



WOF FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Everyone wants to have good health and quality of life as the years go by. But so often, it is usually just an acute illness that will take you to the doctor. I would like to suggest that we spend more time and money looking after our cars than our bodies! How long do you keep your car before you replace it?

Its time you thought about and spend some time and money maintaining your body, after all, unlike your car, it has to last you a lifetime!

Health is the interplay of the genetic legacy you have inherited as it interacts with your environment. You can't do anything about your genes, but you can certainly influence your health by providing a wonderful environment that helps your genes behave well. This healthy environment (called Lifestyle Medicine) involves things like adequate sleep, good diet, adequate exercise, stress management and work life balance.

Now that you have your healthy lifestyle sorted, you want to pick up any health problems early to prevent disability or even death and participate in health screening. You take your car for a 6 monthly warrant of fitness. And as your health is more important, I suggest you take your body along to your family doctor regularly for your own warrant of fitness.

Everyone should have the following screening...

Wellness health check up – every 1-2 years from the age of 40 or so, meet with your doctor and discuss your health in general, in addition to the usual screening you will be doing. Even if you think there is nothing wrong with you, visit your family doctor and have a chat because you may be surprised what may come up. Discuss your diet and lifestyle. How is life, your job and your home life? Is there any stress and where is it coming from? How are you functioning, sleeping, feeling? How's your energy, motivation and happiness levels?

Beware, to do this big overall health discussion, you will need 45 minutes or longer and you will have to pay more. (But how much do you pay to service your car?) If your GP doesn't cater for this and you can't persuade him/ her to, find one that does – its in your best interests.

GP's know about diet and lifestyle interventions as well as advising you about all your health concerns and your family doctor is always your best and first advisor. GP's are involved in a system of short consultations where you usually only have time to ask about one problem. With your insistence, encouragement, and willingness to pay, your GP is likely to accommodate you for a longer visit so you can get a lot more done.

Bowel Cancer Screening. New Zealand started a pilot in 2011 to help it design a good system for us. In the meantime, discuss with your GP what you should be doing and when you should start. It will often involve a Faecal Occult Blood test that may pick up minute traces of blood in the bowel motions. Some people need colonoscopy (looking inside the bowel with a mirror lined tube), especially if there is a strong family history of bowel cancer. This screening can detect and cure bowel cancer early.

Glaucoma (increased eye pressure). If it runs in your family, start your screening at the age of 40 years with either an eye specialist or optician.

Condition – Specific check up. Examples of conditions include hypertension (high blood pressure), heart disease, lung disease, diabetes, past smoker (may need a periodic chest X Ray) and asthma. If you have an ongoing condition, it is a good idea to check in with either your doctor or practice nurse regularly. Many clinics have specific programmes and some of them are run by the nurse and could be free or very inexpensive in some cases.

NOTE- the following cancers run together in families – Ovarian, Breast, Bowel. It may be advisable for a person to undertake more screening than they thought necessary. For example, if there is a strong history of breast +/- ovarian cancer in the women of the family, it may mean that the males could be at increased risk of bowel cancer.

What I recommend for women...

- Smears – 3 yearly unless there have been any abnormalities when it would be yearly.
- Breast examination by your doctor – yearly from age 40 years or earlier if there is a family history of breast cancer. This is necessary because mammograms and ultrasound scans do not pick up all suspicious breast lumps.
- Mammograms – 1-2 yearly after the age of 40 unless there is a strong family history of breast cancer
- Breast ultrasound – instead of, or in addition to mammograms.
- Pelvic Ultrasound 1-2 yearly may be useful in cases where there have been fertility treatments in the past, or a strong family history of ovarian cancer.

Here is the list for men...

Prostate cancer screening is controversial because experts don't agree about two things..

1. Whether a regular rectal examination should be performed
2. Whether a regular blood test should be done.

Its best to discuss your particular situation with your family doctor.

You are far more important than your car and need to spend more money and time on yourself! Design your health screening with your doctor who can place you on the practices computer recall system. Then it will be your responsibility to come when called.