



# Well Woman Exam

**The well woman visit is an important part of a woman's medical care. It should begin when a patient turns 21 years old.**

**ACP recommends against annual internal pelvic exams in asymptomatic, nonpregnant women.** If a patient has any vaginal or pelvic complaints or fecal or urinary incontinence, an internal exam should be performed.

**Cervical cancer screening with cytology only should be performed every 3 years in women aged 21-29.**

**Cervical cancer screening with cytology and HPV testing can begin when a woman turns 30. If testing is normal, retesting should be performed every 5 years.**

## **Guidelines for discontinuing screening:**

- Life expectancy less than 10 years or patient would not want to intervene on an abnormal result.

- Age >65 with 3 consecutive negative cytology screenings or 2 consecutive negative cytology and HPV tests within 10 years, most recently performed within the last 5 years.
- Hysterectomy with removal of the cervix for benign indications with no history of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) 2, CIN 3, vulvar intraepithelial neoplasia, HIV, or immunocompromised state.

## **The well woman exam is a time to ask about:**

- Mammography
- Sexual orientation and habits
- Contraception
- Vaginal, pelvic, or breast symptoms
- Vaccinations, including HPV
- STI and HIV testing



## Well Woman Exam Talking Points

**Well woman exams should be scheduled as independent visits so that all aspects of pelvic, breast, and sexual health can be addressed.** There is no evidence-based interval for well woman exams when not performing an internal exam.

- “As part of your routine healthcare, you should have a visit to specifically address your health as a woman. Is it okay if we schedule that today?”
- “I would like to schedule a special visit for you to complete your PAP. During this visit, we will also discuss other aspects of your health, including certain vaccinations and other testing you may need as a woman. Is it okay if we schedule this today?”

**As a PCP, you should be able to perform an internal pelvic examination.** Some women will want to go to an OB/GYN physician for this, however, many will want to want to see one physician for all their health needs.

- Always ask for help if you need it!
- Always take an MA or nurse in with you during the pelvic exam portion of the well woman exam.
- Explain each step of the exam prior to performing it to help ease any anxiety.
- Ensure the patient has an empty bladder.
- Raise the bed so the patient’s pelvis is at your eye level.
- Place the patient’s feet in the foot rests and ask her to drop her knees to the side as far as they can go comfortably.
- Perform an external exam, keeping the drape covering her knees and thighs.
- Perform an internal exam, sliding the speculum in sideways and flipping it vertically only after you have reached the end of the vaginal canal