



Children's Health

Selecting a Pediatrician



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

TAKE TIME TO INTERVIEW

Prenatal visits can be scheduled with several pediatricians before birth. This allows you time to find out about the pediatrician's practice policies, child-rearing philosophy and credentials. Some pediatricians charge for these interviews, so check ahead. Questions about scheduling office visits, fees and telephone access are also appropriate to ask during the interview.

Pediatricians have a special interest in and knowledge of infants, children and adolescents. After completing medical school, pediatricians must complete a three-year, hospital-based residency program in pediatrics. Some then train for two more years in a specialty, such as pediatric neurology (treatment of the brain and nervous system), oncology (treatment of childhood cancers) or neonatology (treatment of premature infants).

WHEN SHOULD YOU BEGIN LOOKING?

Shortly before your child is born is the best time to begin looking for a pediatrician. Your pediatrician will usually be present when your child is born and will do the general exam right after birth. If you have problems during the pregnancy, if there's more than one baby or if the baby has a genetic disorder, having a pediatrician already selected is especially important. Parents of older children should meet a new pediatrician before a crisis or acute illness occurs.

After interviewing pediatricians, evaluate them by answering the questions below.

	YES	NO
Did the pediatrician respond to all your questions about child health and development?		
Do you agree with the pediatrician's child-rearing philosophy?		
Is the pediatrician willing to help you with specific child-rearing problems (sibling rivalry, discipline, etc.)?		
Is 24-hour care available?		
Does the pediatrician have admitting privileges to one or more local hospitals?		
Is the pediatrician available by phone?		
Will the pediatrician see your child for preventative checkups?		