

Physical changes during Puberty —
menstruation
Lesson 6

Grades
4th & 5th

A Trip to the Gynecologist

In this lesson we will discuss a girl's first trip to the gynecologist.

Materials needed: journals, 3x5 cards, and mailbox.

Today you will need your journals, question cards, and the packets I handed out during the last lesson.

Side Note: Give them a bit of time to get out their things. Make sure you have a few extra copies of the Petite Amie Menstruation Pamphlet on hand in case someone forgot theirs.

I'd like you to open your journals to a new page. Put the date in the top right hand corner (or however you have your students head their papers). I want you to write "When I go to my adult doctor for the first time, I will..." Write about how you think you will feel when you first go to an adult woman's doctor, and what you think will happen while you are there. Write about anything you think might happen. If you have any questions that didn't get answered yesterday, write them down, so you won't forget them when it is time to write on the question cards. Remember, I want you to keep writing for the entire 3 minutes. Go.

Side Note: Give the girls 3 minutes to write. At the end of 3 minutes, tell them to finish the sentence they are writing and put their pencils down.

If you have more to write, you can do it at the end of this session. But leave space that you think you'll need.


Does anyone want to share what you've written?

Side Note: Try to get at least three girls to read out loud from their journals.

You may get comments such as:

- ◆ I hope my grown up doctor is a girl
- ◆ Do you have to get naked for a grown up doctor?
- ◆ What if you don't want a boy doctor? Can you change?
- ◆ Will I have to put my legs up in those hooky things?
- ◆ Will the doctor touch me all over?



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- ◆ Do they have to touch me down there?
 - ◆ Will I go to the same doctor my mom goes to?
 - ◆ Will I ever see my old doctor again?
 - ◆ Do grown ups have to get shots?
 - ◆ Do women and men have different doctors when they're grown ups?

As they tell you what they wrote, list their points on the board. Let them know that you will try to answer all of their questions in your lecture today. As you address each one, cross it off on the board.

Can anyone tell me what an obstetrician or gynecologist is?

Side Note: Take some brainstorming answers. Don't let them struggle too long. Hopefully, some of them have read ahead in their pamphlets and will know the answer.

An obstetrician is a doctor who specializes in caring for pregnant women and delivering babies. A gynecologist is a doctor who specializes in women's health. Often, they will be called ob-gyn doctors, for short. Doctors specializing in Family Practice or Internal Medicine also specialize in women's health. You will begin to see one of these kinds of doctors on a regular basis as you become a woman. You might also see a nurse practitioner. These are nurses that have had special training in order to give gynecological exams. The governing body of these doctors, The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that girls have their first gynecologic exam between the ages of 13 and 15.

When you have your first visit with your new doctor, your mom can, and probably should, go with you. This may or may not help if you are nervous. In any case, you will have a hand to hold. The doctor will determine if your body has developed as normally for your age group. If you haven't started puberty, your doctor will help you determine what's going on. He or she will also ask you and your mom about your family health history.

You probably won't have an internal, or pelvic, exam during your first gynecological visit. The gynecologist will, however, check the thyroid gland in your neck for unusual growth or lumps and listen to your lungs. A breast exam will also be done if you've developed breasts.

If this is the case, you'll be asked to put on a paper sheet or gown, and the doctor will only uncover the parts of your body he or she will be examining. The doctor will examine you by lightly pressing on different places around your breasts. After finishing, he or she will probably show you how to examine your own breasts. This will help you learn how your breasts feel so you know in the future which lumps are normal and which are new or have changed.

First and foremost, your gynecologist should have a discussion time with you and your mom, and answer any questions you may have about personal issues like your periods, breast discomfort and other issues. If you feel embarrassed to ask some questions in front of your mom, ask if you can talk to him or her by yourself for a while. Do any of you think you could ask for this?

What if you knew that you would be with the same doctor you've been seeing for years? Many pediatricians perform gynecologic exams and advise teens about puberty. So you may be able to see the doctor you already know and are comfortable with for your first gynecologic exam.

Whether you want to see a male or female gynecologist will be totally up to you. Some girls prefer being examined by a doctor or nurse who is a woman because they feel like they can talk more openly about

women's health issues and sexuality. Other girls feel more comfortable being examined by a male doctor or nurse. If this is the case for you, he will probably have a female assistant in the room during all parts of your exam.

Most importantly, you should feel comfortable with the doctor or nurse examining you. You should be able to talk with him or her about anything that has to do with your health and issues related to puberty.

When you are scheduled for an internal pelvic exam or pap smear, you will have a sheet or gown over you, and the gynecologist will have you lie down with her feet placed in stirrups for the examination. It will feel awkward, but all women feel this way initially until they get more comfortable, and the examination is necessary to screen for many medical problems. The exam should not be painful, but you will experience some brief discomfort. The whole thing only lasts a few minutes. If you are scared about going to the doctor by yourself have your mom go in the exam room you.

Now, I'd like you to find a clean page in your journal. And I want you to write about what kind of doctor, or nurse, you'd like to have do your first gynecological exam. I'd also like you to write about how you think you'll feel. Will you want your mom to come with you? Do you think you'll feel comfortable asking the doctor or nurse questions? I'm going to give you a few minutes to get started on this. But you will finish it tonight for homework. If you have any questions from today's lecture that you don't want to ask out loud, take this time to write them down on one of your blank question cards.

Side Note: Give the girls 3-4 minutes to write, and then ask them to stop so you have time to answer questions.

I am going to pass around the mailbox for your question cards now. If you have a question, put your folded card into it. I will collect the mailbox after it gets to everyone.

Side Note: When it reaches the last student, ask her to bring you the box. Look through the questions and choose any that you think are relevant to today's discussion.

You may have questions like:

- ◆ **Do they have to touch your breasts?**
- ◆ **Do I have to have a gynecological exam?**
- ◆ **Why?**
- ◆ **Can I wait till I'm older to have one? Like when I'm in college?**



Make sure you give basic answers to all of the questions. If you feel comfortable answering questions about yourself, do so. But if you don't, just shuffle them in with the 'no question' cards.

The girls may begin to raise their hands to get other questions answered that have been raised by those from the mailbox. Go ahead and answer those at this time.

Don't forget to finish writing tonight about your feelings about going to a gynecologist. The other piece of your homework is to talk to your mom, grandma, or older sister (at least a teenager) about going to a gynecologist. Do you all think you can do this? If you don't, I want you to write about why you don't feel comfortable in asking.

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