



Staying Healthy Through the Decades

They say you're only as old as you feel. If you want to keep feeling good as the candles on your birthday cake multiply, Joseph A. DeBlasio Jr., MD, an internist and member of the medical staff at Penn Medicine Princeton Health, suggests a simple starting point. "No matter your age, check in with your doctor at least once a year — even if you're healthy."

There are other steps you can take to stay healthy through the decades, including certain screening tests and vaccinations.

Your 20s and 30s

- Healthy habits will give you a strong foundation for years to come. Maintain a healthy diet and commit to an exercise routine that meets the recommended 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week.
- If you smoke, quitting now will help reduce your risk for lung cancer later in life.
- Don't forget about sleep. Most adults need at least seven hours of quality sleep a night, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Lack of sleep has been linked to health conditions such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and obesity.
- This is also a good time to start monitoring your blood pressure and cholesterol and blood glucose levels. The results of these tests can alert you and your doctor to any problems that may lie ahead.

Your 40s

- In your 40s, you may begin to notice that your body is changing. Your metabolism may not be what it used to be, and you may be reminded of that old ski injury when your knee hurts as you walk up the stairs.
- If you haven't already, it's time to establish a healthcare routine. See your doctor for annual physicals and discuss your risk factors and screenings for certain diseases, including cancer and heart disease.

Your 50s

- Health screenings become more important than ever in your 50s.
- The CDC recommends that both men and women of average health begin regular screening for colon cancer at age 50 and continue to age 75. The American Cancer Society recommends beginning at age 45. Your doctor can help determine what is right for you.
- Depending on your risk factors, the CDC also recommends that women age 50 to 75 have a mammogram every one or two years to check for breast cancer.
- Most women experience menopause in their early 50s. Hormonal changes cause uncomfortable symptoms like hot flashes and night sweats, and decreases in estrogen can increase the risk for heart disease and osteoporosis.
- Men can also be affected by changes in hormones, especially decreases in testosterone that can contribute to bone and muscle loss and erectile dysfunction — which can be a red flag for heart disease. Men who experience erectile dysfunction should share their concerns with their doctor.

Your 60s

- Keeping your vaccinations current is critical as you grow older and become more susceptible to complications from illness.
- The CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get a flu shot every year.

- Adults over age 65 should also receive a pneumonia vaccine. If you're in your 60s, you should speak to your doctor about getting vaccinated against the shingles virus.
- This is also a good time to discuss joint pain with an orthopaedist. Your pain may be caused by osteoarthritis, which is the most common reason to have joint replacement surgery, an option that offers relief from pain and can help keep you moving and active.

Your 70s, 80s and Beyond

- Now is the time to protect your bones.
- According to the CDC, more than 300,000 people 65 and older are hospitalized each year for hip fractures — the majority of which are caused by a fall.
- To help prevent falls and fractures, be sure to undergo screening for osteoporosis and work with your doctor to identify ways to keep your bones — and the muscles that support them — strong.
- In addition, take steps to make your home safer. Eliminating tripping hazards, installing grab bars in the bathroom and putting railings on both sides of the stairs are a good start.

Regardless of how many candles are on your cake, remember the old adage: It's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.

To find a physician with Penn Medicine Princeton HealthCare System, call 888.742.7496 or visit princetonhcs.org.