Some Docs Say Drugstore Clinics Aren't Best for Sick Kids

February 25, 2014

Taking your kid to a clinic at your local drugstore might be easier and even cheaper than going to the doctor's office, but the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recently issued a statement warning parents that these sites aren't appropriate sources of primary care for children, NBC News reports.

The AAP's announcement comes in response to a recent explosion of these drugstore clinics at Walgreens and CVS stores across the country.

Today, at least 1,600 retail health clinics nationwide work with doctors in the community to provide care for low-level health problems such as ear infections and strep throat.

Working parents often rely on clinics because they are open after hours and on weekends, when most doctors' offices are not. What's more, a clinic visit can cost nearly 40 to 80 percent less when compared with visits to doctors' offices, emergency rooms or even urgent care centers.

Advocates from the AAP argue that drugstore clinics often lead to a lack of continuous care and make coordinating health records between providers difficult. In addition, AAP doctors also express concern that medical care at these sites is often overseen by mid-level providers, such as nurses and nurse practitioners, rather than pediatricians.

For example, many times, minor health issues may mask larger health problems. Without regular checkups and thorough knowledge of a patient's medical history, experts say, clinic practitioners could easily overlook signs of a more threatening issue.

But the American Nurses Association (ANA) disagrees. The ANA said studies consistently show that nurse practitioners offer high-quality care in clinic settings.

Still, there is one thing that pediatricians and drugstore clinicians agree on. Both health care providers said parents should use retail clinics as a supplement, not a substitution for regular pediatric health care.

"We believe in the primary care medical home," said a CVS clinic doctor. "We believe we can play an important and complementary role."

Ever heard of concierge medicine? This growing trend could also be a cheap, convenient source of health care for your sick child. Click here for more information.

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