

## **FINDING THE RIGHT PEDIATRICIAN**

As a new parent, you will entrust the medical care of the most precious person in your life, your new baby, to the pediatrician. Taking some time now before the rushed weeks of late pregnancy will help to ensure that you get off to a good start as a family with a doctor who trusts your good parenting instincts, while offering sound medical and practical advice when needed.

### **How can I find a good pediatrician?**

Ask friends whose parenting style you admire to recommend one.

Ask your midwife or OB to recommend one.

### **How may I get to know the doctor?**

Speak with the receptionist for initial screening.

Make an appointment to interview the physician.

Be sure to ask if a fee is charged for the interview.

### **What should I consider or ask the doctor?**

#### **Compatibility**

- What is your initial impression?
- Does the doctor take time to answer your questions fully and respectfully?
- Does the doctor "talk down" to you or seem to resent your questions?

#### **Physical Factors**

- Is the office in a convenient and safe location?
- Is a fee charged for parking?
- Is the staff friendly and willing to help?
- Are there separate waiting and or treatment rooms for sick children?
- Is the office "child-friendly"? i.e. low tables, books, toys within reach

#### **Logistics**

- Is the doctor on your HMO/PPO or other insurance plan?
- What are the office hours?
- Are additional fees charged for after hours visits (or Saturdays)?
- How much time is allowed for well child and ill child appointments?  
Are more than 2 children scheduled for each appointment time?
- What policies guide emergencies, which may occur outside office hours?
- Whom do I speak with if I have a question about my child's health?  
(Doctor, nurse-practitioner, nurse, receptionist or answering service?)
- What is covered in a well child discussion?
- With whom do you share call? (Who are your physician partners?)

#### **Emergencies**

- What hospital do you use for emergency situations?

- May I stay with my child round the clock if I desire?
- Who would care for my child while in the hospital, you, or another physician?

### **Education and Personal Experience**

- Are you a parent?

The following information will most likely be posted in the Doctor's office

- Are you certified by the American Board of Pediatrics?
- Are you a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics?
- From which institution did you receive your degrees/residency training?

### **General Impressions**

If you assess your own values and preferences against those of the physician, it may assist you in selecting the right doctor for you and for your child. One suggestion for determining whether a physician is supportive of an issue, is not to tell them of your own personal convictions, rather ask the following question: "I am trying to decide whether to \_\_\_\_\_ (breastfeed, circumcise, bring our baby into our bed, etc.). Can you tell me what you think of it, to better help me to make my decision?" This will encourage the doctor to give their personal opinion rather than telling you what they think you wish to hear.

### **You might consider some of the following views:**

- Breastfeeding - If the doctor tells you that most mothers just don't seem to be able to produce enough milk after the first 6 weeks, you may need to find someone else. Professionals who believe that formula is "just as good as human milk" and breastfeeding, may not help you work through the typical issues you may face and can actually undermine your efforts with incorrect advice.
- Circumcision - This is a topic parents usually have strong feelings about. Be sure to ask the doctor for his or hers.
- Immunizations - Again, parents have strong feelings on this issue. ASK.
- Diapers - Cloth vs Disposable.
- Where baby should sleep?
- Schedules - how soon are they to be expected - are they necessary or helpful?
- Spoiling and other "discipline" issues.
- Employed mothers, if this applies to you.
- Introducing solid foods (at what age).

If your feelings are in tune with those of the doctor, then you can feel more confident as a parent. Relax, and enjoy the challenges that caring for your new child will bring.