

Choosing A Provider For Your Baby

Choosing a provider for your baby is just one of many important decisions you will make as a parent. Here are some commonly asked questions and guidelines you may wish to consider.

When Should I Make This Decision?

Select a provider before your baby is born. If possible, have the provider selected two months prior to the due date. Remember, some babies come early.

How Do I Get Started?

The first question is whether you prefer a pediatrician or a family practice physician. A pediatrician is a specialist who focuses on the physical, emotional, and social health of children from birth through the teenage years. This specific focus keeps pediatricians up-to-date on changes in children's health care. A family practice physician is a generalist and sees patients of all ages. This allows your entire family to see the same provider and develop a long-term close relationship with one health care provider.

How Do I Find The Right Provider For My Child?

- Contact your insurance company. They can send you a current provider list, or they may post one on their website.
- If you are looking into a Bellin Provider, you may research providers at bellin.org.
- Have your current provider make recommendations.
- Talk to friends, relatives, and co-workers who have children and share your parenting philosophies. Their experience and understanding of your style provide a valuable resource.
- Consider if the provider's age or gender are important issues to you.
- Set up a "Meet and Greet" appointment with one or two providers to get acquainted and discuss specific issues. This "interview" will help you make your choice.

What Should I Look For In A Provider's Office?

Here are a few questions you may want to ask yourself or others as you are evaluating a provider's office:

- How close is the provider's office to your home? Convenience is important, especially when your child is sick.
- Sometimes parents like to use the same clinic for themselves and their child because it is familiar to them.
- What are the office hours?
- Who will see your child if his/her provider is not available?
- Is there an after-hours clinic, staffed by pediatricians or family practice physicians?

- What is the procedure for gaining telephone access to your provider or provider's nurse during office hours?
- Can sick children usually be seen the day you call in?
- How far in advance must you schedule well child check-ups?
- What is the waiting room like? Is there a well-child waiting room separate from the sick child waiting area? Is the area clean and child friendly? How many children are waiting? What is the average wait time? If you are in the waiting room, talk to other parents to determine if they are satisfied with the care their children are receiving

What Questions Might Be Good To Ask The Providers I Am Considering?

In addition to getting a feel for the provider's personality, here are some questions you may wish to ask:

- When do you come to the hospital to examine the new baby and visit the parents?
- Are you willing to explain things carefully and give instructions in writing?
- What are the suggested intervals for clinic visits?
- What can you tell me about the circumcision procedure? Can parents be present?
- What do I need to know about immunizations? Do you recommend the Hepatitis B immunization while the baby is still in the hospital?
- What kind of support do you offer to breast-feeding mothers? Can I have the baby weighed between appointments if I am concerned?
- Which provider in your group practices most like you?
- How do you handle referrals?
- Which parenting and childcare books do you recommend?

What Should I Do After I Have Decided Upon A Provider?

When you are admitted to the hospital for delivery, you will be asked to name your child's provider. The hospital will then contact his/her office. After your baby's birth you will need to call your insurance company to add the baby to your policy. At that time you will report your choice of provider. Continue to evaluate your decision as you work with your child's provider.

Carefully considering the choice of your child's provider prior to the baby's birth will increase your confidence as you become a parent. Finding a good provider/family match will ease the stress of your child's "sick days" and set the stage for preventive health care throughout your baby's childhood and teen years.