

Script – Print – The doctor will see your child now

There's plenty to think about when raising children – education, developing social skills and keeping them healthy.

That's why preventive care is so important. Called well-child visits, these appointments are just as important as treating your child when they are sick. These visits with a pediatrician or family practice physician are also a chance to monitor your child's growth and development, prevent sickness and address any other issues, especially in the first year of life.

"Those visits during that time are very important so we can catch any abnormalities quicker and get them addressed in a timely manner," says Chasity Caperton, MD, a pediatrician with OSF HealthCare.

During a well-child visit, parents and providers can discuss nutrition, physical activity, sleeping habits or any other health-related issues. Regular visits can also detect any potential problem, making them easier to manage or treat. Vaccinations are also a key aspect of many well-child visits.

In the first year of life, visits are typically scheduled when the child is two, four, six and nine months and around their first birthday.

"That time is important for the baby to grow and thrive," says Dr. Caperton. "That's also the ages that we typically do a lot of the vaccinations and after that, they space out some to where they're every six months initially, until they reach the age of two, and then they become yearly."

While you can't really prepare a younger child on what to expect during a visit, Dr. Caperton recommends talking with older children about what might take place during their appointment. That may include vaccines like a flu shot.

"You should let them know that I'll be asking them questions on their diet, their physical activity," adds Dr. Caperton. "They might get a screening for depression, for instance. It's better if they're prepared."

Dr. Caperton says it's important to talk with a child at a level they can understand. "If you're talking with a four-year-old, you get down there and try to use words that they understand. You approach them differently than you would a 15-year-old," she says. "Teenagers require a different approach. Don't try to use their slang. It's not going to work. Talk to them like adults, not like children, because they want to be treated as adults."

Regardless of the child's age, it's important for parents to be present for the appointment.

"A lot of parents will not come to their well-child at certain ages, thinking it's not necessary. But it is very necessary to ensure the health of your child," says Dr. Caperton. "There are many things that we catch at a well-child visit. We catch murmurs, high blood pressure, many different things to treat that we otherwise would not have caught."

A sports physical, which includes monitoring heart, mental health and any other issues, such as follow-up after a concussion, can be included in a well-child visit. And some pediatricians will let you schedule back-to-back appointments if you have two children. Make sure to check with your provider's office first.

For more information about well-child visits, visit the OSF HealthCare [website](#).