

Especially for Teens: Your First Ob-Gyn Visit

Part of growing up is learning to take care of your body.

This means making good choices for your health, avoiding things that can hurt you, and seeing a doctor — including an obstetrician-gynecologist — at least once a year for care.

Doing Your Part for Your Health

Routine care will help:

- Prevent health problems from happening
- Find problems early and control them or keep them from getting worse
- Teach you good choices to make for your health

What to Expect at Your Visit

You should have your first ob-gyn visit when you are between the ages of 13 and 15 years. You will feel more at ease at this visit if you know what to expect.

In fact, the first visit may just be a talk between you and your doctor to get to know each other and to find out what to expect at future visits.

It is normal to feel nervous about your first visit. There is no need to feel scared or embarrassed.

Your doctor may ask a lot of questions about you and your family.

Giving open and honest answers to these questions is key to your care.

This is a good time to ask your doctor any questions you might have.

Exams

During your exam visit, your height, weight and blood pressure will be checked. Your ob-gyn may do a breast exam, pelvic exam and Pap test.

Confidentiality

Many young women want to talk to their doctors, but they are afraid that what they tell their doctor will not be confidential — that is, that the doctor will tell someone else, like their parents. If you are concerned about confidentiality, you and your doctor should talk about it before you answer any questions.

The Breast Exam

At one of your visits, your doctor may check your breasts for signs of any problems.

The Pelvic Exam

For the pelvic exam, the doctor will look at your reproductive organs for signs of problems. The pelvic exam has three parts:

1. Looking at the outside of your private parts (the vulva)
2. Exam with speculum (device used to spread the walls of the vagina so your cervix can be seen)

3. Exam with gloved hands to feel internal organs

The Pap Test

If you are 18 years of age or older or have had sex, you should have a Pap test. It is done to check for abnormal cells in the cervix.

It is best to have a Pap test when you don't have your period.

Immunizations

Your doctor may discuss your immunization history with you at this visit.

Special Concerns

Many young women have the same health concerns. These include:

- Cramps and problems with periods
- Acne
- Weight issues
- Concerns about sexuality
- Questions about birth control
- Concerns about sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- Emotional ups and downs or depression

Talking with your doctor about these issues is a key step to staying healthy.

Finally ...

Your first ob-gyn visit is a great chance to take charge of a healthy lifestyle. You may be nervous at first. Knowing what to expect will help ease your fears.

This excerpt from ACOG's Patient Education Pamphlet is provided for your information. It is not medical advice and should not be relied upon as a substitute for visiting your doctor. If you need medical care, have any questions, or wish to receive the full text of this Patient Education Pamphlet, please contact your obstetrician-gynecologist.

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