

What to Expect For Your First Annual Gynecological Exam

Going to the gynecologist isn't something women eagerly anticipate. The anxiety and discomfort women feel is increased when it's their first annual exam. There are a few things to keep in mind before having your first annual exam.

How should I prepare for my exam?

The most important thing to do before your first gynecological exam is research. Women should be prepared to discuss their family medical history and be ready for questions about their menstrual cycle. Some of the most commonly asked questions your provider may ask include:

- When was your last period?
- How long does your period typically last?
- What age did you start your period?
- Are you sexually active?

What should I expect for my annual exam?

The pelvic exam only lasts a few minutes and the exam itself doesn't hurt. Most physicians will explain the process before beginning the exam, asking questions throughout the process is encouraged. The pelvic exam consists of the following steps:

- Your doctor will typically begin the annual exam with a breast exam to check for lumps that may be a sign of cancer.
- Your physician will then check the external genital area for irritations, cysts or other problems.
- Next, the physician will insert a speculum, which is an instrument that is used to examine the cervix and vaginal walls. During this time, the doctor will also conduct a pap smear to check for cancerous and pre-cancerous cells.
- The last step in the physical exam is for the physician to check the uterus, fallopian tubes and ovaries by inserting gloved fingers into the vagina and pressing on the abdomen.

Not only does the annual exam ensure that you maintain good gynecological health, but it is also an opportunity for you to catch health problems in the early stages.

If it's time to schedule your annual exam, please contact our office.