

Correcting Birth Defects in the Womb

Meet Dr. Yair Blumenfeld, Global Leader in Fetal Therapy

Thanks to recent advances in ultrasound technology and prenatal testing, doctors can diagnose birth defects earlier and with more accuracy than ever before. However, for most conditions, there's nothing they can do to help until after a baby is born. Dr. Yair Blumenfeld is working to change that.

Ensuring a Healthy Life, Even Before Birth

Dr. Blumenfeld developed a love for prenatal care when he first came to Stanford as a medical fellow. Many years later, he is still honored to be with parents in the “magical moment” of an ultrasound when they see their growing child for the first time. It has the potential to be the happiest moment of their lives—or, if he discovers a birth defect, the most devastating. “For too many of the problems I find in that ultrasound room, there aren't any good solutions,” Dr. Blumenfeld says. “But I have dedicated my career to changing that.”

He is working alongside fetal therapists from all over the world to treat conditions like fetal kidney failure, spina bifida, and more—all before a baby takes their first breath. Dr. Blumenfeld and his colleagues at Stanford are committed to developing innovative ways to correct birth defects as early as possible and reduce the risk of complications to give babies a strong start in life.

The work they are doing now can transform the standard of care for children with devastating diagnoses. Ultimately, philanthropy will play a critical role in realizing Dr. Blumenfeld's vision: lasting cures for children with birth defects and congenital anomalies.

1 IN 33 babies is born with a birth defect

80% of birth defects have no known cause

1 IN 5 infant deaths are caused by birth defects

Yair Blumenfeld, MD,
Director of Fetal Therapy,
Lucile Packard Children's
Hospital Stanford, and
Professor of Obstetrics and
Gynecology (Maternal
Fetal Medicine)



Forging a New Era in Fetal Therapy

At Packard Children's we treat mothers and babies together in the same facility—making us the ideal setting for world-class care and game-changing breakthroughs. With philanthropic support, Dr. Blumenfeld and his team can usher in a bright new future for families facing serious birth defects.



Less Invasive In-Utero Surgery

Dr. Blumenfeld's approach is simple, but revolutionary: help an unborn child with as little impact on the mother as possible. In fetal surgery, this means smaller incisions, fewer procedures, and better technology. For example, he has designed an improved shunt device for babies with bladder obstructions in the womb. Clinical trials will be the next crucial step in bringing this lifesaving technology to patients.



A Head Start on Chronic Illnesses

Genetic anomalies cannot be treated with surgery. For example, doctors can diagnose cystic fibrosis (CF) while a baby is still in the womb, but they have no way to slow the rapid progression of the condition until the baby is born. However, Dr. Blumenfeld has a potential breakthrough: giving the mother a medicine that has been proven to help young children with CF. The medicine is then passed on to the fetus—and begins to help right away. This new treatment will also soon be ready for clinical trials.



Wraparound Support for the Whole Family

In addition to the strain of a complicated pregnancy, families may also face financial burdens such as time away from work, traveling to the hospital for care, and providing for other children in the family. Gifts of any size can help cover these costs for low-income families in crisis. Philanthropy can also equip more social workers and behavioral health specialists to help all families manage the stress of a difficult diagnosis.



CREATING THE FACILITY OF THE FUTURE

Packard Children's is in the process of completely reimagining the space where we treat mothers and babies. As a part of this transformation, we're building a dedicated space for expecting parents called Women's Specialty Services. This is where Dr. Blumenfeld will see patients and perform ultrasounds, sharing the special moment with parents when they see their child for the first time. What's more, with 30 percent more space, we'll be able to serve more families, more quickly—especially for high-risk pregnancies.

PHILANTHROPY WILL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Donors can help Dr. Blumenfeld revolutionize treatment for babies with birth defects. To learn more about how you can make an impact, please contact:

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