

FACT SHEET:

High Tech Nutritional Support and Feeding Therapy

Why Choose Blythedale?

At Blythedale Children's Hospital, evaluation and treatment of acquired and congenital feeding disorders in infants, children and adolescents are addressed by a team of pediatric specialists. This team, comprised of a pediatrician, speech and occupational therapist, registered dietitian, psychologist, nurses, neurologists, and other clinical specialists, works collaboratively with each child and family. Blythedale is the only specialty children's hospital in New York State with the capability of combining these areas of expertise in a multidisciplinary team.

Children admitted to Blythedale for nutritional support and feeding therapy have wide-ranging medical problems, including genetic and/or developmental disorders, complications due to premature birth, short-gut syndrome, brain injury, cerebral palsy, oral-motor dysfunction, post-surgical, and seizure disorders. Blythedale's multidisciplinary approach not only incorporates each child's complex medical and developmental needs, but also addresses behavioral and oral-motor feeding issues, in order to customize a nutritional plan to maximize growth and development.

Well-known for its superior outcomes and the ability to help patients achieve their maximum potential and meet their treatment objectives, Blythedale's approach to treating children with complex medical problems is widely recognized as a national model of excellence.



- Board Certified Pediatricians 24/7 and experienced nursing staff (70-80% R.N.).
- Largest hospital-based pediatric therapy department in New York State, with 75 full-time pediatric therapists.
- Therapeutic feeders (49 specially trained speech and occupational therapists) are assigned to each patient, based on the child's individual needs and the therapist's unique area of expertise.
- Registered dietitian provides case-specific, individualized nutritional plan for every patient upon admission.
- TPN (Total Parenteral Nutrition) management, weaning and training expertise.
- Extensive experience in enteral feeding, weaning infants and children from supplemental tube feeding (nasogastric, gastrostomy, and jejunostomy), and decreasing dependence on tube feedings.
- 24/7 pulmonary and respiratory support for ventilator dependent children with immature feeding mechanisms.
- Specialized services for children who have behavioral issues which interfere with diet advancement.
- Six full-time registered pharmacists, including a Board Certified Clinical Pharmacist.
- Frequent and comprehensive communication with referring institutions and physicians.
- Excellence in caregiver education and comprehensive discharge planning services.
- On-site public school district (the only one of its kind in New York).

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The Blythedale High Tech Nutritional Support and Feeding Therapy Team

**Laura J. Mirkinson, M.D., F.A.A.P.,
Chief of Pediatrics**

Dr. Mirkinson has been the Chief of Pediatrics at Blythedale since 2007. She previously served at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and as a Pediatric Hospitalist at Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, Maryland. She is Board Certified in Pediatrics. Dr. Mirkinson supervises a team of 10 Board Certified pediatricians with many years of experience treating pediatric GI disorders.

**Rita Erlbaum Kotorac, CCC/SLP,
Director of Speech Pathology
and Audiology**

Ms. Erlbaum Kotorac's career spans more than 30 years in Speech-Language Pathology. She earned her bachelor's degree from the State University of New York at Albany, and master's degree from New York University. She has extensive experience in the field of pediatrics, with ongoing specialized training in feeding therapy.

**Julie Knitter, OTR,
Director of Occupational Therapy**

Ms. Knitter's occupational therapy career spans more than 25 years, exclusively in pediatrics with extensive clinical expertise in progression of feeding skills for children with complex medical and/or developmental conditions. She holds a degree in occupational therapy from the University of Wisconsin.

**Lauren Brandel, R.D.,
Clinical Nutrition Manager**

Ms. Brandel is a registered dietitian. She earned her bachelor's of science from the University of Rhode Island and completed her dietetic nutrition internship at State University of New York at Stony Brook. She also received specialized training in pediatric nutrition at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital. She has been a specialized pediatric dietitian for her entire 12-year career.

On-Site Services and Support Areas Serving Patients with Feeding Therapy Needs:

- Pediatric Medicine
- Pediatric Nursing
- Pediatric Nutrition
- Pediatric Pulmonology
- Pediatric Rehabilitation Medicine
- Child Neurology
- Child Psychiatry and Psychology
- Pediatric Speech Pathology providing therapeutic feeding, evaluations and interventions
- Pediatric Occupational Therapy
- Pharmacy

Additional Specialty Support Areas Available:

- Pediatric Otolaryngology
- Pediatric Gastroenterology
- Additional consultative specialists as needed

Clinical Support Services

- Audiology
- Radiology
- Lab Services
- Social Work/Case Management
- Child Life Services
- Patient Advocacy

Outcomes Data for High Tech Nutritional Support and Feeding Therapy Patients:

In the last year, the departments of Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy utilized the Infant Feeding Outcome Measure as a means of measuring the feeding outcome for infants transitioning from tube to oral feedings.

Analysis of the results revealed that 92% of the patients in the study made gains in transitioning from enteral (tube) feedings to oral intake.



Contacts:

For Referrals or Feedback on Referred High Tech Nutritional Support and Feeding Therapy Patients:

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