

Sick Too Often? It May Be PI

(NAPSA)—A growing number of parents are learning that their child's frequent illnesses may really be caused by an underlying condition called Primary Immunodeficiency, or PI. Fortunately, greater awareness of the disease and the need to diagnose it as early as possible is growing.

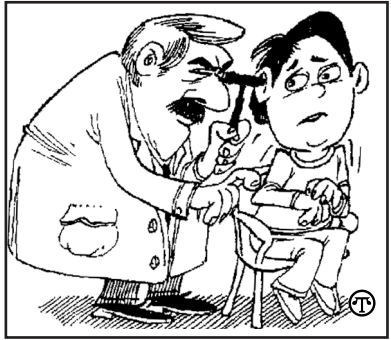
PI occurs when one or more parts of the immune system do not work correctly. Patients with Primary Immunodeficiency can't fight off germs or protect themselves from new germs as well as they should. Primary Immunodeficiencies are inherited and can range from very serious to very mild. The more serious forms are often detected at birth or shortly thereafter. However, very mild forms may not be diagnosed until later in life, during adolescence or adulthood.

Experts have identified 150 Primary Immunodeficiency defects to date. These range in severity from chronic sinusitis to Severe Combined Immune Deficiency (SCID), generally known as "bubble boy disease."

In the U.S. alone, there are at least half a million children diagnosed with a PI disease, and experts estimate that another half million are undiagnosed. PI affects more children than childhood leukemia and lymphoma combined, and it is estimated that 10 million people worldwide are affected.

There are a number of warning signs of PI. They include:

- Four or more new ear infections within one year.
- Two or more serious sinus infections within one year.
- Two more months on antibiotics with little effect.
- Two or more pneumonias within one year.
- Failure of an infant to gain weight or grow normally.
- Recurrent, deep skin or organ abscesses.



Experts agree that early diagnosis is the key to treating Primary Immunodeficiency (PI).

- Persistent thrush in the mouth or fungal infection on skin.
- Need for intravenous antibiotics to clear infections.
- Two or more deep-seated infections including septicemia.
- A family history of Primary Immunodeficiency.

If you or someone you know is affected by two or more of the 10 warning signs, experts recommend speaking to a physician about the possibility of an underlying Primary Immunodeficiency.

Today, patients with PI are able to gain and maintain control of their lives with treatment and intervention. They're able to participate in work, school, and family and social activities.

They have fewer and less severe infections. They feel good about their treatment programs and, most importantly, themselves.

The Jeffrey Modell Foundation (JMF) was established by Vicki and Fred Modell in memory of their son, Jeffrey, who died at the age of 15 from complications of an underlying Primary Immunodeficiency. JMF is a global organization supporting research, physician education, patient assistance, public awareness and advocacy.

To learn more, visit the website at www.info4pi.org.