WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GENERAL PEDIATRICIAN AND A DEVELOPMENTAL PEDIATRICIAN?

Primary care physicians, general pediatricians, family practitioners, and developmental and behavioral pediatricians play important and on-going roles in the care of children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Routine childhood preventive care, including annual physical evaluations, routine inoculations, and other first line health concerns are a priority for the primary care physician, family physician, and general pediatrician. These doctors care for any illness, including cold, ear infection, and injury. General pediatricians also play an important role in monitoring side effects of medications children may be taking. Additionally they will note if there are other concerns and will help families locate specialists for any additional care that might be indicated. General pediatricians will also help families interpret the results of a specialist’s evaluation.

Developmental pediatricians (also called developmental and behavioral pediatricians) are specialists at understanding the developmental concerns of childhood. Children with developmental concerns or delays can benefit from seeing a developmental pediatrician. As these children grow up, it is important that a developmental pediatrician follow their physical growth and emotional development and see how they progress and change over time. Given that individuals with ASD will have differing expression and manifestations of their disability over time, it is important to have regularly scheduled evaluations with a developmental pediatrician. These are usually scheduled annually. Developmental assessments help families know what to expect over time and how to redirect interventions and supports.

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