



**BLACK WOMEN'S
HEALTH IMPERATIVE**

YOUR WOMEN'S HEALTH CHECKLIST

Know Before You Go to Your Healthcare Provider

**The Questions to Ask.
The Care You Deserve.**

Black Women's Health Imperative



Your Health Deserves Your Voice

Too often, Black women are expected to push through pain, stress, exhaustion, and symptoms without slowing down long enough to ask, "What is my body trying to tell me?"

But your health is not something to minimize.

Your questions matter.

Your symptoms matter.

Your peace of mind matters.

This guide was created to help you walk into your healthcare visits prepared, informed, and ready to advocate for the care you deserve. Whether you are in your 20s, 40s, 70s, or somewhere in between, your provider should be a partner in your health, not the only person driving the conversation.

Use this checklist to help you:

- ✓ Know what to ask
- ✓ Understand what to track
- ✓ Speak up about changes in your body
- ✓ Prepare for annual visits and follow-ups
- ✓ Make sure your care reflects your life, your risks, and your goals

Prepared women ask better questions.

And better questions can lead to better care.



THE HEALTH CONVERSATIONS



1. Heart Health

Ask about:

- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Family history of heart disease
- Chest pain, shortness of breath, or unusual fatigue

Try saying:

Can we talk about my heart health and what my numbers mean?



2. Metabolic Health

Ask about:

- Blood sugar
- Weight changes
- Diabetes risk
- Thyroid concerns
- Energy levels

Try saying:

Should I be screened for diabetes or other metabolic issues based on my history?



3. Cancer Screenings

Ask about:

- Breast cancer screening
- Cervical cancer screening
- Colon cancer screening
- Family history and genetic risk
- Any new lumps, bleeding, or changes

Try saying:

Which cancer screenings do I need now, and when should I schedule them?



4. Mental Wellness

Ask about:

- Stress
- Sleep
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Burnout
- Grief
- Mood changes

Try saying:

I have been carrying a lot. Can we talk about my mental and emotional health?



5. Sexual and Reproductive Health

Ask about:

- Periods
- Hormones
- Contraception
- STI testing
- Fertility goals
- Pregnancy history
- Pelvic pain
- Vaginal health
- Libido or pain with sex

Try saying:

I want to talk openly about my reproductive and sexual health without judgment.



6. Bone, Joint, and Muscle Health

Ask about:

- Vitamin D
- Joint pain
- Bone density
- Muscle strength
- Mobility
- Falls
- Exercise and movement

Try saying:

What should I be doing now to protect my bones, joints, and strength long term?

“ *Prepared women ask better questions.
Better questions can lead to better care.* ”

WALK INTO YOUR APPOINTMENT PREPARED

A little preparation can lead to better conversations, stronger decisions, and better care.

Before Your Appointment



1 Make Your Top 3 List

Write down the three most important things you want to discuss. Start with the issue that worries you most.



2 Bring Your Medication List

Include prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, supplements, herbs, and anything you take 'only sometimes.'



3 Track Your Symptoms

Write down what you are experiencing, when it started, how often it happens, what makes it better or worse, and how it affects your daily life.



4 Know Your History

Bring information about your medical history, surgeries, pregnancies, family history, allergies, and past test results if you have them.



5 Bring Support if You Need It

A trusted friend, partner, sister, daughter, or advocate can help you remember questions and take notes.

During Your Appointment



1 Start Clearly

Try saying: "I want to make sure we talk about my main concern before the visit ends."



2 Ask What Your Numbers Mean

Try saying: "Can you explain my blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar, BMI, or lab results in plain language?"



3 Speak Up About Changes

Try saying:

- "This is new for me."
- "This is affecting my daily life."
- "I do not feel like myself."
- "I am worried this is being overlooked."



4 Ask About Options

Try saying:

- "What are my treatment options?"
- "What happens if we do nothing?"
- "What are the risks and benefits?"
- "Are there lifestyle changes that may help?"
- "When should I follow up?"



5 Repeat Back the Plan

Try saying: "Let me make sure I understand. The next step is..."



6 Request Copies

Ask for copies of your labs, imaging results, visit summary, referrals, and medication changes.



7 Ask When to Come Back

Try saying: "When should I follow up, and what symptoms mean I should call sooner?"



You Are Your Best Advocate

Being prepared helps you get the most out of your appointment and take charge of your health.

- ✓ *You do not have to know every medical term.*
- ✓ *You do not have to have all the answers.*
- ✓ *You just need to know that your voice belongs in the room.*

Symptoms Women Should *Never Ignore*

Listen to your body.

These symptoms may be signs of a serious condition and should be checked right away.



1 Chest Pain or Pressure

Especially if it spreads to your arm, jaw, neck, back, or shoulder, or comes with shortness of breath, nausea, sweating, or dizziness.

What to say:

"I am having chest pain or pressure, and I need to know if this could be my heart."



5 Severe Fatigue

Extreme tiredness that does not improve with rest can be connected to anemia, thyroid issues, heart problems, depression, sleep disorders, or other conditions.

What to say:

"This fatigue is affecting my life, and I need help finding the cause."



2 Sudden Shortness of Breath

New or worsening shortness of breath, especially with chest discomfort, swelling, weakness, or dizziness, should not be ignored.

What to say:

"This shortness of breath is new for me, and I need it evaluated."



6 Blood in Stool or Urine

Do not assume it is hemorrhoids, your period, or something minor. Blood in stool or urine should be evaluated.

What to say:

"I noticed blood, and I need to know what tests or exams are needed."



3 Heavy or Unusual Bleeding

Bleeding after menopause, bleeding between periods, very heavy periods, or bleeding after sex should be checked.

What to say:

"This bleeding is not normal for me. What could be causing it?"



7 Sudden Vision, Speech, or Balance Changes

Blurred vision, loss of vision, facial drooping, trouble speaking, sudden weakness, severe headache, or loss of balance can be urgent.

What to say:

"These symptoms came on suddenly. Could this be a stroke or emergency?"



4 New Lump in the Breast or Underarm

A new lump, thickening, nipple discharge, skin dimpling, or breast changes should be evaluated.

What to say:

"I found a new change in my breast, and I need it checked."



8 Pain That Feels Different or Does Not Go Away

Severe pelvic pain, abdominal pain, headaches, back pain, or pain that is new, worsening, or unexplained should be discussed.

What to say:

"This pain is new or getting worse. I need help understanding what is causing it."



If something feels wrong, say so.
You know your body. Trust that knowledge.

Your Health Matters

*at Every Age
and Every Stage*



1

Stay Informed

Ask questions. Learn your numbers.
Keep your records. Know what
screenings are right for you.

2

Speak Up

Pain, stress, fatigue, bleeding,
mood changes, and body changes
are not things you have to
silently carry.

3

Partner With Your Healthcare Team

Your provider should listen,
explain, and help you make
decisions that reflect your life
and your goals.

4

Protect Your Future

Small steps today can help
protect your health, independence,
and joy tomorrow.

Remember:
The Questions to Ask.
The Care You Deserve.

For more resources: **BWHI.org**