

# YEARLY HEALTH SCREENINGS

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## THE PREVENTIVE HEALTH SCREENINGS YOU NEED

Every day, we make decisions that impact our health. But how do you know if you're making the right decisions? One of the best ways to keep tabs on your health, as well as address issues before they can have a wide-reaching impact, is with yearly screening.

In this report, I want to share the lab tests I routinely order for my patients. Together, they work like steppingstones, giving me a good insight into my patients' health to ensure we're steering their health in the right direction.

**Very Important Note:** Depending on the type of doctor you see and your insurance coverage, some of these lab tests may not be available or may not be covered by insurance. Make sure you check in with your insurance company about deductibles and coverage before requesting any of these tests. Plus, remember that your doctor may have a different screening approach.





## COMPLETE BLOOD COUNT (CBC)

As the name suggests, this test measures how much of the following components are in your blood: red and white blood cells, hemoglobin (which carries oxygen), hematocrit, and platelets. This one test will give me a patient's overall health status and let me screen for a wide number of health conditions, including anemia and immune disorders.

Typically, your doctor will order a CBC at your annual checkup and may also be ordered if you are experiencing a health issue that your doctor is trying to diagnose—such as fatigue, weakness, or bruising.

## C-REACTIVE PROTEIN (CRP) & ERYTHROCYTE SEDIMENTATION RATE (ERS)

CRP, which is a protein made by your liver, is a helpful marker of inflammation. An elevated level can signal that you might be fighting an infection, have cardiovascular inflammation or joint inflammation, and more. ESR is another general inflammatory marker that can be useful to run in conjunction with CRP depending on the condition.

I recommend testing for CRP and ESR as part of a patient's annual checkup. If levels are elevated, further testing and questioning will be needed to identify the source of the inflammation.

*"I want you to have the knowledge to be in the driver's seat of your health. I don't want you to feel like you must take a medication and that's your only solution. Naturopaths are trained to give our patients the tools needed to take control of their health. Arming them with the advice and guidance needed to make the dietary and lifestyle changes necessary help you on your journey to wellness."*



*"If you look at conventional medicine and its approach to treating chronic disease—we're putting patients on medications for life and not really addressing why they have these symptoms in the first place. Understanding the reason 'why' is where an integrative approach to practicing medicine really shines. It's the blending of natural medicine with conventional medicine that is, in my opinion, how we bring about true healing. Because the fact of the matter is, we need both systems, right?"*

## COMPREHENSIVE METABOLIC PANEL (CMP)

This panel measures many substances in your blood that support your body's metabolism—hence the name “metabolic panel.” It gives your doctor a snapshot of many vital processes in your body including electrolytes and blood sugar status, and organ function.

Specifically, the CMP measures:

- Liver function: alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), alkaline phosphatase (ALP), and bilirubin
- Kidney function: blood urea nitrogen (BUN), creatinine, and a calculated glomerular filtration rate (GFR)
- Electrolytes: sodium, potassium, chloride, and carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)
- Protein: total protein, albumin, calculated globulin, and calculated albumin/globulin ratio
- Total Calcium
- Glucose (blood sugar)

It's important to note that results of the CMP can vary by day, or even the time of day—so one slight variance in results needs to be taken with a grain of salt. Many factors can affect CMP results, including diet, your last meal, hydration status, weight, fasting, supplements, and prescription and over-the-counter medications. Also, lab error—such as faulty processing or transportation of blood samples—is possible. Therefore, I don't look at CMP results in isolation. Instead, I pair it with asking patients questions about their lifestyle habits which can influence results.





## THYROID PANEL

Your thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland that sits at the front of your neck. It releases hormones that regulate your body's metabolic rate and are important for the proper functioning of your heart, muscles, brain, and more.

The thyroid gland receives a chemical message called thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) from a part of your brain called the pituitary gland, which tells the thyroid how much of the thyroid hormones T3 (triiodothyronine) and T4 (thyroxine) to secrete.

Low thyroid or hypothyroidism occurs when your thyroid gland doesn't produce enough T3 or T4 and can cause weight gain, constipation, hair thinning or loss, poor concentration, elevated lipids, and more.

A comprehensive thyroid panel measures TSH, free T4, and free T3—as well as the thyroid antibodies Anti-TG and Anti-TPO. Or, if you are exhibiting hyperthyroid symptoms your doctor may run antibodies associated with hyperthyroidism. All of these tests together give your doctor a good snapshot of your thyroid function so thyroid issues can be treated.

*"Iodine is the main building block for the thyroid hormone T4. In the body, the liver, kidneys, and skeletal muscles are responsible for converting T4 into its active form of T3. Since T3 is the active thyroid hormone, it is important that the body has enough co-factors like selenium, zinc, and copper to help with this conversion."*





*"One difference you will find with a naturopathic doctor is that he or she practices individualized medicine, which means the diagnosis and treatment plans are unique and specialized for each patient. And running a comprehensive panel of tests is an important first investigative step to developing that treatment plan."*

## HEMOGLOBIN A1C (HgA1C)

Type II diabetes is the most common type of diabetes in adults, yet many people have high blood sugar and don't know it. Left unchecked, high blood sugar can affect many systems of your health, including your heart, eyes, and more.

The HgA1C test shows how much glucose has been circulating in your bloodstream over the last 2-3 months. It does that by measuring the amount of glycated hemoglobin, which is the percentage of red blood cells (hemoglobin) that are attached to glucose (sugar). An elevated A1C level can suggest prediabetes or diabetes and is a very helpful marker for monitoring lifestyle (such as diet and exercise), supplements, and medication changes.

## INSULIN (FASTING)

Insulin is the hormone produced in the pancreas that carries glucose (sugar) to your cells where it's used for energy. Insulin resistance is a condition where cells don't respond to insulin anymore, and insulin levels can rise. Elevated insulin levels can also point to other health issues that your doctor can monitor.

## SERUM FERRITIN (IRON)

Iron is necessary throughout life for stimulating the production of hemoglobin, the red blood cell pigment that carries oxygen to your cells. Low iron can be a sign that you're anemic and high iron levels can signal hemochromatosis, which is a genetic condition where your body absorbs too much iron from the foods you eat.

Ferritin is the storage form of iron in the body. Therefore, to check your iron status, your doctor may order an iron and a serum ferritin test. If your levels are too high or too low, your doctor will need to explore further to address the underlying cause.



## HORMONE PANEL

Hormones are chemical messengers produced by your endocrine system that help to regulate a lot of different functions in the body—from your metabolism to growth, reproduction, sleep, and mood. Ensuring that your hormones are healthy and balanced is extremely important and there are different panels for men and women.

**Men's Hormone Panel:** testosterone, estradiol, cortisol, DHEA, pregnenolone, LH, and PSA (a marker of prostate health)

**Women's Hormone Panel:** estradiol, progesterone, testosterone, cortisol, FSH, DHEA, pregnenolone, and prolactin

## LIPID PANEL (FASTING)

Cholesterol is a waxy substance called a “sterol” that’s produced by the liver. Your body needs cholesterol to manufacture vitamin D, sex hormones (such as progesterone, testosterone, and estrogen), stress hormones, and the bile salts needed for digesting and absorbing fats. Plus, it’s a major building block of your cells.

To make sure you have healthy cholesterol levels, your doctor should run a lipid panel that tests for total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL), high-density lipoprotein (HDL), triglycerides, and lipoprotein(a).

*"Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a), is a dangerous, small, dense, highly inflammatory cholesterol particle that contributes to the formation of clots. Because it tends to be genetic, people with a family history of heart disease must get this level checked."*



## VITAMIN D

Vitamin D is vital to good health, helping with everything from preventing osteoporosis, to modulating your immune system, to fighting colds and flu. Healthy vitamin D levels are also important for healthy brain function, heart health, and more.

Many people assume they're getting enough vitamin D through their diet or sunshine exposure, yet vitamin D deficiency is a widespread problem. Having your doctor measure your vitamin D levels is very important to make sure your levels are within the optimal range.

## OTHER TESTS

Depending upon a patient's health needs, I may also run a urinalysis (UA) with culture, and test for certain vitamins and minerals, inflammatory markers, and other compounds associated with particular conditions. As part of a full cardio workup, I may also test for fibrinogen, homocysteine, LpPLA2, and myeloperoxidase.

*"Bringing the healing power of nature and sunshine into our daily lives can have a profound impact on your health. Even a simple 20-minute walk each day can help connect you with the calming effect of nature, and also help you regain a sense of balance."*