

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

THE IMPORTANCE OF WELL-CHILD VISITS



It is important to take your children to the doctor when they are sick, but there are also reasons to take them when they are well. Preventative health care, seeing a provider and checking for signs or symptoms of disease before they become a discomfort, is important for children and adults alike. Preventative care can allow a doctor or other health-care provider to identify health problems earlier when they are most treatable. This helps your child get or stay on a healthy track and reduces the risk of developing other health conditions.

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Before your next visit, try writing any questions down you or your child may have for the doctor and take notes during the visit.

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Doctors recommend that children have seven checkups between years 1 and 4, and children 5 to 10 years old should have a checkup once a year. These checkups, or well-child visits are different from visits for sickness or injury. These can be pleasant experiences for children. Well visits can give them positive experiences to remember instead of just going to the doctor when they are sick or to get shots.

Very similar to a well-child visit, older children may need a sport's physical to be allowed to play in certain sport leagues or on school sport teams. A sport's physical will cover many of the same health indicators and physical exams as a well-child visit and is a part of preventative health care for kids and teens.

When you schedule your child's annual or semiannual well-child exam, ask about what the exam will include. That way you can make informed decisions about your child's care. You can also explain to your child what they can expect. Talking about going to the doctor or dentist can help children understand why we do that. This will help them build a foundation of healthy habits for life. Many pediatricians, dentists, and family practitioners say you should prepare your children for a visit by being brief, positive, honest, and calm.

If you are going to a regular health checkup, explain that it is a well-child visit: "The doctor will check on how you are growing and developing. They will ask questions and look at you to make sure your body is healthy. You can ask any questions you want to about your body and your health." Explain that all healthy kids go to the doctor for such visits. If they will be getting shots or other procedures, explain why those things are important. "Vaccines help protect our bodies from dangerous diseases. It is better to have a small pinch now, than a big sickness later." Vision screenings, hearing screenings, and breathing tests that check for asthma may be a part of a well-child



visit, depending on the child's age. None of these exams are painful, but it is important to explain to children what they may experience. That way they can fully participate and won't be nervous.

Before your next visit, try writing any questions down you or your child may have for the doctor and take notes during the visit. You may feel silly at first, but you will remember more, and you will make the most out of your visit. Teaching children the skills of asking questions about their health, taking notes, and speaking up if there is something that they do not understand will make your child a better advocate for themselves in medical settings as they get older. As with all skills, it takes time and practice. Your child's provider should welcome this skill building as a part of your child's visit.

REFERENCE:

<https://acpeds.org/blog/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-visiting-the-doctor>

ADULT
HEALTH BULLETIN

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