

How to Choose A Pediatrician!

by Lori Leiman M.D., F.A.A.P.

You've discussed hundreds of possible names. You've spent hours looking through furniture catalogues. You've read dozens of articles on how to prepare for your baby's birth. Now comes one of the most important decisions you'll make: Who is going to be my child's pediatrician?

Choosing your child's doctor should be one of your top priorities. This person will join you in an 18-year journey, advising you and caring for your child. You want to find someone who is not only a good clinician, but also a good listener who will discuss your concerns and answer your questions. You want to have confidence in their decision making skills and be comfortable with their style.

First, start by talking to your friends and neighbors. You can also ask your obstetrician for recommendations. Once you gather a list of potential pediatricians, check your health plan to make sure they are participating providers.

Next, make an appointment for a "prenatal visit/consultation".

This visit is not routinely charged and is a chance for you to interview your potential pediatrician, tour the office and meet the staff.

This appointment is an opportunity to ask questions about what to expect:

1. **Doctor's Background:** Find out the doctor's education background, hospital and insurance affiliations, work experience, languages spoken.
2. **Office Hours:** Does the office offer same day sick visits, separate sitting areas for well and sick children, after hours on nights and weekends, nurse coverage for middle of the night questions.
3. **Philosophies:** What are the doctor's philosophies on breastfeeding, circumcision, vaccines, alternative medicine, etc. and do they match yours?
4. **Handouts, Classes, Educational Materials:** Gather as much material as you can from the office during your visit, including visit schedules, location addresses, advisories on educational programs they may offer. Do they offer online appointments or online bill pay. The more you know about the practice's interest in providing its patients education and accessibility beyond the normal and routine visit, the more you will be able to determine what benefits you will receive as a patient.
5. **Special Needs:** Does your unborn child have any known problems? Do you have special health concerns that need to be discussed? Use this opportunity to ask the big and small questions and judge for yourself on the doctor's reaction and responses to your questions.

Now you should feel well prepared for choosing your baby's doctor. Take the time to think about your family's needs, consider your options and most importantly feel comfortable with your choice.

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