

Health



Celebrating our Cancer Center's Anniversary

Advanced Spine Surgery Gets Pilot Flying Again

Stroke Awareness and Prevention

An Overview of Gallbladder Attacks

Letter from the president.

Dear Neighbor,

Can you believe it has been four years?

In February 2020, right before the world turned upside down with the COVID-19 pandemic, the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center opened its doors to the community, providing advanced cancer care in one convenient, leading-edge location. While our esteemed cancer program has a 40-year history of providing exceptional care and treatments, the opening of our center four years ago offers all the components of world-class cancer care close to home, greatly benefiting the Southern Maryland community.

As you read through this issue, you'll meet Edward Webb, a spinal surgery patient and commercial pilot who is back in the cockpit thanks to the comprehensive care he received from the MedStar Southern Maryland spine surgery team.

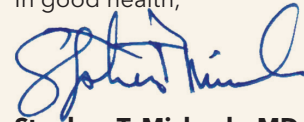
We're also covering one of the most important topics in women's health—cancer. At MedStar Southern Maryland, our specialists are championing innovations in breast reconstruction that are helping improve the quality of life for women post-mastectomy. In general gynecology, our providers are focused not only on healthy pregnancies but also on helping new mothers navigate postpartum conditions like anxiety

and depression. The message our women's health specialists are sending is loud and clear: We're here for you. You are not alone.

And, as May is American Stroke Month, our neurologists are focusing not only on advanced stroke care and treatment but also on prevention. Make sure to read this feature and why you need to B.E. F.A.S.T. Additionally, if you've ever wondered what blood pressure and cholesterol numbers really mean for your cardiovascular health, you'll find these answers and more in the *Heart & Soul* section of this issue.

Thank you for reading Health magazine. We're hard at work to bring our community the very best in accessible, inclusive, and world-class healthcare.

In good health,



Stephen T. Michaels, MD, FACHE
President, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health



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Tidbits



G-Wiz In the House



Patients, visitors, and staff at the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center were treated to quite a surprise when everyone's favorite basketball mascot, G-Wiz from the Washington Wizards, paid a special visit on March 14!

Spreading cheer and high-fives around the center, G-Wiz brought energy and smiles to everyone in his presence as he lit up the room with his signature dance moves and slam dunks. Thanks, G-Wiz, for brightening everyone's day!



Innovative Technique Restores Sensation Post Mastectomy

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's breast and reconstructive surgery teams are pioneering a new technique that reconstructs sensory nerves in the breast to combat post-mastectomy numbness. For breast cancer patients, this is a major quality of life improvement. Learn more on page 15.



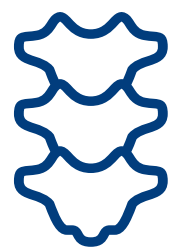
Supporting the Caregivers

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center in collaboration with the Fort Washington Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., has hosted community caregivers workshops, providing support and resources for caregivers of the chronically ill while highlighting the services available through the Prince George's County's Department of Aging. Find out more about this important community program on 16.



Neurology Clinical Trials Program Makes Research More Accessible in Prince George's County

The MedStar Health Research Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center will soon be introducing cutting-edge clinical trials in neurology. A new research program is making future treatments available to patients. Learn more about this exciting new program on page 16.



Advanced Spine Surgery Gets Pilot Back to 41,000 Feet

"I can't say enough about Dr. Weiner's attention to detail, his bedside manner, expertise, and skills," said Mr. Webb. "I was treated like a VIP by everyone at the hospital. It was an outstanding experience. If I could give 10 stars, I would." –Edward Webb

As a commercial aviation pilot for over 40 years, not much has kept Edward Webb out of the cockpit. But on a rainy evening in December 2023, Mr. Webb slipped on the wet surface. In his effort to avoid falling, he jerked and twisted his back so jarringly that the motion caused a rare type of disc herniation. He felt an excruciating pain spread through his lower back. It was like nothing he'd ever felt before.

Hoping the pain would subside with a few days of rest, Mr. Webb woke up the morning of the 31st and could barely get out of bed.

"The pain was beyond comprehension," recalled Mr. Webb, who decided it was time to seek medical care.

After an exam and X-rays in a local urgent care center, Mr. Webb was told he had a severe back sprain and went home with medication that barely scratched the surface of his pain. A second opinion and more pain medication again yielded no relief. Knowing he needed a spine specialist, he went online, finding his way to MedStar Health and spine surgeon David Weiner, MD.

A Complicated Diagnosis

A full evaluation and MRI revealed that Mr. Webb's injury was a far lateral disc herniation. "We weren't dealing with a normal slipped disc," explained Dr. Weiner who serves as the director of spine surgery at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. "This condition causes a portion of the herniated disc to shoot out to the side of the spinal canal where it

compresses the nerves and causes severe pain or nerve damage."

"I wasn't expecting the doctor to tell me I needed back surgery. That was a big pill to swallow," recalled Mr. Webb. "But Dr. Weiner spent close to two hours explaining my options. He answered every question. His bedside manner was impeccable. If I had to have surgery, I knew I was in the best hands."

A Complex Surgery

A fairly routine surgery called minimally invasive transforaminal lumbar interbody fusion (TLIF) was made more complex due to the nature of the far lateral disc herniation, its difficult-to-access location, and surrounding sensitive structures and nerves. The surgical technique required complete precision.

Utilizing advanced micro-instruments, the surgery was performed through only a few small incisions. Dr. Weiner removed a segment of bone that was pushing on the nerve at the site of the herniation and then removed the disc fragment, freeing up the nerve. Several screws, rods, and a disc spacer were then used to stabilize Mr. Webb's spine.

"By using extreme care and a minimally invasive, microscopic approach we successfully corrected the disc herniation without any damage to the delicate surrounding structures," said Dr. Weiner.

Mr. Webb's pain was immediately relieved following the procedure and he was home recovering after only one night in the hospital.

A Team of Spine Surgery Specialists

Aiding in Mr. Webb's surgery and recovery was the hospital's dedicated spine surgery team. This highly specialized team of operating room technicians, anesthesiologists, and nurses helped ensure Mr. Webb's successful post-operative recovery and care navigation.

"The spine surgery team at MedStar Southern Maryland is something special," said Dr. Weiner. "We are known throughout the region for our capabilities in more complex and advanced spinal surgical techniques."

Ready to Fly

Just six weeks after surgery, Mr. Webb was cleared to return to work.

"I can't say enough about Dr. Weiner's attention to detail, his bedside manner, expertise, and skills," said Mr. Webb. "I was treated like a VIP by everyone at the hospital. It was an outstanding experience. If I could give 10 stars, I would."

What is Mr. Webb looking forward to most now that he's cleared to fly again?

"Getting back into the cockpit and flying 600 miles an hour at 41,000 feet—I'm ready to go, go, go!"



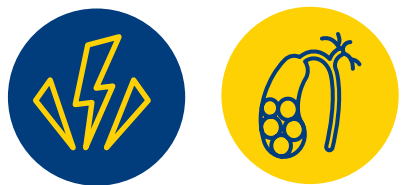
To schedule an appointment with Dr. Weiner, please call **301-856-1682**.



MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center is part of MedStar Orthopaedic Institute, with 50 orthopaedic surgeons, and 18 locations throughout Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia. Visit [MedStarOrthopaedicInstitute.org](https://www.MedStarOrthopaedicInstitute.org) for a complete listing of physicians and locations.



What is the Gallbladder and Why Does it Attack?



A part of your digestive system, the gallbladder is a small organ located beneath the liver that stores and releases bile to aid in the digestion of fats. Such a small organ can produce a great deal of pain when problems arise. The most common issue affecting the gallbladder is gallstones which can cause pain, infection, and inflammation, especially if a stone becomes lodged in the bile duct. Most people don't even know they have gallstones, but those that grow large can cause severe pain. This is often called a gallbladder attack.

Common symptoms of a gallbladder attack include:

- Severe or sharp pain in the upper right or center of the abdomen that doesn't go away. Pain may occur after eating fatty foods in particular
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Fever or chills, which usually indicate an infection
- Light-colored stool and/or tea-colored urine
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes)

caused by a build-up of bile in the bloodstream)

If you experience a sudden onset of symptoms and severe abdominal pain along with any of the above symptoms, seek immediate medical attention. A gallbladder attack and the presence of stones will not be relieved without medical care.

"More than 20 million Americans have gallstones," said gastroenterologist Robert Schenck, MD. "Most gallstones do not cause symptoms; however, a gallstone becomes symptomatic if it blocks the drainage of the gallbladder or liver. The treatment involves the surgical removal of the gallbladder."

Treating a Gallbladder Attack

Surgery to remove the gallbladder called a cholecystectomy is a safe, effective, and common treatment for a sudden gallbladder attack or gallstones. Removing the gallbladder relieves symptoms immediately and prevents future complications. Dr. Schenck assures, "You can live just fine without a gallbladder."

"A cholecystectomy is typically performed laparoscopically, meaning only a few very small incisions for a quicker recovery," added Dr. Schenck. "The surgery does not typically affect digestion

and patients resume a normal diet after they have recovered. Most mild issues such as diarrhea, gas, or bloating after removal of the gallbladder usually resolve within a few months."

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of gallbladder and appendix issues is important for prompt diagnosis and treatment. Listen to your body. Pain is your body's way of getting your attention when something is not right.



Robert Schenck, MD
Gastroenterologist



Dr. Schenck sees patients in the professional office building located on the MedStar Southern Maryland campus.



For an appointment, please call **301-877-4599**.



Good to Know: Understanding Endometrial Cancer



Q&A



with Charlotte Gamble, MD, gynecologic oncologist at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

Endometrial cancer, cancer of the inner lining of the uterus, is the most common gynecologic cancer in the U.S. Charlotte Gamble, MD, MPH, a gynecologic oncologist at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, discusses the disease, symptoms, and treatments of this cancer. Dr. Gamble is a cancer surgeon and cares for people with gynecologic cancers—cancers of the uterus, cervix, ovary and vulva.

Q: What causes endometrial (uterine) cancer?

A: There is strong evidence that obesity, which influences the hormonal balance in the uterus, plays a significant role in endometrial cancer. Non-hormonally driven uterine cancer is also on the rise and we're trying to understand why.

Q: Who's at highest risk for the disease?

A: While the disease predominantly affects menopausal and post-menopausal people with a uterus, we have seen an increase in uterine cancer in younger people, that may be related to the obesity epidemic though this does not explain the entire rise we see.

Q: What are the symptoms of endometrial cancer?

A: One of the first signs is abnormal vaginal bleeding. People with a uterus should not

have any sort of bleeding after menopause and so if even a drop of blood is noted that is a reason for concern. For younger people, very heavy menstrual cycles or bleeding between periods should be taken seriously and checked by a gynecologist, and often needs an endometrial biopsy to rule out cancer or precancer. Other symptoms such as bloating, fullness, unexplained weight loss, and changes in appetite should also be addressed by a doctor and patients may need a CT scan.

Q: Is there a screening test?

A: Unlike the pap smear to diagnose cervical cancer, there is not a screening test for uterine cancer. For this reason, being aware of any abnormal bleeding and having an annual gynecologic exam, including after the age of 65 is important. If you notice anything abnormal, please discuss this with your doctor and make sure you do not feel ignored. If you feel like your symptoms are not being taken seriously, find a new doctor.

Q: How is endometrial cancer treated?

A: Endometrial cancer is treatable, especially in early stages disease when it is only inside the uterus and has not spread. The first step is surgery to remove the uterus (hysterectomy), which has become so advanced that most patients can return home that

same day. With hysterectomy, we also remove the ovaries and fallopian tubes and sample the surrounding lymph nodes for signs of cancer. With the information provided by the pathologist following surgery, we stage the cancer and determine if the hysterectomy alone was sufficient to eliminate the cancer, or if more (adjuvant) treatments such as chemotherapy, immunotherapy, and/or radiation are needed.

Q: What are your final thoughts for patients?

A: Advocate for yourself. If you can't get an appointment with a gynecologist for months, keep trying to get seen as soon as possible. Find a good support system. And finally, don't ignore any new symptoms. It's your body's way of telling you something is not right.



Office location:
13950 Brandywine Road, Suite L75
Brandywine, MD 20613



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Gamble, please call **301-782-3353**.



MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Marks Fourth Anniversary

Celebrating four years of our cancer center and 40+ years of delivering cancer care in Prince George's County

Residents of Prince George's County and Southern Maryland have access to world-class cancer care right in their backyards. Celebrating four years of serving the community, the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center has been delivering leading-edge care and advanced treatments all in one convenient and modern location since it opened in February 2020.

Just ask breast cancer survivor and patient Hope Poliansky, who is grateful for the exceptional care she continues to receive close to home. Feeling like part of the family every time she walks through the doors of the cancer center, Ms. Poliansky said, "I love going to my oncology appointments. It's one of my favorite days. I see my friends at the cancer center. Everyone is so dear and lovely. I feel very blessed."

"We receive so much positive feedback. Our patients love the space. It has all the latest treatments and equipment to provide access to advanced cancer care without having to leave the community," said Chile Ahaghotu, MD, MBA, MHL, FACS, Vice President of Medical Affairs. "This is a really exciting

time for the cancer center as we continue to grow. We're looking forward to a very bright future."

The center's medical director, Kathan Mehta, MD, added, "We not only provide patients with access to exceptional cancer care but also with the resources needed to prevent cancer. We are delivering academic-level care and therapies directly to the communities we serve."

Highlights of the Cancer Center

A State-of-the-Art Facility

The facility offers 25,000 square feet of treatment space providing full-service cancer care from diagnosis to survivorship. This includes a state-of-the-art infusion center with 13 treatment bays and a women's imaging suite with on-site DEXA bone density scans, ultrasound, and 3D mammography.

Leading-Edge Radiation Oncology Services

The cancer center's radiation therapy department offers one-of-a-kind technologies such as ZAP-X®, the first radiosurgery system for the treatment of brain tumors that delivers stereotactic radiosurgery inside the skull with pinpoint accuracy. The hospital's ZAP-X system was the third one of its kind ever built and is the only one of its

kind available in the region. The facility also offers Halcyon™, a type of radiotherapy offering faster, more accurate treatment for general radiation therapy.

Clinical director of radiation oncology services Andrew Satinsky, MD, has been leading the program since 2007 and is proud of the growth and collaborative care that is the hallmark of the program. "This radiation oncology center has been here for about 40 years. We've always brought excellence in cancer care to Southern Maryland. What is special over the last four years is that we now have medical oncology, surgical oncology, radiation oncology, and diagnostic radiology all in the same place. In radiation oncology, access to cutting-edge technologies has grown over the past four years as we have expanded our center."

Medical Oncology and Clinical Trials

Over the past four years, new providers, an expansion of the clinic space, 13 infusion therapy bays, and increased access to clinical trials have provided more access to care and treatment than ever before. For patients in Southern Maryland, being able to have their medical oncology team and receive lifesaving chemotherapy



and immunotherapy without having to travel far distances has made a significant difference in overall care and quality of life.

Clinical trials offered through Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center are also a great benefit to local cancer patients. "We bring clinical trials to our patients with complicated diagnoses and collaborate with tertiary care sub-specialists to offer people the expertise needed to move forward with their cancer care," said Ankit Madan, MD, FACP, FAPCR, medical oncologist/hematologist.

Comprehensive Breast Care

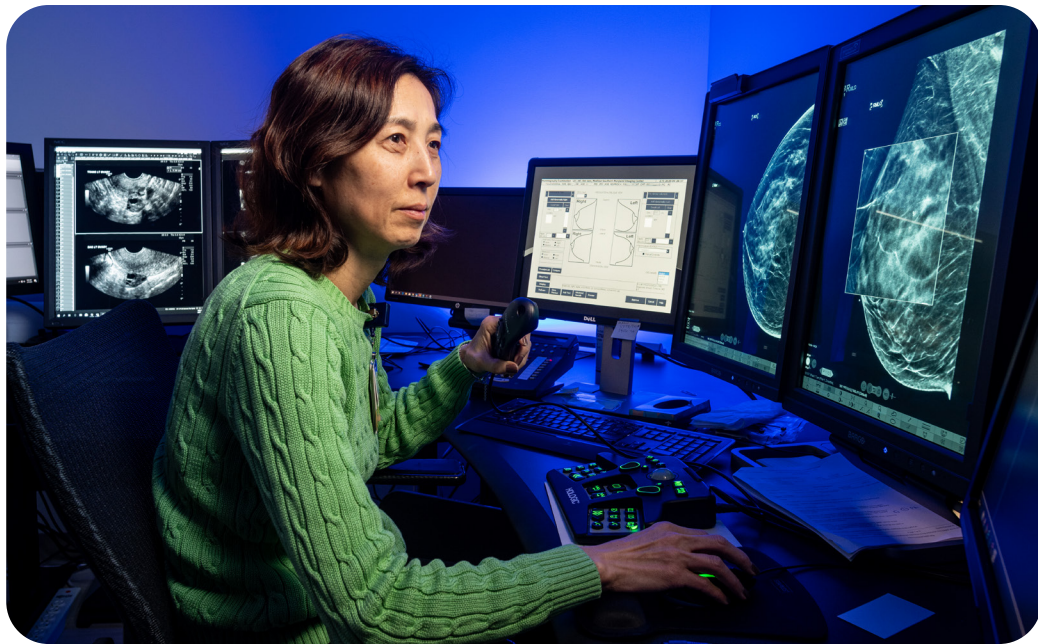
Advanced breast surgery is complemented by the cancer center's outpatient women's diagnostic suite that offers 3D mammography, breast ultrasound, as well as stereotactic and ultrasound biopsy capabilities.

Breast surgeon Patricia Wehner, MD, credits the large, multi-collaborative breast team that includes a lymphedema specialist, nurse navigator, and nurse practitioner, for positive patient outcomes. "Over the past four years, we've gone from treating a handful of diagnosed cancer patients to over 150 new breast cancer patients last year," she explained.


Having a full-time plastic surgeon also enhances the team's ability to perform advanced technical procedures for reconstructive breast surgery.


"While MedStar Southern Maryland has been treating cancer patients for over 40 years, having access to the comprehensive services all in one place has been a tremendous benefit for patients throughout the Southern Maryland region," stated Stephen Michaels, MD, president, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. "The advances that are coming through in cancer care are the most exciting that I've seen in years and we're so pleased to offer these treatments to patients throughout our region."





Did You Know?

 MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's cancer program is fully accredited by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer (CoC). This designation recognizes the hospital for providing quality, comprehensive care using a multidisciplinary approach. Fewer than one-third of cancer programs in the country are CoC-accredited. The hospital's radiotherapy services are fully accredited by the American College of Radiology (ACR).

 Visit the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center:
 7501 Surratts Rd., Ste. 101
 Clinton, MD 20735
P: 301-877-4673



  For more information about the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, please visit [MedStarHealth.org/AdvancedCancerCare](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/AdvancedCancerCare).



3 Steps to Take Now to Help Prevent a Stroke



Some 800,000 people in the U.S. have a stroke every year. That's a sobering statistic. But, there are several steps you can take now to help prevent a stroke from occurring. Often called a "brain attack" strokes are caused when blood flow to the brain is blocked typically as a result of a blood clot. A small number of strokes are caused by a burst blood vessel, or bleeding in the brain.

According to the CDC, 80 percent of strokes are preventable. So, how do you put the odds in your favor when it comes to preventing a stroke?

1. Maintain a healthy lifestyle.

This includes eating a healthy diet and exercising at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Neurologist Jemima Akinsanya, DO, recommends incorporating the Mediterranean diet as part of a healthy lifestyle. Rich in vegetables and fruits, legumes, nuts, fish and lean protein, healthy fats like olive oil, and whole grains, this diet has been repeatedly linked to a lower cardiovascular risk in studies.

Exercise also has benefits for every part of the body, especially the heart.

"Walking is a great low-impact exercise that is easy for people to incorporate into their everyday lives," said Dr. Akinsanya. "Just 30 minutes a day is beneficial."

2. Keep the leading risks of stroke in check.

High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes are three conditions that put people at a higher risk of stroke because they contribute to plaque build-up in the arteries and the brain. Regular check-ups with a primary care provider are vital for managing these conditions through lifestyle changes and medications, especially with a family history of cardiovascular disease or stroke.

3. Quit Smoking.

Smoking is a leading contributor to cardiovascular disease and stroke, damaging the blood vessels over time.



Know the Signs of Stroke—BE FAST!

According to neurologist Tian Wang, MD, time is critically important during a stroke. "We

have a small window of time from the onset of symptoms to reverse the damage with interventions such as clot-busting medications," he said. "The longer you wait to get to the ER, the more damage the brain encounters."

How can you spot the warning signs of stroke? Remember B.E. F.A.S.T.:

B is for balance - Look for sudden dizziness, difficulty keeping balance, or loss of coordination.

E is for eyes - Does the person have sudden trouble seeing out of one or both eyes?

F is for face - Look at the face. Does one side droop? Is the person's smile uneven?

A is for arm - Ask the person to raise both arms. Is one side weak or unable to lift evenly?

S is for speech - Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is there difficulty speaking or slurred speech?

T is for time - When you see any of these signs, it's time to call **911** right away.

"These symptoms come on suddenly. Don't wait to see if things improve or try to sleep them off," said Dr. Akinsanya. "Get to the ER right away for evaluation and intervention."



B E F A S T

Balance	Eyes	Face	Arms	Speech	Time
sudden loss of balance or coordination	sudden change of vision	sudden weakness of the face	sudden weakness of an arm	sudden difficulty speaking	BE FAST. time to call 911.



Jemima Akinsanya, DO
Neurologist



Tian Wang, MD
Neurologist



To make an appointment with Dr. Akinsanya, Dr. Wang or another member of our neurology team please call **301-856-2303**.



Did You Know?

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital has the experience and certifications needed to serve the community with the highest level of stroke care 24/7.

The hospital was re-designated as a Primary Stroke Center by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS) in 2022, signifying our ongoing commitment to quality care for patients who are experiencing a stroke or transient ischemic attack (TIA). Offered in collaboration with the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association, Primary Stroke Center certification occurs every five years.

MedStar Southern Maryland also received the 2023 American Heart Association's Gold Plus Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke quality achievement award for its commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines.



You Are Not Alone- Seeking Help for Postpartum Depression and Anxiety



Inara Omuso, MD,
OB/GYN

Postpartum depression and anxiety are common issues that affect many new mothers, with hormonal changes, genetic factors, and personal history playing a role.

According to OB/GYN Inara Omuso, MD, feelings of unexplained sadness, being overwhelmed, or feeling as if you could cry at any time within the first two weeks after giving birth are called the postpartum blues. The "baby blues" are common, affecting close to 40 percent of new moms, and typically resolve on their own in a few weeks as a new mother becomes accustomed to the baby and routine of having a newborn.

What Does Postpartum Depression and Anxiety Feel Like?

When these "baby blues" continue for weeks, months, or even a year after delivery, however, it is often a sign of postpartum depression or anxiety which manifests as:

- Intense sadness

- Feeling irritable often
- Insomnia
- Constant worry
- Prolonged exhaustion even after a good night's sleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Mood swings

What Causes Postpartum Depression and Anxiety?

Dr. Omuso explained that postpartum blues, anxiety, and depression are often driven by hormonal fluctuations after delivery. "Patients who have a family or personal history of depression and anxiety may be at a higher risk. Having a baby can also exacerbate existing mental health conditions in some women."

"We regularly screen patients for symptoms not just after delivery, but throughout the pregnancy," added Dr. Omuso. "It is so important to talk to your OB/GYN if you're experiencing any feelings of sadness or changes in your moods or behavior before or after the baby arrives."

Ending the Stigma

While some women feel embarrassed or ashamed by their postpartum depression and anxiety at a time when many believe they should be feeling overjoyed, seeking help and support is critical.

"Having a baby isn't easy. Postpartum depression and anxiety are not something you should be ashamed of or deal with on your own," said Dr. Omuso, who added that resources such as help from friends and family, joining in-person or online support groups, as well as access to talk therapy and medications, are available. "You are not alone in your feelings. Help is available."



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Omuso, please call **301-877-7200**.

Tidbit



Surgeons at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Utilizing New Technique to Restore Sensation Following Mastectomy, Breast Reconstruction

Imagine not being able to feel a hug from a loved one.

Loss of sensation or postmastectomy numbness or pain following surgery for the treatment of breast cancer is a common complaint among women. With advanced procedures such as nipple-sparing mastectomy and breast reconstruction, breasts look like breasts, but they don't feel like them.

Resensation nerve grafting is a novel technique being explored at a handful of locations around the country and now at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. The procedure helps to restore breast sensation during reconstruction surgery following mastectomy. Patricia Wehner, MD, breast surgeon, explained that the resensation procedure is promising for many women. "Nerve grafting has been used for years in other areas of surgery, but we are just now utilizing it in breast reconstruction as post-mastectomy numbness can be a huge lifestyle issue for patients," she said.

Dr. Wehner, along with plastic and reconstructive surgeon Samer Jabbour, MD, have

been trained in this specialized microsurgical procedure and are now performing the nerve grafting technique at MedStar Southern Maryland. "This surgery is a "dance" between the plastic surgeon and breast surgeon to find, preserve, and reconstruct sensory nerves to help restore feeling to the skin and nipple," she explained.

Restoring Breast Sensation is Important for Women

During a mastectomy, the tiny sensory nerves are cut to remove the breast tissue. Once cut, these nerves no longer signal the brain to sense touch or temperature, resulting in numbness or complete loss of feeling in the breasts.

With the resensation technique performed during breast reconstruction, the surgeons preserve and reconnect these microscopic nerves to a woman's skin. Over time, the nerves regenerate and grow, restoring feeling. Because nerves grow only about one millimeter per day, some women may not experience full sensation for one to two years.

Studies, however, have shown that women experience a variety of

benefits including improvement in body image, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life following mastectomy and breast reconstruction.

"We are committed to making this surgery a standard of care for women at the hospital to improve their long-term quality of life," said Dr. Wehner.



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Wehner, please call **301-877-5607**.



Patricia Wehner, MD
Breast Surgeon



Samer Jabbour, MD
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon

Tidbit

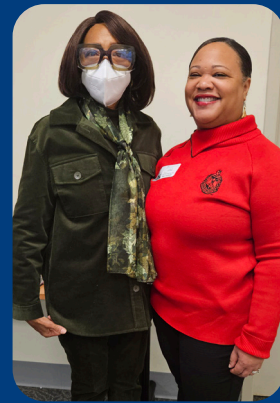


Supporting Our Community's Caregivers

Adult caregivers of frail, aging, or chronically ill parents and family members need help navigating the healthcare system and finding the resources needed to ensure safe and accessible care for their loved ones. On February 24 and April 27, 2024, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center in collaboration with the Fort Washington Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. hosted community caregivers workshops, providing support and resources for caregivers while highlighting the many services available through the Prince George's County's Department of Aging.

The workshops, held at the hospital, covered everything from the services offered at the Department of Aging, how to access them, and who to contact for assistance, to understanding how the Social Security Administration works.

"Being a caregiver provides the opportunity to make a meaningful difference in someone's life. It can be a transformative experience to bring joy, comfort, and support to those in need," said Karen Wyche, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, CENP, vice president and chief nursing officer at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. "The caregiver workshops play a vital role in providing education, support, and practical skills to caregivers. By attending these workshops, caregivers can enhance their knowledge, improve their caregiving techniques, and connect with others who understand the challenges they face. Ultimately, these workshops contribute to



the wellbeing of both caregivers and those they care for."



Follow us on Facebook ([Facebook.com/MedStarSouthernMD](https://www.facebook.com/MedStarSouthernMD)) to learn about our scheduled events, including the caregiver workshops.

Heart & Soul

Helping you get to the heart of the matter.



Are Heart Murmurs Serious? Here's the Scoop

When your doctor listens to your heart through a stethoscope, they are listening for the healthy "lub-dub, lub-dub" sound made by the valves opening and closing as the heart relaxes and contracts to pump blood throughout the body. But sometimes, your healthcare provider might hear a "whooshing" in between the normal heart sounds, signaling a heart murmur.

According to Bryan LeBude, MD, cardiologist, "Heart murmurs are among the top five reasons patients are referred to a cardiologist."

What is a Heart Murmur?

Heart murmurs can be broken into two groups:

1. An innocent or benign murmur is typically caused by changes in blood flow through the heart. This type of murmur is not related to abnormalities with the valves or the structure of the heart. Benign or innocent

murmurs are common in children and can also be heard in adults. They are not dangerous, do not have symptoms, and often resolve on their own over time.

2. Murmurs associated with structural abnormalities such as problems with the opening and closing mechanism of the heart valves or a hole in the heart. These murmurs are more serious, affect the heart's function, and often present with symptoms including shortness of breath, chest pain, palpitations, dizziness, or lightheadedness.

"Murmurs caused by structural abnormalities should be evaluated and followed closely by a cardiologist," explained Dr. LeBude. "We perform specialized diagnostic imaging tests including an echocardiogram or ultrasound of the heart to ensure a definitive diagnosis and tailored treatment plan."

Treating Heart Murmurs

Treatment for structural irregularities that cause a heart murmur has come a long way over the years. Unlike the open-heart surgeries of the past, diseased or faulty heart valves can now be repaired or replaced with minimally invasive surgical procedures. These procedures are typically performed in the cardiac catheterization lab by inserting a very thin catheter (tube) equipped with a tiny instrument at the end that is threaded up to the heart through a vein or artery in the leg (called transcatheter).

"For patients with structural abnormalities causing the heart murmur, early treatment to prevent weakening of the heart muscle results in very good long-term outcomes," added Dr. LeBude. "Patients do very well and go back to living a normal, active life."

Tidbit



New Research Program Gives Access to Groundbreaking Clinical Trials in Neurology

In partnership with the MedStar Health Research Network, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's neurology department launched its new clinical trials program for patients, opening access to critical clinical research studies for diseases with few or no available treatment options including Alzheimer's, epilepsy, and multiple sclerosis.

Clinical trials are carefully designed and closely monitored research studies that provide patients with access to cutting-edge therapies and effective

treatments for diseases before they become mainstream. Patients who are candidates for a clinical trial can receive more advanced treatment for certain neurological conditions that currently lack any effective treatment.

"Previously, we had to refer our patients eligible for clinical trials to our program at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, but now we can provide these promising treatments right here at MedStar Southern Maryland," said neurologist Tian Wang, MD. "Now our patients have access to new

therapies still in trials as well as FDA-approved therapies not available at other community neurology programs. This is very promising for our neurological patients here in Southern Maryland."



To schedule a neurologic consultation or learn more about the neurology clinical trials program at

MedStar Southern Maryland, please call **301-877-4540**.



To schedule an appointment with Dr. LeBude, please call **301-531-9190**.

Blood Pressure and Cholesterol— Know your numbers



When it comes to heart health, ignorance is not bliss. Often called silent killers, elevated levels of cholesterol and uncontrolled hypertension can wreak havoc on your body.

High Blood Pressure: What Do the Numbers Mean?

High blood pressure, or hypertension, puts excessive pressure on arteries and the heart, damaging the vessels and heart muscle over time. Left untreated, hypertension can lead to heart attack and stroke, hardening of blood vessels, and damage to other organs such as the kidneys and eyes.

"Blood pressure that is consistently over 130/80 is considered high," explained cardiologist Alexander Ryzhikov, MD. "Regular monitoring, whether it's at home or in your doctor's office, is critical to get a baseline reading that guides us in the appropriate treatment and long-term management."

Cholesterol by the Numbers

Cholesterol is a type of fat that your body needs for several important functions. Too much cholesterol in your bloodstream leads to the build-up of plaque (atherosclerosis) in the coronary arteries, causing blockages and stroke.

- Your doctor will typically focus on HDL (good cholesterol) and LDL (bad cholesterol)
- LDL should be 130 or below; 100 or less is ideal
- LDL should be less than 70 for established heart disease
- HDL should be above 40
- The optimal target for total cholesterol is under 200

"These numbers are moving targets and dependent on a person's individual risk for cardiovascular disease, underlying medical conditions, as well as genetic factors," added Dr. Ryzhikov.

Identifying the "Silent Killers"

People with high blood pressure well above 130/80 may experience symptoms such as:

- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Blurry vision
- Nose bleed
- Facial flushing
- Chest Pain

A consistent reading of 180/120 or higher is a medical emergency and 9-1-1 should be called.

High cholesterol is different, however. Individuals with numbers over the 200 threshold and even as high as 300 have

no symptoms until it's too late.

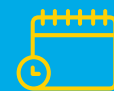
"The first sign of very high cholesterol is a heart attack or stroke," warned Dr. Ryzhikov. "Everyone should have a cholesterol blood test done by the age of 40, if not earlier, especially with risk factors for cardiovascular disease."

The Bottom Line

Annual check-ups and routine screenings for high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol are vital. With interventions such as lifestyle changes, diet and exercise, as well as medications that can lower and manage blood pressure and cholesterol, maintaining your heart health is within your control.



Alexander Ryzhikov, MD



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Ryzhikov, please call **301-705-7870**.



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Blood Drives at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

Helping Others in Great Need

Did you know? One blood donation helps three patients.

Blood drives are important to MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and the community as they assist in meeting the need for the national blood shortage. Blood drives are held at the hospital once a month in the multipurpose room.

Who can donate blood?

- Any individual over the age of 18 who is not pregnant or breastfeeding and can pass a preliminary health screening
- Any individual under 18 can donate with parental consent
- All individuals must feel well and weigh at least 110 pounds



Become a blood donor today! Call **301-877-5633** to register.

Or, visit <https://tinyurl.com/bdh3xk6u> to register for a blood drive.



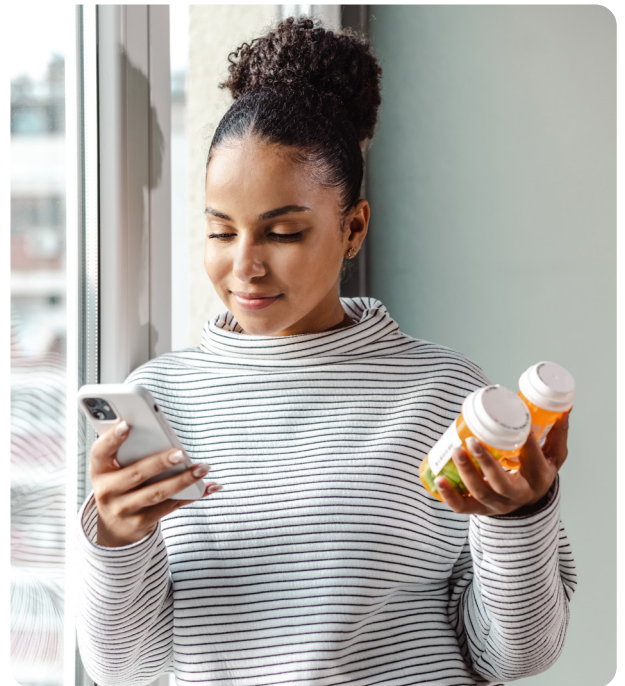
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