



# How to Choose a Pediatrician



Choosing a pediatrician can feel like a big decision: Must we agree on everything? Does location matter? What about weekend office hours? We'll outline the answers to those questions and more below so you can feel confident about choosing the best possible pediatrician for your child and your family!

## What's the difference between a pediatrician and a general practitioner?

A pediatrician specializes in the primary care of children from infancy through adolescence and early adulthood. Pediatricians have spent time working specifically with children in both intensive care situations and routine childhood development. A general practitioner, on the other hand, is trained across all age groups from children to the elderly, so their focus is less specialized than that of a pediatrician.

Pediatricians do what they do because they love working with children and growing families. And parents, you should have high expectations for the physicians you entrust with your child's care! While you don't necessarily have to choose a pediatrician, be sure to ask any family doctors or general practitioners you're considering about their treatment experience with babies or toddlers. Some have experience; some don't.

## What does it mean to be board certified in pediatrics?

Board certification means your doctor has passed a comprehensive written exam. In order to maintain certification, he or she must meet continuing education standards, learn and keep up with the latest medical knowledge, and pass another written exam every 10 years.

## Is it important that a pediatrician's child-rearing philosophy mesh with those of the patient's parents or caregivers?

Yes, but it's more important to choose a pediatrician with whom you can be open and honest—and who will adapt his or her own philosophy to fit your style of parenting and child rearing. Parents and their pediatrician are members of the same team. You'll know a good fit when you find it.

## Is a pediatrician's approach to medicine/treatment important?

A pediatrician's approach to treatment is important, especially when it comes to certain fundamental issues such as the use of antibiotics, vaccines, and other medications. As we discussed earlier, what's more important is your ability to discuss your options freely with the support of your pediatrician.

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Continued



Are a pediatrician's hours important?

What about weekend availability?

While no single pediatrician can be available 24/7, it's important to find a pediatrician who can see your child at reasonable times of the day for well visits and checkups. But perhaps more important is how quickly your child can be seen by your pediatrician or one of his or her representatives when your child is ill—ideally the same day.

What's the difference between a solo practitioner and a multiple-doctor practice?

What, if anything, makes the latter a more reliable choice?

A solo practitioner does everything alone with little support. Multiple doctors in a single practice can provide support for one another and therefore provide the best possible care for patients and reduce appointment wait times. Multiple practitioners can cover for one another when a doctor is sick, so patients always have someone to offer advice and care. And of course, you still have the option of seeing the same doctor at every visit if you choose.

Is convenience of a practice's location important?

Having your pediatrician close to your home, daycare, or workplace is helpful, especially in a child's younger years when they are seeing the doctor frequently. Depending on your circumstances, it can mean the difference between a quick morning appointment and an all-day affair.

How often can a parent expect to visit a pediatrician over the course of a newborn's first year? Is this at all relevant in selecting a pediatrician?

Expect to see your pediatrician about 10 times in your newborn's first year—possibly more if your infant gets sick, which they sometimes do. During the first year, proximity to your pediatrician's office and how easy it is to call and speak with a nurse or doctor is extremely important considering how often you'll need to be in contact.

Pediatricians choose their specialty because they love what they do! Schedule a prenatal visit with prospective pediatricians and get to know them and their staff before your baby arrives. Ask questions and trust your instincts. But don't let too much pressure build over this decision! It's an important one, but it's not a lifetime commitment.

More resources for parents:



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