



healtheo360 Discussion Guide: Women's Health

While men and women have many similar health concerns, each sex comes with its own list of unique concerns that require attention. Most concerns unique to women stem from the female reproductive organs, but women are also more susceptible to certain conditions than men outside of reproductive health. For example, most women require less calories than men due to higher body fat, less muscle, and smaller size. Additionally, women need to focus more on getting plenty of calcium, folic acid, and iron than men due to a higher risk of osteoarthritis and other conditions. This document will help give you ideas for talking points when speaking with your doctor about your health. Because this is a women's health guide, this document will focus primarily on considerations specific to women and leave out most issues shared between men and women.

As alluded to in the previous paragraph, women have different nutritional needs than men. Women are more likely to suffer from certain dietary problems related to nutrition than men, such as celiac disease, lactose intolerance, and mineral deficiencies. Additionally, women tend to process certain types of foods differently than men, burning fewer calories at rest and during exercise. Finally, nutritional needs change throughout your life, as does your body. During puberty, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and menopause, as well as between each of these stages, your nutritional needs will be different. Keeping up with the changes in your nutritional needs (whether because of a dietary concern or a reproductive one) is essential to maintaining your health. Talk with your doctor about how to stay on top of your changing needs, when your needs are likely to change, and what types of vitamins and minerals you may be missing. Ask whether you are showing signs of dietary health problems, and what you can do to avoid these issues.

As was mentioned previously, women are often at higher risk than men for several diseases and disorders. As most people know, many women are at risk for breast cancer, cervical cancer, ovarian cancer, and uterine cancer. Many people don't know, however, that women are also more strongly affected by lupus,

osteoarthritis, most STDs, stress, and stroke. The point here is that there are plenty of diseases, many of which are not common knowledge, that women need to be prepared for more than men. To learn about what you can do to reduce your risk for such diseases talk to your doctor about what conditions you are at risk for, and what you can do to reduce this risk. Ask if there are any specific tests you should get to monitor these conditions, and if there are any lifestyle changes you should adopt to protect yourself.

In addition to physical health, mental health is a cornerstone of overall well-being. According to the United States Office on Women's Health, about 1 in 5 American women experience some form of mental health condition each year. Women have a higher rate of many mental health disorders than men, including depression and bipolar disorder, and are often affected by these disorders differently. It is important to get treated for mental health disorders as early as possible to avoid any potential negative outcomes such as weight gain/loss, relationship strain, self-harm, job loss, and even suicide. Talk with your doctor about warning signs for mental disorders, as well as how to prevent the onset of a mental health condition. Ask how maintaining mental health can lead to better physical health in the future. Finally, if you suspect that you or a loved one is suffering from a mental health condition, ask your doctor about the diagnosis and treatment process for mental disorders.

Perhaps the most obvious, as well as substantial, unique health concern for women is reproductive health. Reproductive organs are the most tangible difference between men and women, and each sex must therefore care for these organs differently. As is self-apparent, all diseases of the female reproductive organs are uniquely women's health concerns, as well as issues with the menstrual cycle, pregnancy, breastfeeding, and menopause. If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant be sure to talk with your doctor about how to manage your pregnancy, as well as about potential complications along the way and how these can be resolved. All women, especially those older than 40, should talk with their doctor about avoiding diseases of the female organs, and about preparing for changes that come about later in life. Ask about monitoring yourself, what's normal and what isn't, and what types of support options are available for any conditions you may develop.

Talking about these topics with your doctor will help you to better understand important issues in women's health. More importantly, your doctor will be able to cater each answer to fit your unique, personal case. To find more general information about women's health, visit <https://www.womenshealth.gov/> or check out our women's health 101 page at <https://www2.healtho360.com/womens-health-101>.