



# Family Health Care Tips

# 3

## Preparing Your Child for Visits to the Doctor

*Parents Reaching Out provides resources that focus on helping families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. Keeping your family healthy means knowing how to navigate the health care system and talk with your doctor or other providers. We hope these tip sheets will give you the information you may need to access the best, most cost-effective medical and related services to meet the needs of your family.*

*When children anticipate “going to the doctor,” many become worried and apprehensive about the visit. Whether they are going to see their primary care doctor or a specialist, and whether for a routine exam, illness, or special problem, children are likely to have fears, and some may even feel guilty.*

*Some fears and guilty feelings surface easily and children may be able to talk about them. Other fears are harbored secretly and may remain unspoken. In preparation for a physician’s examination, you can help your child express these fears and overcome them.*

### **The most common fears about medical exams include:**

- **Separation.** Children often fear that their parents may leave them in the examining room and wait in another room. The fear of separation from the parents during mysterious examinations is most common in children under age 7, but it may be frightening to older children through ages 12 or 13.
- **Pain.** Children may worry that a part of the examination or medical procedure will hurt. They especially fear they may need an injection, particularly children ages 6 through 12.
- **The Doctor.** Unfortunately, one of a child’s concerns may be the doctor’s manner. A child may misinterpret qualities such as speed, efficiency, or a detached attitude, and read into them sternness, dislike, or rejection.
- **The Unknown.** Apprehensive about the unknown, children also worry that their problem may be much worse than their parents are telling them. Some who have simple problems suspect they may need surgery or hospitalization. Some children who are ill may worry that they may die.
- **As a parent you can help by encouraging your child to express his fears and by addressing them in language that he or she understands and is not likely to misinterpret.**



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