

Office Policies and General Information

We take the responsibility of caring for patients very seriously. We assume new patients who transfer to our care are doing so to transfer completely. We ask that Sunshine Pediatrics be your sole primary care provider for both sick and well visits. Patients who visit us for only one type of care, and visit another physician for another type of care, put us in an awkward position when dealing with routine treatment issues or chronic health conditions. This also applies to current families who split care between offices. This could be a potential danger for your child. While we respect your right for a second opinion, when care is *routinely* split between two different practices, it is our opinion that our medical care could be jeopardized. For that reason, we do not offer urgent care type services to new patients who do not want to leave their current office, nor do we offer second opinions for patients from other physicians.

SERVICES WE PROVIDE

Our board certified pediatricians and nurse practitioners provide a comprehensive list of services in order to optimize your child's physical, psychological and emotional development, including:

- Preventative services, such as well child check-ups, school or sports physicals, immunizations, and health screenings
- Acute and chronic care, such as sick visits, chronic disease management, follow-ups, minor trauma, flu testing, specialist referral and coordination, and medication management
- Patient and parent counseling of health, nutrition, safety, parenting, and psychosocial issues
- Referral coordination. If our physicians refer you to a pediatric specialist for a matter outside the realm of general pediatrics, our referral department can process referrals to pediatric specialists, pediatric hospitals, and pediatric specialty clinics, all over the state and into NC.
- Daytime phone triage and in-house 24/7 after-hours call service
- Breastfeeding management and/or lactation service coordination
- Dental clearances for when your child has a dental procedure scheduled

SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS

In an effort to maintain our goals of keeping a stress-free environment for our parents, patients, staff, and providers, we schedule appointments in a particular way so that you can come, be examined, treated and leave in a timely manner. Although this cannot always be guaranteed, we pride ourselves with the many compliments and referrals we receive from parents who appreciate our efforts to be, simply put, a bright spot in your day.

To accomplish this we have several tips and policies to help us keep low wait times, ensure access to all of our patients throughout the day, and avoid overbooking—like other offices may do—to make up for patients who no-show their appointments.

1. **BEING LATE:** Parents who are 15-20 minutes late for their appointment will be rescheduled. We will make every effort to reschedule your appointment as soon as possible, but it is important to keep in mind that some well-visit time slots can be filled as far out as 4-6 weeks. Also, to avoid delaying your child's vaccines and risking their health, we may need to get you back on the schedule as soon as possible. This means you may not get the provider or time slot you prefer – so please be on time!
2. **NO-SHOWS:** A no-show is an appointment for which you do not show up. It also includes when you cancel an appointment less than 30 minutes before your scheduled time. We understand last minute problems can't be helped, but families who no-show more than 3 times may be asked to leave the practice. Not only do your child's needs go unmet, but a missed appointment prevents another child from being treated. We also do not overbook our schedule to accommodate no-shows. Overbooking means long-wait times and unhappy parents! Families who no-show double-well visits for siblings, will not be allowed to schedule double well appointments again. Families who no-show on Saturdays and holidays when we have shortened hours, will also not be allowed to schedule on those days again.
3. **REMINDER CALLS:** We make reminder calls, as a *courtesy*, beginning 2 days in advance of your scheduled appointment. Regardless of whether you get this call or not, it is your responsibility to come at your scheduled appointment time. Please keep us informed of any changes to your contact information.
4. **SICK APPOINTMENTS:** We provide same day sick appointments. To make certain we have a majority of our appointment slots open on any given morning, we ask that you call the day you need the appointment and not earlier. This has helped us reduce our no-show rate since some parents forget about appointments because the child is doing better. We avoid filling up our schedule days in advance so that we can ensure access for everyone when they truly need us.
5. **WALK-INS:** We do *not* accept walk-ins except in cases of emergencies. If a parent walks-in for a non-emergency visit and we happen to have an available opening, we will do our best to fit you in. If you must have a specific provider who does not have an opening at that moment, or if there is no opening at all, we will schedule you in the next available spot. If you have to wait for more than 30 minutes for that scheduled spot, we ask that you leave and come back. Walk-ins can increase wait times for everyone, so please be respectful.
5. **MULTIPLE CHILDREN:** If you arrive with your child for a visit and you need to add one or more siblings on at the last minute, we count that add-on as a walk-in. If we do not have the space to accommodate a walk-in, we will ask that you schedule the sibling(s) at a later time that day. All we ask for is a simple phone call to let us know that your other child needs to be seen as well. Also, we do not do double well visits except in the case of twins, or under very special circumstances. We want to give your child our undivided attention! Teens are also not doubled up with another sibling, and toddlers and younger children that both need vaccines are also usually kept separate. When certain children see a sibling get vaccines, they can get unruly, inconsolable, or even hostile. This makes for a very unsafe and stressful situation to give vaccines, for both you and our staff. Also, somewhere between 6 and 11 years of age, we separate twin well visits so that each child may receive the individual attention they deserve.
6. **SATURDAY SICK APPOINTMENTS:** We have Saturday hours that vary depending on how busy the season is. There is a Saturday service charge that will be added to your bill that many insurance companies do not pay for. This charge, in addition to your copay or co-insurance, is often times less than what it would cost to be seen at an urgent care or emergency room. Urgent care facilities and emergency rooms often send you back to us for a follow up visit since we are the pediatric primary care provider. This means you would be paying a higher cost to be seen there, and then pay again when you come in to see us. In the end, it is often times more cost-effective and time-friendly to schedule with us. To schedule a Saturday sick visit, call us as soon as we open in case the office closes early due to a lack of demand.
7. **VERIFY INFORMATION OVER THE PHONE** - Please call us with any insurance changes to avoid delays in checking-in and increasing your wait time.

CHECKING IN AND WAITING TO BE SEEN

When you arrive for an appointment, please keep a few things in mind:

1. At your first visit, we will ask for and scan, at least one parent's or legal guardian's driver's license.
2. We will ask that you verify your address and phone number *at each and every visit*. All of your child's personal information will need to be updated annually as well. This may entail filling out a new demographic form and insurance form on each child in your family.
3. Please present your insurance card at check-in at every visit. Without proof of insurance you are expected to pay in full at the time of service.
4. In the exam room, we only allow 1-2 adults due to space restrictions, to reduce the risk of spreading contagions, and so that the providers can conduct their exam without distractions.
5. Children are to be supervised at all times, including in the exam rooms, waiting rooms, and when younger children use the restroom.
6. When conducting business with our staff, we expect all cell phone communications to cease or be put on hold. If a parent is carrying on two conversations at once, the next parent in line, or the next patient in an exam room, will be taken care of ahead of you.
7. Occasionally, there are unexpected delays which cause for longer than normal wait times, but if you have been waiting for more than 20-30 minutes, please let us know. We have steps we can implement that help alleviate any back logs. We take our wait times very seriously!
8. We have both a sick and well waiting room. We ask that only children that are coming for their well-child physical wait in the well room. If your child is also sick, please move to the sick room for the protection of the other infants and children. Even minor ailments, including rashes, may be contagious. We appreciate your cooperation in this manner, but if necessary—to protect all of our kids—we will ask you to move.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS SICK

When your child is sick or there is a concern you wish to discuss with your provider, call for an appointment or hit option 2 for our triage staff.

- **TRIAGE:** Our triage staff can take down the details that will help our board certified providers make a decision on the best course of action for your child. Keep in mind that this may mean your child does *not* need an appointment where he or she could be exposed to something more contagious. If, however, your child does need to be brought in, our low wait times can assure you that we are doing everything we can to get you right back home where you can provide the tender loving care your child needs. For matters that are routine or simple, our triage staff may also give you advice and/or suggestions based on current pediatric protocols. Every call is documented and reviewed by our providers. Return calls are prioritized, or triaged, in order of medical significance. It is important to leave detailed information on any message so this process can be done accurately. Calls may be returned as soon as 30 minutes or as late as 4 hours. A good rule-of-thumb is that we will try to return morning calls by our lunch break and afternoon calls by the end of day. Calls made right before closing may be triaged or referred out to an urgent care center or emergency room.
- **AFTER HOURS:** Our board certified pediatricians and nurse practitioners currently provide their own after-hours phone triage service. After our normal business hours, you will need to call our main line like you would during the day (803-980-7337) and follow the instructions on the voice mail message. You must leave a clearly spoken telephone number in order for us to return your call. Please repeat the phone number at least once. You should also keep the phone number to the nearest 24-hour pharmacy handy in case the provider needs it. In order to receive a call back from our office, if your phone does not accept calls that come up as "unknown" on your caller-ID, you will need to turn that feature off. Occasionally, we are unable to return a call in a timely manner. This could be for various reasons, not the least of which include multiple phone calls that are occupying the provider, a phone number that cannot be heard clearly on the message, a wrong number or no number left at all, technical difficulties with the phone company, our phone equipment or the provider's pager. If you do not receive a call back within 30 minutes, please call back again. In the event you are unable to reach us, and feel that you cannot wait, please take your child to the nearest urgent care center or emergency room. In the case of an emergency, you can also call 911. Poison control can be reached at 800-222-1222.

REFILLS

If your child needs a medication refill, we ask that you call your pharmacy up to a week before he/she will run out of medicine. If your prescription has no refills, they will call us to request a new prescription. This extra time allows us to process the refill, allows for any changes in your insurance company's preferred drug list, allows for any shortages that the pharmacy may have, and prevents your child from having to go without any medication. Please do not wait until the bottle is empty! Refill requests are routine matters that must be handled during our normal business hours, except in cases of rescue medications that may be needed after hours. Check back with the pharmacy to see if the prescription is ready.

For ADD/ADHD prescriptions, you must call our office **at least 3 - 5 days before** you run out of medicine and speak to our triage staff who also handle our medication refills. You will be required to answer several questions every month before a refill will be authorized, and once every 3-6 months you will be required to come for a follow-up visit with your physician.

NEED A FORM?

We currently do not have any charges for the actual filling out of the following forms but reserve the right to bill your insurance for sports physicals. We do ask, however, that you make sure your account is in good standing with us.

1. **SCHOOL EXCUSES:** We will be happy to provide you with a school or work excuse, if your child was seen at our office or you consulted us by phone about an illness. We cannot provide excuses for dates we did not see your child or speak to you about his/her illness. We also cannot provide excuses for visits to emergency rooms, urgent care facilities, or other physicians offices.
2. **SHOT RECORDS:** We require at least 24-hours notice to prepare a certified SC Certificate of Immunization. We do not mail shot records. They must be picked up at our office. If you need it to be faxed, a signed release of information must be sent to us before we can do so. If your child is at our office getting his/her vaccines, we will be able to provide you with an updated shot record while you are here.
3. **PHYSICALS FORMS:** Please bring your sports, camp, or school physical forms with you to your well visit appointments. The provider will fill it out for you at that time. If, however, you are bringing us the form after your child's well visit was completed, we must have at least 48-72 hours notice to fill out the form provided that the previous well visit was done within the past 12 months, unless your form requires sooner.
4. **DENTAL CLEARANCE FORMS:** If your child needs a dental clearance form filled out, your child must be examined at our office 2-3 days before your scheduled dental procedure. Please inform your dentist that this is our policy. You must bring the form in with you when you come for your dental clearance visit so that we can fill it out while you are here.
5. **OTHER FORMS:** In general, we require 48-72 hours to fill out forms needed for any other purpose.