

Cedar Mill's newest urgent care is just for kids

Pediatric clinic offers friendly alternative to taking sick kids to the emergency room

By **JESSIE KIRK**
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The underwater-themed waiting room at Pediatric Urgent Care might be fun for kids, but the room symbolizes something more for parents: options.

Pediatric Urgent Care opened its doors Nov. 1 in Cedar Mill and is the first kid-only* urgent care center offered in the evening in Oregon.

"What makes it different is we're open when the other offices are generally closed," said clinic spokesperson Lef Hylton.

The clinic is open from 7 to 10 p.m. on weeknights and 1 to 9 p.m. on weekends to ease the suffering of young patients with sniffles, rashes, bruises and scrapes that are serious enough for immediate treatment. The hours mean parents have access to the expert advice of a pediatrician even when their normal doctor has gone home for the night.

"We're feeling like this is going to really help parents and kids to feel better," Hylton said.

Called Integrative Pediatrics during the day, the clinic is about a mile west of Providence St. Vincent's Medical Center, and has been open since June 2008. Seeing a need in the community and realizing his practice sat empty at night, Dr. Paul Thomas decided to open the clinic for walk-in patients during the evenings starting this month. With help from Dr. Richard Martin and a small



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SPOONFUL OF SUGAR — Above, Dr. Paul Thomas, owner of Integrative Pediatric Clinic, lightens the mood at the beginning of an evening doctor's visit with Ben, Olivia and Dane Edwards. Left, The clinic's waiting room includes a fish tank that separates sick and well patients.

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Lef Hylton
Pediatric Urgent Care spokesman

staff of nurses and receptionists, the team is set to be the go-to place for sick kids.

"As we grow and the need grows, we will put in more staff," Hylton said.

The clinic, at 11790 S.W. Barnes Road, Suite 140, is designed to help alleviate congestion at local emergency rooms, especially for children with H1N1 and the seasonal flu.

"During the flu season, it's incredibly busy and swamped," Hylton said. "That's what we're going to see the most of."

Most doctors offices are closed by the time many parents get home from work and realize their child isn't feeling well, Hylton explained, adding that someone with a cold or flu often has a long waiting time in an emergency room full of people with serious injuries, ailments and broken limbs.

"We're trying to provide (the clinic) as an alternative to taking kids to the ER," he said.

Clinic owner Dr. Thomas has a wealth of experience making children feel better. Before opening his own clinic, Thomas was on staff at Westside Pediatrics for 15 years and before that he ran the Pediatric After-hours Clinic at Emanuel Children's Hospital from 1988 to 1993, before the program was absorbed into the hospital's emergency room.

Having worked at various clinics across the metro area, Pediatric Urgent Care's doctors insist they aren't out to steal patients and say they will encourage follow-up treatment with patients' regular

doctors.

"When we see a patient here, we fax that information straight over to their primary care provider," Hylton explained of the proposed partnership.

Pediatric Urgent Care's 3,000-square-foot clinic has a full in-house lab that allows the doctors to test blood, glucose and cholesterol levels as well as check for diseases like strep and mono and do urinalysis as needed. For X-rays, casts and other treatment, the doctors will refer families to nearby hospitals.

Keeping the patients' wellness in mind, the clinic's waiting room offers a "sick" and a "well" section, with an aquarium separating the two so that a well child won't be sitting next to someone contagious.

Besides offering pediatric doctors who are experts in ailments that affect kids, the environment is much more kid-friendly than a hospital environment, Hylton said. The clinic's walls feature murals of beachscapes and swimming fish, the waiting room has an aquarium filled with colorful, tropical fish and treatment rooms have portholes at kids' eye level for peering out.

"Emergency rooms are so clinical. It's just not comfortable there. (Our clinic) makes a kid feel more welcome," he said.

Where to go

Pediatric Urgent Care, at 11790 S.W. Barnes Road, Suite 140, is available for walk-in patients from birth to age 21. The clinic is open on weeknights from 7 to 10 p.m., weekends from 1 to 9 p.m. and holidays. Clinic officials say they hope the clinic will help alleviate congestion at local emergency rooms, especially for children with H1N1 and the seasonal flu.

The clinic accepts most insurance, except Kaiser and Providence's Oregon Health Plan.