



Keeping My Body Healthy



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As I get older, I may notice changes in my health earlier than other people. Looking after my health now can help me stay well for a long time. I try to stay active, eat healthy food, and visit my doctor regularly.

Seeing your GP every year can help you stay healthy. I can also see my GP any time I notice new changes in how I feel.

Vision

I may be more likely to get eye problems.

I can tell my doctor if I have problems seeing.



What I can do:

- I can have regular eye tests.
 - I can tell an optometrist if I notice changes in my vision.
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Hearing

I can get problems with my ears and hearing.

What I can do:

- I can have my hearing checked every 3 years.
 - I can stay away from loud noise and use hearing protection if needed.
 - I can ask my GP about free hearing tests.
 - I can see my GP if I am worried about my hearing or behaviour changes.
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Keeping a Healthy Brain

It is important to keep our brain healthy as we get older. Adults with Down syndrome have a higher chance of developing dementia, which might start from a younger age (40 years and onwards).

For more information about dementia, I can read this fact sheet:

 www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/dementia-plain-english

Easy Read version:

 www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource/dementia-easy-read



What I can do:

- I can get a healthy brain check when I turn 30.
 - When I turn 40, I can get a healthy brain check with my GP every 2 years.
 - When I turn 50, I can have a check every year.
 - These checks help me look after my brain, and help my GP to make sure things are okay.
 - I can exercise, eat good food, get sleep, and spend time with my friends and family.
 - If I am worried about my memory and brain health, I see my GP.
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Dental Health

It is important to look after your teeth.



What I can do:

- I can brush my teeth twice a day and use dental floss.
 - I can visit the dentist every year.
 - I can tell my dentist if I take medicines that cause dry mouth.
 - If I am worried about my teeth, I can see my dentist.
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Heart Health

My heart pumps blood and oxygen to the body. I can look after my heart by staying healthy.



What I can do:

- I can eat health foods to feed my heart
- I can exercise every day
- I can have a blood sugar (diabetes check) every 3 years from age 30
- I can have my blood pressure checked by my doctor.
- I can have my cholesterol checked from age 40.

Cervical Screening (Pap Smear Test)

Women need regular cervical screening.

This test checks for changes that could turn into cancer.

Cervical cancer can often be prevented with regular screening.

Regular screening helps find changes early, before they become serious.



What I can do:

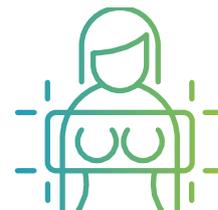
- From age 25, I can have a Cervical Screening Test every 5 years (or as my GP recommends).
- I can talk to my GP or nurse about what happens in the test so I know what to expect.
- I can ask for extra time, support, or a support person if I need one.
- If I feel worried, I can tell my GP.
- If I have unusual bleeding, pain, or discharge, I need to see my GP.

Breast Checks and Mammograms

As I get older, I have a higher chance of breast cancer.

A mammogram is an X-ray of the breasts.

It can find cancer early so that treatment can start early and work better.



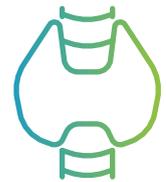
What I can do:

- From age 50, I can have a free mammogram every 2 years (or as my GP recommends).
- I can talk to my GP about when I should start screening.
- I can learn how my breasts usually look and feel.
- If I notice lumps, skin changes, pain, or discharge, I need to see my GP.
- I can ask for extra time, clear explanations, or bring a support person to my appointment.



Thyroid and Metabolism

The thyroid is part of my body that makes hormones. Hormones are in my blood stream. If I have too much or not enough, I can get sick.



What I can do:

- I can see my GP for a blood test every year.
- My GP may have me take medicines to manage the level of the hormones my thyroid makes.

Bones and Joints

I might have problems with my bones like arthritis or neck problems.

Everyone can get weaker bones as they get older.

This is called osteoporosis.



What I can do:

- I can stay active with gentle exercise like swimming or walking.
- I can eat foods full of calcium like eggs, milk, cheese.
- I can tell my GP if I get new pain, weakness, or problems moving.
- If I have neck pain, this can be serious and I need to tell my doctor.

Vaccinations

Vaccinations help you to stay healthy and not get sick. Vaccinations help against illnesses like flu, or COVID-19, or if you are travelling.



What I can do:

- I can see my GP and they will talk to me about vaccines.

Training Resources for Health Professionals

Dementia and People with Down Syndrome Webinar –
Down Syndrome Queensland

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=1S1-Tf3b1aQ

Down Syndrome Australia Resource Hub

 www.downsyndrome.org.au/blog/resource-category/health

GLOBAL Medical Care Guidelines for Adults with Down Syndrome –
Global Down Syndrome Foundation

 www.globaldownsyndrome.org/medical-care-guidelines-for-adults

Disclaimer

This information is general. It is not medical or legal advice. Talk to your GP or health professional about what is right for you. Down Syndrome Australia and nib foundation are not responsible for decisions made using this information.

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