



Early Intervention Is Key to Pediatric Epilepsy

Epilepsy starts waging war early—physicians should, too

“Extensive studies have shown that continued seizures impact cognition, language, attention and memory by limiting neuron survival, while increasing risk of anxiety and depression,” says Michael Chez, M.D., FAAN, FAES, Director of Pediatric Epilepsy and Research at the Sutter Health Neuroscience Institute. “Every infant or child with the diagnosis should have a consultation with a pediatric epileptologist early on.”

We now know that timing is critical in treating refractory epilepsy patients—especially children. Physicians have generally waited until multiple medications have failed while trying to manage parents uncomfortable with an epilepsy diagnosis or further treatment. However, the effects of continued seizures on a young brain—even for a few months—can be significant and damaging.

The Pediatric Epilepsy Program at Sutter Health Sacramento, an NAEC-accredited level 4 center, uses a triage system to ensure seizure referrals are seen within hours or days—not months.

Instead of being referred after years of damage, patients are treated earlier and may return to the referring physician’s care with a comprehensive plan for seizure management—and in many cases will remain seizure-free.



1 in 1000 patients

experience sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP)¹

Starting Out Right—Specialized Pediatric Epilepsy Clinics

It's easy to underestimate the scope of complexity and resources required to manage refractory epilepsy in children, from development to unique family stresses. A full-service pediatric epilepsy clinic model offers a comprehensive level of care that goes beyond the resources or expertise of pediatric neurology or pediatric hospitals.

More Accurate, 24/7 Testing

Even more so than young or middle-aged adults, children and adolescents can experience more types of epilepsy—acquired and genetic—from different causes and with a wide range of complex symptoms and risks. Timely and appropriate diagnosis is critical for the child and the family.

“Our clinic’s state-of-the-art neuroimaging techniques, such as high density EEG and MRI protocols, as well as our leadership in genetic epilepsy, ensure exceptionally precise assessment,” says Dr. Chez. “There are syndromic epilepsies and genetic conditions like Lennox-Gastaut that can have lifelong effects if not identified early or managed appropriately.”

Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento provides an enhanced level of testing with 24/7 EEG technical support.

“At non-epilepsy centers, often there’s no one to do an EEG in the middle of the night,” explains Dr. Chez. “SMCS has the 24/7 tech support essential for emergent cases.”

Unmatched Research and Treatment

Research-guided advances in medication, neuroimaging and surgical techniques—many of them pioneered in the Sutter Health network—have made some surgical treatments more effective than medication. In fact, in randomized control trials, surgery eliminated seizures in 58 percent of uncontrolled epilepsy cases, while medication did so in only eight percent.²




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A “Full Shop” for Easier Transitions

When most patients reach age 18, their pediatric care teams stop providing service. Finding a new program, possibly in a new city, can be disruptive and inconvenient. At Sutter Medical Center, care can continue with our adult epilepsy specialists.

“One quality that distinguishes our specialized clinic is the integrated relationships between adult epileptologists and other specialists and support workers in our network,” says Dr. Chez. “The result is easier, more gradual transitions from neonatal through adulthood.”

SUTTER MEDICAL CENTER, SACRAMENTO OFFERS:



Minimally
invasive surgery
(laser ablation,
neuromodulation)



The latest
medications,
including CBD



Integrated
nutrition services;
ketogenic diet



Ongoing clinical
research (autism,
stem cells,
pharmaceuticals)



Social worker
support



Pharmacological
management

Hands-On, Board-Certified Epileptologists

A family's direct access to a board-certified epileptologist is essential for successful early intervention and management.

"The doctor's expertise makes a big difference with a serious, complex condition like pediatric epilepsy, where there are many potential drug interactions and development issues," says Dr. Chez.

In many epilepsy centers, care decisions might be handled by a non-epileptologist. And often, staff do not have the fellowship training required beyond pediatrics or neurology. At Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento, the clinic orientation means a direct, one-on-one relationship between doctor, child and family—and every doctor on staff is board certified in both pediatric epilepsy and child neurology. These epileptologists are supported by nurse practitioners, nurses, social worker and neuropsychologists for full team patient support.

¹Thurman, D.J. *Epilepsia*, 2014

²Wiebe, Samuel, et al. *N Engl J Med* 2001; 345: 311-318

Manageable Location

When it comes to medical travel with kids, location matters. Sutter Medical Center, Sacramento, offers excellent pediatric epilepsy care with the added benefit of easily accessible services and amenities found in a mid-size city. For example, numerous parks and many family-friendly activities are readily available when patients aren't receiving care.

EXPERIENCE MATTERS

"We have deep roots in epilepsy care—around 30 years of experience and robust research studies that guide our care," says Dr. Chez. "From helping participate in advocacy groups like Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy the Epilepsy Foundation and Lennox Gastaut Foundation, to offering the absolute latest treatments and support, the passion and expertise are here to facilitate successful early intervention."

About Sutter Health Network Services

The Sutter Health network offers level 4 accredited epilepsy centers and highly-trained epileptologists participating in new research that guides and informs the care they provide. Multidisciplinary epilepsy care and research is complemented by expertise from Sutter Health network neuropsychologists and other specialists.

To refer a patient, call 855-421-2904



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