



Health Information and Education Center

Preparing Your Child for Visits to the Doctor

When children anticipate "going to the doctor," many become worried and apprehensive about the visit. Whether they are going to see their primary care doctor or a specialist, and whether for a routine exam, illness, or special problem, children are likely to have fears, and some may even feel guilty.

Some fears and guilt feelings surface easily, so that children can talk about them. Others are harbored secretly and remain unspoken. In preparation for a physician's examination, you can help your child express these fears and overcome them.

The most common fears about medical exams include:

- Separation. Children often fear that their parents may leave them in the examining room and wait in another room. The fear of separation from the parents during mysterious examinations is most common in children under age 7, but it may be frightening to older children through ages 12 or 13.
- Pain. Children may worry that a part of the examination or medical procedure will hurt. They especially fear they may need an injection, particularly children ages 6 through 12.
- The Doctor. Unfortunately, one of a child's concerns may be the doctor's manner. A child may misinterpret qualities such as speed, efficiency, or a detached attitude, and read into them sternness, dislike, or rejection.
- The Unknown. Apprehensive about the unknown, children also worry that their problem may be much worse than their parents is telling them. Some who have simple problems suspect they may need surgery or hospitalization: some who are ill worry that they may die.
- As a parent you can help by encouraging your child to express his fears and by addressing them in language that he or she understands and is not likely to misinterpret.

This information was provided by Kids Health. Kids Health is one of the largest resources online for medically reviewed health information written for parents, kids and teens. For more articles like this one, visit www.KidsHealth.org or www.TeensHealth.org

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