

Transcript – Print - Taking Time to Visit the OB/GYN

The New Year is the perfect time to schedule a visit

January is the time for new beginnings. That includes re-connecting with your doctor or finding one for the first time. For women who have been putting off a visit to an obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN), or are in search of one, it's time to make that appointment and check it off your to-do list.

An OB/GYN deals with some of the most important health issues in a woman's life, including childbirth, menopause, as well as screenings for cancer, and treating infections such as urinary tract infections.

"As obstetricians and gynecologists we have a couple of visit types," said Dr. Christina Kramer, OBGYN, OSF HealthCare. "For most routine OB or pregnancy visits we tend to focus on making sure mom and baby are healthy, answering any questions and providing counseling at those different visits. Depending how far along a woman is there may be additional lab work or immunizations we may recommend."

"For a healthy woman or well woman exam, often times I'm trying to decipher if there are any issues that the patient may want to discuss or anything that comes up in conversation, trying to address those at the same time, but also keeping healthy people healthy," said Dr. Christina Kramer, OBGYN, OSF HealthCare. "Seeing if there are any routine immunizations that are needed, getting routine bloodwork, or often times they're fasting labs, so if they could come in fasting that would be helpful. Depending on the patient's age there's also recommendations for different tests, whether it's a Pap smear, mammogram, colonoscopy, things like that."

A typical annual exam includes a breast exam, an abdominal exam, and a pelvic exam. The doctor will check for abnormalities, such as lumps or painful areas, and discuss with patients any concerns. Other topics that are typically covered include family medical history, nutrition, exercise, and weight management to help reduce the risk for diabetes, cancers and other potential health issues.

"If someone is coming in for a problem visit, I'm trying to see if there are any changes or abnormalities in the anatomy that might be contributing to their symptoms," said Dr. Christina Kramer, OBGYN, OSF HealthCare. "If they're not having any symptoms, it allows me an opportunity to counsel about a normal anatomy and normal changes that they might expect. I've also found some conditions that are, thankfully, benign, conditions that patients may notice over time and I'm catching them first on exam so I can provide them counseling and education so they don't worry down the road when things change."

Because OB/GYNs deal with such personal and sensitive health issues, the thought of seeing one, especially for the first time, may cause some women anxiety. Dr. Kramer said it's common for some women to feel nervous or embarrassed during an exam or have some reluctance to discuss intimate issues during the appointment. Patients no longer need a Pap smear every year, she adds, which helps alleviate some anxiety.

“One of the things that helps patients when I’m visiting with them is I do the history first while they’re still dressed,” said Dr. Christina Kramer, OBGYN, OSF HealthCare. “I’m trying to minimize the amount of time they feel vulnerable while uncovered. I just have them undress for the exam and then dress again for the treatment plan and the wrap up. I really think that helps patients feel more at ease.”

Before your visit to the OB/GYN make sure to prepare a list of any questions you want to discuss. Dr. Kramer encourages patients to be active participants in their own care. It not only helps patients, but it also gives doctors a chance to clear up any misconceptions patients may have about their health.

For more information on how to find an OB/GYN, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).