

GYNECOLOGICAL CARE

PATIENT BROCHURE



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO GO TO THE GYNECOLOGIST ANNUALLY?

This fact sheet has been created for women with cerebral palsy to provide answers to some common questions about CP, disability, and gynecological care. Women with disabilities face barriers to gynecological care due to a number of factors such as lack of knowledge and skills among providers, inadequate office settings and the amount of time providers are able to spend with patients with disabilities.

You can also print out the patient checklist to take with you to your appointment.

PRE-APPOINTMENT PLANNING

Seeing your provider each year is important for maintaining your health. Screening for cancer, getting vaccinations, discussing weight control, birth control and issues with your menstrual period are important topics that should be evaluated annually. In addition, conversations about preconception counseling and general health screenings for diabetes, and osteoporosis are all reasons to see your healthcare provider on a regular basis.

If you are planning to become pregnant, it is a good idea to have preconception counseling. Your OBGYN or health care provider will ask about diet and life style, your medical and family history, medications you take, and any past pregnancies.

WHAT QUESTIONS DO I NEED TO ASK WHEN SCHEDULING AN APPOINTMENT?

- What are the accessible parking and transportation options?
- Is the building accessible?
- Will my wheelchair fit in the exam room?
- Do you have exam tables that raise and lower?
- What should I bring with me?
 - Medical records, insurance cards, pictures of pill bottles, brief medical history.
- Why is the time of day important when scheduling an appointment?
 - Scheduling an appointment at a time when you tend to feel less tired or when your spasticity may be decreased can make for a more successful appointment
- Additionally, having an extra pair of hands to assist with the exam can be helpful, so when scheduling you can plan to have your appointment on a day when there will be extra available staff to assist.

DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

Before your exam begins, you can speak to your healthcare provider about what you can expect to happen during your appointment. If this is your first time meeting with this provider, you can request the appointment take place in two parts, the first appointment being an informational appointment, and ask him/her to walk you through what will happen during the exam, and ask for another appointment for the medical exam.

DRESSING & PRIVACY

- If you need assistance with dressing and undressing, let your provider know. Wearing clothing that is easy to remove can be helpful. Additionally, share any privacy considerations.
- It's important to discuss positioning concerns and mobility issues such as range of motion, spasticity, and startle reflexes. There are many alternate exam positions available (see pictures below). If you have any methods of comfort or relaxation that will work, let your doctor know.

THE PROCEDURE

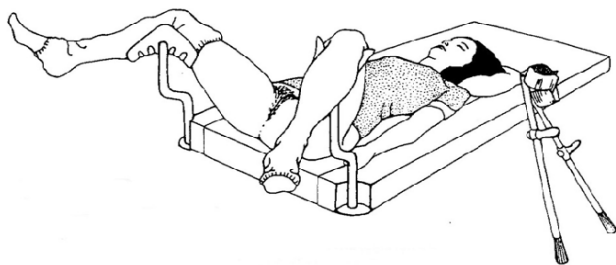
- Use of a smaller speculum, numbing jelly prior to the exam, or performing the exam blindly (not using a speculum) can improve comfort of the exam. Also, be sure to discuss relaxation techniques that you know have worked for you in the past.
- Review your preferred method of communication (email, calls, patient portal, etc..) before you leave the office and discuss any referrals or follow up appointments that you will need.

TIP!

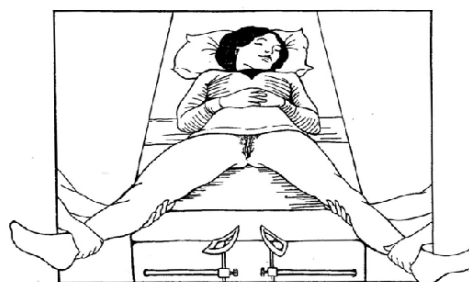
Ask friends, test out an OBGYN and make sure the provider is a good fit for you.

Contact disability organizations to see if they have recommendations for local providers

POSITIONING



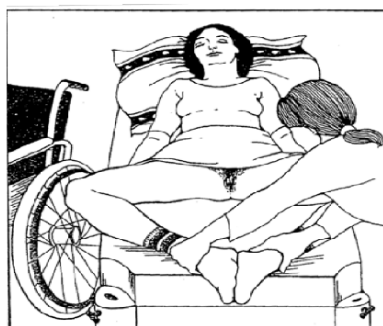
OB STIRRUP



V POSITION



SIDE-LYING KNEE-CHEST



DIAMOND POSITION



M POSITION

WHAT CAN I EXPECT AFTER MY APPOINTMENT?

YOU SHOULD CONTACT YOUR PROVIDER IF:

- You're unclear about anything, if you have questions or concerns, if you have new or lingering symptoms, and if you need to discuss test results.

TIP!

Add a reminder to your calendar 6 months ahead to schedule your next annual exam

DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



CerebralPalsyFoundation.org



columbiaobgyn.org

WEINBERG FAMILY
CEREBRAL PALSY CENTER

weinberg.cuimc.columbia.edu

For more information, please visit yourcpf.org/womens-health