Skin Cancer Foundation. It’s been estimated that one in five million Americans suffer from skin cancer internationally registered trademarks of Covidien AG.© 2012 Covidien. see how at covidien.com products, our embolization device is just one example of how we are collaborating与 healthcare professionals to solve medical issues to help improve patient care and safety. At Covidien, we’re not just committed to medical innovation — we’re committed to making a difference in patients’ lives. See how at covidien.com not anymore. the Covidien embolization device can prevent the rupture of an otherwise untreatable aneurysm by diverting blood flow from the brain aneurysm to a nearby artery. For many patients, this device is literally the difference between life and death. Part of Covidien’s suite of vascular products, our embolization device is just one example of how we are collaborating with healthcare professionals to solve medical issues to help improve patient care and safety. at Covidien, we’re not just committed to medical innovation — we’re committed to making a difference in patients’ lives. see how at covidien.com health = end-of-year wellness checkup by Joe Mullich it’s easy to put off wellness visits to the doctor. you’re busy. it doesn’t seem urgent because you feel fine. or you’re worried your doctor might find something is wrong. but recommended screenings can provide peace of mind, as well as identify potential threats such as diabetes, heart disease and cancer at an earlier stage when the chance of a successful treatment is highest. here are some of the most vital tests to put on your wellness to-do list: EYE EXAM the American Optometric Association says more than 43 million Americans suffer from some sort of degenerative eye disease, yet more than a third of adults don’t get regular eye exams. the eye may or may not be the window to the soul, but they can provide a lot of information about your overall health. “chronic conditions can present as hearing or visual abnormalities,” says Dr. Shyla High, an ophthalmologist and author of “Blurry Vision May Mean.” “Blurry vision may be the only sign of high blood pressure, diabetes or a brain tumor.” the AOA recommends people have a visual exam (which check how well you see) and an eye exam (which determines the health of the eye) once every year, or more if you have health problems. SKIN EXAM Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Each year there are more new cases of skin cancer than all the combined incidence of cancer of the breast, prostate, lung and colon, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. It’s been estimated that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in the course of a lifetime. “The most important test for skin cancer is a skin exam or self-skin exam by a board-certified dermatologist,” says Dr. Charles E. Crutchfield III, a clinical professor of dermatology at the University of Minnesota Medical School. “Everyone needs to have this done at least once in their lives.” The sooner it is done, the better than never,” says the exam is simple: a dermatologist looks at all suspicious moles on your skin with a special microscope, if any lesions look highly suspicious, only then is a biopsy performed. “The frequency of subsequent examinations can be determined based on the patient’s family and personal history,” adds Dr. Crutchfield. HEART DISEASE “The building blocks of cardiovascular disease — high cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking — tend to be slow and don’t hit you in theHIGH. “If you’re at risk, you can extend the length and quality of your life.” the National Cholesterol Education Program guidelines recommend all adults age 20 or older should have a fasting lipoprotein profile — which measures total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol, HDL (good) cholesterol and triglycerides — once every five years. this test is done after a nine- to 12-hour fast without food, liquids or pills. starting at age 18, you should have your blood pressure checked every two years. for those who get two normal results at the doctor’s office, which may cause their blood pressure to rise, some doctors also recommend using at-home screenings or few times machines found at drugstores. THYROID DISEASE “A small gland in your neck, the thyroid regulates your metabolic rate. When the thyroid is over- or underactive, it can lead to a host of symptoms, including insomnia, fatigue and constipation.” the symptoms of thyroid disease can come on gradually, and people rarely have the same combination of symptoms,” says Dr. Alan Christianson, co-author of the Complete Idiot’s Guide to Thyroid Disease. “It can raise the risk for heart disease and certain types of cancer, like melanoma.” the most common test, called the TSH test, measures the level of thyroid-stimulating hormone. it is recommended for postmenopausal women, there are no guidelines for when men should be tested. “this is the country’s fastest growing disease, and it is treatable if diagnosed early.” dr. Christianson says. “women are eight times more likely to acquire it than men.” but because the disease is so common, there are too many men walking around with it and unaware of its dangers.” DIABETES the American Diabetes Association says you should be tested for prediabetes during your next routine medical office visit if you are overweight and age 45 or older. People who have blood glucose levels that are higher than normal but not high enough to constitute type 2 diabetes are said to be prediabetic and are more likely to develop the dis- ease. overweight individuals under age 45 might need testing if they have other risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high cho- lesterol or a history of diabetes during pregnancy. If your blood glucose levels are in the normal range, you should be tested once every three years. BONE DENSITY TEST osteoporosis, which literally means “parched bone,” affects some 10 million people in the United States every year. “A bone density scan is a very important, yet underutilized screening tool for osteoporosis,” says Dr. Dima Dib, a University of Cincinnati faculty member and endocrino- logist. “these tests are fast and noninvasive and can provide important information about bone health, so you can receive treatment for low bone density before you suffer a fracture.” the bone density test is suggested for women aged 65 and older and men aged 70 and older, though factors such as a family history of osteoporosis might merit earlier testing. “if you document someone has osteoporosis, they might be ‘at risk’ again in one or two years,” says Dr. Dib. “if you have all the factors it seems you might want to start testing sooner to catch any changes, like needing to take calcium or other conditions.” for Mullich has received more than two dozen awards for writing about business and other topics.