

# Parenting Together

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## Hand in Hand: Visiting your Child's Doctor

What feelings come to mind when you think about taking your child to the doctor? It is a big responsibility, especially in the early years when doctors recommend multiple visits in a short amount of time.

**Visiting the doctor with your child is very important and can set the foundation for how your child seeks medical care in the future.**

For older children and toddlers, visiting the doctor may bring up a range of emotions. It is important to be mindful of these emotions before the visit (as well as during and after) so that you can help your child process these big feelings in a healthy way.

For parents, visiting your child's doctor may have its own set of challenges. You made an appointment for your child, so unless it is a well-child check, you may be dealing with an illness or injury that wasn't part of the original plan for the day.



*"The first wealth is health" - Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Getting to the doctor's, checking-in, and waiting (aka finding distractions for your young child to keep her busy) can have you feeling stressed before you even talk to the doctor. While it may not be a walk in the park, visits to the doctor are important and there are a few strategies you can use to make the visit a positive experience for both you and your child. Before we share these strategies, let's talk about the importance of well-child visits.

### Well-child Visits

Did you know that well-child visits are recommended for ALL children and can provide an opportunity to:

- Learn more about your unique parent/child relationship
- Discuss the emotional, behavioral, physical, and developmental needs of your child
- Have your parenting questions answered

The American Academy of Pediatrics has a list of surveys (organized by child age) that you can complete and bring with you to help guide the conversation (<http://bit.ly/22k4Bgx>)! Remember to talk to your doctor about the recommended schedule for well-child visits.

### The Book Nook

*Splat the Cat Goes to the Doctor*  
By Rob Scotton

*Daniel Visits the Doctor*  
By Becky Friedman

*My First Trip to the Doctor / Mi Primera Visita al Medico*  
By Katie Kawa



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## Big Feelings at the Doctor's Office

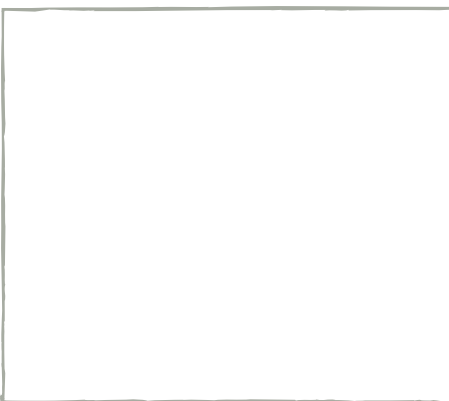
For many children, visiting the doctor's office can lead to big feelings, including stress, anxiety, relief, anticipation, and even excitement. Generally, these trips are not part of the normal routine and are coupled with physical pain or illness. It's hard to find the fun in an activity when you aren't feeling yourself.

Before you leave, ask yourself how your child might be feeling. Starting with these questions can help you take a step back from the act of getting to the doctor and focus on creating a positive experience with your child.

*How is he feeling about visiting the doctor today?*

*What can I do to help him cope with these feelings?*

*How can I help him feel prepared for the visit?*



## Before the Appointment

You never know when you will need to make your next trip to the doctor's office. Before you ever need to go, try these suggestions to help make the most out of this new experience.

- Play 'doctor' at home so that you can model what happens when you visit the doctor
- Have your child 'be the doctor' and use a stuffed animal as a patient
- Talk to your child about the jobs of doctors and nurses. Remind your child that they are caring and kind and want to help
- Draw a picture, write down words together, or tell a story about what you expect will happen when they visit the doctor

## After the Appointment

Take some special time to let your child know how proud you are of her for doing things (like visiting the doctor) that keep her body healthy and well.

Use this time to have a conversation about what happened during the appointment and her feelings about the visit.



Take some quick notes to help you remember some of the details and use them to brainstorm how you might improve the experience for the next visit to the doctor's office!

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## References

- Child Trends - Well Child Visits <https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/well-child-visits/>
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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Milestone Tracker Mobile App <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html>
- Life's Little Lessons | A PBS Learning Kit with Daniel Tiger | New Experiences - Going to the Doctor <http://pbskids.org/learn/lifes-little-lessons/new-experiences/>