



Society Hill Pediatrics

CHOOSING A PEDIATRICIAN

Congratulations on becoming a parent! Expecting a baby is an exciting time, with many choices to make. One of the most important decisions you can make for your family is the pediatrician you choose. These tips will help you establish the right match for you and your child.

What is a pediatrician?

Pediatricians are doctors who provide comprehensive health care to children of all ages, through young adulthood. We help parents ensure that their child is developing both physically and cognitively. We are experts in nutrition, preventive care, vaccinations, and parenting issues. We are diagnosticians, prepared to evaluate and treat all levels of illness.

When should you choose a pediatrician?

The best time to start looking for a pediatrician is in the second trimester or early in the third trimester. This will allow plenty of time to visit pediatric offices or schedule a “prenatal” visit, when you can interview the new doctor, meet the staff, and get a sense of the office policies and environment.

How should you choose a pediatrician?

Start looking for a pediatrician by asking other parents who you trust and with whom you share similar values. Your obstetrician can also be a valuable source of information. Obstetricians typically have a working relationship with local pediatricians and will know the doctors who are respected in your community. If you are new to the area, contact the local children’s hospital for a list of pediatricians on staff. You may also find lists or ads for pediatricians in local newspapers and magazines. Many doctors have websites, so an internet search can be helpful. Look for pediatricians who are board certified by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and who are on staff at local hospitals. Board certification and hospital affiliation will provide assurance that a doctor has passed all of the rigorous standards required by these institutions, and is up to date on continuing medical education.

Visit the office before you choose.

Once you have identified a few pediatricians, call the offices to arrange a time to get more information. Most pediatricians welcome expectant families: ask if you can schedule a personal meeting or attend an open house in the last few months of your pregnancy. During your visit, ask about basic information, such as office hours and procedures, after-hours availability, and accepted insurances. More importantly, you’ll also want to learn about the doctor and practice’s philosophy regarding child care. For example, does the practice take a relaxed approach to vaccine scheduling or adhere to a more rigid schedule? Although most pediatricians follow AAP guidelines, individual practice style and philosophical approach can vary widely. Families also differ: some parents may prefer to have a partnering relationship with their pediatrician, while others may welcome a more authoritarian approach. It’s important to find a pediatric practice that will support your own parenting style while providing expert guidance and medical care.

Questions to ask about office logistics:

- What are the office hours?
- Does the office schedule appointments or see sick children on evenings and weekends?
- How are sick appointments made?
- Is the office conveniently located?
- In which hospitals does the doctor have admitting privileges?
- Where does the practice send their patients for hospital/emergency/specialty care?
- How is specialty care coordinated?
- How does the office handle insurance referrals, if necessary?
- How are phone calls handled?
 - Is there a 'call-in' hour?
 - Is there an advice nurse?
 - When are calls returned?
 - What happens if you need a doctor when the office is closed?

Questions to ask about the pediatricians and practice philosophy:

- How does the doctor practice medicine in ways that promote disease prevention?
- How does the practice monitor growth and development?
- How does the pediatrician communicate his assessment of the child's progress?
- What kinds of educational material does the practice use and share with parents?
- What is the practice philosophy regarding vaccines and vaccine schedules?
- In what ways does the practice promote breastfeeding? Is lactation help available?
- What is the practice philosophy regarding the use of antibiotics and medicine?
- Does the doctor talk to the child when age appropriate?
- How does the practice help with the transition to young adulthood?

When you choose a pediatrician, you are embarking on a new relationship that could last more than 20 years! You should feel comfortable that the pediatrician(s) you choose will listen to you and your child, will answer all of your questions, and will be available when you need them. You are the ultimate architect of your child's health and well-being, and you will need a person you like and trust to help navigate the joy's and bumps ahead!

Janet Crino, MD; Shea Cronley, MD; Cynthia Hill, MD; M. Bidi McSorley, MD;
Roshani Anandappa, MD; Randi Kamen, CRNP; Shobha Sharma, CRNP;
Jessica Sticklely, RN, MSN; Beverly Viscusi, CRNP

Advocare Society Hill Pediatrics, 1233 Locust Street, Suite 400, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone (215) 545-8188/Fax (215) 545-8446