

Looking for an ob/gyn? Here's how

December 29 2023, by Cara Murez



It's important to find the right OB-GYN to guide you through some of life's greatest joys and troubles.

An obstetrician-gynecologist works with [women](#) through [family planning](#), pregnancy, childbirth, aging, menopause and sometimes life-threatening diseases. It's important that your personalities mesh.

"You have to feel comfortable sharing intimate details of your life with this person," said [Dr. Laura Hunter](#), an OB-GYN at Penn State Health Obstetrics and Gynecology and Penn State Health Lancaster Medical Center. "If you don't, you should find a different doctor."

A physician can be either an obstetrician or a gynecologist, but many specialize in both. They may work in private practice, through a [health care system](#) or in a hospital, women's health clinic or birthing center.

When searching for a new OB-GYN, it's important to double check your [insurance coverage](#). Looking for someone in your insurer's list of network providers boosts the odds that your insurance will cover the doctor's services. The insurance company's website should have a list of providers.

Choose an office near your home or work.

Make sure the OB-GYN has practice privileges at the hospital you plan to use.

You can come up with a list of candidates and then read about their education, training, experience and areas of expertise in online biographies.

Use the American Board of Medical Specialties' Certification Matters tool to verify that the doctor is board-certified.

"Call the local hospital with an obstetrics unit and ask to talk to a nurse," suggested [Dr. Christina DeAngelis](#), an OB-GYN at Penn State Health

Obstetrics and Gynecology and an assistant professor of obstetrics gynecology at Penn State College of Medicine. "If you want an honest recommendation for a good OB-GYN, ask a labor and delivery nurse."

Your primary care doctor also may be able to recommend an OB-GYN who's a good fit for you, based on your personality.

Hunter recommends that women follow their instincts when choosing an OB-GYN.

"There's no magic tool for finding an OB-GYN who's a good fit for you," she said, "But you'll know if you feel comfortable or not."

Not being able to talk honestly with your doctor could affect your [health](#).

"I can't help someone who's finding it painful to have sex if she's not able to talk to me about that," Hunter said.

A doctor should listen carefully and address your concerns without judgment or personal opinions, DeAngelis said.

"Patients need to know they can trust their OB-GYN," DeAngelis said. "We need to be able to address their concerns, regardless of what they are."

Gynecologic care should begin at age 21, with a Pap test for [cervical cancer](#), or earlier if a woman has a very heavy or painful period, is sexually active or is planning to become sexually active.

"There really is no hard and fast rule of when to begin care," Hunter said. "It depends on the circumstances of each patient."

When pregnant or planning to become pregnant, a woman should see an

OB-GYN as soon as possible.

"We consider the needs of every patient and treat each patient accordingly," DeAngelis said. "It's important to focus on every person as an individual."

More information: The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists has more on [women's health](#).

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