

Maple



View

Medical Practice

Newsletter: Winter 2017

NHS Health Check

What is an NHS Health Check?

The NHS Health Check is a health check-up for adults in England aged 40-74. It's designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. As we get older, we have a higher risk of developing one of these conditions. An NHS Health Check helps find ways to lower this risk.

How do I get an NHS Health Check?

If you're in the 40-74 age group without a pre-existing condition, you can expect to receive a letter from your GP inviting you for a free NHS Health Check every five years. If you are eligible and have not received an invitation, please ask at reception.

Breast Screening

When will I be offered breast screening?

Breast screening is currently offered to women aged 50-70 in England. However, the NHS is in the process of extending the programme as a trial, offering screening to some women aged 47-73.

If you're over the age of 70, you'll stop receiving screening invitations. However, you're still eligible for screening and can arrange an appointment by contacting your local screening unit.

Bowel Cancer Screening

To detect cases of bowel cancer sooner, the NHS offers two types of bowel cancer screening to adults registered with a GP in England:

- **All men and women aged 60-74 are invited to carry out a faecal occult blood (FOB) test.** Every two years, they're sent a home test kit, which is used to collect a stool sample. If you're 75 or over, you can ask for this test by calling the freephone helpline on 0800 707 60 60.
- **An additional one-off test called bowel scope screening** is gradually being introduced in England. This is offered to men and women at the age of 55. It involves a doctor or nurse using a thin, flexible instrument to look inside the lower part of the bowel.

What does the FOB screening test involve?

The home testing kit is used to collect tiny stool samples on a special card. The card is then sealed in a hygienic freepost envelope and sent to the screening laboratory. It will be checked for traces of blood that may not be visible to the naked eye, but could be an early sign of bowel cancer.

Your results

You'll receive the results of your FOB test within two weeks of sending in the test kit. There are three types of result:

- **Most people will have a normal result** – no further tests are needed and you'll be invited to take part in screening again in two years (if you're still aged 60-74).
- **A few people will have an unclear result** – you'll be asked to repeat the FOB test up to twice more.
- **A few people will have an abnormal result** – you'll be offered an appointment to discuss colonoscopy at a local screening centre.
- **If you're outside the age range...**
- People aged 75 and older can still be screened for bowel cancer. They can request an FOB screening kit by calling the freephone helpline on 0800 707 60 60.

- People younger than 60 aren't eligible for the FOB screening test, but can have bowel scope screening (see below). If you have symptoms, are worried about a family history of bowel cancer, or worried about your bowel health in any way, speak to your GP.

Cervical screening

Cervical screening is offered to women aged 25 to 64 to check the health of cells in the cervix. It is offered every three years for those aged 26 to 49, and every five years from the ages of 50 to 64

Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening

AAA screening is offered to men in their 65th year to detect abdominal aortic aneurysms (a dangerous swelling in the aorta). Men over 65 can self-refer.

Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening is a way of checking if there's a bulge or swelling in the aorta, the main blood vessel that runs from your heart down through your tummy.

This bulge or swelling is called an abdominal aortic aneurysm, or AAA. It can be serious if it's not spotted early on because it could get bigger and eventually burst (rupture).

Who's screened for AAA

In England, screening for AAA is offered to men during the year they turn 65.

Men aged 65 or over are most at risk of AAAs. Screening can help spot a swelling in the aorta early on when it can be treated.

Screening for AAA isn't routinely offered to:

- women
- men under 65
- people who've already been treated for an AAA

This is because the risk of an AAA is much smaller in these groups.

How to get screened for AAA

If you're a man and you're registered with a GP, you'll get a screening invitation in the post when you're 64 or soon after your 65th birthday. You can then arrange an appointment that suits you.

If you're a man over 65 and you haven't been screened before, you can ask for a test by contacting service directly.

Diabetic eye screening

From the age of 12, all people with diabetes are offered an annual diabetic eye test to check for early signs of diabetic retinopathy.

Diabetic eye screening is a key part of diabetes care. People with diabetes are at risk of damage from diabetic retinopathy, a condition that can lead to sight loss if it's not treated.

Diabetic retinopathy is one of the most common causes of sight loss among people of working age.

It occurs when diabetes affects small blood vessels, damaging the part of the eye called the retina. When the blood vessels in the central area of the retina (the macula) are affected, it's known as diabetic maculopathy.

People with diabetes should also see their optician every two years for a regular eye test. Diabetic eye screening is specifically for diabetic retinopathy and can't be relied upon for other conditions.

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Shingles Vaccination

Who can have the shingles vaccination?

You are eligible for the shingles vaccine if you are aged 70 or 78 years old.

In addition, anyone who was eligible for immunisation in the previous three years of the programme but missed out on their shingles vaccination remains eligible until their 80th birthday. This includes:

- people in their 70s who were born after 1 September 1942
- people aged 79 years

The shingles vaccine is not available on the NHS if you are aged 80 or over.

You should not have the shingles vaccine if you:

- have a weakened immune system (for example, because of cancer treatment, if you take steroid tablets or if you've had an organ transplant – your doctor will advise whether this applies to you)
- you've had a serious allergic reaction (including an anaphylactic reaction) to a previous dose of any of the substances in the vaccine, such as neomycin and gelatin – again, your GP can advise you if this applies to you
- you've had a serious allergic reaction (including an anaphylactic reaction) to a previous dose of the chickenpox vaccine
- have an untreated TB infection

Seasonal Influenza

The flu jab

Flu vaccination is available every year on the NHS to help protect adults and children at risk of flu and its complications.

Flu can be unpleasant, but if you are otherwise healthy it will usually clear up on its own within a week. However, flu can be more severe in certain people, such as:

- anyone aged 65 and over
- pregnant women
- children and adults with an underlying health condition (such as long-term heart or respiratory disease)
- children and adults with weakened immune systems

Anyone in these risk groups is more likely to develop potentially serious complications of flu, such as pneumonia (a lung infection), so it's recommended that they have a flu vaccine every year to protect them.

The injected flu vaccine is offered free on the NHS annually to:

- adults over the age of 18 at risk of flu (including everyone aged 65 and over)
- pregnant women
- children aged 6 months to 2 years at risk of flu

Pneumococcal

Who should have the pneumococcal vaccine?

A pneumococcal infection can affect anyone. However, some people are at higher risk of serious illness and can be given the pneumococcal vaccination on the NHS. These include:

- babies
- adults aged 65 or over
- children and adults with certain long-term health conditions, such as a serious heart or kidney condition

How often is the pneumococcal vaccine given?

Babies receive the pneumococcal vaccine as three separate injections, at 8 weeks, 16 weeks and 1 year old.

People over 65 only need a single pneumococcal vaccination, which will protect for life. It's not given annually like the flu jab.

People with a long-term health condition may need just a single one-off pneumococcal vaccination or five-yearly vaccination, depending on their underlying health problem.

Chickenpox

Who should have the chickenpox vaccine?

It is recommended for certain individuals, such as:

- non-immune healthcare workers
- people who come into close contact with someone who has a weakened immune system

This is to lower the chances of infecting people at risk. For example, if you're having chemotherapy treatment, it's advisable that non-immune children close to you are given the chickenpox vaccine.

The vaccine would also be recommended if you were about to start work in a radiotherapy department and had not had chickenpox before.

Hepatitis B

Who should be vaccinated against hepatitis B?

All infants should be vaccinated to protect against hepatitis B infection.

This is because the infection can persist for many years in children and can eventually lead to complications, such as scarring of the liver or liver cancer.

Although the risk of hepatitis B is low in the UK, children and adults in high-risk groups are offered the vaccine.

Babies born to mothers with hepatitis B have been offered hepatitis B vaccine from birth since the 1980s. During autumn 2017, this vaccine became available in the routine childhood vaccination schedule for all babies as part of the 6-in-1 vaccine.

You can get infected with hepatitis B if you have contact with an infected person's blood or other body fluids. People at risk of hepatitis B or at risk of serious complications from it – and who should therefore consider vaccination – are:

- people who inject drugs or have a partner who injects drugs
- people who change their sexual partners frequently
- men who have sex with men
- babies born to infected mothers
- close family or sexual partners of someone with hepatitis B
- anyone who receives regular blood transfusions or blood products, and their carers
- people with any form of chronic liver disease
- people with chronic kidney disease
- people travelling to high-risk countries
- male and female sex workers
- people who work somewhere that places them at risk of contact with blood or body fluids, such as nurses, prison staff, doctors, dentists and laboratory staff
- prisoners
- families adopting or fostering children from high-risk countries

Tuberculosis

Who should have the BCG (TB) vaccine?

BCG vaccination is only recommended on the NHS for babies, children and adults under the age of 35 who are considered at risk of catching tuberculosis (TB). The BCG vaccine isn't given to anyone over the age of 35, as there's no evidence that it works for people in this age group.

Adults aged 16 to 35 who should have the BCG vaccine

BCG vaccination is recommended for people aged 16 to 35 who are at occupational risk of TB exposure, including:

- laboratory staff who are in contact with blood, urine and tissue samples
- veterinary staff and other animal workers, such as abattoir workers, who work with animals that are susceptible to TB, such as cattle or monkeys
- prison staff who work directly with prisoners
- staff of care homes for the elderly
- staff of hostels for homeless people
- staff who work in facilities for refugees and asylum seekers
- healthcare workers with an increased risk of exposure to TB