



Yearly Physicals

July 2016

A frequently asked question that I receive every year before the start of the school year is why does my child need a yearly physical even if he or she is not sick? A yearly physical is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics for children over 3 to 21 years of age and is key to monitoring and maintaining comprehensive health care for children and adolescents. As summer comes to a screeching halt, there is a checklist of things for parents to complete before the start of another school year. High priority items include shopping for school clothes/supplies, completing school forms, and scheduling your child's yearly physicals. This is a very good and convenient time to schedule a yearly well exam. A yearly physical performed by your child's pediatrician is a very important aspect of your child's health care for several reasons.

As children get older, they grow and change a great deal from year to year. Even though the visits to their doctor get less frequent, once per year, they remain an important part of monitoring and promoting good health.



The doctors at our clinic are experts in child health, nutrition, development, growth, and assessment. The yearly physical or well exam is done by your child's pediatrician who knows your child's medical history and family history best. He or

she has had a long-standing relationship with your child

and has both you and your child's trust and confidence. The physical is a complete examination of your child from top to bottom. We allow extra time to do a thorough exam and also look at areas which are typically not evaluated during sick visits. Annual physicals give your child's pediatrician the opportunity to evaluate his/her growth development, review and update immunizations, assess existing medical conditions, review medication list, and address any health concerns or questions you or your child may have. Additionally, age-appropriate screening tests such as blood pressure, vision and hearing, or scoliosis may be performed at this time along with any needed laboratory tests such as lead poisoning, tuberculosis, anemia, glucose, cholesterol, etc.

Since obesity is rising rapidly with a subsequent rise in coronary artery disease and diabetes, healthy eating habits and exercise will be addressed and encouraged. Early intervention may help prevent future difficulties in this age group. Questions parents have concerning child's health, nutrition, and normal development will be addressed during the well visit. Seeing your child on a regular basis helps us know you and your child better. During a well visit, your child's medical history and family history are updated and recorded. This gives us a more complete record of past illnesses, hospitalizations, ER visits, immunizations, lab tests, specialist correspondences, etc. We can monitor his/her development and growth and watch for any potential deviations from the normal track. We will keep you informed of current recommendations so that you can make the best choices for your child's health year to year.

Depression, anxiety, school difficulties, peer relationship problems, and ADHD can have significant effect on your child's well-being now and in the future. Appropriate diagnosis and referrals to specialists and therapy can help your child through difficult times and improve well-being.

If your child participates in sports, a current physical examination is required by many sports institution. We do believe that is a very important requirement. Our pediatricians are not able to complete a sports health form unless we performed the evaluation. Also, our pediatricians will address sport-specific injuries and prevention strategies during that visit.

During the well child visit your pediatrician will recommend immunizations based on the guidelines set by the Committee on immunization practices. Your doctor may also recommended needed laboratory tests (TB, cholesterol, lead, anemia, etc.) vision and hearing screening, and developmental/behavior assessments based on the guidelines established by the American Academy Pediatrics schedule known as the Bright Futures recommendation, for preventative health care.

The yearly physical is preventative and meant to discover any potential problem in the child's physical or developmental health. As the pediatrician is able to regularly evaluate your child year to year, recognize your child's normal exam, he or she may be able to distinguish anything that is not quite right. Abnormalities, fortunately, are rare in the pediatric population. However, heart disease, hernias, tumors, and abnormal growth patterns all can occur in pediatrics. With regular examinations, these conditions may be picked up earlier and intervention initiated or referred to pediatric specialists for further evaluation and management.



Our goal is to partner with parents to help give our patients the best chance at being healthy physically, emotionally and mentally.

If you would like to schedule an appointment with any of our physicians at Pediatric and Adolescent Center, please call 281-374-9700.