

Why You Need Primary Care and a Gynecologist



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HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU SEE YOUR OBGYN? THE GENERAL RECOMMENDATION IS THAT MOST WOMEN VISIT THEIR GYNECOLOGIST AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR. THESE ANNUAL VISITS ARE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE REGULAR SCREENINGS AND TESTS TO KEEP YOU IN GOOD HEALTH.

It's tempting, however, to see an overlap between the annual exam provided by your OBGYN and the yearly wellness visit paid to your primary care doctor. They're both looking out for your overall wellbeing, so why can't you choose one or the other?

The services that your OBGYN will provide are essential for your health. And you're more likely to experience a better outcome and higher-quality sustained care when you visit both your primary care physician and your gynecologist every year.

KNOWING WHEN TO SCHEDULE YOUR OBGYN APPOINTMENT

An OBGYN is a specialized medical doctor that focuses on women's reproductive health. It's important to clarify that for women, "reproductive health" impacts far more than simply your ability to have children. Rather, your reproductive health is an essential and inextricable component of your overall wellness.

As a result, annual "well-woman" visits to your OBGYN are strongly recommended. During these visits, your OBGYN will screen for conditions and concerns that have a larger and broader impact on your overall health.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR OBGYN APPOINTMENT

A typical annual visit to your OBGYN will consist of the following:

1. **Breast exam:** This screening will look for lumps, discharges, or other signs of concern.
2. **Pap smear:** This routine test is an early screening for cervical cancer.
3. **Pelvic exam:** Your OBGYN will screen for growths or abnormalities around your vagina, vulva, cervix, and pelvis.
4. **Current health check:** Your OBGYN will run diagnostics and ask specific questions designed to gauge and document your general health and wellbeing.

You can also see your OBGYN if you're having specific health issues related to your reproductive health. For example, an OBGYN will be able to help you with birth control options or with pregnancy planning if you're trying to have a baby.

Generally, it's recommended that you see an OBGYN annually if any of the following apply to you:

1. You are at least 21 years of age or are sexually active.
2. You have chronic sexual or reproductive healthy issues.
3. You have a previous or current medical condition that requires periodic screenings, tests, or treatment.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN OBGYN APPOINTMENT

There are some things you can do to help your annual OBGYN visit (sometimes called a well-woman visit) go a little bit more quickly and smoothly. In general, you can help prepare for your exam by:

1. Being ready to discuss your medical history. This is especially true if it's your first OBGYN appointment in a while.



Your OBGYN has specialized training when it comes to pelvic exams and reproductive health. And, of course, if you're pregnant, your OBGYN will become a critical part of your care team.

CAN'T YOUR PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN DO ALL THAT?

There are some things that your primary care doctor can do which your OBGYN will be less well equipped to handle and vice versa. In general, you'll want to see your primary care physician for issues such as:

1. Heart health
2. Skin conditions
3. General illness
4. Respiratory health
5. Neurological issues

2. Detailing your surgical history. Your OBGYN will want to know when you've had surgery in the past (if at all).
3. Getting ready to discuss your past cancer screenings, including cervical cancer screenings and mammograms designed to detect breast cancer.
4. Discussing your immunizations (and providing the dates of when you had those immunizations).

WHAT HAPPENS DURING YOUR VISIT?

Your well-woman visit is designed to address specific women's and reproductive health issues. In most cases, this means screening for health conditions and addressing any concerns you may have. Most visits will include a physical exam as well as a general consultation and discussion.

In general, you can expect your annual wellness visit with an OBGYN to cover the following topics:

1. **Methods for cancer prevention:** This could include lifestyle changes you can make, but also regular screenings you may want to undergo. Some of these screenings can be performed by your OBGYN.
2. **Fertility treatments:** Your OBGYN will be able to perform exams, address fertility issues, and recommend therapies designed to help you conceive. Your OBGYN may also be able to refer you to a sub specialist.
3. **Birth control needs:** There are multiple forms of birth control available. Your OBGYN will be able to help you determine the right fit for you and, if necessary, the best way to change methods.
4. **Sexually transmitted infection prevention and treatment:** During your visit, you can be screened for STIs. Your OBGYN will also discuss prevention and treatment.

Your primary care doctor will also run blood work and refer you to other specialists you may need to see. Most physicians recommend that you see your primary care doctor annually to handle your general health concerns. Between your primary care doctor and your OBGYN, you'll be in a good position to stay healthy and happy!

SEE YOUR OBGYN TODAY

Your OBGYN can offer specialized care designed to keep your reproductive system—and therefore you—healthy. Every woman is going to be different and require individualized care. So if you have questions about when you should make your next OBGYN appointment—or what your OBGYN can do for you—contact Yankton Medical Clinic to schedule a one-on-one consultation.

