

Staying healthy in the New Year is an important resolution, but many adults tend to bypass preventive exams and screenings that would keep them stronger longer. Just as infants and children need to follow an immunization timetable, adults should also regularly schedule certain medical tests. The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to start.

“People need to know the status because they need to know their baseline,” said Teresa Mejorado, Physician Assistant at the OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Wound Clinic. “They need to know – are they at risk for anything, they need to know just for their general health. They need to be aware, they need to go to the right screenings, and to stay up on top of it.”

Mejorado sees patients who have had their lifestyle altered by chronic wounds which often have underlying medical conditions such as diabetes, obesity and circulatory problems.

She says the first step to better health is starting a dialogue with your doctor about what screenings are right for you. Mejorado also adds, it is helpful to go into an appointment with a plan.

“They can write things down ahead of time. They can even pre-plan a visit with the doctor, ‘This is what I want to discuss.’ They can call and talk to the nurses beforehand, and just to get an idea of, ‘These are my main concerns, I want to go over what risk factors I may have, I want to focus on prevention.’ A lot of the doctors will do prevention visits just to go over these things,” she said.

The experts at the OSF Wound Care clinic also recommend adding the following screenings to your 2018 calendar, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and other health organizations:

- Diabetes tests should be taken if you have high blood pressure or high cholesterol, as well as every three years after age 45.
- A panel created by the American Diabetes Association recommends that every diabetic over age 50 be tested for peripheral arterial disease (PAD) which narrows leg arteries and reduces blood flow.
- People with diabetes should have their feet examined during regular doctor visits four times a year.
- Cholesterol checks should be taken every five years beginning at 20 years of age. Smokers, people with diabetes and those with a family history of heart disease should especially check their cholesterol on a regular basis.
- Schedule a tetanus-diphtheria vaccine every 10 years, a flu-vaccine every season beginning at six months of age, and a pneumonia vaccine at age 65 (or possibly younger if you have a suppressed immune system or certain long-term health issues).
- Colorectal cancer screenings should begin at age 50.
- Women should begin biennial mammogram screenings at the age of 50, and younger women should ask their health care provider if a mammogram is right for them, based on age, family history, overall health and personal concerns.
- Women should have a Pap test every three years if they are sexually active or older than 21.

- Women should have a bone density test for osteoporosis at age 65.
- Men should discuss having a prostate test and exam with their doctors by age 50 and by age 45 for those at high risk for prostate cancer such as African Americans and those with a family history.
- Men and women should have their physician check for skin abnormalities when already receiving a physical examination.
- If you wear glasses, have a family history of vision problems or have a disease that puts you at risk for eye disease, such as diabetes, have your eyes checked frequently. A healthy adult with no vision problem should have an eye exam every five to 10 years between 20 and 30 years of age, and every two to four years between 40 and 65 years of age.

For more information about staying healthy in the New Year, contact OSF St. Joseph Medical Center Wound Care Clinic at 1701 E College Ave or call (309) 661-6230.