



# *Living Well*

Your Guide to Wellness Checks  
for the Prevention and  
Early Detection of  
Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)



MINISTRY OF  
**HEALTH &  
WELLNESS**

**This Booklet belongs to:**

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**Date:**

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# Message

Screening tests are health checks that are done in persons who seem healthy, to try to find unnoticed problems before you have any signs or symptoms of disease. These tests are done as a preventive measure, to detect a potential health problem early before severe disease and complications occur. Health checks also help to reduce the risk of developing chronic conditions by identifying risk factors that make you more likely to develop major non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the main ones being high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease (like heart attack or stroke), diabetes, cancers and depression.

Early detection means getting the right treatment at the right time, which gives you better control over your health.



# Basic Facts

## How to Beat NCDs

Eat Healthy



Be Physically Active  
(Everyday, Your Way)



Stop Smoking



Avoid Excess Alcohol



Manage Stress & Mental Health



Regular Health Checks



Know Your Numbers:  
Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar,  
Cholesterol, BMI,  
Waist Circumference



Get Vaccinated



Always Wear A Seat Belt



Always Wear A Helmet  
(Cycling, Bike Riding)



## Know Your Body, Know Your Status



Everyone should 'be in the know' about their body and health status, and the factors that may put them at greater risk of getting a NCD. The more you know about your body and health status...

... the more control you have over your health and wellbeing.

... the more opportunities you have to control and even reverse changeable risk factors, to help prevent the development of NCDs.

... the earlier health problems can be detected and treated.

## What to check?

## Why should you check it?

## How is it checked?

Weight, Height and Body Mass Index (BMI)



A BMI value of 25.0–29.9 means you are overweight and a value  $\geq 30.0$  means you are obese. Overweight and obesity are major risk factors for several major chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancer.

Measure and record your weight in kilograms and your height in metres. BMI is calculated as:  $\text{weight} / (\text{height})^2$ . You can check it at home, or at your next check-up. Talk with your health care provider about your results.

Blood Pressure (BP)



High BP (hypertension) is a silent killer which often causes no symptoms. If high BP (measurements  $\geq 140/90$ ) is detected early and controlled, you can prevent irreversible damage to major organs in the body like the brain, heart, eyes and kidneys.

BP is usually measured on the arm with a sphygmomanometer (BP machine). Persons should be seated for at least 5 minutes before the BP reading is taken. You can check it at home, or at your next check-up. Talk with your health care provider about your results.

Blood Sugar (Glucose)



Many persons have high blood glucose levels (diabetes) for years without knowing it, until they get sick. Early detection and control can prevent irreversible damage to several organs like the brain, heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves.

Talk with your health care provider about doing a Fasting Blood Glucose (FBG) test and Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (OGTT).

### What to check?

### Why should you check it?

### How is it checked?

#### Heart



Your heart works hard every second of the day to keep you alive! Prevention and early detection of heart disease and its risk factors (like obesity, high cholesterol, hypertension and diabetes) are therefore essential to help keep your heart in good health.

The status of your heart should be checked along with your blood pressure, heart rate, BMI and investigations recommended by your health care provider.

#### Blood Cholesterol (Lipids)



High levels of fat in the blood contribute to hardening and narrowing of blood vessels, leading to poor blood circulation to major organs in the body. This increases your chances of having strokes and heart attacks.

Talk with your health care provider about doing a Fasting Blood Cholesterol test.

#### Sickle Cell Status



The sickle cell gene (or trait) is very common in Jamaicans (1 in 10 persons have the trait). If you pass these genes on to your children, they may develop Sickle Cell Disease and suffer from several complications in childhood and adulthood that cause severe pain, frequent hospitalization, disability and death. Knowing your sickle cell status early can save lives.

A blood test is done on all newborn babies at birth in the hospital (using blood from the umbilical cord) and on all pregnant women. Persons who intend to, or are planning to have children soon, should talk with their health care providers about getting tested.



## What to check?

Breast  
Colon (Large  
Bowels)  
Cervix  
Prostate



## Why should you check it?

Breast, Colon, Cervical and Prostate Cancers are leading causes of death in men and women in Jamaica, and each year about half of all new cancer cases are due to these 4 cancers. Too many cancer cases are detected when the disease is far advanced. Early screening before you experience symptoms of cancers is essential for early detection and initiation of life-saving treatment that can cure cancers and minimize pain and suffering.

## How is it checked?

Talk with your health care provider about your risk of getting these cancers and doing your routine screening tests:

- Mammogram for breast cancer
- Stool test or colonoscopy for colon cancer
- Pap smear +/- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) test for cervical cancer
- Digital rectal examination (DRE) and Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test for prostate cancer

## Mental Health and Wellbeing



Depression is a medical condition that affects your work and relationships with family and friends. It can also make physical illnesses worse or difficult to treat. Screening for depression helps your health care provider give you complete care for your mind and body.

If you are experiencing symptoms of depression (such as sadness, lack of desire to do things you enjoy, hopelessness, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, etc.) for at least 2 weeks, visit your health care provider for screening and assessment.

# Screening for Major Non-Communicable Diseases

## What's Your Risk of Getting a Non-Communicable Disease (NCD)?

Persons at high risk of developing NCDs have certain factors or characteristics that make them more likely to develop NCDs than the average person. Factors that increase the risk of persons developing major NCDs are listed below:

Major NCD	Persons with HIGH RISK of these NCDs are, or may have...
<b>Hypertension (HTN) &amp; Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)</b>	Overweight/obesity, family history of HTN or CVD, older persons, diabetes, African descent, sleep disorders, kidney disease; pregnant women with other medical conditions during pregnancy
<b>Diabetes</b>	Overweight/obesity, family history of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, signs of specific hormonal abnormalities, history of diabetes in pregnancy, physical inactivity
<b>Breast Cancer</b>	Age over 40 years, family history of breast cancer, persons known to have BRCA 1 and 2 or other genetic mutations, history of chest exposed to radiation
<b>Cervical Cancer</b>	All women ages 21 to 65 years of age are at risk of cervical cancer. Persons with weak immune systems, including those with HIV infection, have a higher risk
<b>Colon Cancer</b>	Age over 50 years especially males, personal or family history of intestinal polyps, family history of colon cancer, lifestyle factors (low fibre diet, obesity, diabetes, smoking), African descent
<b>Prostate Cancer</b>	Men over 50 years, family history of prostate cancer, persons known to have BRCA 1 and 2 genetic mutations
<b>Depression</b>	Chronic medical illness, personal or family history of mental illness, single parent family, poor social and economic circumstances, history of negative life event (job loss, death of relative/friend, domestic violence, etc), substance abuse, persons in the LGBTQ community

Note that smoking and excess alcohol intake also increase your risk of developing these major NCDs.

If you don't have any of these characteristics, then you are likely to have **AVERAGE RISK** for developing NCDs.

While some characteristics can't be controlled or prevented (like getting older and family history), several lifestyle choices can be improved to decrease your risk of getting a chronic illness. Also, identification of risk factors and early detection of abnormal signs through regular screening are essential for prevention and control of NCDs. Early detection and early intervention saves lives.

Your recommended schedule for routine screening depends on your age and your risk level for developing these major NCDs. Visit your health care provider to find out more about your risk for developing NCDs, and to make an appointment for screening.



# When To Screen

## Children and Adolescents (0-19 years)

When should you get checked?

What to check for?	When should you get checked?	
	AVERAGE RISK PERSONS:	HIGH RISK PERSONS:
Sickle Cell Disease	At birth in hospital	
Hypertension	Every 2 years (Starting at age 3 years)	Annually (Starting at age 3 years)
Diabetes	Routine screening is not recommended	Every 2 years
Breast Cancer	<b>Adolescents:</b> conduct a breast self-examination at the same time each month. If you notice any changes, visit your health care provider as soon as possible	<b>Adolescents:</b> visit your health care provider for screening and assessment by a specialist
Cervical Cancer	Screening is not recommended, however HPV vaccination (2 doses given 6 months apart) for children 9-14 years is highly recommended	Screening is not recommended, except persons with a weakened immune system. HPV vaccination is highly recommended. Talk with your health care provider
Colon Cancer	Routine screening is not recommended	For adolescents with genetic intestinal polyps, screening should start at 12 years of age with colonoscopy
Depression	<b>Adolescents:</b> screen for depression annually. Talk with your health care provider.	<b>Adolescents:</b> screen for depression three times a year. Talk with your health care provider.

N.B. Routine screening for prostate cancer in children and adolescents is not recommended

*Early investments in health are key to lifelong wellness and productivity*





*The best way to keep your baby and family healthy is to keep yourself healthy*

# Pregnant Women

## When should you get checked?

What to check for?	AVERAGE RISK PERSONS:	HIGH RISK PERSONS:
Diabetes	At 24 weeks, then rescreen at 28 weeks gestation	At first antenatal visit and rescreen at 28 weeks gestation
Hypertension	Every clinic visit	
Depression	At each antenatal and postnatal visit	
Sickle Cell Disease	At the first antenatal visit	

N.B. Routine screening for cancers during pregnancy is not recommended.

# Adult Females

(20-59 years)

## When should you get checked?

What to check for?	AVERAGE RISK PERSONS:	HIGH RISK PERSONS:
Hypertension	Annually	At minimum once annually; BP should be measured at each clinic visit for persons on medication that have elevated blood pressure
Diabetes	45 years & older: every 2 years	30 years & older: annually
Breast Cancer	≥40 years: Mammogram annually	Your health care provider will guide you on the age to start screening and necessary tests.
Cervical Cancer	21-29 years: Screen with Pap smears every 3 years 30-59 years: Screen with Pap smears or HPV testing every 3 years	21-29 years: Screen with Pap smears every year 30-59 years: Screen with Pap smears or HPV testing every year
Colon Cancer	20-44 years: Routine screening is not recommended 45-59 years: Annual screening with stool-based tests	Talk with your health care provider about getting a colonoscopy done
Depression	Screen for depression annually. Talk with your health care provider.	Screen for depression twice a year. Talk with your health care provider.



*Love yourself enough to live a  
healthy lifestyle*



Living Well: Your Guide to Wellness Checks for the Prevention and Early Detection of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

*It's never too late  
to safeguard your health  
and wellbeing*



# Older Adult Females

## (60 years and older)

### When should you get checked?

What to check for?	AVERAGE RISK PERSONS:	HIGH RISK PERSONS:
Hypertension	Annually	At minimum once annually; BP should be measured at each clinic visit for persons on medication that have elevated blood pressure
Diabetes	45 years & older: every 2 years	30 years & older: annually
Breast Cancer	<70 years: Mammogram annually	<70 years: Visit your health care provider for screening and assessment by a specialist
Cervical Cancer	<64 years: Screen with Pap smears or HPV testing every 3 years  65 years & older: Routine screening is not recommended. Talk with your health care provider	<64 years: Screen with Pap smears or HPV testing every year.
Colon Cancer	<75 years: Annual screening with stool-based tests  75 years & older: Routine screening is not recommended. Talk with your health care provider	<75 years: Talk with your health care provider about getting a colonoscopy done
Depression	Screen for depression two to four times a year	

# Adult Males

(20-59 years)

## When should you get checked?

What to check for?	AVERAGE RISK PERSONS:	HIGH RISK PERSONS:
Hypertension	Annually	At minimum once annually; BP should be measured at each clinic visit for persons on medication that have elevated blood pressure
Diabetes	45 years & older: every 2 years	30 years & older: annually
Prostate Cancer	<40 years: Routine screening is not recommended 40-54 years: PSA blood test and DRE every 2 years 55 years & older: PSA blood test and DRE every 2 years	55 years & older: PSA blood test and DRE every year
Colon Cancer	20-44 years: Routine screening is not recommended 45 years & over: Annual screening with stool-based tests	Talk with your health care provider about getting a colonoscopy done
Depression	Screen for depression annually. Talk with your health care provider.	Screen for depression twice a year. Talk with your health care provider.



*Take care of your  
health now  
and reap big rewards later*



*Don't wait for illness  
to start valuing health  
and wellness*

# Older Adult Males

(60 years and older)

## When should you get checked?

What to check for?	AVERAGE RISK PERSONS:	HIGH RISK PERSONS:
Hypertension	Annually	At minimum once annually; BP should be measured at each clinic visit for persons on medication that have elevated blood pressure
Diabetes	45 years & older: every 2 years	30 years & older: annually
Prostate Cancer	<70 years: Screen with a digital rectal examination (DRE) & PSA blood test every 2 years  70 years & older: Routine screening is not recommended. Talk with your health care provider	<70 years: Screen with a digital rectal examination (DRE) & PSA blood test every year
Colon Cancer	<75 years: Annual screening with stool-based tests  75 years & older: Routine screening is not recommended. Talk with your health care provider	<75 years: Talk with your health care provider about getting a colonoscopy done
Depression	Screen for depression two to four times a year	

# My Health Checks

My Next Check Up Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sickle Cell Status: \_\_\_\_\_ My Height (in metres): \_\_\_\_\_

My Numbers	Date	Date	Date	Normal	My Goal
Weight in kilograms	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>
Body Mass Index (BMI)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	< 25.0	<input type="text"/>
Blood Pressure (BP)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	< 120/80	<input type="text"/>
Blood Sugar (Glucose)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Fasting: < 6.1 mmol/L 2hrs post meal: < 7.8 mmol/L	<input type="text"/>
Blood Cholesterol (Lipids)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	HDL: > 1.17 mmol/L LDL: < 3.7 mmol/L	<input type="text"/>

Common Cancers	Am I Average or High Risk?	Screening Date	Result
Breast Cancer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Cervical Cancer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Colon Cancer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Prostate Cancer	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Also remember...

- get regular eye checks as recommended by your health care provider
- get your dental check up every 6 months
- get tested for HIV every year
- ensure you are fully vaccinated





**Upcoming Appointments:**

Healthcare Provider	Date	Date	Date	Date

*Your health doesn't get better by chance.  
It gets better by choice.*

# Notes

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**#BeatNCDs**

### **For More Information...**

Contact your doctor or nearest health centre

Visit [www.moh.gov.jm](http://www.moh.gov.jm)  
Call 888-ONE-LOVE (663-5683)

Like and follow us on



@themohwgovjm

### **For additional support, you may also contact:**

#### **National Council on Drug Abuse:**

[ncda.org.jm](http://ncda.org.jm)

☎ 876-564-HELP (4357)

[f](#) [@](#) [i](#) [t](#) [v](#) [@drugfreeja](#)

#### **Jamaica Cancer Society**

[jamaicacancersociety.org](http://jamaicacancersociety.org)

✉ [jcsinfo3@cwjamaica.com](mailto:jcsinfo3@cwjamaica.com), [jcsinfo1@gmail.com](mailto:jcsinfo1@gmail.com)

☎ 876 927 4265

[f](#) [t](#) [@jamaicacancersociety](#)

#### **Heart Foundation of Jamaica**

[heartfoundationja.org](http://heartfoundationja.org)

[t](#) [@HeartJamaica](#) [f](#) [i](#) [@heartfoundationja](#)

#### **Diabetes Association of Jamaica**

[daj.thedirectiveedge.com](http://daj.thedirectiveedge.com)

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MINISTRY OF  
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**#BeatNCDs**

**Early Detection Saves Lives**