

The No. 1 Choice for Mothers!

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Magazine

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Getting the Right Prenatal Care

Now that you're pregnant, it's time to choose your healthcare provider for your pregnancy and childbirth. No idea where to start? **MH** fills you in on what you need to know.

WORDS JOANNA ONG

Congrats! You're pregnant! The two lines on the home pregnancy test have brought much joy and maybe to others, some level of anxiety and concern. For first time mums, what should you do? Besides breaking the wonderful news to your husband, choosing the right healthcare provider for the 40-weeks and beyond journey should be at the top of your priority list.

Firstly you might be wondering when is the best time to visit your OBGYN. According to Dr Ann Tan, OBGYN at Women Fertility & Fetal Centre in Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre, it is good to determine the viability of the pregnancy through ultrasound to see if the embryo is present and has foetal heart pulsations by six weeks from the last menstrual period. But if there are any issues such as pelvic cramps or bleeding, it is highly advisable to visit your doctor even earlier. She reminds pregnant women to start on prenatal supplements prior to the pregnancy, but if you have not been taking them regularly, please start taking the supplements consistently from now on.

Secondly, what should be some important considerations when

choosing an OBGYN? Here are some factors:

Gender

Some women prefer a female doctor while some are fine with male doctors. Audrey Lau, a teacher in her early 30s, recalls her preference for female doctors for her first pregnancy. Her impression was that female doctors would be more understanding and empathetic towards her pregnancy journey. She also found it weird for another man to look at her lady bits and didn't feel uncomfortable undressing in the presence of a man even if the nurse was there. Ironically, her experience with her female doctor was less than pleasant and she changed to a male doctor who was highly recommended by a friend for her second pregnancy. It all depends on preference. No gender is better than the other.

Comfort

Dr Christopher Ng, OBGYN at GynaecMD Women's & Rejuvenation Clinic at Camden Medical Centre shares that women should look for a gynaecologist who is able to listen to their problems and to understand their unique needs as every pregnancy is different.

Some mothers will have personalised birth plans in which they would like to be fulfilled so it is important to find gynaecologists that are open to the idea of birth plans as some may not be so obliging.

Recommendations

Experienced doctors are generally sought after and most first-time pregnant women visit doctors via recommendations from friends or the internet. It is essential to remember that every doctor has a different style, so what may work for other women might not work for you. Some doctors also have different areas of specialty e.g. twin or triplet delivery, high-risk pregnancy etc. Therefore, it is still important for



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you to do your own research and find a doctor that suits your condition and expectations.

Availability

According to Dr Ng, most patients usually want a detailed consultation in which all their concerns and questions

are answered and not consultations that last just five to 10 minutes. Patients also do not like waiting too long and want to be seen on time and at their convenience. “Choose a gynaecologist who is able to accede to this expectation unless you do not mind waiting,” says Dr Ng.

Convenience

The convenience of parking and location of the clinic are important considerations as close proximity to your home or workplace helps ease the travelling time and stress knowing that regular antenatal appointments can be expected up to nine months.

Hospital

Both Dr Ng and Dr Tan agree that it is more important to choose your doctor first before choosing the hospital to deliver in.

Dr Ng reiterates that the gynaecologist should be the most important factor as this is the person that you are going to trust your life and your baby's life with during the delivery process. You should be very comfortable with his or her style of delivery, ability, and management so that at the end of the day, you know that you are in safe hands.

The hospital is only a physical place in which the delivery is conducted and all government and private hospitals in Singapore are very well equipped and adequately staff.

Sometimes the chemistry wears off and you discover that you're unhappy or uncomfortable with your doctor halfway through your pregnancy due to some reasons. So what should you do? Dr Ng gives a few questions for you to consider when evaluating your relationship with your doctor:

- ♥ Is your doctor spending enough time with you during your consultation?
- ♥ Does he/she seem rushed and more concerned with clearing all the patients in the waiting room?
- ♥ Is your doctor able to explain things clearly to you?
- ♥ Are you able to trust yourself and your baby to this doctor's care?

If you can't see yourself fully trusting your doctor and he does not live up to your expectations, then find another gynaecologist which would be more suitable to your needs. If

your doctor has fulfilled all your criteria then this is a good doctor and you should continue to be under their care. "Remember that at the end of the day, you are paying for him or her to deliver your baby," reminds Dr Ng.

Holistic Healthcare Support for Pregnant Women

Besides getting the right prenatal care from your doctor, antenatal classes and hospital tours are gaining more popularity among first-time pregnant parents. Instead of jumping into the deep-end of the pool, more parents are getting themselves more informed on the process of labour, delivery, breastfeeding and the post-natal period. "In the event, some mothers want more detailed information on cord blood banking or cord tissue

storage or have particular requests during labour (natural analgesia free birth, doulas) then they will have to attend talks or classes which cater for this," mentions Dr Ng.

In the midst of all the doctor's appointments and antenatal classes, what trumps it all? A supportive husband! Hear that, men! "A supportive husband is key to the woman feeling good about herself and the pregnancy. He should be a source of comfort and a true companion on this intimate journey to parenthood as it will lay out how their lives will be in the future," says Dr Tan. Not to mention, the woman's parents and in-laws play a vital supportive role too. Indeed, this journey need not be a lonely one but one filled with love and support from your loved ones and healthcare providers. All the best! ☑



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