



PEDIATRIC PATIENTS: Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Children

In the past few years, we have seen more and more pediatric patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). IBD is a chronic disorder characterized by autoimmune-related inflammation of the lining of the digestive tract, including the colon and intestines, and includes both Crohn's Disease (CD) and Ulcerative Colitis (UC). CD inflammation can spread deep into the layers of the affected bowel tissue, while UC usually affects only the innermost lining of the colon.

While the exact cause of IBD is unknown, it may occur at any age, in both males and females, and the disorder often runs in families, although a person can develop it even though no other family members have it.

At **GI for Kids, PLLC**, our providers may suspect a child has IBD based on his/her medical history and presenting signs and symptoms, but testing is needed to confirm the diagnosis. Common symptoms of IBD include diarrhea or constipation, abdominal pain, loss of appetite and weight loss, delayed growth, vomiting, skin rash, joint pain, fever, and bleeding in the digestive tract. If a child presents with some or all of these signs and symptoms, our providers will perform one or more diagnostic procedures to help confirm or rule out IBD. These diagnostic tests include blood tests, stool samples, magnetic resonance enterography (MRE), CT enterography, capsule endoscopy, upper endoscopy (also called esophagogastroduodenoscopy or EGD), and colonoscopy. Capsule endoscopy is new technology that makes it possible for children with IBD to be diagnosed earlier, often preventing a child's condition from drastically deteriorating before being diagnosed. We perform EGD and colonoscopy procedures in our state-of-the-art endoscopy suite located in East Tennessee Children's Hospital, where we have complete access to specialized pediatric anesthesiologists and nurses. Once IBD has been confirmed, our goal for treatment is to reduce the inflammation causing damage to the intestines.

Our clinic has a multidisciplinary approach to treating IBD. We treat the whole patient, including his or her family, by providing a variety of professional services, including multiple medical providers, dietitians, behavior health providers, a hospital inpatient practitioner, and a medical infusion nurse specialist. Since IBD, and particularly CD, are often associated with poor digestion and malabsorption, children with IBD may benefit from seeing one of our dietitians for nutritional support and assistance with diet modification. Our behavior health providers can offer support, advice, and help with emotional and psychological issues related to adjustment to illness, depression, anxiety, and school attendance. They can also assist with pain management by teaching relaxation techniques and distraction strategies, thus reducing the need for pharmaceutical pain management.

Our clinic also offers in-office Remicade infusions, which enables us to provide more convenient and timely infusions, as

well as giving the child less exposure to potential contagious illnesses compared to a hospital setting. Unfortunately, it is not unusual for our IBD patients to require inpatient hospital care, and our inpatient practitioner will collaborate with our team of professionals to ensure that our patients receive thorough, comprehensive, and timely care during any hospital stay. This synthesis of care has proven to be a great benefit to our patients as they frequently achieve remission in a shorter period of time and often avoid dependence on long-term steroid treatment.

Also during the past few years, **GI for Kids, PLLC**, and Dr. Youhanna S. Al-Tawil realized there was a great need in the community to support our children and families coping with IBD. **KidsFACT** (Kids Fighting Against Crohn's and Colitis Together) was created out of the recognition of this need. **KidsFACT** is a nonprofit support group to help kids and families with IBD through support and advice. The mission of **KidsFACT** is to help make strides towards improved quality of life and advance knowledge in order to contribute to better treatments and, ultimately, a cure. The mission is achieved through education, family support, and research. **KidsFACT** raises awareness of the disorder and funding through an annual golf tournament and rodeo. Anyone can join the **KidsFACT** discussion forum where helpful advice and support from others with IBD is available by visiting their website at www.kidsfact.org.

GI for Kids, PLLC, also performs clinical research and participates in clinical trials. Data from the research has been presented at national conferences. If you are struggling with IBD, or know someone who is, we hope you will consider the services we provide. Please contact our clinic at (865) 546-3998 for a comprehensive consultation or visit our websites at www.giforkids.com and www.kidsfact.org.



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