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JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute:

February is Kids' Ear, Nose and Throat Month

Edison, NJ—February is Kids' Ear, Nose, and Throat Month. "It's important to educate families about those common ear, nose and throat disorders that affect millions of children each year. Left untreated, many of these infections can have lasting and severe consequences," notes Virginia Gural-Toth, AuD, CCC/A, Manager of Audiology of JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute in Edison.

Most people aren't aware that the number one reason children go to the doctor is because of ear infections. "More than that, repeated ear infections, for instance, can cause temporary or permanent hearing damage, which in turn can cause problems with a child's speech development. In fact, ear infections are the number one cause of hearing loss in children.

"Most people are unaware of the potential danger when it comes to children and ear infections. They only know that their child is uncomfortable and sometimes in pain and want to relieve that discomfort," says Gural-Toth.

"Chronic ear infections are more than just an ache. The bigger picture is that they can negatively impact a child's language development, which can also impact their academic performance. In some cases, the impact can later necessitate a need for audiologists to intervene because a hearing loss has already been sustained," says Gural-Toth. If a child is not hearing clearly on a consistent basis, the child is not going to develop optimal speech and language skills and will miss important directions or concepts in the classroom.

Ear infection prevention and intervention are important in order to ultimately minimize the impact on a child's hearing health. What should a parent do? Immediate medical treatment is a necessity. Parents should take the child to their primary care physician at the first sign of an earache. If the child has frequently recurring infections or chronic fluid in the middle ear, or has already shown signs of hearing loss (such as inattentiveness, wanting the television or radio louder than usual, misunderstanding directions, listlessness, unexplained irritability, delay in developing speech and language skills, or pulling or scratching at the ears), an audiologist will be needed to evaluate the severity of the impairment and a speech-language pathologist will be necessary to evaluate the child's speech and language skills and recommend and/or provide remedial programs as appropriate." says Gural-Toth.

Half of all infants have had at least one ear infection by age one. Between ages one and three, 35% will have repeated ear infections. For school-age children, an estimated 5 million school days are missed every year due to ear infections.

For more information on hearing health or to schedule a hearing test, contact

JRI's Speech and Audiology department at (732) 321-7063 (Voice/TDD).

*Founded in 1974, The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is a major component of Solaris Health System, one of New Jersey's most comprehensive healthcare networks.*

*The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute headquartered at the JFK Medical Center in Edison is a comprehensive rehabilitative service provider focused on educating the community on rehabilitative health and helping adults and children with disabilities reach optimal function and independence. The Institute offers a complete array of inpatient and outpatient programs and services in rehabilitative health, including stroke, orthopedics, prosthetic and orthotics, electrodiagnosis, fitness, cardiac, women's health, pain management, pediatrics, speech pathology and audiology, industrial and vocational rehab, and brain injury rehabilitation programs and services. JRI includes a 94-bed inpatient center in Edison. Outpatient centers are located in Edison, Metuchen, Monroe, Old Bridge, and Plainfield. Affiliated with the JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is the Shore Rehabilitation Institute, a 40-bed inpatient and outpatient comprehensive rehabilitation hospital located in Brick, NJ. The Rehab Medicine Department at JRI also serves as the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation for UMDNJ, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for its Comprehensive Inpatient Rehabilitation, Brain Injury, and Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation programs. For more information on The JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute, call 732-321-7790 or visit the organization online at <http://www.njrehab.org>.*

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