

Written by Dr. Greg Marchand



A well-woman visit is a critical part of healthcare for women of all ages. Such an appointment is recommended once a year, and it encompasses screening and treatment appropriate to each patient's age and needs.

Women who have not started menstruating and are under age 18 are probably best seen by a pediatrician. It is important, however, to be sure that gynecologic care is available for young women because they may not be comfortable discussing their sexual health with their parents.

From the time a woman has her first period, to 30 years old, a well-woman visit focuses on birth control and screening for sexually transmitted diseases. Screening this population for gonorrhea and chlamydia is especially important because if left untreated these conditions may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which can lead to permanent infertility. Therefore, screening for STDs is critical for young women.

Pap smears start at age 21 to screen for cervical cancer, followed by annual screenings every three years. A pelvic and breast exam may or may not be included in a well-woman visit depending on symptoms and risk factors. During an annual appointment, a physician might discuss pregnancy and birth control including long-acting reversible contraceptive methods. Premenopausal women who are age 30 or older receive HPV testing with pap smears as this age group is at higher risk.

We generally begin mammograms at age 40 and recommend a screening annually. Breast education is important in this age group as women need to examine their breast tissue more frequently to pick-up any possible lesions.

A colonoscopy is recommended at age 50 if there are no other risk factors, with a repeated screen every five years. Bone health is critical in postmenopausal women and a bone density test may be needed. Menopausal symptoms should be discussed in this age group, including education on hormonal or non-hormonal treatments.

There is much value in scheduling an annual well-woman visit because patients of all ages gain insightful information which can lead to a happy and healthy life.

[Dr. Greg Marchand](#), a board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, recently became the first U.S. surgeon to earn a prestigious accreditation for his outstanding record of performing and promoting [minimally invasive procedures](#). The [Surgical Review Corporation](#), an internationally recognized medical accreditation company named Marchand as the first U.S. "Surgeon of Excellence in Minimally Invasive Surgery" (SOEMIS). To learn more on Marchand's work in raising awareness for the accessibility of minimally invasive surgery techniques for women, please visit [GregMarchandMD.com](#). Dr. Marchand's medical practice is based in Mesa but has patients from across the country.