

Population and Community Health News

Advancing Health

MedStar Harbor Hospital



Connecting patients to essential services.

Program designed to support our communities.

Inside: Preventing diabetes through positive change. | Providing patients with healthy food options.

Letter from the President.



Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Advancing Health*, which highlights how MedStar Health is working to connect our hospitals' patient populations and local communities with the resources they need to live healthier lives. With so many aspects of our lives disrupted due to the pandemic during the past two years, the needs of area residents have never been greater. Our Population and Community Health teams have responded by stepping up our efforts in many innovative ways.

In this issue of *Advancing Health*, you'll read about three unique initiatives that are making a meaningful difference in people's lives. We highlight our community health advocates, who work to keep patients with chronic conditions out of the hospital by connecting them to needed social services—ultimately improving their health. We feature a program designed to help people prevent diabetes, an extremely important topic given the prevalence of this potentially fatal condition in the Baltimore region. Our third story focuses on food insecurity and the creative ways we are working to promote better health in our communities by increasing access to healthier foods.

Every day, we touch the lives of area residents in ways most people don't even think about. We are privileged to be able to address the community's needs in so many ways, but we know we couldn't do it alone. We are grateful for your support.

In good health,

Jill Donaldson, FACHE

President, MedStar Harbor Hospital
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health

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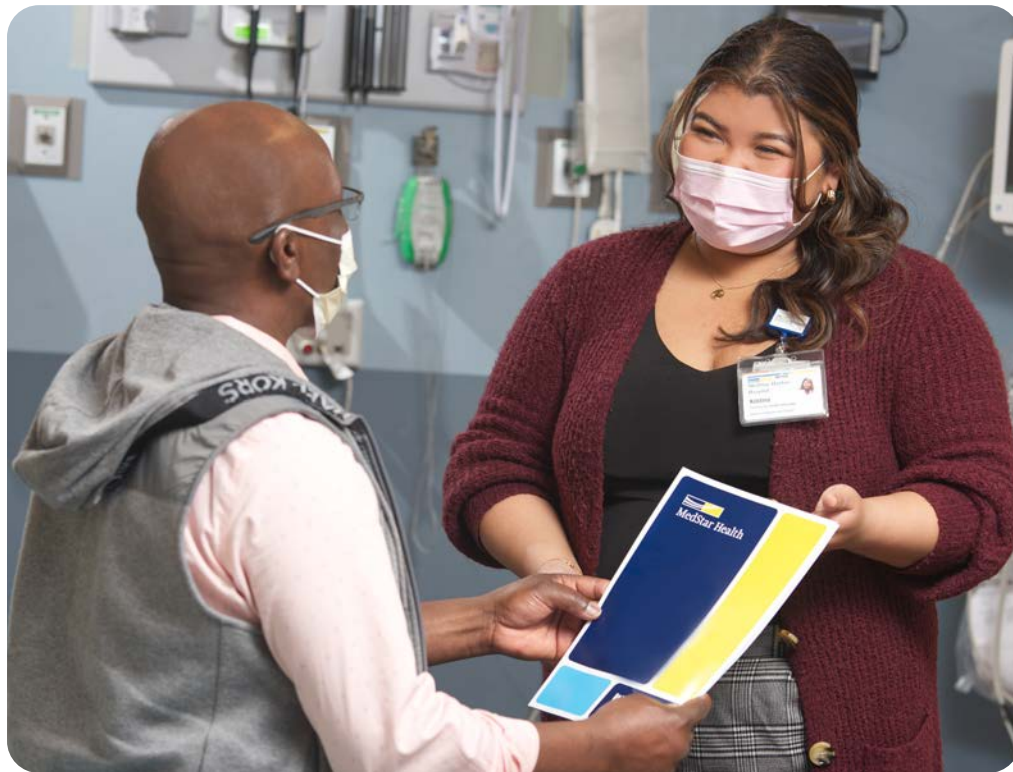
At MedStar Health, we offer easy access to great health care in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., via our 10 hospitals and more than 280 other care locations. We're also committed to advancing your care by continuously learning and applying new knowledge. We help our patients and their families feel understood, appreciated, and confident in their care. MedStar Harbor Hospital is proud to be part of MedStar Health. **It's how we treat people.**

Population and Community Health's mission: *Bridging gaps in health care by connecting the populations we serve with resources to enhance their health and wellbeing.*

On the cover: Meet Kristina Aquino, CCHW, certified community health worker and advocate, at MedStar Harbor Hospital.



Connecting patients to **essential services.**



Kristina Aquino, CCHW, a certified community health worker and advocate at MedStar Harbor Hospital, chats with a patient.

An innovative program developed by MedStar Health in 2017 is successfully connecting some of Baltimore's most in-need residents to hospital-based community health advocates (CHAs) who ensure they receive not only routine primary health care, but vital community services.

Called the Community Health Advocate program, the goal is to serve the needs of the community in a holistic way. The program is designed to support patients by engaging them in care and keeping them out of the hospital for chronic conditions, as well as to help them navigate the complex web of social services.

Offered at all four of MedStar Health's hospitals and affiliated clinics in the Baltimore area, the program now employs 28 full-time CHAs who live in the communities they serve and are therefore well suited to assist in-need patients with accessing resources.

The CHAs are integrated into each hospital's case management teams and participate in post-discharge care planning for patients who are identified as most likely to need support after they leave the hospital. Once these patients are discharged, the CHAs help link them to community-based services that can assist with social needs such

as housing, food access, and utility assistance. The CHAs also provide ongoing support during home visits, helping to ensure that patients are not faced with barriers that might interfere with their health or accessing care. They share their own experiences, which are often similar and help to forge a relationship with their patients.

Kristina Aquino, CCHW, a CHA at MedStar Harbor Hospital, sees the positive impact the program has on a daily basis. "Many of the individuals we work with have non-medical challenges that can interfere with and impact their health. A lot of them are seniors with mobility issues. We help them with anything they might need. They truly appreciate having someone they know and can trust to turn to for help."

Since the program began, the CHAs have helped patients who have been threatened with turn-off notices keep their power on. They've helped patients receive aid to retrofit homes with wheelchair ramps and grab bars to increase mobility and independence. They have even helped patients sign up for food stamps and connected primary caregiver family members with financial resources.

"The patients we assist are so grateful and thankful. It is very heartwarming," says Aquino. "We make sure they are being helped the way they deserve."

For more information about our services, visit [MedStarHealth.org/CommunityHealth](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/CommunityHealth).

Preventing diabetes through positive change.

Odds are you know at least one person with diabetes. And the odds are even greater that you know at least one of the 86 million Americans with prediabetes. The thing is, only 9 million of those with prediabetes know they have it and 15 to 30% of them will develop type 2 diabetes within 5 years.

It's a big problem, especially when you consider that diabetes is one of the leading causes of death in Maryland. The good news is that there are things you can do to prevent prediabetes from advancing to type 2 diabetes. That's the goal of the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), which is offered by MedStar Health hospitals in the Baltimore region to address this chronic disease.



Rebecca Hartnett, a community health project coordinator, teaches the virtual DPP class.

"Prediabetes is a condition in which individuals have high blood glucose or hemoglobin A1C levels but they are not high enough to be classified as diabetics," explains Karen R. Polite-Lamma, MSN, RN, program manager, Population and Community Health for MedStar Health, Baltimore region. "By developing and maintaining healthy lifestyle changes, prediabetes can be reversed."

Developed specifically for people who have prediabetes or are at risk for type 2 diabetes, the program is modeled after the National Diabetes Prevention Program, an initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). It features a CDC-approved curriculum and trained lifestyle coaches who closely support participants throughout the program. But it's not a quick fix. Rather, it's focused on long-term changes and lasting results.

The group-based program consists of 16 sessions over 6 months, followed by 6 additional monthly sessions, led by a coach who facilitates small groups of people with similar goals. The group support is just as important as the coaching. "We discuss topics such as healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and losing weight as well as behavioral changes," says Polite-Lamma. "A goal of the program is to help participants lose 5 to 7% of their body weight."

Research has shown that if a person with prediabetes loses just 5 to 7% of their body weight through healthier eating and the incorporation of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week, their risk of developing type 2 diabetes can be reduced by as much as 58%. "For a person who weighs 200 pounds, losing 5 to 7% of their body weight means losing just 10 to 14 pounds. It doesn't take a drastic



Rebecca Peterson, CCHW, certified community health worker and advocate, leads the in-person class.

weight loss to make a big impact," Polite-Lamma says.

Classes are held at various community-based sites across the greater Baltimore area and online. New programs are available continuously so that individuals interested in participating don't have to wait long to get started. "The key to the program is to follow all the steps," notes Polite-Lamma. "If you do that, the weight comes off in no time."

For more information about the Diabetes Prevention Program offered through MedStar Health, call **855-218-2435**.

**Do you know your diabetes risk?
Take this test today!**

Scan this QR code with your smartphone and take a one-minute quiz to determine your risk for diabetes.



Providing patients with healthy food options.



Many chronic conditions, such as diabetes, can be better managed by following a specific diet. Unfortunately, a lot of patients with these conditions have tight budgets and cannot afford the fresh and nutrient-rich foods they need. Plus, many patients have limited access to supermarkets and other locations where healthy food can be obtained.

MedStar Harbor Hospital is doing its part to change this with the launch of Food Rx in the near future. Designed to serve patients with chronic health conditions and food insecurity, the program is being made possible through the generosity of the Stulman Foundation, funding from the American Rescue Plan Act in partnership with Baltimore City Department of Food Policy & Planning, and support from numerous corporate partners.

"Food Rx, modeled after our program at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, will provide patients who are managing chronic diseases with easy access to fresh, healthy food," explains Lucas Carlson, MD, regional medical director, Care Transformation, MedStar Health, Baltimore City. "The goal of Food Rx is to treat food as medicine to support patients in managing their health for the long term."

As part of the program, patients receive ongoing one-on-one consultations with a dietitian and are provided food options tailored to their individual needs.

"Food plays a huge role in a person's overall ability to be healthy," says Dr. Carlson. "Eating the 'right' balance of food types is particularly important for individuals with conditions such as diabetes. This program, established on an evidence-based model, has



Angela Roberson, RD/LDN, a population health dietitian with Food Rx at MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, talks with a patient about healthy food choices.

proven to result in marked reductions in patient weight, blood sugar levels, emergency room usage, and total costs of care."

Food Rx is stocked with a wide variety of non-perishable items as well as healthy fresh and frozen food options, thanks to partnerships with several other organizations. In addition to their food supply, patients are provided with a welcome kit including measuring cups and spoons, recipes, and nutritional information to use at home as well as cooking instruction and educational programming.

"Through this initiative, we are able to 'prescribe' and supply patients with

the type of meals that will help keep their disease under control," Dr. Carlson says. "Based upon each patient's needs, they receive a 2-week supply of food bi-weekly for a minimum of 6 months. This supply includes enough food to feed the patient as well as his or her household."

Food Rx will be one of several services offered through MedStar Harbor to patients who screen positive for food insecurity. Depending on their needs and individual circumstances, patients may be linked to Hungry Harvest, which delivers boxes of fresh produce and other items to their homes, or resources such as SNAP, Meals on Wheels, or Movable Feast.

Community class schedules.

At MedStar Health, we care about the health and wellness of our community. One of the ways we try to keep you healthy and active is by offering a variety of free and low-cost special classes, events, and screenings at our local MedStar Health hospitals. They include the following:



BIRTH AND FAMILY CLASSES

Prepared Childbirth Weekend Express or 4-Week Series

Preparing mother and her birth partner for labor and childbirth. Offered 1 full day or as a 4-week series (1 night/week).

Breastfeeding: Facts, Myths, and Techniques

Taught by a board-certified lactation consultant to help you get breastfeeding off to a good start.

Infant Care and Safety Class

For expectant and new parents, grandparents, and babysitters. Learn bathing, diapering, and other skills to care for your baby.

Infant and Child CPR

Ideal for expectant parents, daycare providers, and loved ones caring for your baby.

Infant and Child First Aid

Classes can be taken separately or together with CPR (discount applies if taken at the same time). These classes meet the state requirement for daycare providers.

To learn more and register for these classes, visit [MedStarHealth.org/BirthFamilyClasses](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/BirthFamilyClasses) or call **888-746-2852**.

CANCER PREVENTION

Breast and Cervical Cancer Screenings

Call **410-350-2066** for details.

Colon Cancer Screening

Call **410-350-8216** to learn more.

Lung Cancer Screening

Call **410-591-6969** for more information.

DIABETES PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

Diabetes Prevention Program

A program for people with prediabetes, who want to reduce their risk for type 2 diabetes. Lifestyle change, 12-month program. Offered virtually or in person.

Call **855-218-2435** for details.

Diabetes Education

If you have diabetes, our educational classes can teach you about self-management of your disease, medical nutrition therapy, continuous glucose monitoring, and more. Virtual appointments are available.

Call **410-554-4511** for details.



Get the care you need

Knowing you need to see a doctor is one thing. Sometimes, being able to actually get to a doctor's office is another. The MedStar Health Mobile Health Center offers a solution in neighborhoods across South Baltimore. It makes it easier than ever before for you to focus on your health and wellness and get care when you need it. For details and locations, visit [MedStarHealth.org/MobileHealthCenter](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/MobileHealthCenter).





Community services for your convenience.

PNC Bank's Mobile Branch often visits MedStar Harbor Hospital's campus. The mobile banking truck, located in the parking lot across the street between S. Hanover Street and Potee Street, allows you to do your everyday banking on our campus.

Services provided:

- **One-to-one banking:** Our Mobile Branch gives you the opportunity to meet with a personal banker for financial guidance and support.
- **Mobile branch services:** Apply for checking and savings accounts, receive or replace your PNC debit card on-site, apply for a credit card, discuss lending options, and more.
- **Mobile branch ATM:** Deposit cash or checks without an envelope, withdraw or transfer funds, check balances and set personal preferences such as preferred language, fast cash, and receipt selections.

To see when PNC's mobile banking truck will be at MedStar Harbor Hospital, call **410-350-3200**.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Amputee Support Group

Email jennifer.mcdivitt@medstar.net for details.

Concussion Support Group

Email kate.c.gerber@medstar.net for details.

Stroke Support Group

Email kate.c.gerber@medstar.net for details.

WELLNESS AND PREVENTION

Tobacco Cessation

Learn to quit smoking with support from our certified tobacco cessation experts. Free 4-week virtual or in-person classes.

Call **855-218-2435** to register or visit MedStarHealth.org/StopSmoking.

HIV Support and Education

Free rapid HIV testing, referrals for medical treatment, and support services.

Call **443-980-9889** for more information.





Safe disposal of your **prescription medicines.**

If you have expired drugs or medications you no longer use, you may have questions about how to dispose of them properly.

Often unused prescription drugs find their way into the wrong hands. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), unused or expired medication is a public safety concern leading to potentially accidental poisoning, misuse, and occasional overdose. Proper disposal of unused drugs saves lives and protects the environment.

Drug Take Back Programs

MedStar Health hospitals in the Baltimore region have introduced a safe and secure way to dispose of your unwanted medications. The pharmacies, located at MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center, MedStar Good Samaritan Hospital, MedStar Harbor Hospital, and MedStar Union Memorial Hospital, have installed Drug Take Back boxes. The Drug Take Back box is a secure receptacle that allows the community to properly dispose of old, unwanted, and unused medications.

All narcotics are accepted. If you have or know someone who has these medications, bring them to our hospital locations to dispose of them safely and securely. The box does not allow you to dispose of liquids, syringes, lotions, thermometers, aerosol cans, hydrogen peroxide, and illegal drugs.



To learn more about Drug Take Back options, visit [TakeBackDay.DEA.gov](https://www.dea.gov/takebackday), or your local drugstore or police station.