

# What to expect in a gynecological exam

To maintain your best health, you may require medical examinations of the most vulnerable and private areas of your body. These exams are needed to stay healthy but are limited to those steps that are absolutely medically necessary. Here are some things to know in preparation.

When a medical professional performs a gynecological exam, you can *expect* the examiner to do the following:

- Be professional and respectful at all times.
- Ask you to undress only the part(s) of your body being examined.
- Offer you a gown or cover to drape over yourself before, during, and after the exam.
- Provide privacy or step out of the room while you undress.
- Have another professional in the room during the exam to monitor for any signs of discomfort and advocate for your comfort if needed.
- Explain each part of the exam to you before and while it is happening.
- Use gloves.
- Encourage you to tell them if something feels wrong or uncomfortable.

We would like you to know that your medical examiner is a professional who has been trained not to engage in the following actions:

- Decline to answer your questions or tell you to be quiet.
- Examine private body parts without gloves.
- Decline to tell you what they are doing or why they are doing it.
- Neglect to have another person in the room during the exam.
- Insist that you undress parts of your body they are not examining.
- Expect you to answer questions about your sexual activity if it makes you uncomfortable.

If anything about the exam makes you feel uncomfortable, you are encouraged to do the following:

- Speak up. Let the examiner know your concerns, especially if you are experiencing any pain. The person examining you should let you know if something may be painful and why.
- End the exam at any time by letting the person examining you know you would like them to stop.
- Have a trusted friend or family member stay with you and even serve as an interpreter if you need one.
- Ask for an examiner of a different gender (this might require picking a new doctor and might not be possible in an emergency).

During gynecological exams, there is the rare but unfortunate possibility that some patients feel they have been treated unprofessionally. If you feel your rights or preferences have been disregarded at any time, please report it to the manager in charge as soon as possible. The hospital, practice manager, or facility manager can be reached at email address and/or phone number.