



## FACT SHEET

### TOOL KIT FOR TEEN CARE, SECOND EDITION

# FIRST REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH VISIT

It is recommended that adolescent girls see a gynecologist for the first time when they are between the ages of 13 years and 15 years.

## Why should you go to a gynecologist?

- Getting to know your health care provider before you really “need” him or her is helpful because you will be sharing very private information.
- Some adolescents are more comfortable if they get to know their health care provider slowly so they can build a strong, trusting relationship with each visit.
- Sometimes it is easier to meet and discuss issues about your menstrual period (or even sexual topics) before you have problems. Talking about these sorts of private subjects may be difficult until you get to know your health care provider.

## What will happen at the visit?

- First, you will get a chance to see the gynecologist’s office and meet your health care provider, nurses, and other staff.
- In most offices, your health care provider will explain what will happen during the visit, including the order of how things will go and what will be discussed with parents or guardians.
- Most health care providers like to meet you and your parent(s) or guardian first and then talk with you in private.
- After you talk for a while, your health care provider may suggest that you have a pelvic examination but often times this is not needed. He or she will explain what will happen if you need to have this examination.

## How much will be shared with your parents?

- Privacy is an important part of your visit with a gynecologist.
- It is best to understand from the beginning what will be kept between you and your health care provider and what will be shared with your parents.
- Your health care provider should make it very clear to both you and your parents what will be kept private. It is important to remember that if the doctor learns that you may be in danger of hurting yourself or someone else or if someone may be hurting you, he or she will have to share that information with your parent or guardian.

## What will you and your doctor talk about?

- What happens is a bit different for each patient, but the doctor will spend most of the time talking with you and learning about you and any questions or problems you may be having.
- He or she also will help to teach you about normal development and normal menstrual periods. Learning more about what is normal can help you to decide if you may have a problem.
- A review of important safety topics, such as abstinence from sexual activity or use of contraceptives; avoiding smoking, alcohol, and drug use; and violence prevention also could be included.
- Many teens may be thinking of having sex, so your doctor may talk with you about how to protect yourself if you decide to begin having sex. Be prepared with any questions you may have. Make a list if you have several questions.



### Do you have to have a pelvic examination?

- Most of the time, an internal pelvic examination will not be needed. A general physical examination, like your pediatrician or family doctor would perform, is usually done. This helps your doctor understand how much development in puberty (breast changes and pubic hair) you have had.
- When examining private areas of the body, the doctor usually will only look on the outside and may have a nurse or medical assistant there to make you comfortable. You also can ask to have your mother or a friend present for support during the examination. It is most important to look into the vaginal area if you are having problems, such as pain or lack of menstrual periods.
- When it is time to start having internal pelvic examinations, your doctor can choose special, smaller instruments to make the examination more comfortable.

### Will you need to have blood drawn or other tests performed?

- Blood tests only will be done if you are having specific problems.
- Urine testing can be used to test sexually active teens for sexually transmitted diseases even when there are no symptoms.
- Your first Pap test should be performed when you are 21 years old.

### Will I have to get any shots (immunizations)?

- This visit also is an opportunity to learn about and receive vaccinations recommended for teens, including the human papillomavirus vaccination. (See the “Human Papillomavirus” fact sheet for more information.)

### For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

#### American Academy of Pediatrics

Telephone: (847) 434-4000

Web: [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

#### American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Telephone: (202) 638-5577 or (800) 673-8444

Web: [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org)

#### AWARE Foundation

Telephone: (215) 955-9847

Web: [www.awarefoundation.org](http://www.awarefoundation.org)

#### Center for Young Women’s Health

Telephone: (617) 355-2994

Web: [www.youngwomenshealth.org](http://www.youngwomenshealth.org)

#### Go Ask Alice

Telephone (212) 854-5453

Web: [www.goaskalice.columbia.edu](http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu)