis (thinning of the bones).
5. **Cholesterol profile** to screen for a major risk factor for heart disease. High levels of cholesterol (above 200 mg/dL or 5.18 mmol/L), LDL or bad cholesterol (above 130) significantly increase the risk of heart disease.
6. **Dental Care** - Regular dental cleanings and exams, usually every 6 months, help prevent gum disease and identify problems with your teeth and gums early. Flossing daily may lower the risk of heart disease.
7. **Eye care** - Regular dilated eye exams on average about every two years, is the best way to pick up silently developing diseases such as macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. Talk with your healthcare provider about the best frequency for you.

- 8. Colonoscopy** after age 50 and every 10 years after that is an essential screening test for women *without* a strong family history of colon cancer. If you *do have* a strong family history for colon cancer, inflammatory bowel disease or colon polyps, start having your colonoscopy earlier and more frequently to prevent colorectal cancer. Women should also get an annual rectal exam to test for fecal occult blood - a screening test for colon cancer. These tests cut the rate of colon cancer by 15 to 33%.
- 9. Bone Density** at age 50 to screen for osteoporosis or osteopenia, thinning of the bones, before enough calcium is lost to be osteoporosis. Some doctors recommend waiting until as late as 65 to get a bone density. I disagree. If you find thinning of the bones early you can treat it. Once the bones have lost a lot of calcium it is harder to get it to return.
- 10. Pelvic Exam** The recommendations for how often to get a pelvic exam by a gynecologist, skilled internist or family or nurse practitioner along with a *pap smear* to check for cancer of the cervix (opening of the uterus) has undergone some changes. A pelvic exam and pap smear can be done less often if you have no pelvic symptoms and have had three normal pap tests in a row and no abnormal results in the past 10 years.
- 11. Skin cancer check** looking at the skin of the entire body every year to screen for malignant melanoma – the deadliest form of skin cancer as well as other skin cancers or other problems.
- 12. Immunizations** are recommended every 10 years for tetanus and diphtheria, and flu shots are recommended every year. Ask about herpes zoster and meningitis immunizations and make sure you are up to date on your other immunizations.

If you have questions about women's wellness and menopause, join Dr. Mache Seibel each month at [www.AskDrMache.com](http://www.AskDrMache.com) and get your most pressing questions answered. Discover more about estrogen at [EstrogenWindowBook.com](http://EstrogenWindowBook.com).