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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)

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

Cancer Screening

For Women

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

For Men

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

For Everyone

Age	Screening	Frequency
From 35	Skin cancer screening	Every 2 years
From 35	Gesundheits-Check-up	Every 3 years
From 50	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?
U1	Immediately after birth	Vital signs, reflexes, birth defects
U2	Days 3–10 of life	Organ function, metabolic screening, hearing test
U3	Weeks 4–5 of life	Hip ultrasound, reflexes, weight
U4	Months 3–4 of life	Motor skills, vision, hearing, vaccinations
U5	Months 6–7 of life	Motor skills, grasping, turning, interaction
U6	Months 10–12 of life	Standing, first words, vaccinations
U7	Months 21–24 of life	Speech, walking, social behavior
U7a	Months 34–36 of life	Speech, vision, allergies

Screening	Age	What is checked?
U8	Months 46–48 of life	Fine motor skills, speech, social behavior
U9	Months 60–64 of life	School readiness, speech, coordination
J1	Ages 12–14	Puberty development, vaccinations, mental health
J2	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
Tetanus	Everyone	Every 10 years
Diphtheria	Everyone	Every 10 years
Pertussis	Everyone (once as adult)	Once
Flu (Influenza)	From 60, chronically ill, pregnant women	Annually
COVID-19	Everyone (recommendations vary)	Per STIKO recommendation
Pneumococcal	From 60 or with pre-existing conditions	Once
Shingles (Herpes Zoster)	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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