

7 Health Questions Every Woman Should Be Able to Answer Before Age 30

BY LINDSAY TIGAR MAY 9, 2017 7:30 AM



What are you doing in the hour before your annual physical? Or your teeth cleaning? Or your ob-gyn appointment? Probably not *prepping*, right? Doctor's appointments may not be tests (you don't need to study!), but especially as you close in on 30, taking stock of your own health before every appointment becomes essential. Why? Part of becoming a responsible person means that you can handle any question about your medical history (and current state) all by yourself.

"At age 30 most people still feel vibrant and healthy but our bodies are starting the aging process," says Miami physician Adonis Maiquez, M.D. "You need to understand your health so you are able to plan for your future and

take control of your genetic disposition. You need to be aware of where you are in the health spectrum and understand what changes you need to make to ensure a long, productive, happy life.”

We asked top docs to tell *Glamour* which questions you should be able to answer anytime, any place, and during any appointment:

How are you feeling?

This isn't a platitude. When your doctor asks this, do you find yourself pausing? Or worse, saying what you think they want to hear instead of what's really going on? Dr. Maiquez says that when a doctor inquires about how you're feeling, what they really want to know is about your energy level.

“At any age you should wake up in the morning with energy and maintain that energy level throughout the day until you start to wind down for bed,” he notes. “You should know if you have a hard time getting out of bed, if you have an afternoon crash, if you have difficulty falling asleep.”

Fatigue can serve as a potential clue to more serious health conditions, like fibromyalgia, depression, heart disease, and diabetes. While we all have sleepless nights, if you're constantly exhausted, that's something you should be able to dictate to your doctor so you can get the help you need to feel strong again.

How regular is your menstrual cycle?

If you can't explain what your flow is like, work to remedy that. While the consistency of your period can be an important factor to consider if you're starting to think about having a family, it can serve as an indicator of your overall health too.

“Getting a monthly period is often referred to as the added ‘vital sign’ for a woman. That lets us know that our brain hormones are connecting to your ovaries, we have eggs and we have a uterus that is shedding a lining every month,” explains Sheeva Talebian, M.D., an ob-gyn and fertility specialist at CCRm New York. “The absence of a regular period or skipped periods could be a signal that something may not be functioning properly and you should speak to a health care provider.”

Do you want to get pregnant in the next year?

Thinking about the next 12 months in terms of a positive test may seem daunting, but with the average age of first-time parents continuing to rise in the United States, your thirties are likely the time when you stop talking about preventing pregnancy and shift to getting pregnant. That's why Maria I. Rodriquez, M.D., an assistant professor in the department of obstetrics and gynecology at Oregon Health & Science University, says being able to communicate your hopes for family planning is essential.

“If you don't want to be pregnant, there are lots of excellent methods of contraception your doctor can offer,” she says. “If you do want to become pregnant, it is important for your doctor to be aware of this, to help with preconceptual planning—like vaccines and folic acid—as well as to keep in mind when managing any other medical conditions you may have.”

Do you have any food sensitivities?

Hopefully, by the time you reach your thirties, you've figured out that ramen noodles aren't all you need to survive. But it's also important to know how your body reacts to different foods. This way, if you ever struggle with weight or digestive issues, your doctor has a background to consider. Registered dietitian Brooke Alpert says, “Everyone by the time they are 30 should know if gluten really makes you feel poorly or if you just don't eat it because that's what other people do. Does dairy affect you? Chocolate? Booze? Know your body and what foods

make you feel good or not good, so you know what to feed yourself regularly and a doctor can help you navigate issues when they arise.”

What’s your family’s medical history?

From certain types of cancers to other common ailments, when your doctor asks about your family history, dermatologist **Kristina Goldenberg, M.D.**, explains that they’re trying to know what to test you for and when. In her practice melanoma is a daunting diagnosis but, if caught early, can be treated effectively. “If you have a personal or family history of melanoma, you are at a higher risk than the general population for the development of another melanoma. It’s important to communicate this to your dermatologist because you may require more frequent skin checks and a more thorough understanding of what to be on the lookout for in new or changing moles,” she says.

The same goes with any cancer, heart, digestive, thyroid, or lung illness that’s impacted those in your immediate family, especially your parents. Armed with information, your doctor will know exactly when and how to keep you healthy.

Do you feel depressed?

There’s a difference between a bad day and a bad few months. If you’ve started to feel helpless, hopeless, and like nothing ever goes in the direction you wish it would, it might be time to seek therapy. Being able to communicate your mental state helps you get the help you need, says psychiatrist Don Mordecai, M.D. “Depression is treatable, and you can feel better. If you have symptoms such as low mood or energy, loss of interest and trouble concentrating frequently or for more than two weeks, it could be depression. Check in with your primary care provider or gynecologist to help you figure out what’s going on.”

What do you use every single day?

This refers to all the daily medications and vitamins you take, as well as the products you use on your face and body. But when your doctor asks you about creams or prescriptions, they want to understand how those chemicals are working in your body and whether they’re still a fit with your evolving hormones.

As Dr. Goldenberg says, “There are many skin conditions that are caused by inappropriate use of medicated creams. For instance, a high-potency steroid cream used on the face for an extended period of time can cause acne or a condition known as steroid rosacea. Communicating this information to your dermatologist will allow him/her to treat you accordingly.”

Very important note: The same goes for birth control pills. What you were prescribed as a teenager might not be what your body needs when you’re 33. Yana Markidan, M.D., an ob-gyn attending at Princeton notes, “Many women have already been on birth control for a number of years, but quite a few do not remember why they were initially placed on it in their teens or early twenties. Some were prescribed the medicine to control irregular menstrual cycles due to polycystic ovarian syndrome, which would need to be addressed if they were to come off the Pill.”