



**Pamela
Hayford**
PARENTING

The teenager and the pediatrician

At 5 feet, 10.5 inches tall, my teenage boy sits next to me in the pediatrician's office, an arm's length away from the table where I used to plop him down for his monthly, then yearly, exams. Is this the same boy who used to grab at the little zebra on the doctor's stethoscope and flash big blue eyes at the nurse? Is he too old to go to the pediatrician?

The last time we visited the pediatrician for a wellness exam was two years ago. (We missed his 12-year check-up.) This was completely different.

For starters, Logan grew 6 inches.

For the first time, we were directed to the "teen room," a waiting area with big cushy chairs, cool magazines and a TV.

The woman at the front desk had handed me a clipboard with three sheets of paper. As we sat in the teen room and I began to put pen to paper, I realized two of these weren't for me to fill out. They were for Logan. After I completed the parents' sheet, I handed the clipboard to him. Halfway down one of the pages, Logan says, "These questions are ridiculous." I look at him questioningly. "Are you happy?" he quotes. "What kind of question is that?"

They're trying to get a feel for his mental health. We're entering an age when depression, anxiety and myriad other issues are very real possibilities. I thank the universe that my boy thinks "Are you happy?" is a silly question.

Soon, a nurse ushers us into the exam room. You'll need to undress to your boxers, she tells him. If that's uncomfortable, there's a paper gown to wear. She leaves the room. Do you want me to step out, I ask him? Yes, he says. He feels free to walk around the house in his boxers yet he can't be in underwear in front of me at the doctor's office. But I understand.

As I wait outside the exam room, Dr. Bruce Berget appears and stops at a computer and taps the keys. We chat. We've known Dr. Berget and his nurse, Dawn, since Logan was born. They feel like family. From Day 1, they impressed us. Dr. Berget easily cites medical journals and the latest studies. And while he's brilliant, he's also friendly. He takes time to explain things and answer our questions.

When Dr. Berget steps into the exam room this time, he looks over the papers on the clipboard. "Depression screening looks good," he says. He talks with Logan directly, advises the importance of brushing teeth twice a day, washing his face, eating right. He tells Logan he likes his teen patients to get nine to 10 hours of sleep a night. Eight, he'll take, but he really wants nine. You really need that sleep, he says. It repairs the brain. And exercise. An hour a day, he says. It doesn't have to be all at once but you have to stay active. I'm sure he spent a half hour with us.

I stepped out for the physical exam. From outside the door I could hear them chatting. Logan, our one-word-answer king, talked a lot with the doctor. He's comfortable with him. And Dr. Berget is as versed on the teen issues as the baby ones. Is Logan too old to go to a pediatrician? Not at all.

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