

Health



**Breast Cancer
and Genetics
Explained**

**Surviving
Cancer:
Doris' Story**

**Honored for
Heart Care:
A Top 100
Hospital in
Coronary
Intervention**

**Is Your Immune
System Ready
for Winter?**

Letter from the president.

Dear Neighbor,

People often think of a hospital as a place to go to only when you're sick or need medical attention. While that is true, it's only part of what healthcare organizations like ours do for the community. Preventing illness and poor health outcomes is a major focus of the care and services provided to the community at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and is a major theme of this issue of *Health*.

Throughout these pages, you'll read about preventing sepsis, a life-threatening medical emergency; how the work of our population and community health team is protecting the well-being of mothers and babies; how our interventional cardiologists deliver a precise diagnosis of chest pain, commonly called angina; as well as how general cardiologists are focused on keeping your heart healthy and strong through every stage of life.

You'll also learn about the genetic component of breast cancer, a major focus as we closed out Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, and ways our team is helping the community prevent and manage diabetes. And, importantly, read on to discover ways to boost your immune system to fight off common winter illnesses. You will also meet a patient who is now cancer-free after being treated for pancreatic cancer.

I'm especially proud of the recognition our hospital has gained over the past several months. The designation as a Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Care Center, the Healthgrades recognition for being one of America's 100 Best Hospitals for Coronary Intervention, the recertification as a Maryland STEMI (ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction) Center, and the hospital's Stroke Gold Plus award are all direct results of our team's passionate commitment to ensuring our community has access to critical resources and cutting-edge care close to home.

We take great pride in being a part of the Prince George's County and Southern Maryland communities and strive to provide the latest health information to impact lives for the better. I hope you enjoy the latest issue of *Health* magazine.

In good health,



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



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President, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center
7503 Surratts Road, Clinton, MD 20735
301-868-8000 or TTY **301-877-4473**

Cheryl Richardson
Director, Marketing and Community Relations

Erin Glynn
Graphic Designer

Lisa Schwartz
Susan Walker
Writers

Cheryl Richardson
Editor

Photo Credits:
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Tidbits

1



MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center Named One of America's 100 Best Hospitals for Coronary Intervention™



MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center has been named one of America's 100 Best Hospitals for Coronary Intervention™ for 2025 by Healthgrades, highlighting its top-tier coronary care. This recognition underscores MedStar Southern Maryland's commitment to advanced cardiac interventions, positioning it as a leading healthcare provider in the region.

2



MedStar Southern Maryland Named Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Center

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center is the only hospital in Prince George's County to be designated a Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Care Center. The Center offers equitable access to cutting-edge MS care and research, early diagnosis, and treatment options for patients throughout Southern Maryland. Learn more about this important designation on page 15.

3



Rapid Response for Heart Attack Patients

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center was recently redesignated a Maryland STEMI (ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction) Center, also known as a Cardiac Intervention Center (CIC), providing rapid response and treatment for patients suffering a heart attack who are transported to the emergency department. See what this means for the community on page 16.

4



Award for High-Quality Stroke Care

For patients suffering from a stroke, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital's recent award from the American Heart Association is good news. The Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke Gold Plus award demonstrates the hospital's commitment to delivering the highest level of stroke care for patients throughout Prince George's County and Southern Maryland. Read more about the significance of the award on page 16.



Doris is cancer-free after pancreatic cancer treatment at MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

Doris Lewis wasn't feeling like herself. The 80-year-old Clinton, Maryland resident was experiencing nausea, abdominal pain, jaundice, and losing weight. Bloodwork done at an appointment with her endocrinologist for thyroid issues found she had higher than normal liver enzymes, so she made an appointment with her gastroenterologist. Having been successfully treated for cancer in her small intestine 20 years ago, she knew it was better to consult with her doctor than ignore her new symptoms.

An MRI found a 2.2 cm mass on her pancreas, which a biopsy confirmed was a type of pancreatic cancer called invasive adenocarcinoma. Doris was referred to medical oncologist Ankit Madan, MD, an experienced hematologist oncologist at MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. "The team at MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center has considerable experience treating all stages

of pancreatic cancer and we offer patients the full spectrum of treatments from expert physicians within MedStar Health," explains Dr. Madan. "After the biopsy, we performed a CT to stage Ms. Lewis' tumor and discovered it was stage 1B. We were fortunate to have caught this cancer early, which gave us the best chance of curative treatment."

Doris underwent five cycles of chemotherapy at MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center to keep

the tumor from growing or spreading. Then she had a surgery known as the Whipple procedure to remove the head of the pancreas, where the tumor was located, as well as part of the small intestine, gall bladder, and bile duct at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. "Dr. Madan and the whole team of doctors and nurses who treated me were great," says

Doris. "Everyone took the time to answer any questions we had and explain the process of treatment and what I should expect. Dr. Madan's office staff even helped me schedule all my CT scans, getting me in quickly." The chemotherapy and surgery were successful and Doris has been cancer-free for almost two years. She has CT scans every three months and blood

work every six weeks to check for any return of the cancer. Doris is feeling like her old self again and back to her regular activities, shopping for groceries, working in her yard, and driving. "If you're facing cancer, put your trust in your doctors and yourself, ask questions, and do your best to have a positive outlook," Doris says.



Get to know Dr. Ankit Madan, medical oncologist/hematologist

Patients like Doris Lewis and those diagnosed with cancer in our community are grateful for the expertise of the oncology specialists at MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. MedStar Southern Maryland has been delivering comprehensive cancer care in Prince George's County for over 40 years, and the hospital's Cancer Center, which opened in February 2020, provides full-service cancer care from diagnosis to survivorship. The modern facility offers patients throughout the region access to infusion therapy, radiation therapy, medical oncology, clinical trials, comprehensive breast care, and a women's imaging suite all in one location. Ankit Madan, MD, FACP, FAPCR, medical oncologist/hematologist at MedStar Southern Maryland, understands how important collaborative, high quality cancer

care is to the local community. "The collaboration among the entire team at MedStar Southern Maryland's cancer center and with the oncology subspecialists at MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute allows us to provide services that are far beyond any community hospital," he stated. Dr. Madan is board-certified in internal medicine, hematology, and medical oncology. As a hematologist and oncologist at MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, he cares for patients with a variety of conditions including benign and malignant blood disorders such as leukemia and lymphoma, melanoma, sarcoma, and cancers of the breast, colon, kidney, liver, lung, prostate and ovaries. He is also a passionate advocate for evidence-based cancer care and oncology clinical trials, bringing clinical trials offered

through Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center to local cancer patients with complex cancer diagnoses and providing access to expertise and innovative therapies. Understanding that cancer affects patients and families physically and emotionally, Dr. Madan combines state-of-the-art cancer care with empathy, compassion, and respect for his patients. He said, "We're partners in this difficult journey, and I hope to alleviate some of the stress and anxiety associated with this disease."



Ankit Madan, MD, sees patients at:
7501 Surratts Road, Suite 108
Clinton, MD, 20735



To schedule an appointment, call
301-877-5610.



For more information about the MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute, please visit [MedStarHealth.org/Cancer](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Cancer).

Genetics and Breast Cancer in Women:



What You Should Know



Breast cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting women. Gene mutations can play a role in breast cancer, but they are not as common as many might believe. Understanding the genetic factors behind breast cancer, who should consider genetic testing, and how these mutations affect treatment can help women make informed decisions about their breast health.

Most Women with Breast Cancer Don't Have a Gene Mutation

Lesa Poinsett, MS, MPH, CRNP, Women's Health Nurse Practitioner at the MedStar Regional Breast Health Program at MedStar Southern Maryland, noted that most women diagnosed with breast cancer do not carry a gene mutation. "Only 5 to 10% of women with breast cancer have a genetic mutation that contributes to the disease," she stated, adding that there are certain populations where genetic

mutations are more common, which is why genetic counseling may be recommended.



The BRCA Gene and Other Mutations Linked to Breast Cancer

The BRCA gene mutations, specifically BRCA1 and BRCA2, are the most well-known genetic mutations associated with an increased risk of breast and other cancers such as ovarian, pancreatic, and, in men, prostate cancer. Some families with BRCA mutations may even see an increased risk of melanoma. In addition to BRCA mutations, there are at least 10 other genes associated with an increased risk of breast cancer.

Knowledge is Power

Poinsett explained that while the prevalence of mutations in the general population is low, knowing if you have a gene mutation can be powerful. This knowledge can significantly impact decisions around treatment and preventative

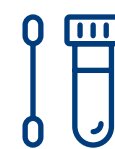
measures, including surgical options and medications. For women who are at high risk of developing breast cancer, whether due to a family history of specific cancers or due to a personal gene mutation, implementation of regular breast screening and other preventative strategies is critical.

According to Poinsett, awareness of a genetic mutation can lead to more extensive discussions about treatment options.

"Women with BRCA mutations, for example, may be counseled about surgical options such as a double mastectomy with reconstruction to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer in both breasts," she said. Poinsett emphasized that a mastectomy does not eliminate the risk of breast cancer; however, for women with BRCA mutations, this surgery can significantly lower the chances of a future diagnosis.

"The decision to undergo such surgeries or other preventative measures is highly personal and often influenced by

individual risk factors and preferences," she added.



Who Should Undergo Genetic Counseling and Testing?

According to guidelines from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), genetic testing is recommended for individuals with a family history of breast cancer, particularly if a first-degree relative (like a mother or sister) was diagnosed before the age of 50. Other factors, such as a family history of other cancers associated with BRCA mutations, like ovarian or pancreatic cancer, may also warrant genetic testing.

Genetic counseling helps individuals navigate their risks, noted Poinsett who holds a certification in this specialty. Patients may be referred by an OB/GYN, oncologist, or other medical provider or can self-refer for counseling. The counseling process involves obtaining a detailed family history, discussing the various

gene mutations linked to breast cancer, explaining what a positive result would mean, and determining if a patient is eligible for genetic testing. For women who test positive for a mutation, referrals to specialists such as oncologists and surgeons can help them understand their risk and treatment options.



Know Your Family History

While genetic counseling and testing can offer women guidance and recommendations, there is no replacement for knowing your family's medical history.

Poinsett emphasized, "Knowing your family's medical history is important. I encourage everyone to start a conversation with their family members about health issues as it could make a world of difference not only in earlier cancer diagnosis but for future treatment and survival."



Lesa Poinsett, MS, MPH, CRNP

Women's Health Nurse Practitioner at the MedStar Regional Breast Health Program at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



To learn more about genetic counseling for breast cancer or to make an appointment with Lesa Poinsett, please call **301-877-5607**.



Office location:
7501 Surratts Road
Suite 303
Clinton, MD
20735

Winter is Around the Corner—Is Your Immune System Ready?



With winter just around the corner, now is the perfect time to begin fortifying your immune system.

“Viruses such as the flu, COVID, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), pneumonia, and the common cold often spike during winter, affecting people of all ages, but especially children and older adults,” emphasized nurse practitioner Tierra Richardson, CRNP, who noted that sinus and ear infections also become more common, and those with chronic respiratory issues may experience heightened symptoms during the colder months.

Immunity-Boosting Strategies

Prepare your immune system for winter with these important tips:

1. Wash your hands frequently. Disinfect high-touch surfaces

such as keyboards, phones, and remote controls to avoid lingering germs.

2. Get vaccinated for flu, COVID-19, RSV, and pneumonia, especially if you are in a high-risk group such as those with weakened immunity, the elderly, and young children.
3. Eat a balanced diet. Foods rich in antioxidants and vitamins like B6, C, and E support immunity including:
 - Vitamin B6: Eggs, milk, salmon, chicken breast, chickpeas, avocado
 - Vitamin C: Oranges, grapefruit, kiwi, red and green peppers
 - Vitamin E / Zinc: Broccoli, spinach,

Vitamin supplements can provide extra support, but

Richardson warns they are not substitutes for whole foods that provide the body with natural nutrients.

4. Engage in 150 minutes of moderate activity per week can boost overall health and reduce chronic stress, which can weaken the immune system.
5. Catch up on your sleep. Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night to ensure your body is well rested.
6. Stay Hydrated. Drink at least 64 ounces of water daily to keep your body functioning well.
7. Schedule regular doctor’s appointments. “Patients with chronic conditions especially should see their primary care provider as directed. This ensures patients are regularly assessed,



their health conditions are stable, and we can identify any new changes in their health in a timely fashion,” Richardson said.

Richardson added that winter travel, especially during the holiday season, can increase exposure to illnesses. “Consider wearing a mask for added protection in crowded or high-risk places like airports,” she said. “And, when gathering in large groups, I encourage patients to be transparent with friends and family about their health status. If you are sick, then you most likely should not attend.”



Tierra Richardson, CRNP

Internal Medicine,
MedStar Medical Group



Tierra Richardson, CRNP, sees adult primary care patients at:

13950 Brandywine Road
Suite 125
Brandywine, MD
20613



To schedule an appointment, please call **301-782-2220**.



Your Gut Health—How Diet, Stress, and Lifestyle Affect Digestive Wellness

Q&A

with Kathryn Peacher, MSN, FNP-C

Gastrointestinal problems are common complaints for millions of people. From chronic conditions such as Crohn's disease to occasional stomach upset and stress-related GI issues, how can you manage and improve your gut health?

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center's Kathryn Peacher, MSN, FNP-C, a family nurse practitioner with the hospital's gastrointestinal (GI) service, shares some important information and tips for maintaining optimal gastrointestinal health.

Q: What are the most common GI issues that you see in your practice?

A: The most common GI disorders we see include:

- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)
- GERD/Acid Reflux
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) such as Crohn's Disease or Ulcerative Colitis (UC)
- Peptic Ulcer Disease (PUD)
- Constipation/Diarrhea

These GI conditions are managed by a collaborative team of gastroenterologists (physicians who specialize in gastrointestinal disorders) and advanced practice providers (nurse practitioners and physician assistants) who work collaboratively to manage a patient's needs and long-term care.

Q: Why is gut health so important?

A: The digestive tract is comprised of an abundance of healthy bacteria. When the healthy bacteria are disrupted by illness or poor diet, overall gut health can become unbalanced, leading to bothersome GI symptoms including fatigue, abdominal bloating, and stomach discomfort.

Q: What tips can you share to help people maintain optimal gut health?

A: The best ways to manage gut health and help prevent many common GI conditions are:

- Maintain a healthy diet. Incorporate high-fiber foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, limit fatty and processed foods, incorporate more lean proteins and whole grains, and eat smaller portions. Some people should also limit red meat, which is higher in protein and more difficult for the body to digest. Red meat is also higher in iron, which can contribute to constipation in some patients.
- Focus on fiber. Most people don't take in an adequate amount of fiber in their diet alone. Adding a daily fiber supplement is important. Fiber can improve bowel habits, control hunger, feed the microbiome of the gut, and lower the risk of developing certain conditions such as hemorrhoids, diverticular disease, and colon cancer in some cases.
- Exercise. At least 30 minutes of daily cardiovascular exercise can help improve the body's metabolism of sugar and fat.
- Drink at least 64 oz. of water daily.
- Quit smoking and limit or

avoid alcohol consumption.

- Talk to a GI provider before starting a prebiotic or probiotic. These supplements can disrupt the normal healthy bacteria that live in the digestive tract, causing an overgrowth of bacteria that can lead to gastrointestinal disturbances.

Q: How does stress affect gut health and digestion?

A: Stress significantly impacts gastrointestinal health and digestion. There is a direct connection between the brain and the gut called the gut-brain axis. A network of nerves runs between the brain and the gut, allowing for two-way communication. Stress exacerbates GI health problems and poor gut health can negatively affect mood, concentration, and overall mental health. Extreme stress or anxiety, for example, can cause constipation or diarrhea, abdominal pain, acid reflux, and bloating. Managing stress and anxiety and seeking help from healthcare professionals is important not only for better GI health but also for improving overall physical and mental health.

Want more information on how to take care of your gastrointestinal health? Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Gastroenterology](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Gastroenterology).



Kathryn Peacher, MSN, FNP-C,
Gastroenterology



To schedule an appointment, please call **301-877-4599**.



7501 Surratts Road, Suite 206
Clinton, MD 20735



1.7 million American adults develop sepsis each year.

Knowing the signs and symptoms and taking fast action could save your life.

Sepsis, a life-threatening medical emergency, is the body's extreme response to an infection. Time matters when seeking treatment. Without treatment, sepsis can quickly cause severe damage to your internal organs and even lead to death.

Despite this threat, new national survey data released by MedStar Health shows that 81% of Americans do not know all of the signs and symptoms of sepsis, which takes a life every two minutes in the U.S. But knowing the signs and symptoms and getting immediate medical attention could save your life or the life of someone you love.

Sepsis can be complex to detect. It's a sneaky disease. Any infection can lead to sepsis, and anyone can develop sepsis. The risk increases for:

- Infants and the elderly
- People with chronic illnesses
- Those who recently had

- surgery or were hospitalized
- Those with a weakened or impaired immune system

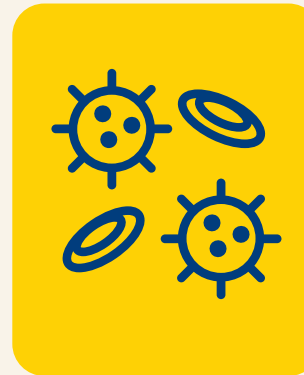
How do you know if you have an infection? Typical signs include feeling unwell; fever or drastic temperature change; pain, redness, discharge, swelling, or heat near a wound or surgical site; flu-like symptoms, like sore throat, vomiting, and diarrhea; and new, intense pain anywhere in the body.

"Sepsis happens when an infection you already have triggers a chain reaction of extreme responses throughout the body, potentially leading to tissue damage, organ failure, and death," said, Sharon O'Brien, MD, FCCP, chief Quality and Patient Safety officer at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital. "Early recognition of the warning signs and symptoms of sepsis can literally make the difference between life and death."

You can remember the warning signs and symptoms by using the acronym **SEPSIS**:

- **S** - Shivering, fever, or feeling very cold
- **E** - Extreme pain or discomfort
- **P** - Pale, discolored, clammy, or sweaty skin
- **S** - Sleepiness, confusion, or disorientation
- **I** - "I feel like I might die"
- **S** - Shortness of breath

By recognizing these signs and symptoms, and taking immediate action, you can save a life. Seek medical care immediately and ask your healthcare provider: "Could this be sepsis?" **Speaking up can save a life.**



Get ahead of sepsis.

Sepsis can progress rapidly, and the initial infection can progress to include organ dysfunction and shock. There are four ways to get ahead of sepsis.

- Practice good hygiene, washing hands often and ensuring wounds are covered with a clean, dry bandage until healed.
- Prevent infections by managing chronic conditions and getting recommended vaccines to prevent infections and lower sepsis risk.
- Know the signs and symptoms of sepsis.
- Act fast because sepsis is always a medical emergency.

Know the signs and symptoms of SEPSIS

Sepsis, a life-threatening medical emergency, is the body's extreme response to an infection. An estimated 81% of Americans do not know all of the signs and symptoms of sepsis, which takes a life every two minutes in the U.S.

S	E	P	S	I	S
Shivering, fever, or very cold	Extreme pain or discomfort	Pale, discolored, clammy, or sweaty skin	Sleepiness, confusion, or disorientation	"I feel like I might die"	Shortness of breath

Supporting healthy mothers and babies—One year of MedStar Southern Maryland’s and Prince George’s County Healthy Babies Program

One year ago, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center was awarded the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Healthy Start Initiative-Enhanced Grant, launching the Prince George’s County Healthy Babies program. The initiative assists the hospital and its community partners in improving health outcomes for women and babies before, during, and after pregnancy.

The hospital’s population and community health team has been dedicated to this vital program, delivering vital services to women and families throughout the community. Charmaine Ivey, director of population and community health, explained that in the past year, the program has become fully staffed, providing new mothers with the resources they need to lead healthier lives and help their babies thrive.

“The goal of this grant is to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality rates in Prince George’s County, which are currently higher than the national average,” she explained. “The program brings awareness to maternal health disparities, particularly among Black mothers, and ensures they receive the high-quality care they deserve.”

New program staff include:

- Program coordinator** - Oversees the grant and facilitates community services and events such as the recent community baby shower.
- Health educator** - Provides essential tools and information to new mothers, families planning for a child, or first-time pregnant women, empowering them with information to support a healthy journey into motherhood.
- Peer recovery coach** - Helps new mothers struggling with substance abuse by providing access to recovery programs that keep the family unit together throughout treatment and rehabilitation.
- Perinatal nurse navigator** - Works with pregnant women and new mothers to manage chronic conditions like gestational diabetes, hypertension, and preeclampsia, offers postnatal follow-up, and serves as a contact for any health-related questions.
- Lactation coordinator** - Provides education and assistance with breastfeeding, promoting the hospital’s Baby-Friendly USA designation by encouraging the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and baby.

Who can enroll in the program?

The Healthy Babies program is open to all new mothers in Prince George’s County, including anyone planning to conceive, currently pregnant, or who has recently given birth. Enrollment is free of charge, with no eligibility requirements beyond residency in Prince George’s County. Insurance is not necessary, as services are provided at no cost.



For more information or to enroll in the Healthy Babies Program, please contact pghealthystart@medstar.net.



Tidbit

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center named a Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Care Center—Only one of its kind in Prince George’s County

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center was recently designated as a Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Care Center through the National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s Partners in MS Care Program. MedStar Southern Maryland is the only hospital in Prince George’s County to receive this recognition, which is awarded to programs that demonstrate the highest level of knowledge and experience in treating MS, offer a full array of medical, nursing, mental health, rehabilitation, and social services, and have a strong collaborative relationship with the National MS Society.

“This designation is a critical milestone for patients in Prince George’s County, particularly because it marks the first time in over a decade that our community has access to a local MS specialist,” said Jemima Akinsanya, DO, neurologist and director of Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Center at MedStar Southern Maryland. “The center allows us to meet the

unique needs of MS patients in our diverse community. Our presence here means patients no longer need to travel far to receive expert care. The center is uniquely positioned to address health disparities and bring equitable access to cutting-edge MS care and research, early diagnosis, and treatment options for all patients, particularly those who have historically faced barriers to care.”

Advances in MS treatments and research provide patients with new hope for an improved quality of life. Neurologists at MedStar Southern Maryland are also specialists at the renowned Multiple Sclerosis and Neuroimmunology Center at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, DC, providing multidisciplinary, comprehensive care for patients in the community.

MedStar Southern Maryland’s Comprehensive MS Center provides holistic and cutting-edge care including access to the latest disease-modifying therapies, early diagnosis, and



participation in clinical trials that offer innovative treatments.

Access to advanced MS care is a priority.

“Our center’s focus on health equity means we actively seek out opportunities to address disparities in MS care, ensuring that underserved patients have access to the same high-quality care, treatment options, and access to clinical trials,” added Dr. Akinsanya.



Jemima Akinsanya, DO
Neurologist and director of the Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Center at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center



To schedule a consultation at the Comprehensive Multiple Sclerosis Center at MedStar Southern Maryland, please call **301-877-4540**.



Rapid response and stellar outcomes for patients earn recognition for heart attack care.

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center was recently redesignated a Maryland STEMI (ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction) Center, also known as a Cardiac Intervention Center (CIC), by the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services System (MIEMSS). The designation recognizes that MedStar Southern Maryland meets all standards for receiving patients experiencing myocardial infarction, or a heart attack, including having all required medical equipment, staff specially trained in serving the needs of patients with acute STEMI, and availability to receive heart attack patients 24/7.

While all hospitals are equipped to receive and treat heart attack patients, the designation as a STEMI Center recognizes

MedStar Southern Maryland's rapid response to receiving and immediately caring for patients experiencing a STEMI, the most common type of heart attack, leading to improved patient outcomes.

"Receiving re-designation as a STEMI Center demonstrates the seamless collaboration and close working relationship between emergency medical services (EMS), our emergency department (ED), and the various hospital providers and departments working together and quickly to save lives of



patients throughout the Southern Maryland region," stated Stephen Michaels, MD, FAAOS, FACHE, president, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and senior vice president, MedStar Health.



Award for high-quality stroke care sets MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center apart.

MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center received the American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke Gold Plus award for its commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate and timely treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines. This award demonstrates the hospital's commitment to delivering timely access

to the highest level of stroke care for patients throughout Prince George's County, leading to more lives saved.

Get With The Guidelines - Stroke is an in-hospital program for improving stroke care by promoting consistent adherence to national guidelines, which minimizes the long-term effects of a stroke and even prevents death. MedStar Southern Maryland qualified for the Get With The Guidelines - Stroke Gold quality award by providing

quality care for stroke patients, following comprehensive treatment guidelines, and educating patients to help them manage their health and recovery at home.

One of the busiest stroke centers in the region, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center is a designated primary stroke center by the Maryland Institute of EMS Systems (MIEMSS), providing lifesaving stroke care 24/7.

Heart & Soul

Helping you get to the heart of the matter.



Heart attack or angina?

Dr. Brian Case, Interventional Cardiologist, Explains Why an Accurate Diagnosis Could Be a Lifesaver

Pressure. Tightness. Chest pain. Is it a heart attack? Or is it angina?

"Angina is a squeezing, heavy pressure and pain in the chest that is a symptom of reduced blood flow to the heart," explained Brian Case, MD, director of interventional cardiology at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. "Angina is not a disease itself but rather a signal of underlying heart issues and can be a warning sign of a heart attack."

Types of angina

Angina is typically triggered by physical exertion or stress. Dr. Case stressed that any chest pain should be taken seriously and can be atypical, especially in women, or manifest as gastric reflux or stomach pain.

Stable angina, the most common form, usually occurs with exertion and goes away with rest. Unstable angina happens during rest. The chest pain worsens over time and lasts for several minutes. Unstable angina can result in a heart attack and requires immediate evaluation and treatment.

In most cases, angina is caused by atherosclerosis or obstructive coronary artery disease, the buildup of fatty plaque deposits in the large blood vessels that block blood flow to the heart.

Some patients, however, experience what is called angina with no obstructive coronary disease (ANOCA). "Disease of the tiny blood vessels around the heart like coronary microvascular disease is the cause of stable angina in about 40% of patients who were tested," said Dr. Case who noted that almost all patients can find relief from angina symptoms with treatment such as medication.

Cardiac catheterization - providing a complete picture

Cardiac catheterization is a minimally invasive procedure where interventional cardiologists guide thin, flexible tubes called catheters through blood vessels to identify and fix problems in the heart and coronary vessels.

"Cardiac catheterization provides us with a complete picture of what is causing chest pain," explained Dr. Case. "If there is a narrowing or

blockage, this can be treated by deploying a stent (percutaneous coronary intervention) to relieve the symptoms. If there is no narrowing, we can fully evaluate for ANOCA, make the diagnosis, and tailor medical therapy."

Utilizing advanced technology, cardiac catheterization procedures include:

- Measurement of pressure and flow in the heart's chambers
- Opening narrowed or blocked blood vessels
- Repairing or replacing damaged blood vessels or heart valves
- Biopsy of the heart muscle for advanced diagnosis of cardiac conditions

"If you have ongoing chest pain, talk with your doctor about seeing a cardiologist. If you've been told your heart is "normal" but still have symptoms, keep asking questions," said Dr. Case. "Between your persistence and our expertise, we can often relieve your angina symptoms and address any unseen cardiac issues."



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Case, please call **301-877-5677**.



Heart health strategies for every decade

Heart health is essential at every stage of life. About 659,000 people in the U.S. die from heart disease each year - about 1 in 4 deaths - according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

“Heart disease is more prevalent in patients 60 and older, but can develop much earlier in life,” explained Rania Kaoukis, MD, director of heart failure at MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center. “That’s why it is so important to live a heart-healthy lifestyle at every age. We all have an opportunity to prevent heart disease with healthy habits and a proactive mindset.”

How to maintain optimal cardiovascular health at every age

20s: Building Healthy Habits

The foundation for lifelong heart health begins in your 20s and even earlier.

- Get at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily. Incorporate weights to build muscle mass and add high-intensity aerobic exercise to keep your heart in tip-top shape.
- Skip fast food and add fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats (like avocados and nuts) into your diet.

- Avoid smoking. If you smoke, quit. Programs are available to help you become smoke-free.
- Schedule yearly check-ups with a primary care provider to establish your baseline for health and wellness.

30s and 40s: Stress Management and Prevention

- Maintain a healthy weight and eat a heart-healthy diet. Reduce saturated fats and limit processed foods high in sodium and sugar. Focus on portion control and daily physical activity to maintain your heart’s optimal pumping function.
- Get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- Know your family history. If heart disease runs in your family, start paying closer attention to your health and discuss risk factors with your doctor.
- Manage stress. Incorporate stress-relief techniques such as yoga, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.

50s, 60s: Focus on Risk Factors

During your 50s and 60s, focus on reducing controllable factors.

- Manage chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol

as directed by your doctor.

- Stay active and continue to eat a heart-healthy diet.
- Be aware of unusual fatigue, shortness of breath, swelling, or chest pain, which could be early signs of heart issues including congestive heart failure.

70s and Beyond: Protecting Your Heart

- Stay physically active.
- Manage conditions like atrial fibrillation, high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol with your healthcare provider to prevent disease progression and complications.
- Stay connected. Social isolation can negatively impact heart health. Maintain a support network of friends and family.

By following these age-specific tips, you can help maintain a strong, healthy heart throughout your life.



 **Rania Kaoukis, MD**



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.



Need to find a primary care provider or cardiologist? Visit [MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/FindADoc).



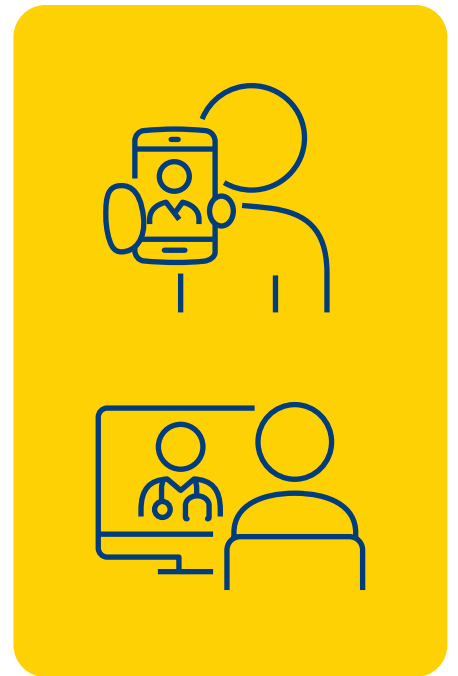
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