

An Ounce of Prevention...

Screening Tests for Better Health and Longer Life

"Heyam dukkham anagamam. (Avert the danger that has not yet come.)

--Yoga Sutras of Patanjali

Prevention Through Maharishi Ayurveda

Prevention is one of the most fundamental principles of Maharishi Ayurveda (MAV.) The approaches of MAV help prevent disease from ever occurring by providing proper education regarding healthy diet and lifestyle and through products and procedures to strengthen immunity and remove disease-promoting toxins from the body. In addition, the MAV understanding of individual body type and imbalances allows you to identify and accomplish your unique preventive health needs.

Regular prevention checkups with a MAV-trained physician, including pulse assessment, helps identify and correct early stages of imbalance in the physiology that may not yet be evident as disease, or perhaps even as symptoms. In this way, the diagnostic and treatment approaches of MAV promote prevention at the same time as they treat disease, through eliminating the underlying causes of the disease and restoring balance to the physiology as a whole.

Regular Maharishi Rejuvenation Treatments ("panchakarma," practice of the TM and TM Sidhi programs, Maharishi Amrit Kalash, balanced, organic diet, regular exercise, proper sleep habits, proper vastu, graha shanti (jyotish and yagya) as well as other approaches of MAV, are collectively validated by a large body of scientific research which supports their use in the prevention of cardiovascular disease, cancer and other disorders. In a blissful and profound way, these programs support the innate healing, detoxifying and preventive capabilities of the body and should be taken advantage of as much as possible.

Modern medicine also offers preventive approaches that are capable of reducing disease and mortality, and should be used by everyone in addition to the MAV programs. These approaches are highly recommended to support your overall health and longevity.

Modern Medicine for Prevention

While most modern medical preventive strategies lack the elegance, grace and nourishing value of MAV approaches, they nonetheless have proven effectiveness for reducing the toll of disease and can be of benefit to you in your pursuit of long life and perfect health. The major preventive approaches of modern medicine are described below.

Please take advantage of the health-protecting and life-saving potential of the following tests as advised below for your age and gender.

Summary of Recommended Preventive Tests:

Men and Women Age 50 and Older:

1. **Vitamin B12 blood test** (*prevention of neurological damage*)
2. **Homocysteine blood test** (*prevention of stroke, heart attack and dementia*)
3. **Colon Cancer Screening**
4. **Blood pressure** (*heart attack prevention*)
5. **Cholesterol** (*heart attack prevention*)
6. **Fasting blood sugar** (*diabetes screening*)
7. **Bone Density** (*osteoporosis prevention*)
8. **Vitamin D blood test** (*bones, immunity, heart, cancer prevention, strength*)

Women only:

1. **Pap smears** (*cervical cancer prevention*)
2. **Mammogram** (*breast cancer detection*)

Men only:

1. **PSA (prostate specific antigen blood test)**
2. **Prostate physical examination**

A handout describing all these tests, including costs and availability, is available upon request.

MORE INFORMATION ON RECOMMENDED PREVENTIVE TESTS...

Men and Women Age 50 and over:

Vitamin B12

This vitamin is essential for a healthy nervous system. Long-term vegetarians, especially those who do not consume at least 3 servings of dairy each day, and do not take a multivitamin or B complex tablet daily are at high risk for vitamin B12 deficiency. Vitamin B12 deficiency can cause irreversible nerve damage. Symptoms of low vitamin B12 vary individual to individual, from no symptoms in the early stages of deficiency to serious neurological problems in late stage deficiency.

Symptoms of vitamin B12 deficiency may include memory problems and mental fogginess (common), loss of motivation, apathy, depression, muscle weakness, soreness or redness of the tongue, tingling, numbness or crawling sensations in the arms, legs, or feet, fatigue, hair loss, and elevated homocysteine levels (an independent risk factor for stroke, dementia and heart disease.)

If you are vegetarian and do not regularly take a multivitamin or B complex tablet, or you have any of the above named symptoms, ask your doctor for a prescription to have your vitamin B12 level checked. It is a simple blood test that can be done at the Jefferson County Hospital, and costs about \$55 plus a \$10 blood drawing fee. Your insurance might provide coverage, depending on your plan and your diagnosis.

Colon cancer screening

Currently, any of the following early detection methods are acceptable for individuals at average risk for colon cancer. If colon cancer runs in your family, please discuss with your doctor, as more intensive screening is recommended. **Insurance usually covers this procedure if you present with a digestive complaint to your doctor.**

Stool samples- Every year after age 50, submit 3 stools samples from a home kit available from your doctor. This test checks for signs of hidden blood in your stool, a sign of possible colon cancer, and should be performed *every year*. It is very important to follow the simple dietary restrictions on the form you will be given to avoid false positives. (If your test comes back positive, you will need to have an internal exam of your colon, called colonoscopy, which is described below.) Regularly taking this test reduces your risk of death from colon cancer by 15-33%. When performed through Dr. Lonsdorf's office, the cost is \$30. OR

Sigmoidoscopy- this internal exam is usually performed in a doctor's office. It examines the rectum and left half of the colon. If performed every 5 years, it lowers colon cancer deaths by about 30%. The cost is usually about \$1500. OR

Colonoscopy- this internal exam is done at the hospital on an outpatient basis. It examines the entire colon. When performed every 10 years, it lowers colon cancer rates by an estimated 60% or more. It is available at the U. of Iowa in Iowa City, or at the Jefferson County Hospital by specialists from Ottumwa and Iowa City. Approximate cost is \$3000.

Blood Pressure screening

High blood pressure is called the “silent killer” because it gives no symptoms, but markedly increases the risk of heart attack and stroke. A simple blood pressure test at least once a year can help to save you from serious consequences from undetected, untreated high blood pressure. Tests in your local drug store, supermarket or other screening modalities are also useful. A high reading should be followed up with your physician.

Cholesterol screening

You should have your fasting cholesterol checked every 1-5 years (ask your doctor), to monitor this important risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

The Jefferson County Hospital in Fairfield offers a low cost complete cholesterol panel for \$30, available without prescription Monday through Friday, 8Am to 4:00 PM. A fasting sample is required for accuracy. Call JCH at 472-4111 if you have further questions.

Blood glucose (sugar) screening

Check your fasting blood glucose every 1-5 years (ask your doctor), especially if you are overweight, have high blood pressure, or diabetes runs in your family. Uncontrolled diabetes can cause very serious problems, including heart, kidney, circulatory, and visual disorders.

The Jefferson County Hospital in Fairfield offers a low cost fasting blood sugar for \$10, available without prescription Monday through Friday, 8Am to 4:00 PM. A fasting, morning sample is required for accuracy. Call JCH at 472-4111 if you have further questions

Bone Density Testing

One in two women will suffer a fracture from osteoporosis sometime in their lifetime, and one in seven men will also have osteoporosis. All women should receive at least one bone density screening by the time of menopause. Testing at an earlier age gives you more time to improve your bone density naturally, before you get older and are at higher risk of bone fractures.

Men should be screened if they take (or have taken for extended periods of time) seizure medication, corticosteroid medication (including asthma inhalers,) blood thinning agents, hormonal treatments for prostate cancer or other medication known to reduce bone density. Also, if they have a family history of osteoporosis, are not particularly muscular, or have fractured a bone since age 45 without a high-force injury.

The DEXA scan, considered the “gold standard” in bone density assessment, uses low dose radiation and tests at the spine and hip. It is available at the University of Iowa and the Fairfield Clinic Professional Group. For a DEXA scan at the Fairfield Clinic, call 472-4141 for an appointment. A prescription from a medical doctor is required.

For Men Over 50:

Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)

This blood test measures a protein ("PSA") that is secreted by the prostate, and is elevated in cases of prostate cancer (as well as in prostate infections, after sex, and after certain forms of exercise that may irritate the prostate.) To avoid false positives, avoid sexual activity, bicycling and other exercise that might aggravate the prostate gland, for 48 hr. prior to the test. This test is recommended as a screening tool to catch prostate cancer early, when it is most treatable. However, use of this test as a screen in asymptomatic men is controversial due to a lack of data regarding its ability to reduce prostate cancer deaths. If you are interested in having this test, please discuss the issue with your doctor

Certainly, a physical examination, including a prostate exam, is recommended for all men on a regular basis after age 50.

For Women Only:

Pap Tests

This test checks the cervix of the uterus for abnormal, pre-cancerous or cancer cells. It is a very important tool for catching cervical cancer early, when it is completely curable. **Every woman with a uterus should have a pap test regularly--at least every three years.** Once a year is recommended for those who have had an abnormal Pap test anytime in the past. This test is completely safe and should be taken advantage of for its preventive and even life-saving potential. Pap smears and pelvic exams are available with Veronica Butler, M.D. at her office in Ottumwa; at the Gynecology Clinic at the U. of Iowa, or with the gynecologist or nurse practitioner of your choice. Low cost screening is also available through Planned Parenthood clinics, several of which are within an hour's drive of Fairfield (please check in phone book for numbers.)

Mammograms

There has been a great deal of controversy lately about the utility of mammograms as a screening approach to reduce deaths and disease burden from breast cancer. In 2000, a major paper reviewed the 8 existing long-term studies on mammograms and concluded that 6 of them had designs that were so flawed that no conclusion could be made that regular mammography prevented deaths from breast cancer. Other reviewers have come to different conclusions. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent body of scientists and medical doctors, reviewed the same 8 studies carefully, and although they acknowledged the design flaws in the

studies, concluded that in spite of the flaws, mammography clearly reduces deaths from breast cancer by about 25%.

After age 50, screening mammograms are more clearly beneficial. Breast cancer becomes more common as women age, and the breast itself is less sensitive to any negative effects of radiation after menopause. I generally recommend mammography for all women over the age of 50. Most experts also recommend screening mammograms every 1 to 2 years in women between the age of 40 to 49.

If you are at high risk due to your family history or other reason, had a prior biopsy that showed atypical hyperplasia (a pre-cancerous condition), or feel less anxious by doing so, you should get yearly mammograms from age 40 onwards. Anti-estrogen therapy (i.e. taking a drug such as Tamoxifen to block your body's estrogen,) is a treatment option available to women with a strong family history of breast cancer. Certain lifestyle and dietary changes may also reduce your risk of breast cancer and may be discussed with your physician.

Also, if you have a questionable lump at any time, you need a mammogram.

Mammograms are available at any local or regional hospital. Also, a low cost mammogram screening program for financially-challenged women is also available, and information provided upon request.