

A baby is lying on a bright green, textured rug. The baby is wearing a long-sleeved shirt with horizontal stripes in red, white, blue, yellow, and green. They are holding a large, red, ribbed plastic plate over their face with both hands. Scattered around the baby are various colorful toys: a blue ring with colorful beads, a red rectangular block with studs, a green circular block, a blue ring, and a green square block.

# atlanta BABY

FROM ATLANTA PARENT MAGAZINE

**Mom-Approved  
OB/GYNs and  
Pediatricians**

**Babies  
Want  
to Have  
Fun**

**New  
Parents:  
Don't  
Sweat It!**



# *Special Deliveries Daily*

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# 2023-24 atlanta BABY

FROM ATLANTA PARENT MAGAZINE

## Guide for New and Expectant Parents



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Ten creative ways to share your happy pregnancy news.

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atlanta  
BABY

FROM ATLANTA PARENT MAGAZINE

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## Top Tips for a Healthy Pregnancy

- **Drink plenty of fluids each day**, at least eight glasses, and avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- **Eat small and well-balanced meals daily**, five to six meals instead of the standard three.
- **If you smoke, quit**, and don't expose yourself to second-hand smoke.
- **Take a prenatal vitamin daily** as directed by your physician.
- **Stay toned** with daily moderate exercise — activity is good for physical and emotional well-being and a great stress-reducer.
- **Make sure you rest** — get at least eight hours of sleep at night and nap if you feel tired.
- **Non-prescription drugs or herbal remedies aren't a good idea**, unless your physician says they're OK.
- **Be sure you know where to place your seat belt**; the lap-belt portion should be below your abdomen. Sit as far back from the vehicle's airbag system as possible.
- **Avoid heavy lifting**, standing for long periods of time, using harsh chemicals or changing cat litter (it can expose your baby to toxoplasmosis, a parasitic disease carried by cats).
- **This is no time to go on a diet**, but pay attention to your weight gain, and avoid packing on excess pounds that can stress your body and your baby's; guidelines say normal-weight mothers should gain no more than 35 pounds.

# 10 FUN WAYS TO SAY 'I'M PREGNANT!'

The urge to shout "I'm pregnant!" seems to strike many women practically from the moment the pregnancy test turns positive. Sure, you could always just blurt out the news to your partner, family and friends, email them a photo of that plastic stick, or post an emotional video to social media. Before you shout from the rooftops, why not consider some more creative ways for sharing your happy news?

Here are a few ideas for telling the world you've got a new family member on the way.

- 1 Bake a dozen cupcakes**, then ice half with blue frosting and the other six with pink. Use icing to mark a big plus sign on top of each. Then, invite close friends and family over for a casual get together and serve the cupcakes for dessert.
- 2 Invite everyone over for Chinese food.** Before the guests arrive, replace the paper slip inside the fortune cookies with one of your own, announcing your big news.
- 3 Create a scavenger hunt** around the house. The last item to find is a basket or bag filled with baby basics.
- 4 Take advantage of holiday gift-giving** by picking a baby-themed item to share with someone special: a baby stocking for grandparents-to-be at Christmas.
- 5 If your family is expanding from three to four**, consider enlisting your child's help. Buy or make a T-shirt with the phrase "I'm going to be a big brother" or "I'm going to be a big sister." Let your son or daughter wear it to the next family gathering (and take bets with your spouse on who will be the first to notice). You can also use this idea for a social media reveal with cute pics or video of your child announcing your news.
- 6 Buy personalized greeting cards** for different members of the family to announce the news. For your sister, choose a "dear aunt" one and for new grandparents that might move to be closer to baby, get a "congrats on your new home" one. Then, see how long it takes them to catch onto the news!
- 7 Surprise your partner** by filling the car with pink and blue balloons.
- 8 Use pink and blue yarn** to lay a path starting at the front door and wandering all through the house. End the yarn at the positive pregnancy test.
- 9 Host a movie night** at your house and rent movies that share a baby theme: "Junior," "Nine Months," "Father of the Bride II," "Look Who's Talking," "She's Having a Baby."
- 10 Borrow a page from your wedding planner** and send a "Save the Date" card with your baby's due date. If you had an ultrasound early in your pregnancy, consider including baby's first photo with the card.

## When to Tell

Now that you're pregnant, when's the best time to start spreading the news? It's probably a given that your partner will be the first to know. Beyond that, you'll likely want to tell your parents, siblings, friends and coworkers — and possibly total strangers.

There's no right or wrong answer when it comes to deciding when to tell everyone you're pregnant. Waiting until the end of the first trimester lets you get past a major milestone: The chance of miscarriage decreases after 12 weeks. Others decide to tell earlier, eager to share the excitement.

Most experts agree that it's best to tell your boss after the first trimester, unless you have pregnancy complications that interfere with work or you have a physically strenuous job. It's also a must to tell your boss before telling other coworkers — you don't want the grapevine to share the news before you have.





# Don't-Sweat-It Tips for New Parents

by Sarah Lyons

Having a baby is one of the most exciting and anticipated moments in a parent's life. You have prepared the nursery, installed the car seat, read parenting books, and it's time to bring baby home and start life with a new family member. While having a new baby is a fun time, it can also be exhausting and overwhelming. Adjusting to having an infant at home takes time as you figure out the new normal. What is not worth stressing over while enjoying time with the new bundle of joy?

## Housework

It's nice to have a house that is neat and clean but the thing about housework is that it never goes away. As soon as the house is clean, it's messy again. While you enjoy the new baby, try to let some of the cleaning go. Do the bare minimum while resting, recovering, and recuperating from birth and spend more time snuggling that newborn.

## Cooking

Immediately after bringing home a baby is not the time to cook elaborate meals, or sometimes, any meals at all. However, eating nutritious meals on a regular schedule is important, so keep it simple. Stock the pantry with items that are quick and easy to eat while caring for the baby. Mom of two Wendy Haviland says, "I prepared freezer meals before the baby was born so I had something to put in the oven or crock pot when I was tired from taking care of a newborn." Ask friends to set up a meal train where family and friends can bring dinner during the first few days after the birth of a new baby. This will eliminate the need to shop and cook while recovering.

## Spoiling Baby

Some warn that holding a baby too much or while sleeping will spoil the baby and prevent the newborn from learning proper sleep habits. This is simply not true. There is no such thing as a spoiled baby. Newborns sleep most of the day and they find great comfort in being held. It also creates a strong bond between parent and child. Enjoy cuddle time and let that worry go.

## Naptime

There is one old saying that is true — “sleep when the baby is sleeping.” This really is the best advice. As a person that likes to keep busy, it can be hard to take naps during the day. Once the exhaustion of being up most of the night nursing or feeding a newborn hits, give yourself permission to take a nap when the baby does. Moms need rest and your body needs time to recuperate after the stress of giving birth.

## Accept Help

It can be hard to accept help but with a new baby at home, any help offered can be a huge blessing. Take people up on their offers

to bring meals, help with older children's carpool, or clean the house. Don't just have them do the easy, quick chores that aren't difficult to keep up on — let them vacuum the house, do laundry, and wash dishes. While help is around, jump in the shower, take a nap, or run a much-needed errand. People offer to help because they want to. Return the favor when you can.

## Take Turns

It can be hard, especially for breastfeeding moms, not to get overtired. As much as possible, share the task of caretaking with a partner. Some moms will find it hard to pass the baby care to their husbands or significant others, but dads often feel left out and want to jump in. He may not do things exactly like you, but that's okay. As long as the baby is clean, fed and happy there isn't anything to stress over. This will also give dad time to bond with the baby.

## Take a Break

Having a new baby can be physically and emotionally taxing. It is okay to admit you may need a break sometimes. If feeling overwhelmed, schedule a time someone else

can take care of the baby and step out of the house for a short while. Breastfeeding moms may find it is hard to get away for extended periods but typically taking a break for an hour or two can do a lot to improve your mood.

## Be Flexible

When adjusting to having a new baby, it's important to realize it will take a while to find a routine again. When planning an outing, think ahead. Pack items you might need including extra diapers, clothes for you and the baby, and be prepared to feed the baby on the go, if needed. It's also important to accept that sometimes an outing will not go as well as planned and it's okay to head home early. Be flexible and go easy on yourself when it comes to taking the baby out for the first time and when trying to get things done around the house. This is normal and will get easier in time.

Adding a new family member is both exciting and disruptive to a family. In time, everyone will adjust to the newborn and won't be able to imagine your family without them. In the meantime, give yourself, your spouse, and your other children time to adjust to this big change. It's okay to let go of some non-essential things and focus on the baby.

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# Creating a BIRTH PLAN

You've been to countless appointments, picked out the pediatrician, prepared the nursery, packed the hospital bag ... but have you created a birth plan?



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A collage of newborn photography images. The top row shows four small photos: a baby in a white hat, a baby in a pink basket, a baby in a white basket, and a family portrait. The bottom row shows a larger photo of a baby in a white basket, a baby in a pink basket, and a baby in a white basket.

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A baby is crawling on a white surface, looking up and smiling. The baby is wearing a brown shirt and patterned pants.



A birth plan is a personalized list for your ideal labor and delivery scenario. Keep in mind when you're drafting your plan that it's just a plan.

The birth plan is a communication tool, a "jumping off point" for conversations with your medical team about your preferences. It's best to keep it simple, no more than 10 items, and to have a separate plan for your baby on brightly colored paper. Your birth plan goes in your medical chart, and you need one with "do's and don'ts" for your baby that will be placed in the infant's nursery chart. Putting together a birth plan ahead of time might help you feel more prepared for labor and delivery, but keep flexibility in mind; neither you nor your practitioner will be able to predict everything that will happen on delivery day.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hospital policies may have changed. Make sure you understand the policies for testing or symptom screening, if your support person can stay with you, mask practices, the possibility for virtual support and visitor policies.

– *Melanie Wagner and Amanda Allen*

#### Here are some things to consider when creating a birth plan:

- Who do you want to be present at the birth? Your spouse, partner, friends, relatives or doula?
- Know who will deliver your baby and the backup doctor or midwife, just in case.
- Know when you should go to the hospital (immediately if you are Group B strep positive or when your water breaks).
- How will you labor? Walking, birthing bed, sitting in a chair, rocking on a big ball, a water birth?
- Which pain relief would you like administered? An epidural or spinal block, acupuncture, no pain medication?
- Would you like to push instinctively or be coached on when to push and for how long?
- Do you want your partner to help "catch" the baby? Do you want him or her to cut the umbilical cord? Do you want to hold your baby right away?
- Do you want all newborn procedures to take place in your presence? Do you want your baby to be in the room with you at all times?
- Do you want to breastfeed only, formula feed only or a combination?
- Do you want your baby boy circumcised at the hospital, at a later date or not at all?

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**atlanta baby**

page 9

# Robinette King, MD



Dr. Robinette King is dedicated to providing exceptional, compassionate care to women at every stage of their lives. As the lead physician at The OB/GYN Clinic at Southern Regional, she prides herself on spending time with each patient ensuring that she and her team develops a personalized partnership focused on each patients' healthcare journey. For Dr. King and staff, it's all about comfort, confidence, and communication with every patient.

Dr. King received her medical degree from Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta, where she also completed her Residency and an Internship in Obstetrics and Gynecology. She also completed a Fellowship in Clinical and Translational Research in Healthcare for Community Providers at Morehouse School of Medicine/Institute for Healthcare Improvement. She earned her undergraduate degree from Albany State University, Albany, Georgia. Board-Certified by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology, she is a member of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

The OB/GYN Clinic at Southern Regional is committed to personalized high-quality women's health care. The practice is located just off Southern Regional Medical Center's campus in Building 29 and serves the communities of the southern crescent of metro Atlanta. The OB/GYN Clinic's diverse and dedicated team is honored to continue to provide all aspects of women's health for the women in our communities.

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ATLANTA PARENT'S

# MOM-APPROVED DOCTORS

*Atlanta Parent* asked readers to recommend obstetricians and midwives they trust for excellent medical care.

## OB/GYNS

**Adedayo, Pelumi, MD**  
Juno, Atlanta

**Anderson, Keisa, MD**  
North Atlanta Ob/Gyn, Atlanta,  
Alpharetta and Marietta

**Barratt, Peter, MD**  
Atlanta Obstetrics & Gynecology  
Associates, Atlanta

**Beesley, Anne, MD**  
Atlanta Obstetrics & Gynecology  
Associates, Atlanta

**Blackburn, Nicole, MD**  
Georgia Obstetrics & Gynecology,  
Atlanta and Alpharetta

**Bonk, Catherine M., MD**  
Atlanta Gynecology and Obstetrics,  
Decatur and Lilburn

**Cherry, Colleen, MD**  
North Atlanta Ob/Gyn, Atlanta,  
Alpharetta and Marietta

**Combs, Julia Carper, MD**  
Piedmont OB-GYN, Atlanta

**Creed, Karen, MD**  
Women's Health Associates Group,  
Atlanta

**"Dr. Michelle Dodder of North Atlanta Ob/Gyn makes me feel safe, seen, and heard. Her staff is so friendly and accommodating."**  
*Haley V., / Brookhaven*

**Dennard-Hall, Keisha, MD**  
Obstetrics & Gynecology of Atlanta,  
Four metro Atlanta Locations

**Dodder, Michelle, MD**  
North Atlanta Ob/Gyn, Atlanta, Alpharetta  
and Marietta

**Elliott, Jennifer L., MD**  
Alliance Ob/Gyn, Sandy Springs and  
Alpharetta

**Epps, Sarah Grace, DO**  
Unified Premier Women's Care, Marietta

**Espinosa, Lauren R., MD**  
Piedmont OB-GYN, Atlanta

**Fairbrother, Genevieve L., MD**  
Obstetrics & Gynecology of Atlanta,  
Four metro Atlanta Locations

**Fisch, Jacqui, MD**  
Atlanta Obstetrics & Gynecology  
Associates, Atlanta

**Fryman, Julie, MD**  
Peachtree Women's Clinic, Canton  
and Cumming

**Gandhi, Peahen, MD**  
Cherokee Women's Health Specialists,  
Canton and Woodstock

**Garcia, Jose A., MD**  
Peachtree Women's Clinic, Alpharetta

**Glaspy-Benton, Eleanor, MD**  
Wellstar Gynecology Issues, PC,  
Lithia Springs

**Grogan, Stephanie S., MD**  
Peachtree Women's Clinic, Atlanta  
and Alpharetta

**Hayley, James, MD**  
Cherokee Women's Health Specialists,  
Canton and Woodstock

**"Dr. Dawn Mandeville of Atlanta Gynecology and Obstetrics is very knowledgeable, caring and personal, and she advocates for her patients."**  
*Tameke D. / Snellville*

**Henke, Jill J., MD**  
Obstetrics & Gynecology of Atlanta,  
Four metro Atlanta Locations

**Hill, Cherie C., MD**  
Emory Clinic, Atlanta

**Holloway, Keri, MD**  
Peachtree Women's Clinic, Atlanta,  
Alpharetta and Canton

**Jeffers, Sarah, MD**  
Atlanta Obstetrics & Gynecology  
Specialists, Atlanta and Alpharetta

**Killingsworth, Lindsay, MD**  
Inspire Ob/Gyn, Suwanee

**King, Robinette, MD**  
The OB/GYN Clinic at Southern  
Regional, Riverdale

**Litrel, Michael, MD**  
Cherokee Women's Health Specialists,  
Canton and Woodstock

**Lyman, Jennifer, MD**  
Premier Care for Women, Atlanta

**Mandeville, L. Dawn, MD**  
Atlanta Gynecology and Obstetrics,  
Decatur and Lilburn

*Cont'd on next page*



**Manetta, Kiley, DO**

Peachtree Women's Clinic,  
Canton and Cumming

**McLeod, Lisa, DO**

Cherokee Women's Health Specialists,  
Canton and Woodstock

**Mekonnen, Sitra, MD**

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**Morris, Sara, MD**

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**Reddy, Sowmya, MD**

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Reproductive Biology Associates, Atlanta

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day and as a new mom, that  
truly means a lot."

*Sara L. / Canton*

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**Kanter, Jessica R., MD**

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**Katler, Quinton, MD**

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staff are amazing. They  
are all friendly, professional  
and prompt."

*Michele F. / Cumming*

**Rubin, Jessica R., MD**

Reproductive Biology Associates, Atlanta

**Schirmer, David Austin, MD**

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**Slayden, Scott M., MD**

Reproductive Biology Associates,  
Atlanta and Braselton

**Straub, Robert J., MD**

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**Toledo, Andrew A., MD**

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**Zimmerman, Amanda, CNM**

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*Bess G. / Atlanta*



# Catherine M. Bonk, MD & L. Dawn Mandeville, MD



Atlanta Gynecology & Obstetrics (AGO) congratulates Dr. Catherine Bonk and Dr. L. Dawn Mandeville on being nominated as Mom-Approved Doctors. Dr. Bonk and Dr. Mandeville are dedicated to empowering women to make the best decisions when it comes to childbirth and health.

AGO is a diverse group of female physicians, midwives, and nurse practitioners who prioritize collaboration, choice, and safety. You'll always make the right choice when you know and understand the options available – backed by a team of women who share your perspective and your experience. AGO physicians have all been moms themselves, so they go beyond clinical expertise and work alongside you through every visit, every question, leading up to the special joy of bringing a new life into the world.

AGO believes that one of its most important jobs is educating women about their health before, during, and after pregnancy. Education is part of their model of care, scheduling visits around key milestones and decision points. Even putting information at the tips of your fingers through advanced technology applications to help you understand the changes your body is going through, week by week.

The goal of the AGO team is to guide you to the best birth possible. They are honored to have been nominated as a practice of "Mom-Approved Doctors" for Atlanta Parent and would be honored to help you along your pregnancy journey at either of their Decatur or Gwinnett locations.



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**Gwinnett Office**  
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## Anna Rybka, M.D.



Dr. Anna Rybka is a highly skilled and compassionate physician who brings a wealth of expertise and a warm, personalized approach to women's health. With a deep commitment to providing comprehensive care, she is excited to welcome new patients to Atlanta Women's Obstetrics & Gynecology!

Married and the proud parent of two delightful "dawgters," Dr. Rybka embraces a vibrant life outside of medicine. Her passions span various interests, from exploring new destinations through travel to relishing in the beauty of the outdoors. In her quieter moments, she finds solace and creativity in the art of needlepoint and the practice of Pilates.

Dr. Rybka has a genuine love for the OB/GYN specialty. She finds joy in forming meaningful relationships with her patients. Helping women navigate their healthcare through each stage of life is not only her professional duty but a source of immense personal fulfillment.

As "women proudly caring for women," Atlanta Women's Obstetrics & Gynecology has provided exceptional patient care to the Atlanta community for over 40 years. With her six partners—Cyd Williams, MD, Vanessa Biggs, MD, Gabriela Siegel, MD, Alice Hood, MD, Holly Sternberg, MD, and Kira Clement, MD — Dr. Rybka continues this legacy.



275 Collier Road NW, Suite 230  
Atlanta 30309  
404-352-3616

[www.awog.org](http://www.awog.org)



# North Atlanta Ob/Gyn



Dr. Keisa Anderson



Dr. Michelle Dodder



Dr. Sitra Mekonnen



Dr. Colleen Cherry

Atlanta/Sandy Springs  
5780 P'tree-Dunwoody Rd.  
Atlanta 30342. 404-255-0621

East Cobb/Marietta  
1523 Johnson Ferry Rd.  
Marietta 30062. 770-977-3513

Alpharetta/Avalon  
3905 Brookside Pkwy.  
Alpharetta 30022. 770-752-0824  
naobgyn.com

North Atlanta Ob/Gyn proudly celebrates Drs. Michelle Dodder, Keisa Anderson, Colleen Cherry and Sitra Mekonnen for their well-deserved recognition as Atlanta Mom-Approved Doctors!

What sets Dr. Dodder apart is her genuine commitment to building lasting bonds with her patients. From guiding women through the intricacies of their obstetrical journeys to offering unwavering support in every season of life, Dr. Dodder cherishes the privilege of serving her patients' diverse needs.

A true Atlanta gem, Dr. Keisa Anderson, is more than just a physician – she is your advocate, educator, and confidante. With over 15 years of experience, she is a steadfast source of personalized care and guidance for women.

Dr. Cherry finds her calling in every facet of obstetrics and gynecology, relishing the opportunity to establish enduring relationships with her patients. Her expertise extends to pediatric and adolescent gynecology, vulvar dermatology, and high-risk obstetrics.

Dr. Sitra Mekonnen's fervor for women's health knows no bounds, with special interests ranging from high-risk obstetrics to contraceptive care and minimally invasive surgery. Dr. Mekonnen's passion lies in empowering her patients, offering personalized care that resonates, and advocating for women's health.

Experience excellence with our award-winning team at North Atlanta Ob/Gyn. From personalized care to innovative expertise, we're dedicated to your wellbeing.



NORTH ATLANTA  
OBSTETRICS &  
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# Questions to Ask an OB/GYN

The relationship between a family-to-be and an obstetrician is a special one.

When it's time to find an OB/GYN, a good place to start is recommendations from friends and family, or other doctors your family uses. The physician also should be certified in obstetrics by the American Board of Obstetrics and Gynecology ([abog.org](http://abog.org)).

Then you'll need to check whether the doctor is part of your current health insurance plan, research the doctor's credentials and office hours and factor in convenience, such as how far the doctor's office is from your home or whether the doctor practices in the hospital you prefer for delivery.



## (And Some Questions to Ask Yourself)

### Here's what to ask the doctor or office staff:

- **How long have you been practicing** obstetrics and how many births have you attended? How many do you typically attend in a month?
- **How can I get in touch with you** if I have a concern? Are some questions handled by email or a nurse practitioner?
- **If the doctor is in solo practice**, who covers when the doctor is not available? If the doctor is in group practice, what percentage of his patients does he deliver each month? How often will my prenatal appointments be handled by other doctors in the practice?
- **What will be covered** during prenatal visits and how much time do you allow for a visit?
- **What is your philosophy** on pregnancy care, labor and birth? Which prenatal tests do you routinely recommend? Does your practice include midwives?

- **Will your practice** make every effort to follow my written birth plan, unless there is an emergency?
- **Does your practice** or hospital policy limit who can be in the room with me during labor and birth?
- **During labor**, do you encourage natural child birth? What do you recommend for pain relief?
- **If an emergency C-section** is needed, who will perform it? Is an anesthesiologist available if there is an emergency? What percentage of your patients have C-sections or complications during delivery that require surgery?
- **Will my baby** be in the room with me throughout my hospital stay?

### After the visit, ask yourself:

- **Was the** office clean and professional?
- **Was the** staff efficient and attentive? How long did you wait to see the doctor?
- **Does the** doctor share your philosophy about prenatal care and childbirth?
- **Did the** doctor really listen to your concerns or did the interview feel hurried?
- **Is there** anything about the doctor or the medical practice that makes you uncomfortable?

# Where Will You Have Your Baby?



**B**efore baby is born, there is a long checklist of things to do! One of your first decisions as a parent is where to deliver your infant. The metro Atlanta area has many different healthcare and hospital options, so you can discover the best fit for your family. This list includes the major metro-area hospitals to help you learn more about their services, birthing rooms, birth rates and more. Check websites for more information, including how to schedule a maternity tour.

## HOSPITALS

### Emory Healthcare

[emoryhealthcare.org](http://emoryhealthcare.org)

Emory Healthcare offers comprehensive, high-quality maternity services at three locations, including certified breastfeeding specialists, childbirth classes, overnight accommodations, on-call baby photography and more. The Johns Creek and Decatur hospitals have Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Units, and the Midtown location's NICU is part of a Special Care Nursery.

#### ■ Emory University Hospital Midtown

Births per month: 375-400  
Private maternity beds: 51-P  
Birthing rooms: 18 LDR

#### ■ Emory Decatur Hospital

Births per month: 260  
Private maternity beds: 52-P  
Birthing rooms: 18 LDR/LDRP

#### ■ Emory Johns Creek Hospital

Births per month: 115-130  
Private maternity beds: 11-P  
Birthing rooms: 12 LDR/LDRP

**August is  
the most  
popular  
birth  
month.**

### Grady Memorial Hospital

[gradyhealth.org](http://gradyhealth.org)

Special programs at Grady's Women's Health Center include Centering Pregnancy, a prenatal program that creates support groups of women whose babies are due on similar schedules; Baby Friendly, which encourages breastfeeding; and Talk With Me Baby, a program encouraging mothers and caregivers to spend time talking to newborns. Grady's Perinatal and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit serves more than 40 counties in North Georgia.

Births per month: 250  
Private maternity beds: 26-PP  
Birthing rooms: 12 LDR

### Northeast Georgia Health System

[nghs.com](http://nghs.com)

Northeast Georgia Medical Center specializes in Mother/Baby Care, allowing moms to actively participate in caring for your newborn during the hospital visit with special time to bond. Childbirth Education Classes include an online education portal, a Prepared Childbirth Class, a Breastfeeding Class, a Newborn Parenting Class and a free Car Safety Class. The Gainesville location includes a new Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

#### ■ Northeast Georgia Medical Center Braselton

Births per month: 140  
Private maternity beds: 20-P  
Birthing rooms: 10 LDR

#### ■ Northeast Georgia Medical Center Gainesville

Births per month: 307  
Private maternity beds: 30-P  
Birthing rooms: 18 LDR

**Babies  
usually  
smile at two  
months.**



## Northside Hospital

northside.com

Northside Hospital offers in-person maternity classes, as well as self-paced online courses with an interactive Q&A session with an experienced nurse. Women's center virtual tours and eBooks are also available. Northside offers multiple high-risk maternity services with Special Care Nurseries at all four locations. The Miracle Babies fund provides resources and financial assistance to families with newborns in the NICU.

### ■ Northside Hospital Atlanta

Births per month: 1,323  
Private maternity beds: 200-P  
Birthing rooms: 42 LDR

### ■ Northside Hospital Cherokee

Births per month: 226  
Private maternity beds: 24-P  
Birthing rooms: 13 LDR

### ■ Northside Hospital Forsyth

Births per month: 322  
Private maternity beds: 40-P  
Birthing rooms: 12 LDR

### ■ Northside Hospital Gwinnett

Births per month: 350  
Private maternity beds: 37-P  
Birthing rooms: 19 LDR

## Piedmont Healthcare

piedmont.org

Piedmont has helped welcome more than 100,000 babies in the last century. They offer a variety of classes, including childbirth preparation, breastfeeding, baby care and more. Piedmont has also launched the first neonatal nutritional program in Georgia allowing breastfeeding moms to help premature infants by donating their excess breast milk. The Athens, Atlanta, Fayette, Henry, Newnan and Rockdale locations have a Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

### ■ Piedmont Atlanta Hospital

Births per month: 250  
Private maternity beds: 29-P  
Birthing rooms: 14 LDR

### ■ Piedmont Cartersville Hospital

Births per month: 65-70  
Private maternity beds: 9-P  
Birthing rooms: 7 LDR

### ■ Piedmont Eastside Medical Center

Births per month: 110-135  
Private maternity beds: 18-P  
Birthing rooms: 13 LDR

### ■ Piedmont Fayette Hospital

Births per month: 215  
Private maternity beds: 24-P with 12 overflow  
Birthing rooms: 12 LDR

### ■ Piedmont Henry Hospital

Births per month: 166  
Private maternity beds: 18-P  
Birthing rooms: 12 LDR

### ■ Piedmont Newnan Hospital

Births per month: 140  
Private maternity beds: 18-P  
Birthing rooms: 6 LDR/LDRP

### ■ Piedmont Rockdale Hospital

Births per month: 140-160  
Private maternity beds: 19-P  
Birthing rooms: 16 LDR

There  
are about  
**380,723**  
babies born  
every year in  
Georgia.

The  
average  
baby  
weighs **7.17**  
pounds.

## Southern Regional Medical Center

southernregional.org

Southern Regional Medical Center works with you and your OB/Gyn to welcome your baby in a caring, comforting and secure environment. Their dedicated OB-Emergency Department offers enhanced emergent care for pregnant women with obstetrical concerns, and the Level III Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is led by board-certified neonatologists and specialty trained clinicians 24 hours-a-day. The Women's & Infants Pavilion provides a variety of education and support services for parents and families.

Births per month: 150  
Private maternity beds: 40-P  
Birthing rooms: 14 LDR/LDRP and 8 OB-ED

## Wellstar Health System

wellstar.org

Each year, 10,000 babies are born at Wellstar. Their highly skilled maternity services team provide family-centered care in technologically advanced birthing centers. The Cobb, Kennestone, North Fulton and Spalding locations feature a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, and the West Georgia Medical Center has a Special Care Nursery for babies born prematurely.

### ■ Wellstar Cobb Medical Center

Births per month: 230  
Private maternity beds: 38-P  
Birthing rooms: 20 LDR/LDRP

### ■ Wellstar Douglas Medical Center

Births per month: 55  
Private maternity beds: 10-P  
Birthing rooms: 10 LDR/LDRP

### ■ Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center

Births per month: 510  
Private maternity beds: 60-P  
Birthing rooms: 21 LDR/LDRP

### ■ Wellstar North Fulton Medical Center

Births per month: 115  
Private maternity beds: 20-P  
Birthing rooms: 6 LDR/LDRP

### ■ Wellstar Spalding Medical Center

Births per month: 85  
Private maternity beds: 20-P  
Birthing rooms: 4 LDR/LDRP

### ■ Wellstar West Georgia Medical Center

Births per month: 65  
Private maternity beds: 15-P  
Birthing rooms: 10 LDR/LDRP

Newborns  
have around  
**300 bones,**  
but adults  
only have  
**206.**

## BIRTH CENTER

### Atlanta Birth Center

atlantabirthcenter.org

The Atlanta Birth Center provides a holistic program with comprehensive midwifery care, childbirth services and free women's support groups. Birth services include labor, birth and postpartum care in a birth suite, hydrotherapy, immediate skin-to-skin care and more, and other services include family planning, pap smears, anxiety and more.

Sources: [babycenter.com](http://babycenter.com); [unitypoint.org](http://unitypoint.org); [stateofbabies.org](http://stateofbabies.org)

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Hudson Bridge   770.692.0760	Douglasville   770.599.5651
McDonough   770.637.7472	Lilburn   770.629.8889
Locust Grove   770.809.3727	Rex   678.324.3075
Oakwood   770.609.2757	Gainesville   770.535.7220
Flintstone   706.800.8585	Hampton   770.525.5560

[CedarsPreschool.com](http://CedarsPreschool.com)

CEDARS



PRESCHOOL





# Helping Baby Learn and Grow!

● **Talking to baby** is essential to language development. The facial expressions and tone of voice used also give baby social and emotional cues needed for healthy growth.

● **Tummy time** builds muscle strength in babies that is essential to their motor development. As soon as baby's umbilical cord stump falls off, try a minute of supervised time in two to three sessions per day.

● **A sleep schedule** is a proven method to get baby to sleep more quickly. The consistency of bedtime also helps keeps baby calm.

● **Introducing solid food** should happen when baby is about 6 months old. Offer single-ingredient, fresh foods first, and wait three to five days between each new food to gauge baby's reaction and ensure there are no allergies.

# Riding with Baby: 5 Tips for Car Seat Safety



by Emily Webb

**B**ringing baby home is exciting, but there's a lot to remember as a new parent. From the moment you drive your newborn home from the hospital, car safety is an important item to keep in mind.

Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death among children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. According to the CDC, in 2021, 711 passengers ages 12 and younger were killed in motor vehicle crashes. In a 2023 study using fatal crash data, researchers found 30% of ages 0-3 and 36% of ages 8-12 who were killed in car crashes were not buckled up.

Here's what you need to know:

## One size does not fit all.

The type of seat your child needs depends on your child's age, size and developmental needs.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends all infants ride rear-facing starting with their first ride home from the hospital. Infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing seat as long as possible until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by the seat manufacturer. Convertible seats have limits that will allow children to ride rear-facing for two years or more. Rear-facing seats usually come with a base that can be left in the car, and you can purchase other bases for additional vehicles.

A common concern for parents is what to do if their child's feet touch the back of the vehicle seat; however, as children are very flexible, they can easily find a comfortable position in a rear-facing seat.

With the upcoming colder months, remember to dress your baby in thinner layers and wrap a coat or blanket around your baby over the buckled harness straps. Winter coats can compress in a crash and leave the straps too loose to restrain your child.

## Know when to size up.

Car seat, booster seat and seat belt usage varies by age. Many children move up too soon to the next stage. Recommended ages for each seat type vary to account for differences in child growth and weight/height limits. Use the manual to check for information about installation, the seat weight and height limits and proper use.

Infants and toddlers should be buckled in a rear-facing car seat with a harness in the back seat until they reach the maximum weight or height limit. Children should be in a rear-facing car seat until at least age 5. Children can move onto a booster seat after outgrowing their forward-facing car seat and until the seat belt fits them properly. A seat belt fits properly when the lap belt is across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt is across the center of the shoulder and chest; this usually occurs between ages 9-12.

In Georgia, all children younger than the age of 8 are required to be properly restrained

in an appropriate child passenger safety seat or booster seat. Georgia law also requires children to ride in the back seat until age 8.

The CDC recommends keeping children properly buckled in the back seat until age 13. Vehicle airbags are not safe for children, which is why they should remain in the back seat. Don't seat children in front of an airbag. If your vehicle has a front passenger airbag, infants in rear-facing seats must ride in the back seat. Read your car safety seat instructions and the vehicle owner's manual for guidance on placing the seat next to a side airbag.

Buckle children in the middle of the back seat when possible. This is generally the safest position in the vehicle.

### Common errors include:

- Incorrect recline angle for rear-facing car seats
- Loose harness for all car seats
- Harness behind child's arms, legs or back in forward-facing car seats
- Improper lap belt position for booster seats
- Improper shoulder belt position for booster seats

## Ask for help.

Eight out of every 10 child safety seats are not used correctly, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. So if you feel unsure about your child's security, ask for help.



Car Seat Safety Technicians hold a special certification to perform car seat inspections. Certified child passenger safety technicians are trained to provide education and hands-on assistance for all types of car seats and booster seats, and services are usually free. Some technicians receive additional training to provide education and assistance for transporting children with special needs. CPSTs are the only ones qualified to do car seat checks. While first responders might have this additional training, it is not standard training. Technicians near you can be found at [cert.safekids.org](http://cert.safekids.org).

You can also find a list of county-by-county fitting stations in Georgia at [gahighwaysafety.org](http://gahighwaysafety.org). Safety inspections are free of charge but generally require an appointment.

Working with a technician is a one-on-one learning experience, so that when you leave, you will be confident that your child's seat is installed correctly and you can reinstall it on your own. Find tips on preparing for a consultation at [cert.safekids.org/get-car-seat-checked](http://cert.safekids.org/get-car-seat-checked).

Before bringing baby home, schedule your consultation to make sure your baby is safe in the seat starting from the very beginning.

## Children can move onto a booster seat after outgrowing their forward-facing car seat and until the seat belt fits them properly.

### Buy a new car seat.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety/Highway Loss Data Institute recommends purchasing a new child safety seat, as used or hand-me-down seats may have been recalled or damaged in a crash. Whether you buy a new or used seat, register it with the manufacturer so the company can contact you in the event of a recall.

A more expensive product doesn't necessarily mean the seat is safer or easier to use.

In the event of a crash, inspect child restraints. They should be replaced any time there's damage, including cracked plastic, bent metal parts or stretched or elongated belts or harnesses.

Never use a car seat that: is too old; has any visible cracks on it; does not have a label with the date of manufacture and model number; does not come with instructions; is missing parts; was recalled (check the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website

at [nhtsa.gov](http://nhtsa.gov)); or has been in a moderate or severe crash.

Use the NHTSA's Car Seat Finder to find the right car seat for your child.

### Car safety is more than just car seats.

Do not leave your child alone in a car, or allow your child to play in your car. A child can die of a heatstroke; be strangled by power windows, retracting seat belts, sunroofs or accessories; knock the vehicle into gear; be backed over when the vehicle backs up; or become trapped in the trunk.

Make sure others are following the correct procedures. If your child is being driven by someone else, make sure the car safety seat properly fits in the vehicle being used; the car safety seat is appropriate for the age and size of your child; and the person in charge of transporting knows how to install and use the car safety seat correctly.



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 [www.EasterSealsNorthGeorgia.org](http://www.EasterSealsNorthGeorgia.org)

# Read, Baby, Read!

## Make reading a habit at home



by Mary Williams

It's never too early to start reading to baby! Reading helps with eyesight and brain development; as kids grow older, reading teaches toddlers language skills, self-expression and other skills they'll need as they begin school. For older kids, reading helps to explore subjects of interest and inspire their imaginations.

*Atlanta Parent* asked Marcia Divack, Branch Group Administrator for Youth Services at Fulton County Library System, for her advice on helping parents get their kids started on the path to a lifelong love of reading.

### How can babies and young children benefit from being read to by their caregiver?

Reading to babies and young children exposes them to a greater number and variety of words. While talking to babies and children also helps build language skills, reading aloud to them gives them even more of a boost.

**FULTON COUNTY  
LIBRARY SYSTEM**

# 1,000 BOOKS BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

System-wide Storytime!

**Wednesday  
September 20, 2023**

All Fulco Library Branches

Join us as we kick off reading 1,000 Books before Kindergarten with a morning of Storytimes! Locations and times will vary. Visit [fulcolibrary.org](http://fulcolibrary.org) for more details.

**September is Library Card Signup Month. Get Your Library Card Today!**





### Why read 1,000 Books?

Numerous studies estimate that as many as 1 in 5 children have difficulties reading. Reading has been associated as an early indicator of academic success. Public formal education does not typically start until ages 5-6. Before then, parents and caregivers are the first education providers during the 0-5 early critical years! Let's read 1,000 books together!

**CONNECT WITH US**

[fulcolibrary.org](http://fulcolibrary.org)

[fulcolibrary](#) [fulcopubliclibrary](#)





## Tips for Reading With Young Kids

- Start early and establish a routine, such as reading after bath time.
- Find a quiet, comfortable spot to read together.
- Slow down. Take time to talk about the book's pictures and characters. Make connections between books and life.
- Listen to audio books in the car or while traveling.
- Ask your child questions about the story and how it made them feel. Let them ask you questions.
- Let your child choose the book — even if it's "Goodnight Moon" for the hundredth time, it's still beneficial.
- Offer a variety of books in varying formats and subjects.
- Make trips to the library. Model good reading habits.

### How can parents make reading with kids more enjoyable?

Parents should set aside a time every day for reading and pick a comfortable spot with few distractions. This is a time for snuggling and bonding as well as reading. Parents should also engage children by asking open-ended questions about the text of the book.

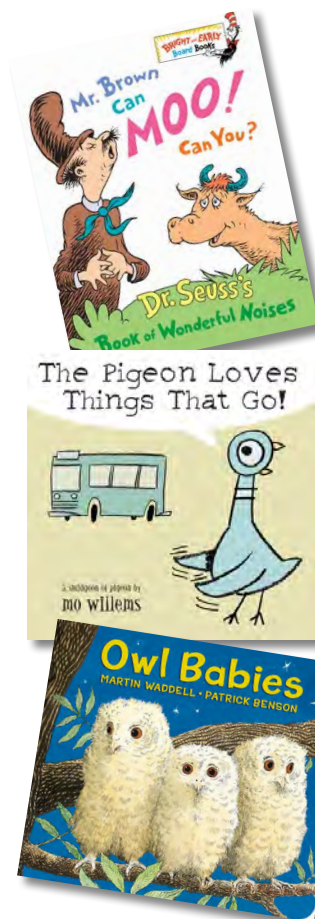
### What are some suggestions for parents for establishing a regular reading routine?

The best time is at bedtime, when everyone is settling down for the day. It gives children and parents something to look forward to each day.

### What types of books are best for babies and toddlers?

Picture books with bright colors, especially good contrasting colors. Books at this age should not be text heavy and should have a good rhythm or a rhyming pattern.

*Cont'd on next page*



## Read Me a Story!

With simple text and illustrations in an easy-to-hold format, board books are just right for small hands. You'll find both old and new children's favorites adapted to this format, including:

- The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle (Penguin Young Readers Group)
- Mr. Brown Can Moo, Can You? by Dr. Seuss (Random House Children's Books)
- The Pigeon Loves Things That Go! by Mo Willems (Disney Publishing Group)
- Owl Babies by Martin Waddell (Candlewick Press)
- Alligators All Around by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins Publishers)
- A Little Stuck by Oliver Jeffers (Penguin Young Readers Group)



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# Read, Baby, Read!



## Destination Storytime

Check out all the places around Atlanta that offer story times for babies and toddlers.

### ■ Atlanta Botanical Garden

On Wednesdays through October, kids ages 1-4 can listen to stories about bees, flowers and other garden friends. Atlanta. atlantabg.org

### ■ Atlanta History Center

Toddler Storytime for ages 1-5 is held the first Wednesday of each month, and includes themed storytelling, songs, crafts and other activities. Atlanta. atlantahistorycenter.org

### ■ Barnes & Noble Booksellers

Children's storytime is on Wednesday mornings at Barnes & Noble's Buckhead location on Peachtree Road, Atlanta. barnesandnoble.com

### ■ Fernbank Museum

Storytimes for ages 1-6 are held throughout the month; check the website for dates. Afterward, explore the NatureQuest play area and WildWoods forest. Atlanta. fernbankmuseum.org

### ■ Little Shop of Stories

This Decatur shop offers Storytime on Thursdays for ages 3 and younger, along with songs and play. Storytime for ages 2-6 is held each Tuesday. Decatur. littleshopofstories.com

### ■ Marietta-Cobb Museum of Art

Kids ages 1-5 will hear a story and make an art project with their caregivers. September 19, 22 and 26. Marietta. mariettacobbartmuseum.org

### ■ Southeastern Railway Museum

The Preschool Program for ages 2-4 is held the second Thursday of the month and centers around a themed vehicle of the month, with a story, songs and games. Duluth. train-museum.org

### ■ Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History

During the Mommy and Me Preschool Program on Thursdays, ages 3-5 can explore a monthly theme with a story, activities and movement. Kennesaw. southernmuseum.org

### Metro Atlanta Libraries

Make a trip to the library! Metro Atlanta libraries offer more than just books — they're a wealth of resources for parents and kids. Check the event calendar at your local branch to find storytime events for babies and toddlers; many also incorporate singing, crafts and other fun activities. Find your local library at georgialibraries.org.

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**www.saintannesdayschool.com**



# Babies and Toddlers Just Want to Have Fun!

Toddlers have a lot of energy, so mixing things up with a visit to somewhere fun is a must! There are lots of options around Atlanta for young children. Whether you opt to spend time with your toddler exploring, making music, being artistic or staying active, get out there and try something new.

## Museums and Places to Explore

You've likely visited these family-friendly attractions, but did you know they have programs designed just for toddlers? From story times, music sessions, and hands-on learning opportunities, find out what your favorite spot has to offer your little one.

### ■ Children's Museum of Atlanta

This hands-on museum is a treasure trove of fun for toddlers. Check out "Emotions at Play With Pixar's Inside Out" (through January 7), as well as engaging permanent exhibits like "Fundamentally Food" and "Leaping into Learning." The Building Blocks program for ages 1-5 includes Artsy Mondays, Tinkerin' Tuesdays, Messy Thursdays and Jam Session Fridays. Atlanta, [childrensmuseumatlanta.org](http://childrensmuseumatlanta.org)

### ■ Zoo Atlanta

When it comes to animal adventures, Zoo Atlanta offers up fun for all ages, including toddlers. Get up-close and personal with hundreds of animals, visit the petting zoo, Splash Fountain and KIDZone play area, and ride the train and carousel. Kids ages 5 and younger can learn about animals and nature through games and activities during Adventure Cubs (held twice a month throughout the year) and Twilight Tots (Sept. 23, Oct. 27, March 29, April 9 and May 30). Atlanta, [zooatlanta.org](http://zooatlanta.org)

[atlantaparent.com](http://atlantaparent.com)



Fernbank Museum



Zoo Atlanta

### ■ Atlanta Botanical Garden

This beautiful greenspace in the heart of Atlanta is a family destination. The Lou Glenn Children's Garden has places to play and learn, along with special programming, including Young Sprouts (Wednesdays from Nov. 8-Dec. 6), Garden Playtime and Garden Grooves (March-Oct.). On Fridays from May-Sept., Shows for Seedlings has performances by puppeteers, storytellers and musicians. Atlanta, [atlantabg.org](http://atlantabg.org)

### ■ Fernbank Museum

Explore science and nature at Fernbank! Explore NatureQuest, a fun hands-on learning area with activities and live animal displays. Outside, Fernbank Forest and WildWoods offer lots of places to play. Look for special events on their website, including Critter Corner, Animal Encounters and Storytime for ages 1-6. Atlanta, [fernbankmuseum.org](http://fernbankmuseum.org)

*Cont'd on next page*

# Babies and Toddlers Just Want to Have Fun!

## ■ High Museum of Art

Toddler Thursdays for ages 1-3 feature a weekly topic and related artwork, art-making, activities and a tour. Toddler Saturdays also occur on the first Saturday of the month. Atlanta, [high.org](http://high.org)

## ■ Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History

On Thursdays at the Mommy and Me Preschool Program, ages 3-5 can explore a different theme through hands-on activities, story time and movement. Kennesaw, [southernmuseum.org](http://southernmuseum.org)

## ■ Center for Puppetry Arts

Engaging puppet shows are fun takes on classic stories; upcoming shows include "Human," "Packrat," and "The Emperor's New Clothes;" check the calendar for dates and times. At the Worlds of Puppetry Museum, see puppets and costumes from Sesame Street, Fraggle Rock and more. Atlanta, [puppet.org](http://puppet.org)

## ■ Atlanta History Center

Explore the gardens that surround the History Center and visit with farm animals, including sheep, chickens and goats. On the first Wednesday of every month, Toddler Storytime engages kids ages 1-5 with a themed story, craft and activities. Atlanta, [atlantahistorycenter.com](http://atlantahistorycenter.com)



Atlanta History Center

## ■ Interactive Neighborhood for Kids

Toddlers will love flying in an airplane, shopping for groceries, playing dentist, making music, and exploring the dairy farm at this hands-on museum. Gainesville, [inkfun.org](http://inkfun.org)

## ■ Alliance Theatre

The Kathy & Ken Bernhardt Theatre has creative, interactive performances designed just for ages 5 and younger. Current and upcoming shows include "Oodles of Doodles," "Knock, Knock" and "The Curious Cardinal." Atlanta, [alliancetheatre.org](http://alliancetheatre.org)

## ■ Chattahoochee Nature Center

The CNC, a 127-acre center on the banks of the Chattahoochee River in Roswell, has trails to explore (many are stroller-friendly), wildlife, special exhibits and seasonal events. Pee Wee Naturalists, a quarterly series for ages 3-4, encourages an appreciation of nature through exploration, a close-up look at wildlife, and an art activity. Roswell, [chattnaturecenter.org](http://chattnaturecenter.org)

## ■ Yellow River Wildlife Sanctuary

This 25-acre attraction has plenty of wildlife, including bison, peacocks, pigs, wallabies, sheep and lemurs. Visit the petting zoo or purchase a bag of lettuce and carrots to feed the deer, goats, bunnies and alpaca. Lilburn, [yellowriverwildlifesanctuary.com](http://yellowriverwildlifesanctuary.com)



## Building Blocks PRESCHOOL PLAYTIME



Build school readiness for ages 1-5 through play! Drop in weekdays from 10 AM - 12 PM for hands-on fun.



[childrensmuseumatlanta.org](http://childrensmuseumatlanta.org)



This program is supported in part by the City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs.





## Best Playgrounds for Babies and Toddlers

Metro Atlanta has so many playgrounds! Check out these area favorites, with features just for younger kids.

### ■ Brook Run Park Playground

The playground and adventure garden has a toddler area with slides, swings, a tunnel and more. Dunwoody, [dunwoodyga.gov/brookrunpark](http://dunwoodyga.gov/brookrunpark)

### ■ Decatur Toy Park

Filled with donated scooters, tricycles and push toys galore, this park is the perfect spot for toddlers. Decatur, [decaturdisciples.org](http://decaturdisciples.org)

### ■ Wills Park Playground

In addition to the “Wacky World” playground, the toddler playground has slides, swings, a tire spin and sand boxes. Alpharetta, [alpharetta.ga.us](http://alpharetta.ga.us)

### ■ Riverside Park Playground

This riverfront park has a shaded play area for ages 2-5, along with dinosaur bounce toys and a slide. Roswell, [roswellgov.com](http://roswellgov.com)

### ■ Centennial Olympic Park Playground

This large and partially shaded playground is designed for all ages and abilities, with a soft playing surface and slides, swings and interactive elements. Atlanta, [gwcca.org](http://gwcca.org)



Brook Run Park Playground

### ■ Ben Hill Park Playground

The playground in the community park is partially shaded, with a soft-surface playground, slides and infant swings. Atlanta, [atlantaga.gov](http://atlantaga.gov)

### ■ Roswell Area Park

Large play areas feature a separate playground for younger kids and are naturally shaded by the surrounding trees. Roswell, [roswellgov.com](http://roswellgov.com)

### ■ D.H. Stanton Park Playground

Located in the Peoplestown neighborhood, this park features plenty of green space, a multi-use playground and a splashpad. Atlanta, [beltline.org](http://beltline.org)

### ■ Kidscape Village Playground

This large playground has a section just for toddlers, with mini slides, swings and climbing areas. Smyrna, [smyrnaga.gov](http://smyrnaga.gov)



Kidscape Village Playground



Decatur Toy Park



Roswell Area Park



# Babies and Toddlers Just Want to Have Fun!

## Just-Right Learning: Toddler Classes and Programs

Toddlers love routine, so why not try a class that will give you a scheduled activity each week and help your child learn something new? Explore everything from art to nature and meet friends at these local class opportunities. Check websites for class times, fees and registration information.

### ■ The Music Class

The popular Music Class for ages 4 and younger is packed with singing, dancing, movement and instrument play. Nine metro Atlanta locations, [themusicclass.com](http://themusicclass.com)

### ■ The Little Gym

Parent and Child classes for ages 4 months-3 years at The Little Gym support early development through movement and brain-boosting activities, sharing and more. Four Atlanta locations, [thelittlegym.com](http://thelittlegym.com)

### ■ European School of Music

Mommy and Me "Learning Groove" program for ages birth-4 years include music games, songs, dances, exercises and fairy tales with music and nature themes. Atlanta, [euroschoollmusic.org](http://euroschoollmusic.org)

### ■ The Art Barn

This Canton farm is a fun mix of art and animals. During Play Dates, kids can take a hay ride, pet the animals and then head over to the barn for an art lesson or free draw time. Canton, [theartbarn.com](http://theartbarn.com)

### ■ Gymboree Play & Music

Music and play classes for all ages are specifically designed for early childhood development, encouraging children to play, explore and learn. Sandy Springs and Johns Creek, [gymboreeclases.com](http://gymboreeclases.com)

### ■ Champion Kids

During Buddy and Me class at this gymnasium, parents and kids (ages 15 months to 2.5 years) are led through obstacles to learn basic gymnastics skills and better prepare for without-parent classes. Marietta, [championkids.net](http://championkids.net)

### ■ Music Together

Classes for kids ages birth-4 years offer an interactive experience, with music, movement and songs. Decatur and Marietta, [musictogether.com](http://musictogether.com)



Goldfish Swim School

### Splish, Splash! Swim Classes

For safety and fun, it's important for your toddler to know how to swim. From infant safety to swimming techniques, these spots offer instruction for kids as young as four months.

■ Aqua-Tots Swim Schools. Multiple locations, [aqua-tots.com](http://aqua-tots.com)

■ Big Blue Swim School. Johns Creek, [bigblueswimschool.com](http://bigblueswimschool.com)

■ Dynamo Swim School. Multiple locations, [dynamoswimschool.com](http://dynamoswimschool.com)

■ Goldfish Swim School. Four metro Atlanta locations, [goldfishswimschool.com](http://goldfishswimschool.com)

■ SafeSplash Swim School. Atlanta and Decatur, [safesplash.com](http://safesplash.com)

■ SwemSchool. Decatur, [swemschool.com](http://swemschool.com)



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## Free and Almost-Free Fun

These toddler-friendly spots offer a great time without breaking your budget, which means you can enjoy them week after week. Plus, most neighborhoods offer their own finds in each category, so you don't have to drive far to have some serious toddler fun.

### ■ Story Time

Metro Atlanta libraries offer story time events for babies and toddlers; many also incorporate singing, crafts and other fun activities. Find your local library at [georgialibraries.org](http://georgialibraries.org). Many neighborhood bookstores offer weekly story times, including Little Shop of Stories in Decatur, FoxTale Book Shoppe in Woodstock and Barnes & Noble in Buckhead.

### ■ Nature Centers

Admission is free at the Dunwoody Nature Center, where you can explore the trails and play on the kids' playground. Explore the woods at Morningside Nature Preserve and see a variety of animals at Autrey Mill Nature Preserve.



Southern Museum for Civil and Locomotive History

### ■ Trains

Train-loving toddlers can take can explore the Southeastern Railway Museum; admission includes a train ride (Duluth, [train-museum.org](http://train-museum.org)). The North Georgia Live Steamers operates several train ride days throughout the year ([northgeorgialivesteamers.org](http://northgeorgialivesteamers.org)). At the Southern Museum for Civil and Locomotive History, see the General Locomotive and explore more train-related artifacts ([southernmuseum.org](http://southernmuseum.org)).

### ■ Fire Trucks

Check out fire-fighting equipment at the Marietta Fire Museum ([mariettaga.gov/189/fire-museum](http://mariettaga.gov/189/fire-museum)) or Roswell Fire Museum ([roswellgov.com](http://roswellgov.com)); both are open for self-guided tours.

### ■ Splash Pads

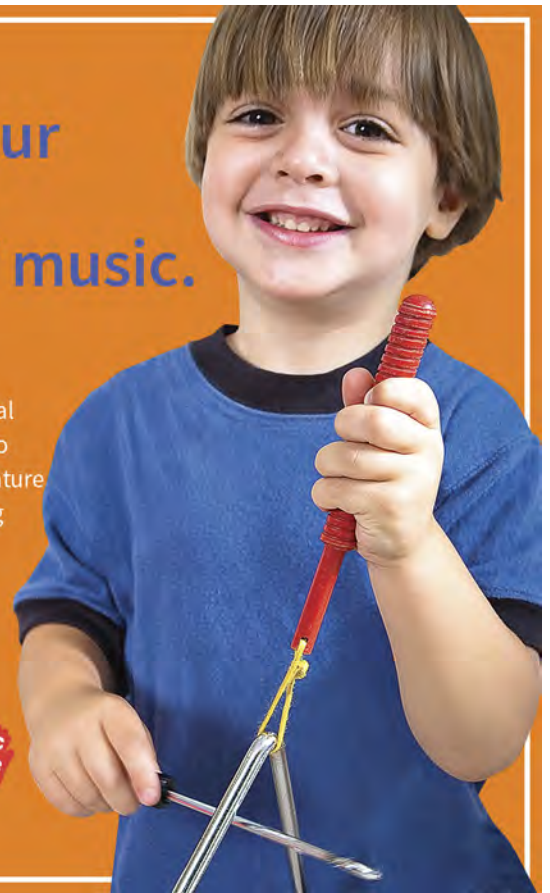
On hot summer days, toddlers love to play at a splashpad or fountain. Check out the splash pads at The Battery Atlanta, Legacy Fountain at Piedmont Park and the Duluth Town Green Fountain.

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# EARLY INTERVENTION: What You Need to Know



by Tali Benjamin

**B**aby's first smile, sitting up, waving bye-bye, crawling and baby's first word are all milestones new parents look forward to and expect since most first-time parents start reading and learning about baby's development during the pregnancy.

It's important to understand that all babies develop and achieve skills at different times. But what if a baby seems delayed? What if an older sibling did things much earlier? What if parent intuition says something might not be quite right?

It might be time to consider an early intervention evaluation. Early intervention — a term that refers to the services and supports that are available to babies and young children with developmental delays and their families — is essential to helping children achieve their maximum potential.

## For Parents

According to Dr. Leslie Rubin, a developmental pediatrician, empowering parents to follow their gut instincts regarding their child is of the utmost importance. "From my nearly 40 years of experience, if mom or dad think there's a concern with their child, they are almost always right," he says. "And, if they are wrong, at least they know there's nothing to worry about."

Janine Wiskind, an occupational therapist and founder of On Solid Ground Occupational Therapy based in Sandy Springs, agrees. By the time families make it to her, parents have usually been struggling with their gut instincts for a long time. "If you have the opportunity to help your kids thrive, why not take it?" explains mom of two from Cobb County Katherine Thomas. Thomas has seen this first-hand; her son Henry has come a long way in better managing his nervous system thanks to early intervention therapies and techniques. "He's even considered advanced in language at this point," she says.

"The earlier you start with therapies, the easier it is for children to adapt certain skills and habits," says Jenny Bowen, MA, CCC-SLP and Founder of SpeechFamily located in Dunwoody. Normalizing neurodiversity can help parents in seeking early intervention for their child. "Families have such diverse backgrounds — culturally, financially, educationally — and these factors impact their reactions to concerns they may have," says Bowen.

For some parents, having a diagnosis helps determine next steps and gives them peace of mind. "I work with the family to understand areas of need and strengths of the child," explains Rubin. "Then, I can formulate a diagnosis and recommendations for therapies and interventions to help the child make as much progress as possible."



For other families, a diagnosis can add tension to an already stressful situation. “I always tell parents, when you’re ready to explore, we have resources, and we are on this journey with you,” says Bowen. “We teach parents to better understand their child, which helps the entire family system, including siblings.”

## For Children

“Babies are born with more brain cells than they will have later in life,” says Rubin. “It’s a physiological fact. The younger a child is, the more potential for learning and incorporating new skills into who they are exists.”

Progress through therapies occurs much more quickly, the younger a child is when therapy starts. Waiting to see what might happen, especially with motor development, can be a loss of valuable time. “If core steps of movement are missed, it’s harder to build upon during therapy,” explains Wiskind. Rubin notes that this is especially true for children with cerebral palsy who need assistance in moving the effected muscles before they become paralyzed or atrophied.

Children can exhibit signs of developmental delays in various ways. With sensory processing, children have to learn how to synthesize each of their senses and movement at the same time. If they have difficulty doing this, they may seem sensitive to sounds or lights. They might also have behavioral challenges. Some developmental delays are more obvious such as missing milestones like being able to sit up, walking, feeding themselves or speaking.

*Cont’d on next page*

## Developmental Delays 101

Developmental delays align with the areas of child development and connect with different parts of the brain. Some children can experience a delay in only one area; other children may have delays in multiple areas, which is referred to as global developmental delay.

### The categories of developmental delays include:

- **Cognitive skills:** Cognitive or thinking skills include learning and understanding information, as well as problem solving and following multi-step directions.
- **Social and emotional skills:** This includes getting along with others and being able to express feelings and communicate needs. Those with social or emotional delays may struggle with understanding social cues, accepting changes to a routine, or having a conversation.
- **Speech and language skills:** Speech and language skills include speaking and comprehension. If a child can speak but does not understand what others are saying, this still constitutes a developmental delay in this area, and vice versa.
- **Fine and gross motor skills:** Motor delays are centered in the muscles and can deal with gross motor skills such as sitting up or walking or fine motor skills such as holding a crayon or bottle.



# Caring for Parents and Students



Do you know a child who resides within the city of Atlanta in need of special education services? APS Department of Special Education services can open a window of hope for a brighter future for children and young adults identified with a disability or developmental delay.

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## EARLY INTERVENTION: What You Need to Know

“In the first year of life, a baby learns to go from lying in whatever position you place them in to being able to walk and move independently,” says Rubin. “It’s a huge time for motor development and that process has certain milestones. What parents need to be aware of is when a child misses several milestones or if a delay persists.” The same pattern follows in the second year of life for speech and language skills. Rubin notes that one red flag is if a child stops speaking or regresses in their speech around 15-20 months of age.

Jill Lewis started to notice signs for her older son in behavioral issues. “He was biting a lot and acting out,” says the Brookhaven mom of two. “He really wasn’t listening and had a big reaction when Charlie (his younger brother) was born.” She saw a huge improvement in a short time following starting occupational therapy when he was a toddler. “Within weeks I saw a change and after seven months, he was like a new kid.”


The long-term benefits of early intervention can be truly life changing for children who experience developmental delays. “The biggest impact of my work as an OT is giving a child the ability to be their best self and helping parents find a balance between accepting their child and the expectations they have for them,” says Wiskind. “My goal is to create joy and confidence for kids, so that they feel proud of who they are.”



## Common Conditions Connected to Developmental Delays



According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), recent estimates in the United States show that about one in six, or about 17%, of children between the ages of 3 and 17 years have one or more developmental delay. While there are many factors at play, commonalities with certain conditions are evident, including:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Cerebral Palsy
- Premature Birth
- In-utero Exposure to Drugs and Alcohol
- Genetic and Chromosomal Conditions




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# ATLANTA PARENT'S MOM-APPROVED DOCTORS

Parents are choosy when it comes to medical care for their children. *Atlanta Parent* asked readers — moms and dads like you — to nominate pediatricians and specialists they would recommend. We wanted to know what makes your child's doctor special and you told us.

## PEDIATRICIANS

### Adamkiewicz, Thomas, MD

Perimeter Pediatrics Clinic, Atlanta

### Akinsola, Adebayo, MD

Baybol Pediatrics, Chamblee and Lawrenceville

### Aldridge, Sarah, MD

Sandy Springs Pediatrics, Sandy Springs

### Avery, Rashida, MD

Intown Pediatrics, Atlanta and Decatur

### Babcock, Laura, DO

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, four metro Atlanta locations

### Bataille, Fredly, MD

InTown Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, PC, Atlanta and Decatur

### Benaroch, Roy, MD

Pediatric Physicians, PC, Roswell and Alpharetta

**"Dr. Berenson and Dr. Kelly take their time with both my children, never rushing us or making us feel like just any other patient. They also have Saturday hours."**

– *Claudia B.*

### Benza, Natalia, MD

Healthy Kids R Us Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, Dunwoody

### Berenson, Gloria Ana, MD

Dunwoody Pediatrics, Dunwoody and Alpharetta

### Bien, Elizabeth R., MD

Pediatric Physicians, PC, Roswell and Alpharetta

### Blackington, M. Rebecca, MD

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC, Alpharetta and Cumming

### Bowman, Catherine, MD

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC, Alpharetta and Cumming

### Brown, Lauren Vergouven, MD

Peachtree Park Pediatrics, Atlanta

### Brutus-Darius, Jessie, MD

Healthy Kids R Us Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, Dunwoody

### Burnham, Brian D., MD

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC, Alpharetta and Cumming

### Burnham, Robert D., MD

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC, Alpharetta and Cumming

### Cabrera, Greg, MD

North Point Pediatrics, Alpharetta

### Chheda, Shafali, MD

Harmony Pediatrics, Alpharetta

### Clements, Rebecca B., MD

Preston Ridge Pediatrics, Alpharetta

### Cline-Egri, Zachary, MD

Pediatric Physicians, PC, Roswell and Alpharetta

**"Dr. King is an exceptional pediatrician. He was amazing when we brought our newborn son in and made us feel confident in our parenting."**

– *Monica W.*

### Colquhoun, Cynthia, MD

Wellstar Pediatric and Adolescent Center, Smyrna

### Cooper, Jeff, MD

Cooper Pediatrics, Duluth

### Corral, Jessica, MD

The Pediatric Center of Stone Mountain, Stone Mountain

### Darby, Scott, MD

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, four metro Atlanta locations

### Dickerson, Jill, MD

Vibrant Kids Pediatrics, Newnan

### Drake-Forte, Gabriela, MD

TenderCare Pediatrics Inc., Alpharetta

### Eaton, Melissa G., MD

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC, Alpharetta and Cumming

### Elliott, Steven, MD

Piedmont Pediatrics, Atlanta

*Cont'd on next page*



**hnaz, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Fatema, Tayaba, MD**

United Pediatrics, Lawrenceville

**Garrett, Tolly W., MD**

North Point Pediatrics, Alpharetta

**Gfroerer, Terrence, MD**

Dunwoody Pediatrics,  
Dunwoody and Alpharetta

**Gillman, Rachel, DO**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Gotlieb, Edward M., MD**

The Pediatric Center of Stone Mountain,  
Stone Mountain

**Guthrie, Bridgette D., MD**

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC,  
Alpharetta and Cumming

**Hill, Andrea, MD**

Monroe Pediatrics, Monroe

**Homer, Ronald A., MD**

DeKalb Pediatric Associates, PC, Tucker

**Jacobsen, Sara, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Johnson, Wes, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Johnson, Yolanda, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Josephson, Douglas S., MD**

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC,  
Alpharetta and Cumming

**Judah, Lauren, MD**

West Atlanta Pediatrics,  
Lithia Springs and Dallas

**Kelly, Linda S., MD**

Dunwoody Pediatrics, Dunwoody and Alpharetta

**King, David M., MD**

Children's Medical Group, Atlanta

**Klopman, Andrea F., MD**

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC,  
Alpharetta and Cumming

**Kubagawa, Homare, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Landis, Evan N., MD**

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC,  
Alpharetta and Cumming

**Lavania, Hiral, MD**

One Family Pediatrics, Cumming

**Metzig, Natalie M., MD**

Northside Pediatrics,  
Sandy Springs and Woodstock

**Miller, Robyn, MD**

Snellville Pediatrics, Snellville

**Molock, Suzanne, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Mordi, Emmanuel E., MD**

Delta Pediatrics, Buford

**Muller-Dale, Stephanie, MD**

North Point Pediatrics, Alpharetta

**Nally, Meg Mackin, MD**

North Atlanta Pediatric Associates, Atlanta

**Norwood, Dorsey, MD**

Norwood Pediatrics, Atlanta

**Pleasant, Shyronda, MD**

Pleasant Peds Care of Conyers, Conyers

**Quisling, Yvette, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Ransom, Lindsey, MD**

West Atlanta Pediatrics,  
Lithia Springs and Dallas

**Reisman, A. Gerald, MD**

Dunwoody Pediatrics,  
Dunwoody and Alpharetta

**"Dr. Shah asks my kids questions and talks with them. The office has books for the kids in the lobby and TV's in each colorful room."**  
– *Melanie R.*

**Roberts, Lisa, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Roberts, Nikki, MD**

Cobb Pediatrics, Marietta

**Salandy, Shelly-Ann, MD**

Children's Medical Associates, Hiram

**Sellers-Scott, Adrene M., MD**

Kaiser Permanente Henry Towne Centre,  
McDonough

**Sells, Deneta, MD**

InTown Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine, PC,  
Atlanta and Decatur

**Shah, Shalini M., MD**

Village Pediatrics at Vickery, Cumming

**Shelton, Melinda, MD**

DeKalb Pediatric Center, Decatur

**Shepard, Alejandro, MD**

Intown Pediatrics, Atlanta and Decatur

**Shirazi, Kathy, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Silverman, Howard W., MD**

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC, Alpharetta  
and Cumming

**Smiley, Susan, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Smith, Shayna, MD**

Flourish Pediatrics, Sandy Springs

**Stebbins, Stanton, MD**

Pediatric Physicians, PC,  
Roswell and Alpharetta

**Steele, Sharon, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Stickney, George, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Stolle, Ashley, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Tolkan, Judith R., MD**

Roswell Pediatric Center, PC, Alpharetta  
and Cumming

**Torres, Alejandro, MD**

Dunwoody Pediatrics, Dunwoody  
and Alpharetta

**Vigil, J. Vincent, MD**

Children's Medicine, PC, Lawrenceville  
and Suwanee

**Washington, Keyana, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Wells-Jarrett, Estonna, MD**

Sandy Springs Pediatrics, Sandy Springs

**Widjaja, Courtney, MD**

Gwinnett Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Wilburn, Kelly, MD**

Dunwoody Pediatrics, Dunwoody  
and Alpharetta

**Wilkov, Jane, MD**

DeKalb Pediatric Center, Decatur

**Williams, Christian, MD**

Wellstar KenMar Pediatrics, Acworth

**Young, Earl, MD**

West Atlanta Pediatrics, Lithia Springs

**Youngblood, Elaine, MD**

Kids First Pediatrics, Stockbridge



## PEDIATRIC SPECIALISTS

**Bauer, Erik, MD**

PENTA: Pediatric ENT of Atlanta,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Berenson, Frank, MD**

Panda Neurology & Southeast Center  
for Headaches, Atlanta

**Bernard, Paul, MD**

Pediatric Endocrine Specialists, Atlanta

**Berland, Jerry E., MD**

Thomas Eye Group, multiple metro Atlanta  
locations

**Bhatia, Taz, MD**

CentreSpringMD, Atlanta and Johns Creek

**Chacko, Thomas, MD**

CHACKO Allergy, Asthma and Sinus Center,  
six metro Atlanta locations

**Ganz, Jodi E., MD**

Olansky Dermatology & Aesthetics,  
Atlanta, Roswell and Cumming

**Gold, Benjamin D., MD**

GI Care for Kids, Atlanta and Decatur

**Harmon, Paula MD**

PENTA: Pediatric ENT of Atlanta,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**"Dr. Tolkán always  
takes such good care  
of us. We also love her  
therapy dog, Gypsy!"**  
– Joy C.

**Hochman, Jay, MD**

GI Care for Kids, Atlanta,  
Marietta and Alpharetta

**Hurwitz, Eugene, MD**

Center for Allergy and Asthma of Georgia,  
five metro Atlanta locations

**Ingle, Avani P., MD**

Northwest ENT and Allergy Center,  
Atlanta and Marietta

**Mehta, Tejas, MD**

GI Care for Kids,  
Atlanta, Marietta and Lawrenceville

**Moncino, Mark, MD**

Georgia Center for Autism and  
Developmental Pediatrics, Sandy Springs

**Parikh, Shatul L., MD**

Northwest ENT and Allergy Center,  
Atlanta and Marietta

**Patel, Nirav R., MD**

GI Care for Kids, Atlanta and Marietta

**Phoenix, Vidya P., MD**

Thomas Eye Group, multiple Atlanta locations

**Punjani, Zahra, DMD**

Bloom Holistic Dentistry, Atlanta

**Rubin, Leslie, MD**

The Rubin Center for Autism  
and Developmental Pediatrics, Atlanta

**Sheerin, Kathleen A., MD**

Atlanta Allergy & Asthma, Lawrenceville and Sandy Springs

**Sherrod, Olga, MD**

GI Care for Kids, Atlanta, Decatur and Lawrenceville

**Sidhu, Navreet, MD**

Inspire Pediatric Neurology, Atlanta

**Thomsen, James, MD**

PENTA: Pediatric ENT of Atlanta,  
four metro Atlanta locations

**Tritt, Ramie A., MD**

Atlanta ENT Sinus & Allergy Associates, PC, Atlanta

**Videlefsky, Neill, MD**

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Sibley Heart Center,  
Atlanta, Alpharetta and Lawrenceville

**Yoo, Jina, DDS**

Happy Children Pediatric Dental Sedation Center, Atlanta

## CHOOSING A PEDIATRICIAN



Atlanta has many great pediatricians; choosing the right one for your child can seem daunting. When you need to find a new one, use *Atlanta Parent's* mom-approved list of pediatricians, along with recommendations from family and friends. You'll need to check whether the doctor is approved by your current insurance, research their credentials and office hours online and factor in convenience, such as how far the doctor's office is from your home or whether the office has evening or weekend hours. Consider scheduling an in-person meet-and-greet (some pediatricians charge for these visits). Here are 10 questions to ask while you're making a decision.

- What do you love about your job?
- How long have you been practicing, and do you have any sub-specialties (such as special needs, childhood obesity or diabetes)?
- How does your practice utilize technology? Do you embrace telemedicine? Can parents contact you or your nursing staff via email? What's the process when I need to call after hours?
- Can appointments be made online?
- What is the scheduling process? What is the average wait time for an appointment?
- Which medical networks and hospitals do you work with? Does your practice accept a variety of insurance plans in case our insurance coverage changes?
- Does the practice offer same-day sick visits?
- What are your thoughts on vaccines and the use of antibiotics for children?
- If other doctors are in the practice, will we also see them on occasion? Do nurse practitioners also see patients? If the doctor is the sole practitioner, who covers if you are out of town or unavailable?
- As a pediatrician, what is your top advice to parents?



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