

Script – Broadcast – Taking a swing at Guillain-Barré Syndrome

INTRO

Freddie Freeman has plenty to be grateful for this holiday season. Not only did his Los Angeles Dodgers win the World Series in October, but the first baseman was named the series' most valuable player.

But the best news for Freeman and his wife is that their young son is recovering after a scary bout of Guillain-Barré (pronounced Ghee-yan Bah-ray) Syndrome (GBS).

(((SOS)))

Dr. Asma (OZ-MA) Khan, pediatrician, OSF HealthCare

"Guillain-Barré Syndrome is an illness that we see often in adults, but we can see it in children as well. It's an inflammation of the body. It's like an autoimmune disease but it's an inflammation where the body attacks its nerve cells." (:20)

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While experts aren't sure of the exact cause of GBS, many people with Guillain-Barré exhibit early symptoms of an infection before a diagnosis is found. Freeman's three-year-old son, Max, first started experiencing symptoms in July when he developed a viral infection. When Max was unable to stand or walk without being in pain, his parents rushed him to the hospital.

While it's rare, anyone can get GBS, but it's more common in adults and especially in males. But Dr. Khan has seen a few cases in her pediatric practice.

The most severe problem is trouble breathing. Dr. Khan explains that as muscles and the chest wall get weaker, respiratory failure can occur. That's the reason hospitalization is so important.

Treatment includes plasma exchange, which filters out the antibodies in the plasma that are attacking the nerves. Another treatment, intravenous immunoglobulin therapy (IVIG), involves IV injections of immunoglobulins which are proteins that the immune system makes. IVIG can reduce the immune system's attack on the nerves.

Physical, occupational and speech therapy may also be required, depending on the severity of the symptoms.

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Dr. Khan says most people completely recover from Guillain-Barré Syndrome, but it can take six to 12 months, or longer. However, some people may experience lingering effects including weakness and fatigue.

Freeman has posted on his social media accounts that Max is back home and recovering. Still, the young boy has a long road ahead to regain his strength and learn to walk again.