



# Spasticity and Gait Disorders

Navigating a  
course to the  
right specialists



**P**icture this: Your toddler or teen cannot walk, run or move as easily as others. If you're like many parents, you might find yourself taking your child to a half-dozen specialists and as many different hospitals, looking for the right diagnosis and the right care. A team of experts at Atlantic Health System understands this sea of challenges, and they have another solution.

"Movement disorders are difficult for parents to manage, because so many different medical specialists might need to be consulted," says Barbara Minkowitz, MD. "And depending on the specialists you see, each treatment plan can differ from – and sometimes conflict with – other advice you've gotten. Those are the challenges we're helping parents to meet with our Pediatric Spasticity and Gait Disorder Center."

Modeled after successful programs elsewhere, the center streamlines the process of diagnosis and treatment by having a wide range of medical specialists and the family all meet together at one time.

"As a multidisciplinary clinic, we diagnose gait and movement disorders, offer medical and surgical options together with rehabilitation methods (therapies and appliances). This is fulfilling and less time-consuming for parents, as they can be seen by several specialists at the same time."

**– Trevor DeSouza, MD, Co-Director of the Pediatric Spasticity and Gait Disorder Center**

"So parents can ask us as a group about the benefits of different treatments and come away with a plan they have confidence in," says Michelle Sirak, MD, director of pediatric physiatry for Goryeb Children's Hospital.

In addition, some children have a number of different health conditions, some of which can be lifelong. "We have a very experienced team that includes a variety of specialists, so we're able to provide comprehensive care for a range of health issues, something many of our patients need," says Catherine Mazzola, MD, founder and co-director of the center.

"We researched many doctors and hospitals when looking for care for our children," says Noreen O'Brien. Because of birth defects or injuries, each needs the specialized care of the center. "All of the doctors communicate with us, and it's clear we're all part of a team."

For more information, call 973-971-5901.

## Spasticity and Gait Disorder Center

Centralized resource for diagnosis and care

**C**hildren who have health conditions that affect the muscles and movement are the focus of Atlantic Health System's Spasticity and Gait Disorder Center. Spasticity refers to muscle movements that might be slow, jerky and uncontrollable. Gait refers to walking. Common causes of these disorders are cerebral palsy, spina bifida and other conditions children are born with, as well as injury.

Based at Goryeb Children's Hospital, this unique service helps children gain greater control and independence, and helps families understand their options for care. Specialists here have expertise in a variety of areas, including neurology, neurosurgery, physiatry, orthopedic surgery, spine surgery, developmental pediatrics, physical therapy, orthotics, nursing and social work.

"We're an anchor for parents and children, and we help them navigate the complicated issues that arise from these health conditions," says Michelle Sirak, MD, director of pediatric physiatry for Goryeb Children's Hospital.

