



MIAMI CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL®

THE MARY ANN KNIGHT INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF PEDIATRICS  
FOUNDED AS VARIETY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

We're here for the children

# CHILDREN'S HEALTH TALK

A Miami Children's Hospital Community Update, May 2005

## CHILDREN'S ASTHMA ON THE RISE

### Helping Families Confront a Chronic Disease

Asthma is a chronic condition of the lungs and airways that is responsible for more missed school days than any other illness requiring long-term management. And the incidence of asthma among children is on the rise. Since 1980, the number of affected children has swelled to 5 million—an increase of 160 percent. Asthma symptoms include persistent coughing—particularly at night—wheezing, difficulty breathing and chest tightness. Though wheezing is a trademark of asthma, as many as one child out of three never experiences this symptom.

"Asthma is often misdiagnosed," said Maria Franco, Medical Director of the Asthma Center at Miami Children's. "The disease is often thought to be chronic bronchitis. As a result, parents often don't know that they are dealing with a long-term disease, which leads to a delay in therapy. That's of particular concern to physicians as asthma can result in serious complications if not properly treated."

But there's plenty of good news for families of children with asthma. "When properly diagnosed and managed, asthma does not have to control your child's life," said Dr. Franco. "Children are always pleased to learn that many athletes have histories of asthma. The key is consistent and appropriate management," she said.

### What Causes Asthma?

Why do some children suffer from asthma while others do not? Some have a genetic predisposition that increases the likelihood

of developing asthma, so a family history of the condition is a major risk factor. For other children, asthma is induced by environmental exposures. The most common triggers include viral infections such as the common cold, pollutants, cigarette smoke, strong perfumes, and allergens, including pollen, dust, mold and pet dander.



Dr. Maria Franco, Medical Director of the Asthma Center, with asthma patient Perla Soto

In susceptible individuals, these environmental factors create a response in the lungs that includes swelling of the windpipes, overproduction of mucus and bronchial spasms, which result in the symptoms described above.

Fortunately for those affected, therapy for asthma has advanced significantly over the years. Today, medications can treat and control asthma, and physicians work as a team with families to help affected children enjoy normal lives.

### The Asthma Center at Miami Children's

When a child is diagnosed with asthma, the family often feels overwhelmed. The Miami Children's Hospital Asthma Center was created to offer comprehensive support to families in managing childhood asthma.

The center staff—which includes doctors, specialized nurses, social workers and more—works with the family to identify asthma triggers for each child. The team then instructs the family about the disease, how to minimize the impact of triggers and provides medications and instructions to help the child when an asthma attack occurs.

"The patient's family and the Asthma Center team form a partnership in the treatment and care of the child. Our goal is to help parents keep their children out of the Emergency Department and enjoying a normal, active life," said Dr. Franco.

For more information on asthma or the Asthma Center at Miami Children's, please call 305-669-5864.

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## WHAT IS A REAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL?

"Children's Hospital." A surprising number of healthcare facilities have that appellation as part of their names. Yet many of these providers are really simply wings or departments within a larger adult-care facility.



Miami Children's Hospital is the region's only licensed specialty hospital *exclusively* for children. The 268-bed free-standing pediatric hospital receives thousands of referrals of complex cases from throughout the region each year and is home to many of Florida's top pediatric sub-specialists, including many whose reputations draw patients from throughout the world.

What's more, Miami Children's is the only pediatric facility in Florida recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* magazine as one of "America's Best" in 2002, 2003 and 2004.

"We've all heard the phrase that children are not merely small adults. Because they are still growing and developing, children's medical needs can be vastly different than adults," said Christian C. Patrick, MD, PhD, Chief Medical Officer/Senior Vice President for Medical Affairs.

"Miami Children's offers specialized equipment and medical staff who are highly trained in the unique medical indicators and physiologic responses associated with children. Our campus features more than 100 pediatric sub-specialists who have invested their entire careers in the care of children. Many facilities that call themselves 'children's hospitals' have adult-care specialists providing care for children," Dr. Patrick said. Miami Children's physicians are more than care providers, they are also the region's pediatric care teachers. Most pediatricians in Miami-Dade County had received some or all of their training at Miami Children's.

Only Miami Children's Hospital:

- Has more than 55 years experience exclusively treating children
- Is the largest pediatric teaching hospital in the Southeast
- Cares for more than 185,000 pediatric patients annually
- Has more than 650 pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists on staff.

For a referral to a Miami Children's Hospital physician, please call 888-MCH-DOCS (624-3627).

## COMMUNITY EDUCATION CALENDAR

### Summer Safety Fair and Teddy Bear Clinic

June 18

10 am to noon

This program for children ages 2 to 12 and their parents includes information on these safety topics: first aid, swimming safety, bike safety and preventing child abduction. For more information, please call 305-662-8282.

### Safe Sitter

June 10 and 11

9 am to 4 pm

Prepares 11 to 15-year-olds to baby sit safely. The class teaches developmentally appropriate activities, feeding and bedtime routines to help teens and preteens care for babies and young children. For more information, call 305-662-8282.

### CPR Class

May 14 (Spanish) June 7 (English)

9 am to 11 am

CPR class for infants and children. Designed for parents,

grandparents and caregivers to learn pediatric CPR. Please call 305-662-8282 for further information.

### Child Passenger Safety

Child safety is our priority. Child passenger safety technicians will check your child's seat for defects, recalls, installation and fit. Please contact the Department of Preventive Medicine at 305-663-6800 for more information.

### Emergent Language Group for Children with Autism

Thursdays

4 pm to 4:45 pm

Music therapy is used to promote language development in children with autism. For more information call 305-666-6511 ext. 2434.

### Social Skills Group for Adolescents with Autism

Wednesdays

4 pm to 4:45 pm

Music therapy is used to enhance social skills among teens with autism. For more information call 305-666-6511 ext. 2434.

Only one children's hospital in Florida has been ranked one of "America's best" for the past three years.



U.S. News & World Report has recognized Miami Children's Hospital year after year for what we do day after day. Choose the best hospital in South Florida for your children, Miami Children's Hospital, where children always come first.

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