



Stephanie A. Phelps, M.D.



# YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

*Presented by the medical professionals at Midcoast Pediatrics*

## Spinal Muscular Atrophy

Spinal muscular atrophy, or SMA, is a rare genetic disease that affects the arm and leg muscles of children. Although there are several distinct types of SMA, there are three that affect children. Type One, the most severe, begins in infancy. Infants with the disorder will exhibit floppy arms and legs, have trouble sucking, and may have breathing difficulty. Most babies with type One SMA only survive about two years. Type Two SMA usually presents during toddlerhood and is characterized by a baby who does not crawl or walk. These children often survive to adulthood. Type Three SMA, the mildest form, can show itself any time between toddlerhood and adolescence and is characterized by shaky fingers and difficulty standing.

**HINT: It's helpful for parents of children with SMA to learn chest physiotherapy in order to help their children clear their airways.**

**The type of SMA is determined by the severity of symptoms and the age at onset of the disease, which ranges from infancy through adolescence. Though SMA cannot be cured, treatment consists of managing the symptoms and preventing complications. For further information about today's column, call MIDCOAST PEDIATRICS at 207-721-8333. We are located at 121 Medical Center Drive, Suite 2600, Brunswick. New patients are welcome.**

[www.midcoastpediatricspa.com](http://www.midcoastpediatricspa.com)