

# Health Tips for Parents

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## How do I prepare my child for a doctor's visit?

**When kids anticipate** “going to the doctor,” many become worried and apprehensive about the visit. Whether they're going for a routine exam or illness, kids are likely to have fears.



**If you detect anxiety from your child** about going to the doctor, encourage him or her to tell you about their fears. Then, address their concerns using age-appropriate language. “In the exam room, children can be quite sensitive to their parents’ emotions. Having a calm, positive, reassuring attitude can reduce your child’s anxiety,” advises Carlos Lerner M.D., medical director, Children’s Health Center, Mattel Children’s Hospital UCLA.



When explaining the purpose of the appointment, talking about the doctor in a positive way helps promote the relationship between your child and the doctor. Explain that the purpose of a regular “well-child visit” is to see how he is growing and developing and to

make sure that his body is healthy. If she is not feeling well, tell her that a doctor can help find out what is wrong and how best to treat it.

When you call to make the appointment, you can ask to speak to the doctor or a nurse to find out, in a general way, what will take place during the office visit and exam. Then you can explain some of the procedures and their purpose in gentle language.

Children can cope with discomfort or pain more easily if they're forewarned, and they'll learn to trust you if you're honest with them. If you don't know much about the illness or condition, admit that but reassure your child that you'll be there and that you will both be able to ask the doctor question. Write down your child's questions to bring with you.

### Common Fears and Concerns

- **Separation** – Fear of being left in the exam room without a parent
- **Pain** – Worry that a part of the exam or a medical procedure will hurt
- **The doctor** – Misinterpreting the doctor's speed, efficiency or a detached attitude as sternness, dislike or rejection
- **The unknown** – Worry that their problem may be much worse than their parents are telling them
- **Guilt** – Belief that their illness or condition is punishment for something they've done or neglected to do



## Choosing the right doctor for your child

Because your doctor is your best ally in helping your child cope with health examinations, it's important to carefully select a doctor. Of course, you want one who's knowledgeable and competent. However, you also want a doctor who understands kids' needs and fears and who communicates easily with them, in a friendly manner.

This information is provided courtesy of the pediatricians at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA. UCLA Health System pediatricians are conveniently located in your neighborhood. In addition to our Children's Health Center in Westwood, we have offices in Brentwood, Manhattan Beach, Santa Monica and West Los Angeles. All health and health-related information contained in this publication is intended to be general in nature and should not be used as a substitute for a visit with a healthcare professional.