



Children's Mercy designated as Level 1 Children's Surgery Center by ACS

1 of only 10 institutions in world to achieve this elite ranking

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) has verified Children's Mercy as a Level 1 Children's Surgery Center, the highest possible rating, making CM one of only 10 centers in the nation and the only institution in Missouri and Kansas to attain this designation.

"Congratulations for this notable achievement," the ACS said in its notification letter. "Children's surgery verification ... formally acknowledges your commitment to providing and supporting quality improvement and patient safety efforts for children who require surgical services. As a verified program, you have demonstrated that your center meets the needs of your patients by providing multidisciplinary, high-quality, patient-centered care."

What it means for patients, families

"With this recognition, the ACS has verified that Children's Mercy is THE regional center for taking care of children," said Shawn St. Peter, Surgeon-in-Chief. "When your child needs surgery, whether routine or a life-saving procedure, you want the best systems and people in place who specialize in taking care of children."

The three-year ACS verification distinguishes CM and other Level 1 centers from hospitals that offer some pediatric subspecialties or use adult providers for pediatric patients. The ACS verification requires immediate availability of board-certified or board-eligible pediatric specialty anesthesiologists, pediatric surgeons, subspecialty children's surgeons, neonatologists, pediatric intensivists and pediatric emergency physicians. Other board-certified pediatric specialists would be similarly available, within a short time, to all patients who required their expertise.

"Centers may have a given surgeon in a surgical discipline who can cover, and that surgeon may or may not be pediatric trained. That is quite different from having a team of surgeons in every discipline with pediatric training and a dedicated pediatric practice, which is what allows you to be a Level 1 center," Dr. St. Peter said. "There are also many systems that take care of kids in adult hospitals and partially use adult providers. The people and systems aren't in place when a child's care needs to be escalated. It doesn't matter how sick your child is or how urgent the situation, we can take care of your child."

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Dr. St. Peter emphasized that CM, which performs some 18,000 surgeries a year, also is the place to come for simpler procedures. “We understand for parents there is no common or routine surgery, which is why every child has access to the same resources and specialists that allowed us to achieve the Level 1 verification.”

Rigorous verification process

Attaining Level 1 status was a rigorous, two-year effort. CM submitted a 75-page, 200-question application and underwent an extensive site visit by an ACS team of surveyors who reviewed our structure, process and clinical outcomes data. The team, which consisted of experienced children’s surgeons, anesthesiologists and nurses, were on-site for two days and visited all areas of the hospital to make sure we have the support and resources hospital-wide to ensure patients receive the highest level of care.

The ACS evaluation went beyond surgical care. CM also was required to document its educational opportunities for staff and educational outreach to the community; residency and fellowship programs; research; publishing, including frequency and types of publications; Quality Improvement programs; and transport capabilities. The hospital also participates in a national data registry that yields semiannual reports of quality for processes and outcomes and identifies opportunities for continuous quality improvements.

“We take our obligation as a Level 1 surgery center seriously,” Dr. St. Peter said. “This means continually reviewing clinical data to support a top-notch performance improvement system, which assures we perpetually identify opportunities for improvement as part of the commitment to you and your family that you receive the safest pediatric surgery care in the region.”

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By joining this elite group of Level 1 Children’s Surgery Centers (see below), Dr. St. Peter said, “We are contributing to the innovation of pediatric surgery, which impacts the lives of children right here in Kansas City and elsewhere.”

ACS Verified Children’s Surgery Centers

- Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago
- C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital, Ann Arbor, Michigan
- Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, Milwaukee
- **Children’s Mercy Kansas City**
- Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center
- Doernbecher Children’s Hospital, Portland, Oregon
- Duke Children’s Hospital and Health Center, Durham, N.C.
- Penn State Children’s Hospital, Hershey, Pennsylvania
- Texas Children’s Hospital, Houston
- University of California-Davis Children’s Hospital, Sacramento