

Elliot Hospital: Ask the Pediatric Surgeon



I am 24 weeks pregnant with my first baby and on my ultrasound they saw a “cyst” inside her belly. What does this mean?
Heather



Dear Heather,

First of all, congratulations! Having a baby is both exciting and overwhelming at the same time, and this is particularly true when there are medical concerns for either mom or baby. I frequently see women in prenatal consultation after concerns are identified on routine ultrasound. My role during those visits is to help you understand what may be expected after the baby is born and answer all your questions. Ultimately your OB provider will likely have you meet with a Pediatric surgeon or Maternal-Fetal Medicine specialist to discuss more of the specifics, but let me briefly walk through some possible explanations here. A “cyst” is a word that we use to describe a mass or structure that is filled with fluid. The location of the cyst within the belly, or abdomen, helps us better understand which organ it is coming from. The most common type of cyst in a baby girl is a benign ovarian cyst. This is actually quite common and is most likely related to stimulation from maternal hormones. Although very large cysts can make the ovary prone to twist, most ovarian cysts can safely be watched for the first several months of life, by following the size on ultrasounds until they disappear completely. Only on rare occasion is surgery required to remove the cyst, but this can usually be done with a small camera, called laparoscopic surgery, which babies tolerate very well.

Other kinds of cysts are much less common, but can arise from the bladder, kidneys, liver, bile ducts, or intestinal tract. These can be more serious and usually do require surgery to correct the problem. Often, we may not know with certainty what type of cyst a baby has, based on the prenatal ultrasound alone. Your OB may repeat ultrasounds throughout your pregnancy to determine if the cyst is growing or shrinking, but our best opportunity to image the cyst is with an ultrasound after the baby is born. We also can gather more information on how your baby is doing: Is she eating well and having normal bowel movements? Is she vomiting? Is she jaundiced? All of these things help us know the nature of the cyst and whether treatment is necessary. For this reason, it is important to deliver your baby at a hospital, such as The Elliot, that is specialized in newborn care, particularly with a Pediatric surgeon and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) if needed.

I know that abnormal finding can produce a lot of stress during pregnancy, but meeting with a specialist and having all your questions answered goes a long way in helping families cope with the anxiety. Thanks for your question!

-Dr. Soukup



Elizabeth S. Soukup, M.D., M.M.Sc.
Pediatric Surgeon

Dr. Soukup is a Pediatric Surgeon at the Elliot Hospital and has an interest in educating families about pediatric health and wellness. Her mission is to provide expert specialty care for children of all ages in New Hampshire - newborns through teenagers - striving to keep them close to their families and communities. If you would like more information, call 603-663-8393 for an appointment, or visit our website at <http://elli hospital.org/website/pediatric-surgery.php>

Dr. Soukup earned her Bachelor of Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and her Doctor of Medicine from the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, where she received the Outstanding Achievement Award in Medicine, graduating first in her class. She completed her General Surgery training at the Massachusetts General Hospital and her fellowship in Pediatric Surgery at Children’s Hospital Boston. During her time in Boston, she also completed a Masters of Medical Sciences degree in clinical investigation from

Harvard Medical School. She is board-certified in both Pediatric Surgery and General Surgery.

She has specialized training and experience in minimally invasive surgical treatment for babies, children and teenagers. Her practice includes all areas of general pediatric surgery, including common pediatric surgical problems as well as neonatal surgery, congenital anomalies, minimally invasive surgery, and complex thoracic surgical problems.

Please send your questions to:
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