

# Tips For New Parents on Selecting a Pediatrician

Becoming a parent is such a huge life-changing event. Everything about becoming a parent can be overwhelming; from choosing the right pediatrician to selecting a name they may live with forever; parenting is full of tough choices.

One of those choices includes selecting the right pediatrician for your child. This can be overwhelming and stressful. Here are some things to look for when considering pediatric offices.

## Location, Location, Location

Choosing a convenient location may seem like a simple consideration but choosing a pediatric office that is easy to access for your family is important. This does not necessarily mean you should select the pediatric office that is closest to your home; there are other factors to consider but knowing you can easily and quickly get your sick child to the doctor is important.

Consider, that in the first year of your child's life you will be visiting your pediatrician regularly for well-child visits. As your child gets older, these regular check-ups will likely be annual if your child is generally healthy. Still, there are sick visits, scheduled vaccinations, clinics, and sports medical forms—you may be at your pediatrician more often than you realize. And if you have multiple children, these visits increase.

### *Office Logistics*

When looking at the location of your pediatrician, make sure you also understand their hours and availability. Here are some questions to consider; What is your and your partner's work schedule? How do they schedule appointments? How long does it take to get in for sick and well visits? What is the off-hour schedule? What about weekend and evening availability? Do they offer on-call access to a physician?

Other things that may be important to you may be online scheduling and online access to your child's medical records. Newsletters or social media presence with updates on the office, parenting tips, and other information may be something you are looking for to research a pediatrician or stay connected with the office.



If you have private insurance, make sure the office accepts your insurance and you understand their policies on payments, co-pays, and prescriptions. These office logistics are just as important as the location of your doctor.

## Culture

Trying to gauge the culture of an office may be more difficult, but if you are visiting this office at least once a year for 18 years you want to make sure it's a good fit for your family. Does the staff seem friendly? Are there indications that the values of the practice align with your family's values? Parents should intentionally sit down to identify your family's values and use those to help guide you in important decisions like this. This could include your point of view on healthcare and whether the provider aligns with those values.

Does the practice have specific philosophies on things such as parenting, sleep, circumcision, feeding, vaccines, potty training, and antibiotics? You may find philosophical differences between your family's values and the pediatricians' philosophies that may be indicative that this may not be a good fit.

## Credentials, Certifications and Reputation

Where did your pediatrician attend medical school? How long have they been practicing? Are they up to date on certifications and the latest science as it relates to child development? It's ok to ask these questions and confirm their authenticity. You may think that a seasoned doctor who has been practicing medicine for years will have the experience to make the best decisions and recommendations about the health of your child. Or you may believe a new physician, fresh off their notations may bring a fresh and modern

perspective to raising a healthy child. Look for degrees, certifications, and other documentation around the office.

Everyone has an opinion, and the ability to share that online. Parents are likely to be vocal if they love their pediatrician, or if they had specific issues with a practice. While you certainly should not base your decision just on online reviews, checking out the practices online reputation and simply talking to people in your community can help you better understand the experiences parents before you had with this practice.

## Other Important Considerations

We've covered some of the major considerations you should think about when selecting a pediatrician, but there are many other things that may be important to you or influence your decision. Are sick patients separated from well patients in the waiting room? Are virtual visits an option? Does your doctor have plans to retire soon? What hospitals if any is the practice affiliated with? There are so many questions to ask to make sure you make an informed decision about your child's healthcare.

Listen to your gut—if the provider isn't really listening to your concerns or questions, or you just don't feel like it's a good fit, trust that intuition. This person will likely be caring for your child for at least 18 years, so you want to make sure it's a good fit & that you feel comfortable not only with him/her but also with other staff as well.

Finding the right pediatrician can be a stressful proposition. Proper planning, asking the right questions, and thoroughly vetting each practice will help ensure you make the right decision for your family.