



SIZWE

MEDICAL FUND

Your health in caring hands

**SCREENING
TESTS**

What you need
to know

**BECAUSE....CARING
COMES NATURALLY TO US**

You've probably heard the age-old saying that 'prevention is better than cure'? That saying is spot on! Furthermore, going to your medical practitioner for regular check-ups is vital in order for health checks to be done, and screenings to be completed at regular intervals. In this way, potentially life-threatening conditions can be identified sooner rather than later, improving the chances of recovery and effective treatment

WHICH SCREENING TESTS ARE SUITABLE FOR ADULTS?



Blood Pressure Monitoring

It is important to measure your blood pressure regularly because the higher it is, the greater your risk of health problems such as stroke and heart attack. High blood pressure is also called hypertension. Measuring blood pressure is done using an inflatable cuff, which is placed around your upper arm. Normal blood pressure is 120/80.

Suggested Frequency of Test:

If you don't have hypertension and you're aged 19 - 64, have it checked every once a year. If you're aged 65 and over, have it checked every year. (These figures are according to the Health Society of South Africa).



Cholesterol Screening

Cholesterol plays a big role in a person's heart health. High blood cholesterol is a major risk factor for stroke and coronary heart disease.

A cholesterol test measures your level of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol and triglycerides. Blood will be drawn from your arm for this test. Your doctor may tell you to fast (avoid food, drinks and medications) for 9 -12 hours before the blood test. Your goal should be to have a total cholesterol of under 5 mmol/l.

Suggested Frequency of Test:

Cholesterol should be checked every four to six years from the age of 20, in people who have not been diagnosed with cardiovascular disease. (This is according to the American Heart Association). If your risk is elevated, you should check it more often.



Blood Glucose Test

Blood glucose is an important source of energy for those cells that make up your muscles, tissues, and your brain's chief source of fuel. Diabetes develops when you have too much glucose in your blood. This may happen because your body either doesn't produce enough insulin, or it is not able to effectively use the insulin it produces. A screening test is done by pricking your finger and assessing your blood glucose level. A normal fasting blood glucose level is 4-6 mmol/l (this test is done after you have fasted for at least 8 hours), while a nonfasting blood glucose level is acceptable at 4-10 mmol/l. If your levels are on the high side, an additional fasting blood glucose test will be done to determine whether or not you may be diabetic.

Suggested Frequency of Test:

A diabetes screening test is recommended for people aged 45 and older.



BMI Index

Your Body Mass Index (BMI) determines whether or not you're overweight for your height. This is also used to assess whether you're at greater risk for heart disease. The calculation is as follows:

BMI: weight/(height x height)

So if you're 1.75 m tall and you weigh 75 kg, your BMI will be:

$$\frac{75}{1.75 \times 1.75} = 24.5$$

This is within the acceptable range.

BMI	Classification
< 18.5	Underweight
18.5 – 24.9	Healthy weight
25 – 29.9	Overweight
> 30	Obese

There is no Suggested Frequency for checking your BMI number. If your BMI is over 24.9, please consult a registered dietician for assistance in terms of weight loss and adopting a healthier lifestyle.



HIV Testing

The HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) test does not detect the presence of the HIV virus itself, but the presence of antibodies your body produces as its response to HIV infection. It may take up to six months for your body to start developing these antibodies, so if you suspect you've been infected with HIV, you need to re-take the HIV test six months after exposure to the virus.



Rapid Tests:

These tests have over 99% accuracy, are cost effective and yield results within 30 min. A small sample of blood is taken from a finger prick, or the inside of the cheek or gums is swabbed. If the test is positive, a second test is done, either by using a different type of rapid test, or the ELISA test is done.



The ELISA Test:

Blood is drawn and sent to a laboratory. Two separate specimens are tested using two different kits in order to confirm the patient's identity. The result may take several days.

Suggested Frequency of Test:

Request this test when you believe you may have been exposed to HIV, and again, six months after exposure just to make 100% certain that you are indeed HIV-negative.

WHICH SCREENING TESTS ARE SUITABLE FOR WOMEN ONLY ?



PAP Smear



This is a microscopic examination of cells taken from the cervix, which is the lower, narrow end of your uterus. This test is able to detect changes in your cervical cells that may indicate cancer developing in the future.

Early detection of cervical cancer can improve your chances of survival substantially.

Suggested Frequency of Test:

CANSA (Cancer Association of South Africa) encourages all women to go for pap smears at least every three years from the age of 25. Sizwe Medical Fund offers an annual pap smear to women over the age of 25.



Mammogram

This is an x-ray of the breast, used to check for breast cancer, or to investigate a lump or other sign of breast cancer. Mammograms can show changes in the breast up to two years before a patient or physician become aware of those changes. Regular breast examinations are vital as early detection of breast cancer is vital to improve your chances of survival.

Suggested Frequency of Test:

CANSA encourages all symptom-free women to have a mammogram every year, from the age of 40. Sizwe Medical Fund offers an annual mammogram to women over the age of 25.

WHICH SCREENING
TESTS ARE SUITABLE
FOR MEN
ONLY ?





Prostate Specific Antigen Test

Prostate cancer is the most common solid organ malignancy in South Africa. Those who are specifically at risk are men who have symptoms including frequent urination, a weak or interrupted urine stream, pain on urination or ejaculation, pus or blood in the urine or semen, and a discomfort in the lower back, pelvis or upper thighs. High-risk candidates include men with a family history, those who are obese and those with high-fat diets. This is a blood test and if higher than normal level of PSA is found, it may indicate prostate infection, inflammation, enlargement or cancer.



PSA Testing Assesses the Level of Risk for Prostate Cancer

TEST VALUE	<3 ng/ml	3-10 ng/ml	>10 ng/ml
RISK	LOW	MODERATE	HIGH
EXPLANATION	PSA levels below 3 ng/ml are generally accepted to indicate a low risk for prostate cancer.	PSA levels between 3 ng/ml and 10 ng/ml may indicate moderate risk for prostate cancer. PSA levels below 10 ng/ml may be associated with localised cancer.	PSA levels above 10 ng/ml indicate high risk for the presence of prostate cancer.

Suggested Frequency of Test:

Annually, for men over 40.



References: <http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/microsites/u40/Home/facts/Whyitmatters>; http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Cholesterol/Symptoms/DiagnosisMonitoringofHighCholesterol/How-To-Get-Your-Cholesterol-Tested_UCM_305595_Article.jsp; <http://www.floraproactiv.co.uk/proactiv/what-is-cholesterol/what-are-normal-cholesterol-levels.aspx>, <http://www.healthsociety.co.za/article.asp?ID=619>; <https://labtestsonline.org/understanding/analytes/glucose/tab/test/>; <http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/pap-smear/basics/definition/prc-20013038>, www.cansa.org.za; <http://www.health24.com/Medical/HIVAIDS/Testing>; <http://www.homemed.co.za/prostate-specific-antigen-psatestkit/?p=Zz0xJmFwPTUmcD0yMg%3D%3D>

The Sizwe Medical Fund Disease Management Programme provides access to chronic medication and ongoing support.

To reap the benefits please register on our Disease Management Programme at



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