



The importance of the annual health check

It might seem like a bit of an inconvenience, but the annual health check is a great opportunity to check in with a medical professional every year.

Who is entitled to an annual health check?

You'll be invited for a free NHS Health Check every 5 years if you're between 40 and 74 years of age and do not already have a pre-existing condition.

If you've been diagnosed with a severe mental illness then you are eligible for a health check every year.

This can help identify any problems early. It's also really useful for monitoring ongoing conditions.

What does the annual health check include?

The annual health check-up for adults in England is designed to spot early signs of stroke, kidney disease, heart disease, type 2 diabetes or dementia. You might have it done at your GP's offices, but other health and wellness charities and organisations may also conduct them.

The person doing your check will usually collect the following information:

- Weight
- Blood pressure and pulse
- Alcohol consumption
- Smoking status
- Your GP may also do a blood test to check glucose and cholesterol, though many health and wellness charities and organisations will not be able to do the blood test.

Why is it important?

Research has shown that people with a severe mental illness typically have a lifespan 15 to 20 years shorter than the general population. This is largely due to preventable or treatable physical health problems. The annual health check is just one way the NHS is trying to solve that problem. The goal is to:

1) Catch problems early

Often, health conditions go unnoticed until severe symptoms present themselves. By doing the check every year you increase the chances of picking up a problem early. This can reduce the chance of long-term damage and improve the chances of successful treatment and recovery.

2) Improve your overall health

Annual health checks are not just about preventing something bad, they are also a great opportunity for you to check in with a health professional about your general health and wellbeing.

3) Manage existing conditions better

By doing your annual check your GP will get a fuller picture of how you're doing and that information can be very useful to managing ongoing conditions, as well as picking up on any new ones.

What do I do with the results?

Once you've had your annual health check, your healthcare professional will discuss your results with you. You'll be given advice to help you maintain or improve your health and any serious issues will be followed up by your GP.

How do I get a health check?

You can contact your GP to book an annual health check by econsult or by phone as usual.

Mind in Bexley are also offering Annual Health Checks at their Monthly Peer-led Forum.

The monthly peer-led forum is a safe place for clients with SMI and their carers to come together and chat about their challenges and share solutions. The group is led by a Mind staff member with lived experience and is held every second Wednesday of the month. A community link worker will also be available at monthly meetings to carry out Annual Health Checks.

You can register to attend the Monthly Peer-led forum through Mind in Bexley's Recovery College or visit www.mindinbexley.org.uk/smi for more information.