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"We believe medicine is about people so we treat the patient and then the disease."

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9 ISSUES THAT IMPACT

Women's Health



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Siena Women's Health

St. Catherine of Siena Medical Center
At the heart of health

Today, women lead busy lives with little "me" time and even less time to heed the signs of potential illness. Faced with a daily barrage of healthy living advice, it is sometimes tough to prioritize preventive tips for medical conditions that specifically target females. The following health briefs are offered to help educate women about the signs and symptoms of illness and the importance of regular screening tests.

01 Lupus

This autoimmune disease typically surfaces in women of childbearing ages (early 20s to mid 30s) and can attack multiple organs, including the heart, lungs, kidneys—even your skin. There are no screening tests for Lupus, so seek medical attention immediately if you experience hair loss, rash, fatigue, joint pain or low-grade fever. Blood and urine tests are used to confirm the condition.



04 Menopause

The timeframe, symptoms and complaints may differ among women, but physicians say a female has officially reached menopause when she has not had a period for a full year—typically around age 51. Prior to this, women experience perimenopause, the stage in which decreasing estrogen levels cause irregular bleeding patterns, hot flashes, difficulty sleeping, thinning hair and vaginal dryness. To manage symptoms, dress in layers, avoid triggers like caffeine, spicy foods, alcohol and stress.

06 Varicose Veins

Varicose veins are common but can carry real health risks. If blood flow through the valves in the veins backs up and can't reach the heart (venous insufficiency) it can induce clotting, leg swelling, discoloration and ultimately, a fragile breakdown of veins. Family history, pregnancy and standing for long periods of time increases your risk. Early detection is key. If spider/varicose veins surface see a vascular surgeon for ultrasound testing. Compression stockings can help improve blood flow.



02 Breast Health

One in eight women have a lifetime risk of developing breast cancer. Nonetheless, it is now the most curable, treatable cancer there is. Typically silent, breast cancer does not always manifest as lumps or pain. It's detected on imaging studies. Follow preventive guidelines: perform a self - breast exam one week after menstruation, see your OB/GYN for an annual physical, schedule annual mammograms beginning around age 40 (sooner if there's a family history).



03 Digestive Health

Eat smarter to prevent disease. Boost your fiber intake to 30 grams daily to reduce your risk of conditions like colon cancer, diverticulosis and hemorrhoids. Include fruits, veggies and whole grains in meals and avoid processed meats. Instead, choose whole grain pastas, brown rice, lentils or quinoa. Steer clear of white bread, white rice and pasta. Excessive drinking and smoking also increase your risk for colon cancer. Get screened by age 50 (age 40 if there's a family history or you are African American).



05 Urinary Incontinence/Overactive Bladder

It's common, but many are embarrassed to discuss it. However it can impact quality of life. Urinary incontinence affects women of childbearing age as well as pre/post-menopausal women. The biggest culprit is too much caffeine. Pregnancy, hormonal changes, aging, spicy foods and alcohol are also contributing factors. Incontinence can be remedied with medication, Botox injections into the bladder or sacral nerve electrical stimulation. Kegel exercises and reduced fluid intake may be helpful as well.



08 Stroke

A stroke, or brain attack can kill. High blood pressure that is uncontrolled puts you at the greatest risk. Other risk factors include the presence of diabetes, atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), smoking, which can cause clots, high cholesterol and a family history of aneurysms. If you have multiple risk factors, see your doctor every three to six months. Otherwise, schedule an annual physical. For information on stroke recovery, go to strokeassociation.org.



07 Fragility Fractures

In the post-menopausal stage of life bones weaken and women become prone to fragility fractures. These are low energy injuries to the wrist, hip and spine occurring during normal activity that typically should not cause a fracture. Risk factors include a family history of falls, low BMI (body mass index) smoking, and drinking excessively. A healthy diet and weight-bearing exercises may help increase bone strength.

09 Obesity, Diabetes and Weight Loss

Obesity is a life threatening issue that can induce Metabolic Syndrome—a group of risk factors including coronary heart disease, renal failure, high blood pressure and diabetes. Weight loss diets alone typically fail those who are obese (more than 100 pounds overweight with a BMI greater than 30). However, there is a new, non-surgical procedure called IntraGastric Balloon performed without the need for anesthesia or incisions.

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