



## dr. mom

By Lucie B. Amundsen

**W**hen I was a very new parent, I had no idea how important my relationship with the pediatrician was to become. Honestly, I had no idea that with all the newborn checks, shots and parental concerns that I'd be stepping into that office with the regularity of Norm heading to Cheers.

I had heard of other more organized mothers-to-be conducting full-scale searches for the right ped, including interviews with questions like, "did you graduate in the top half of your class?" I, more or less, picked mine out of a hat and while the practice has a devoted patient base, I wasn't as thrilled.

# Really Horrible Things

It could have been when someone there implied I was starving my child who they had diagnosed as "Failure to Thrive" and further classified as a "Nutritional Dwarf" (Yes, that is apparently a legitimate medical term). Then I was strongly advised to give up on breastfeeding and nourish my underweight baby with frosting and chocolate bars (no, really). I squinted closely at the wall diplomas to be sure they weren't issued from cereal boxes.

Then I did what most mothers do when concerned about their child—I asked other mothers. My ECFE friends, Jil & Kelly, adored a clinic located across town and, at this point, I was ready to drive to the edge of sanity to find a physician who wouldn't mistake me for the bad mommy in "The Sixth Sense."

At Pediatric Services, a great doctor named Bess Gold asked questions about my family and when she heard that at 120lbs, I outweigh most of the women in my family by a good 30, she got it. "You're small, your baby is small—I'm okay with that."

So now I consider myself an "informed consumer" when it comes to the doctoring of my little people. We've now

settled in with another Pediatric Services doc, Michael Hobbs. We like him because we respect his light handed approach to medicine, but we adore the sweet antics he carries on with our children. I'll drive 25 minutes for the guy who will hold my giggling children upside down for "the ankle test." When my daughter bravely told her new doctor that she just turned 4, without missing a beat Dr. Hobbs reached into his shirt pocket and said with pure earnest, "and I got you this pen." She was thrilled.

So when my toddler son swallowed a marble, I picked up the phone—and once Dr. Hobbs stopped laughing at me and assured me that in all likelihood this to shall pass, I couldn't resist the question, "But what is the worse case scenario here?"

He surprised me with the answer, "Why would you want to know that? Why don't parents want to know what the most likely scenario?" And the question gave me pause—why did I want to know that? Because as the name suggests, the worst case is always bad (often really, really bad) and then we're forced to worry about something that isn't likely to happen. As parents, we're then compelled to "rule out" the worse case thingy causing more stress, more tests, more discomfort—and usually a visit to a specialist.

Having been through several specialist visits with my "dwarf" I can tell you that my experience went something like this: "It's probably nothing, but I'll go ahead and tell you about some really horrible things (RHTs) that are less likely to happen than getting hit by a falling plane. And, of course, these RHTs can only be ruled out by anxiously waiting out two weeks so your kid can have a painful/scary procedure that they might remember forever."

It can readily become a lose/lose for everyone, especially the child. Of course, there are hundreds of instances where going off to the specialist is the absolutely appropriate thing to do—in fact, we're going soon to check out some ear trouble. But for the marble incident, did I really need to fret about the orb not passing and partially dissolving into sharp edges that could cause deadly internal bleeding? Had the doctor told me that in that crucial moment, I would have run red lights all the way to Children's Hospital.

As parents, we gloss over hard situations all the time. We use euphemistic terms like "passed away" to describe the cat under the SUV or use geography to our advantage when we say, "yes, there is war, but it is very far away from here." It staves off obsessive worry and prolongs that ever-shortening period of childhood innocence. And just like your child doesn't need to agonize over the complexities of terrorism, parents don't need to be terrorized by the complexities of their little being. The potential for small bodies to go haywire is enough for me to start keeping a flask in my purse.

Of course we need to advocate for our children, and research the web, and visit our kid's doc armed with every possible question to ensure good care. But when it comes to those Really Horrible Things—I'm not going there until I have to.