

GET AHEAD OF THE TEST

WHAT YOU WEAR FOR YOUR NEXT MEDICAL TEST CAN MAKE YOUR EXPERIENCE SAFER, MORE COMFORTABLE AND A LOT LESS AWKWARD. HERE'S WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO PREPARE.

Words Karen Burge

Sometimes we're booked in for tests and exams we've never experienced before. But if you think ahead about what to wear to your tests, the experience may be far less confronting. Here's how to walk into the clinic knowing you're fully prepared (post-COVID, you may need to wear a mask and take your own pen).

BLOOD TEST

If you're having blood drawn, a pathology collector will need access to the veins in your mid-arm (at the front of your elbow) and your upper arm to apply a tourniquet. Wear loose clothing that gives easy access to these areas. **Think t-shirts, sleeveless tops or shirts with sleeves that roll up all the way.**

SKIN CHECK

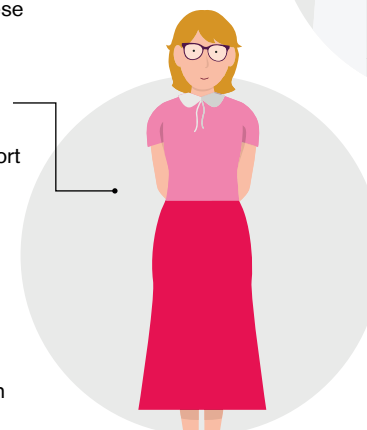
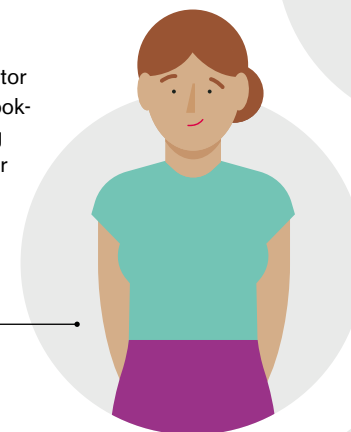
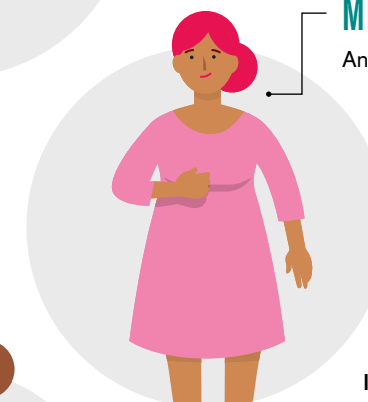
During a skin cancer check your doctor will give all of your skin a thorough look-over. Sydney GP Dr Ginni Mansberg says you'll need to strip down to your underwear, so expect to remove all your other clothes. You'll also need to take off your socks, she adds, as you can get melanomas between your toes and under your feet.

MAMMOGRAM

A mammogram is an X-ray of breast tissue to check for breast cancer. As you'll need to press your breasts between X-ray plates, **it's best to wear a two-piece outfit with a separate top**, so you can keep your lower half clothed during the test, advises BreastScreen NSW. Avoid wearing deodorant, talcum powder or creams on the day, as these can show up on your x-ray.

CERVICAL SCREENING TEST

Dr Mansberg says dressing for comfort will help you relax for your cervical screening test (used to be called a pap smear) and make the procedure easier for your doctor. "Some doctors' rooms don't have a private area for you to get undressed and it can be uncomfortable to take your clothes off in front of people, in which case I'd recommend a long skirt."



GENERAL X-RAY

Depending on the area being imaged, you may need to remove some clothes or wear a medical gown for your X-ray, as some clothes can make it difficult to see the images clearly, explains the Royal Australia and New Zealand College of Radiologists. Remove metal items, such as watches, necklaces and earrings.

MRI

An MRI involves entering a tunnel that uses magnets and radiofrequency pulses. Because of this magnetic action, you can't wear metal, like zips, hooks or wire in clothing, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists explains. Avoid jewellery, belts, watches and hairpins, and put away phones and credit cards.

Wear clothing that's loose and light – no activewear – and avoid makeup or hairspray, too, as these can contain tiny metal particles that could interfere with the scan or cause harm.

ELECTROCARDIOGRAM (ECG)

Your doctor might order an ECG to get some insight into how your heart is functioning. During your test, small sticky dots and wire leads are stuck on your chest, arms and legs, and the leads are connected to the ECG machine, explains the Heart Foundation. To help give easy access and for your comfort, **wear something that opens easily at the front, such as a button-up shirt.**

DENTAL X-RAY

Whether you're having an orthopantomogram (an OPG – standing with your chin resting on a small shelf) or a lateral cephalogram (standing with your head against a plate, with supports in each ear), all head, neck and face jewellery should be removed. Metallic objects can create 'ghosts' on your images, potentially corrupting the X-ray. Mouth piercings that can be hard to remove, such as tongue rings, are best discussed with your dentist. 📌

SOURCES: BETTER HEALTH CHANNEL, BREASTSCREEN NSW, CANCER COUNCIL, CANCER COUNCIL QUEENSLAND, DENTOMAXILLOFACIAL RADIOLOGY, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, HEALTHDIRECT, HEART FOUNDATION, NHS, NSW MINISTRY OF HEALTH, ROYAL AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF RADIOLOGISTS, UCLA BRAIN MAPPING CENTER, PHOTO: ISTOCK