Pediatric Orthopaedics and the Infant and Young Child with Spina Bifida

The pediatric orthopedic surgeon is usually consulted to see the newborn with spina bifida in the nursery prior to going home. At that time we do a head to toe evaluation for any orthopedic problems. Common problems that are often seen in the newborn child with spina bifida include clubfeet and developmental dysplasia of the hips or dislocated hips. Clubfoot is initially treated with serial casting of the feet and legs. The infant will need these casts changed every week and may need surgery to fully correct the deformity.

Treatment of developmental dysplasia of the hips will vary. Harnesses, braces and surgical procedures are available for treatment. The treatment option chosen for the child with spina bifida will depend on the level of the child's spina bifida and whether one or both hips are affected.

Many children with spina bifida require bracing of their feet and/or legs for walking, standing and shoe wear. Pediatric Orthopaedics will prescribe the type of bracing needed. We will also prescribe other walking /standing devices and wheelchairs.

All infants with spina bifida need to be in contact with the county Early Intervention Program. This program will evaluate the infant and provide in-home therapies needed by the child. You can get your local county number by calling the Special Kids Network of Pennsylvania at 1-800-986-4550.

Pediatric Orthopaedics and the Older Child with Spina Bifida

Older children with spina bifida will be evaluated at least every year by pediatric orthopaedics. During these visits we will continue to evaluate the child's lower extremities, movement abilities, need for bracing and other equipment, and the continued need for physical or occupational therapies. Older children will also be evaluated for neuromuscular scoliosis. Neuromuscular scoliosis may be treated with observation or a surgical procedure. We will continue to see children with spina bifida until they are 21 years old. By this time they are usually stable orthopedically and will be transitioned to the adult team.

Pediatric Orthopedic Testing

Testing done by pediatric orthopaedics for all children includes evaluating the range of motion and strength of their extremities and their movement abilities. Other testing may include ultrasounds of their hips and xrays of their feet, legs, hips or back. Sometimes MRI"s are also ordered to evaluate their scoliosis.

Pediatric Orthopedic Surgery

Surgical procedures for Spina Bifida children are typically considered after other interventions such a physical therapy, occupational therapy or bracing have failed. Prior to any surgical procedure we will want to make sure the child's shunt for hydrocephalus is functioning properly. If the child is on a clean intermittent catheterization program we will also check the urine for any infection.