

# How to choose a pediatrician

By Kristi Wees

Choosing a doctor can be a daunting task for even the most savvy of adults. So when it comes to choosing a doctor for our own child, many of us feel completely overwhelmed. Where do I start? Right here.

**Determine what you are looking for in a pediatric provider.** In other words what is on your wish list. Are you a mom who works during the day and really needs the convenience of a doctor who has evening hours? Are you a dad who would prefer your child see the same doctor at every visit and therefore prefer a smaller practice? Write these “wishes” down in a prioritized list with your top three to five must haves.

**Start asking around.** Other parents are a tremendous wealth of information. Ask your neighbors, other moms, people at your church or work if they have any referrals, even online community Facebook groups can be a place to inquire. Make a short list of four to six names that you receive, making special note of those pediatrician’s names you hear more than once.

**Check with your insurance.** You will get the “biggest bang” for your insurance



“buck” if you find a pediatrician who is “in-network” with your insurance provider. To figure out if the pediatricians on your referral list are in-network call the number on the back of your insurance card (usually member services number). Many insurance companies also have online systems on their website where you can look this info up, but it may require a user name and log in.

**Internet research.** Once you have narrowed down your list to those covered by insurance, it is time to dig a bit deeper and do a little Internet research. Google the names on your list and peruse what

you find. You may find their practice website which may answer many questions (sometimes found on the FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions section) or you may come across a review site where other parents have written the good or bad experiences they have had with this practitioner. Heed caution, knowing that everything you read on the Internet may or may not be true, so it is a good idea to verify if you can.

**Schedule a free consultation.** Depending on the age of the child, this next step may look different for different families. You may be looking for a pediatrician because you are expecting your first child or you may be looking for a new pediatrician for your 12-year-old because your doctor retired.

For new parents or parents to be, many doctors offices will schedule a free consultation (usually 15-20 minutes) to meet with the pediatrician to see if they are a “good fit” for your family. This is a wonderful time to ask about your top “wishes”. If you feel comfortable with this doctor after the consult, call back to schedule your baby’s first appointment with them. If your child is older, some offices won’t offer this free consult but instead they will schedule you with the doctor of your choosing for your child’s next well visit. Use this visit to ask all your questions and if you find this doctor does not meet your expectations, consider seeing a new physician the next check-up.

Above all, the most important thing to remember is that you must feel comfortable AND confident in your choice. If after a few visits you do not feel confident in the care your child is receiving, then it is ok to politely inquire about your concerns and if need be, seek a new doctor. Finding a pediatrician that considers you, the parent or caregiver, an integral PART of your child’s team (known as a family-centered model of care) is being embraced by more and more pediatric practices

continued on page 36

**RIVER PEDIATRIC THERAPIES**

OT • PT • SPEECH  
SCHOOL SERVICES • BEHAVIORAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS  
EACH STEP COUNTS!

Proud to work with:  
**ACHIEVA**

Give us a call today to schedule an appointment  
**412.767.5967**

Providing outstanding therapy to children of all ages.

Speech Therapy · Physical Therapy · Occupational Therapy · Aqua Therapy  
· School Services · Social Groups · Behavioral & Psychological Evaluations  
· Interactive Metronome Therapy · Free Down Syndrome  
Play Groups · Free River Client Play Groups

**Fox Chapel | Cranberry | Monroeville**

**(412) 767-5967 | www.RiverPediatric.com**