

Family Voices Health Care Visit Checklist for Children with Special Health Care Needs



Every child - no matter their diagnosis or health condition - needs a Medical Home - a consistent pediatrician, family practitioner, or other health provider who knows the child and the family. Routine appointments to check on a youngster's general health and development should be made, the schedule based on the child's age and condition. Here's a checklist to help prepare you for your child's next routine visit to the doctor.

Choosing a Health Care Provider

If you have a choice, look for a provider whose style and office procedures fit your needs. Talk with family and friends about providers they recommend.

- Do you think his/her style fits your needs and those of your child?
- Can you talk easily with this provider? Are there language or cultural barriers?
- Is the office location convenient and accessible?
- Are there hours or times you can call with questions?
- Who is available when the doctor is away?
- Will your health insurance cover this provider?

If you don't have insurance or health care coverage, call your health department, local hospital, Women, Infants and Children's (WIC) office, your state's chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, or the toll free number 1-877-KIDS-NOW (for information on free or low cost children's health insurance).

Preparing for a Health Visit

Before the visit, look it over and think about further questions or ideas. Adapt the suggestions to fit your child's stage of development or special health care needs. Have your older son or daughter study this list and then make notes of their own.

- Know the purpose of the visit and what might occur (immunizations, lab tests, camp or sports physical), and the length of time for the appointment, so that you and your child are prepared.
- Think about your child's progress and what has changed since the last visit (changes in health or behavior, within the family, etc.) Make a list of questions or thoughts you want to discuss.
 - Bring a notepad to take any notes you want to remember. Parents who have information feel better prepared themselves.
 - It's important to ask questions, even if some don't seem directly related to health.
 - Put worries into words. A good health care provider will try to help you think through or find answers.
 - Are there any concerns from those who see your child in other settings - child care center, school, sports, therapy program? Include notes from the latest visit with a specialist
 - Prepare your child for the visit. Encourage your child to ask questions or discuss concerns (as appropriate for your child). Carrying along a special toy, art project, or favorite book or tape to show the doctor makes the visit friendlier for a child.



Be prepared for emergencies. What is your health care provider's advice on how and when to get emergency help? Should you take the time to call the office number first? Learn this before there is a problem. Keep phone numbers in a place that is easy to find when there is a sudden problem.

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During the visit

- Talk about what matters to you. Your way of seeing your child helps the health care provider understand more about your child's development and your priorities.
- Expect your child's health care provider to ask questions such as:
 - How does your baby respond to new people?
 - How many hours does Juan sleep at night?
 - How is school going for Tina?
 - How is Philippe handling stress and other emotions such as anger and sadness?
- Ask questions about any important issues for your child such getting along with others, anger and fighting.
- Mention interesting events that have occurred recently for your child or family, setting an atmosphere of partnership and revealing the unique nature of your child and your family.
 - Think of major changes or events related to your child's health since the last visit. For example, an emergency room visit or an alteration in seizure activity. Talk about changes in sleep or eating patterns or behavior.
 - Consider any significant family events that have happened since the last visit (a move, death, divorce, other family members who are sick).
- Offer feedback about recommendations made to you about your child's health.
 - Your opinions should be respected.
 - Sharing information will strengthen the partnership, even if you disagree sometimes.
- Ask about what's likely to happen next in your child's growth and development. Ask what you can do to support a healthy pattern of development.
- Share ideas, observations, and good resources; in turn, ask for recommendations.
 - Is there a support group nearby?
 - Is there a child care center that will welcome you child?
 - May you borrow a book, video, or article about tantrums, potty training, or sexuality.
- Offer your health care providers constructive feedback on how they're doing, caring for your child.



After the visit is over

- Was the office a comfortable place; did you feel welcome?
- Were there opportunities for you and your child to discuss concerns?
- Did your health care provider listen and communicate well?
 - Did you understand what was being discussed?
 - If there was something you didn't understand, did you ask for a clearer explanation?
- If you didn't get to cover everything you had planned to discuss:
 - Are you comfortable waiting for the next visit?
 - Are there other members of this provider team who can talk about these issues with you?
 - Is there an easy way to get answers to questions between visits (e.g. calling the office or a healthline)?
- Could you provide support for your child when something painful or unexpected occurred?
- If you didn't agree with your health care provider about an issue, did you discuss your concerns? Do you feel comfortable with the result? Have your cultural values and views been considered?
- If you were given referrals or instructions for care after the visit:
 - Do you know or have in writing what you should do next, and why?
 - Do you have the names and phone numbers for the referrals?
 - If you are responsible for follow-up activities or treatments at home, do you feel prepared? Who can
 - Do you need to share information from the visit with family members or other care givers?
 - Are you clear about how to describe what needs to be done?
 - Is there written information?
 - Did you and your child receive positive feedback about her general care and well-being? Did you feel you were part of your child's primary health care team?
 - Is there anything you plan to do differently at your next health visit? Do you feel OK about doing so?

