

DOCTORS OF INTERNAL MEDICINE
30335 W. 13 MILE ROAD, SUITE 100 · FARMINGTON HILLS, MI 48334
TELEPHONE: (248) 626-6500
FAX: (248) 855-0190

STEVEN D. GRANT, M.D., F.A.C.P.
LOWELL S. PAUL, M.D.

TO YOUR HEALTH

There is more to good health than just checking your cholesterol and getting that routine physical exam. We would like you to consider the following issues and suggestions as part of a broader plan to improving your health.

- Routine or preventative exams are a mainstay of good health. The extent and frequency of these exams should be tailored to your needs, taking into account your past and family medical history, life-style, and other risk factors. This is best discussed with your physician. If you have never had a complete physical examination at this office, you are encouraged to schedule one.
- Mammogram recommendations have become controversial. For average risk women mammograms prior to age 50 should be based on individual risk assessment and preference. After age 50 mammograms every 1 – 2 years are reasonable until age 74. The benefit of mammograms after age 74 is unknown. Routine breast self exam is of questionable benefit though is not discouraged.
- For average risk women between the ages of 21 to 65 a Pap smear should be obtained every 3 years, or every 5 years for women ages 30 – 65 if HPV (human papillomavirus) is also tested. A Pap smear is not necessary after a hysterectomy. Routine pelvic exams are not needed.
- For average risk men, Prostatic Specific Antigen (PSA) is no longer advised though a digital rectal exam should be done on men over 50 every one to two years. If you are African-American or there is a family history of prostate cancer, PSA testing is still advised starting in your 40s.
- Men and women over age 50 should be screened for colon cancer. This can be done with a sigmoidoscopy and stool cards or with a colonoscopy. If there is a family history of colon cancer, screening needs to be done more often and may start earlier.
- Eye examination by a competent eye doctor should begin about age 40. The most important part of this exam is the eye pressure check for glaucoma. Anyone with diabetes needs to have a retinal exam yearly.
- If you use tobacco products you are strongly encouraged to stop. There are over-the-counter aids, such as the patch and gum, as well as prescription medication to help you quit. Please, discuss this with your physician.
- Always wear a seat belt when driving in a car. Remember that airbags are not a substitute for seat belts.
- Always wear a helmet when riding a bike.
- Practice safe sex and use condoms.
- All patients, especially senior citizens and anyone with a potential life threatening illness, are encouraged to speak with their physicians about end of life planning. It is important to know the patient's, and possibly the family's, wishes regarding possible life saving measures (e.g. CPR, ventilatory support, etc.).

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