St. Joseph’s Children’s Hospital Surgeons Specialize in Advanced Laparoscopic and Thoracoscopic Procedures

Minimally invasive surgery offers smaller scars, quicker recovery, less pain and a faster return to play or school.

TAMPA, Fla. (Feb. 6, 2013) – On Christmas Eve, 6-year-old Samantha Gina began experiencing discomfort in her abdomen, and within a few hours the pain increased drastically and she was rushed to St. Joseph’s Children’s Hospital. Tests revealed that a large cyst on Samantha’s ovary caused her ovary and fallopian tube to become twisted, a condition known as ovarian torsion. The condition also created a blockage of blood flow to her appendix.

With the help of today’s modern technology, St. Joseph’s Children’s Hospital Pediatric Surgeon Dr. Tuan Pham was able to remove Samantha’s appendix, the ovarian cyst and part of the affected ovary through minimally invasive surgery, leaving just three tiny incisions in her abdomen.

“What I never dreamed that my family would spend the holiday in a hospital, being told that Dr. Pham could use a less invasive technique to perform my daughter’s emergency surgery sure did feel like a Christmas gift,” said Lisa Gina.

What is minimally invasive surgery?
Minimally invasive surgery includes laparoscopic procedures when performed through the abdomen and thoracoscopic procedures when performed through the chest, and often can be performed on infants and children of any size, even newborns only a few pounds in weight.

Dr. Pham notes that while many children who require an operation are candidates for minimally invasive surgery, there may be some conditions and some children who may not benefit from this approach.

During a minimally invasive procedure, the surgeon makes several small incisions in the skin - just a few millimeters in some cases - and a long, thin tube equipped with a tiny camera is passed through one of the incisions. The images from the camera are displayed on large, high-definition video monitors, allowing the surgeon to see a magnified view of the delicate structures within a child’s small body. Special instruments inserted into the other small incisions allow the surgeon to cut, pull, snip, staple, capture, cauterize and perform other techniques to repair the body.

St. Joseph’s Children’s Hospital is the region’s leader in pediatric minimally invasive surgery, and procedures performed include:

- Diagnostic evaluation and resection for cancers
- Appendectomy
- Bowel resections
- Cholecystectomy
- Ovarian cyst removal
- Duodenal atresia repair
Patients return to play sooner
While everyone’s body heals at their own speed, minimally invasive surgery can reduce hospital stay and recovery times.

“In laparoscopic and thoracoscopic procedures, physicians no longer need to open the entire area,” Dr. Pham notes. “Since there is less tissue and muscle to heal, this often means less pain and a return to normal activities faster than traditional surgery.”

Samantha’s family was surprised at how fast she recovered from her surgery. She was discharged from the hospital just one day after the emergency surgery, and according to her mother, within days she was back to her normal, active routine.

For more information on minimally invasive surgery and whether or not it might be an option for your child, please visit: StJosephsChildrens.com.