

HEALTH

Does Your Child Have a Medical Home?

NewsUSA

(NU) - Home – a place where you're surrounded by people you know and where you feel comfortable. Imagine creating this sense of home within a trusted pediatrician's office – a sort of medical home.

While it won't have your favorite chair and may require you to leave your shoes on, a medical home creates a sense of comfort and familiarity and also ensures the most comprehensive care for your child. Here your child's medical records are complete, both medical and non-medical needs are met, and assistance is available to help the patient access specialty care, other health care services, educational services, family support and community services important to overall health.

More and more experts such as the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) are stressing the importance of this type of regular, ongoing care. Good preventive care helps children and adults stay healthier, and it helps to contain runaway health care costs by preventing costly illnesses and injuries. For example, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality estimated that hospitals spent \$326 million in 2004 on complications of pediatric asthma – many of which could have been prevented with ongoing care.

So, what should you look for when choosing a medical home for your child? According to the AAP, a trusted pediatrician provides primary care that is acces-



Create a sense of home within a trusted pediatrician's office.

sible, continuous, comprehensive, family-centered, coordinated, compassionate and culturally effective. There should be a partnership of mutual responsibility and trust with the child and family.

Pediatricians provide care ranging from preventive (such as checkups and immunizations) to acute care (such as injuries, infections and sudden stomach aches) to care for chronic (long-term) conditions. A medical home becomes even more important when a child suffers from a chronic condition such as asthma or diabetes. These conditions are managed more effectively when the physician can see the patient over the long term.

So, while emergency rooms and urgent care clinics have their uses, for day-to-day care it is best to stick with your regular pediatric practice – a place you and your child can call home.

For more information about creating a medical home for your child, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org.