

Your First Gynecologic Visit

Frequently Asked Questions

Overview

When should I have my first gynecologist visit?

An [obstetrician-gynecologist \(ob-gyn\)](#) is a doctor who specializes in the health care of women. You should your first visit with an ob-gyn between the ages of 13 years and 15.

[\[Should My Teen See an Ob-Gyn? Here's What I Tell Parents.\]](#)

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. Your doctor can help put you at ease.

What should I expect at the first gynecologist 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 can ask questions about your body, growing up, and sex. You may also have certain exams and vaccinations.

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). Your doctor needs to ask these questions to best know how to care for you.

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

Possible Exams

What exams are done?

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 done:

- 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.

What happens during a general physical exam?

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

What happens during an external genital exam?

In this exam, the doctor looks at the [vulva](#) . Your doctor 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.

[\[Female Reproductive System: Internal Organs and External Organs\]](#)

What is a pelvic exam?

Even though you may not have a pelvic exam, it helps to know what one is. The pelvic exam has three parts:

- Looking at the vulva

- Looking at the [vagina](#) and [cervix](#) with a [speculum](#)
- Checking the internal organs with a gloved hand

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. (Read [Pelvic Exams](#) to learn more.)

Will I need a Pap test?

[Pap tests](#) are a type of [cervical cancer screening](#), which is not recommended before age 21. Cervical cancer screening can include a Pap test, a test for [human papillomavirus \(HPV\)](#), or both. HPV is a virus that can cause cervical cancer.

When you are 21 or older and have a Pap test or HPV test, a sample of cells is taken from your cervix with a small brush. The HPV test looks for the types of HPV that are most likely to cause cancer. The Pap test checks for abnormal changes in the cervix that could lead to cancer.

Other Questions

What vaccines may be given?

Vaccines are shots that protect against certain diseases. The following vaccines are given to all young women age 11 to 18 on a routine basis:

- Tetanus–diphtheria–pertussis (Tdap) booster
- [HPV vaccine](#)
- Meningococcal vaccine
- Influenza vaccine (yearly)

Other vaccines may be given if you are at an increased risk for certain diseases:

- Hepatitis A virus vaccine
- Pneumococcal vaccine

You may also need a [COVID-19 vaccine](#). And if you have missed or delayed doses of hepatitis B virus vaccine, measles–mumps–rubella vaccine, varicella vaccine, or polio vaccine, get "catch-up" doses as recommended by your health care professional.

What concerns can I discuss 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

You can talk with your ob-gyn about all these topics [and more](#).

What can I do to stay healthy?

Making certain 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, vaping, 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 or polyurethane [condom](#) . Know your partners—the more partners you or your partners have, the higher your risk of getting an STI.
- Keep up with routine exams, tests, and vaccines.

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.

Human Papillomavirus (HPV): The name for a group of related viruses, some of which cause genital warts and some of which are linked to cancer of the cervix, vulva, vagina, penis, anus, mouth, and throat.

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 ob-gyn.

Don't have an ob-gyn? [Learn how to find a doctor near you.](#)

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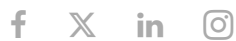
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