

**“You don’t need a ‘premarital exam’ to begin sexual activity. You do need a pelvic exam to maintain your health.”**

*Kristin Hodson*

### First off, what is it?

Historically in Utah, a woman’s first wellness or pelvic exam has been known as a “premarital exam.”

This unique name has come about because of a strong religious influence which encourages abstinence before marriage. However, for the rest of the world this woman’s wellness exam is standard and not required prior to marriage.

**“While it’s not vital that a soon-to-be bride sees a doctor before becoming sexually active, it’s important to do so if she would like to begin contraception.”** - [UofU Health](#)

Check in with yourself and check out the questions to in the table to see if scheduling an exam feels right for you.

I hope this helps you in your sexual wellness journey!

*Kristin Hodson*

### SHOULD I SCHEDULE AN EXAM?

- Do I already have an established relationship with a qualified medical professional with whom I feel comfortable discussing your sexual health?
- Have I had the opportunity to discuss my family health history with a trusted medical professional recently?
- Have I had the opportunity to discuss my period with a qualified medical professional recently?
- Have I received a pap smear? If so, has it been within the past three years?
- Have I received a complete physical exam within the past year?
- Have I had the opportunity to discuss contraception, if desired, with a qualified medical professional?
- Would I like to discuss tips for becoming sexually active with a qualified medical professional, including topics such as these:
  - Preparing my body for becoming sexually active, including steps or tools to reduce the discomfort and frustration often associated with the first few times
  - Recommended products to help reduce the discomfort and frustration of becoming sexually active
  - Preparing for my honeymoon and any potential for bladder infections or other ailments that could disrupt the experience



## Who should I see for my exam?

“A pelvic exam is performed by a healthcare provider, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner. You can see your regular primary care practitioner or family medical professional for this or you can go to an obstetrician-gynecologist (OB-GYN).” - from [Verywell](#)

## When should I go (if I decide it's right for me)?

An initial pelvic exam with pap smear is recommended at age 21. However, if you're experiencing heavy or irregular periods or other vulvar/vaginal irregularities, then it's recommended to connect with a provider to discuss those issues as they are happening ([ClevelandClinic.org](#)). If you're not sexually active but are planning to be and you would like to discuss contraception and other sexual health questions, then it's recommended you schedule 2-3 months before your wedding date.

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

### During a standard exam, you should expect the following:

- A complete physical examination
- A discussion about family health history
- A pap smear to screen for cervical cancer >>

You can also discuss the following:

- Preparing for a sexually-active lifestyle:
  - Considering contraception options
  - Tips/tools for enjoying sex
  - Tips for avoiding bladder or yeast infections
- Anything else you'd like to discuss!

“Ask as many questions as you need and seek advice on how to make the exam easier.. You can ask your provider to talk you through the exam step by step so that you are prepared for what is about to happen. If you have post-traumatic stress disorder or experienced sexual violence, or suffer from health anxiety or body dysmorphia, it's important to let your provider know so he or she can help you through the exam.” - [Mayo Clinic](#)

### Note: It's okay for the examiner to:

- Explain each part of the exam to you before and while it is happening.
- Use gloves.
- Encourage you to tell them if something feels uncomfortable.
- Is the same sex as you, if requested.
- Only ask you to undress the part of your body being examined.

### It's NOT okay for the examiner to:

- Refuse to answer your questions or tell you to be quiet.
- Examine private parts without gloves.
- Refuse to tell you what they are doing or why they are doing it.
- Decline to have another person in the room with you.
- Insist that you undress parts of your body they are not examining.
- Ask you questions about your sexual activity that make you uncomfortable - [RAINN.org](#)