



How to Pick a Great Gynecologist

A gynecological exam is a highly private and personal experience that can leave a woman feeling very vulnerable, which makes finding a gynecologist a difficult and even traumatic event for many women. In addition, for many women, the gynecologist is their primary or only physician and, therefore, needs to be someone with whom she is comfortable sharing a lot of confidential information.

What is a Gynecologist Anyway?

A gynecologist is a Medical Doctor (M.D.), and often a surgeon, who specializes in diseases of the female genital tract, specifically, and women's health, in general. Many gynecologists also practice obstetrics, which is the specialized care of pregnant women. If you are planning to get pregnant in the future it is important for you

to choose a gynecologist who is also an obstetrician. In order to get the best care possible, I recommend making sure your new ob/gyn is board-certified.

How Do You Find One?

To begin with, you should figure out if you want a male or a female doctor. Also, determine if there is a hospital you would prefer that doctor to be affiliated with. If you have any special conditions that require an expert you should make sure to look for doctors who specialize in that area of expertise.

There are two key places to get recommendations for your next gynecologist. The first is your friends; ask them who they go to and what they think of their doctors. The second place to get referrals is from your other doctors. Once you have

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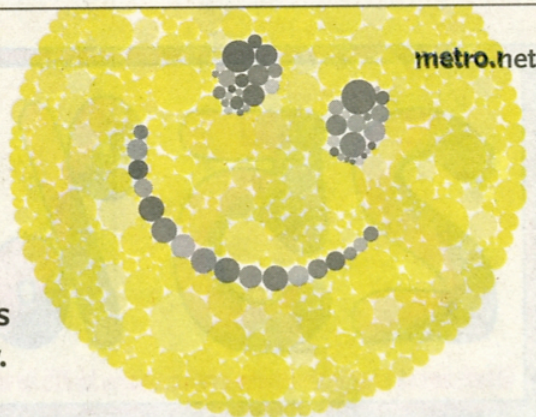
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narrowed your list of potential doctors down to three to six, it is time to start making calls to find which doctors from your list are taking new patients and if they charge for an initial consultation. I recommend making appointments to meet three doctors. It is crucial to your care that you pick someone who you are really comfortable talking to, and interviewing more than one doctor is a good way to find that person.

The Good, the Bad, and the Gynecologically Ugly

Since many women have had bad experiences with previous gynecologists, it is important to share with your new gynecologist any negative experiences you have had in the past. In addition, sharing your previous experiences is a good way to gauge your new potential doctor's philosophies and sensitivities. If you let your new doctor know that your last OB/GYN always left you waiting for two hours before each appointment and your new doctor says, "Why does that bother you?" you know you can expect the same treatment from her.

It is important to know who will be providing your treatment. Some busy doctors have nurse practitioners perform routine exams. I do not recommend you consider any doctor who runs her practice that way. While there are many qualified nurses who can do a good exam, you deserve to have the best possible treatment and, generally speaking, that comes from a qualified M.D.

The Q&A

Before you go in to meet with your potential new ob/gyn you should prepare a list of questions. The following questions are a good place to start. Feel free to use whichever questions you feel are applicable to your situation or even to bring this list with you to your initial consultation.

- Are you board-certified?
- Do you take my insurance?
- How are after hours emergencies handled?
- Do you return phone calls yourself or does your staff take care of that?
- Will other people in the office like a nurse practitioner participate in my medical care?
- Will you recommend alternative, complementary or integrative medical approaches?
- What percentage of your patients do you deliver?
- If a patient is having trouble getting pregnant what are the first recommendations you usually make?
- What hospital do you deliver at?
- What are your feelings about natural childbirth?
- How do you approach menopause and hormone replacement therapy?

Picking a Gyno For Your Daughter

The American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists recommends that women start visiting an OB/GYN between the between ages

13 and 15, regardless of whether or not they are sexually active.

Some parents worry that sending their daughter to a gynecologist will encourage her to become sexually active. Regular visits to a gynecologist do not promote promiscuity or sexual activity. In many cases, in fact, it can make your daughter much more careful in her sexual choices and will make her approach to sex a more healthy one.

Many mothers will send their daughters to their own gynecologist, but I recommend finding a different doctor for your daughters. In my experience, girls are more likely to be honest with their doctor when there is no connection to their own mothers and therefore get the best medical treatment. Ideally, the doctor you choose should be a little younger than your own doctor and would have experience working with teens.

In the end whether you are picking a gynecologist for yourself or your daughter, it is important to trust your instincts. If you feel that it is not a good match, move on. There are a lot of excellent gynecologists out there.

Dr. Jenn Berman is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice in Los Angeles. You can hear her giving advice weekday nights 10 PM to midnight on Star 98.7 (98.7 FM). For more information check out Dr. Jenn's website at www.DoctorJenn.com.



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