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## Preventive Health Screenings — Free Health Checks in Germany

Which Vorsorgeuntersuchungen are covered by health insurance, when you should go, and why early detection can save lives.

**Deutsche Begriffe:** Vorsorgeuntersuchung | Gesundheitscheck | Krebsvorsorge | Check-up | Früherkennung | U-Untersuchung

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### Why Preventive Care?

**Vorsorgeuntersuchungen** (also called early detection screenings) help **identify diseases early** — often before symptoms appear. Many diseases (e.g., cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure) are **more treatable in their early stages**.

In Germany, many Vorsorgeuntersuchungen are **fully covered by health insurance** — you **don't have to pay any co-payments**. Yet many people don't take advantage of preventive care — a big mistake!

### Preventive Care for Adults

Gesundheits-Check-up (from age 35)

- **Every 3 years** from age 35 (between 18 and 35: once)
- **Free** (insurance benefit)
- **What is included?**
- Full-body examination
- Blood pressure measurement
- Blood test (cholesterol, blood sugar, kidney values)

- Urine test
- Screening for hepatitis B and C (once from age 35)
- Counseling on risk factors (smoking, overweight, lack of exercise)

### Skin Cancer Screening (from age 35)

- **Every 2 years** from age 35
- **Free** (insurance benefit)
- Doctor examines **entire skin** for suspicious moles and changes
- At dermatologist or general practitioner (with qualification)

### Dental Preventive Care (all ages)

- **2x per year** — dental check-up
- **1x per year** — tartar removal
- **Free** (insurance benefit)
- **Bonus booklet** — get it stamped to increase denture subsidy!

## Cancer Screening

### For Women

| Age            | Screening                                | Frequency  |
|----------------|--|--|
| <b>From 20</b> | Cervical smear (Pap test)                | Annually (20-34: cytological smear; from 35: every 3 years combined with HPV test) |
| <b>From 30</b> | Breast examination (palpation)           | Annually   |
| <b>From 50</b> | Mammography (breast cancer screening)    | Every 2 years (50-75)  |
| <b>From 50</b> | Colorectal cancer screening (stool test) | Annually (50-54), then every 2 years or colonoscopy                                |
| <b>From 55</b> | Colonoscopy                              | 2x at 10-year intervals  |

### For Men

| Age            | Screening                                | Frequency                                |
|----------------|--|--|
| <b>From 45</b> | Prostate/genital examination             | Annually                                 |
| <b>From 50</b> | Colorectal cancer screening (stool test) | Every 2 years or colonoscopy from age 50 |
| <b>From 50</b> | Colonoscopy                              | 2× at 10-year intervals                  |
| <b>From 65</b> | Abdominal aortic aneurysm screening      | Once (ultrasound)                        |

### For Everyone

| Age            | Screening                   | Frequency                           |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>From 35</b> | Skin cancer screening       | Every 2 years                       |
| <b>From 35</b> | Gesundheits-Check-up        | Every 3 years                       |
| <b>From 50</b> | Colorectal cancer screening | Annually/every 2 years (stool test) |

## Preventive Care for Children (U-Untersuchungen)

**U-Untersuchungen** (U1 through U9 and J1/J2) are the **most important preventive program** for children:

| Screening  | Age                     | What is checked?                                  |
|------------|-------------------------|---|
| <b>U1</b>  | Immediately after birth | Vital signs, reflexes, birth defects              |
| <b>U2</b>  | Days 3-10 of life       | Organ function, metabolic screening, hearing test |
| <b>U3</b>  | Weeks 4-5 of life       | Hip ultrasound, reflexes, weight                  |
| <b>U4</b>  | Months 3-4 of life      | Motor skills, vision, hearing, vaccinations       |
| <b>U5</b>  | Months 6-7 of life      | Motor skills, grasping, turning, interaction      |
| <b>U6</b>  | Months 10-12 of life    | Standing, first words, vaccinations               |
| <b>U7</b>  | Months 21-24 of life    | Speech, walking, social behavior                  |
| <b>U7a</b> | Months 34-36 of life    | Speech, vision, allergies                         |

| Screening | Age                  | What is checked?                                  |
|-----------|----------------------|---|
| <b>U8</b> | Months 46–48 of life | Fine motor skills, speech, social behavior        |
| <b>U9</b> | Months 60–64 of life | School readiness, speech, coordination            |
| <b>J1</b> | Ages 12–14           | Puberty development, vaccinations, mental health  |
| <b>J2</b> | Ages 16–17           | Development, career orientation, health behaviors |

Are U-Untersuchungen Mandatory?

- In **Bavaria, Hessen, and Baden-Württemberg** they are **mandatory** — if missed, youth welfare will be notified
- In other federal states: **strongly recommended**, but not legally mandatory
- All U-Untersuchungen are **free** (insurance benefit)

## Vaccinations — Recommendations

The **Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO)** recommends the following vaccinations for adults:

| Vaccination                     | For whom?                                      | Booster                  |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| <b>Tetanus</b>                  | Everyone                                       | Every 10 years           |
| <b>Diphtheria</b>               | Everyone                                       | Every 10 years           |
| <b>Pertussis</b>                | Everyone (once as adult)                       | Once                     |
| <b>Flu (Influenza)</b>          | From 60, chronically ill, pregnant women       | Annually                 |
| <b>COVID-19</b>                 | Everyone (recommendations vary)                | Per STIKO recommendation |
| <b>Pneumococcal</b>             | From 60 or with pre-existing conditions        | Once                     |
| <b>Shingles (Herpes Zoster)</b> | From 60 (from 50 with pre-existing conditions) | 2 doses                  |

**Costs:** Recommended vaccinations are **free** (insurance benefit). Travel vaccinations are often **not covered** (some insurers refund voluntarily).

## Pregnancy Preventive Care

Pregnant women are entitled to comprehensive preventive care:

- **10-12 preventive examinations** during pregnancy
- **3 ultrasound examinations** (around weeks 10, 20, and 30 of pregnancy)
- **Blood tests** (blood type, measles, HIV, hepatitis)
- **Maternity passport** — documents all examinations
- All **free** (insurance benefit)

## Costs — What Does Insurance Cover and What Doesn't?

Free (Insurance Benefit)

- All Vorsorgeuntersuchungen mentioned above
- U-Untersuchungen for children
- Recommended vaccinations
- Pregnancy preventive care
- Cancer screening

Paid Out-of-Pocket (IGeL — Individual Health Services)

Some doctors offer **additional** screenings that you must pay for:

- **PSA test** (prostate cancer) — approx. 25-50 € (benefit disputed)
- **Additional ultrasounds**
- **Eye pressure measurement** (glaucoma prevention) — approx. 20-40 €
- **Additional blood tests** (vitamins, thyroid)

**Tip:** Always ask if a screening is an **insurance benefit** or **IGeL** before agreeing. Don't let yourself be pressured into paid screenings.

## Tips for Foreigners

- 1. Yellow booklet** for children — you receive it at U1, bring it to every screening
- 2. Bonus booklet** at the dentist — get it stamped from your first day in Germany
- 3. Bring vaccination records** — if you have them from your home country, the doctor can update missing vaccinations
- 4. Make appointments** — participate in preventive care even without complaints

**5. Don't delay cancer screening** — it can save your life

**6. All screenings are confidential** — doctors are bound by professional secrecy

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