

# Taking a Closer Look at

By Jenna Haines

# Women's Health

**W**hen it comes to health and wellness, women are the leaders for their families. You take your kids to the doctor when they catch the flu at school, lather everyone's sunscreen on at the beach, dole out the vitamins in the morning, and remind your husband about his annual checkup.

While taking care of loved ones is important, your own health is dependent on giving your body the attention it needs. Along with the diseases and ailments that pose a risk for everyone, women have to also deal with a handful of gender-specific issues—often the kind we don't feel comfortable discussing at the dinner table.

So we're here to discuss all the nitty-gritty issues: breast health, urinary incontinence and overactive bladder (OAB), ovarian cysts, your period, skin care advice for aging skin, heart health, and the benefits of breastfeeding. Our hope is that this special "Women's Health" section will offer you some useful information about your body so that you can take care of *you*. Education is key to prevention—so read on, and don't wait to take action when it comes to your health!

## Key Stats from the CDC

Did you know that of the estimated 158 million women in the U.S., approximately...

- 14% are in "fair" or "poor" health
- 36% are obese
- 33% have hypertension
- 17% currently smoke cigarettes

And only...

- 45% of women 18+ meet the federal physical activity guidelines for aerobic activity
- 73% of women 18+ had a pap smear within the past 3 years
- 67% of women 40+ had a mammogram within the past 2 years



## An App for Your Health

In an effort to improve access to health care for women in underserved and minority communities, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched an app content in 2012. The winner was Ever-healthier Women, a free web-based mobile app designed by a group of nursing school professors and techies. By simply entering a few details about yourself, you can instantly find out what tests you may need, why, and directions to the nearest free or low-cost health center.

## Get a Well-Woman Visit Every Year

When was the last time you saw your doctor? The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists says that all women need annual "well-woman" office visits in order to assess overall health and minimize health risks. A physical exam generally includes blood pressure, weight, body mass index, palpation of the abdomen and lymph nodes, and a general assessment of your overall health. It also gives your doctor the chance to catch anything that seems "off," as well as administer specific screenings, evaluations, and immunizations based on your age and health history. ♀

## EXPERT ADVICE Essential Screenings

“Wellness examinations should be performed on women yearly once they become sexually active. Papanicolaou tests (pap smears) should be initiated at age 21, then repeated every 1 to 5 years depending on the presence or absence of abnormalities. Other testing should include: a complete blood count, and depending on the patient's age, a chemistry panel and a lipid panel. Yearly mammograms and rectal vaginal examinations are also recommended beginning at age 40.”

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