



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

Iannelli, V. (2008, 3 10). Choosing a Pediatrician. Retrieved January 30, 2013, from http://pediatrics.about.com/od/choosingapediatrician/a/07_choosing_ped.htm