

# Pediatric Subspecialists

## Part II: Medical Subspecialists



The American Academy of Pediatrics has created a series of fact sheets about different pediatric surgical and medical subspecialists whom your children may be referred to. The fact sheets are available on the AAP Web site at <http://www.aap.org/family/pedspecfactsheets.htm>.

Following are excerpts from the medical subspecialty series. If you have additional questions, please talk with your pediatrician.

There are a variety of pediatric medical subspecialists, including the following:

- Allergist/Immunologist
- Critical Care Specialist
- Dermatologist
- Endocrinologist
- Gastroenterologist
- Geneticist
- Hematologist/Oncologist
- Infectious Diseases Specialist
- Neonatologist
- Nephrologist
- Pulmonologist
- Radiologist
- Rheumatologist
- Sports Medicine Specialist

### Pediatric Allergist/Immunologist

If your child suffers from allergies or other problems with his immune system, a *Pediatric Allergist/Immunologist* has special skills to treat your child.

#### What types of treatments do pediatric allergists/immunologists provide?

Pediatric allergists/immunologists generally provide treatment for the following:

- Asthma
- Hay fever (allergic rhinitis)
- Sinusitis
- Eczema (atopic dermatitis)
- Hives (urticaria, welts)
- Severe reactions to foods, insect stings, and medications (anaphylaxis)
- Immune disorders that lead to the following:
  - Frequent sinusitis, pneumonia, or diarrhea
  - Thrush and abscesses that keep coming back
  - Severe, unusual infections

### Pediatric Critical Care Specialist

If your child has an illness or injury that results in your child being in an unstable critical condition, a hospital-based *Pediatric Critical Care*

*Specialist* (pediatric intensivist) can be called on to provide the special care that your child needs.

#### What types of treatments do pediatric critical care specialists provide?

Pediatric critical care specialists generally provide the following care to children who are critically ill:

- Diagnosis of children who have an unstable, life-threatening condition
- Thorough monitoring, medication, and treatment of children in a pediatric intensive care unit (PICU)
- Supervision of children on respirators
- Medical treatment for children with severe heart and lung disease
- Placement of special catheters in the blood vessels and heart
- Management of medications and treatments for children with brain trauma

### Pediatric Dermatologist

If your child has skin conditions such as birthmarks, eczema, warts, or psoriasis, a *Pediatric Dermatologist* has the experience and qualifications to treat your child.

#### What types of treatments do pediatric dermatologists provide?

Pediatric dermatologists provide medical care for a variety of skin conditions. They generally provide the following services:

- Diagnosis and treatment of various skin conditions, including contact dermatitis, eczema, psoriasis, vitiligo, hives, warts, hemangiomas, birthmarks, and congenital skin disorders
- Prescription treatment of skin conditions
- Medical and/or surgical treatment of skin conditions such as warts and molluscum (pea-sized yellow or pink lumps)
- Surgical removal of molluscum, warts, and other small lumps in the skin (cysts)
- Skin biopsies

### Pediatric Endocrinologist

If your child has problems with growth, puberty, diabetes, or other disorders related to the hormones and the glands that produce them, a *Pediatric Endocrinologist* may treat your child.

#### What types of treatments do pediatric endocrinologists provide?

Pediatric endocrinologists diagnose, treat, and manage hormonal disorders, including the following:

- Growth problems, such as short stature
- Early or delayed puberty
- Enlarged thyroid gland (goiter)
- Underactive or overactive thyroid gland
- Pituitary gland hypo/hyper function
- Adrenal gland hypo/hyper function

- Ambiguous genitals/intersex
- Ovarian and testicular dysfunction
- Diabetes
- Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia)
- Obesity
- Problems with vitamin D (rickets, hypocalcemia)

## Pediatric Gastroenterologist

If your child has a digestive system, liver, or nutritional problem, a *Pediatric Gastroenterologist* has the expertise to treat your child.

### What types of treatments do pediatric gastroenterologists provide?

Pediatric gastroenterologists generally provide treatment for the following:

- Bleeding from the gastrointestinal tract
- Lactose intolerance
- Food allergies or intolerances
- Severe or complicated gastroesophageal reflux disease (reflux or GERD)
- Inflammatory bowel disease
- Short bowel syndrome
- Liver disease
- Acute or chronic abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Chronic constipation
- Chronic or severe diarrhea
- Pancreatic insufficiency (including cystic fibrosis) and pancreatitis
- Nutritional problems (including malnutrition, failure to thrive, and obesity)
- Feeding disorders

## Pediatric Geneticist

Fortunately, most children are born healthy with no medical problems or birth defects. However, some children are born with differences in body structure, brain development, or body chemistry that can lead to problems with health, development, school performance, and/or social interaction. *Pediatric Geneticists* are trained to identify the causes and natural history of these disorders.

### What types of treatments do pediatric geneticists provide?

Pediatric geneticists diagnose, counsel, and treat families with many different kinds of problems, including the following:

- Birth defects (physical differences present at birth causing a health problem)
- Conditions with one or more birth defects (Down syndrome, Williams syndrome, or achondroplasia)
- Conditions that can cause disabilities (fetal alcohol syndrome or fragile X syndrome)
- Inborn errors of metabolism (cystic fibrosis, phenylketonuria, or sickle cell disease)
- Familial or hereditary problems (congenital heart disease or hypercholesterolemia)
- Short or tall stature (height that is significantly below or above normal range)

## Pediatric Hematologist/Oncologist

If your child or teen has a blood disease or cancer, a *Pediatric Hematologist/Oncologist* has the experience and qualifications to evaluate and treat your child or teen.

## What types of treatments do pediatric hematologists/oncologists provide?

Pediatric hematologists/oncologists diagnose, treat, and manage children and teens with the following:

- Cancers, including leukemias, lymphomas, brain tumors, bone tumors, and solid tumors
- Diseases of blood cells, including disorders of white cells, red cells, and platelets
- Bleeding disorders

## Pediatric Infectious Diseases Specialist

If your child has a recurring or persistent disease caused by an infectious agent such as bacteria, a fungus, a parasite, or other rare infection, a *Pediatric Infectious Diseases Specialist* has the experience and qualifications to help your physician diagnose and treat your child.

### What types of treatments do pediatric infectious diseases specialists provide?

Pediatric infectious diseases specialists treat a wide range of infectious and immunologic diseases such as those caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites. Other pediatric infectious diseases specialists are consulted for diseases that are complicated or atypical, including

- Illnesses that are of unclear cause, have prolonged fever, or are recurrent
- Respiratory infections
- Bone and joint infections
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS)
- Hepatitis
- Meningitis

## Neonatologist

Although your pediatrician can solve most health problems of newborns, a *Neonatologist* is trained specifically to handle the most complex and high-risk situations.

### What types of treatments do neonatologists provide?

Neonatologists generally provide the following care:

- Diagnose and treat newborns with conditions such as breathing disorders, infections, and birth defects.
- Coordinate care and medically manage newborns born premature, critically ill, or in need of surgery.
- Ensure that critically ill newborns receive the proper nutrition for healing and growth.
- Provide care to the newborn at a cesarean or other delivery that involves medical problems in the mother or baby that may compromise the infant's health and require medical intervention in the delivery room.
- Stabilize and treat newborns with any life-threatening medical problems.
- Consult with obstetricians, pediatricians, and family physicians about conditions affecting newborns.

## Pediatric Nephrologist

If your child has kidney or urinary tract disease, bladder problems, or high blood pressure, a *Pediatric Nephrologist* has the special skills and experience to treat your child. Pediatric nephrologists treat children from infancy through late adolescence.

## What types of treatments do pediatric nephrologists provide?

Pediatric nephrologists diagnose, treat, and manage many disorders affecting the kidney and urinary tract, including kidney failure, high blood pressure, inherited kidney diseases, kidney stones, urinary tract infections, and abnormalities in the urine such as blood and protein. They also know how to evaluate and treat problems with growth and development that are specifically related to chronic kidney disease.

Pediatric nephrologists generally provide the following services:

- Dialysis
- Kidney transplantation
- Kidney biopsies
- Interpretation of x-ray studies of the kidney
- Interpretation of laboratory studies related to kidney disease
- Ambulatory blood pressure monitoring

## Pediatric Pulmonologist

If your child has breathing problems, or a problem with his or her lungs, a *Pediatric Pulmonologist* has the experience and qualifications to treat your child.

## What types of treatments do pediatric pulmonologists provide?

Pediatric pulmonologists often treat children with the following conditions:

- Chronic cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Recurring pneumonia (infection of the lungs)
- Asthma (chronic inflammation of the airways)
- Cystic fibrosis (a genetic disease with pulmonary and nutritional symptoms)
- Apnea (when a child's breathing stops for a prolonged time)
- Chronic lung disease in premature infants
- Noisy breathing
- Conditions that require special equipment to monitor and/or help with breathing at home

## Pediatric Radiologist

A *Pediatric Radiologist* is an expert in the diagnosis of illnesses, injuries, and diseases of infants, children, and adolescents, using imaging techniques and equipment.

## What do pediatric radiologists do?

Pediatric radiologists are experts in selecting the best imaging techniques to diagnose medical and surgical problems. Examples of imaging techniques include x-ray, ultrasound, computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and nuclear medicine. Pediatric radiologists make sure that testing is performed properly and safely. They also interpret the results of the test and make an appropriate diagnosis.

## Pediatric Rheumatologist

If your child has complaints of pain in the musculoskeletal system (joints, muscles, bones, or tendons), other symptoms of arthritis, or an autoimmune disorder, your pediatrician may recommend a *Pediatric Rheumatologist*.

## What types of treatments do pediatric rheumatologists provide?

Pediatric rheumatologists work with pediatricians or family physicians to evaluate and treat a variety of joint, muscle, and bone disorders, including the following:

- Arthritis
- Autoimmune disorders, such as lupus; juvenile rheumatoid arthritis; scleroderma; Kawasaki disease; postinfectious arthritis; chronic vasculitis; and inflammatory disorders of the muscle, eye, or other organs
- Evaluation of prolonged fever
- Unexplained complaints of chronic musculoskeletal pain, weakness, poor appetite, fatigue, and/or loss of function or skills
- Unexplained symptoms, such as a rash, anemia, weight loss, or joint swelling
- Possible inflammatory disease

## Pediatric Sports Medicine Specialist

If your child or teen has an injury or illness that affects sports performance, exercise, or activity, a *Pediatric Sports Medicine Specialist* has the expertise, experience, and qualifications to treat his or her youth-specific problems.

## What types of treatments do pediatric sports medicine specialists provide?

Pediatric sports medicine specialists diagnose, treat, and manage the musculoskeletal and medical problems of children and teens, including the following:

- Sprains and strains
- Dislocations
- Ligament injuries
- Minor fractures and avulsions
- Apophysitis
- Tendinitis
- Overuse injuries
- Cartilage injuries
- Exercise-induced asthma
- Concussions
- Nutrition and supplement issues
- Diabetes
- Eating disorders
- Stress fractures
- Heat illness
- Unique conditions of the athlete with special needs

### Remember

To learn more about pediatric subspecialists, visit the AAP Web site at <http://www.aap.org/family/pedspecfactsheets.htm>.

### From your doctor

