

Disease Prevention Checklist

Health screenings, vaccines, and guarding yourself from germs and bugs can help keep you feeling your best. Here are tips to help you better prevent diseases:



GET SCREENED FOR DISEASES

Some screenings can reduce your risk of dying from a disease. But sometimes, experts say, a test may cause more harm than good. Before you get a test, talk with your doctor about the possible benefits and harms to help you decide what's best for your health.

To learn about screening tests, ask your doctor:

- What's my chance of dying of the condition with and without a screening?
- What are the harms of the test?
- How likely are false results?
- What are possible harms of the test?
- What's the chance of finding a disease that wouldn't have caused a problem?
- How effective are the treatment options?
- What are other ways to decrease my risk?



GUARD AGAINST GERMS

For nearly a century, bacteria-fighting drugs known as antibiotics have helped to control and destroy many of the harmful bacteria that can make us sick. But these drugs don't work at all against viruses, such as those that cause colds or flu. Learn how to protect yourself against germs in the environment.

To block harmful germs:

- Wash your hands often.
- If you're sick, make sure your doctor has a clear understanding of your symptoms.
- If antibiotics are needed, take the full course exactly as directed.
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle—including proper diet, exercise, and good hygiene.



PROTECT YOUR BODY'S BACTERIA

Microscopic creatures—including bacteria, fungi, and viruses—can make you ill. But what you may not realize is that trillions of microbes are living in and on your body right now. Most don't harm you at all. We tend to focus on destroying bad microbes. But taking care of good ones may be even more important.

To protect good microbes:

- Eat a diet high in fiber. Fiber is found in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Limit foods that can hurt your gut microbes, including sugar and fatty foods.
- Know when to wash your hands, like when preparing food and before eating.
- Use hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol) when you can't use soap and water.
- Avoid antibacterial soaps and other products.
- Be wary of "probiotics." Many are untested.



PREVENT MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESSES

Most mosquito bites are relatively harmless. The itchy bumps often last for just a day or two after a mosquito has punctured your skin. But if the mosquito is carrying certain germs, like viruses or parasites, these pathogens might enter your blood during the bite and make you sick. But we can all take simple steps to avoid getting bit by those blood-sucking insects.

To avoid mosquito bites:

- Use insect repellents as directed on the label.
- Cover up. When outside, wear long sleeves, pants, and socks.
- Install or repair screens on windows and doors in your home to keep insects out.
- Get rid of mosquito breeding sites. Empty standing water from flowerpots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, and birdbaths on a regular basis.



BLOCK TICK BITES AND LYME DISEASE

When warm weather arrives, you might get the urge to walk barefoot through the grass. But before you stroll through your lawn or head out on a hiking trail, you'll want to protect yourself and your loved ones from ticks that often lurk in tall grass, thick brush, and wooded areas. Many ticks carry disease, so do what you can to keep ticks from taking a bite out of you.

To prevent tick bites and tick-borne diseases:

- Help keep ticks off your skin by wearing long sleeves, long pants, and long socks.
- Ward off ticks by using an insect repellent.
- Walk in the center of trails and steer clear of tall vegetation.
- After being near ticks, bathe or shower as soon as possible, and wash or tumble your clothes in a dryer on high heat.
- Check your body carefully for ticks.
- Remove ticks right away.
- If you develop a rash or fever after removing a tick, see your doctor.



PROTECT YOURSELF AND EVERYONE ELSE FROM DISEASE

We share more than food and culture within our homes and communities. We can also spread disease. Luckily, we live in a time when vaccines can protect us from many of the most serious illnesses. Staying current on your shots helps you—and your neighbors—avoid getting and spreading disease.

To stay up-to-date, check on shots for:

- Bacterial meningitis
- Chickenpox
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus influenzae type b
- Hepatitis A and B
- Cervical & other cancers caused by HPV
- Influenza (flu)
- Measles, Mumps, and Rubella
- Pertussis (whooping cough)
- Pneumococcal pneumonia
- Rotavirus diarrhea
- Shingles
- Tetanus