

How To Choose A Specialist Gynaecologist

Choosing a gynaecologist that suits you can be difficult. Reviews from friends or the internet maybe influenced by individual experiences that might not reflect the true character or skills of the doctor. Likewise, a gynaecologist's personality, website, online testimonials, consulting room decor or price are unlikely to provide you with information that reflects that persons skills and knowledge.

The first step in the process is to see your GP to obtain a referral. Your GP will recommend a specialist based on their understanding of your condition and their assessment of your personal preferences. It is important that you have an understanding of why you are being referred to a particular specialist and what alternatives may be available to you.

This guide aims to provide you with a list of question you can ask your health professionals to help you make decisions regarding your gynaecological referral and treatment. There are no right or wrong answers and factors such as personal preference, geographical location and the reason for your referral will influence responses to many of the question.

The below questions are aimed as a guide to help you choose a gynaecologist who is right for you. There are no right or wrong answers and not all questions will fit all situations.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR GP

1. Why are you referring me to that particular gynaecologist?
2. Is my gynaecologist a good communicator?
3. Is my gynaecologist experienced in treating my particular condition?
4. Does my gynaecologist provide timely and appropriately detailed feedback about my condition and aftercare plans?
5. If you need to speak to them, has my gynaecologist been available and easy to contact?
6. Does my gynaecologist have the facilities and staff to manage my particular medical, personal or cultural needs?

QUESTIONS TO ASK CLERICAL STAFF BEFORE MAKING AN APPOINTMENT

1. How much time will my appointment take? – *A new visit should be allocated at least 30 minutes.*
2. How much will it cost? – *Medical specialists are not permitted to confer regarding their medical fees, however in general most services do not deviate widely as they are often based on rates set by the Australian Medical Association. Price (high or low) is not an indicator of quality and it is ok to contact your gynaecologist to ask for price estimates.*
3. How long will the wait for an appointment be? – *Waiting times vary and are not an indication of the quality of the gynaecologist. Your GP can request an urgent referral if they think it is warranted.*
4. If I am admitted to hospital, will my gynaecologist visit me every day?
5. If I need a surgical procedure, what is the post-operative follow up plan?
6. Who do I call if something goes wrong during and after hours?
7. If I need an operation which hospitals could I be referred to and do these hospitals have the necessary staff and services to deal with my condition and any complications that may arise both during and after hours?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR GYNAECOLOGIST

1. What are my other treatment options apart from surgery?
2. What are the risks of the treatments you have recommended?
3. Do you see others with my particular condition regularly?
4. Would your peers regard you to have the experience and skills to look after my particular condition?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

1. Do I feel comfortable talking to my Gynaecologist? Keep in mind that a congenial manner does not always equate to advanced technical or decision-making skills.
2. Has the gynaecologist explained the options and risks to me?
3. Was I given choices regarding my care (including non-surgical options)?
4. Was I heard? Were all my questions answered?
5. Was I given time to consider the options?

Seeing a specialist is an emotional, physical, and financial investment. Like all investments, sometimes we need advice on how to proceed and sometimes we need to change our direction. If these questions lead to confusion rather than clarity you can discuss your options with your GP.