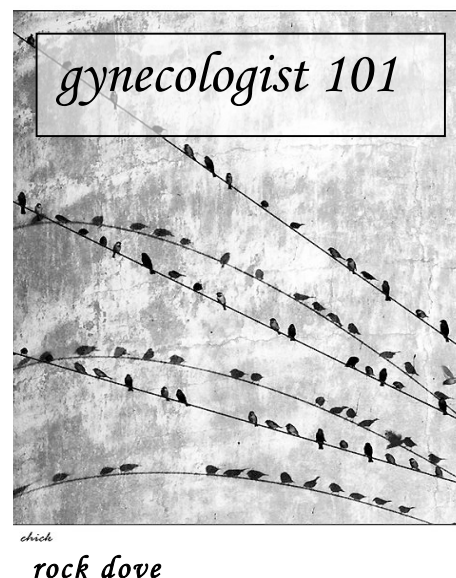


# visiting the gynecologist

All female-bodied people over age 16 are recommended to visit the gynecologist once a year for a check-up. This should include a physical exam of the reproductive area and breasts, a Pap smear that checks for cellular changes in the cervix that could signal disease, STI tests if requested and occasionally a cholesterol check. On average, female-bodied people in the USA live an average of three-four years longer than male-bodied folks; this is attributed in part to regular annual visits to the gyno, which can help detect other health concerns as well.

Here's to staying healthy!



## some tips for your visit

1. Do not have vaginal sex, use spermicidal products, contraceptive foam, douche, lubricants, or any other product in your vagina for at least 24 hours before the visit, some providers recommend 48 hours.
2. If it is your first time seeing a particular provider, try to arrive at least ten minutes early in order to fill out forms. The following info is good to have on hand:
  - Insurance card (if you have it)
  - Social security number
  - Emergency contact info(if you're not comfortable or unable to give the last two, don't worry about it, a lot of places won't require it although it might be in your best interest to provide it, especially the emergency contact)
3. You might need to provide a urine sample, so you might want to drink enough water before hand.
4. You can always request that a nurse be present in the room in addition to you and the provider if it makes you more comfortable. Often providers will request it themselves, but that's usually more to protect themselves from potential harassment lawsuits.

5. Be honest with your provider, even if the questions are embarrassing, don't worry about it, chances are they've heard it all before! And provide all pertinent medical information, even if it's not asked for.
6. During the physical exam of your vagina you can request that the provider set up a mirror so you can see what s/he is seeing.
7. Sometimes Pap Smears can cause a little bit of bleeding (that's normal!) so you may want to bring a panty liner to use afterwards, often providers will have some on hand.
8. Specify which sexually transmitted infections (STIs) you want to be tested for, sometimes default testing excludes certain ones. FYI, tests for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)—which can lead to genital warts and cervical cancer among other things—tends not to be covered by insurance, make sure you talk to your insurance provider about this before hand if you're interested.
9. The jury is still out about a uniform way to test for herpes, some providers can only test if there are sores present while others do blood tests. If this is something you're interested in getting, have a detailed conversation with your provider about it.
10. ASK QUESTIONS!!! Don't be afraid or embarrassed about this, most providers prefer that you do so! If they get annoyed with the questions you're asking, you probably don't want to return to them in the future. Remember, it's your body and your health! Take charge of it!!!

**[www.rockdovecollective.org](http://www.rockdovecollective.org)**

DISCLAIMER: This is not a comprehensive list and is in no way meant to be a substitute for certified medical advice. This information is presented by women who have experience going to gynecologists and have a working knowledge of health and sex education. If you have grounds to find any of this information detrimental or incorrect, please email us at [rockdovecollective@riseup.net](mailto:rockdovecollective@riseup.net) and we'll address your concerns right away.