

Patient-Friendly Physical Exam Checklist

What to expect during a routine annual checkup

Use this checklist before, during, or after your general physical examination to ensure key preventive health components are addressed. Not every item applies to every patient, but most should be reviewed over time.

1. Medical History Review

- ☐ Review of **personal medical history** (past illnesses, surgeries, hospitalizations)
- ☐ Update of **family medical history** (heart disease, cancer, diabetes, dementia, autoimmune diseases)
- ☐ Discussion of **current medications and supplements** (including dosages)
- ☐ Review of **drug allergies or adverse reactions**
- ☐ Update on **vaccination status**

Ask:

“Has my family history changed my screening needs?”

2. Lifestyle and Preventive Health

- ☐ Diet and nutrition habits
- ☐ Physical activity and exercise level
- ☐ Sleep quality and duration
- ☐ Stress levels and mental well-being
- ☐ Alcohol use, smoking, vaping, or substance use
- ☐ Sexual health and safety (as appropriate)

Ask:

“Are there lifestyle changes that would reduce my long-term health risks?”

3. Vital Signs and Measurements

- ☐ Blood pressure (measured correctly and explained)
- ☐ Heart rate
- ☐ Respiratory rate
- ☐ Temperature
- ☐ Height and weight
- ☐ Body Mass Index (BMI) or alternative risk indicators (e.g., waist circumference)

Ask:

“Are my vital signs normal for my age and risk profile?”

4. Cardiovascular Examination

- ☐ Heart auscultation (listening for murmurs or rhythm abnormalities)
- ☐ Peripheral pulses checked (hands and feet)
- ☐ Assessment for swelling (edema)
- ☐ Cardiovascular risk discussion (cholesterol, blood pressure, family history)

Ask:

“Do I need any heart-related screening tests?”

5. Respiratory (Lung) Examination

- ☐ Lung auscultation (listening to breathing sounds)
 - ☐ Discussion of shortness of breath, cough, or wheezing
 - ☐ Smoking history and lung risk assessment
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6. Abdominal and Digestive Examination

- ☐ Abdominal palpation (checking for tenderness or masses)
 - ☐ Liver and spleen assessment
 - ☐ Discussion of digestion, bowel habits, reflux, or abdominal pain
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7. Neurological and Mental Health Screening

- ☐ Brief neurological check (strength, reflexes, coordination as appropriate)
- ☐ Screening for memory, concentration, or mood changes
- ☐ Anxiety and depression screening (especially during annual exams)

Ask:

“Should I be screened for cognitive or mental health concerns?”

8. Musculoskeletal Examination

- ☐ Joint range of motion
 - ☐ Muscle strength and balance
 - ☐ Assessment of pain, stiffness, or functional limitations
 - ☐ Fall risk evaluation (especially for older adults)
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9. Skin, Hair, and Nails

- ☐ Visual skin examination for lesions or moles
- ☐ Discussion of new or changing skin spots
- ☐ Nail and hair changes (may reflect nutritional or systemic issues)

Ask:

“Should I have regular skin cancer screenings?”

10. Sensory Screening

- ☐ Vision check or referral
 - ☐ Hearing screening or discussion of hearing changes
 - ☐ Eye symptoms (dryness, pain, vision changes)
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11. Age- and Sex-Appropriate Preventive Screenings

- ☐ Blood tests (e.g., cholesterol, glucose, metabolic panel)
- ☐ Cancer screenings (breast, cervical, colorectal, prostate as applicable)
- ☐ Bone health (DEXA scan if indicated)
- ☐ Infectious disease screening (as risk-appropriate)

Ask:

“Am I up to date on all recommended preventive screenings?”

12. Discussion, Education, and Follow-Up

- ☐ Explanation of exam findings in clear language
- ☐ Opportunity to ask questions without feeling rushed
- ☐ Discussion of abnormal results and next steps
- ☐ Clear follow-up plan or referrals if needed

Ask:

“When should I follow up, and how will I receive my results?”

How to Use This Checklist

- Bring it to your annual physical exam
 - Use it to prepare questions in advance
 - Refer to it afterward when reviewing test results
 - Share it with family members to promote preventive care
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Final Tip

A physical exam is not just something that happens *to* you—it’s something you actively participate in. Being informed, asking thoughtful questions, and understanding what’s being checked are key to **early disease detection and long-term health maintenance**.