



The Pediatric Health Care/Medical Home An Introduction for Parents and Children

There is a great focus in our country to find ways to improve the availability and the quality of primary health care for children and their families. Regular and coordinated primary care with the same health care provider helps to improve the overall health and wellness of children and adults by focusing on the prevention illness and disease, and by making it easy for patients to seek health care when they are sick. Quick access to your child's primary care provider when he/she is not feeling well may result in less severe symptoms and possibly a shorter period of illness. But nurse practitioners and doctors alone can't keep you and your children healthy. Parents, children and their health care provider need to work together as a team to identify all of the resources a child needs to live a healthy life. Think of your child's nurse practitioner or doctor as your personal health coach.

What is a pediatric health care/medical home?

The pediatric health care/medical home is a concept designed to improve the relationship children and families have with their health care provider by providing one place with all the necessary tools for the team to work together and to ensure that every child has a coach. The pediatric health care/medical home partnership is focused on the overall well-being of children and families and not focused solely on responding to illness. The care provided by a pediatric health care/medical home should be, accessible, coordinated, compassionate, culturally sensitive, and offer you support in parenting and reaching the family values important to you (AAP, 2002, NAPNAP 2009). Some of the services provided by a pediatric health care/medical home include (but are not limited to): referrals to specialists when needed, motivational and anticipatory guidance for health promotion, parenting, nutrition, child development and safety education, mental health and behavioral referrals. Using this concept you, your child and your health care provider will create a stable, long term, trusting relationship (Duderstadt, 2008).

Who provides this type of care for my children?

All children and families should have a choice of qualified pediatric health care providers. This might be a pediatric nurse practitioner or a pediatrician. Pediatric nurse practitioners are uniquely qualified to engage in this type of partnership as they are proficient care coordinators and are educated and trained to provide primary care to children, advocate for children and their families, and make appropriate referrals. These are the core focuses of education for nurse practitioners.

How is this different than my regular pediatric provider?

The pediatric health care/medical home is focused on the overall health of the child and family, rather than just on episodic or acute problems. In this concept of care, each child and family member has an ongoing relationship with the health care provider. Children who receive health care services in a health care/medical home have better health outcomes than children who do not receive health care services in this way (NAPNAP, 2009). These outcomes included improved involvement in planning of goals for the child's treatment and understanding of the child's medical condition (Homer, et al, 2008 and Palfrey, et al, 2004). These outcomes lead to fewer hospitalizations for the child and fewer missed days of work for family members (Palfrey, et al, 2004).

Why is this important?

As mentioned above, the pediatric health care/medical home concept provides an environment that is family-centered, accessible, coordinated, compassionate, culturally sensitive, and focused on the well-being of children and their families.

The pediatric health care/medical home is **Family Centered**:

- Considers the family as the expert in the child's care
- Encourages extended family participation in the health, safety and education of the child
- Aims to develop a close relationship between families and their health care provider
- Assures your child will see the same provider each time he/she is seen in the office
- Provides preventive, primary and specialized care for your child and family

The pediatric health care/medical home is **Accessible**:

- Makes health care available in your community. Assures a health care provider is available 24 hours a day to answer your questions
- Has same day appointments available for your child when he/she is ill so you don't have to go the emergency room or medi-center

The pediatric health care/medical home is **Coordinated**:

- Brings together you, your child and your health care provider to develop a plan to keep your child healthy
- Assures your child is referred to medical specialist, nutrition education, mental health and behavioral services when needed
- Helps coordinate testing or other support required through the school system
- Provides resources to other community based services and programs

- Shares insurance information and other resources with the family
- Manages both acute and chronic illnesses
- Maintains your child's health record and plan of care in a central, easily accessible location

The pediatric health care/medical home is **Compassionate**:

- Shows concern and offers support for your child and family
- Offers a safe place for your child and family to discuss your concerns
- Helps with the transition to adult care when your child outgrows the pediatric environment

The pediatric health care/medical home is **Culturally Sensitive**:

- Acknowledges and respects your cultural and religious beliefs and facilitates developing a plan of care within those belief

References

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