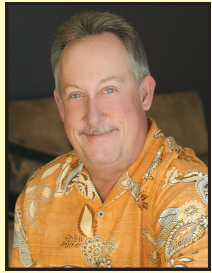


KIDS FIRST



Infantile Colic

Of all the health challenges that seem to plague infants, this is probably the one that causes the most upset with parents.

Imagine for a moment feeding your munchkin, when all of a sudden he/she begins screaming at the top of her lungs — arms curling in, legs drawing up - with what seems to be agonizing pain. All the common remedies associated with “over-the-fence,” neighborly, and grandmotherly advice seem to be of no avail. Colic and ear infections are the two conditions that tug at mothers’ and fathers’ heart strings more than any other conditions I see at our Center.

Most parent health textbooks describing colic, mention that it usually happens in the evening hours. I have not found that to be the case. I found that it tends to occur at anytime of the day and seems to have no rhyme or reason. Colic, it seems, tends to start sometime in infancy, around the first two weeks of life, and can persist for a number of months.

For those who are not familiar with infantile colic, and have never had the pleasure of dealing with a child who is so afflicted, you have no idea how devastating it can be on parents’ nerves. Why? I’ll tell you. It is characterized by constant crying, screaming, whining, pain in the stomach area, and acute irritability. (This is not **cute** irritability, this is **acute** irritability...big difference between the two). The spells of crying can last for hours and parents’ nerves can be shot at the end of such spells. This type of crying leads to aerophagia, which means the

swallowing of air. This then causes distention or enlargement of the bowels, which then creates more pain, which creates more crying which creates more air being swallowed, which then becomes a cycle. Colic is also characterized by passing an exorbitant amount of gas and abdominal distention, which simply means the stomach area is enlarged and bloated (this gas thing can be embarrassing when in public — but you can always blame it on the family dog). As well, the infant does not appear to be ill, is gaining weight, and has a good appetite. If either of those are absent, then the incessant crying can be caused by a problem different from colic. In such cases, I would suggest you consult your family chiropractor or health provider to give you some advice.

There has been many theories people have used in the past to attempt to explain what colic really is and why it occurs. Some authorities have blamed lactose intolerance, some felt it is caused by stress of the parents — which a baby can readily pick up on, stress of the baby, abnormal gallbladder function, higher levels of intestinal hormones, allergic reactions, digestive hormone instability, etc. None of these seem to provide adequate answers.

It is interesting to note that breast fed babies are rarely affected by this colic thing whereas bottle fed babies have a much higher incidence. The answer here is that mom’s milk is especially designed for that baby - and no other. It’s the perfect food.

It is very easily digested, leaves very little waste and research shows that breast fed babies have a higher IQ than their formula counterparts. Please contact La Leche League in your area for

additional info on the benefits of breast-feeding.

One of the biggest concerns of a child having colic, is that there is a potential for possible child abuse. To be very frank, try to imagine a child screaming for hours non-stop. I find that this will sometimes get on parents’ nerves and on occasion we see a condition which is called “the shaken baby syndrome.” This is a condition whereby the baby is literally shaken by the parents (or a baby sitter) to somehow stop him/her from crying. This only takes place when mom and dad are at the very ends of their wit. But, there is no excuse for this behavior. Shaking an infant can cause irreparable damage to a baby and even death. I am not suggesting that this is a huge problem, but there is potential for abuse of an infant who happens to be colicky. If you do ever feel that you as a parent are close to “losing it,” remember that there is a reason this takes place.

In my experience in dealing with thousands of children and babies, I found that often a vertebral subluxation in the spine affecting the way the nervous system controls bowel function is usually the cause of colic. Any chiropractor involved in seeing children will attest to this fact. You must understand that the digestive system is essentially a long tube (refer to my column on “Tummy Troubles”) and is made of muscle walls, which are under the direct control of the nervous system. I find that a vertebral subluxation will reduce the amount of information flowing from the brain to the large intestine in the case of colic - thereby reducing the normal function and motility (movement and function) of the large intestine. This causes food to “stick around” in the large intestine longer than it should and it tends to produce gas. This gas causes distention of the

intestinal wall, causing pain and crying. The cry of the baby is really for help.

Children who are affected by colic generally show a wonderful response in the hands of a chiropractor. Most often I find results within the first week of care, but the care must be directed at the correction of the subluxation which is at the root of the problem, not simply giving the child mere relief. If mere relief is given only, there is a very high possibility of the subluxation becoming chronic and then causing arthritic degeneration, colitis, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, etc., later on in life. Not a desirable situation.

I should mention that I have often been asked if there are any nutritional products parents can give their colicky baby to ease their discomfort. I must tell you that I feel uncomfortable giving such advice when it involves an infant. I don’t feel that their physiology is ready to accept outside help. Parents can ease some discomfort by applying warm towels to the abdominal area. This causes reflex relaxation of the muscles of the bowels and will generally ease pain to a degree. If the child is older, mom can try a little slippery elm powder and also test for lactose intolerance which may also produce gas in the bowel. The most important issue here is to find out why your baby has colic. To treat only the pain, will provide generally short-term relief. I have always felt that this is a most important distinction.

For those of you who have children affected by colic, or know of a new mom who has a child so afflicted, I suggest you call us without delay.

If you need additional information, please call me personally at 605-665-8228

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Battle

From Page 1

things in the admissions office and get ready for softball.”

POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Such a relatively quick return to everyday life would seem unthinkable given the treacherous path Fernandez has taken in just six weeks. He has shared his journey on a nearly daily basis through the Caring Bridge social media site.

On Sunday, Nov. 4, Fernandez went to the emergency room in Yankton because of back pain and numbness in the right side of his body. Medical tests found a compressed vertebrae and a 2-inch diameter mass on the left side of his brain. He was immediately transferred to Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls and prepared for neurosurgery the next day.

The surgery went well, with doctors removing the life-threatening mass. However, surgeons also found two other small masses on the other side of his brain. Doctors ordered a full-body CT scan along with MRIs to ensure removal of the entire brain tumor and locate any additional spots that could cause concern.

Doctors advised Fernandez the removed mass was not the cancer source. Samples were sent to pathology to determine the type and source of cancer, along with treatment.

The test results found several small spots — two on the right side of his brain, one in his shoulder, two on his spine, one in the large intestine and a few in his lower body. Doctors believed it was an aggressive form of cancer, but they were surprised by Fernandez’s strength regained in his right arm. He was also fitted with a brace to support his right knee and keep his toes pointed.

Doctors ruled out lymphoma and found the cancer hadn’t affected any major organs. However, they determined it was Stage 4 lung cancer that had moved to other parts of the body.

Small spots of lung cancer were left in his brain, which would likely be treated with radiation. Nothing was found in his neck, while multiple areas of lung cancer were found in the chest area, basically around the lungs and trachea with one found in the right middle lobe.

Fernandez learned he suffered from a form of cancer known as ALK, which involves a genetic mutation.

“My oncologist in Sioux Falls was excited that it was ALK and not EGFR,” he said. “There have been good results with treating ALK with the drug Crizotinib.”

As a young, non-smoking athlete, Fernandez doesn’t fit the typical profile for lung cancer. But he doesn’t question why the disease has hit him.

“I don’t think about it. I never ask, ‘Why me?’ To me, that’s asking for pity,” he said. “I want to move beyond (that mindset) and try to figure out how this happened and what I have to do to fight it. There have been some rough days and nights, but I think it’s all part of challenging your mental toughness.”

Fernandez has received support during his surgery and treatment from his parents and older sister, Dre (Andrea).

“My sister is a super-supportive woman. She kind of gives a kick in the rear end if I need it,” he said with a laugh.

Fernandez draws upon his Catholic faith, passed down from his parents. “My mom gave me the crucifix that she wore during her (cancer) treatment,” he said.

He also draws upon the strength shown by his mother and aunt as cancer survivors. “I’ve got some good leaders in front of me,” he said.

In determining where he would receive radiation treatment, Fernandez was accepted for treatment at the world-renowned MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. He made daily calls, and his persistence paid off as he was admitted early when an opening became available. He has also been allowed to receive radiation treatments at Austin rather than Houston.

“AL’S ARMY”

Fernandez has received a great deal of support from a large group of colleagues and friends known as “Al’s Army.”

MMC student coach Amanda Volgarino and player Gabi Cardenas visited Fernandez in the Sioux Falls hospital. They found him in tremendously upbeat spirits so shortly after surgery.

“He seemed perfect. He acted like he wasn’t ever in surgery. It was incredible,” Volgarino said. “But that’s his mindset. He’s going to beat this thing.”

After undergoing brain surgery, Fernandez wanted to talk softball with the two women, Cardenas said.

“We were really surprised, but it’s something that makes him happy,” she said. “And when you go through something so traumatic (as his surgery), it takes everything else off his mind.”

The entire team visited Fernandez at the hospital, but he insisted on one cardinal rule, Cardenas said.

“He has to remain positive. He doesn’t like any negativity,” she said. “He asks, if you are sad when visiting him, to leave the room. He doesn’t want you crying for him, because you need to be just as strong as he is.”

Fernandez has become a mentor or father figure for the team, Volgarino said. Besides regular team meetings, he meets one-on-one with players to talk about their academic and athletic progress, along with any personal concerns.

“His philosophy is that he cares about us as people first, then as students and then as athletes. He wants us to succeed in every aspect,” she said. “And we want to be super supportive of him.”

“Albert is taking the deck that has been dealt and is attacking it with everything he has. This time of year, we should be grateful for things. When we begin complaining about our own life, Albert’s example is a call to be a little bit more grateful for what we’ve been given.”

JILL PAULSON

The team met with Fernandez through Skype and sent him Christmas presents. In turn, he sent Christmas greetings to them and remains in continuous contact.

Cardenas and Fernandez grew up in the same Arizona town and know each other’s families. Cardenas’ mother — a cancer survivor — contacted her best friend, who arranged to make T-shirts with the motto “Nobody Fights Alone” for a fundraiser for the Fernandez family. Cardenas’ mother also covered the shipping costs of the T-shirts to Yankton.

“We had 280 T-shirts. I thought we would sell something like 100 shirts, but we sold out,” Cardenas said. “Albert is so well known in the community that everyone wanted the T-shirts.”

Fernandez has even received best wishes from opposing coaches in the Great Plains Athletic Conference (GPAC), Cardenas said.

“There is a huge amount of respect for him and how he has coached this program the last eight years,” she said.

SOLID SUPPORT

Support for Fernandez has poured in from other sources.

The MMC athletic department has launched a raffle to benefit Fernandez, according to MMC athletic director Chuck Iverson.

small department like ours. We collected money and gifts, and members went to visit him in Sioux Falls.”

Other colleagues went a step further, Paulson said.

“We had staff members who asked if they could donate their PTO (paid time off) if Albert needed it,” she said. “And we have one staff member on campus whose family has foregone Christmas gifts and are sending the money to Albert.”

Fernandez has shown tremendous strength, Paulson said.

“Albert is taking the deck that has been dealt and is attacking it with everything he has,” she said. “This time of year, we should be grateful for things. When we begin complaining about our own life, Albert’s example is a call to be a little bit more grateful for what we’ve been given.”

Fernandez admits he’s overwhelmed by the support.

“Mount Marty and the Yankton community are such a dear place for me,” he said. “This is one of the reasons why I moved back to the Midwest: the people and their values. Everybody steps up and helps people.”

Preferring to give rather than receive, Fernandez said he has learned to accept such an outpouring of kindness from others.

“I ask, why do I deserve this? But I have learned to accept it and thank them,” he said. “This is a giving season, and that’s what everybody should be doing. I want to be giving, no strings attached and nothing expected. I’m not expecting anything back in return.”

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