

MAIL TODAY



TILL DIE

While Bryan Adam's song expresses every person's longing for eternal youth, the reality is that the wear and tear of our bodies continues unabated and needs to be monitored regularly

BY MANU MOUDGIL

EVER WISH you could exchange your body for a newer, younger version? Leaner, healthier, and more energetic than the one you have right now? Well, the good news is that you can make this possible simply by paying attention to your health and making the lifestyle changes required to improve it. All of us have unique medical histories and are predisposed to different ailments, based on our genetic makeup as well as our lifestyles. Begin by setting up an appointment for a physical checkup. The results will ascertain your state of health, and help you put into place a regimen to improve it.

A good physical examination includes taking a person's medical history into account. It usually checks for heart disorders, cancer, diabetes and other diseases that may be present in him or his family. Besides the blood pressure and pulse check, inspection of the body for unwanted growths and swellings, examination of private parts, blood tests, urine analysis and chest X-ray should all be part of the checkup. Breast examination and Pap smear are important for all women. A dental checkup is also recommended. Here we run you through essential tests through the ages:

IN YOUR 30S

Till your 30s, there is a balance between the build-up and breakdown

of muscle in the body, but from now on breakdown is greater than build-up. It also becomes more difficult to lose weight as our metabolism begins slowing down. Any excess calories we eat are more readily stored as fat. So it's a good idea to get your cholesterol level tested. "You can get your cholesterol levels tested once in a couple of years after the age 30. After 40 years, the screening should be done every year," says Dr Anil Dhali, consultant cardiologist, Max Hospital.

If you are younger than 35 and smoke or have diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease in your family, talk to your doctor about monitoring your cholesterol more closely. Pregnant women should better forego cholesterol testing since pregnancy often causes higher than normal cholesterol numbers. Those with diabetes should start going for eye checkups in their 30s every six months.

Also linked to slower metabolism and weight gain is a higher predisposition to heart disease. Get a stress echocardiogram done every two to three years in your 30s. Women in this age group are at a higher risk of developing thyroid disorders which are among the most common and yet most under-diagnosed of all health problems. At 35, begin having your thyroid testing done every five years. "Pregnant women and those having a close relative with an autoimmune disease are at greater risk of hypothyroidism," says Dr Dheeraj Kapoor, consultant endocrinologist, Artemis Healthcare Institute.

GET YOUR TESTS DONE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Most of us try and prepare ourselves mentally for medical tests. But we overlook that going at the wrong time of the day or month can actually impact the results. Going at the right time is key:

Mammogram during period
Research has found that breasts become denser or less fatty during the early part of your menstrual cycle due to hormonal fluctuations. Dense tissues appear opaque on X-rays, making it harder to detect small, early-stage tumours.

Colonoscopy in morning
Patients who get colonoscopy done in the afternoon were less likely to adhere to the daylong fast, making it harder for the doctor to navigate the colon.

Teeth cleaning after period
Your teeth and gums become more sensitive the week before you men-



struate, according to Israeli researchers.

Have surgery in morning
Duke University researchers have found that the most medical mistakes are made during operations done between 3pm and 4 pm, and least between 9 am and noon, when surgeons are most likely to be alert.

The screening for thyroid disorders should be done annually after age 45.

IN YOUR 50S

In your 50s, age-related bone loss accelerates due to wear and tear of the body. Women lose more because, during the menopause, the rate of bone loss increases for a few years.

It's a good idea to get a bone density test done before you hit menopause with routine screenings every few years afterwards. If you have risk factors like low body weight, history of eating disorders or family history, get the screening done early. Annual bone density scans should begin in your 60s. Early diagnosis can help stop progression of the disease and even reverse some of the bone loss.

Increase the frequency of your test for heart ailments to annual. Women are generally protected towards them, but their risk equals men of their age post menopause. Age also starts telling on your ears. Continuous exposure to noise and stress causes them to constrict reducing the amount of blood that can pass through them.

Get your hearing checked every 10 years. After 50, have it checked every three years. "Hearing loss is common in people with diabetes, those with family history and people exposed to noise. They should start the tests in their 40s," says Dr J M Hans, head of ENT department, Primus Super Speciality Hospital.

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