

Tips for Choosing and Working With Doctors

Some things to think about when choosing a doctor for your child:

Be a partner

You and your child's doctor should be in a partnership when it comes to caring for your child. You should feel comfortable asking questions, sharing your insights and feeling like you are a part of your child's medical team. Your doctor should be approachable and make you feel comfortable. You should also want your child's doctor to freely and openly ask you questions and be able to share their insights with you.

Experience

Has the doctor and their medical team cared for children who have special health care needs similar to your child's diagnosis?

Experience can help your doctor be more aware of services and resources that might benefit your child and family.

Be a role model

Show by example how you want to be treated and how you want your child to be treated. If you want to be listened to, be a good listener yourself. Talk about the good things too, just not what worries you. Show pictures and tell stories about your child and family so your medical team can get to know you, your child and family better.

Don't expect everything too be perfect

Every relationship has hard times. Be flexible. Recognize that doctors are people too, and give them and their medical team a chance to make things better if you are unhappy. It may be worth working through the tough times.

Say Thank You

Let your child's doctor and the medical team know what is helpful and that they are doing a good job.

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Doctor

- Does this office have experience with children with special health care needs?
- What kinds of services does the office offer? Which are provided by the doctor and which are provided by the nurse or physician's assistant?
- What kind of insurance does the office accept?
- Is there a team approach when other doctors, therapists, educators or home care nurses are involved?
- Does your office have a care coordinator?
- How many patients does your office see each day? How long does an average appointment take? Are extra long appointments available?
- Which hospital does the doctor go to?
- What is your telephone call policy? Do you give advice or refill medications over the phone?
- Does your office use email?
- Who will see my child after hours or when the doctor is on vacation?
- Does the doctor allow for an appointment just to ask questions and discuss a plan of care?

Tips on Preparing to See the Doctor

Get Ready:

Write down all your questions

Bring paper, pencil and your calendar

Bring any information you have on your child; symptom check list

Have a list of all medications your child is using, including over the counter medicines

Have a list of all therapies and services your child is receiving

Tell the Doctor:

How your child is doing

What has been going well and what you are worried about

Details about your child's symptoms and changes that is different for your child

When the symptoms appeared and started changing

How often and when the symptoms occurred

What you have tried to relieve the symptoms and what happened

Don't Leave the Office Without:

Understanding

Having your questions answered

Instructions for **all** medications

Asking how long the child will be on the medication and whether there are refills

Asking about side effects

Asking what and when the child can eat

Understanding all follow-up questions and how to report changes in symptoms

Asking when your child needs to be seen again

Making the next appointment

