

What parents can learn from well child visits

By William Hong

An important part of keeping children healthy is to bring them to a pediatrician or a family physician – not just when they are feeling ill, but also when they are feeling well. These well child visits take a holistic approach to caring for your child's health and provide significant benefits for parents to consider:

Medical: Your child's physician will conduct a thorough physical examination. They will discuss any medical conditions that your child may have and ensure that your child's conditions and medications are being appropriately managed.

Development: Your healthcare provider can evaluate your child's growth and development to ensure that they are meeting age-appropriate milestones. They will inform you about what to expect regarding development as your child gets older. For more information, consider checking out the free online parent resource published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called "Learn the Signs. Act Early."

Safety: As safety is of critical importance to any parent, your provider can provide valuable and age-specific recommendations to help keep your child safe both within and outside the home.

Prevention: An important aspect of keeping your child healthy is to prevent illness when possible. Well child visits help keep your child up-to-date on immunizations. Your provider can answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding immunizations or other healthy habits that may help prevent illness.

Diet: Whether it is breastfeeding, formula feeding or regular food on the dinner table, your provider can provide you information on ways to feed your child an age-appropriate, healthy diet to nourish growing body and mind.

Activity: Well child visits are a great opportunity to evaluate your child's activity. You can receive guidance on keeping your child appropriately active with play, sports, exercise and reducing screen time.

Sleep: Adequate sleep is fundamental to your child's health and development. Your child's doctor can evaluate issues that may be interfering with your child achieving quality sleep and provide recommendations as needed.

Mental health: Mental health is a critical component of your child's health and development. Your child's doctor can evaluate and provide recommendations, guidance and support for any mental health challenges that your child may be facing. They can also connect you and your child to pediatric counselors or other mental health professionals if needed.

School: School plays a critical role in the health and development of your child. Well child visits provide an opportunity for your provider to listen to any concerns regarding school performance

whether academic or social. Your child's doctor can provide recommendations and direct parents to additional support as needed.

Parenting: Well child visits are not only about your children. Making sure parents are also doing well and staying healthy is an important part of monitoring your child's health. Well child visits can provide guidance on maintaining your well-being while connecting with and raising your child.

Annual well child visits help ensure that your child can enjoy a happy, fun, healthy and productive year. If it has been at least one year since the last checkup, consider scheduling a visit soon.

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