

Your Annual Gynecological Exam

**Not one of our favorite things to do in life—but necessary.
A calm and gentle conversation helps reduce fear and apprehension.**

It is best for parents and caregivers to discuss having a pelvic exam, but please do not make it sound like a big deal. Having a pelvic exam is part of being a woman and staying healthy. It is okay for a doctor or nurse to do this, but no one should do it without permission. It can be medically necessary, but talk with your provider if you have concerns or are not comfortable.

Here is what will probably happen:

- You will meet the doctor or nurse practitioner.
- You will have your weight and blood pressure checked.
- You will be asked questions about any medications you are taking and any surgeries you have had. You may also be asked about your period, and about what your pee and poop look like. The last question will be about your exercise habits and the foods you eat.
- The doctor or nurse practitioner will leave the room and you will change into a gown with the opening of the gown in the front.
- Once they return, the doctor or nurse practitioner will listen to your heart and lungs with a stethoscope.
- Your neck will be touched to see if there are any lumps.
- Your breasts and under arms will be touched gently. This may tickle a bit.
- Your belly will be touched gently and this may tickle a bit too.
- You will be asked to place your legs in the stirrups and move your bottom to the edge of the exam table.
- The doctor or nurse practitioner will gently touch the skin outside the vagina (vulva) with a gloved hand.

- Next you will feel a little pressure because the doctor or nurse practitioner will insert a finger into your vagina. This will feel different, but it should not hurt.
- Next a plastic or metal speculum will be inserted into your vagina. If you are scheduled to have a pap smear and High Risk Human Papillomavirus (HRHPV) testing this will be done. The testing tool looks like a long Q-Tip. You will feel some pressure and maybe some scratchiness. It will feel different, but it should never hurt.
- Always speak up if something is hurting you.
- The exam will take less than 5 minutes. That is not very long!
- Smile and thank your doctor or nurse practitioner and have a great day!

Information courtesy of Kate Nolan, NP, Director and Founder of The KIND Clinic. Revised by Hannah Graham, M.D., Physician at Advocate Medical Group Adult Down Syndrome Center.