

# A Caring Approach to Pediatric Gynecology

by Melanie Davis

**D**elivering babies may be her highest profile work, but Dr. Judith Hersh's work with pediatric gynecology patients distinguishes her from her peers.

Infants, children and adolescents make up 40 percent of Hersh's practice, and they are referred to her for conditions including ambiguous genitalia, incompletely formed genitalia, uterine anomalies, yeast infections, vaginismus, transgender, precocious puberty, irregular or painful menstruation, sexual abuse, and adolescent sexual behavior.

Hersh and Dr. Corey Bosin founded Central Jersey Women's Health Associates in Bedminster to provide gynecological care to females of all ages. They also provide nutritional counseling, laser hair removal, and microdermabrasion.

Hersh is on the staff of Somerset Medical Center and on the faculty of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. She treats disabled teens and women as Director of Women's Healthcare at Matheny Center of Medicine and Dentistry in Peapack, and she cares for women in the Association for Retarded Citizens.

"Disabled women have the same gynecological needs as able-bodied women, but they need a very different, more pediatric approach,"

says Hersh.

Her interest in reproductive rights led Hersh to become an obstetrician/gynecologist. She considered specializing in infertility until a college job as a contraceptive counselor fostered her interest in teen sexuality. Her interest in endocrinology led to her work in pediatric gynecology.

Hersh says her biggest reward is seeing the caregivers of her patients so visibly relieved and happy that the children they love are being taken care of in a loving, non-frightening way.

"The parents are frightened that their children need to see a gynecologist, and they often cry with relief afterward because the exam wasn't traumatic," says Hersh.

The special physical and emotional needs of her patients require Hersh to be creative about exams. She may examine a child who sits on a parent's lap, or she may perform a pap smear on an adult disabled patient who prefers to stand. The friendly 43-year-old physician eases patients into their exams by explaining what will transpire, showing them pictures to illustrate the "butterfly legs" or "sleeping kitty" positions they will use during the exam.

Her work with both pediatric and disabled patients has a big impact.

"At Matheny, we're reaching women who haven't been

reached before. But if I've helped one teen make healthier choices, I've saved her a lifetime of difficulties," says Hersh.

Many of Hersh's patients request the new Gardasil® vaccine, which protects against strains of the human papilloma virus (HPV) that can cause cervical cancer.

"HPV is causing serious pre-cancers in 16- and 17-year-olds. I'm very excited about Gardasil and look forward to having fewer cervical cancers and disease in my young patients," says Hersh.

Hersh says that even girls who do not intend to be sexually active should be inoculated.

"Sexual assault is important to consider. A girl may not choose to become sexually active, but she may be forced to. It is wise to protect them," she says.

Along with medical care, Hersh dispenses advice aimed at protecting her patients' health.

"Many adolescents have sex before they are mature enough to understand the ramifications of their behavior. They miss out on the beauty of what sexuality is, and my passion is helping them understand the beauty of sexuality in healthy ways. I tell them their body is an incredible, powerful gift, and because of that, they need to use it wisely," she says.

She advises parents to let their children know they are available to listen.

"Let them know how you feel about these difficult subjects. I'm here to help with those discussions if needed," says Hersh.

She's getting her share of practice at home, where, with husband Andrew, she raises Rachel, 11; Jacob, 8; and Hannah, 6. And, no matter how busy Hersh is with work, she always makes time for Sabbath dinner.

"I rush home to light candles and bless the children every Friday night," she says. 

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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Dr. Judith E. Hersh