Understanding Children's Ear, Nose and Throat Health



NEMOURS CHILDREN'S HEALTH

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Table of Contents

Introduction 2

Ear Anomaly 5

Hearing Loss 5

Vestibular Disorders 5

Minimally Invasive Skull Base Surgery 5

ENT Surgery 6

Why choose us? 7

Sources 8

Introduction

Conditions that affect a child's ears, nose and throat (ENT) are surprisingly common — and a common reason that kids visit a doctor. It's important for children to receive the care they need for ENT conditions.

Without proper treatment, these ailments may affect kids' hearing, learning, speech, sleep and development over time. At Nemours Children's Health, our experienced team of pediatric ENT specialists provides expert care for children of all ages, from infants to teens.





ENT Conditions: Our ENT specialists provide surgical care for a wide range of conditions, from the simplest to the most complex. Our team of ENT experts — including surgeons, audiologists, speech and language pathologists, feeding and swallowing therapists, advanced nurse practitioners and physician assistants — work together to create personalized treatment plans for each of our patients.

Recurring Infections or Swelling in the Tonsils/Adenoids: Tonsils are clumps of tissue on both sides of the throat. Adenoids are tonsil-like tissue that sit behind the nose, above the tonsil. In some children, they become repeatedly infected or swollen, blocking airways and causing pain, snoring or trouble breathing.

Chronic Ear Infections or Fluid Behind the Eardrum: Most ear infections occur in the middle ear, where fluid and mucous can build up behind the eardrum and create prime conditions for an infection to develop. Five out of six children have at least one ear infection before age 3. Repeated ear infections and fluid that doesn't drain can cause hearing loss or a delay in speech.



We also care for many other conditions, such as head and neck masses, airway and breathing problems, craniofacial conditions, balance and dizziness disorders, nasal dysfunction problems, voice issues, hearing loss and communication problems.

Complex airway: We treat children with a variety of airway problems. Because many children with airway disorders will often require care from multiple specialties Nemours has a monthly Aerodigestive Conference where specialists from otolaryngology (ENT), pulmonology, gastroenterology, pediatric general surgery and speech pathology meet to discuss children with complex issues involving the aerodigestive tract.

Neck masses: A variety of neck masses can occur in children. Many of these are present at birth but other neck masses such as tumors and infections, may be acquired. Our team specializes in the care of simple and complex neck masses.

Tongue ties: Tongue ties are often found in infancy when feeding; breastfeeding can be especially challenging. Less commonly, tongue ties are diagnosed later when articulation or restricted tongue movement become a concern. Our team is experienced at evaluating tongue ties and treating them when needed. In babies under 3 months, this is a short procedure we can perform in the office. Older children will be treated in the operating room, if surgery is needed.

Complex sleep: We see many children with sleep difficulties including obstructive sleep apnea. Many children with obstructive sleep apnea are treated with surgery on the tonsils and adenoids. If sleep apnea continues, some children may need additional surgery or nonsurgical care. Some children with persistent sleep apnea are candidates for additional surgery, while others benefit from non-surgical care. In our Complex Sleep Clinic, specialists from ENT and pulmonology see children in the office together to create a comprehensive plan of care.

Voice: We treat all pediatric patients with voice concerns. Common diagnoses we see include vocal fold nodules, vocal fold paresis or paralysis, and vocal cord dysfunction. Our initial clinic appointments are shared appointments between ENT and speech therapy. We also include psychology as needed for care of patients.

Ear Anomaly

Ear anomalies are differences in the shape and size of the ear that are present at birth. Children can have differences in the external portion of their ear (Microtia), and/or have an absent ear canal connecting the outside ear to the hearing structures inside (Atresia). Most children with these conditions have some form of hearing loss. Our ear anomaly team, including otolaryngology, plastic surgery, audiology, psychology, and social work, work together to provide care to patients. By working as a team, we can coordinate the child's care and assist them in getting the best treatment at the most appropriate times as they grow and develop.

Hearing Loss

Hearing loss is one of the most common differences present at birth. Our team of experts is equipped to diagnose and treat hearing loss of all types and degrees. For the most severe cases, children are referred to our cochlear implant team. In other instances, hearing loss may develop over time because of chronic ear infections, eardrum perforations, or growths of skin that invade the ear (cholesteatoma). Our providers are often able to treat these conditions with minimally invasive techniques. For many children this can mean procedures that only need a few, small cuts, and an easier recovery.

Vestibular Disorders

Children with dizziness are often referred to several specialists in search of both diagnoses and treatment. We are able to offer a variety of vestibular testing to determine whether a child's dizziness has been caused by a middle or inner ear problem. Even if the dizziness does not seem to be related to the ears, our otolaryngologists work with a team of specialists to help families find answers.

Minimally Invasive Skull Base Surgery

Skull base surgery is done to remove a tumor or other growth from the base, or bottom, of the skull. It is also done to treat cysts, encephaloceles (hernias in the brain) and some birth defects. New techniques and specialized instruments have been developed in recent years to make skull base surgery easier on patients. Today, surgeons can use delicate instruments placed through the nose or mouth and work through small and hidden incisions. When skull base surgery is done this way, it is called minimally invasive or endoscopic surgery. There are many benefits to minimally invasive surgery, including a shortened hospital stay, faster recovery, less pain, no scars, fewer complications and less chance of damage to other parts of the brain. Our providers partner with the expert skull base surgeons from the Vickie and Jack Farber Institute for Neuroscience at Jefferson Health to provide the highest quality of care for children with complex lesions of the skull base.

ENT Surgery

Nemours Children's Health has one of the largest pediatric specialty programs in the country. Our board-certified ENT experts provide world-renowned care close to home in the Delaware Valley/Greater Philadelphia area. We use state-of-the-art equipment designed specifically for children and provide care in a kid-friendly, family-centered setting. Whenever possible, we use minimally invasive surgical techniques with a low risk of complications such as pain and bleeding.



Why choose us?

Nemours is a nationally recognized destination for children's medical services. Parents turn to us for top-level care provided by experienced, highly skilled, board-certified ENT specialists. Our specialists have additional training in pediatrics to ensure your child receives the best care for their ear, nose and throat conditions.

We make it as convenient as possible for kids to receive care from our ENT team. Our doctors, audiologists and speech therapists are all under one roof, so it's often possible to schedule multiple appointments in one day. You can see our experts at select Nemours locations in Delaware, New J ersey and Pennsylvania, or at home via a telehealth video appointment.

You can count on us to take great care of your child's ENT health. To get started, call us at 800.416.4441 to schedule an appointment.

"As a mother, I know how stressful it is for a family when their child is ill. I strive to help families through these difficult times and to provide them with the best possible care."

– Heather C. Nardone, MD

"I feel strongly about making sure every child has access to health care. Children are at the mercy of their caregivers, and I believe we have an obligation to provide the best care we can for them."

— Richard J. Schmidt, MD



Resources

For more resources, visit **KidsHealth.org from Nemours KidsHealth** — a pioneer and leader in pediatric health content, trusted by millions worldwide for more than 25 years to help keep families healthy.

1. Middle Ear Infections. Nemours KidsHealth. KidsHealth.org/en/parents/otitis-media.html
2. Myringotomy. Nemours Children's Health. Nemours.org/services/myringotomy.html
3. Otolaryngology. Nemours Children's Health. KidsHealth.org/en/parents/otitis-media.html
4. Strep Throat. Nemours KidsHealth. Kidshealth.org/en/parents/strep-throat.html
5. Tonsillectomy. Nemours KidsHealth. Nemours.org/services/tonsillectomy.html
6. Tonsillitis. KidsHealth from Nemours Children's. Kidshealth.org/en/kids/tonsillitis.html
7. What is Tympanoplasty? Nemours KidsHealth. Kidshealth.org/en/parents/tympanoplasty.html?WT.ac=p-ra
8. Colds. Nemours KidsHealth. Kidshealth.org/en/parents/cold.html



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