

Routine and regular checkups are particularly important for your baby during her first three years of life. Problems found at this age, if not treated early, may have serious implications for her later in life.

Well-Baby Examination

Your doctor's well-baby examination consists of many different parts, each designed to help her find certain information. You may have to watch closely to see her do each part of the exam because she probably has developed her own tricks and techniques. Some doctors like to have the baby on the examination table; others prefer that the parents hold the baby. Sometimes the doctor will be talking to you while examining your baby.



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Here are some of the major areas your doctor will consider and what she looks for in each category:

- General Appearance: cleanliness, nutrition, alertness
- Skin: color, rashes. Bruises, swelling, condition of hair and nails
- Head: Shape, softness of the anterior fontanel [soft spot]
- Eyes: redness, good movement, light reflexes [checked with an instrument called an ophthalmoscope, looking for problems with the retina]
- Ears: irritation or infection of the ear canals or ear drums



When you visit the doctor's office, the doctor's staff will probably ask you some questions before you see the doctor. Here are just a few samples: How is the baby feeding? Is she sleeping well? Does she seem to have any problems with her bowels? Does she have any skin problems? They will also measure your baby's growth, including her weight, length, and head circumference (the distance around her head).

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- Nose: congestion, discharge
- Mouth: gums, tongue, throat, tonsils

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- Neck: swelling of the thyroid or lymph nodes, mobility
- Heart: rate and rhythm, murmurs
- Lungs: breathing rate, abnormal noises, air exchange
- Abdomen: bowel sounds [normal stomach gurglings], enlarged organs or tenderness
- Genitals: In girls-normal appearance of external genitals, redness. In boys-penis [if circumcised, check that it has healed well; if not, check that foreskin is normal], both testicles are in scrotum
- Arms and Legs: normal movement and color, absence of swelling and discoloration
- Pulses: equal femoral pulse [same on both sides]
- Neurologic: tone, muscle movement and coordination, strength

