

What is a Pediatric Critical Care Specialist?

If your child has an illness or injury that results in your child being in an unstable critical condition, a hospital-based *Pediatric Critical Care Specialist* (pediatric intensivist) can be called on to provide the special care that your child needs. Some conditions that may cause your child to be unstable and critical include the following:

- Severe asthma
- Deep diabetic ketoacidosis
- An overwhelming infection, such as severe pneumonia
- Serious injuries from accidents (such as cars, bicycles, scooters, skateboards, and rollerblades)
- A near drowning

All children become ill or injured at one time or another. Most of these problems can be cared for by your pediatrician.

Children who are critically ill require careful monitoring in a pediatric intensive care unit (PICU). Pediatric critical care specialists coordinate the care of these children which is provided by a team of doctors, nurses, and other health care specialists. They use the special medicines or treatments that can only be offered in the PICU.

What kind of training do pediatric critical care specialists have?

Pediatric critical care specialists are medical doctors who have earned a medical degree and had

- Three years of pediatric specialty residency training
- Three or more years of fellowship training in pediatric critical care

Pediatric critical care specialists treat children from birth through the teen years. They choose to make caring for children who are very sick the core of their medical practice. Their advanced training and experience prepare them to give children in PICUs the unique medical care that they need.

What types of treatments do pediatric critical care specialists provide?

Pediatric critical care specialists generally provide the following care to children who are critically ill:

- Diagnosis of children who have an unstable, life-threatening condition
- Thorough monitoring, medication, and treatment of children in a PICU
- Supervision of children on respirators
- Medical treatment for children with severe heart and lung disease
- Placement of special catheters in the blood vessels and heart
- Management of medications and treatments for children with brain trauma

Where can I find a pediatric critical care specialist?

Pediatric critical care specialists work in PICUs within major hospitals. These hospitals usually are children's hospitals, university medical centers, or large community hospitals.

A child who is critically ill or injured often needs to be sent immediately to the proper hospital. Your pediatrician will know the hospitals that have pediatric critical care specialists.

Pediatric critical care specialists — the best care for children

Children are not just small adults. They cannot always say what is bothering them. Sometimes they cannot answer medical questions. They are not always able to be patient and cooperative.

Pediatric critical care specialists know how to examine and treat children in ways that put them at ease. In addition, pediatric critical care specialists use medical equipment that is designed just for children. Most PICUs are arranged and decorated for children.

If your pediatrician suggests that your child receive care from a pediatric critical care specialist, you can be assured that your child will receive the best possible medical care.

A pediatric critical care specialist offers a wide range of treatment options, along with great skill in dealing with children who are critically ill or injured.

Ask your pediatrician if your child's specialist is certified or eligible to be certified in pediatric critical care medicine by the American Board of Pediatrics.

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