



Jeb Bush
Governor

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Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maintaining good health habits is the key
Preventive health care to stay healthy

The most important part of preventive health care is maintaining good health habits, including:

- Daily exercise;
- Weight control;
- Proper nutrition;
- Avoidance of smoking and drug abuse;
- Abstinence from or moderation of alcohol use; and
- Proper control of any diseases or disorders (such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or elevated levels of cholesterol in the blood)

In addition to these habits, there are some other professional services that may prove worthwhile in either preventing or at least minimizing disease.

Specific to Women:

Periodic screening of adults for specific problems is important and recommended:

Pap smear -- cervical cancer screening

- Sexually-active female adolescents and women over age 20 should have an annual Pap smear.
- After three consecutive, negative, annual Pap smear tests, women who are celibate (not sexually active) or monogamous (have only one partner) and younger than 35 - 40 years of age may decrease Pap smear testing to every two to three years.
- Women over the age of 40, women with multiple sexual partners, and women who take oral contraceptives should have an annual Pap smear.
- Women with a medical history of HPV (genital warts) should have a Pap smear every 6 months.

Breast self-examination (BSE) should be taught during adolescence and continued on a monthly basis throughout a woman's life.

Mammography (radiologic (x-ray) evaluation of the breast tissue)

- A baseline mammogram is recommended for women at age 40.
- Mammograms should be repeated every two years for women 40 to 50 years old, if the baseline test is clear.
- A mammogram may be done at earlier age or at more frequent intervals if problems are suspected, or the woman is at increased risk (for instance, if a first-degree relative has had breast cancer).

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Specific to Men

Testicular self-examination (TSE) should be taught during adolescence and continued on a monthly basis throughout a man's life.

Prostate cancer screening

- Prostate health should be evaluated by annual digital rectal examination for men over 40.
- PSA (prostate specific antigen) may also be used as a test to screen for prostate cancer, but it is not specific and may indicate benign growth of the prostate (benign prostatic hypertrophy) as a man gets older.
- Screening may begin earlier if there is a strong family history of prostate cancer.
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Cholesterol screening

- A baseline total cholesterol measurement, as well as a measurement of bad (LDL) and good cholesterol (HDL), should be obtained for all adults between 18 and 20 years of age
- If normal, the test should be repeated every five years.
- Individuals at higher risk, including children with a strong family history of hyperlipidemia, may be screened earlier and at more frequent intervals.

Colon cancer screening

- A stool or other test for occult (hidden) blood in the stool should be done every year after age 50 (or sooner if there is a family history of colon cancer).
- A flexible sigmoidoscopy is recommended every three years after age 50 (earlier or at more frequent intervals for individuals at higher risk); colonoscopy, which is probably a better screening test than flexible sigmoidoscopy need only be repeated every 5 - 10 years if normal.

Blood pressure should be checked annually.

Weight should be checked annually unless there are notable weight losses or gains.

Dental examinations and cleaning should be routine, every six months or so.

Many diseases can be effectively treated when detected early. See your primary health care provider right away if:

- A lump or persistent lesion appears on your body
- You have unexplained weight loss
- You have a prolonged fever
- A chronic cough develops (or if you begin to cough up blood)
- You notice continued body aches and pains

Have a plan for obtaining professional care *before* the need arises.

Keep immunizations up-to-date. Remember that adults should receive periodic boosters for diseases such as tetanus. If you are either older than 65 or have significant heart or lung problems, you should consider receiving an influenza vaccine during the fall and winter season, as well as a pneumonia vaccine.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov

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The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.

www.PinellasHealth.com