

Title: Is your annual physical necessary?



Do you really need an annual physical?

Physicals are typically a benefit covered by insurance plans, like annual eye exams or biannual teeth cleanings. However, scheduling a physical with your doctor should depend on your individual needs, not the calendar. If you are generally in good health, you may not need an annual physical.

Annual physicals may incur an unwanted charge

An annual physical is a routine review of your general well-being. Sometimes patients assume they can use this time to discuss health concerns with their doctor. Bringing up other health issues is not part of any preventive or wellness exam, so patients could be charged for a problem-focused visit when performed with a preventive exam, like an annual physical.

How effective are annual physicals for healthy people?

Several studies on the effectiveness of annual physicals in healthy people have not demonstrated better health outcomes or reduced mortality rates in this group. In fact, annual physicals can increase the likelihood of unnecessary tests and screenings on healthy people with no risk factors. There is also an increased chance of false-positive results that can cause anxiety and unnecessary follow-up tests and treatments. It's best to talk with your doctor to determine how often they would want to see you based on your individual health needs and goals.

Adults over age 65 and individuals with chronic health conditions, such as diabetes or high blood pressure, should consult with their primary care physician, as their annual physical requirements may be different and they may need to come in twice a year.

Scheduling a regular appointment with your doctor

Anytime you'd like to discuss a health concern with your doctor, you're encouraged to make a regular appointment. During these regular appointments — whether they are in person or virtual — your doctor will also review any needed preventive care services.

If you're still unsure of when to make a regular appointment, we suggest scheduling a visit with your doctor:

- When you are already sick
- When you have a symptom that could indicate illness
- To manage an ongoing or chronic condition
- To check on effects of a new medication
- For prenatal care
- For lifestyle issues such as family planning, STD prevention and healthy eating — especially important for young adults
- For other reasons based on your individual health needs
- If you haven't had health care for a long time

For more information on preventive care services in California, visit the [Department of Managed Health Care](#). Additional preventive care benefits for adults can be found on [HealthCare.gov](#).