

THE DOCTOR IS IN: THE IMPORTANCE OF AN ANNUAL PHYSICAL EXAM



Your annual physical exam is an opportunity to build a strong relationship with your primary care physician, one that focuses on improving your current state of health and preventing future illness.

NorthShore University HealthSystem takes a closer look at the annual physical, examines the tools of the trade and advises how to make the most of your time with your physician.

What's an Annual Physical Exam?

It's a wellness check with a primary care physician that determines your overall health.



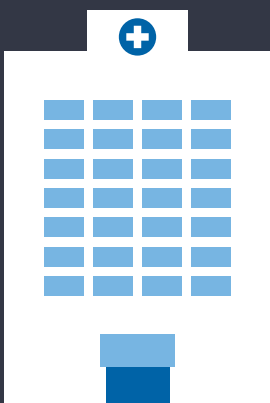
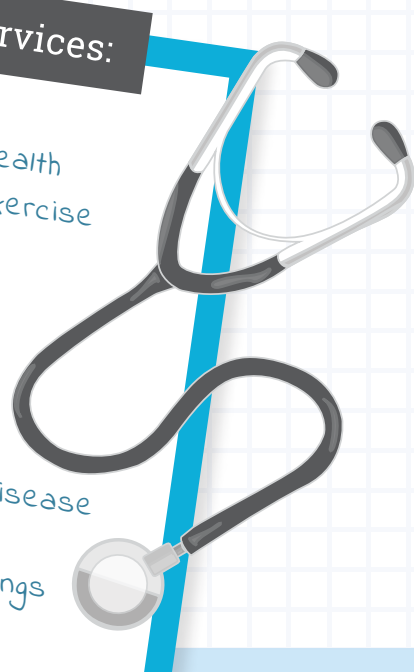
Who's a Primary Care Physician?

A PCP is a physician who provides preventative health services and serves as your main point of contact for any health concerns.



What Do They Do?

- Preventative Services:**
- Promote good health through diet & exercise
 - Treat acute & chronic illnesses
 - Diagnose health issues & prevent disease
 - Offer health screenings & immunizations
 - Educate patients on health concerns



Primary care services at NorthShore consist of:

- + Pediatrics
- + Family Medicine
- + Internal Medicine
- + Obstetrics & Gynecology

Why Do You Need a PCP?

Regular visits with a primary care physician may actually make you healthier.

People who live in areas of the U.S. with more primary care physicians per capita have a longer life span.



HEALTH WATCHDOG

A PCP can monitor your health concerns and notice any unusual changes, unlike a doctor you only see once.



TRUSTED REFERRALS

Your primary care physician can refer you to a skilled specialist that he or she trusts, should the need arise.



PREVENTION OF FUTURE ILLNESS

PCPs often offer advice at routine check-ups that can ward off future illness. Topics covered may include weight management, disease prevention and tobacco use.



LOWER TOTAL COSTS

A PCP can often provide more affordable care and treatment than a specialist for common and chronic illnesses. Areas with more PCPs have lower total health services costs.

The Tools of the Trade



A PCP uses a variety of tools to record and track your health history over time as well as identify and diagnose current health issues.



A Stethoscope

Monitors overall heart health and has been used in the medical profession for 200+ years.

Can help identify:

- Irregular heartbeats** (e.g. atrial fibrillation)
- Heart murmurs**
- Signs of heart failure**



A Plexor/ Reflex Hammer

Tests your reflexes, or the communication between your spinal cord/brain and nerves, tendons and muscles.

Can help identify:

- Presence & strength of reflexes**
- Signs of spinal cord injury**
- Signs of neuromuscular disease**



A Otoscope/ Auriscope

Uses light and magnification to examine the inner ear and the tympanic membrane, also known as the eardrum.

Can help identify:

- Infections** (often found in infants & children)
- Perforations of the ear drum**
- Potential sources of hearing issues**

The length of a routine annual physical will vary but you'll likely have **15-45 minutes with your PCP.**

Tips to Make the Most of Your Visit

By preparing in advance, you can maximize the time with your doctor.

1 List your symptoms

Prepare a list of pains, symptoms and changes in your health. Prioritize your most pressing symptoms first.



2 Prepare your questions

Write down your questions ahead of time.



3 List your medications

Be sure to include prescriptions, vitamins and supplements.



4 Know your family history

Be prepared to answer the basics about family health history and concerns.



5 Dress the part

Wear clothing that can be easily changed since you'll likely have to wear a gown.



6 Take notes

Write down your doctor's lifestyle recommendations.



7 Connect online

Log onto **NorthShoreConnect** after your visit to check test results and schedule any necessary follow-up visits.



Sources

- northshore.org
- aafp.org
- health.clevelandclinic.org
- healthline.com
- medical-dictionary.com

- menshealth.com
- ncbi.nlm.nih.gov
- onemedical.com
- patient.info