

It IS Brain Surgery

Pediatric Neurosurgeons Provide Targeted Care to Children with Rare Conditions



Expert Advice From:

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Though relatively rare, nervous system conditions in children require specialized treatments, rigorous follow-up care, and longstanding relationships with pediatric neurosurgeons and their specialized teams.

Conditions such as hydrocephalus, spina bifida, brain tumors, vascular disorders, and head injuries are just some of the conditions managed by pediatric neurosurgeons, according to Dr. Ramin Javahery, medical director of pediatric neurosurgery at MemorialCare Miller Children's & Women's Hospital Long Beach. All of these conditions, however, require a neurosurgeon with specialized training in pediatric neurological surgery.

And while adults with similar conditions can be treated successfully by neurologists, children's neurological issues manifest differently and thus require care from neurologists who have extensive pediatric training, he observes.

"I treat babies, young children, adolescents and young adults," says Dr. Javahery. "Pediatric neurological problems require long-term management – and an intimate relationship develops between the physician, the parents, and the patient to ensure they get adequate and successful follow-up care."

Parents concerned about their child's neurological health should watch for unexplained headaches, often accompanied by nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, and weakness, coordination, and balance difficulties.

"Neurological changes in children whether subtle issues with balance or significant weakness should be addressed expeditiously," notes Dr. Javahery, who has been practicing neurosurgery at Miller Children's & Women's since 2007. "Anytime there's an issue with a child's balance, it should be addressed quickly."

Not all pediatric neurosurgical conditions are acutely surgical. Often, they're managed medically as well. Conditions such as tumors, vascular lesions and epilepsy may often require non surgical management.

No matter the medical management, surgical management or other treatment modalities, the children who suffer from

neurological disorders depend on their parents as their primary source of support and stability.

"This is why we spend so much time educating families about the neurological conditions their children are dealing with. We depend on what the parents observe at home, in many instances, as part of our decision making."

While some neurological conditions, such as spina bifida, last throughout a child's lifetime, other issues like vascular conditions or brain tumors require a shorter course of treatment. Whichever approach is necessary, it's vital that children with neurological conditions be treated at a children's hospital with a team that has specialized pediatric training and experience, he notes. "Given the emotional stress created by having a sick child, it's important to have a knowledgeable and engaged dedicated team to help families navigate the process," says Dr. Javahery.

"Children's hospitals provide the infrastructure and the doctors dedicated to pediatric patients and their families."

With specially trained physicians, therapists, social workers, nurses, child life specialists, and others dedicated to treating children's neurologic conditions, Miller Children's & Women's is uniquely positioned to provide comprehensive treatment.

"We bring together a range of specialists under one roof who can manage all aspects of pediatric health care. Miller Children's & Women's serves local and regional communities without regard for any other factor other than the needs of the children in our care," Dr. Javahery observes. "We provide for our patients the care we would like to see provided to our own family members."

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