



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
FAQ150  
ESPECIALLY FOR TEENS

## Your First Gynecologic Visit (Especially for Teens)

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### **When should I have my first gynecologic visit?**

An **obstetrician–gynecologist (ob-gyn)** is a doctor who specializes in the health care of women. Girls should have their first gynecologic visit between the ages of 13 years and 15 years.

### **Is it normal to be nervous before the first visit?**

It is normal to feel nervous about your first visit. It may help if you talk about it with your parents or someone else you trust. You may want to let your doctor know you are nervous. He or she can help put you at ease.

### **What should I expect at the first gynecologic visit?**

The first visit may be just a talk between you and your doctor. You can find out what to expect at future visits and get information about how to stay healthy. You also may have certain exams.

Your doctor may ask a lot of questions about you and your family. Some of them may seem personal, such as questions about your **menstrual period** or sexual activities (including vaginal, oral, or anal sex). If you are concerned about confidentiality, you and your doctor should talk about it before you answer any questions. Much of the information you share can be kept confidential.

### **What exams are performed?**

You may have certain exams at the first visit. If you choose, a nurse or family member may join you for any part of the exam. Most often, these exams are performed:

- General physical exam
- External genital exam

You usually do not need to have a **pelvic exam** at the first visit unless you are having problems, such as abnormal bleeding or pain. If you are sexually active, you may have tests for certain **sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**. Most of the tests that teens need can be done by the doctor with a urine sample. You also may have certain vaccinations.

## What happens during a general physical exam?

During the general exam, your height, weight, and blood pressure will be checked. You also will be examined for any health problems you may have.

## What happens during an external genital exam?

In this exam, the doctor looks at the **vulva**. He or she may give you a mirror so that you can look at the vulva as well. This exam is a good way to learn about your body and the names for each part.

## What are the pelvic exam and Pap test?

Even though you probably will not have a pelvic exam, you should know what one is. Another test that you will have later (at age 21 years) is a **Pap test**. This test checks for abnormal changes in the **cervix** that could lead to cancer.

The pelvic exam has three parts:

1. Looking at the vulva
2. Looking at the **vagina** and cervix with a **speculum**
3. Checking the internal organs with a gloved hand

The doctor will use a speculum to look at your vagina and cervix. When you have a Pap test, a sample of cells is taken from your cervix with a small brush.

To check your internal organs, the doctor will place one or two gloved, lubricated fingers into the vagina and up to the cervix. The other hand will press on the abdomen from the outside.

## What are vaccinations?

Vaccinations or immunizations protect against certain diseases. The following vaccines are given to all young women aged 11–18 years on a routine basis:

- Tetanus–diphtheria–pertussis (Tdap) booster
- Human papillomavirus vaccine
- Meningococcal vaccine
- Influenza vaccine (yearly)

In addition to routine vaccines, special vaccines may be given to young women who are at an increased risk for certain diseases. Listed are some of these vaccines:

- Hepatitis A virus vaccine
- Pneumococcal vaccine

## What special concerns can be discussed with my ob-gyn?

Many young women share the same health concerns. Most of these concerns are a normal part of growing up:

- Cramps and problems with menstrual periods
- Acne
- Weight
- Sex and sexuality
- **Birth control**
- STIs
- Alcohol, drugs, and smoking
- Emotional ups and downs

## What can I do to stay healthy?

Making good lifestyle choices can help you to be strong and healthy for years to come:

- Maintain a healthy weight by eating a well-balanced diet and exercising often.
- Avoid smoking, drinking alcohol, and using illegal drugs.
- Seek help if you have emotional ups and downs or feel depressed.
- Use birth control if you are having sex and do not want to have a baby.
- Protect yourself from STIs by using a latex **condom**. Know your partners and limit their number.
- Keep up with routine exams, tests, and immunizations.

## Glossary

**Birth Control:** Devices or medications used to prevent pregnancy.

**Cervix:** The lower, narrow end of the uterus at the top of the vagina.

**Condom:** A thin cover for the penis used during sex to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and pregnancy.

**Menstrual Period:** The monthly shedding of blood and tissue from the uterus.

**Obstetrician–Gynecologist (Ob-Gyn):** A doctor with special training and education in women's health.

**Pap Test:** A test in which cells are taken from the cervix (or vagina) to look for signs of cancer.

**Pelvic Exam:** A physical examination of a woman's pelvic organs.

**Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs):** Infections that are spread by sexual contact.

**Speculum:** An instrument used to hold open the walls of the vagina.

**Vagina:** A tube-like structure surrounded by muscles. The vagina leads from the uterus to the outside of the body.

**Vulva:** The external female genital area.

## If you have further questions, contact your obstetrician–gynecologist.

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