Everything You Wanted to Know About the Pelvic Exam

Part of being a woman is going to the gynecologist and having a pelvic exam. These typically start when you are a teenager or possibly not until you are in your early 20s. You may need to get one annually, or every few years, depending on your overall health. Here is more information about the pelvic exam.

**The Pelvic Examination**

If you have never had a pelvic examination before, you may be curious what is involved, but you also might just be wondering what happens during this examination, even if you have had one before. The pelvic examination is not the same thing as a pap smear, though they are often done at the same time. A pelvic exam is when your doctor looks at various pelvic organs, such as your cervix, vagina, and ovaries. They might also examine your uterus during this time. There are many reasons you might get the exam, from the fact that you just started your period, want to get birth control, or are having issues like itching, swelling, pain during intercourse, or an unusual odor.

**Preparing for the Exam**

The first thing you should understand is that the exam only takes a few minutes, even when a pap smear is also being done at the same time. However, you will be instructed to follow a few simple guidelines before going in for your appointment. For example, it is not uncommon to be asked not to have intercourse about 24 hours before the exam. This makes it easier for your doctor to perform the pelvic exam and see clearly the condition of your various pelvic organs.

You should also try not to use a tampon, vaginal douche, or powders in the area the day before and day of your exam.

**Why it is Necessary**

There are several reasons you should get periodic pelvic exams. First of all, it is good for overall gynecological health. These are often done if you are trying to get pregnant or to confirm your pregnancy, as well as to look at early warning signs of cancer. It can also help to examine the causes of sexually transmitting infections and diseases.

Pelvic exams may also be performed if you show symptoms of certain medical conditions, including urinary tract infections, unusual discharge, and pelvic pain or bleeding. See your doctor if you have these or other odd symptoms related to your gynecological health.