

Women's Health – health for a lifetime

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is an essential component in ensuring your over all wellbeing throughout your life, but what factors can impact on women's health during the various stages of their lives?

While developing and maintaining a healthy eating plan and exercise regime are important throughout our lives, there are certain monitoring measures that are of particular importance at various stages, and it is essential that you adapt your lifestyle to suit the specific needs of your body as you age.

Women are prone to the development of a wide spectrum of illnesses as they age, although increased risk during a particular period is in no way an assurance that development of these illnesses will not take place either earlier or later in life. Whether you are 18 or 80, it is important to plan for your future health and it is never too late or too early to start making the necessary changes to promote a long and productive life.

Age 18 – 29

From as early as 18 years it is important to adopt a preventative approach towards ensuring your future health. This can begin by establishing a relationship with a healthcare provider or doctor who can monitor your health on an ongoing basis and will help you to understand any impact your family health history can have on your personal health.

It is also a good time to begin seeing a gynaecologist for routine check-ups and screening for various diseases such as ovarian and cervical cancer, as well as sexually transmitted diseases, particularly Chlamydia and HPV (Genital Human Papillomavirus), which have been linked to cervical cancer. **Resolution Health offers the revolutionary Cervical Cancer vaccine to women free of charge as part of the scheme's Preventative Care Programme. The Programme also offers access to annual Pap Smears.**

Your number one fitness goal during this period should be to achieve peak bone mass, one way of which would be to include high-impact exercises in your routine. Strength training and a good cardio exercise programme will also assist in muscle and bone density retention later in life. **Join the Voila! wellness and loyalty programme and enjoy the fantastic gym benefit.**

You should begin regular monthly breast and skin examinations from 18 years of age. Melanoma, a form of skin cancer, is one of the most common cancers in people younger than 30 years.

Women are more prone to develop nutritional deficiencies than men and particular care should be taken to ensure that you provide your body with sufficient Iron and Calcium throughout your life. Additional supplements should be taken while pregnant like Folic Acid, Calcium, Iron.

Age 30 – 39

It is easy to become distracted from your personal health when family and work responsibilities become more time consuming, however it is important to continue with regular health monitoring and exercise and ensure that you maintain a healthy diet.

If you are thinking of becoming pregnant, bear in mind that the risk of birth defects increases after the age of 35 years. If you smoke, think about quitting. Smoking can lead to lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer deaths in women.

Studies indicate that muscle mass may decline by 20 to 40 percent between the ages of 20 and 65, and thus keeping up a strength training regime throughout your life is an important component of maintaining muscle mass as you age.

Age 40 - 49

This is a transitional decade during which your body matures into middle age and maintaining healthy eating habits, monitoring your health status and ensuring that you get regular exercise is increasingly important. As you approach menopause conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, breast cancer and heart disease become of increasing concern and weight gain becomes more difficult to control. **The Resolution Health Preventative Care Programme provides for annual mammograms, blood pressure and glucose monitoring.**

Menopause is not the only cause of middle-age spread. Reduced physical activity, decreased metabolism, genetics and increased calorie intake also play a significant part. A lot of women unwisely decrease their physical activity as they grow older, which can place restrictions on their mobility, self-reliance and quality of life. Exercise routines during your 40's should focus on maintaining bone mass and improving coordination and balance.

Ask your doctor if you should be taking a multivitamin. Iron deficiency is particularly common amongst pre-menopausal women.

Age 50 - 64

Taking “me time” to ensure that you get enough exercise, both mental and physical, is highly important during this ongoing transitional period of your life. Hormonal fluctuations during and after menopause can be disruptive and lead to depression and poor attention to personal health.

While sleep patterns change as you age, disturbed sleep and waking up tired every day are not part of normal aging. Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing prolonged disruptions in your normal sleep pattern.

It is also advisable to take a multivitamin which contains Vitamin D as this contributes to the prevention of osteoporosis. Ensuring sufficient Calcium is absorbed is also essential during this period of your life. Should you suffer from osteoporosis, be sure to get medical approval for your exercise choices. Focus on exercise that promotes flexibility and mobility.

Age 65+

If you neglect a routine of eating well and staying fit, disease can threaten your health during this "settling down" period of your life.

Maintaining mobility is even more important now, so you will need a lifestyle that keeps your senses alert and your body strong and flexible in order to avoid disabling falls. At this age your body has become less tolerant of extreme activity, so establish a moderate exercise routine.

Monitoring your heart health is vital at this time. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute:

- Most women over age 65 have obvious heart disease or "silent" atherosclerosis ("hardening of the arteries"). Lowering cholesterol is especially important to keep heart disease and atherosclerosis from worsening.
- The average age for women to have a first heart attack is about 70. Also, women are more likely than men to die within a few weeks of a heart attack.

Although your eating habits have likely changed, your body still has the same basic nutritional needs. You'll need the same vitamins and minerals (and in some cases more) to maintain a general sense of wellbeing.

Ultimately, ensuring that you take optimum care of your present health and wellness, and taking proactive steps towards planning for your future health, is the best way of getting the most out of your today and guaranteeing that you can grow old gracefully tomorrow.
