

What to Expect at Your First Women's Health Exam...

As you get older, your provider may tell you that you need a gynecological or pelvic exam. This means that he or she will take closer look at your reproductive system. You may need this exam if you...

- ⇒ are sexually active and have symptoms of an infection
- ⇒ have any changes or questions about your sexual health
- ⇒ have never had a gynecological exam and are 21 years of age or older
- ⇒ you are pregnant
- ⇒ don't start your period or stop having your period

1 Your provider will ask questions about your period. He or she will also ask about sex, pregnancy and STIs. It's important to answer these questions truthfully. The provider will not tell anyone what you tell him or her unless he thinks that someone has hurt or abused you.

2 You will undress and cover up. You will probably be left alone in the room to undress and cover up with a sheet or a gown.

3 You will lie on the exam table and will be asked to scoot to the edge of the table and open your legs. Usually you will be asked to put your feet in foot rests that will help keep your legs apart while the exam is done. *If you have mobility problems, use a wheelchair, or have tight legs, your provider will work with you to find a comfortable position.* There are usually three parts of the exam:

- **External Exam** — The provider looks at the outside of your vulva for bumps or other problems.
- **Speculum Exam** — A tool called a speculum is inserted into your vagina. The speculum is used to look at your vagina and cervix. The cervix is the opening to your uterus. Samples of vaginal or cervical discharge will be taken with a large Q-tip. These samples are used to check for vaginal infections, STIs and cancer.
- **Bimanual Exam** — Your provider will put one or two gloved fingers inside your vagina. He or she will then press with the other hand on the outside on your lower belly. This is to check the size and position of your cervix, uterus and ovaries. Sometimes the provider will also perform a rectal exam and insert a finger in your anus. This is to check for tumors, and is not usually done on teens.

5 The provider will let you ask any questions and then leave the room so you can change. If the results of the test are normal you won't hear anything. If the results of the tests are not normal, someone from your provider's office will contact you within a week.

Some TIPS

- ☑ Come prepared to this visit by knowing the dates of your very first period and your last menstrual period.
- ☑ Do not come when you are on your period unless you are having a discharge, burning when you pee, abdominal pains or irregular bleeding.
- ☑ It is your right to ask for a different provider if you do not feel comfortable with the one you have, or ask for a female to be in the room if you have a male provider.
- ☑ It is almost always ok to bring someone into the exam room with you, like a relative or a friend.
- ☑ The exam might be uncomfortable but shouldn't hurt. The best way to deal with this discomfort is to take some slow deep breaths. Breathe in through your nose and blow out through your mouth. If you feel any pain during the exam, tell your provider.
- ☑ If you want, ask for a mirror during the exam so you can see what's happening.
- ☑ Be familiar with your body so you know when anything changes.
- ☑ Ask questions! This is an especially great opportunity to ask about your body, sex, STIs and birth control.
- ☑ If you don't want to be contacted at your home with your test results, make sure you speak up about this!
- ☑ You can call your provider to find out the results of your tests.