

Scheduling Well Baby Visits

As new parents, you want to make sure your baby is healthy and happy during the busy first year of life. One important way to keep your baby healthy is by scheduling well-baby visits with your pediatrician after your baby leaves the hospital. Well baby visits give you a chance to discuss your child's milestones, social behaviors and learning with your pediatrician.

The timing of well-baby visits can vary but the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends your baby see a pediatrician 3 to 5 days after birth and within 48 hours after hospital discharge, especially if you are exclusively breast feeding then at 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18 and 24 months.

To be prepared for each appointment, write down a list of questions or concerns beforehand to make sure you don't forget to talk about them with your pediatrician.

"If you have concerns, you need to bring them up and if you're wrong and your baby is doing just fine that's great because then your pediatrician can reassure you. But if you do identify a developmental delay or a problem early on you have done your child a world of good by advocating for them."

Your baby's first well-baby checkup will be when he is three to five days old. Your pediatrician will measure and weigh your newborn to make sure his growth is on track, and he is eating enough. Your pediatrician will check the soft spots on your baby's head and the shape. The doctor will check your baby's eyes, check for fluid or infection in their ears, as well their response to different sounds, including your voice.

Your healthcare provider will listen to your baby's heart and lungs to detect any abnormal heart rhythms or trouble breathing. Your doctor will examine your baby's tummy to check for tenderness, enlarged organs or an umbilical hernia, which occurs when a bit of intestine or fatty tissue near the navel breaks through the muscular wall of the abdomen.

Your baby's mouth will be checked for oral thrush or yeast infection. As your baby gets older, the pediatrician will ask you if notice more drooling or chewing than usual. These are the first signs of teething. Your healthcare provider will check your little one's skin for rashes. Skin rashes are common in newborns and usually go away on their own.

The doctor will look at your baby's hips and legs for any joint problems. And your doctor will examine the genital area for any signs of infection. Immunizations are an important part of your child's well-baby visits. Immunizations will be given at your baby's checkup at two months, again at four months, then at six months. The American Academy of Pediatrics has a schedule of immunizations and screenings recommended at well child visits from infancy through adolescence. You can find the schedule at www.aap.org.

If you notice anything unusual between visits, don't hesitate to call your baby's doctor. It's important to keep your appointments for your baby's regular checkups to make sure your baby is healthy and developing well and hitting all those joyous firsts.