



Mott Poll Report

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Making the Most of Well Visits

Well visits, often called check-ups, are opportunities for providers to assess the child's growth and development, answer questions from parents and children, and offer guidance on how to keep the child safe and healthy. The C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health asked a national sample of parents of children 1-12 years about their experiences with well visits.

Most parents (92%) report their child has had a well visit in the past two years. Two-thirds of parents (67%) report their child always sees the same provider for well visits. Nearly half of parents (47%) say they schedule well visits with their child's regular provider even if they have a long wait for an appointment. One-third of parents (34%) strongly agree their child is more likely to follow advice if it comes from a provider their child knows well.

In advance of well visits, some parents prepare a list of questions to ask the provider (25% often, 54% sometimes, 21% never), write down information about their child's health changes (21% often, 48% sometimes, 31% never), or search online for information to discuss with the provider (14% often, 48% sometimes, 38% never). Eleven percent of parents say they often arrange for a family member or friend to accompany them to the well visit for support.

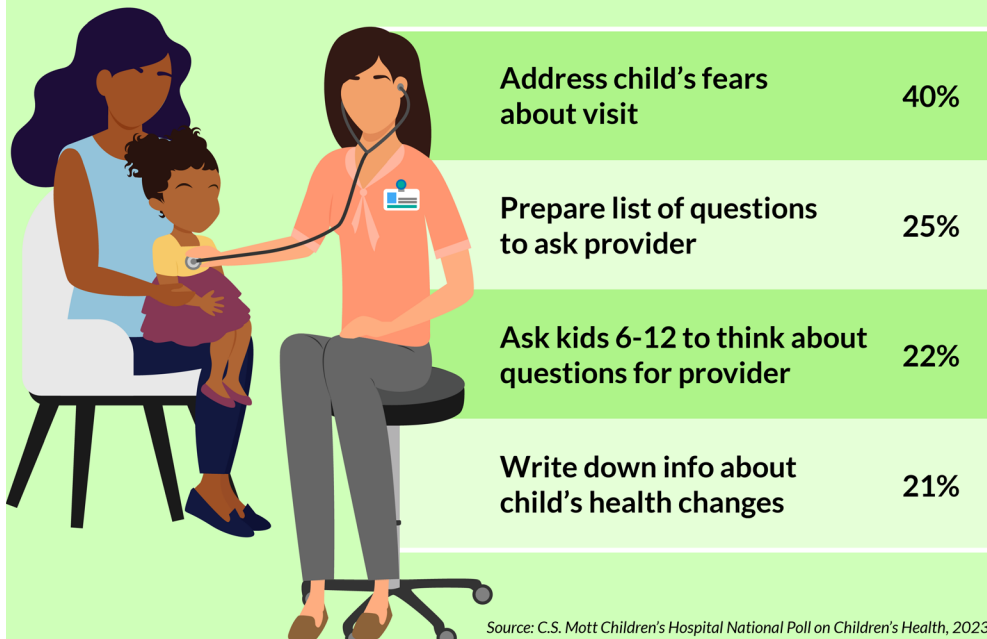
Some parents prepare their child for an upcoming well visit by addressing any fears they may have (40% often, 42% sometimes, 18% never), and offering rewards for cooperating (25% often, 45% sometimes, 30% never); and for parents of children 6-12 years, some ask the child to think about questions for the provider (22% often, 47% sometimes, 31% never).

For their child's most recent well visit, parents rate the provider as excellent for knowing the child's health history (57%), answering all parent questions (65%), and giving recommendations that are realistic for the family (58%). Parents who report their child always sees the same provider for well visits are more likely to rate the provider as excellent.

Most parents (81%) recall completing questionnaires checklists about their child at well visits. Among these parents, 93% understand the purpose but only 74% say they receive feedback about how their child is doing.

Checklist for the check-up

Actions that parents *often* take in advance of their child's well visit



Report Highlights

Nearly half of parents schedule well visits with their child's regular provider even if they have a long wait for an appointment.

1 in 3 parents believe their child is more likely to follow advice if it comes from a provider their child knows well.

3 in 4 parents recall the provider giving feedback on questionnaires completed about their child's health and behavior.

Data Source & Methods

This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by Ipsos Public Affairs, LLC (Ipsos) for C.S. Mott Children's Hospital. The survey was administered in August-September 2022 to a randomly selected, stratified group of adults who were parents of at least one child age 0-18 years living in their household (n=2,023). Adults were selected from Ipsos's web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 61% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 1,331 parents with at least one child age 1-12. The margin of error for results presented in this report is ±2 to 3 percentage points.

A publication from C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, the University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics, and the Susan B. Meister Child Health Evaluation and Research (CHEAR) Center.

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C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health

Co-Director: Sarah J. Clark, MPH
Co-Director: Susan J. Woolford, MD, MPH
Contributing Editor: Gary L. Freed, MD, MPH
Poll Manager: Dianne C. Singer, MPH
Data Analyst: Acham Gebremariam, MS
Publication Designer: Sara L. Schultz, MPS



**SUSAN B. MEISTER
CHILD HEALTH EVALUATION
AND RESEARCH CENTER**
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

Implications

At well visits, providers assess the child's growth and development, do a physical exam, assess behavior and emotional well-being, screen for signs of health problems, give anticipatory guidance for parents, and administer vaccines. Well visits offer parents an opportunity to ask about day-to-day aspects of keeping their child healthy, including nutrition (e.g., should the child take vitamins), safety (e.g., how to choose a bike helmet), and general well-being (is the child getting enough sleep). Parents also can get the provider's perspective on issues raised by teachers or daycare providers, such as reports of emotional outbursts or difficulty paying attention. Parents also may ask the provider to recommend resources for challenging situations, such as talking with the child about the death of a family member or pet, or how to help the child cope with fear of the dark.

The benefit of well visits is enhanced through parent preparation. In the weeks leading up to the visit, parents may want to keep a list of questions they want to ask the provider. This Mott Poll showed that 1 in 5 parents never jot down questions for the provider, which may represent missed opportunities to get advice from child health experts. As children get older, parents should involve them in thinking about any questions they have about their body or feelings; writing down the question will make it easier for them to remember. In particular, as children reach the upper elementary years, they may have questions about why their bodies are changing and what they can expect in the years ahead.

It can be helpful for two adults to attend the well visit to help remember what the provider said or to watch any siblings who come along. In cases where parents disagree about some aspect of child health or safety, having both parents attend the well visit is a chance for the provider to offer accurate information and guidance to help parents make the best decisions for their child's health.

Parents of younger children can ease any anxiety about an upcoming well visit by helping them know what to expect. Parents might explain what will happen by reading a children's book about going to the doctor or role playing with a toy medical kit. Some parents offer a reward or treat, such as a toy or a trip to the park, if their child is cooperative at the visit, which can set a positive tone.

Many children (and parents) get anxious about vaccines. Parents should avoid promising the child that there will be no shots; parents may not know whether the child is due for a vaccine at that visit. If a child seems especially fearful, parents should alert the provider and decide on strategies to ease that anxiety, such as distracting the child with stories or songs.

Providers assess a child's behavior and development by observing the child during the visit and asking for parent input, often through questionnaires or checklists. Parent-reported information helps the provider assess the child's development particularly in areas that the provider cannot observe directly, such as nutrition, sleep, physical activity, or mental health. Some providers have parents complete these questionnaires at the visit; others send them through the mail or through a patient portal, allowing the parent to have more time to think about their responses. If the provider does not offer feedback on the information parents provided on questionnaires or checklists, parents should feel free to ask for that information.

In this Mott Poll, two-thirds of parents reported that their child always sees the same provider for well visits, and about half are purposeful about ensuring this happens. If the provider and parent have developed a rapport over time, continuing with the same provider might help parents and children be more comfortable discussing health and behavior issues. The provider may also be in a better position to pick up on changes in the child's health because they are familiar with them.

When well visits are scheduled with a different provider, either by choice or necessity, it's still a good opportunity for discussion about the child's health. Parents may benefit from different explanations or perspectives.