

## Primary and Preventative Guideline Changes for Adolescent Pap Smear

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The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) suggests that “teen girls may need two “well-child” visits each year. A general preventive visit and a dedicated reproductive health visit. Both visits should be covered by insurers according to an updated Committee Opinion issued December, 2009 by ACOG and published in the July issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.” (ACOG, [http://www.acog.org/from\\_home/publications/press\\_releases/nr06-22-10-2.cfm](http://www.acog.org/from_home/publications/press_releases/nr06-22-10-2.cfm)).

The visit relating to reproductive health will be an opportunity for the obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN) to start a physician-patient relationship. The OB-GYN visit may include screening, evaluation, immunizations and counseling (including preventative health care). The positive behaviors, like exercise and diet should be encouraged, while discouraging smoking, alcohol and other drugs that lead to behavioral characteristics that indirectly affect the teen’s sexual health. For an asymptomatic teen, a pelvic examination is not necessarily included.

Prior to 2009, ACOG recommended cervical cancer screening begin three years after first sexual intercourse or by age 21, whichever occurred first. In 2009, ACOG stated: “The recommendation to start (cervical)

screening at age 21 years regardless of the age of onset of sexual intercourse is based in part on the very low incidence of cancer in younger women. It is also based on the potential for adverse effects associated with follow-up of young women with abnormal cytology screening results” (ACOG Practice Bulletin No. 109).

ACOG “maintains its recommendation that adolescent girls have their first visit with an OB-GYN between the ages of 13 and 15 to help set the stage for optimal reproductive health in the years ahead” (ACOG). “Sexually active adolescents, younger than 21 years, should be counseled and tested for sexually transmitted infections and should be counseled regarding safe sex and contraception.” Adolescents should have a pelvic examination if the adolescent is symptomatic. “These measures (the pelvic exam) may be carried out without cervical cytology screening and in the asymptomatic patient, without the use of a speculum” (ACOG Practice Bulletin No. 109).

By establishing a primary care physician, OB-GYN and following the ACOG recommendations for early and frequent intervention, the adolescent is more likely to enjoy a lifetime of reproductive health.