

YOUR GUIDE
TO CHOOSING A
PEDIATRICIAN AND HOSPITAL



Children's
HOSPITAL • ST. LOUIS
BJC HealthCare

CHOOSING A PEDIATRICIAN

Take the Guesswork out of Choosing your Child's Doctor

As a parent, perhaps nothing is more important than your child's health. And other than you, no one will be more involved in ensuring good health for your child than your family pediatrician. In the years ahead, your pediatrician will become much more than a person who cares for your child when he or she is sick. They will be a trusted advocate who offers reassurance, advice and guidance throughout your child's years of growth and development.

Most parents and children develop close and lasting relationships with their primary care physician. If you take care to select a pediatrician who matches your personality and needs, working together to watch your child thrive will prove to be an enjoyable experience.



Choosing a Pediatrician

BEGINNING THE SELECTION PROCESS

Before beginning the selection process, you should think about what factors you value most when choosing a pediatrician:

- Is it important for the doctor's office to be close to your home?
Your office? Frequent well baby visits are required during the first two years of life, so choosing a location that is convenient for you can be a major factor in the selection process.
- Does your health insurance plan limit the list of physicians from which to choose?
- Would you feel more confident dealing with an older or a younger doctor?
- Would you prefer a male or female pediatrician?
- Does the doctor speak multiple languages?

When you've determined your preferences, there are several sources you can use to find the names of specific doctors. Your obstetrician, friends and relatives may all have suggestions. You are also welcome to call St. Louis Children's Hospital for assistance with selecting a pediatrician. Whether you'd like to find a primary care physician affiliated with our hospital, or prefer an office based on location, our experienced referral specialists can pair you with a pediatrician who best meets your needs. To speak with a referral specialist, call 314.454.KIDS (5437) or 800.678.KIDS.

TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING PROSPECTIVE PEDIATRICIANS AND STAFF

We suggest scheduling an interview to meet the pediatrician you are considering. This *free* introductory visit will help you determine whether the doctor matches your personality and needs.

When you talk with the doctor, don't be shy about asking questions – pediatricians rarely hear a new one! They also understand how important a child's health is to parents. Suggested questions to ask when interviewing a doctor can be found on the next page.

Choosing a Pediatrician

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE PEDIATRICIAN

- Is the physician certified by the American Board of Pediatrics or other specialty boards?
- Where did the doctor attend medical school and receive postgraduate training?
- How long has the doctor been in practice?
- Are there certain days the doctor sees patients?
- Will the pediatrician come to the hospital where I deliver? (Many pediatricians use Hospitalists to see the newborn, which is a physician who specializes in the hospital patient.)
- When hospitalization is necessary, where does the pediatrician usually admit patients?
- Will the pediatrician personally see the patient if admitted to the preferred hospital? In some instances, a physician may use the Hospitalist to see the patient.
- What other members of the office staff assist the doctor in caring for patients? What are their roles and qualifications?
- What are the doctor's views on breastfeeding and bottle-feeding? Opinions vary, so it may be helpful to have a pediatrician who shares your feelings.
- What are the doctor's views on early childhood development and behavioral issues? These answers may tell you whether your philosophy of child-rearing corresponds with the pediatrician's.

QUESTIONS FOR OFFICE STAFF

A pediatrician should be chosen before the baby is born so an appointment can be made during the third trimester. This is a great opportunity to meet the office staff, as it is not uncommon for parents to talk with a pediatrician's office staff as often as they talk to the doctor. You'll want to feel comfortable with your primary care physician's staff and ask them some important questions about the practice:

- Is this a group or individual practice?
- How long do patients usually wait to see the doctor?
If sick, are they seen the same day?
- Is there a separate waiting area for sick patients?
- What are the office hours? Is the office open on weekends?
- Are there designated phone hours to speak with the doctor?
- Will you be able to speak with a nurse to seek routine information?
- Will your child have a primary physician, or do several doctors and nurse practitioners in the group share patient care responsibilities?
- How are emergencies handled during evening or weekend hours?

CHOOSING A HOSPITAL

Hospitals are Different – Choose the Best for your Child

Finding the right hospital requires parents to make informed decisions. For example, if your child needed care for a sudden emergency, what hospital's physicians, nursing staff and reputation would you trust to treat your child?

There are differences in the pediatric experience and staff from one hospital to another. You'll want to educate yourself on these differences so you can make an informed decision. Your primary care physician can also help with this process. The following pages list some questions for you to consider when choosing a hospital.



Choosing A Hospital

BEGINNING THE SELECTION PROCESS

1. What doctors are affiliated with the hospital?

Children have different needs than adults, so look for physicians who specialize in caring for kids. Physicians at St. Louis Children's Hospital are affiliated with Washington University School of Medicine, ranked among the top medical schools in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*. Our staff consists of some of the most renowned pediatric specialists and surgeons in the country who work with an outstanding group of community pediatricians to foster a seamless culture for excellent patient care.

Convenience is key — especially when your child needs medical attention. Specialized pediatric care by Washington University physicians and St. Louis Children's Hospital nurses are also available at off-site locations, providing you with more options to receive care for your child. Our physicians and nurses provide pediatric coverage in special care nurseries and emergency rooms at Progress West Hospital and Missouri Baptist Medical Center, with additional outpatient services offered at St. Louis Children's Specialty Care Center in Town & Country and St. Louis Children's After Hours in South County.

2. How broad is the range of pediatric services?

Some hospitals only specialize in a handful of pediatric services. At St. Louis Children's Hospital, there is a specialist for every kind of pediatric condition. From bumps and scrapes to intensive care, we handle cases from the most complex heart transplants to ear tubes. And we handle them all in the warm, caring way kids deserve.

3. Do all departments specialize in children?

For some hospitals, pediatrics means a single unit or floor set aside for kids. Every square foot of all 12 floors at St. Louis Children's Hospital is geared towards children. Model trains, colorful butterflies, interactive play areas, fish tanks and rooftop gardens are just a few examples of what you'll find inside our hospital. Every single department at Children's specializes in just one kind of patient — kids.

4. What about the nurses?

St. Louis Children's Hospital has earned a distinction that only about 100 hospitals worldwide have achieved — our third consecutive four-year Magnet® honor for nursing excellence, quality patient care and innovations in professional nursing practice.



Designated by the American Nurses Credentialing Center® (ANCC), such high standards enable a hospital, like a magnet, to attract and retain outstanding nurses in an environment dedicated exclusively to caring for children.

5. What is the hospital's reputation?

St. Louis Children's Hospital is widely recognized as one of the premier pediatric hospitals in the United States. Each of Children's Hospital's specialties is consistently ranked among the finest in the nation. Founded in 1879, we are the oldest children's hospital west of the Mississippi. Over 275,000 children are seen at our hospital every year.



WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH, EVERY QUESTION IS IMPORTANT.

Moms and dads have hundreds of questions about their child's health and development:

- What should you do if your child develops a fever, cough, vomiting, rash, sore throat or head injury?
- When can your child return to school or child care after an illness?
- What should you do about behavioral issues, from toilet training to teaching responsibility to teenagers?



Health problems can arise anytime – evenings, weekends, when you're at work or traveling or your doctor's office is closed. When you need answers right away, we have an app for that, and it's free!

Kid Care guidelines help you make decisions on what level of medical care (if any) is needed and how to treat your child at home when it's safe to do so. You can select from more than 100 pediatric topics and search from an alphabetical list or by body area.

The app is free for iPhone and Android and may be downloaded from iTunes, Google Play or from our website, StLouisChildrens.org/app.

To have information sent to you about your child's health, wellness or developmental stage, contact the Family Resource Center at St. Louis Children's Hospital. Visit StLouisChildrens.org/frc to request health information.

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ST. LOUIS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

One Children's Place
St. Louis, Missouri 63110

314.454.KIDS (5437)
800.678.KIDS (5437)

StLouisChildrens.org



St. Louis Children's Hospital and Washington University Physicians comply with applicable federal civil rights laws and do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex.

Atención: hay servicios de asistencia de idiomas disponibles a su disposición sin costo.
Llame al 314-747-5682 (TTY: 1-800-735-2966).

注意：免费提供语言协助服务，如有需要敬请致电 314-747-5682 (TTY: 1-800-735-2966)。