

Choosing the Pediatrician

One of the most important decisions you will make during pregnancy is to choose the doctor who will care for your baby. You may be considering a pediatrician, who treats only your child, or a family practitioner, who treats everyone in the family. A pediatrician should be certified by the American Board of Pediatrics and a family practitioner should be certified by the American Board of Family Practice. You can get recommendations from your family, friends, childbirth educator, or your obstetrician. Try to choose your baby's doctor during your last trimester of pregnancy. A complete list of local pediatricians is in the Los Olivos book "Your Pregnancy Guide" and at http://www.lowmg.com/info/medinfo/ob/ob_book/pediatricians.pdf

You should choose your pediatrician by 34 weeks of pregnancy if possible. It may be helpful to schedule an introductory visit with a few doctors before choosing a pediatrician. Below are suggestions for some things to consider:

Staff and Office

Is the office staff friendly and helpful?

Can you arrange a meeting within a few days of your call?

Is the office conveniently located?

Do the office hours accommodate your needs?

How long would you typically have to wait for an office visit for a check up and for an illness?

Is the office clean (given that children have been in it all day)?

What does the doctor charge for office visits?

Does the doctor accept your insurance plan?

How are the payments handled?

Meeting the Physician

Is there an advice nurse?

Are there educational materials on parenting, child health and behavior issues?

How do you reach the doctor after hours?

Is the doctor board certified?

Who covers for the doctor when he or she is away?

With which hospital is the doctor affiliated, and is it convenient for you?

The Doctor-Patient Relationship

Does the doctor answer your questions patiently and clearly?

Does the doctor take a "let me handle everything" attitude or include you in medical decision making? Which style do you prefer?

How does the doctor handle telephone questions? Some doctors have a special phone-in time each day.

Will the doctor visit your baby in the hospital at birth?

What is the schedule of well-baby visits during the first year of life?

Will the doctor tell you what to expect in the weeks between visits?

Does the doctor support your choice of infant feeding? Your child-care and work plans? Your views on circumcision? Or any other issues concerning your baby's care?

Do you feel comfortable with this doctor caring for your baby? Trust your instincts.

If you live in an area away from Good Samaritan Hospital and choose a pediatrician near your home, your obstetrician will arrange for a pediatrician from Good Samaritan Hospital to check on your baby during your hospitalization. After discharge your baby will see the new doctor.

Pediatric visits during the first year of life occur at 2 weeks, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 and 12 months.