



Women's Health in October

Prioritizing Women's Health This Fall

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month—a timely reminder for women to prioritize their health and wellbeing.

Between work, family, and daily responsibilities, it's easy to put your own needs last, but preventive care and self-care are essential for long-term health.

Screenings matter. The American Cancer Society recommends women ages 40 and older talk with their healthcare provider about annual mammograms. In addition, be sure to keep up with regular checkups such as Pap tests, blood pressure monitoring, cholesterol checks, and other preventive screenings that may be recommended based on your age and family history.

Take time for your whole self. Women's health isn't only about physical care—it also includes mental, emotional, and social wellbeing. Make space for stress management, regular movement, balanced nutrition, and adequate rest. Even small steps, like a daily walk, deep breathing break, or preparing a nourishing lunch, can make a big difference.

You are worth the investment. By making your health a priority, you not only protect yourself but also strengthen your ability to care for others—students, colleagues, family, and friends. This October, take one proactive step toward your wellbeing, whether it's scheduling a screening, moving your body, or carving out time for self-care.





Screening Guidelines & Why They've Changed

- The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) updated its breast cancer screening recommendations in 2024: **women of average risk should begin mammograms every two years starting at age 40, and continue through age 74.**
- For cervical cancer screening, women ages 30 to 65 can now choose among options including an HPV test every five years (with or without Pap), or a Pap test every three years. Self-collection (for HPV) may become more widely available, which could help increase access.
- The Healthy People 2030 goal: get as close as possible to 80.3% of women aged 50 to 74 screened for breast cancer. As of most recent data, about 79.8% have met this screening benchmark.



Practical Steps You Can Take

Schedule your preventive screenings: If you're 40 or older and haven't had a mammogram recently, talk with your healthcare provider to set one up. Don't wait. Also check whether you are up to date on Pap/HPV screening—especially if you're between ages 30–65.

Check for risk factors: Family history, breast density, lifestyle, and other factors can affect what's right for you. If you have concerns, asking for a risk assessment or discussing additional screening options (beyond standard mammogram) might be appropriate.

Sources: Health.gov; AP News

Support your mental health daily:

- Try small, regular breaks during your day—whether it's a walk, deep breathing, or a few minutes away from screens.
- Set boundaries where you can. Work tends to bleed into “off hours” (planning, grading, emails). Try to designate certain hours as protected for yourself.
- Make use of any available mental health resources: employee assistance programs, counseling benefits, support groups, etc.

Foster community & conversation: You're not alone. Sometimes sharing challenges with trusted colleagues—whether about health screenings, menopause, stress, or mental load—can reduce stigma and help people find support.