

Fall
2007

health highlights

for
PARENTS

NEWS FROM CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL HERMANN HOSPITAL



ADVANCED SURGERY OFFERS HOPE FOR CHILDREN WITH EPILEPSY

Epilepsy, or chronic seizures, can seriously affect a child's life. While medication can control seizures, this treatment does not work for as many as 15 percent of children with epilepsy. Fortunately, there is a surgical solution to seizures for some of these children. This advanced treatment is now available at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital.

"The idea of treating epilepsy with surgery has been around for a long time," says Gretchen Von Allmen, M.D., director of the Pediatric Epilepsy Program at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and assistant professor of pediatrics at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston. "However, only within the past decade or so has modern technology advanced enough to make it truly feasible."

Patients with difficult-to-treat epilepsy begin by visiting the Pediatric Epilepsy Clinic. There, specialists use advanced diagnostic tools to identify the region of the brain causing the seizures. Since some of these tools, such as magnetoencephalography, are available at only a few centers in the country, children come to Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital from across Texas and the Southwest. If doctors can pinpoint the brain area causing the epilepsy, they may be able to surgically remove it.

Not everyone is a good candidate for surgery. For children whose seizures resist other treatments and for whom surgery is an option, however, the procedure can be curative.

"There are a lot of kids out there whose seizures really disrupt their childhood," says Dr. Von Allmen.

"This surgery is an opportunity to change their lives." ■

To contact the UT Pediatric Epilepsy Clinic, call 832.325.7151.

inside this issue:

Sleep Apnea Affects Children, Too *page 2*

How to End the Food Battles *page 3*

Stress During Pregnancy *page 4*

Sleep Apnea Affects Children, Too

When a child is hyperactive and has trouble concentrating, people usually suspect attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. But if these symptoms are combined with snoring or restless sleep, the problem may be sleep apnea.

Sleep apnea manifests as temporary pauses in breathing that may awaken a child from sleep. These constant interruptions prevent the brain from entering deep sleep, which it needs to function properly. Adults with sleep apnea often feel tired and have difficulty thinking. In children, however, sleep apnea often causes behavioral problems such as hyperactivity.

The first step in treating sleep apnea is to properly diagnose it. To do that, children spend the night in a sleep lab, where sleep specialists closely monitor them. If a child has sleep apnea, doctors can recommend treatments. In most cases, removing enlarged tonsils or adenoids may improve symptoms. Occasionally, some children require continuous positive airway pressure therapy to breathe normally.

"We perform one of the most complete sleep monitoring studies available," says Cindy Jon, M.D., pediatric pulmonologist at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and assistant professor of pediatrics, The University of Texas Medical School at Houston. "If your child has abnormal sleep patterns, especially combined with behavioral problems during the day, you may want to discuss having a thorough sleep evaluation."

To schedule a sleep evaluation, call 713.704.2337.

Mackenzie's Story

Lessons from Tuberous Sclerosis

Two weeks before Mackenzie's first birthday, she had a mild seizure. Her parents hoped it was an anomaly.

But when it happened again, they consulted a pediatric neurologist. During the exam, the physician noticed white spots on Mackenzie's abdomen, arms and legs. He ordered a magnetic resonance image (MRI).

"Four days later we got the diagnosis, and our world came apart," says Mackenzie's mother, Mary Jane. Mackenzie had a genetic disorder called tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC).

TSC is caused by a gene mutation in which tumors are not suppressed. The condition has a broad range of indications that can involve the heart, brain, lungs, kidney, skin and eyes. For an adult, the chance of passing it on to offspring is 50 percent.

"About 50,000 people in the United States and more than a million worldwide have tuberous sclerosis," says Hope Northrup, M.D., a medical geneticist on staff at Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital. She also is professor and director of the division of Medical Genetics in the department of Pediatrics at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston.

TSC frequently affects the brain, so the disease is diagnosed with MRI or computed tomography (CT). In children

like Mackenzie, whose brain is involved, seizures are common.

Once Mackenzie began having seizures, she suffered with about ten a day. Doctors tried many drugs, but they often didn't control her seizures or eventually ceased to be effective. Then, her doctors suggested vagus nerve stimulation using an implant that sends a continuous stream of electrical pulses to the brain.

With the implant and two medications, Mackenzie became seizure-free. Today, she's a typical teenager, bopping to her favorite music and fighting her sisters for computer time.

"Mackenzie was my first child, and she was perfect for a full year," her mother says. "When we learned about her disease, I had to let go of what was and prepare for what would be. I can't imagine life without her." ■

The Tuberous Sclerosis Complex Clinic, affiliated with Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital and The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, is the first and only clinic in the greater Houston area specifically dedicated to treating TSC. For more information, call 713.500.7032.

Happy Kids, Healthy Plates:

How to End the Food Battles



It can be difficult to teach your little ones good eating habits and ensure they get the nutrition they need. But it is possible with a little patience and planning.

Q: How can I provide my kids with healthy snacks on the go?

A: Smart snacking is important. In addition to quieting a rumbling tummy, snacks can help ensure kids get all the nutrients they need. To make the most of snack times, try these tips:

- Have plenty of portable, healthy snacks on hand that are easy to grab as kids head out the door. For example, put pretzels, nuts or trail mix into single-serve, individual baggies. Always have an assortment of fresh fruits on hand for quick grab-and-go treats.
- Get rid of junk food. Kids won't eat what you don't buy them.
- Pack more nutrients and help kids fill up by combining snacks from two

food groups – such as low-fat cheese and whole-grain crackers or apple slices.

Q: How can I make sure the whole family gets a nutritious meal?

A: Kids can be finicky. But you don't have to give in to their whining for less-than-nutritious fare. Instead, try these mealtime savers:

- Enlist your kids' help in planning, shopping for and preparing meals. Kids are much more likely to eat something they help prepare.
- Make an effort to eat together whenever possible. Family dinners promote good eating habits.
- Offer a wide variety of foods at mealtimes, including whole grains, lean meat, low-fat dairy and plenty of fruits and vegetables. These can be served in kid-friendly ways. Try quesadillas with veggies and beans.
- Make a few positive dinner "rules" and stick to them. For example, every-

one drinks only low-fat milk or water with a meal. ■

Join us on Saturday, Nov. 10, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. as Central Market Cooking School teams up with Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital to provide heart-healthy recipe choices for children, including standard kid favorites like macaroni and cheese, chicken fingers and chocolate chip cookies. Please register in advance by calling 713.993.9860. (Cost: \$65, location: 3185 Westheimer.)

Tiny PIZZAS

quick

One standard-sized bagel, cut in half
Tomato sauce
Shredded mozzarella cheese
Toppings like diced green pepper, chopped onion or chopped tomato (whatever you like)
Seasonings like oregano, basil and pepper



- 1 Set the oven to low heat.
- 2 Spread tomato sauce on each bagel half. Then sprinkle on shredded cheese.
- 3 Add your favorite toppings.
- 4 Put a light sprinkling of seasonings on each half.
- 5 Put your bagel halves on a baking sheet and bake for about five to eight minutes. Pizzas are done when the cheese is bubbly.
- 6 Let cool for a minute.

Serving size: two tiny pizzas

Nutritional analysis (per serving): 210 calories, 9 g protein, 4 g fat, 34 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 11 mg cholesterol, 633 mg sodium, 144 mg calcium and 1.9 mg iron.

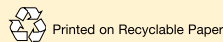


Healthcare for Children Is Our Priority

At Memorial Hermann, we understand the special healthcare needs of children. That's why we are taking our expertise and high standards of quality for which our flagship children's hospital in the Texas Medical Center is known to suburban hospitals throughout the greater Houston area. We're bringing our skilled children's healthcare services to Memorial Hermann hospitals in Katy, southwest Houston and The Woodlands.

Now, children of all ages can receive a whole new level of care close to home. And if circumstances require, our Children's Transport Team – composed of specially trained nurses and neonatal and pediatric intensive-care physicians – can transport young patients to Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital or to another appropriate Memorial Hermann facility via ground or Life Flight® air ambulance. ■

For more information, visit childrensmemorialhermann.org.



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STRESS DURING PREGNANCY

Pregnancy brings its own set of joys – and stressors.

That's normal. But when a pregnant woman is dealing with chronic or extraordinary stress – such as death, divorce or financial pressures – its effects can be harmful to her and to her baby.

Stress ignites a woman's "fight-or-flight" response, flooding her bloodstream with hormones. With chronic stress, these hormone levels remain elevated for months, greatly increasing the risk for high blood pressure and preeclampsia, gestational diabetes, extreme morning sickness, miscarriage and premature delivery.

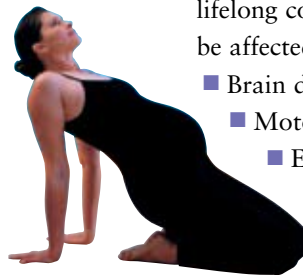
New research has suggested a mother's stress-altered body chemistry may

influence a baby's developing organs with lifelong consequences. The areas that can be affected include:

- Brain development
- Motor skills and balance
- Emotional and social skills

Here are some healthy ways to manage stress:

- Eat a nutritious diet, exercise according to your doctor's instructions and get plenty of rest.
- Make time for what's important to you – and don't be afraid to say "no" to everything else.
- Consider relaxation therapies, such as massage, aromatherapy or deep breathing.
- Do what works for you, such as listening to soothing music or reading a novel.
- If you feel overwhelmed by stress, talk with your doctor. ■



"ASK THE DOCTOR" EVENTS AT BABIES "R" US

In partnership with Babies "R" Us stores in the Houston area, Memorial Hermann Healthcare System and Children's Memorial Hermann Hospital are hosting seminars for expectant mothers and parents or caregivers of babies. Obstetricians and/or pediatricians will be at Babies "R" Us stores on a bimonthly basis to lead discussions about topics of interest and answer any questions. Participating stores are located in the Galleria, Sugar Land, Katy, northwest Houston, Humble, on Westheimer near West Oaks Mall, on Gulf Freeway near Baybrook Mall and at FM 1960 and I-45.

- Nov. 15, 7 p.m., Sleep Habits and Sleep Training
- Jan. 17, 7 p.m., Childbirth – Stages of Labor and Birth Methods

Dates and times are subject to change. Confirm scheduling with the Babies "R" Us store in your area.

Memorial Hermann Healthcare System



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