



Health Tips for Women in their 40s and 50s

In your 40s and 50s, you'll want to maintain good habits if you've adopted them already—and start them today if you haven't. We can always improve our overall health and wellbeing, and even reverse the effects of bad habits from the past.

1. Maintain Strong Bones

The average age for menopause in the U.S. is 51. This means estrogen levels decrease, which increases your risk for bone loss. Start and maintain a weight lifting routine and be sure to get enough calcium in your diet. This means 1000 mg. daily for women up to age 50, and 1200 mg. daily for women over 50.

2. Get Your Mammogram

It is recommended that women at average risk for breast cancer start getting mammograms at age 45, and undergo an annual mammogram up to age 54, and then every other year after that. However, women that are at high risk of breast cancer—such as those with a mother or sister who have had breast cancer—should start getting their mammograms at 40.

3. Get Enough Sleep

Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of quality sleep every night. Active lifestyles, stress, and the onset of menopause in your early 50s can affect sleep greatly. Getting adequate sleep can provide health benefits, including fewer illnesses, the ability to maintain a healthy weight, and a lower risk of high blood pressure and diabetes.

4. Maintain A Healthy Weight

Once you enter your 40s, your metabolism starts to slow down, so maintaining weight or losing weight will be more difficult. Exercise regularly (try to move for at least 30 minutes every day), make healthy food choices and watch portion sizes, eat 2 servings of fruit and 5 servings of veggies every day, and increase your water intake.

5. Keep Stress Under Control

Stressors can be prominent in your 40s and 50s—family, professional, and financial. It's important to both identify and control them, especially since consistent stress is a risk factor for heart disease. Find some relaxation techniques, like meditation or deep breathing, that you can easily fit in to your schedule.

6. Get Important Screenings

By now, you should have a primary care physician (PCP) who has established your baselines for weight, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and thyroid—and checks them annually.

- Along with adding a **mammogram**, continue to get clinical **breast exams** every three years, a **pap test** every two years, and a **pelvic exam** yearly. Also continue to give yourself breast self-exams monthly.
- **Sexually transmitted infection (STI)** tests and HIV testing are key for those with new or multiple partners.
- **Mole exam**—this can be done monthly as a self-exam and also as part of your routine checkups with your PCP or dermatologist.
- **Diabetes**—a blood glucose or A1c test should start at age 45 and happen every three years.
- **Bone health**—discuss with your doctor when you should have a bone density screen.

Top Health Concerns For Women Over 40

Weight or Weight Gain

As metabolism starts to slow down in your 40s, maintaining a healthy weight can be more difficult. Some habits may need to be adjusted, like your diet or exercise routine, so ask your doctor for recommendations. Another option is to join a weight management program like the Healthy Weight for Wellness Program offered by our Integrative Wellness Center.

Heart Disease

Women's heart disease risk jumps to almost 40 percent by the time they reach the age of 50. Ensure that you are seeing your doctor regularly. They will monitor your blood pressure and cholesterol. If you're a smoker, quit now, and be sure that you are limiting your alcohol consumption.

Menopause

There's a decline in reproductive hormones when a woman reaches her 40s or 50s. Menopause is a natural process that ends fertility, and is accompanied by symptoms such as hot flashes, sleep disruption, and lowered energy. There are many effective treatments to help alleviate these symptoms.

Other Exams

- **Colonoscopy**—Age 50 is when the American Cancer Society recommends both women and men to start getting colonoscopies. During a colonoscopy, precancerous polyps can be found and removed, preventing colon cancer. If your results are normal, you may not need to be screened again for 10 years.
- **Eye and ear health**—both a comprehensive eye exam and a hearing test every 10 years
- **Oral health**—dental exams and cleanings should be done every 6 months

Immunizations

- Influenza Vaccine—Yearly
- Tetanus/Diphtheria/Pertussis Booster Vaccine (Tdap)—Every 10 years

If you don't have a primary care physician, [find a doctor here](#), or call 1-888-996-9644.

