

GYNECOLOGICAL CARE

for Teens

You might think your teenage daughter doesn't need to see a women's health provider until she is older. But establishing this relationship at a young age sets her up for good health as she matures.

In addition to answering questions about her changing body, a gynecologist can help your teen deal with period pain and other concerns she has. And while your teen may not want to talk to you about sex, a women's health provider can answer any questions she has about sex, sexuality and gender identity. A gynecologist can also help your teen learn about birth control options and offer testing for sexually transmitted diseases.

[Make an appointment for your teen's first gynecological exam](#) at Beaufort Memorial.



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Your Daughter's First Gynecology Visit

A girl's first visit with a women's health provider raises questions for parents and teens alike. We've answered some of the most common to help you and your child navigate the appointment.



WHEN SHOULD TEENAGERS HAVE THEIR FIRST APPOINTMENT?

According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, teenage girls should have their first gynecology visit between ages 13 and 15.

Your daughter's pediatrician can address some gynecological complaints, but a dedicated women's health provider can help with issues such as extremely painful or [heavy periods](#), lower abdominal pain, or unusual vaginal discharge.

WHAT WILL THE DOCTOR TALK ABOUT?

Your daughter's provider will want to know when your daughter had her last period and whether she experiences pain or heavy bleeding during her cycle. The provider will also ask questions about her general health and whether she is sexually active. The provider can also offer advice about acne and will give your daughter the chance to ask any questions she might have.

Before your daughter heads into the exam room, ask her if she would like you to sit in. It might be a good idea to give her some time alone with the provider so she feels less self-conscious about asking and answering questions.

WHAT PHYSICAL EXAMS WILL TAKE PLACE?

Most girls do not need a pelvic exam at their first appointment. These exams usually start at age 21, as do Pap tests, which screen for cervical cancer. Instead, the first visit will likely be a conversation that focuses on the topics mentioned above.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

After the visit, talk with your daughter about how it went and if she felt at ease with the provider. You want her to feel comfortable so she has a trusted provider whom she can visit when period problems and other health concerns develop.

Need a provider for your teenager? [Request an appointment](#) with a women's health provider in Beaufort or Okatie.

NEED A PROVIDER?

The following Beaufort Memorial providers have a special interest in teen gynecological care:

Eve Ashby, D.O.
Okatie and Port Royal



Tiffany Bersani, M.D.
Beaufort and Okatie



Marlena Mattingly Masavage, M.D., FACOG
Beaufort and Okatie



Catherine Tambroni-Parker, CNM
Beaufort



Soldrea Thompson, M.D., FACOG, MBA
Beaufort and Okatie



4 Common Gynecologic Problems in Teens

Your teen isn't exempt from developing a painful gynecological condition. Learn to spot these four health problems many girls face during adolescence.

No matter how healthy and active your teen is, it's important to recognize the warning signs of [common gynecologic problems](#). Here are some of the health issues she may face:

1. Anemia can develop if your teen has heavy menstrual periods.

- Possible signs: Pale appearance, fatigue, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, jaundice (yellow tint to skin and eyes)

2. Period problems are common in women of all ages, including teens.

- Possible signs: Heavy bleeding, irregular bleeding, missed periods, severe cramping or other premenstrual symptoms

3. Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) become a risk as soon as your teen begins having sex.

- Possible signs: Unusual discharge, genital sores, pain in the lower belly, unusual bleeding, painful ulcers, fever, rash

4. Unusual vaginal discharge could signify yeast infections and other conditions.

- Possible signs: Vaginal itching, unusual bleeding, changes in discharge (odor, color or texture)

Tip: Establish communication with your daughter from a young age. The earlier you start having conversations that may feel uncomfortable or awkward, the easier it will be for your child to trust you through her teen years. Make sure she knows you have her best interest in mind, and she can confide in you about any unusual health symptoms.

Breast Development and Your Teen

Talk to your daughter about the development of her breasts during puberty.

If you are the parent of a young girl age 8 to 13, chances are she is going through the physical and emotional changes associated with puberty. The development of breast buds is one of the first signs that puberty has arrived.

When breast development begins, your daughter may have a lot of questions about how to manage this occurrence. Be open and honest as you provide her with the information she is seeking. Some of the questions you may hear include:

Q. MY BREASTS HURT. IS THIS NORMAL?

A. Soreness underneath the nipples is totally normal. While the developing tissue in this area is firm and tender at first, it will become less painful as breasts continue to grow.

Q. WHY DOES ONE SIDE LOOK LARGER THAN THE OTHER?

A. As breasts develop, one is usually a little larger than the other.

The difference in size will be less noticeable as time passes.

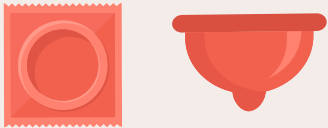
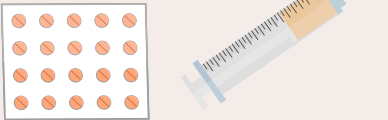
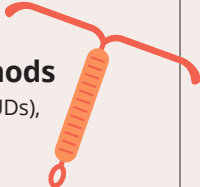
Q. HOW LARGE WILL MY BREASTS BECOME?

A. Breast size is different for every girl, and it can depend on her weight and her mother's breast size. Some girls may develop breasts very quickly. For others, breast development may continue into young adulthood.



BIRTH CONTROL for Teenagers

Parents may feel uncomfortable discussing birth control with their daughters, but it does more than prevent pregnancies. Here's a breakdown of options and how they can help your teen.

TYPE	PROS	CONS
Barrier methods Condoms, diaphragms, sponge, cervical cap 	• Inexpensive • Widely available • Prevent STDs	• Can break during sex • May cause irritation or allergic reaction • Must be used every time you have sex
Short-acting hormonal methods Pills, the patch, the shot, vaginal ring 	• May help with painful periods • May clear acne	• May cause uncomfortable symptoms • Must be taken or replaced regularly, which may be difficult for some teens to remember • Do not prevent STDs
Long-acting reversible methods Intrauterine devices (IUDs), hormonal implants 	• Last several years after insertion • May protect against cervical cancer	• May cause uncomfortable symptoms • Must be inserted and removed by a physician • Do not prevent STDs

Your teen can speak with a women's health provider about which birth control method is best for her. [Request an appointment.](#)



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