



The Children's Hospital



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO HEALTHY, HAPPY KIDS

# It Runs in the FAMILY

Many common health conditions are passed from parents to their children, but that doesn't guarantee your child will inherit allergies or migraines simply because you have them. However, it does mean your child is at an increased risk, so it is important to recognize signs of certain inherited health conditions early to prevent them from getting worse. Some common inherited illnesses are:

## ALLERGIES

If either parent suffers from allergies — seasonal, food or otherwise — a child has a 50 percent chance of also having them. If both parents have allergies, the percentage is even higher.

Allergy symptoms vary from one child to the next and can be characterized by watery eyes, runny nose, sneezing, nasal congestion, skin hives, throat tightness and trouble breathing. Food allergies may cause other symptoms, including nausea and vomiting.

The pediatric allergy and immunology specialists at The Children's Hospital are leaders in allergy research and treatment. If your child displays allergy symptoms and does not find relief from over-the-counter medications, ask your

family physician or pediatrician for a referral to a pediatric allergy specialist at Children's.

## ECZEMA

This condition — which causes the skin to become red, dry and itchy — affects about one in 10 children, usually before the age of five. More than half of these kids will outgrow eczema by their teenage years, and a physician can help identify triggers and recommend a moisturizing cream to soothe the skin.

If your child suffers from eczema, keep these tips in mind to minimize discomfort:

- Bathe in lukewarm water.
- Do not scratch the affected area.
- Drink plenty of water to keep the skin hydrated.
- Wear loose clothing.

## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Unfortunately, some behavioral conditions also can be passed from parent to child, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and depression. If your child shows symptoms such as constant sadness, irritability, anxiety or severe inattention, speak to your pediatrician or family doctor about a referral to a

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# Recognized for Excellence

The Children's Hospital has been recognized as one of the nation's 10 best pediatric hospitals in *U.S. News & World Report's* 2009 edition of "America's Best Children's Hospitals." Children's received Honor Roll designation, which is awarded to hospitals that receive a ranking in every surveyed specialty area. Children's also was ranked among the top 10 hospitals in six specialty areas, including:

- Cancer (ranked 10th)
- Diabetes and endocrine disorders (ranked 10th)
- Digestive disorders (ranked fifth)
- Neonatal care (ranked eighth)
- Orthopedics (ranked eighth)
- Respiratory disorders (ranked fifth)

In addition, Children's was selected as the top-ranked Family Favorite Winner by *Colorado Parent* readers!



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pediatric behavioral health specialist at Children's.

## IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS)

If you suffer from IBS, your child is twice as likely to develop the condition as a child whose parents do not have it. Common symptoms of IBS include cramps, gas, bloating, diarrhea and constipation.

Children's recently became one of only eight pediatric centers nationally to offer a new "camera pill" — known as M2A® technology — which is used to diagnose and manage diseases of the small bowel in children ages 10 to 18. The child swallows the pill, and as it passes through the bowel, the camera technology captures multiple images to help determine the affected area and develop a treatment plan.

## MIGRAINES

Migraine headaches also are common inherited conditions and are characterized by throbbing pain, nausea, vomiting and sensitivity to light and sound. These debilitating headaches begin around age eight but may occur sooner. Migraines can occur in younger children (ages five to eight) up to 10 percent of the time and up to 25 percent of the time in adolescent girls.

Migraines typically have triggers that can be determined by a specialist. Tonia Sabo, MD, neurologist and Director of the Headache Clinic at Children's, is currently leading a study into the role of nutrition and vitamins in relieving migraines in children.

## VISION PROBLEMS

Your children will probably view the world the same way you do. Nearsightedness, color blindness, lazy eye and other vision problems often are inherited, so if your child complains of headaches or frequently squints when reading or watching television, impaired vision is probably the culprit. Whether or not vision problems run in your family, schedule annual eye exams to detect potential complications early.

For more information about these and other health conditions, visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org).



## Keep Your Child's Health in Check

**As** a parent, you may worry about your child becoming sick or injured at school, on the playground or even in your own home. That's why it is important to keep a list of your family's medical conditions on hand in case of an emergency.

Feel free to cut out this list and keep it in a handy place after filling in the information for each of your children.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_

Current height and weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Pediatrician: \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-existing medical conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Food/drug allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

Hearing or vision problems: \_\_\_\_\_

Medicines, including the dosage: \_\_\_\_\_

Updated vaccinations: \_\_\_\_\_



# IDENTIFYING SCHOOL PHOBIA



Fall is here, and it is time for your child to be in school. As your daughter gets ready in the morning, you can tell she does not feel well. She seems healthy at other times, and her pediatrician says she is healthy, but something still seems wrong. School phobia could be to blame.

Some children miss lots of school because of vague physical symptoms, such as stomachaches and headaches. The symptoms mainly occur in the morning, and they worsen when it's time to leave for school — a pattern commonly associated with school phobia.

School-phobic children usually are very close to their parents and find it difficult to separate from them (separation anxiety). It's similar to homesickness, but school phobia produces symptoms.

To help your child overcome school phobia, enforce the following rules:

**1. Insist on regular school attendance.** The best therapy for school phobia is to be in school every day. Fears are overcome by facing them as soon as possible. Be optimistic with your child, and reassure her that she will feel better after she gets to school.

**2. Be extra firm on school mornings.** In the beginning, mornings may be a difficult time, especially Mondays. Never ask your child how she feels because it will encourage her to complain. Remember, if she is well enough to be up and around the house, she is generally well enough to go to school. If your child complains of the

usual physical symptoms, she should be sent to school with minimal discussion. Attending school must be a non-negotiable rule.

**3. Have your child see her doctor on any morning she stays home.**

If your child has a new symptom or seems quite sick, keep her home. Call your pediatrician or family doctor as soon as the office opens, and try to schedule an appointment that morning. If the symptom is caused by illness, appropriate treatment can be started. If the symptom is due to school phobia, your child should go back to school before noon.

**4. Ask the school staff for assistance.**

Schools usually are very understanding about school phobia because it is a common problem. If your child has special fears, such as talking in front of the class, the teacher may make special allowances. If the symptoms worsen during class times, ask the school to allow your child to lie down for 10 minutes and regroup rather than sending her home.

**5. Talk with your child about any school fears.**

At a time other than a school morning, talk with your child about her concerns. Encourage her to tell you exactly

what upsets her. If there's a situation you can change, tell her you will work on it, but she must go to school while the problems are being resolved.

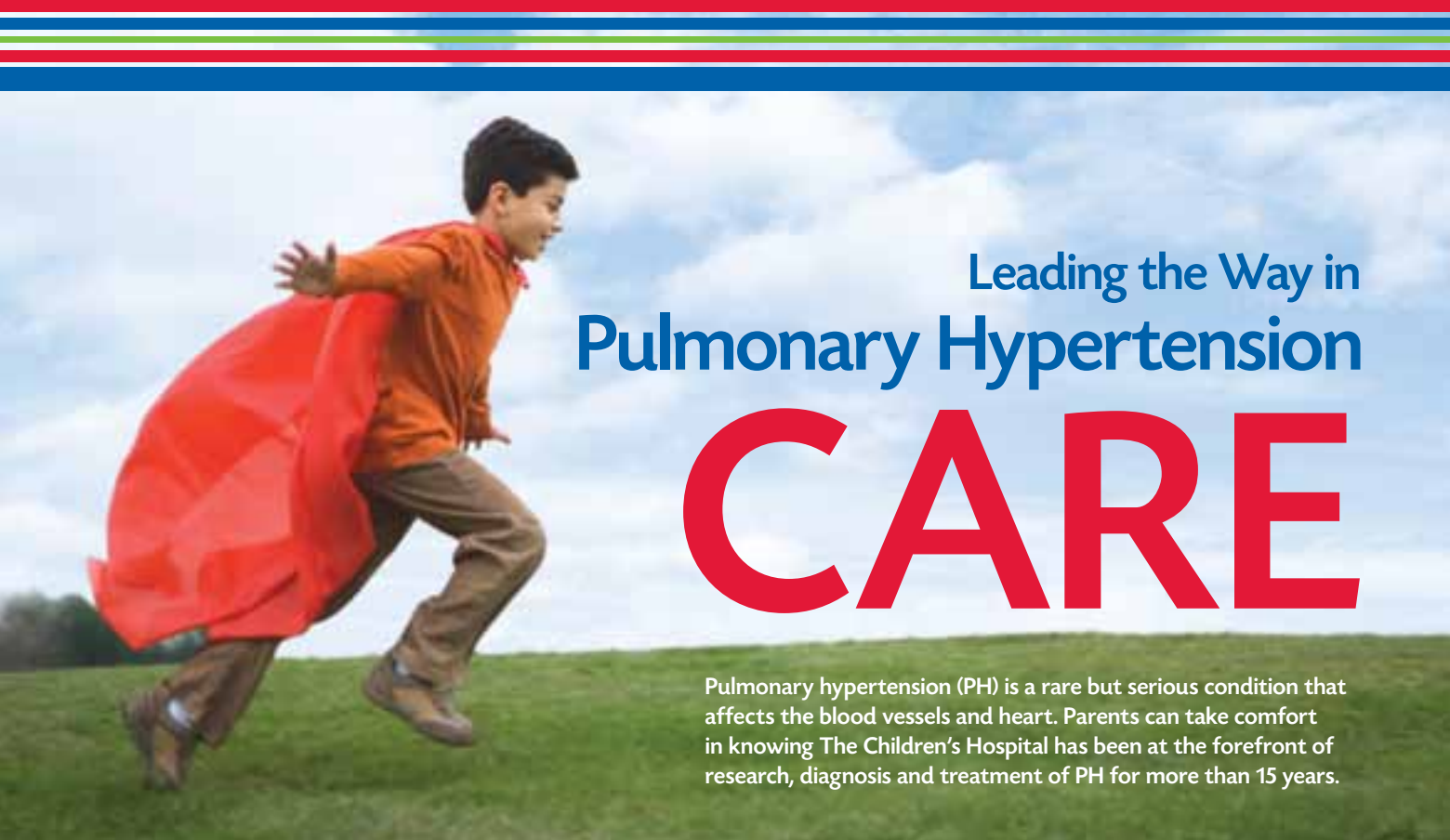
If you are firm with your child and make school attendance mandatory, school phobia symptoms should dramatically improve within a week or two.



Barton Schmitt, MD, FAAP, is a board-certified pediatrician at The Children's Hospital. He has been practicing medicine for 40 years and has received two distinguished awards from the American Academy of Pediatrics, including the Child Development Award in 1994, followed by the Education Award in 2004. A father of four and grandfather of eight, he most recently completed the third edition of *Your Child's Health*, now available in bookstores.



Written by Barton D. Schmitt, MD.  
Revised August 2009.



# Leading the Way in Pulmonary Hypertension

# CARE

Pulmonary hypertension (PH) is a rare but serious condition that affects the blood vessels and heart. Parents can take comfort in knowing The Children’s Hospital has been at the forefront of research, diagnosis and treatment of PH for more than 15 years.

**PH** can occur in children of all ages, from newborns to adolescents. The condition causes narrowing of the blood vessels in the lungs, which raises blood pressure because the blood vessels have to work harder to maintain blood flow. As blood pressure rises, the right chamber of the heart may become enlarged due to added strain. If left untreated, the condition can lead to heart failure.

“PH often is a silent disease,” said Steven H. Abman, MD, Director of the Pediatric Heart Lung Center at Children’s and Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine. “Some early symptoms may be present, such as shortness of breath, dizziness or fainting, but the disease also may progress without many signs at all.”

## CAUSES, DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

Physicians classify PH by cause. The primary (or idiopathic) type arises with no known cause while secondary PH is caused by or occurs along with chronic lung disease or congenital heart problems.

Early diagnosis of PH is crucial but can be difficult because the symptoms often resemble those of other conditions, such as asthma or pneumonia. If your child demonstrates or complains of fatigue, weakness, chest pain, swelling in the legs or any of the aforementioned symptoms, contact your child’s pediatrician or family

physician who can evaluate him or her and provide a referral to a pediatric specialist at Children’s, if necessary.

PH is generally diagnosed using heart tracings, echocardiograms (EKGs) or ultrasounds, and if the disease is confirmed, chest X-rays, blood tests and cardiac catheterization may be used to pinpoint the cause and determine its severity. Several medications, including calcium channel blockers, sildenafil, endothelin receptor blockers, prostacyclin and others may be prescribed to treat PH.

## A TEAM APPROACH TO CARE

Children’s is home to the first comprehensive Pediatric Pulmonary Hypertension Program in the country, and it’s our multidisciplinary team approach to the disease that makes us so successful.

“Our team approach is unique because it involves physicians of diverse specialties, including pulmonologists, cardiologists, intensivists, neonatologists and others,”

Dr. Abman said. “Our research also sets us apart by allowing us to stay on the cusp of new developments and treatments.”

*For more information about the Pediatric Pulmonary Hypertension Program at The Children’s Hospital, visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org) and search “Pulmonary Hypertension” and “Pediatric Heart Lung Center.”*

## FAST FACT

One of The Children’s Hospital’s most important contributions to the treatment of pulmonary hypertension (PH) occurred in 1991, when the research team discovered that small doses of nitric oxide – a molecule found in the body – can help newborns with PH avoid the need for a bypass procedure to treat the condition.

# STOPPING STRAINS

## in Their Tracks

Children spend much of their time at play, so occasional muscle soreness is to be expected. But how can you tell when your child's injury is something more serious?

**W**hile sprains affect joints and ligaments, pulled muscles — or strains — are small tears in muscle or tendon fibers caused by excessive pressure, overstretching or pulling during a sport or other physical activity. The tearing of fibers can damage small blood vessels and nerve endings in the area and may lead to bruising and significant pain.

“We are seeing an overall increase in overuse injuries among active youth. I may treat four to six strains every week,” said Aaron Provance, MD, pediatric sports medicine physician on staff at The Children’s Hospital and Assistant Professor of Pediatric Sports Medicine at the University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine. “Young athletes involved in multiple sports or participating in one sport year-round often are injured due to repetitive stress placed on their muscles and tendons.”

### MORE THAN SORENESS

While most pulled muscles simply require a break from physical activity, severe tears may need medical attention. To determine whether or not your child’s injury is more serious, considering the following characteristics of strained or torn muscles:

- A popping feeling when the affected muscle is moved
- Complete inability to use the affected muscle
- Immediate onset of pain after the initial injury
- Pain in one arm or leg, as opposed to muscle soreness, which generally occurs in both limbs
- Pain in the affected muscle while at rest
- Soreness for more than 24 hours
- Swelling, bruising or redness in the injured area

“The best initial treatment for strains is early application of an ice pack and keeping the strained muscle in a resting position,” Dr. Provance said. “Anti-inflammatory medication combined with 20-minute icing periods four to five times a day will decrease pain and swelling. I recommend refraining from physical activity for two to four weeks or until the pain has decreased significantly. Physical therapy is usually needed to regain strength in the affected muscle before safely returning to sports.”

Generally, only a muscle or tendon rupture will require surgery. A pediatric orthopedic specialist at Children’s can help determine the best treatment if conservative treatment options are not effective.

For more information about the Sports Medicine for Young Athletes Program at The Children’s Hospital, call (720) 777-3899 or visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org/sports](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org/sports).

### BEFORE THE PAIN STARTS

Many common muscle injuries can be prevented with regular stretching routines and muscle conditioning. Instilling these habits and making sure kids warm up their muscles by stretching for at least five minutes before physical activities will help your child prevent injury.





# Fighting Fair

Even in the most harmonious homes, parents will occasionally disagree. While many people believe arguing in front of children is inappropriate, disagreements actually provide a great opportunity to model conflict resolution skills.

**O**n the surface, seeing parents argue may sound like a negative experience for children. However, when parents understand how to model healthy compromise and resolution, children actually can learn a great lesson that will stay with them throughout their lives.

“Parents need to take advantage of teaching moments,” said Jeffrey Dolgan, PhD, Senior Psychologist on staff at The Children’s Hospital. “Before a discussion gets heated, parents should calm down, take a break and logically resolve the situation later. Human nature makes it inevitable that people will argue, so it is important to teach children to handle conflict appropriately.”

## LAY THE GROUND RULES

Consider the following recommendations for constructive conflict resolution:

- Choose your words wisely by avoiding name-calling, yelling or involving the children.
- Express yourself without foul language.
- Avoid attacking statements, such as “You *always*...” or “You *never*...” and instead describe how the person’s actions made you feel.
- Apologize to one another after the conflict is resolved and offer forgiveness.

“The goal is to offer resolution without the stress of yelling or screaming,” Dr. Dolgan said. “Arguments should be handled as a partnership, and teaching this skill to children will help them build strong social skills.”

*If you have questions about your child’s health, visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org) and click on “Wellness & Safety,” then “Family Health Library.”*

## Keeping a Healthy Balance

**Children and teenagers have so many responsibilities. Between school and extracurricular activities, an overloaded schedule doesn’t just tire out the child – it can impact the whole family.**

**O**ne major way overscheduling can impact kids is through their sleep. Adolescents need at least nine hours of sleep per night and children need even more, but maintaining successful sleep rhythms may require parental involvement.

“Parents recognize the role of adequate sleep when their children are babies, but a good night’s rest is a necessity at every age,” said Keith L. Cavanaugh, MD, pediatric pulmonary and sleep specialist at The Children’s Hospital. “Parents should establish an evening routine for children to promote good sleep habits, which may involve removing televisions and computers from bedrooms, and stick to it.”

## ACHIEVING THE RIGHT BALANCE

As a parent, it is important to recognize when your child is taking on too many activities. Keep in mind the following tips to ensure your child is keeping a well-balanced schedule:

- Before allowing your child to participate in a new

activity, discuss it as a family to weigh the pros and cons, including the financial commitment involved.

- Set ground rules for participation. These may include ensuring your child maintains good grades and gets an appropriate amount of sleep.
- Make sure your child has plenty of free time. Children need to be able to enjoy themselves without rules or pressure to foster creativity and a healthy outlook.

*For more information about keeping a balanced schedule for your child, visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org) and search keyword “overscheduling.”*

## FAST FACT

Adolescents tend to become sleeper later at night compared to before puberty. Add an irregular sleep pattern, and an adolescent could be at risk of developing a circadian rhythm sleep disorder, which makes it difficult to get enough sleep during the school week. An inadequate amount of sleep can impair the child’s ability to function during the day. If your child has difficulty falling asleep, appears to not get enough sleep or frequently doesn’t feel refreshed upon awakening, ask your family doctor or pediatrician for a referral to a pediatric sleep specialist at The Children’s Hospital.

# Attacking Teen Acne

Are you eliminating chocolate, pizza and sodas to help keep your child's acne under control? There are many myths about ways to improve acne, but how do you know what works and when to seek professional help?

Acne — which may appear on the face, back, arms, shoulders and other areas of the body — is an embarrassing condition of the skin that socially hinders many teens by weakening self-confidence. Acne can occur because of hormonal changes during puberty and is a trying part of adolescence for many teens. However, there are legitimate ways to help clear your child's skin.

## FINDING WHAT WORKS

Some teens have found that practicing a healthy diet may improve their acne to a certain degree, but avoiding certain foods or beverages will not necessarily help the condition. Sun exposure also is thought to mask acne temporarily, but it does not offer a permanent solution, and the long-term effects of sun damage are not worth the increased risk of skin cancer.

"Many over-the-counter products can help clear acne," said Joanna Burch, MD, pediatric dermatologist at The Children's Hospital. "But for numerous teens, professional

help and medication are needed to clear the skin and restore confidence."

Dr. Burch recommends trying benzoyl peroxide gel and an oil-free cleanser to eliminate acne. Avoid touching the face, and never squeeze a blemish, which can transfer bacteria and make the condition worse. If over-the-counter products do not produce desired results, ask your family doctor or pediatrician for a referral to a pediatric dermatologist at Children's.

For more information on teen acne, visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org) and search keywords "teen acne."



# It's Only a Game, Right?

With so many video games on the market targeted to a variety of age groups, it can be hard to decide if your child is old enough to play.

Over the years, video games have become a multi-billion-dollar industry, as well as an integral part of modern culture. When it comes to these games, there are positive and negative influences, so consider the facts before you purchase a video game for your child.

## WEIGHING THE PROS AND CONS

Video games introduce children to computer technology and teach them to follow directions. Some games encourage the use of logic or problem-solving skills and promote the development of fine motor and spatial skills. Other games even incorporate physical activity to keep kids active. In addition to entertainment value, video games can promote bonding between parents and children.

In contrast, children who depend on video games for entertainment may become socially isolated to the point that they no longer require social interaction to have fun. Many popular games show violence or anger and include the use of dangerous weapons and hostile actions to defeat enemies, which may condone aggressive behavior.

## A FAMILY DECISION

While there is no specific age when kids should be allowed to play video games, consider the following ideas before introducing them in your home:

- Offer game time as a reward for positive behavior rather than a daily event.
- Research popular games

first to determine if they are age-appropriate.

- Set time limits for playing games to 60-90 minutes per day.

For more information about video games, visit [www.thechildrenshospital.org](http://www.thechildrenshospital.org) and search keywords "video games."





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HEALTHY, HAPPY KIDS

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## Exercise: A Family Affair

“Being a healthy role model is one of the best ways to get your kids up and moving on a regular basis,” said Michael Witten, MS, exercise physiologist and Director of The Children's Hospital Wellness Center. “You can help change the way your kids view exercise simply by becoming more active yourself and discussing the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle with your family.”

### USE YOUR IMAGINATION

When it comes to being active as a family, there are endless options that will not only get your heart rate up, but also get everyone smiling.

- **Create your own Olympics-themed day.** Spend an afternoon in the park making your own Olympics with events such as a Frisbee-throwing competition, sprints, bike race and tennis or volleyball tournament.
- **Make chores fun.** Make games out of housework by playing music throughout your home and dancing while vacuuming or dusting to teach kids that physical activity can be fun. Also, find healthy ways to reward your child for a job well done.
- **Set up stations.** Create an exercise circuit where family members can participate together. For example, you might have one station set up to bounce a medicine ball, another for hula-hooping and another for playing hopscotch. Circuit training also can include jumping jacks, push-ups and sit-ups.

## Healthy Beginnings

If you need help getting your family into shape, The Children's Hospital offers the region's leading pediatric weight management programs, including the **GoodLIFE Clinic** for overweight and obese infants, toddlers, school-age children and adolescents and the **SHAPEDOWN® Clinic** for childhood and adolescent overweight and obesity issues.

“Parents have limited time to spend with their kids before they leave the ‘nest,’ and busy parents may not realize they are missing a great opportunity to connect with their kids through exercise,” said Marilyn

Getting your kids  
excited about working  
out can be easier than  
you think if you create  
fun activities and  
make it a family event.



Day, MS, RD, Co-Director of Preventive Programs and Coordinator of the SHAPEDOWN® Clinic at The Children's Hospital Heart Institute. “One aspect of the SHAPEDOWN Clinic that families really enjoy is playing active games together. It's enriching for everyone, both physically and emotionally.”

*The Children's Hospital offers various weight management programs. To understand which program is best for you and your family, contact our Weight Management Nurse Coordinator at (720) 777-3352.*