



What Is An Annual Check-Up?

During an annual check-up, or physical, primary care providers perform a physical exam in addition to asking you and your child questions about your child's health history. During the physical exam, primary care providers will check your child's:

- Height
- Weight
- Blood pressure and heart rate
- Teeth, gums, tongue, and throat
- Pulses and reflexes
- Eyes, ears, nose, and skin
- Abdominal organs
- Heart, lungs and abdomen
- Spinal alignment
- Fine motor development, such as writing and coloring skills
- Gross motor development, such as the ability to jump and run

WHO SHOULD HAVE AN ANNUAL CHECK-UP?

Children should have check-ups at 1 month, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, and then every year after that. In the District of Columbia Public Schools, an annual check-up is strongly recommended for every student.

WHY ARE ANNUAL CHECK-UPS IMPORTANT?

Annual check-ups give you and your child the chance to speak with a medical and developmental expert to discuss your child's health and development and ask questions. Returning to the same primary care provider every year allows your child's primary care provider to follow your child's health across time, making it more likely that he or she will pick up on

small changes in your child's health that a new primary care provider might not notice.

Sometimes during annual physicals, primary care providers catch the early stages of major diseases, like cancer or problems with a child's heart, and also hearing and vision problems that might cause the child to do poorly in school. Annual check-ups are also an important way for primary care providers to monitor your child's development and to catch sleep and speech abnormalities.

Seeing the same doctor regularly also allows your child to develop a relationship with his or her primary care provider. When children form a relationship with their primary care provider, they are more likely to talk openly about their health and any concerns they may have. This relationship is especially important when pre-teens and teenagers begin having questions about drugs and sexuality.

