

Finding The Right Doctor For Your Child

Finding the right doctor for your child is important. When you are looking for a doctor, it may help to do some work ahead of time. Think about what is needed and what is important to you.

What things should I think about?

- **What type of doctor does my child need?**
 - A primary care doctor (family doctor, pediatrician).
 - A specialist for ongoing care.
 - A specialist for one visit such as a second opinion.
- **What type of practice do I want?**
 - A doctor who works alone, two doctors in partnership, or a large practice? If working alone, who will my child see when the doctor is not available?
 - A multi-specialty practice or a group focused on only one specialty?
 - A clinic in a hospital or one in my community?
- **What type of relationship would I like to have with my child's doctor?**
 - Someone who makes the decisions for me and decides on the plan of care.
 - Someone who lets me make all of the decisions.
 - Someone who makes decisions with me.
- **What approach to treatment do I want the doctor to have?**
 - A doctor who treats aggressively.
 - One who is cautious and conservative.
 - Someone in between these two types of practice.
- **Will they accept my insurance?**

You may need to get a list of doctors that are covered by your insurance.

What questions might I ask?

Below are some ideas for what to ask when you call the doctors office. You do not need to ask these exact questions. Pick the questions that are important for you, or come up with your own.

- What services does your practice offer? Which do you provide and which are done by others such as a nurse or physician assistant?
- What happens if my child needs tests or lab work?
- What happens if my child needs to be hospitalized?
- Do you bill my insurance company directly?
- Do you have payment plans for any costs not covered by my insurance?
- Can I make an appointment just to ask questions and talk about a plan of care?

Possible questions (continued)

- Are you open to talking about other treatments such as the use of herbal or alternative treatments?
- How many patients do you see each day? How long does a normal appointment take?
- How soon do you return phone calls? Do you give advice or prescribe medicine over the phone?
- Can I communicate with you through e-mail?
- Who will my child see when you are on vacation or if it is after hours?
- If I ever needed a second opinion, would you help me with a referral?

If your child has special health care needs

- Do you see children with special health care needs in your practice?
- Do you and your staff have experience with a child who has _____ (your child's special health care need)?
- Are you experienced with medical care coordination?
- Are you willing to work as part of a team with my child's other providers (other doctors, teacher, therapist, case manager, home care nurse, etc.)?
- Will you help us find an adult healthcare provider when we are getting ready to transition?

Making the final decision

1. Narrow your list down to a few names

Your insurance company may decide on this. Friends, other health care providers and members of a support group may be good people to ask. Remember what works for one family, may not work for you.

2. Check out the credentials of the candidates.

Where did the doctor go to medical school? Where was residency done? Did the doctor do a fellowship after residency? How long ago was residency completed? Is the doctor board certified?

Several web sites can help with this step in the process:

- American Medical Association Physician Select: www.ama-assn.org (click Dr. Finder)
- American Board of Medical Specialties: www.certifieddoctor.org
- Medical College of WI Physician Find: www.doctor.mcw.edu/

3. Interview the Physician(s)

See questions to ask, listed above.

4. Make a Decision

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.