

GI FOR KIDS

DR. YOUGHANNA AL-TAWIL

Mission Statement

“The mission of GI for Kids is to help make East Tennessee Children’s Hospital a Center of Excellence for Pediatric Gastroenterology on a local, regional and national level. I am committed to serving the children in this region and help build the hospital’s reputation nationally, and GI for Kids is a perfect partner in this effort.

“East Tennessee is an amazing resource for our community and the surrounding counties. Our clinic treats patients from all over Tennessee and outside of the state. We are one of the busiest pediatric GI practices in the United States. Our website www.giforkids.com is one of the most visited websites for pediatric gastroenterology. I would encourage you to visit our website for more information.”

—Dr. Youhanna Al-Tawil

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AN AFFILIATE OF East Tennessee Children’s Hospital, GI for Kids, PLLC, provides Knoxville and the surrounding area with premier pediatric gastrointestinal, hepatology, and nutritional services. It is staffed by four board-certified pediatric gastroenterologists, three nurse practitioners, a physician assistant, two behavior health clinicians, three registered dietitians, and a research coordinator.

GI for Kids is pleased to announce the addition of a new and exciting liver program. Dr. Diana Moya recently joined the practice and has exceptional expertise in liver disease. Dr. Moya manages any and all liver diseases arranging from elevated liver enzymes to more complicated diseases such as hyperbilirubemia, autoimmune hepatitis, infectious hepatitis, and chronic liver diseases or conditions. She works very closely with the hepatology program at Vanderbilt, forming protocols for liver disease management.

GI for Kids has also developed a family based, multidisciplinary pediatric-weight management program, Bee Fit 4 Kids, due to rising concerns with obesity across the United States. Bee Fit 4 Kids

is a one-on-one format that allows a physician extender, a behavioral health clinician, and a registered dietitian to identify nutrition, fitness, and psychological concerns. Using evidence-based research, our providers make appropriate recommendations for implementing healthy lifestyle changes to a child’s daily routine. The program emphasizes healthy food options and fun physical activities, while also addressing the emotional aspects of obesity and the process of implementing new lifestyle changes. Bee Fit 4 Kids is appropriate for a child or adolescent with a body mass index (BMI) greater than the 95th percentile, or with a BMI greater than the 85th percentile if the child has an overweight parent, medical complication, or a family history of increased health risks.

Partnering and collaborating with Dr. Nadine Trainer at ETCH’s Pediatric Physical Medicine and Rehab clinic, GI for Kids’ Dr. Al-Tawil and one of our dietitians, Ashley Treadway, developed the Feeding Clinic. The Feeding Clinic addresses and treats children with feeding difficulties due to neonatal abstinence syndrome, prema-

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ture birth, neurodevelopmental delay, and sensory integration disorder.

Celi-ACT is a support group for anyone with celiac disease or gluten intolerance sponsored through GI for Kids. Celi-ACT provides children and their families with the education and support needed to make important lifestyle changes related to their diagnosis. Celiac disease is a genetic autoimmune disease estimated to affect 1 of every 133 people in the United States and can cause significant health problems if not treated with diet changes.

KidsFACT (Kids Fighting Against Crohn's and Colitis Together) is a nonprofit support group created by GI for Kids for those diagnosed with pediatric Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) and their family members. KidsFACT is dedicated to making strides towards an improved quality of life for those with IBD and to advancing knowledge in order to contribute to better treatments and, ultimately, a cure. "For the first time, we will be providing college scholarships to children with IBD, Crohn's Disease, and ulcerative colitis. This is such a great way to bring our support to a new level," says Dr. Al-Tawil. Over the years, GI for Kids sees more and more patients, making the practice one of the largest IBD clinics in the nation, and especially in this geographic location.

Transitions Behavioral Health Clinic is located within GI for Kids, as well, and services pediatric patients and their families for issues related to coping with health problems, as well as dietary changes. The main goal is to provide support and behavioral modifications for the patient and the family related to gastrointestinal diseases and general behavioral issues. GI for Kids is also pleased to receive outside

referrals from pediatric practices for treatment of behavioral issues both related and unrelated to GI concerns.

In addition to these support groups, GI for Kids has an active research program. Currently, they are conducting active IBD research and most recently published an article titled "Alterations in junctional proteins, inflammatory mediators and extracellular matrix molecules in eosinophilic esophagitis" in *Clinical Immunology*, a well-known medical journal.

Jayma Jeffers-Branam, the manager at GI for Kids, says that despite all the government-mandated changes affecting the business-side of health care in the last few years, the clinic's mission and practice remain the same: "The new laws haven't affected the treatment we offer, the care we show, or the concern we have for our young patients."

Youhanna Al-Tawil, MD, is the Medical Director for GI for Kids and is board-certified in pediatrics, pediatric gastroenterology, and nutrition. He sees another aspect of the clinic's practice that has continued over the years: the need for children to be more active and aware of the healthful benefits of physical exercise. "The fast-paced world of sedentary technology interests—such as video games, smartphones, and other electronics—captivates children and doesn't promote a healthy, active lifestyle," he says. Along with poor diets, physical inactivity ranks high in the cause of GI problems.

If you are interested in making a referral, community events, or becoming a member of one of GI for Kids' many support groups, please visit their website at www.giforkids.com contact the office directly at 865-546-3998.

GI for Kids offers many programs to help support kids and families in our community.

Transitions: Behavior Health Center for Kids-

Support for patients and families with issues related to gastrointestinal diseases and other general behavioral issues.

Bee Fit 4 Kids- Designed to help overweight children and their families make better lifestyle and dietary choices.

KidsFACT- Support group for patients with Crohn's disease and Ulcerative Colitis which also sponsors an event to raise funds and awareness each year.

Celi-Act- Support group organized by one of the dietitians for individuals with Celiac disease which supports one of the largest vendor fairs in North America for celiac disease and gluten free foods each year.

GI for Kids Newsletter- Quarterly publication sent to area physicians that features different topics, including related resources offered by our practice.