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Key screening tests covered by Medicare



A “screening” is a general test to look for signs of a problem. Because early detection makes a huge difference in your ability to recover from any disease or condition, Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans use screening tests for many health issues. Often these tests are 100% covered—no copayments. But you must fit eligibility criteria. The criteria usually involve age, symptoms, and/or a family history that puts you at risk.

If a screening reveals that you actually *have* a condition, all subsequent treatments and tests are subject to your usual copayments. Screening tests are used only to help a doctor conclusively determine if there is a problem.

All the ins and outs of eligibility are too complicated to outline here. Plus, they can change. Use this table to give you a sense of what’s covered. Talk to your doctor about whether a screening test is appropriate. This table lists the most common free screenings.

Cancer screenings

- **Breast cancer.** A mammogram once a year after age forty. A breast exam once every two years (with pelvic exam).
- **Cervical or vaginal cancer.** Pap smear and pelvic exam once every two years. Yearly if high risk.
- **Colorectal cancer.** A fecal occult blood test once a year. A screening colonoscopy once every two to ten years, depending on your level of risk.
- **Lung cancer.** For those at high risk, a CT scan once a year.
- **Prostate cancer.** A blood test to measure PSA (prostate-specific antigen) and a digital rectal exam once a year.

Noncancer screenings

- **Alcohol misuse, once a year.** Involves questions and discussion.
- **Bone density, once every two years.** Low-level x-rays to assess osteoporosis (for men and women).
- **Cardiovascular disease, every five years.** Blood tests to look at cholesterol, lipids, and triglycerides.
- **Depression, once a year.** If you feel suicidal, call or text 988 night or day.
- **Diabetes, twice a year.** A blood test to determine if your body is able to keep your blood sugars stable.
- **HIV, once a year.** A blood test.
- **Sexually transmitted infections, once a year.** Some are blood tests, some a swab.

**Want to learn more about staying healthy and aging well?
Give us a call at 206-456-5155.**



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206-456-5155

Aging Wisdom supports individuals and families in King and south Snohomish Counties as they plan for aging.



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