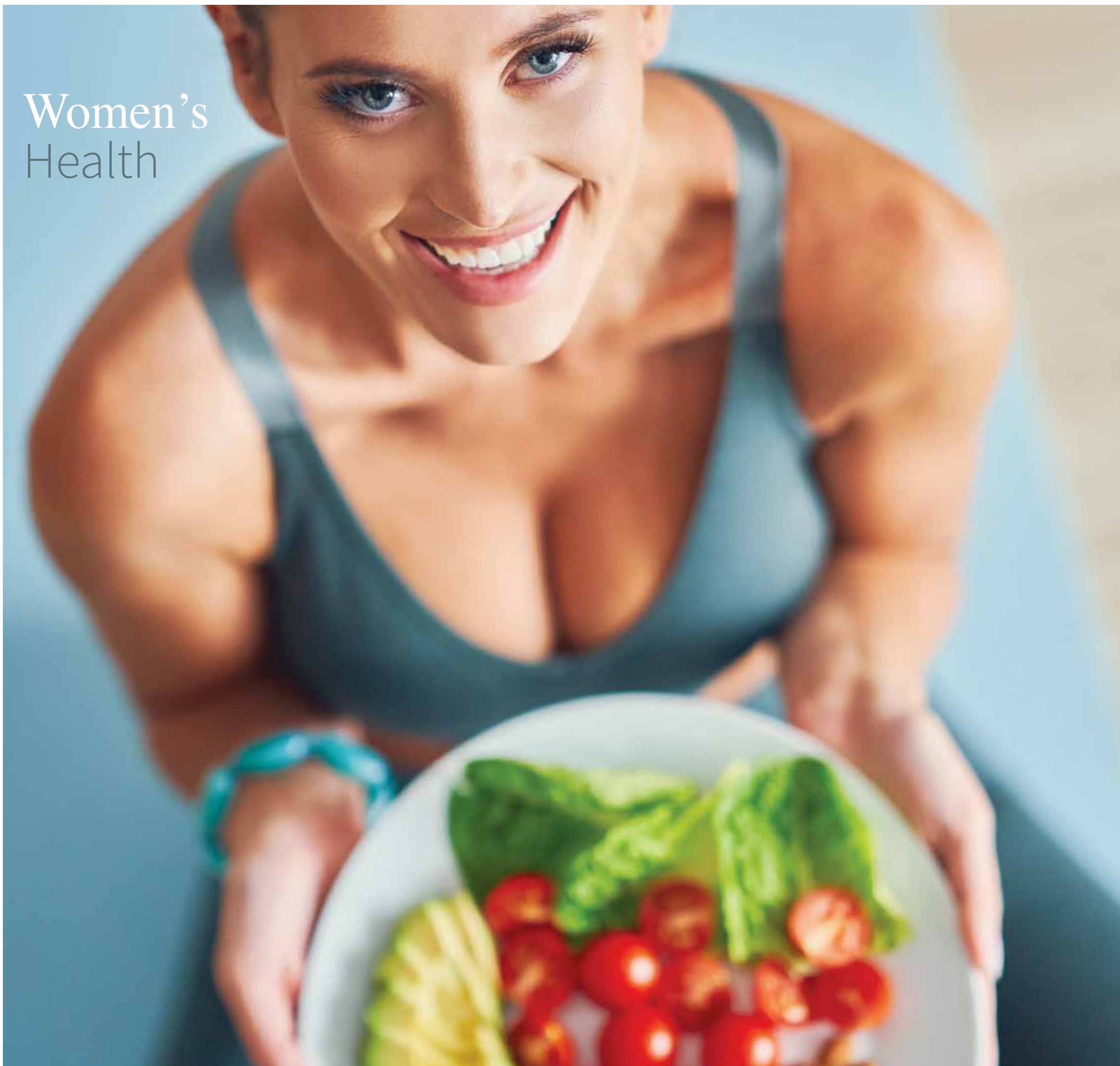


Women's Health



Teens and Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is pressure from a friend group for someone to act or do certain things.

It can be either explicit or implicit. Explicit peer pressure is when someone directly comments on your teen's behavior and outright asks them to act a certain way. This is the typical "everyone's doing it." Implicit peer pressure is when someone changes their behavior to fit in with the people around them. It's unspoken influence.

Both negative and positive peer pressure can have far-reaching consequences. Negative peer pressure examples include offering teens a beer or a joint, teens bullying people or teens calling themselves fat and encouraging each other to skip meals. Positive peer pressure examples include forming a study group for a difficult class, encouraging a shy classmate to join a club or putting a stop to classroom gossip.

As kids get older, it's natural for them to turn to their friends for advice and guidance. It might sting, Healthline says, but it's perfectly normal. It's important to teach your teens (and preteens!) to react to positive peer pressure and resist negative peer pressure. Tell them to be leaders in their peer group, encouraging them to use peer pressure positively instead of negatively.



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Keep open lines of communication no matter their age. Even if it seems otherwise, your kids really do care about what you think and have to say. Healthline suggests showing your interest by asking questions about their values

and activities, and really listening to what they have to say. Avoid placing blame or judgment so that your child will feel more comfortable talking to you.

Instead of bringing down the hammer on activities you wish

they wouldn't participate in, encourage the ones you do want them to participate in. Offering a more subtle encouragement can encourage your kids to choose healthier behaviors, Healthline says.

Also remember to set your

own good example for your kids. Want to stop them gossiping in school? Then check your own gossip at home. Even if you're not doing the dishing, even participating in the conversation can make it seem like you're condoning the behavior.

Well Woman Exams

Most people know they should get an annual physical exam with their primary care physician.

Women also get another annual exam, usually called the well woman exam, pelvic exam or gynecological exam. Sometimes it's performed by your PCP, but more often it's given by a gynecologist. Keep reading to learn more about well woman exams.

WHEN TO START WELLNESS VISITS

It's a good idea to get your first well woman exam between 13 and 15, Planned Parenthood says. Your doctor may just talk with you and then do a regular physical exam. If you're worried about your period, if it's been heavy, painful or irregular, now is the time to talk about it. The doctor or nurses may check on height, weight and offer vaccines, like the HPV vaccine.

Be honest with your care providers about if you're sexually active. This will let them know if you need STD testing. They may also talk with you about birth control.

AGES 21-39

Around 21, you should start getting regular pelvic exams and Pap tests. Pap tests look for abnormal cells on your cervix that could lead to cervical cancer. During this test, the doctor or nurse will put a



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metal or plastic speculum into the vagina and open it. They'll then use a tiny spatula or brush to collect cells from your cervix. Those cells will go to a lab to be tested.

You'll also need a routine clinical breast exam every one to three years, Planned Parenthood says. During your

visits, the health care provider may talk about healthy relationships, mental health, emotional health and more. Answer their questions honestly; it's important to have good communication with your providers so they can provide you with the best care.

AFTER 40

As you age, your provider may add more tests, such as mammograms, that are required on a regular basis.

Mammograms are X-rays of the breast that can show early signs of breast cancer. Try not to get your mammogram the week before you get your

period or during your period, as your breasts may be tender and the mammogram will be more uncomfortable than usual.

On the day of your exam, don't wear deodorant, perfume or powder as these products can show up white on the X-ray.

Testing for STDs

As soon as you become sexually active, you need to have your health care provider perform regular testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

Any kind of sexual contact, including anal and oral sex, can spread STDs.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF AN STD

STDs symptoms can come and go, or they can have no symptoms at all. Some common STD symptoms include sores or bumps on and around your genitals; odd discharge from the vagina or penis; burning when you pee or needing to pee a lot; itching, pain, irritation or swelling in your penis, vagina, vulva or anus; flu-like symptoms like fever, body aches, swollen glands and feeling tired.

These could be other things, like a UTI, but it could also be an STD. The only way to know for sure is to get tested.

GETTING TESTED

Be prepared to be completely honest about your sex life with your health care provider (you should be anyway, but it's particularly important here). For some practices, STD testing isn't a regular part of your annual exam and you'll need to ask for it. Again, be completely honest



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about your sexual history. Just remember that health care providers have heard and seen it all, so there's nothing to be embarrassed about.

STD testing itself is quick and easy — and sometimes even free. There's not a single test for STDs. Each disease has its own test. STD testing

may include, according to Planned Parenthood:

- A urine test.
- A cheek swab.
- A blood test.
- A physical exam.
- Testing any sores or blisters.
- Using a swab to gently take cell samples from your penis, vagina, urethra, cervix,

anus or throat.

Sometimes your health care provider may be able to tell you instantly if you have a sexually transmitted disease, but other times they may have to wait for results. Planned Parenthood says not to assume if you don't hear anything that you're all clear. Call the doctor and confirm

your test results.

ASKING YOUR PARTNER TO GET TESTED

The best time to bring up testing with your partner is before you have sex. Getting tested doesn't mean you suspect infidelity or don't trust your partner, it's about good health.



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Prenatal Nutrition

Pregnancy is definitely life-changing. You are (as you've probably been reminded many times) eating for two now, and that means the healthy choices you make in your diet more important than ever.

You should follow the same general rules for healthy eating, the Mayo Clinic says, including plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats.

FOLATE AND FOLIC ACID

These B vitamins prevent neural tube defects, serious abnormalities of the brain and spinal cord. Folate is the naturally occurring substance; folic acid is the synthetic form that's found in supplements and fortified foods. In

pregnancy, you'll need 400 to 1,000 micrograms a day of folate or folic acid before conception and throughout. Good sources of folate and folic acid are leafy green veggies, citrus fruits and dried beans and peas.

CALCIUM

You probably already know that calcium strengthens your bones. Well, it strengthens baby's bones, too. You should get 1,000 milligrams per day. Pregnant teenagers, the Mayo Clinic

says, need 1,300 milligrams per day. Dairy products are a great source of calcium and are the best absorbed in the body. Nondairy sources include broccoli and kale, and many fruit juices and cereals are fortified with calcium as well.

VITAMIN D

Vitamin D also helps build bones and teeth. You need about 600 international units per day. You can get vitamin D from fatty fish, such as salmon, as well as fortified milk and juice.

PROTEIN

Protein helps your baby grow throughout your pregnancy. You'll need about 71 grams per day, ideally, and you can get it from lean meat,

poultry, fish, eggs, beans and peas, nuts, seeds and soy products.

IRON

You use iron to make hemoglobin, a protein in red blood cells that brings oxygen to your tissues. During pregnancy, you need twice the iron you'd normally need to make more blood to supply oxygen to your baby. If you don't get enough iron, you could develop iron deficiency anemia, which causes fatigue and could increase your risk of premature birth, having a low birth weight baby and postpartum depression. You should get about 27 milligrams a day of iron, and you can find it in lean red meats, poultry and fish, iron-fortified breakfast cereals, beans and vegetables.

Weight Loss after 40

It's not your imagination. Those extra pounds get extra stubborn after you turn 40.

Here are some reasons you might be fighting the battle of the bulge extra hard as you get older.

HORMONES

As women approach menopause, hormones — the chemical messengers that control most bodily functions — start to fluctuate, Healthline says. It can cause a slew of changes, including decreased bone density, less lean muscle mass, a lower sex drive and mood changes.

The good news is that this phase of life will soon end. Just continue to eat well, get plenty of rest and exercise regularly. This, too, shall pass.

SLOWER METABOLISM

Your metabolism slows down as you age, meaning your resting metabolic rate gets slower. You may also start to carry more fat around your waistline. Combat this by staying as active as you can. Experts at Healthline recommend a combination of strength training and cardio.

INSULIN RESISTANCE

Your aging body may also start to ignore insulin, the hormone responsible for regulating blood sugar levels. This makes your blood sugar higher, which makes you hungrier and more susceptible to cravings. This is one reason you may start packing

on unwanted pounds and it can leave you at greater risk for Type 2 diabetes. Keep your meals a healthy mix of carbohydrates, protein and fat — without loading up on carbs too much — to fight this trend.

UNDER PRESSURE

Women in middle age are also often in the middle of a sea of stress. They're managing their own busy families, often balancing the needs of aging parents with their responsibilities to their older children. Black women, in particular, are under heavy stress loads, Healthline says, and that stress causes your body to produce more cortisol, the fight-or-flight hormone. Cortisol drops your blood sugar, making you want to eat more. Talk to your health care provider about managing your stress levels.

SLEEP PATTERNS

A lot of women report trouble sleeping as they get older, Healthline says, and sleep disruption gives you less energy to exercise, less energy to manage your life and can have an adverse affect on all aspects of your health. Try to establish a soothing bedtime routine — with no electronics — and avoid caffeine and alcohol before bed. Those can cause hot flashes and night sweats, which can, in turn can disrupt your sleep.



What Does your Thyroid Do?

There's a small, butterfly-shaped gland at the base of your neck that makes a hormone that travels to your blood in all parts of your body, controlling your body's metabolism.

Women are more likely than men to develop thyroid disease; one in eight women will develop thyroid problems in their lifetime.

SYMPTOMS OF THYROID PROBLEMS

Depending on if your thyroid is producing too much or too little hormone, you may feel restless or tired, or you may lose or gain weight. You can also have problems with your menstrual periods, problems getting pregnant and problems during pregnancy. Sometimes, thyroid problems are mistaken for symptoms of menopause.

HYPOTHYROIDISM

This is when your thyroid doesn't make enough hormone. Hypothyroidism can slow your body down. The most common cause of hypothyroidism is Hashimoto's disease, when the immune system mistakenly attacks the thyroid.

This condition also can be caused by hyperthyroidism treatment, radiation treat-



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ment and thyroid removal.

HYPERTHYROIDISM

Also called overactive thyroidism, this is where your thyroid makes more hormone than your body needs, speeding up your body's functions.

The most common cause of hyperthyroidism is Graves' disease, an immune system disorder that is most common in women under 40.

THYROIDITIS

Inflammation of the thyroid, or thyroiditis, happens when the body's immune system makes antibodies that attack the thyroid. Causes of thyroiditis include autoimmune diseases, genetics, viral or bacterial infection, and certain types of medications. Two common types of thyroiditis are Hashimoto's disease and postpartum thyroiditis.

GOITER

A goiter is an enlarged thyroid gland. It can happen for a short time and may go away on its own, or it may be a symptom of another thyroid disease, such as Graves' disease.

Usually, the only symptom of a goiter is a swelling in your neck, but it can also cause a tight feeling in your throat, coughing or problems breath-

ing or swallowing.

THYROID NODULES

When only one part of the thyroid gland swells, it's called a thyroid nodule. It may be solid or filled with fluid or blood. Nodules affect four times as many women as men. Most nodules don't cause symptoms and aren't cancerous, but you can have several nodules on one thyroid.

What Is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a disease that causes bones to become weak and brittle.

Even a mild fall or stresses such as bending over or coughing can cause a fracture a bone. These fractures most commonly occur in the hip, wrist or spine. Osteoporosis can affect men and women of all races, but white and Asian women, especially once they're past menopause, are most at risk.

CAUSES

Bones are constantly being renewed. When you're young, you make new bone faster than you break down old bone, and your bone mass increases. After around age 30, the process starts to reverse and bone mass is lost faster than it's created.

Risk factors for osteoporosis include your age, race, lifestyle choices and some medical conditions. It's also more common in people who have too much or too little of certain hormones in their bodies, like sex hormones, thyroid problems and problems with parathyroid glands and adrenal glands. It can also be caused by dietary factors, such as low calcium intake, eating disorders and gastrointestinal surgery.

SYMPTOMS

Osteoporosis usually doesn't have any symptoms in the



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early stages. Once your bones have been weakened by osteoporosis, some symptoms may include back pain, a loss of height over time, a stooped posture and a bone that breaks much easier than expected.

Screening for osteoporosis is recommended for all women by age 65. To test for osteoporo-

sis, your doctor will do a family history and can also do bone density tests. These tests will use low levels of X-rays to determine the proportion of mineral in your bones. Usually, only a few bones are checked, usually in the hip and spine.

TREATMENT

Your treatment plan will

depend on your risk of breaking a bone in the next 10 years. Osteoporosis can be treated with biophosphonates, such as Fosamax and Bonita; monoclonal antibody medications, such as Xgeva; hormone therapies; and bone-building medications, such as Evenity. Treatment plans might also include

modifying your risk factors for bone loss and falls. You should also quit smoking, avoid excessive use of alcohol and prevent falls however you can.

Discuss with your health care provider the best treatment plan for you, including medications and lifestyle modifications.