

## Health Checks for 50 Plus

If you are 50 or over, regular preventive health checks with your GP become even more important. It's good to continue your current regular checks and begin to introduce additional checks including eyes, blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels, Pap tests, dental checks, skin cancer checks and healthy weight assessments.

## Nothing's wrong, why should I get checked?

Regular health examinations and tests can help prevent health issues before they start to cause problems and can improve your chances for treatment and effective cures. By seeking the appropriate health services, screenings, and treatments, you are taking steps that may help you live a longer and healthier life. Your age, health family history and lifestyle choices (i.e. what you eat, how active you are, whether you smoke) are all important factors.



## Hearing Checks

Hearing and vision problems can affect your quality of life. Hearing loss affects three in five people over the age of 60 in some form. Your doctor can treat minor conditions that cause temporary hearing loss, such as ear infections and they can also refer you to a hearing service for more permanent hearing problems. Audiologists can carry out a range of hearing tests to determine your degree of hearing loss, and investigate possible causes of your hearing problems.

If you hold a valid Pensioner Concession or DVA repatriation healthcare card you may be eligible for government-funded hearing services.

## Bone Density Scan

Your doctor may refer you for a bone density scan if required. The scan is usually recommended for anyone over 65 or with a BMI of less than 20 but some may have a scan at a younger age if there is an increased risk of developing osteoporosis due to previous fractures, family history, using certain medications or have certain medical conditions. It is advised that women over 45 and men over 50 should ask their doctor to assess their risk factors for osteoporosis.

## Vision Checks

It is important to get your eyes checked for age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma. According to official government figures, the incidence of blindness and low vision increases with age. If you haven't had your vision checked recently, it may be time to.

## Blood Tests

Heart disease is the most common cause of death in Australia. The more risk factors you have the greater the chance that you will develop heart disease. There are some risk factors that you cannot control such as age, family health history and ethnicity. But you can protect yourself from heart disease and type 2 diabetes by not smoking, controlling your blood pressure and cholesterol, exercising and eating well. Talk to your doctor about getting a blood test.

Lesbians and bisexual women have a higher rate of obesity, smoking, and stress. All of these are risk factors for heart disease. As such, lesbians and bisexual women should talk with their doctors about how to prevent heart disease.

## Hormone Checks

As we get older a variety of things can start affecting us including hormonal changes such as menopause in women and andropause in men and thyroid complications. As a woman it is recommended to get Pap smears every two years up to 70 years of age. If you are suffering from low energy, low mood, muscle aches and pains it might be linked to a hormone imbalance. If you are concerned, see your doctor. For trans men and trans women, hormone replacement has many benefits but requires ongoing consultation with your health professionals.

For a list of gay friendly GP's follow this link:  
[www.acon.org.au/gay-friendly-GP](http://www.acon.org.au/gay-friendly-GP)

## Sexual Health Checks

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) are infections that are transmitted during sex through body contact or the exchange of body fluids (i.e. blood, mucus or saliva). Sexual contact includes vaginal or anal intercourse or touching, fingering or sucking/ kissing/licking a penis, vagina or anus. If you manage your sexual health and play it safe such as using condoms, you can significantly reduce your risk of getting an STI, or passing it on to a sexual partner. The more partners you have the more often you should get tested. Most STIs can easily be tested for and treated. Not everyone with an STI will experience symptoms, so regular testing is important. If you or your partner have any sex with casual partners you should get tested for STIs regularly at least twice a year. For more information: men go to [endinghiv.org.au](http://endinghiv.org.au) and women to [iloveclaude.com](http://iloveclaude.com)

## Dental

With older age, there is a greater chance that your general health and medications will affect the health of your teeth, mouth and gums. Poor oral health causes gum disease, tooth loss and tooth decay. If your mouth is unhealthy, bacteria may build-up and spread infection to other parts of your body causing lung infections, heart disease or a stroke. By simply maintaining good oral hygiene and visiting a dentist regularly you can improve your overall health and well-being.

## Resources

ACON  
[www.acon.org.au](http://www.acon.org.au)

Ending HIV  
[endinghiv.org.au](http://endinghiv.org.au)

I Love Claude  
[iloveclaude.com](http://iloveclaude.com)

NSW Sexual Health Infolink  
[shil.nsw.gov.au](http://shil.nsw.gov.au)  
1800 451 624

Vision Australia  
[visionaustralia.org](http://visionaustralia.org)

The Gender Centre  
[gendercentre.org.au](http://gendercentre.org.au)  
02 9569 2366

Organisation Intersex Australia  
[oiaustralia.com](http://oiaustralia.com)

Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS) Support Group Australia  
[aissga.org.au](http://aissga.org.au)

National LGBTI Health Alliance  
[lgbthealth.org.au](http://lgbthealth.org.au)

QLife  
[qlife.org.au](http://qlife.org.au)

Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM)  
[ashm.org.au](http://ashm.org.au)

The LOVE Project is an ACON initiative aimed at creating better conversations and improved social engagement with older LGBTI community members. By understanding people's needs and preferences the LOVE project aims to facilitate greater social connectivity, improve social inclusion and provide appropriate health information for LGBTI elders.

[facebook.com/LivingOlderVisiblyEngaged](https://facebook.com/LivingOlderVisiblyEngaged) | [twitter.com/LOVEproject](https://twitter.com/LOVEproject) | [Loveproject.org.au](http://Loveproject.org.au)

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