

Washington Hospital Healthcare System (WHHS)
Inpatient Pediatric Unit Closure - October 2024
Frequently Asked Questions

Can I still bring my child to Washington Hospital for pediatric care?

Yes. You can still bring your child to Washington Hospital for care. Although the Inpatient Pediatric Unit is closing, we continue our commitment through these key services:

- The Washington Hospital Birthing Center, Nursery, and Emergency Department will continue to provide care for newborns and children.
- We will continue operating our ten-bed Level II Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), where UCSF neonatologists deliver high quality and specialized care for newborns and premature babies. Expanding this unit in the future is under consideration.
- We will maintain an onsite 24/7 pediatric hospitalist to support emergency consults, newborn care, and urgent deliveries.
- Newborns with certain diagnoses under 30-days old requiring readmission will be admitted to our Level II NICU.
- Pediatric patients needing inpatient care will be transferred, utilizing jointly developed protocols, to specialty pediatric hospitals, ensuring they receive the best possible care.
- Our Emergency Department staff and physicians will be provided ongoing training in order to respond to pediatric trauma to care for injured children alongside our adult patients in the ED.

Why is Washington Hospital closing its inpatient pediatric unit?

Like many, Washington Hospital has seen a decline in the need for inpatient pediatric care. This is due to advances in immunizations and the ability to manage pediatric care in outpatient settings or specialized pediatric hospitals.

Washington Hospital have seen a significant decline in patient admissions, averaging just 13 patients per month which is less than a patient per day. The unit has been closed for an average of 18 days per month due to a lack of patients, which makes it difficult to staff and maintain resources to meet the level of care that children's specialty hospitals offer.

Where will I take my child?

The community can still bring their children to Washington Hospital. They will be seen and assessed in the Emergency Department, and only if a hospital admission is needed, the child will be transferred to a nearby pediatric specialized hospital.

For newborns under 30 days old with certain diagnoses that need an admission, which is many of the admissions today, we will admit them to our Level II NICU.

Our Emergency Department staff and physicians will be provided ongoing training to be able to respond to pediatric trauma in order to serve injured children alongside our adult patients in the ED. Through our partnership with UCSF, we also have a 24/7 pediatric hospitalist to support emergency consults, newborn care, and urgent deliveries.

Why are you sending children to another hospital?

Pediatric specialty hospitals are designed to minimize the psychological impact of hospitalization on children and their families, and provide a level of care that community hospitals find increasingly difficult to maintain. The Tri-City Area is fortunate to have two world-class pediatric specialty hospitals nearby, equipped with state-of-the-art technology and a comprehensive range of pediatric subspecialties.

Does this closure affect maternity care / birthing center?

No. Our Birthing Center and Emergency Department will continue providing care for newborns and children. Our 10-bed Level II neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and UCSF neonatologists will continue delivering specialized care for newborns and premature babies. Newborns with certain diagnoses under 30-days old requiring readmission will be admitted to our Level II NICU.