



Choosing Your Baby's Provider

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that every infant with special healthcare needs have a medical home. They use the term *medical home* to describe an individual or team of providers that is prepared to coordinate the many needs of infants in a way that is family-centered and culturally effective, while providing education and making use of community resources (American Academy of Pediatrics, n.d.).

All infants need a healthcare provider or group to be their primary care provider and provide the services of a medical home. Depending on where the infant lives and what his or her care needs are, this provider may be a pediatrician, a physician who provides family care, or a nurse practitioner. When an infant is born prematurely, parents may not have had time to choose a primary care provider. Parents should begin their search as early as possible and meet the primary care provider before discharge, if possible. When picking a provider, parents should consider the following issues:

- Does the provider accept their insurance or form of payment? Are they accepting new patients?
- Where is the provider located? Does the family have appropriate transportation to reach the provider?
- Does the provider understand the parents' culture and beliefs? Is the provider easily able to communicate with the parents?

- Does the provider have the knowledge and skills to care for the infant? Is the provider willing to coordinate potentially complex care needs? With which hospitals is the provider affiliated? With which hospitals are they on staff and can provide in-patient care if needed?
- Does the provider have separate "sick" and "well" waiting areas, or does the provider schedule fragile patients at specific times?
- How long does it take to get an appointment? What if the parents just need advice? Is there a "nurse line" parents can call with questions?
- Does the provider offer lactation support after discharge through the office?
- Will parents always see their primary care provider?
- How do caregivers contact the provider after hours or on weekends?

Reference

American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). National Center for Medical Home Implementation. Retrieved September 22, 2012, from www.medicalhome.com

Bibliography

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Choosing Your Baby's Doctor When Going Home: Information for Parents

Picking a doctor to care for your baby after you have gone home is an important decision. You may need to see this person often, and you will be dependent on him or her for advice, medical care, and help as you coordinate your baby's care. Start looking for a doctor before your baby is ready to go home. This will give you time to find someone you are comfortable working with to make taking your baby home less stressful.

Here are some things to consider when picking a doctor:

- What types of doctors have offices close to your home? Are there pediatricians, family practice doctors, or nurse practitioners?
- How far are you willing to travel to see a doctor? Ask your baby's nurse what kind of special care your baby might need when he or she goes home.
- Consider asking friends and family for suggestions. The social worker in the NICU also might be able to help you identify a few doctors to consider.

Here are some questions to ask potential doctors:

- Is the doctor on your insurance plan? Is the doctor accepting new patients?
- Can you set up an appointment and meet the doctor before bringing your baby home?
- Does the doctor have experience caring for babies with your child's conditions, such as prematurity, feeding

problems, or lung issues? Is the doctor comfortable coordinating the specialty care your child may need after going home?

- Does the doctor have separate "sick" and "well" waiting areas or another way to make sure your baby stays well while at the office?
- With which hospitals is the doctor working? Will they care for your baby if he or she has to be admitted to the hospital again?
- What are the doctor's hours? If the doctor is part of a group, do you always see your own doctor or nurse practitioner? How long is a typical appointment? Are weekend hours available?
- What if you need to talk with someone after hours? Does the doctor offer a "nurse line" for questions?
- How are emergency calls handled?
- While you are breastfeeding, is there someone at the office who can help you with questions or provide support?

Discussing these topics with your doctor before bringing your baby home can help you feel more comfortable with your doctor and make coming home less stressful. Don't forget to schedule your first appointment within a few days of going home. Once you choose your doctor and make your appointment, be sure to give that information to the NICU team so they can share information about your baby with your new doctor.