

## Pelvic Exam

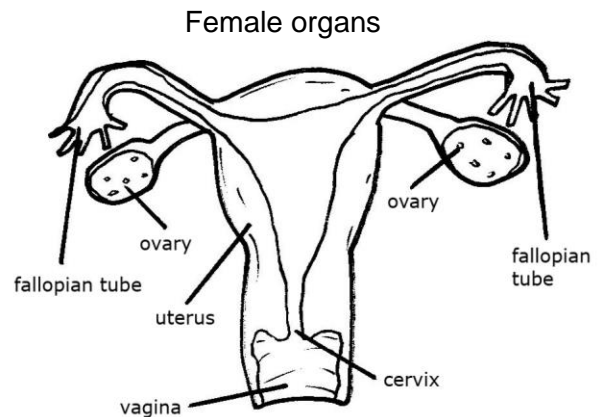
### What is a pelvic exam?

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 like pain or infection.

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

### Why do I need a pelvic exam?

- A history of abnormal pap test results.
- A history of sexual health problems.
- A family history of certain kind of cancer.
- A sexually transmitted infection or a sex partner with an infection.
- Recurrent vaginitis.
- Unexplained pain in your lower belly or around the area outside of your vagina (vulva).
- Vaginal discharge or wetness on your underwear that causes itching, burns or smells bad, especially if you've had sex.
- No menstrual periods by age 15 or 3 years after your breast development begins.
- Vaginal bleeding that lasts more than 10 days.
- Missed periods, especially if you are having sex.
- Menstrual cramps so bad that you miss school.



### Before the exam

Before the pelvic exam, you will undress and put on an exam gown. We will give you 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. Most often the exam only takes about five minutes.

## The exam

- A light will be used to look at the outside of the vagina. The provider will check for any bumps or rashes.
- A speculum is used to look inside the vagina. Most often, it is made of plastic. It will be slid gently into your vagina. You will feel some pressure, but most of the time this 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. Then the speculum is removed.
- 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 you pee before the exam so that your bladder is empty.
- If you would like, 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 your vagina from tensing up.
- If anything is uncomfortable or hurts, **speak up right away!** The provider can change what they are doing, 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.**