

New Parents,

I have compiled this Q and A session on paper from many pre-natal visits in hopes that it will overlap with many, if not all, of your own questions about the practice.

How do we notify you of our child's birth and when do we come in? I no longer see newborns in the hospital, so we ask that you call ASAP once your baby is born so that we can start reserving appointment times for you! We will only need your baby's name, type of birth (vaginal or C-Section), and date of birth. Typically, we will see you for an initial visit 2-5 days after you are discharged from the hospital, unless the doctor in the hospital has specific concerns. We DO need the discharge paperwork from the hospital when you come in for your visit. If you deliver at a birthing center, we will want to see you for your first visit within 48 hours after birth.

What are your views on parenting, medicine and treatment? In general, I tell people that I like to "team" with my families. I am not a paternalistic sort of provider. I feel it is my job to diagnose, provide information, discuss and explain options, and guide you in making an informed decision for your child. When there aren't options and only one safe thing to do, I will let you know...but that is rare. I value and depend on my parents to provide me with much needed information that only a parent and care-giver can provide. While my training is in classic western medicine, I am open to alternative/homeopathic modalities when there is support for its safe use. I only use antibiotics when necessary or prudent.

How long have you been in practice? I have been practicing in pediatrics for 21 years, and in a private practice setting for 18 years. More information on my education and training is listed on my website: www.bartoncreekpediatrics.com.

How easy is it to get an appointment with you? It depends on the season! We protect our schedule to always have more than half of our schedule open every day for same-day sick appointments. So, if you call first thing, it is rare to not be able to get in the same day. In order to make this happen, we only do a certain number of "well visits" each day. For well checks, you often need to book 2-6 weeks out, depending on the season and whether you are seeing me or my nurse practitioners: Cheryl Powers, Amy Eckerman, Jill Stanley, or Natalie Buchanan (who are WONDERFUL). They help us provide extra appointments every day and cover for me when I need to be out of the office.

Will you be available on certain days or at certain hours to answer questions over the phone? No. There is no set time. My nurses usually return phone calls throughout the day, talk with me and then get back with you if it's something they can't answer or something you specifically want my opinion on. This allows them to get back to you sooner and keep me from being here until 10PM every night returning phone calls! All nurse phone calls are reviewed by me. However, I am happy to return phone calls after hours if there is something you only want to talk with me about.

Do you offer after-hour care or weekend appointments? Yes. If you need to speak with a triage nurse any time our office is closed, call our office and follow the prompt and select "1" and a triage nurse will be paged to help you. There will be a charge for all after hour calls. If you feel your child needs to be seen, refer to the pediatric after-hour clinic options below. These clinics will send us records of your visit in order to keep your child's chart complete.

1) "After Hour Kids" clinic is open from 6:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m. most nights. This clinic is run by Pediatric Associate's nurse practitioners and is located at 1500 W 38th Street, Suite 20. Their phone number is 512-499-2452.

2) Austin Regional Clinic offers after-hour care at several locations. For an appointment, you can contact them at 512-272-4636.

3) Austin Diagnostic Clinic offers after-hour care at several locations. For an appointment, you can contact them at 512-901-4031.

4) "411 Pediatrics" offers after-hour care in Westlake most week-nights and Saturday and Sunday. Their number is 512-327-0411.

5) Texas Children's Urgent Care offers after-hour care on South Lamar. You can contact them at 512-892-9231.

How does your practice respond to emergencies? We do not provide emergency care. My office is run by appointments only, and while we try to squeeze people in for minor emergencies as we are able, this becomes unfair to those with appointments. So, any TRUE emergency is triaged to an emergency room or urgent care depending on the situation. If you are not sure if it is a true emergency, you can always call and be triaged by our nurse to decide the next best course of action. After hours, the triage nurse would do the same.

Are you open to answering our concerns and participating in discussions regarding aspects of child development such as discipline, language, social behavior and sleep problems? yes...that's much of what we do!

How often do you schedule well-child visits, what are the duration of each visit and what kinds of tests are performed at each visit? You can visit my website to see a listing of the recommended well child visits. Most well checks are 30 minutes. Per the recommendation of the Academy of Pediatrics: a newborn screen is done at 2 weeks, an anemia/lead check is done at 9 months, hearing tests start at 2 years, vision tests start at 4 years. Most other tests are done on an as needed basis based on history and physical.

What lab/X-Ray capabilities do we have in the office? Most labs and tests are done in our office: urine, strep, flu, anemia blood tests, newborn screens, mono tests, etc. If there is a special lab test that needs to be sent to a larger lab, my nurses are able to draw the blood and we will send it to the lab in most cases. We do not have x-ray capabilities in our office, however, we have an association with ARA (Austin Radiological Association) so that you can walk-in for most x-rays without an appointment and we will have results in a few hours.

How much does the practice charge for phone consultations? I do not charge for phone calls during regular business hours in most cases. There is an \$25 charge for all after hour calls that we will bill you for to cover the triage nurse fee.

Are you open to alternative vaccine schedules? Yes, I am very thoughtful about the vaccine schedule we recommend and the types of vaccines we provide/order. All of my vaccines are mercury/thimerosal-free and are as preservative-free as they come. We typically discuss all vaccines and the risks and benefits of giving them or not at the 1 month visit to come up with a customized vaccine plan based on family

history and parental preference. We have many patients that choose a selective/alternative vaccine plan. Our office is very accustomed to and able to accommodate such schedules. We do not “fire” patients due to non-vaccination.

Do you have sick and well waiting rooms and what is the typical wait? Yes, we have separate waiting rooms for sick and well patients. We try very hard to run ON SCHEDULE so that you get pulled back into your own exam room as soon as possible. We also try to cluster our well checks (especially our newborns) at the beginning of the morning schedule and afternoon schedule so that the waiting room is in its most sterile condition. We also provide more time per visit than most pediatric offices in an effort to stay on schedule, spend adequate time with our patients and families, and prevent extra time spent in the waiting room. Most pediatric offices schedule appointments every 10 minutes. We provide 15 minutes for basic sick visits and 30 minutes for most well checks. However, our schedule is largely dependent on factors beyond our control: patients/families arriving on time for their appointment (even being 5 minutes late adds up when we are seeing 20 patients a day) and visits not being prolonged (unfortunately visits are prolonged frequently for various reasons with pediatric patients). Our average wait time is 5-15 minutes.

Hope this helps!

Valerie Wheelock, MD