

Script – Print - When’s the Right Time for a Checkup? Doctors Recommend an Appointment Every One to Three Years

One of the best ways to take control of your health, experts say, is to listen to your body, stay in touch with your physicians and make sure to get regular checkups.

Most doctors say the frequency of routine checkups are based on age, risk factors and your current health status. Healthy patients over the age of 50 should visit their doctor at least once a year to be weighed and have their blood pressure checked. For people under 50 and in good health, one visit every three years is recommended.

For people who have underlying health conditions like diabetes, heart issues or a history of cancer, appointments may be more frequent, regardless of age.

“The bottom line is there are things you want to make sure are healthy and you really want to check on them yearly,” said Dr. Leonardo Lopez, Family Practice Physician, OSF HealthCare. “Seeing a provider will make sure those things are done but at a minimum you should do those things every three to five years. For women it’s particularly important for cervical cancer screening. Once you establish with a provider you can certainly talk about your risk factors and how often you need to be seen. That can change with recommendations as you get older because certain risk factors increase with age.”

Before your appointment, Dr. Lopez suggests preparing a list of questions or concerns to discuss with your doctor. During the checkup, your medical team will discuss your medical history, medication list and vaccination history. Your doctor will perform a thorough exam, listen to your heart and lungs, and may do other types of exams or tests depending on your age and health risks. In addition, your doctor will inquire about your mental health.

“Other things we would look into is a possible risk for depression, possible risk for substance abuse,” said Dr. Leonardo Lopez, Family Practice Physician, OSF HealthCare. “They’ll ask you these types of questions to make sure you’re not at risk or having difficulties, as well as your lifestyle and exercising – all these things are important to living a healthy lifestyle.”

Knowing your family history is also important and could help you avoid serious health problems down the road.

“Ask your family if there is anything that runs in the family that might be helpful to know,” said Dr. Leonardo Lopez, Family Practice Physician, OSF HealthCare. “Sometimes you might not know that your uncle has a certain disease or a cancer and that can affect the way we approach things when you come in for your well exam.”

Dr. Lopez said it’s important to have open and honest conversations with your doctor about anything that is troubling you or questions that might have about your health. Your doctor is there to help you, and not judge you.

“A lot of times I see people come in and they feel like they’re coming in for a test,” said Dr. Leonardo Lopez, Family Practice Physician, OSF HealthCare. “Did I pass my physical examination?” It’s not about passing or failing it’s about what can we do to make things less risky for you and improve your health.”

Dr. Lopez recommends establishing with a primary care physician if you don’t already have one. The best way to find a doctor is to do some research online or ask family and friends for any recommendations. Sometimes word of mouth is the best way to find the doctor that is right for you.

For more information, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).