

HEALTH HIGHLIGHTS

NEWS FROM CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL HERMANN HOSPITAL SPRING/SUMMER 2010

FOR PARENTS

Spring into action against ear, nose and throat problems

Most children welcome the warmer weather that spring brings. And parents, too, welcome the new season because it means fewer visits to the doctor.

"As the weather warms up, children actually tend to be less sick," says Soham Roy, M.D., F.A.C.S., F.A.A.P., director of pediatric otolaryngology affiliated with Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital.

However, spring does present challenges for parents, namely allergies. "More plant growth means more allergens in the air. Tree and grass pollens can cause a wide range of symptoms

such as sneezing, runny nose, stuffy nose and cough in children," says Dr. Roy, who is also an associate professor of pediatric otolaryngology-head and neck surgery at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston.

Understanding Seasonal Problems

A pediatric otolaryngologist can help parents develop strategies for coping with their child's seasonal symptoms. "We look at your child's history and conduct a complete examination to determine the cause of seasonal ear, nose and throat problems," Dr. Roy says.

When symptoms occur, simple solutions may help a child feel better. Stuffy noses may be managed by using saline nasal spray to clean out the nasal passages. Medicines, too, can help control seasonal symptoms as needed.

Avoiding allergy triggers can also help. Dr. Roy suggests that parents work with a pediatric allergist and immunologist if they are interested in allergy testing.

Problems Can Occur 365 Days a Year

Many ear, nose and throat problems in children aren't seasonal. Tonsil problems that can cause snoring and trouble breathing in children can occur year-round. Ear infections, too, happen any time of year.

"You and your child don't have to suffer through it alone," Dr. Roy says. "If your child's symptoms don't seem to get better after a few weeks, make an appointment." ■

Join us on April 13 for Dr. Roy's free online chat with parents about pediatric ear, nose and throat issues. For more information, visit childrensmemorialhermann.org/ENTchat. Dr. Roy cares for patients at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center.



Vaccination Update: Is Your Child Protected?

Vaccinations protect children from some serious diseases. For the most protection, children need to get the right shots on schedule. Talk with your child's doctor about when certain vaccinations are needed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently updated its recommended immunization schedule. New recommendations include:

- Boys ages 9 to 18 can get the HPV4 vaccine to prevent genital warts caused by human papillomavirus, or HPV.
- Children previously vaccinated with the meningitis immunization should be revaccinated if they remain at increased risk three to five years after the first dose.

In addition to these changes, the AAP recommends the following:

- MMR for measles, mumps and rubella (German measles)
- Polio vaccine
- Rotavirus vaccine
- DTaP or DTP to protect against diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough)
- Hib to protect against spinal meningitis, pneumonia, joint or bone infections and throat inflammations
- Hepatitis B vaccine
- Pneumococcal disease vaccine to prevent pneumococcal blood infections and meningitis
- Varicella vaccine to prevent chicken pox

For a complete list of immunizations, visit our Resources for Parents at childrensmemorialhermann.org/resources. Select Pediatric Health Library.



Leading the way with minimally invasive surgery for gynecology

The doctors at the Women's Center at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital are leaders in performing minimally invasive surgery for many gynecologic conditions. The benefits for women are many, including a shorter hospital stay, faster recovery and less pain and scarring.

Minimally invasive surgery – also known as laparoscopic surgery – uses smaller incisions than those used in traditional surgery. Doctors insert mini-instruments through these tiny incisions. Miniature cameras send images to a TV monitor the surgeon watches during surgery. The images are magnified three times, so surgeons can see in detail and make precise movements.

“My view of the surgical area is much better with minimally invasive surgery,” says Diane Hughes, M.D., an obstetrician/gynecologist affiliated with Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and a specialist in minimally invasive techniques. “The difference in recovery, healing and blood loss is phenomenal.”

A Less Invasive Surgical Option

Specially trained doctors use minimally invasive surgery to treat many conditions, including:

- Removal of the uterus (hysterectomy)
- Removal of uterine fibroids, cysts and polyps
- Removal of the ovaries and fallopian tubes
- Repair of pelvic organ prolapse (when a pelvic organ drops from its normal position)
- Bladder repair for incontinence
- Evaluation of irregular bleeding
- Treatment of endometriosis (when the lining of the uterus grows on or around the pelvic organs)

What to Expect

“Less invasive surgery allows women to return to their daily routines sooner compared with traditional open procedures,” says Dr. Hughes. “Generally, women will spend no more than one night in the hospital. Complete healing may take two to three weeks. Traditional open procedures require several days in the hospital and a six-week recovery period.” ■

Can minimally invasive surgery help you? Talk with your obstetrician/gynecologist. For a physician referral, call 713.222.CARE or visit childrensmemorialhermann.org.

Does my child have gastroesophageal reflux?

You've probably heard of adults experiencing gastroesophageal reflux, but did you know that it is common in children, too?

Normally, a ring of muscle at the bottom of the esophagus called the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) opens and closes to allow food to enter the stomach. The LES also keeps stomach contents from coming back into the esophagus (known as "reflux"). Gastroesophageal reflux occurs when

the LES opens spontaneously, allowing acidic stomach contents to back up into the esophagus.

Reflux can occur in healthy children, but kids who were born prematurely or who have conditions such as cerebral palsy are at greater risk.

Recognize the Symptoms

"It is normal for infants and babies to have some reflux, or spit-up," says Ashish DebRoy, M.D., a pediatric gastroenterologist affiliated with Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and The University of Texas Medical School at Houston. "If the reflux is acidic or occurs often enough, it can cause irritation and inflammation." This may lead to symptoms such as:

- Sore throat that causes problems with eating or sleeping
- Weight loss
- Difficulty swallowing
- Appearing uncomfortable or in pain when spitting up

Gastroesophageal reflux can lead to a variety of complications. In children with other conditions, such as neurologic diseases, it may result in pneumonia if the refluxed material enters the airways and lungs. Another concern is that pain in the throat or esophagus can make it difficult for a child to eat, affecting growth.

How Is Reflux Treated?

Doctors at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital use several techniques when diagnosing reflux that tell them not only if a child has the condition but also how severe it is. Doctors can then determine the best treatment.

Frequently, reflux can be treated with medication. One commonly prescribed medication keeps acid from rising up into the esophagus, and another type reduces the amount of acid in the stomach. Sometimes children who do not respond to medications may need surgery. ■



Could your child have reflux? Dr. DebRoy suggests seeing your child's physician if your child experiences the symptoms of this condition. Or call the UT Pediatric

Gastroenterology Clinic at 832.325.6516 to schedule an appointment. For a physician referral, call 713.222.CARE (2273) or visit childrensmemorialhermann.org.

juicy ladybug treats

- 1 ripe **apple**
- ½ cup **chocolate chips**
- 1 tablespoon **peanut butter**

1. Wash your apple.
2. Have an adult cut your apple in half and remove the core.
3. Place the apple on a plate with the skin facing up.
4. Dip the chocolate chips into the peanut butter.
5. Place the chocolate chips on the apple wherever you like to make your ladybug's spots.



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Join the March for Babies

This year the Memorial Hermann system is proudly serving as the presenting sponsor for the 2010 Houston March for Babies, the March of Dimes' annual campaign to raise awareness and funds to improve the health of babies. The Houston event is the largest March for Babies in the United States, and the funds that are raised through this event play a vital role in the March of Dimes' ongoing work to prevent birth defects, prematurity and infant mortality through research, education and community programs.

Started in 1970, the March for Babies was the first walking fundraising event in the country and has raised nearly \$2 billion since that time. It's the largest charitable walk/run event in Houston.

The March for Babies will take place on April 25 at the University of Houston. Register to be a part of the Memorial Hermann team. Visit memorialhermann.org/marchforbabies.

Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital
6411 Fannin, Houston, TX 77030. Call **713.704.KIDS (5437)**.

Giving back the **love** they received

Houston's March
of Dimes
Ambassador Family

After rupturing her membranes just 18 weeks into her first pregnancy, Lindsey Oakley Garcia was hospitalized on bed rest at the Women's Center at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital until she gave birth prematurely to her son Kai. From admission to Kai's discharge, mother and son had spent nearly four months at the hospital.

During her stay, Garcia was seen daily by staff in the antepartum unit. She was also visited by March of Dimes volunteers, who are trained to help high-risk mothers cope with the challenges and stress of prematurity.

Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital is one of four Houston hospitals that partner with the March of Dimes in Antepartum Family Support Programs. Volunteers provide patients with personal care gifts to make their hospital stay more comfortable. Staff members in the antepartum unit also created a group called H.A.P.P.E. (Helping Antepartum Patients Endure, pronounced "happy") for mothers on bed rest.

"Being on bed rest is difficult," says Sandra Uribe, R.N., clinical director of the Women's Center at Children's Memorial Hermann



Kai Garcia

Hospital. "We created H.A.P.P.E. in the hope that our patients would find some comfort in knowing that they're not alone."

Garcia was a natural choice when the Memorial Hermann system, as presenting sponsor of the 2010 Houston March for Babies, was able to select the Ambassador Family for the fundraising campaign.

"When Lindsey was further along in her pregnancy and able to get up and move around, she visited other expectant mothers who couldn't get out of bed," says Uribe. "Her positive spirit helped so many other people."

"When they asked us to be the Ambassador Family, I said yes right away," Garcia says. "I considered the March of Dimes volunteers and all the doctors, nurses and techs as family."

Kai is now doing well. And Garcia gets to do for others what they did for her. "I want to give the same love I got." ■