

UCLA Fetal Care Program offers broad expertise for pregnancies complicated by fetal abnormalities



The UCLA Fetal Care Program provides comprehensive, state-of-the-art screening, monitoring and medical management of high-risk pregnancies before, during and after delivery.

Some of the most frequently diagnosed and treated conditions include congenital heart abnormalities, abdominal-wall defects (gastroschisis and omphalocele), neural-tube (brain and spine) abnormalities, urinary-tract and airway obstructions, cleft lip and palate, cysts and tumors as well as complications of multiple gestation pregnancies.

Patients are referred to the Fetal Care Program from across Southern and Central California and beyond.

Access to expert care

Because the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) is adjacent to labor and delivery at Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA, newborns can immediately receive full-service medical and surgical treatment. This arrangement eliminates the need to transport newborns to another facility and prevents mothers from being separated from their babies.

Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA features level IV NICU staff and equipment, the highest designation available from the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Reducing the stress of high-risk pregnancies

“The UCLA Fetal Care Program team of physicians, nurses and support staff specializes in coordinating all aspects of patient care, from diagnosis and treatment to postoperative recovery and long-term follow-up,” says Daniel DeUgarte, MD, associate professor of pediatric surgery. “It is this collaboration that allows us to create a unified care plan for patients and drive exceptional outcomes.”

“After completion of the necessary diagnostic screening, often in one day and in a single location, our fetal-care team offers guidance and shares recommendations regarding test results and treatment options,” says Uday Devaskar, MD, professor and chief of neonatology. “There is the opportunity to ask questions and receive counseling. Families are individually escorted through a prenatal tour of the center, the neonatal ICU and other areas appropriate to the maternal-fetal diagnosis.

“Our mission is to ease any family burden and anxiety and enable parents to make the best decisions for both mother and baby.”

Level IV personnel have expertise in the entire spectrum of pediatric medical and surgical subspecialties, including surgery to correct congenital heart defects and provide extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), a state-of-the-art therapy similar to cardiopulmonary bypass that supports newborns struggling with severe but reversible cardiac or hypoxemic (inadequate oxygenation of the blood) respiratory failure.

The ECMO program at UCLA, in operation since 1998, has successfully treated newborns and pediatric patients with congenital diaphragmatic hernia, meconium aspiration, pulmonary hypertension and severe pneumonia. The ability to provide ECMO support is only available at a handful of neonatal centers, and Mattel Children's Hospital UCLA is among the Designated Centers recognized by the Extracorporeal Life Support Organization.

Advanced fetal diagnostic evaluation

When a fetal anomaly is suspected or detected during routine screening, patients first receive a comprehensive diagnostic ultrasound evaluation. Ultrasound examinations are performed using the highest-resolution imaging equipment with 2D, 3D and 4D technology and color Doppler capability. The examinations meet or exceed the standards set by the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM).

UCLA's advanced screening/diagnostic capabilities include chorionic villus sampling (CVS) and amniocentesis for genetic diagnosis, and cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for suspected fetal cardiac abnormalities.

Coordinated, team approach

A collaborative approach among our nationally recognized specialists in maternal-fetal medicine, neonatology, genetics, cardiology, neurology, urology, radiology and pediatric surgery ensures seamless evaluation and treatment continuity.

The team of fetal-care experts meets weekly to review every aspect of patient progress and prognosis. A close working relationship with referring physicians throughout the diagnostic and treatment process enables patients to obtain much of their care locally until a transfer is needed.

Personalized, ongoing patient support is facilitated by a patient navigator who provides a single point of contact for patients and their families in a comfortable, compassionate environment. The team of obstetricians and nurses at The BirthPlace at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center specializes in the care of high-risk pregnancies.

The UCLA Fetal Care Program is an integral member of the University of California Fetal Care Consortium, and has helped standardize and improve the diagnosis and treatment of several pre-birth conditions, including gastroschisis, congenital heart disease and twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome.

Participating Physicians

Cardiology & Fetal Echocardiography

Gary Satou, MD
Mark Sklansky, MD

Cardiothoracic Surgery

Reshma Biniwale, MD
Hillel Laks, MD
Brian Reemtsen, MD

Craniofacial and Plastic Surgery

Reza Jarrahy, MD
Justine Lee, MD, PhD
Wayne Ozaki, MD

Fetal Cardiac MRI

Paul Finn, MD

Fetal Imaging (Ultrasound and MRI)

Michael Douek, MD
Rinat Masamed, MD
Nagesh Ragavendra, MD
Steven Raman, MD

General and Thoracic Surgery

Daniel DeUgarte, MD
Howard Jen, MD, MS
Steven Lee, MD
Shant Shekherdimian, MD
Stephen Shew, MD

Genetics

Barbara Crandall, MD
Julian Martinez, MD, PhD
Eric Vilain, MD, PhD

Head and Neck Surgery

Nina Shapiro, MD
Alisha West, MD

Maternal Fetal Medicine

Carla Janzen, MD, PhD
Brian Koos, MD, DPhil
Lydia Lee, MD, PhD
Aisling Murphy, MD
Tina Nguyen, MD
Khalil Tabsh, MD

Neonatology

Kara Calkins, MD
Uday Devaskar, MD
Meena Garg, MD

Nephrology

Patricia Weng, MD

Neurology

Raman Sankar, MD, PhD
Joyce Wu, MD

Neuroradiology

Noriko Salamon, MD

Neurosurgery

Aria Fallah, MD
Anthony Wang, MD

Tumors / Vascular Anomalies

Tom Davidson, MD
Noah Federman, MD

Urology

Steven Lerman, MD
Jennifer Singer, MD

Contact Information

UCLA Fetal Care Program
Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center
757 Westwood Plaza
Los Angeles, California 90095

(310) 825-9436

uclahealth.org/fetal-care-center