

## **Add Self-Checks to Your Health Routine**

by Shannon Lynch

February is National Self-Check Month, a reminder to perform regular health self-exams. When you become familiar with your body, it is easier to identify potential problems early on to prevent them from worsening.

Always consult your health care provider with any questions or concerns and don't forget to schedule regular wellness visits. In the meantime, there are several simple things you can check yourself to stay on top of your health.

**Tip the Scales:** Maintaining a healthy weight can help prevent many diseases. Plan to weigh yourself once a month, perhaps on the same day each month, the better to track weight gains or losses before they get out of hand and become problematic.

**Take A Look:** Eyes are said to be a mirror into the soul, but if yours are red and irritated or you have bags under your eyes when you look in the mirror, it might be a signal that you need more sleep or you have an allergy that can be easily treated.

**Bumps & Lumps:** Don't be bashful. Regularly check your body for lumps and bumps and if you find something out of the ordinary schedule an appointment with your doctor.

**Skin Signals:** The same goes for checking your skin. Look for any changes in texture, color, spots, or anything out of the ordinary.

**Longer Arms Please!** When the small print becomes impossible to read and it seems like you need longer arms to read even the regular size print, you know it's time to schedule an eye exam.

**Pulse Check:** Locate your pulse in your wrists, inside your elbow, or on the side of your neck. Relax in your favorite chair and count the beats for 30 seconds, then multiply by two. The normal resting heart rate for a healthy adult is between 60 and 100, although certain medications can affect your heart rate. Speak with your doctor if you have concerns.

**Balloon Power:** Try blowing up a few balloons. If it's harder than you expected, try to understand why; for instance, it could signal you are

carrying around too many extra pounds or have become too sedentary and aren't giving your heart and lungs a workout on a regular basis. Discuss this with your doctor.

**Pass the Mints:** Now that we're all wearing masks, it's easier to detect if your breath smells bad. If it happens more often than not, it could be a sign that your teeth or gums need attention, and you need to make a dental appointment.

**Say What?** Do you have to ask people to repeat themselves or find that you have to turn up the volume on the television or radio more than usual? It might be time to have your hearing checked.

Early detection of potential health problems through self-checks is no substitute for your annual health exam. You should also feel comfortable sharing any concerns with your health care provider at any time throughout the year. Working together, you and your doctor can detect problems early, and come up with a plan to keep you at your healthy best.

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