



Choosing the Best Medical Care for Your Child

Children are not just “little adults.” From infants to teens, children come in all sizes and go through many stages of growth and development. When children have medical problems, they need services and medical equipment that fit their size. Blood pressure cuffs, breathing tubes, needles and other kinds of medical equipment come in pediatric sizes and should be used according to the size of the child.

Children need healthcare providers who understand these differences and who have access to pediatric-sized equipment.

Children may be too young to talk or have a hard time expressing their pain. This means that doctors, nurses, and other healthcare providers need to have special talking and listening skills when working with children. They may need to take more time with a child and family to learn about the child’s specific healthcare needs.

A family doctor or pediatrician can usually care for 95 percent of the health problems faced by typically healthy children. A small percentage of children have more serious health problems that require the pediatrician or family physician to refer the child to a specialist--preferably a pediatric specialist. Pediatric specialists have had extensive training in caring for children. In contrast, specialists who treat adults and children may only spend 5 percent to 10 percent of their time in pediatric training and caring for children.

Children should have access to healthcare providers who specialize in childhood illnesses and injuries.

Ask your family doctor or pediatrician the following questions to help them recommend a qualified specialist for your child:

- How much of the specialist’s training was dedicated to the care of children?
- Has the specialist been board certified by a pediatric society?
- What percentage of the specialist’s professional time is spent caring for children?
- In the last year, how many children of the same age and with similar problems has the specialist treated?
- Is the specialist considered an expert in treating my child’s type of problem?
- If your child or grandchild was approximately the age of my child and had a similar problem, would you go to the specialist to whom you have referred my child?

If you do not believe that a specialist recommended by your insurance company is qualified to treat your child, write the insurance company so there is written documentation about your concern. Include the list of questions above regarding the specialist’s training, and ask for a written response. Your pediatrician or family doctor may also write to the insurance company on your behalf. If a strong written case is presented, the insurance company may agree to provide coverage for a specialist recommended by your doctor.

Children need parents who are informed advocates for appropriate medical care.

For more information, please contact the Community Education Department at Riley Hospital for Children at 317-274-2964 or visit us on the Web at www.rileyforkids.org.