

Pelvic Exam

What is a pelvic exam?

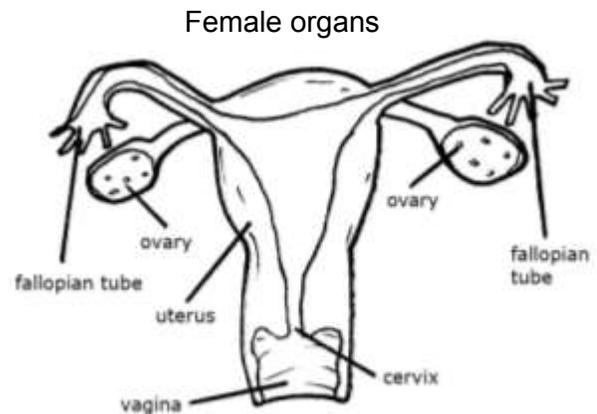
A pelvic exam is done to check your female organs to see if you are developing normally. It is also a way to see if there are any problems with the organs such as pain or infection.

This exam can tell the provider that these organs are working in the right way. It is just as important as checking your heart and lungs to be sure they are working as they should. Most girls will have a pelvic exam before or around the time they turn 21. A girl may need one sooner if she is sexually active, having problems with her period or pain.

How is the exam done?

Your provider will talk with you and ask questions such as:

- Do you have periods? If so, how long do they last and how often do they come?
- Do you have pain or cramps?
- Have you ever had sex? If so, how many partners have you had?
- What do you use to prevent pregnancy and reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs, formerly known as STDs)?
- Are you are having any pain, itching, bumps or discharge from your vagina?



Before the pelvic exam, you will be asked to undress and put on an exam gown. You will be given a sheet to help cover the lower part of your body.

The provider will come back into the room and ask you to lie down on the exam table. You will put your feet in special holders called stirrups. The provider will help you move into a position so the exam can be done. Most often the exam only takes about five minutes.

The rest of the exam will go like this:

- A light will be used to look at the outside of the vagina. The provider will check for any bumps or rashes.
- To look inside the vagina an instrument called a speculum is used. Most often, it is made of plastic. It will gently be slid into your vagina. You will feel some pressure, but normally this part is not painful. Try to relax and take deep breaths to help make this easier. The provider will look at the inside of the vagina and at the opening into the uterus (cervix). Some samples from the vagina and cervix may be taken and sent to the lab. The speculum is removed.

Exam (continued)

- The last part to check is your uterus and ovaries. They are felt to see if they are the right size and are not tender. The provider will put one or two gloved fingers into your vagina and gently push on your abdomen.

Tips

- Ask questions if you do not understand something.
- Make sure your bladder is empty before the exam.
- If you would feel more comfortable, a parent or friend can be in the room with you.
- Relax and breathe deeply as much as you can during the exam. This will keep the muscles of your vagina from tensing up.
- If anything is uncomfortable or hurts, **speak up right away!** The provider can make adjustments, give you a minute to relax or stop the exam if you say so.
- Some girls are worried if they have never had sexual intercourse that this exam will mean they are no longer a virgin. This is not true!
- The exam is not a test to check if you are a virgin.

ALERT: Call your child's healthcare provider, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if you have special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.