

SUMMER 2009

bridges

TO A HEALTHIER LIFE



serious about kid-friendly services

WHAT TO DO WHEN HOSPITAL BECOMES HOME

Being sick in a hospital can be difficult for anyone, but it can be especially stressful for kids. The best solution? Making sure young patients' lives are as normal as possible during their stay.

At UCSF Children's Hospital, the Child Life Services program helps children and their families feel right at home. To give kids the "lay of the land," the staff offers a hospital tour and individualized play. Then, because medical treatment can be confusing for kids, Child Life specialists use special dolls and medical equipment to show them

just what to expect. Young patients are even coached to use imagery, distraction and relaxation to help reduce their anxiety. To help children stay on top of their studies, they can attend the hospital's Marie Wattis School, which covers kindergarten through 12th grade.

Of course, just because a child is in the hospital doesn't mean he or she stops being a kid: Peek inside the playroom and you might see them enjoying games, doing arts and crafts, or engaged in the therapeutic music program. Patients and siblings 13 and up love the Teen Lounge, where they can listen to music, play video games and just hang out with other kids their age. For the "wired" kid who likes to stay con-

nected, there's the All Stars Technology Room and Courtyard, offering supervised Internet access and other technology-based activities. Kids of all ages can get plenty of TLC with pet therapy, courtesy of the San Francisco SPCA.

Because a child's illness affects the entire family, support is available to everyone. Child Life specialists offer siblings emotional support, and a Family Resource Room is fully equipped with health information, computers, Wi-Fi access, phones and a copier. That way, parents can keep up with life outside the hospital without missing moments of quality time with their child.

For more information, go online and visit www.ucsfhealth.org/childlife. Contact Child Life Services at (415) 353-1203 or childlife@ucsfhealth.org.



UCSF Children's Hospital



Solutions for Epilepsy

Early, specialized care makes a difference

Children with epilepsy have a valuable ally—their own natural resilience. Pediatric epilepsy (unlike adult epilepsy) is often caused by an abnormal development of the nervous system. If the condition is treated effectively at this early age, the child's developing brain can continue to develop. "The earlier we intervene, the better the outcome we're likely to have," says Dr. Joseph Sullivan, director of the UCSF Pediatric Epilepsy Center.

UCSF specialists in neurology, epilepsy, neuropsychology and neurosurgery strategize early intervention. The team uses the latest diagnostic imaging—including extended video EEG and high-resolution MRI—and offers treatments ranging from careful use of medication to state-of-the-art surgical options.

For more information about the Pediatric Epilepsy Center and its services, call (415) 353-8164 or visit www.ucsfhealth.org/childrens/epilepsy.

Get Fit Tips

To attain and maintain a healthy weight, all movement is good for children—and it doesn't have to be strenuous to be beneficial. To help your child get physical:

- Explain the benefits of exercise—weight control, stronger muscles, added energy, improved sense of well-being and more.
- Set a doable goal and then stick with it. Work together to pick exercises that match your child's ability and preferences. Good options for tracking progress: an exercise journal or a chart.
- Devise a balanced program that works major muscles and includes stretching and strength training.
- Discourage couch-potato pastimes, such as watching TV, playing video games or using the computer. Limiting TV is an important part of helping youngsters lose weight and be more active, researchers say.
- Make exercise a family affair. No matter what joint activity you choose, be consistent and creative—and make sure everyone is having fun.

listen up: pediatric audiology

DOES YOUR CHILD'S HEARING NEED TESTING?

Children who can't hear the world around them are at a double disadvantage; they have trouble learning to talk, too. But today, even children with significant hearing loss may benefit from medical innovations available at UCSF, such as cochlear implants—nicknamed the "bionic ear"—which give them their first gifts of sound.

To avoid problems later, parents should be on the lookout for signs

of hearing loss as children develop. "Kids might not startle to sound or might not awaken when another child cries," says Dr. Anna Meyer, head and neck surgeon at UCSF. A young child might also have hearing loss if he or she doesn't turn toward a new sound, smile when spoken to or enjoy rattles or other toy noisemakers.

"Between 12 and 18 months, if they're not trying to imitate words, that's also something to be con-

cerned about," Dr. Meyer says. Regardless of any symptoms, hearing should be checked every six months if a child has certain hearing loss risk factors, which your pediatrician can discuss with you.

By law, all children must be screened at birth for hearing loss, but some children slip through the cracks. "According to one assessment, in 2006 [most recent data] in California, only 84.4 percent of children were screened," Dr. Meyer says.

The WATCH Clinic

SOPHISTICATED WEIGHT WATCHING FOR KIDS AND TEENS

Concern over an overweight child is about more than appearance. Childhood obesity sets kids up for chronic health problems and can lower self-esteem, hindering a child's social life and school performance.

Enter the Weight Assessment for Teen and Child Health (WATCH) Clinic at UCSF Children's Hospital, where a top team of doctors, nutritionists, exercise physiologists and psychologists helps kids manage their weight and get healthy.

Each child gets a full evaluation, including a blood test, a fitness assessment and a doctor's visit. Then specialists create a personalized program, focusing on nutrition and lifestyle changes, and the child returns every three months for follow-up appointments.

For qualified teens who are at risk for developing life-threatening health conditions, UCSF offers weight-reducing bariatric surgery. "Minimally invasive surgical techniques allow us to perform these procedures in children with minimal visible scarring," says Dr. Shinjiro Hirose, a pediatric surgeon.

Children need a doctor's referral to be seen at the WATCH Clinic. **For more information, call (415) 353-2813 or visit www.ucsfhealth.org/childrens/obesity.**



At the UCSF Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery and Audiology clinics, families can access the services of skilled audiologists, otolaryngologists and rehabilitation therapists. State-of-the-art procedures include otoacoustic emission

and auditory brainstem response testing (both used in newborn screenings) and electrocochleography (ECoChG).

Many children with hearing problems simply have fluid trapped in the middle ear; in such cases, UCSF surgeons can insert a tube into the eardrum to drain fluid. For children with permanent hearing loss, UCSF offers analog, digitally programmable and fully digital hearing aids. If a hearing aid isn't effective,

patients may be candidates for a cochlear implant, an electrode that's surgically inserted into the inner ear and allows them to perceive sound. "Once they've been implanted and have received intensive hearing and speech therapy," says Dr. Meyer, "many children can experience life like any normal-hearing child."

For more information, call the Audiology Clinic at (415) 353-2101 or visit www.ucsfhealth.org/childrens/audiology.



a parents' guide: HEALTHY EATING, HEALTHY WEIGHT

Getting your child to develop healthy eating habits isn't always easy. At the dinner table, you might find yourself telling your 6-year-old, "You need to finish your green beans if you want dessert." Resist the urge. Talking in terms of "good foods" and "bad foods" only makes kids want treats all the more—and can create guilt around eating. Force-feeding can backfire, too; better to encourage children to eat when they're hungry and stop when they're satisfied. Most of all, make sure you always set a good example.

For more guidelines to healthy eating, visit www.ucsfhealth.org/childrens/obesity and click on "Patient Education."

TO OUR NEIGHBORS



The pioneering spirit and unmatched skill found at UCSF Children's Hospital has led to countless breakthroughs that have redefined what is possible in pediatric

medicine. At the same time, we do everything to create a comfortable place for children and the families who love them.

In this premier issue of *Bridges*, you'll read about a few of our 150 pediatric physicians practicing in more than 50 clinical specialties—all of whom inspire us with their imagination and accomplishments, embodying the spirit of innovation and compassionate care.

For parents, this approach has made UCSF Children's Hospital a beacon of hope; a place where countless families have learned that if it can be done, it can be done here.

Sincerely,

Roxanne Fernandes, R.N.
Executive Director
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