

Health Guide for Women

At some point in our lives, generally when the forties and fifties hit, we moms start thinking about things we ought to be doing, or should have been doing for years to get our health in line.



Well on a recent yearly visit to my doctor, I saw a chart on her wall titled, “What to do NOW so you’ll look and feel great in 10 years”. The writer of the article was Sally Kuzemchak who I believe is a dietician. I’ve tried googling and just can’t quite find her connected with this particular article and chart.

In any event, the information is great and I’ll paraphrase to keep it to the point. The chart is divided into five categories; Health, Fitness, Nutrition, Beauty and Mind/Body. Then there are four different degrees of recommendation. For instance, if the ideas are strongly recommended, they are “Sure Things”, if they aren’t recommended; they are called “Better Nots”! There is a lot of information on the chart so we’ll go through it one category at a time. In this article let’s highlight the “Health” category.

So, in the Health category, “Sure Things” would be mammograms. The writer mentions that it is best to talk to your doctor about when to start getting them. I think we all feel that early mammograms are important to form a baseline, especially if you are from a family with a history of early onset breast cancer.

Of course monthly breast self examination should start as early as age 20 so you have knowledge of what your own tissue feels like and can sense when if it is suddenly different. And don’t forget the Pap smear every year. (These are kind of the duhs.)



Then it lists flossing (good dental hygiene), getting enough sleep (oh, if we could all just sleep like this kitty), regular checkups with your family physician, eye exams at least every two years and wearing seat belts! Ha! I'm doing pretty well so far, how about you?

The next category down is called "Good Bets" and it lists the chicken pox vaccine if you've never had chicken pox. There is a vaccine for shingles as well. It's for people over 60 who had chicken pox as a child and who may have an outbreak of "adult chickenpox" after having them at a young age. I didn't know that they always stay in your system... did you?

Yes, it's another injection, but the chart lists a yearly flu shot. You know, I try not to add too many chemicals to my body, but the year I didn't get the flu shot, I was down and out twice with it and it was miserable. And actually, last year, some of us got the nasal spray flu vaccine instead of the needle!!

Another needle, but it's the all important cholesterol checks. The American Heart Association recommends that everyone 20 years and older have a fasting "lipoprotein profile" every five years. This means no eating, drinking or pill taking for 9-12 hours before the test. By the way, do drink water, I found out the hard way it's tough to squeeze juice out of a dry lemon!!



You want your results to be Total Cholesterol to be less than 200 mg/dL and HDL Cholesterol level to be 60 mg/dL and above. For LDL Cholesterol level it depends on how many other risk factors you have, but generally, your health care professional is looking for less than 100 mg/dL.



Under “Long Shots” and “Better Nots” there are treatments I can’t even pronounce, like Melatonin (which has to do with regulating sleep and wake cycles), Shark Cartilage Therapy(used to treat cancer and arthritis), Smoking, Colloidal minerals (OK, looked it up but too confusing to describe) and DHEA(sometimes called the “wonder nutrient” for defying age). Had really only heard of smoking before writing this article!

The chart also mentions staying away from routine urine tests if you are an asymptomatic woman with no family history of diabetes or kidney disease. Mainly because if you are asymptomatic and still have some small bacterial infection going on, doctors may prescribe antibiotics that our bodies really don’t need.

It also says to stay away from bone density tests if you are premenopausal unless you have had a bone fracture, curvature of the spine or a prolonged lack of menstruation. Even some eating disorders or the prolonged use of corticosteroids (used for pain) may warrant a bone density test. I had one recently and discovered that I have osteopenia which is the first step towards osteoporosis. It happens to folks my age and I can stop it from continuing and possibly even build new bone mass if I start doing weight bearing exercise. So, I bought new tennies and I’m walking fast, lifting weights and am looking forward to getting back on the tennis court soon. I may even take up tap dancing.... (I’ll keep you informed!)



So, since these procedures, products and treatments are on her chart of things to stay away from, if you are involved in any of these you may want to talk to your doctor, check on line and do your research for more details.

Well, that's a good start for us, and we'll pick up with one of the other categories next time. In the meantime, if you have information that might help any of us women out there, add your comments to the bottom of the page and we can all share what we know!

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(Matt, this is the hyper link for the cigarette photo. It's the only one that needs it.)

Cigarettes
by Anna Cervova