

Don't neglect these tests



IN OUR BUSY LIVES, IT'S TEMPTING TO LEAVE ANY REMINDERS FOR HEALTH TESTS AT THE BACK OF THE DRAWER. BUT DR ELLIE CANNON EXPLAINS WHY THERE ARE CERTAIN CHECKS YOU SHOULDN'T PUT OFF...

MAKE THE MOST OF THE NHS MANY TESTS ARE FREE

Are you avoiding looking after yourself and your health because you're too busy caring for everyone else? Figures show that many women are guilty of avoiding some health tests they really should take up. This is especially true when it comes to sexual health checks – think again, and make sure you protect yourself!

SAFE SEX

Do you need to visit a sexual-health clinic for a sexually transmitted infection (STI) screen? With many women starting relationships later in life and not always practising safe sex, these tests are a good idea, including one for HIV. STI rates in people aged 50-70 have risen by a third in the last decade, with genital warts, chlamydia and herpes being the most common.



EYE HEALTH

Eye tests aren't just about your sight. A good eye test can detect other problems, too, including diabetes, thyroid disease and high blood pressure. Everyone over 60 is entitled to a free NHS eye check. Signs of glaucoma, which causes blindness, can be spotted during an eye test. The condition often doesn't have symptoms in the early stages, so these checks are vital.



SMEAR TESTS

Are you still going for your smear tests? You should be. After the age of 50, you only need a smear test every five years, but they are still really important. Research by Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust last year showed that a worrying one in three women over 50 had delayed their smear by an average of two years, or missed it entirely. Smears are essential up until the age of 64.

BOWEL CANCER

It may not be a pleasant one to do, but don't put off that bowel cancer screening test. The home testing kit is sent to everyone between the ages of 60-74 every two years, and it's one people try to avoid as it involves collecting a stool sample yourself, which you send off to be tested. It's quick and painless, and could save your life. Detecting bowel cancer early, before symptoms appear, makes it far more treatable.



BREAST CHECK

With a test that crops up every three years, it can be easy to lose track of whether you've had one recently or not. But do keep on top of your mammograms! Between the ages of 50 and 70, you should be having this vital breast cancer screening test every three years. Your GP's surgery should have a record of when you last went, and can help you rearrange it if you've missed one.

TEETHING TROUBLES

If you haven't been to the dentist for many years, it can be hard to summon your courage and go. Fear of dentists is common but, as you get older, it's essential to visit regularly. Gum disease and dental decay can increase your risk of other health problems, including heart disease, so it's important to find out exactly what's going on in your mouth. So find a friendly dentist today!



DIABETES TIMEBOMB

Many people have type 2 diabetes for years before it's diagnosed, by which time serious complications may have started to develop. Everyone over the age of 40 is entitled to a diabetes test from their GP, so don't put it off! Whether you think you're a candidate due to being overweight or not, it's worth getting checked over. Luckily, we now know that type 2 diabetes can be reversed with a good diet and exercise.

Look younger with Lesley



Anti-ageing guru **Lesley Reynolds** reveals the latest treatments to help you stay youthful

Fuelled by photos of, shall we say, pert celebrities, nipple surgery is now one of the fastest-growing procedures. Here's the low-down on some other cosmetic treatments.

NIP-PLES AND TUCKS

Nipple-lift surgery can improve the shape and size of the area. The procedure involves creating several small flaps around the nipple to push it up and out, giving it more definition. It also helps even out any asymmetry. Nipples can be raised around 1.5-2cm above their existing level to make breasts look perkier. It's important to use an experienced surgeon, as surgery can cause the nipples to lose sensation if nerve endings are damaged.

AREOLA REDUCTION

The average size of the coloured area (areola) around the nipple is around 4.5cm in diameter. Pregnancy and weight gain increase breast size but, while breasts shrink afterwards, the areola can remain enlarged. Areola reduction surgery is a straightforward procedure under local anaesthetic. The desired size is marked, skin is removed and the area is stitched up. Downtime is minimal and scarring fades over time.



TATTOOING

An option for those who have undergone breast reconstruction surgery following a mastectomy, nipple tattooing adds highlights and shading to create a 3D effect. The treatment takes one to two hours for the first session, with further sessions a month afterwards. Expect a light crust around the area, which takes up to a week to heal. Patients need to ensure they avoid swimming, saunas and sun exposure for a fortnight afterwards. A colour boost is needed after five years.

AND DON'T FORGET...

- There is no one type of 'normal' nipple or areola and there are many healthy variations. If you're concerned, then a doctor can reassure you.
- It's common to have bumps on the areola. Called Montgomery glands, they can look like whiteheads.
- Hairs around the nipple are normal, and safe to pluck out.
- Inverted nipples are common. They can be corrected with nipple shields, which put pressure on the tissue around the nipple and encourage it to protrude through the central hole.
- Remember, there are risks associated with nipple surgery (see above), plus any incision carries a small risk of infection.

For more information on Lesley and her team of doctors, please visit harleystreetskinclinic.com