Her First Gyno Visit

A girl should start going in her early teens

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No longer should girls wait until they're 21 or sexually active to first visit the gynecologist, advises the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Instead, girls should start going when they're 13 to 15, followed by annual appointments. (ACOG still recommends a first Pap test, taking cells from the cervix, or womb entrance, to check for infection or cancer, about three years after intercourse but before age 21.) Unless a girl is sexually active or her medical history warrants it, the first visits will involve talking "about who they are, how to be safe, eating, blood pressure, emotional issues and menstruation," says Loretta Sweet Jemmott, PhD, nursing professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

But according to the Centers for Disease Control, black teens have sex earlier, and more STDs and HIV, than other groups. It's about being proactive, Sweet Jemmott says: "Going early helps teens develop a relationship with the ob-gyn before they need to seek care for pregnancy prevention or STDs."

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