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WHEN TO SEE YOUR GYNAEC

Some women wait to start their gynaecological examinations until they have a symptom of any problem. The sooner you start regular exams the better it is. It's important to see your gynaecologist once a year for screening. Read the signs that calls for a visit



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Prevention is your best defence against future health problems, but you can't always predict when or what type of issues may arise. Experts say women who are sexually active or who are over 21 (whichever occurs earlier) should schedule regular checkups and see their gynaecologist yearly for routine checkups and screenings. The sooner a problem is found, the sooner it can be treated.

These potentially serious signs are among several that call for a visit.

- Pelvic pain and abdominal

discomfort: It's important to tell your gynaecologist what kind of pain you're having. This will help the doctor make a proper diagnosis. Sharp pelvic pain may be a warning sign that you have an infection, a ruptured ovarian cyst or a dangerous ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy growing outside the uterus). More constant pain is suggestive of uterine fibroids.

- **Another reason of regular pelvic pain is endometriosis:** It is a common condition in which the lining of the uterus grows outside the organ. Endometriosis starts with pain during the menstrual cycle and can progress to become an 'all the time' pain as endometrial cells grow outside the uterus. In addition to causing pelvic pain, the condition can lead to trouble in having a baby.
- **Bleeding between periods /**

post-menopausal bleeding: Occasional spotting between periods shouldn't set off any alarm bells. But when the bleeding lasts for days or is heavy and painful, it's time to call your gynaecologist. This could be a sign of an injury to the vagina, a miscarriage, or even cancer of the cervix or uterus. If you're having mid-cycle bleeding month after month, do call the doctor.

- **Erratic periods/missed periods:** If your bleeding has lasted longer than a week, your gynaecologist needs to know. Uterine fibroids, an infection, or a thyroid problem could be to blame. If you feel weak or dizzy during menstruation, you should call your doctor. Irregular or infrequent periods can be a symptom of an underlying condition such as polycystic ovary syndrome, a hormone imbalance problem. A

missed period could be a sign that you are pregnant, or that there is another medical condition requiring attention.

- **Unusual discharge or soreness in the genital area:** Vaginal discharge is the body's way of keeping the vagina clean and healthy. The thickness of discharge changes at different times of the month, but if you notice a yellow, green or gray discharge that has a bad odour, it's time to see your gynaecologist. It could indicate some type of vaginitis. Two major culprits are yeast and bacterial infections, which can be treated with medication. Very painful genital sores could be a sign of herpes.
- **Painful sex:** One of life's greatest pleasures shouldn't be painful. Pain during sex can be felt as deep pelvic pain in your genital area.

Common causes are vaginal dryness, infections or uterine fibroids. Your gynaecologist may perform a pelvic exam to find out what's wrong.

- **Problems with urination or bowel movements:** Urinary incontinence or difficulty in bowel movement can be a symptom of pelvic floor problems. If the muscles are weak, your gynaecologist may suggest special pelvic exercises, called kegels, to strengthen the area. But if there's a tear, your gynaecologist will suggest other treatment options.
- **Always pay attention to what your body is telling you:** If you are experiencing any of these warning signs, your gynecologist can evaluate the problem and commence treatment to help you get back to feeling your best as soon as possible.