

August
2023



THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

AT SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL
A MEMBER OF SAINT PETER'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Treating you better...for life.

Understanding Pediatric Epilepsy, Migraines, and Muscular Weakness

Pediatric neurology encompasses the diagnosis and treatment of many conditions affecting the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves, and muscles in children. Among these concerns, epilepsy, migraine headaches, and muscular weakness disorders are significant challenges.

Pediatric Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder characterized by recurrent seizures due to abnormal brain activity. Epileptic seizures can be characterized by brief lapses in awareness, and convulsions in the full body or parts of the body.

“Not all shaking is indicative of epilepsy, seizures, or epileptic seizures. It’s very important to understand the child’s medical history and to conduct an electroencephalographic (EEG) evaluation before making a diagnosis and probably admitting the patient for continuous video EEG monitoring for several days. Many tests are necessary to try to find the cause of epilepsy, including blood tests, brain imaging and genetic testing,” said Carlos Lastra, MD, chief of the Division of Pediatric Neurology at The Children’s Hospital at Saint Peter’s University Hospital.



Beyond seizures, other symptoms of epilepsy include:

- **Staring Spells:** Children with epilepsy may experience sudden moments of absent-mindedness where they seem unresponsive or disconnected from their surroundings. This can be a sign of absence seizures.
- **Repetitive Movements:** Some children with epilepsy may exhibit repetitive movements during a seizure such as chewing, fidgeting, or picking at clothing. These behaviors are often seen during focal seizures.
- **Changes in Sensation or Behavior:** Seizures can sometimes cause changes in a child’s sensory perception or behavior. They may experience sensations such as tingling or numbness in specific body parts, or exhibit sudden changes in mood or behavior like aggression, confusion, or fear.
- **Loss of Control:** Children may experience sudden muscle stiffness or jerking movements, difficulty speaking or understanding language, or loss of bladder or bowel control during a seizure.

The Children’s Hospital at Saint Peter’s University Hospital has a dedicated 24-hour inpatient epilepsy unit for video EEG monitoring, which is an essential advanced tool in the management of patients with epilepsy. The patient’s seizure events, along with the measurement of the brain’s electrical activity, are recorded simultaneously. This information allows the pediatric neurologists to classify the origin and/or the type of seizures to determine the appropriate treatment.

Pediatric Migraine Headache

Many parents don’t realize that children can have migraine headaches just like adults. Headaches are a common symptom among both children and adults, but some symptoms indicate that a visit to the pediatric neurologist is needed:

- A headache accompanied by nausea or vomiting
- Sudden withdrawal from play
- Inconsolable crying due to the pain of the migraine

“Lack of sleep can be a trigger for migraine headaches. All children, like adults, should get eight hours of sleep each night. During sleep, the brain continues to work by imprinting new memories, which is why it’s so important for children to get a good night’s rest,” said Dr. Lastra.



Stock photo. Posed by model.

Disorders of the Muscle and Peripheral Nerves

Muscular weakness can be caused by a muscle disorder and/or damage to the peripheral nerves, spinal cord, and brain, leading to signal interruptions between the organs. This leads to symptoms such as:

- **Sensory Changes:** Children with muscular neuropathy may experience sensory abnormalities, such as numbness, tingling, or decreased sensation in the affected areas. They may have difficulty sensing touch, temperature, or pain.
- **Pain:** Inflammation of the muscles can cause pain ranging from mild discomfort to severe and persistent pain.
- **Motor Impairment:** Children may experience difficulties with coordination, balance, and motor function. This can manifest as delays in reaching developmental milestones or problems with activities such as walking, running, or gripping objects. Children may have difficulties with fine motor skills, such as writing, buttoning clothes, or tying shoelaces due to muscle weakness and lack of proper nerve stimulation.
- **Muscle Wasting:** Prolonged muscle weakness and lack of use can lead to muscle wasting or atrophy over time. This can result in visible changes in muscle size and strength.

Managing the symptoms of muscle and peripheral nerve conditions, slowing down disease progression, and improving quality of life are paramount. This may include physical therapy, occupational therapy, assistive devices, pain management medications, and sometimes surgical interventions. The treatment approach depends on the underlying cause of the weakness and the specific needs of the child.

“Early attention to the neurology symptoms is key. We rely on the parents and pediatricians to detect if the child has any symptoms requiring evaluation by the pediatric neurologist. Be sure to bring your child to all their medical appointments so their pediatrician can spot any neurological concerns,” said Dr. Lastra.

The Division of Pediatric Neurology at The Children’s Hospital at Saint Peter’s University Hospital cares for children and families affected by disorders of the nervous system. In addition to epilepsy, migraine headaches, and muscle and peripheral nerve disorders, the Division provides comprehensive evaluation and management for children with developmental disorders caused by brain disorders; Tourette syndrome; cerebral palsy; meningitis; Bell’s palsy; Dravet syndrome; encephalitis; Guillain-Barre syndrome; neurocutaneous disorder; traumatic brain injury; tics; brain tumors; post-traumatic brain disorder; Down syndrome; and the evaluation of sleep disorders, learning disabilities, and autism. Children will then be referred to the appropriate medical specialist.

Saint Peter’s pediatric neurologists see patients at The Children’s Hospital at Saint Peter’s University Hospital in New Brunswick and at the Dr. Bipin Patel Pediatric Multispecialty Center at Hoboken University Medical Center, part of CarePoint Health in Hoboken.

For more information, call 732.339.7870
or visit saintpetershcs.com/pedsneuro.

The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital Opens New Baby Boutique for NICU Parents

The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital has opened the Bless U Baby Boutique, a shop stocked with donated items and gifts for parents of babies who have been admitted to the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). In partnership with Saint Peter's Foundation, the shop, located across from the NICU, is filled with new toys, books, outfits, hats, blankets, personal care items for parents, and more. All the items are given to parents free of charge.

The idea for the boutique was spearheaded by Dolly Allen, DNP, MSN, RN, CCRN, C-ELBW, NEA-BC, director of Adult Emergency Services at Saint Peter's University Hospital, while she was in her previous role as nurse manager of the hospital's NICU.

"Families with a baby in the NICU are often caught off guard by their baby's early arrival. This has left them little to no time to shop for those essential items needed to care for their baby at home," Allen said. "Our NICU families experience varying emotions and challenges while we are caring for their baby in the NICU, which sometimes can be for a few days or several months. In our Bless U Baby Boutique, families can feel a sense of normalcy as they select items for their baby while thinking about the day they get to take them home."

Mark Hiatt, MD, director of Saint Peter's NICU and chief of the Division of Neonatal Medicine at The Children's Hospital at Saint Peter's University Hospital, said "Family-centered care is the gold standard of care at Saint Peter's. By offering this shop to the families of babies in the NICU, we hope to bring them a sense of celebration and joy during a stressful time."

Saint Peter's is home to a state-designated Regional Perinatal Center that provides an exceptional level of care to women experiencing high-risk pregnancies and operates a nationally recognized Level IV Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) where premature or fragile newborns receive the highest level of specialized care. The hospital is certified in Perinatal Care by The Joint Commission and is the state's first to be verified by The Joint Commission as a Level IV Maternal Care facility. Saint Peter's University Hospital was also named to *Newsweek's* list of America's Best Maternity Hospitals in 2023 and 2022.

To make a monetary donation in support of the NICU or the Bless U Baby Boutique, please visit saintpetershcs.com/DonateNICU



Community Calendar

For more information or to register for a program, call the contact number listed or visit saintpetershcs.com/Events. Most programs are FREE unless noted; please call for information.

Cancer Support

Bone Marrow Transplant

For patients who have had an allogeneic transplant
Call for information: 732.235.8522

Breast Cancer

Call for information: 732.235.7011

Gynecologic Cancer

In partnership with the Cancer Support Community Central New Jersey
Call for information: 732.235.6792

Living with Cancer

Call for information: 732.235.7557

Diabetes Education*

For information about classes, call the numbers listed below.

Diabetes Self-Management Education

Call for information: 732.339.7630

Gestational Diabetes Self-Management Education

Call for information: 732.339.7630

Prevent T2 Program

Call for information and registration: 732.339.7772

Parent Education

Parenting classes are currently being held online. Register at saintpetershcs.com/Services/Parent-Education. Once registered for a class, access information will be provided to you. For information about the following classes, please call Parent Education at 732.745.8579.

Baby Care

Birth Center Class

(for moms under midwifery care)

Breastfeeding Class

Breastfeeding Support Group

Grandparents Class

Hypnobirthing

Marvelous Multiples

New Daddy Class

New Mom Support Group

Prenatal Yoga & Exercise Class

Prepared Childbirth/Lamaze Classes

Sibling Class

Spinning Babies

Support Groups

Bariatric Nutrition Support Group

2nd Thursday of each month

Next meeting: August 10 • 6 – 7 pm

Call 732.339.7450 for Zoom meeting information

Bereavement

Call Pastoral Care for information: 732.745.8565

Craniofacial Teen Girls

Call for information: 732.745.8600, x8113

MyGoal Autism Family

2nd Sunday of each month

Next meeting: August 13 • 3 pm

Call 877.886.9462 or email info@mygoalautism.org for virtual meeting details

SHARE

3rd Thursday of each month

Next meeting: August 17 • 7 – 9 pm

Call 732.745.8522 or

email imariano@saintpetersuh.com for Zoom link

Spouse/Partner Caregiver Support Group

Call for information: 732.745.8600, x8653

SAINT PETER'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL | Robert Wood Johnson | RWJ Barnabas University Hospital | HEALTH

Blood and Platelet Drive
Thursday, August 24 • 11:30 am – 5:30 pm
IBEW Local 456
1295 Livingston Ave. • North Brunswick, NJ
Schedule an appointment at rwjhdonorclub.org

SAINT PETER'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

PRESIDENT'S GOLF CLASSIC

September 11, 2023 | The Ridge At Back Brook

Benefiting Saint Peter's Healthcare System

For registration and sponsorship information, contact Saint Peter's Foundation at **732.745.7932** or spfoundation@saintpetersuh.com

COVID-19

Pfizer COVID-19 Vaccines

For age eligibility and clinic locations and dates, visit saintpetershcs.com/covidvaccine

Need a doctor? To find a Saint Peter's physician, visit saintpetershcs.com/findaphysician.

Online scheduling is also available with select Saint Peter's Healthcare System physicians via Zocdoc at BookMySPDoc.com

This calendar is for information only. Do not rely on it to make healthcare decisions on your own; instead, talk with your healthcare provider for advice and treatment. Do not ignore medical advice or delay seeking it because of something you read here. We do not suggest or endorse that you have any tests, use products, or use other information in this document without advice from your healthcare provider.

SAINT PETER'S HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

254 Easton Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901
732.745.8600 | 800.269.7508 | saintpetershcs.com

Sponsored by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Metuchen
State-designated children's hospital and regional perinatal center

