Q's

BEetter Safe Than Extremely Sorry!

By | Noelle Ziadeh

Consider this: you’re driving the car of your dreams, and it’s great! How many times do you take it for a check up each year? Probably every 3 months. Now, how many times do you get a physical check up in a year? A car is an expendable thing, but your body isn’t. Dr. Antoine Youssef, general medicine specialist, explains just how important and rather, mandatory a routine physical check up is.

Can you please tell us what exactly is a physical check-up exam?

A physical check-up examination is an evaluation of the body and its functions, using inspection, palpation (feeling with the hands), percussion (tapping with the finger) and auscultation (listening). A complete health assessment also includes gathering information about a person’s medical history and lifestyle, doing laboratory tests and screening for diseases.

Is it really necessary and why?

Of course it is necessary, especially in our days. As people put more emphasis on wellness and healthy living, the preventive medical field has grown substantially. Preventive medicine focuses on finding and addressing health issues before they turn into more serious problems. Preventive medical physicians take an individualized approach to annual exams, creating a personalized plan for good health. Using this approach, a physician can specify testing or lab work that applies directly to one’s age, health history and current health level. For example, a 45-year-old, overweight man with a strong family history of heart disease should not get the same preventive care as a 35-year-old man with few cardiovascular risk factors. Regardless of age, however, regular screenings can diagnose diseases earlier, allowing many patients to start medication or make lifestyle changes to minimize the effects of these ailments.

What are the standard tests for a physical exam?

The evaluation will include a complete medical history and physical examination by an internal medicine specialist. He or she may order a variety of tests based on your individual needs. These can include:

- Electrocardiogram (EKG)
- Pulmonary X-Ray
- Complete blood work (CBC)
- Biochemical profile
- ESR Sedimentation Rate
- High and low density lipoprotein profile (Cholesterol, HDL & LDL)
- FPI RAPID Test
- Thyroid profile (T4/T3/T4/T3)
- Urine test
- Focal Analysis
- Prostate Exam (PSA) for men over 40 years of age
- Estrogen levels (for women)
- Progesterone levels (for women)
- Ceruloplasmin levels (for women)
- Mammary (for women)

Additional Exams

- Stress test
- Endoscopy / Colonoscopy
- Complete gynecological exam
- Evaluation for sleep disorders
- Bone density testing (to detect onset of osteoporosis)

Additional Consultations

Once your testing is complete and results have been rendered, you should receive a personal consultation with a specialist in internal medicine. Based on your test results, you may be referred to a doctor in a different specialty for further evaluation.

Are these tests adequate enough to prevent potential illnesses and why?

Of course these tests are adequate enough to prevent potential illnesses, because the physician will choose the right analysis to find any abnormalities before they cause serious problems.

How often should an exam be conducted in order to be useful and effective?

An annual physical exam is necessary. However, sometimes every 6 or 3 months is more appropriate, but that depends on the risk level of each patient.

Recently, many studies have been released suggesting that a physical exam is a waste of time and money, what do you think about that?

You know to get your car’s oil changed every 3,000 miles, you have a standing appointment to get your hair trimmed every six weeks; and you make sure the trash is out every Thursday. But many people are missing the most important scheduled event of the year – an annual physical exam. Our busy lives are marked by stress, inactivity and
an unhealthy diet - all of which take their toll on one's physical health. Weight, blood pressure, heart and lung function are all things that can change slowly as people age. Dramatic changes, however, can be an indication of a larger health problem.

According to the American Diabetes Association, 6.2 million Americans have diabetes but remain undiagnosed. Untreated, diabetes can increase risks for eye disease, kidney disease, complications from poor circulation and many other conditions. Likewise, high blood pressure is a risk factor for stroke, heart, and kidney diseases and is especially dangerous because it often has no warning signs or symptoms. An annual physical exam is the easiest and most effective way to regularly track these changes and to determine if one is at risk for serious illnesses.

**Lastly, what is your personal advice?**

An annual physical exam is necessary, whether it is expensive or not. People usually don’t think about their health for many reasons. That’s why we find a lot of critical cases being admitted into the intensive care unit instead of being treated at home with less cost.

Prevention of diseases costs far less than their treatment. Another point I wish to add is that nations who think about the health of their citizens and promote health education can be considered as cultured.