3-STEP GUIDE TO CHOOSING A PEDIATRICIAN

You want the very best for your child and choosing a pediatrician is an important decision. Consider these tips when making your choice.

1 DEFINE YOUR PRIORITIES

Define what is most important to you and your family in choosing a pediatrician. Here are some questions to consider:

• What is the doctor’s philosophy of care? Does it align with your values?
• Are the clinic locations convenient? (Are there options near home, work, or other important areas of your life?)
• Does the clinic offer conveniences that are important to you? (open hours, urgent care, same day or walk-in appointments, online access to electronic medical records, etc.)
• Does the clinic have an affiliation with a hospital or connection with a network of specialty care?
• Is the doctor and/or clinic considered “in network” for the health insurance that covers your child(ren)?

2 SEEK RECOMMENDATIONS AND DO YOUR RESEARCH

• Ask your obstetrician or midwife for recommendations. Get more than just names and clinics: ask why they think you should trust the provider with your child’s care.
• Ask family and friends who share your values about their experiences with specific clinics and pediatricians.
• Research both pediatricians and clinics online to see how they fit with your priorities. Clinic websites are a great place to start, but also consider conducting searches online or through social media.
• Call the clinic to ask questions; if a pediatrician isn’t available, talk with the clinic manager.
• Arrange a meeting with the pediatrician (in person or on the phone). Many clinics offer expectant parent classes to help assist in this decision process.

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3 NARROW DOWN YOUR CHOICES AND ASK QUESTIONS

Location
• Is the clinic conveniently located to meet your needs?
• Is there easy parking and building access?
• Does the clinic have affiliate clinics nearby if your clinic isn’t available?

Experience of the clinic providers
• How many years have they been in practice?
• What is the level of training (Physician, nurse practitioner, pediatric or family practice specialty)?
• Do you prefer a male or female pediatrician for your child? Are there both at the clinic if your child has a preference in the future?

Philosophy of care/communication style
• What’s their communication style? Do they listen to and trust your instincts? Are they open to questions, do they provide recommendations and guidance and function as a partner in your child’s care?
• What’s their philosophy of care? Opinion on vaccination use? Frequency of well check-ups — do they follow American Academy of Pediatricians recommendations? What’s their philosophy on prescribing medications? Do they treat the whole child — taking time to focus on prevention, nutrition, development, mental health and the family environment?

Convenience
• What are office hours?
• Are same-day or walk-in appointments available?
• What after-hours or urgent care do they offer?
• Do they have weekend hours?
• How many other pediatricians are at the clinic to care for your child if your primary care provider is unavailable?
• How are after-hours calls handled?
• What other services are available at the clinic (X-ray, lab, lactation consultant, telehealth, specialists, pharmacy)?

Comfort
• Is the clinic bright and welcoming?
• Are staff helpful and friendly?
• Do they understand kid’s needs and respond accordingly?
• Is there a separate waiting area for well children and/or newborns?
• Is the wait time reasonable? Is there enough time within your appointment to get your questions answered without feeling rushed?

Affiliations
• Is the clinic part of a larger health system with access to pediatric specialty clinics?
• What hospitals is it affiliated with?
• What hospital emergency room or urgent care do they recommend?
• Does your insurance cover services at these facilities?

Insurance
• Is the clinic within your insurance network?
• Does the clinic accept a variety of plans in case your coverage changes?
• What if you don’t have insurance?
• Is a payment plan possible if you are not covered by insurance? What other financial resources are available?
• How does the clinic handle payments, billing, laboratory charges and insurance claims?