

LAST week, I wrote about how one should go for a medical check-up especially if there's a history of diseases like diabetes, heart diseases, cancer and so on, in the family. If your loved one has suffered any of these, it's a good idea to visit your doctor and find out what your baselines are.



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A simple medical check-up can reveal certain things about your health that may require you to go to the next step. Get a complete blood test done to find out what your blood glucose levels as well as all other organ functions are like. By doing this, you're giving yourself a chance to nip the problem in the bud and therefore have higher chances of cure and a better, healthier life.

The good thing about getting a medical check-up is that you may actually discover that you're in pretty good shape; that everything's working as they should. Then you'll have nothing to worry about.

Sometimes, however, you may find that your levels aren't at their optimum readings. Don't despair. A bit of tweaking to your lifestyle and diet may just be the thing you need for better health.

In some instances, you may need some medications to control certain conditions, which may or may not be a long-term solution. Don't let your fear that something may not be right

stand in the way of getting a proper check-up and solution.

IMPORTANCE OF CHECK-UPS

Many diseases have no signs or symptoms. People usually don't know that they have diabetes, high cholesterol levels or even cancer. They may feel a bit under the weather, but if they don't check, they'll never know. By then it may be harder to treat or even too late.

For starters, the doctor would always check your blood pressure. It's good to

Why medical check-ups matter

know what your usual blood pressure is like. If it's high, discuss with the doctor what you can do to manage it.

If you're suffering from hypertension — the risk tends to increase with age — you'd need to keep that under control. High blood pressure can lead to a condition called aneurysm, which is a dangerous ballooning of the artery. You'd also be at risk of heart diseases, stroke and kidney failure.

Your blood test would show your cholesterol levels — HDL, LDL and triglycerides.

HDL (high density lipoprotein) is called the "good" cholesterol because it helps carry the LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol; hence keeping your arteries open so your blood can flow more freely.

If your LDL cholesterol (also known as "bad" cholesterol) is high, it causes plaque to build up in the walls of the arteries. Over time, it can harden and narrow your artery and lead to heart attack, or small pieces could dislodge and cause a stroke. All these can happen without any symptoms. That's why it's important to check the levels before they get out of hand.

READING THE READINGS

Triglycerides are a type of fat in your blood. High levels of this are associated with several factors that include having diabetes with elevated blood sugar levels. Diabetes is a silent and insidious disease that sneaks up on you.



Why should diabetes be taken seriously? It's a disease that damages blood vessels and nerve ends, which means that it can affect your all your vital organs from your eyes, heart, kidneys, and causes impotence. Foot care is also very important because undetected wounds can fester into something serious:

Diabetes, however, can be detected and

controlled from the early stages through lifestyle and diet changes along with exercise, weight loss and medications. To test for diabetes, you'd need to fast overnight for a blood test that often includes the A1c test.

If you have diabetes, also check your eyes for glaucoma and cataract. Glaucoma is an eye disease that could lead to irreversible vision loss and even blindness, if not detected and treated early enough. The ophthalmologist would test for abnormally high pressure within the eye and treat the condition before there's any damage to the optic nerve.

WHEN'S THE BEST TIME TO GO FOR YOUR FIRST MEDICAL EXAMINATION?

The American Medical Association (AMA) and other similar groups say most people below the age of 40 who are generally free from the disease with no family medical history. For some tests, it's a good idea to do it on your 50th birthday.

Women with no family history of breast cancer should do their mammogram when they turn 40; earlier if there are. A colonoscopy is a common test for both men and women that should be done at least once in their life when they turn 50.

The AMA has moved away from the yearly exam and now suggests that medical check-ups be performed every five years, unless otherwise indicated. While at the doctor's, make sure your immunisation is up to date — and that includes flu shots.