

# Healthy Living



**Bariatric  
surgery offers  
healthier future**



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# Letter from the president

Dear friends,

"How are you?" is a question asked and answered countless times each day. From the friendly supermarket cashier to a parent checking in, it can be a passing pleasantry—an impulse, a habit. Maybe we listen for the answer, or even share an honest one; perhaps we move along without registering someone's response, or fully considering our own. Regardless, the words carry weight. The question is deeply personal. And while wellness looks and feels different for each person, the need to practice self-care is universal: we cannot pour from an empty cup.

What does wellbeing look like to you? Perhaps it's catching up with an old friend, working in the garden, or slowing down to enjoy your morning coffee on the porch. For me, family walks with my husband and daughters and our dog bring me happiness on challenging days. Whatever makes you feel calmer, happier, and stronger—I encourage you to find moments of joy as ways to care for yourself.

In doing so, pause and listen to your body. For some, that might mean stopping in to visit a care provider you haven't seen in a while. If you're among the thousands of Americans who canceled or deferred a health screening or annual exam in the last two years, you're not alone! Screenings for cervical cancer were down 10% in 2021, compared to historical averages; thousands of women who would have normally received this important exam did not. If you're behind, make a plan to get your appointments on the books. **Screenings save lives.**

Whether your needs involve routine or specialized care, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital continues to grow to meet our community's needs. In this issue of *Healthy Living*, you'll meet Dr. Jorawer Singh, fellowship-trained ophthalmologist and surgeon, with insights into how we see. Dr. Anand Nath discusses lifestyle changes that can help alleviate common gastrointestinal symptoms, and Dr. Frank Chen is welcoming new patients for expert ear, nose, and throat care.

As always, we are grateful for your continued support of our hospital. Philanthropy takes center stage in this edition, showcasing our Hospital Auxiliary and the many ways we have been fortunate to benefit from their generosity. Also, please save the date for Oct. 21: we are excited to welcome our community partners back to our black-tie gala this fall.

Wherever this summer may take you, I wish you good health.

Best regards,

Mimi Novello, MD, MBA, FACEP

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital of St. Mary's County, its Medical Staff and Auxiliary, are non-discriminating in their admission, treatment, employment and membership policies. The hospital employs, offers membership, renders treatment and receives vendor services without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin or ancestry, marital status or status as a qualified disabled individual. Patients receive considerate and respectful care at MedStar St. Mary's regardless of the source of payment. MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's Payment Assistance Program provides free or reduced charges for care to patients who receive inpatient and outpatient services. This program is available for individuals who are not eligible to receive medical assistance from the state and meet specific income requirements. If you are interested in finding out if you qualify for payment assistance, please contact our Credit Office at 301-475-6039.

# Q&A with Jorawer Singh, MD, MS Ophthalmologist and cataract, cornea, and refractive eye surgeon

## Four eye-opening questions

**Q. To the surprise of many patients, you often explain that it isn't our eyes that actually "see." How is this possible?**

**A.** At their most basic, eyes work just like cameras and even resemble them. While iPhones take pictures with 15-megapixel cameras, eyes render images with a resolution of 100 million megapixels. We can see in greater detail than even the best cameras. That being said, eyes merely convert light into electrical signals sent to the brain. There, more than 90% of visual data is deleted. The remaining 10% is integrated from both eyes and dynamically enhanced. Details like depth perception, color, and context are added in. We even store memories—we look at pictures to remember loved ones, for example. So much of our identity exists in the world we see, and so much of what we see defines who we are. That is why declining vision accelerates dementia, and why holding onto good vision in old age matters greatly.

**Q. Refractive (laser eye/vision correction) surgery has become a routine procedure. Can you explain what it is, and who is a candidate?**

**A.** Although we would all wish to be born with spherical eyes, most eyes are either too short or too long. Laser vision correction uses light pulses to remodel the eye's surface in order to move the focal point onto the retina. Candidates for vision correction have the severity of their length mismatched compared to the thickness of their corneas. Almost everyone is a candidate for laser vision correction, with the exception of those with especially short or long



eyes, or patients with thin corneas; these groups are usually better candidates for lens based refractive surgery.

**Q. It's understandable that patients may be nervous before any surgical procedure. What is recovery usually like?**

**A.** It is often said ophthalmologists become nauseous at the sight of blood. While that may be an

exaggeration, it is true that we are privileged to work in a painless, minimally invasive specialty. Most cases take 10-15 minutes, and recovery times usually average 24-72 hours. We relish hearing a 70-year-old tell us, "I couldn't see this well even in my 20s." As someone who has had refractive surgery himself, I can say there is no reason to be anxious.

**Q. You are passionate about giving back. Can you tell us about your experiences on surgical mission trips?**

**A.** Traveling to work in charity hospitals in Ecuador, Colombia, and India gave me an opportunity to work with surgeons operating in very resource-limited areas. I quickly learned I had nothing to teach them; on the contrary, they were already achieving world-class outcomes despite obvious financial disadvantages. These visits taught me how less is more and laid bare my arrogance in thinking I was going there to give back. In reality, they taught me skills I will continue using for the rest of my career. I feel I come back from each of these trips a radically better surgeon. My goal is to spend one month abroad each year doing charity cases, and I hope I am able to stick to that!



Dr. Singh treats a wide variety of eye-related conditions with surgery performed at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Eye](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Eye) to learn more.

**MedStar Eye Physicians at Charlotte Hall**  
30065 Business Center Drive, Suite 1  
Charlotte Hall, MD 20622  
P 301-290-5915  
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**Bariatric surgery has helped Robert Newton get back to physical activities he enjoys, including wrestling and weightlifting. The procedure has been a valuable tool in his weight-loss journey helping him lose 125 pounds.**

# A healthier future

Bariatric surgery gives local wrestling coach added momentum in weight-loss journey.

For Robert Newton, 2021 was a life-changing year. Not only did he become a father for the first time, but he also made the decision to undergo a procedure to change the course of his health—bariatric surgery.

"I have always been a big person," said Robert, 28, of Mechanicsville. "I didn't really have any health issues other than joint pain, but I could see the writing on the wall. I have a lot of diabetes and heart disease in my family, things I know could go wrong if I stayed the weight I was."

During his college years, Robert played football and was an avid weightlifter and, like many athletes,

learned a lot about nutrition. Following college, however, the pounds started adding up.

"I was 394 pounds at my heaviest," said Robert. "At the time I decided to have the surgery, my son was on the way. That is the other reason I wanted to get the surgery because I wanted to be healthy for my son."

Robert started researching bariatric surgery in November 2020. A simple internet search led him to **Nicholas Tapazoglou, MD**, bariatric surgeon with MedStar St. Mary's Hospital in Leonardtown.

"I had a consultation with Dr. Tapazoglou to see what the program was all about. I was told I would have to take six months of nutrition classes before the surgery," said Robert. "I started my first class in December 2020, and I had the surgery the following June."

Robert admits he has always struggled with weight, although he was never a fad dieter switching between popular weight-loss programs.

"I am just a cheap person," he joked. "All of my friends make fun of me for being cheap—I did not want to pay for anything. I tried counting calories and reducing carbs, but it was hard to stay motivated and I kept falling off the wagon."

"Robert was the perfect candidate for weight loss surgery because he was motivated to change his lifestyle and non-surgical methods were not working for him. He understands that any weight loss surgery will not work in the long term without commitment."

Following the nutrition classes, Robert underwent a vertical gastric sleeve procedure. The surgery, which is minimally invasive and performed through four or five small incisions, reduces the size of the stomach to only hold about three to four ounces. Robert had surgery on a Thursday and returned home on Saturday. He said he had no complications other than the expected post-surgery nausea



**Robert Newton made the decision to have bariatric surgery when he and his wife, Gabby, were expecting their first child.**

which went away quickly and has not returned. The hardest part of the recovery for Robert was not being able to lift his three-month-old son.

"For about eight weeks, I couldn't lift more than a gallon of milk," said Robert. "That was hard with a three-month-old."

Robert followed a progressive diet after surgery, moving from liquids to a soft diet to a modified diet with regular foods. The weight quickly began to drop off and Robert was

losing a pound or two a day.

"I think one of the biggest challenges I had was making sure to separate liquids and foods at meals," said Robert. "If I ate a meal, I could not drink anything for 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after. It was something to get used to, but I was mentally prepared for whatever I had to do to make a positive change in my life."

Five months post-surgery, Robert had lost approximately 100 pounds. Although his weight loss has slowed, he is still losing and, as of April, was 125 pounds down from his pre-surgery weight which has allowed him to return to physical activities he enjoys.

"Most patients will reach their weight loss 'plateau' between 6 to 9 months post-operatively," said Dr. Tapazoglou. "The average patient is expected to lose between 50-70% of their 'excess body weight,' which is their weight above their 'ideal body weight.' For the majority of patients, this means reducing their weight below the dangerous morbid obesity classification."

"This is the lightest I've been since high school," said Robert, who coaches wrestling at a local high school. "I am back in the gym and lifting weights like I used to. I recently wrestled in an open wrestling tournament, and I placed first in the tournament which is awesome! I proved to myself I still have it a little bit. I feel like now I can do whatever I want to do."

Approaching a year after his surgery, Robert said he has no regrets about his decision.

"Bariatric surgery is a tool, and it has helped me so much," he said. "It put me on the right trajectory and I'm able to keep going."



Visit [MedStarHealth.org/BariatricSurgery](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/BariatricSurgery) to learn more about bariatric surgery or to start your journey to a healthier future.

## Robotic assisted bariatric surgery means faster healing, better outcomes for patients.

Although she had been considering it for several years, Stacy Tobin of Mechanicsville was not sure she would be a suitable candidate for bariatric surgery. Having had multiple surgeries, she was afraid scar tissue would prevent her from being able to undergo what she hoped would be a life-changing procedure. Then she met bariatric surgeon **Nicholas Tapazoglou, MD**, with MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

Recently diagnosed with diabetes and an autoimmune disorder and having difficulty with her knees due to her weight, Stacy finally made the decision to put her health first and scheduled a consultation with Dr. Tapazoglou.

"I really liked how straightforward Dr. Tapazoglou was with me," Stacy said. "He did not speak doctor mumbo jumbo to me, he just talked to me like a normal person and was not judgmental about my reasons or my struggles. He was honest with me about how the surgery could help and the responsibilities I would have if I decided to have it."

During her consultation, Dr. Tapazoglou reviewed Stacy's medical records and discussed her previous surgeries with her—a C-section, hysterectomy, and appendectomy. He assured Stacy that she could undergo the gastric sleeve procedure.

"We began performing bariatric da Vinci procedures at MedStar St. Mary's in January of 2022," said Dr. Tapazoglou. "This

technology allows a greater degree of precision and control using small incisions, which translates to better outcomes for our patients."

During robotic surgery, a surgeon makes several small incisions each about the size of a fingertip and uses a camera and tiny instruments to complete the operation. The system delivers 3D, high-definition views magnifying the surgical area 10 times what the human eye sees. The instruments move like a human hand in real time but with smooth precision and an increased range of motion.

"Since starting to use the robot, I am finding that patients have less post-operative discomfort and shorter hospital stays," said Dr. Tapazoglou. "I am always striving to improve patient outcomes and get patients back to their lives as happy and healthy as possible."

Stacy, who is 45, underwent the gastric sleeve bypass procedure on Valentine's Day, Feb. 14. She had no complications from the surgery, returned home quickly, and never had to take pain relievers after leaving the hospital. Approximately two months later, she was down 35 pounds.

"I cannot even say I was scared about having the procedure," said Stacy, "because I just had peace about my decision and about Dr. Tapazoglou. I was just excited because this felt like this was the first day of the rest of my life."

## Robotic surgery: Putting technology to work.

These surgeons perform a variety of procedures with the assistance of the robotic surgical equipment.

### Da Vinci Xi surgical system

#### Sameer Alrefai, MD



General surgeon  
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital  
Call 240-434-4088.

#### Gustavo J. Franco Vasquez, MD



General surgeon  
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital  
Call 240-434-4088.

#### Arthur Greenwood, MD



Obstetrics and Gynecological surgeon  
MedStar Medical Group Women's Health  
Call 301-997-1788.

#### Tushar Samdani, MD



Colon and Rectal surgeon  
MedStar Shah Medical Group  
Call 301-373-7900.

#### Nicholas Tapazoglou, MD



General and Bariatric surgeon  
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital  
Call 240-434-4088.

### ROSA robotic knee system

#### Daniel Bauk, MD



Orthopaedic surgeon  
Southern Maryland Orthopaedic & Sports Medicine Center  
Call 301-475-5555.

## MedStar St. Mary's Hospital welcomes Dr. Mimi Novello as president, CMO

In January, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital welcomed a new president and chief medical officer (CMO), **Mimi Novello, MD, MBA, FACEP**. Although Dr. Novello was excited to move to a hospital with a strong record of delivering quality, safe patient care, it was her family's ties to the Southern Maryland area that gave the transition deeper meaning.

"My grandmother was born and raised on a farm in Hughesville, and we were incredibly close," said Dr. Novello. "I am really delighted to be able to care for people in the community that was part of her heritage."

Dr. Novello grew up in Bethesda, "back when it was a quiet suburb," she said, and attended Georgetown University and Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri, which is where Dr. Novello discovered her passion for emergency medicine. She completed an internship at Rhode Island Hospital and her residency at the Medical College of Pennsylvania.

"After my residency, I really wanted to come back home again," said Dr. Novello. "I missed the D.C. area and wanted to work with an outstanding group of emergency clinicians. That is how I ended up at MedStar Franklin Square Medical Center."

There Dr. Novello joined MedStar Emergency Physicians and quickly became part of the leadership team, eventually moving into the role of vice chair of the Emergency Department. She spent 22 years at MedStar Franklin Square, where she became the chief medical officer in 2017.

"MedStar Franklin Square was a wonderful place and my time there was a great learning experience," she said. "I learned a lot about leadership and informatics. Quality and safety are my passion, and community benefits, community health, and outreach are all things I really enjoy. I think this comes from my ER days."

Having served on numerous committees and boards as part of MedStar Health, Dr. Novello said she was always impressed with MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's reputation for outstanding care.

"MedStar St. Mary's has had remarkable success in quality metrics and that happens because of the dedication of its leaders and staff," she said. "I value innovation and I think when presented with problems, the collaborative teams at MedStar St. Mary's come together to solve challenges. That is how we move forward as an organization and improve care for our patients."

"Since coming here, I have felt warmly welcomed and supported, and I am very appreciative of that," said Dr. Novello. "I cannot imagine being anywhere else."



### About Dr. Novello

#### Member of:

- American College of Emergency Physicians
- American College of Physician Executives
- American College of Healthcare Executives

#### Committees/boards:

- MedStar Health Capacity and Throughput Task Force, co-chair
- Catholic Charities of Central Maryland Board of Directors
- Physician representative on the American Hospital Association Region Three Policy Board
- Chesapeake Potomac Healthcare Alliance Board of Directors
- Chesapeake Potomac Home Health Alliance
- Southern Maryland Navy Alliance



## #2YearsStrong

### Flag exhibit honors healthcare team's dedication

On March 23, 2020, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital admitted its first confirmed COVID-19 positive inpatient. As of March, nearly 1,200 inpatients had been cared for in our community hospital—a number that increases greatly when we consider all those for whom we have cared for in the Emergency Department, drive-thru testing, monoclonal antibody infusion centers, vaccine clinics, and other additional services. On March 22, staff and medical providers commemorated the two-year anniversary of the pandemic with a flag exhibit at the main entrance of the hospital.

## Workforce wellbeing

### MedStar Health supporting employees with new center devoted to boosting wellness, quality of life

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the daily lives of healthcare workers became increasingly complex. To help its employees manage the day-to-day stresses of work and home, MedStar Health recently launched the new MedStar Health Center for Wellbeing.

"For the past four years, MedStar Health has built robust wellbeing programs that support wellness, professional satisfaction, and quality of life for its associates," said **Daniel Marchalik, MD**, executive director of the new center. "The MedStar Health Center for Wellbeing signals a significant new investment in our workforce and a commitment to creating and growing programs that focus on the needs of not only our clinicians but all of our associates who have been fighting the pandemic in some capacity for two full years now."

The Center for Wellbeing will function as a new incubation center within the MedStar Institute for Innovation and will focus on the research and development of best practices and programs. In 2021 MedStar Health earned the Joy in Medicine™ distinction from the American Medical Association (AMA).

"Through the center's creation, we are both elevating MedStar Health's internal wellbeing priorities, and striving to serve as a national leader in wellbeing innovation, research, and education more broadly," said Dr. Marchalik.



Wellness rounds is one of many programs aimed at improving employee wellbeing at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

### Tips for maintaining workplace wellness

**Heather Hartman-Hall, PhD**, clinical director of Behavioral Health Initiatives for the MedStar Health Center for Wellbeing offers the following suggestions for maintaining your workplace wellbeing.

#### Focus on where you have control

We may not be able to control the demands of work, our work conditions, or others' perceptions of us, but we can control how we approach our work, how we behave, and how we care for ourselves. And consider speaking up if you have ideas to solve problems at work.

#### Get rid of the guilt

If you are going to function at your best, you must take care of yourself—you are not being selfish.

#### Set boundaries

These days we can be plugged into work 24/7. Taking actual breaks from thinking about and engaging in work is essential so that you can recharge and reconnect with other important things in your life.

#### Refocus on meaning

When we find our work meaningful and see purpose in what we do, the challenges and demands are more manageable, and we derive more enjoyment from the work. Remind yourself why your role is important and look for how you make an impact.

#### Look for the positive

It is easy to focus on things we are worried about or that aren't going well. Try making the "Three Good Things" exercise part of your daily routine—look for three things you are grateful for or that are going well each day.

#### Talk it over

Whether you are trying to set self-care goals, feeling overwhelmed with something at work, or in a low mood and you are not sure why, talking it over with someone who can help you feel supported or get clarity about what to do next. Talk to someone you trust at work or in your personal life or consider talking to a mental health professional or coach.

Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Wellbeing](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Wellbeing) for more information about wellness resources at MedStar Health.

## Meet our new medical professionals.

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is pleased to introduce the newest members of our medical staff. We strive to bring high-quality physicians and specialists to Southern Maryland to meet our community's needs close to home. For a full list of local MedStar Health provider resources, visit [MedStarHealth.org/Doctors](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Doctors) for individual doctor profiles.



**Samer Jabbour, MD**  
Reconstructive plastic surgery, plastic surgery

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital welcomes Samer Jabbour, MD, a fellowship-trained plastic and reconstructive surgeon. Dr. Jabbour specializes in breast reconstruction, microsurgery, body contouring, and cosmetic surgery.

Dr. Jabbour completed five years of plastic surgery residency, along with three different specialty fellowship trainings in cosmetic and reconstructive plastic surgery, after earning his medical doctorate from Saint Joseph's University Medical School. He did his first fellowship at the Groupe Hospitalier Paris Saint-Joseph hospital in Paris, France, and then underwent another year of

fellowship training with a focus on reconstructive plastic surgery at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Dr. Jabbour went on to complete a third year of specialty training at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, where he focused on advanced breast reconstruction techniques.

Dr. Jabbour is accepting new patients. Call **240-434-4088** for more information.



**Lukas Blignaut, MD**  
Radiology

**Employed by:**  
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital

**Medical school:**  
University of Pretoria



**Wendy Lobo, AGACNP-BC**  
Vascular Surgery

**Employed by:**  
MedStar St. Mary's Hospital

**Medical school:**  
Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine



## Auxiliary's support of student scholarships establishes new endowment

Since 1916, the all-volunteer **MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Auxiliary** (pictured above) has led many efforts to strengthen our non-profit organization. Decades of volunteer work and community patronage at the hospital's gift shop and participation in past events—including ADF Bingo, golf tournaments, sales and bazaars—have funded hospital renovations and medical equipment, allowed for the purchase of patient experience items, and much more.

In 2021, the Auxiliary made a generous \$425,000 donation to establish the hospital's new **Scholarship Endowment** for Southern Maryland students pursuing healthcare careers. The fund continues to build toward the

\$2.5 million goal needed to award annual scholarships in perpetuity. "At a time when there is an especially great need for healthcare workers, our community and volunteers are helping to support today's students as they prepare for tomorrow's patients," said Holly Meyer, director of Marketing, Public Relations & Philanthropy, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. "Fully funding the Scholarship Endowment will allow us to refocus fundraising our efforts on important equipment and



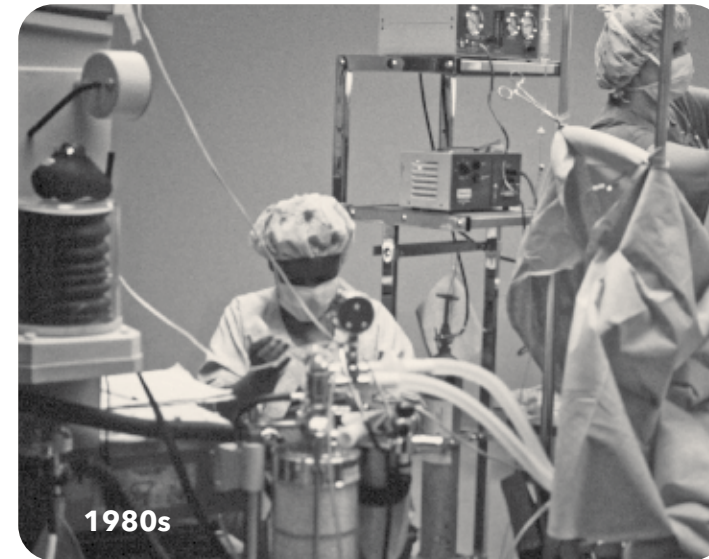
Partner with us! Visit [Giving.MedStarHealth.org/MSMHDDonate](https://giving.medstarhealth.org/MSMHDDonate) and select "Scholarship Endowment Fund" under "Designation" to join in supporting our future healthcare team.

infrastructure priorities—critical needs to continue delivering outstanding service to our residents."

Awarded each spring by the Philanthropy Committee of the hospital's Board of Directors, the scholarship supports individuals pursuing nursing, respiratory therapy, imaging, laboratory services, and many other related health fields. More than 170 recipients have benefited since 2001. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/StMarysScholarship](https://medstarhealth.org/StMarysScholarship) to learn more.

### FUNDING PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

## Renovations to Central Sterile.



Our commitment to delivering outstanding care at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital hasn't changed. And, since 1984, neither has much in the space of the Central Sterile processing department.

While surgical services keep expanding, now through robotic-assisted procedures with da Vinci Xi (above right), our small area for sterile processing has not kept pace with this progress.

### Who relies on Central Sterile?

**Patients in every area of the hospital**, who must receive care with specially-cleaned tools to prevent infection.

Whether you have:

- Had surgery
- Welcomed a baby
- Undergone a diagnostic procedure, like an endoscopy
- Or many other events...

You have been touched by the services of the Central Sterile team.

We're seeking  
**\$60,000**  
toward renovations and equipment to expand and modernize Central Sterile.

**\$2.4 million**  
in state bond awards have already been secured for these important upgrades.

Help shape the future of MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. Visit [Giving.MedStarHealth.org/MSMHDDonate](https://giving.medstarhealth.org/MSMHDDonate) to give online, earmarking "Central Sterile" in the comments box. To learn more, contact Holly Meyer, director of Marketing, Public Relations & Philanthropy, at **301-475-6010** or [holly.b.meyer@medstar.net](mailto:holly.b.meyer@medstar.net). Thank you!

# News briefs



## Braveheart Award honors team's dedication

During National Public Health Week in April, the St. Mary's County Health Department honored MedStar St. Mary's Hospital with a Braveheart Award in recognition of our COVID-19 efforts. The Commissioners of St. Mary's County also issued a commendation in recognition of the team's "compassion, integrity, and professionalism," stating, "You are a true example of bravery in times of challenge."

Accepting on behalf of MedStar St. Mary's Hospital were president and CMO **Mimi Novello, MD, MBA, FACEP**, pictured second from left; **Lori Werrell, MPH, MCHES**, assistant vice president, care transformation, southern region, MedStar Health; and **Stephen Michaels, MD, FACHE**, president of MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, formerly chief operating and chief medical officer, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.



## Wound Healing Center of Distinction

The Wound Healing Center at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital was named a 2021 Healogics Center of Distinction, honored for achieving outstanding clinical and operational results last year! The team maintained its patient-first focus throughout COVID-19, earning patient satisfaction rates higher than 92% in 2021, among other important measures. Call **240-434-7670** to learn more.

## Leapfrog "A" for Patient Safety

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital earned its seventh "A" in the Leapfrog Group's Hospital Safety Grade for Spring 2022. Published twice annually, Leapfrog's scores reflect an organization's commitment to prioritizing patient safety above all else. Learn more at [HospitalSafetyGrade.org](https://www.hospitalgrade.org).



## Annual Gala set for Oct. 21

Coming to a red carpet near you: MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's annual Gala will return for an in-person night of Hollywood-inspired glitz on **Friday, Oct. 21!**

Join us in Hollywood (Maryland, that is!) for a fanciful night out in support of our non-profit hospital. Sponsorship opportunities are available now. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/RedCarpet](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/RedCarpet) to learn more, or contact Holly Meyer, director of Marketing, Public Relations & Philanthropy, at [holly.b.meyer@medstar.net](mailto:holly.b.meyer@medstar.net).



# What's in your blood?

Regular blood testing is an important glimpse at your overall physical health. By establishing a baseline for your "normal" and following up with regular testing, it's more likely that changes will be spotted quickly. Here, just a few of the commonly-ordered blood tests you could undergo at the recommendation of your primary care provider.

Blood test:	Tests for:	Normal range:
<b>Basic metabolic panel</b>	Levels of eight different compounds, including calcium, glucose, sodium potassium, chloride, and creatinine	<b>Varies.</b> Abnormal results may indicate diabetes, kidney disease, hormone imbalances, or other conditions.
<b>Lipid panel</b>	Two types of cholesterol: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High-density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good" cholesterol, which removes harmful substances from the blood</li> <li>Low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol, which can cause plaque build-up in the arteries, increasing the risk of heart disease</li> </ul>	<b>HDL</b> High: >60 mg/dL Low: <40 mg/dL (men) <50 mg/dL (women)  <b>LDL</b> High: >160 mg/dL Low: <100 mg/dL
<b>Complete blood count (CBC)</b>	Levels of 10 different components of every major cell in the blood: platelets, white blood cells (WBC), and red blood cells (RBC). RBC carry oxygen throughout the body; a normal range is important. High WBC could indicate infection. Abnormal levels could also indicate anemia, cancer, nutritional deficiencies, clotting problems, or other issues.	<b>Red blood cells</b> 4.3-5.9 million/mm <sup>3</sup> (men) 3.5-5.5 million/mm <sup>3</sup> (women)  <b>White blood cells</b> 4,500-11,000/mm <sup>3</sup>  <b>Platelets</b> 150,000-400,000/mm <sup>3</sup>
<b>Thyroid panel</b>	This test checks how well your thyroid is producing and reacting to certain hormones, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T3, which regulates heart rate and body temperature</li> <li>T4, which regulates metabolism</li> <li>Thyroid-stimulating hormone, which regulates the levels of hormones the thyroid releases</li> </ul>	<b>T3:</b> 80-180 ng/dL <b>T4:</b> 0.8-1.8 ng/dL <b>TSH:</b> 0.5-4 mIU/L  Abnormal levels can indicate conditions including thyroid growth disorders, or abnormal testosterone or estrogen levels



See your primary care provider to assist in ordering the right blood tests for you. At MedStar Health facilities, access your data—including test results—anytime, anywhere through the newly-redesigned myMedStar Patient Portal and myMedStar app. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/myMedStar](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/myMedStar) to get started.

# Chronic runny nose? Ringing in your ears? It may be **time to see an ENT.**

If you are experiencing any of the following, you may need the expert care of an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist.

- Ear infections that are recurring
- Hearing loss that does not resolve in a week or two
- Nasal congestion that is persistent and does not go away
- Ringing in your ears
- Sinus pain or repeated sinus infections
- Sleep apnea or snoring
- Sore throat that will not go away or happens repeatedly
- Swimmer's ear

Although some of these conditions may not be cause for alarm, they could lead to serious consequences if left untreated.



## What Dr. Chen's patients are saying:



"Dr. Chen is very patient and listens to you. He had a couple of solutions for me and let me make the final decision. He explained things thoroughly and, in a language I could easily understand. Wonderful doctor and I would not hesitate to recommend him."

"Excellent provider. Dr. Chen is very professional and knowledgeable in his field. I have referred other friends and family members to see him."

"This was my first visit with Dr. Chen. He was professional throughout the visit and took much time and care when reviewing my post-surgical notes. He has a gentle and kind manner. I appreciate his thoughtful evaluation."



Dr. Chen is now accepting new patients. Make an appointment today!  
Call **301-475-1555**.

**Frank Chen, MD**  
**MedStar Medical Group**  
**ENT at St. Mary's**  
25480 Point Lookout Road  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
[MedStarHealth.org/DrChen](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/DrChen)

# "It's a door-opener."

Community health advocates connect patients with critical resources

## A world of support can begin with just one search.

The AccessHealth team, part of the Population & Community Health department, works with recently discharged MedStar St. Mary's Hospital patients who have social barriers to care. Community health advocates (CHAs) now serve patients throughout St. Mary's County.

"Our community health advocates consider the many factors that could impact patients being able to access a full spectrum of care," said **Brenda Wolcott, MPH**, director of Population & Community Health, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. "They could be uninsured or underinsured, and maybe need help with the insurance application process. They might be without reliable transportation, or experiencing homelessness. Our role is to connect them with resources that can help them improve their quality of life, which has a clear and direct impact on health."

As part of the post-discharge process, AccessHealth—comprised of three full-time CHAs and a driver—now conducts social needs screenings through **Findhelp.org**. Based on the patient's responses, they will be linked to one or several of the verified 1,800-plus free or reduced-cost programs available via local and national partners.



The AccessHealth team includes, from left, **Vivian Mills, certified community health advocate; Marissa Kelsh, community health advocate; Katie Buchholz, transportation; and Deidra Carroll, medical assistant/community health advocate.**

"It's a door-opener—it provides more opportunities to help patients with support we might not have known was available," said Brenda. "We have outstanding local resources, but we can get very siloed by considering only resources in our immediate area. Findhelp has expanded our network and even helped us to book some appointments for patients faster."

Nearly 700 patients were contacted by CHAs between July 2020 and June 2021. And help isn't limited to St. Mary's, or even just the State of Maryland—a CHA was recently able to link a relocating patient to services in Florida ahead of their move.

"We once worked with a military veteran who was experiencing homelessness. He wanted to work, but couldn't, because he had no fixed address," Brenda shared. "One of our CHAs asked him about

his time in the military, which he dismissed as 'just four years' of service. He wasn't aware that he was entitled to veterans' benefits." The advocate drove the individual to the Veterans Administration herself, where the patient received housing assistance that ultimately led to gainful employment—all thanks to that first conversation.

This is just one example of many, Brenda shared. Over the years, the Population & Community Health department has developed a strong reputation as a trusted resource. "We were 411, back when there was 411," she joked. "Community members still often call us and say, 'I know you're not the right one for this, but do you know where I can find . . .?' Maybe it's grief support, primary care, transportation. Whatever they need, we are happy to help. That's why we're here."



Keep up with the latest classes, clinics, and more through our Population & Community Health team. Turn to page 18 for our summer calendar, or call **301-475-6019** to learn more.



# Small changes for a big GI impact.



Our digestive system works hard night and day: breaking down food, absorbing nutrients, converting it to energy, clearing out waste. From mouth to stomach, gallbladder to intestines, we rely upon this complex network to keep us feeling healthy and on the move.

When the system is working well, we don't have to give digestive juices much thought. But there's little mistaking it when issues like gas, constipation, diarrhea, and heartburn—four of the most common gastrointestinal (GI) complaints—develop.

"The digestive system is a network of interlocking parts," said **Anand Nath, MD**, board-certified gastroenterologist, MedStar Medical Group Gastroenterology at St. Mary's. "When there is a disturbance somewhere along the route, uncomfortable symptoms result. It's our job to look at the puzzle pieces and determine why there is an upset, then work on a treatment plan to get patients back to functioning optimally."



## Befriend fiber

Fiber is crucial to good digestive health, adding bulk to stools so they pass more easily. It's naturally available in many vegetables, fruits, beans, whole grains and legumes. High-fiber options include avocados (1 cup raw: 10 grams), raspberries (1 cup raw: 8 grams), lentils (1 cup cooked: 13 grams); and black beans (1 cup cooked: 8 grams).

"Needs vary, but a good goal is 14 grams of fiber for every 1,000 calories consumed daily," said Dr. Nath. If your diet doesn't cover it, over-the-counter supplements can help improve consistency and frequency of bowel movements.



## Stay hydrated

Water breaks down food and softens stools to prevent constipation. A healthy adult woman should aim for a daily fluid intake of 92 ounces, according to the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Men should set a goal of 124 ounces a day. Plain water isn't the only option; water in food and other drinks contribute to your fluid needs, too.



## Try mini-meals

Rather than the standard three meals, consider five or six

smaller portions spread throughout the day. "Eating more frequently and in smaller quantities helps prevent the digestive system from getting overburdened," said Dr. Nath. "A very full stomach can cause acids to travel into the esophagus. Eating more frequently also boosts the metabolism, which helps promote overall digestive health." Avoiding laying flat for three hours after dinner may significantly help with acid reflux symptoms.



## Ditch the sugar

Cutting back/decreasing intake of simple and processed carbohydrates (such as sucrose, zero calorie sugars and high fructose corn syrup) can help improve symptoms of gassiness, diarrhea, and acid reflux. Try replacing these with natural, complex carbs such as those present in whole grains and certain fruits and vegetables (peas, cucumbers, carrots, sweet potatoes, etc.).



## Add in activity

Regular exercise encourages regular bowel movements. Most healthy adults should aim to get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity (biking, swimming, brisk walking), or 75



Call **240-434-7474** to schedule an appointment, or visit **MedStarHealth.org/Gastro** or learn more.



# Inbox



"I was a patient at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital [in August and September]. During this time I found the hospital to be far beyond excellent care! The clean building, comfortable beds, very good food and portions were great. Under the fantastic direction of Dr. John Harvey, the nurses and techs were fabulous. Nurses Renee, the wound care specialist; Miranda; Venessa; and Maybelle especially stand out as extremely caring and not that I was just another patient. Rest assured that anyone and everyone that I speak to about my health will only receive accolades about MedStar St. Mary's Hospital."

-Gary Sacks, via Facebook

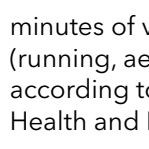
"Last summer, my son was admitted to the ER at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. ... In the middle of a pandemic, in the dead of night, I'm sure a healthy young guy would have slipped through in some places. But the personnel in the ER wouldn't cut corners, and made sure my son had enough tests to rule out anything dangerous. Everyone we encountered [was] exceptional.

After more tests, this perfectly healthy guy was revealed to need an emergency gallbladder removal. ... My son is now perfectly healed, so many months later. It is not lost on me that the staff at your hospital saved his life. But not only that—the care and treatment we received felt more like a five-star hotel than a healthcare facility. It was clean, well-stocked and efficient. Tests were completed quickly, food delivered, and everything sanitized on top of the knowledgeable and compassionate care. One after another, the nurses and nurse techs made sure we were comfortable, safe and, most importantly, healing.

How do you thank someone for saving your son's life? There are not enough words. My gratefulness will not fade. So thank you from the bottom of my heart. I hope the positive energy and health that you showed my son is reflected on you and your loved ones tenfold."

-Deb D.

Patient feedback fuels decisions at our hospital and throughout our health system. Visit **MedStarHealth.org/Feedback** to share your experience.



## When to see a specialist

If your symptoms aren't helped by consistent lifestyle changes, reach out to a gastroenterologist. Medical care is needed to address certain conditions, including but not limited to Crohn's disease, celiac disease, gallstones, and irritable bowel syndrome.

"We are here to help and there is no need to be embarrassed in discussing these issues," said Dr. Nath. "The important thing is to get the symptoms addressed so you feel like yourself again."

MedStar Medical Group Gastroenterology at St. Mary's is growing! The practice welcomes nurse practitioner **Heather Tennyson, CRNP**, who joins Dr. Nath in caring for patients with a range of GI needs in the Outpatient Pavilion at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.



## Nondiscrimination Statement

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. ATTENTION: If you speak English, language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-301-475-8981.

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Sumusunod ang MedStar St. Mary's Hospital sa mga naaangkop na Pederal na batas sa karapatang sibil at hindi nandiskrimina batay sa lahi, kulay, bansang pinagmulan, edad, kapansanan o kasarian. PAUNAWA: Kung nagsasalita ka ng Tagalog, maaari kang gumamit ng mga serbisyo ng tulong sa wika nang walang bayad. Tumawag sa 1-301-475-8981.

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MedStar St. Mary's Hospital tele ilana ofin jjoba apapo lori eto ara ilu atipe won ko gbodo sojusaju lori oro eya awo, ilu-abinibi, ojo-ori, abarapa tabi okunrin ati obinrin. AKIYESI: Ti o ba nso ede Yoruba ofe ni iranlowo lori ede wa fun yin o. E pe ero ibanisoro yi 1-301-475-8981.

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MedStar St. Mary's Hospital tuân thủ luật dân quyền hiện hành của Liên bang và không phân biệt đối xử dựa trên chủng tộc, màu da, nguồn gốc quốc gia, độ tuổi, khuyết tật, hoặc giới tính. CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 1-301-475-8981.

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital የፌዴራል ሲቪል መብቶችን መብት የሚያከብር ሲሆን ለምሳሌ በቆይታ ቀለም፣ በዘር ሃረግ፣ በእድሜ፣ በእኩል ጉዳት ወይም በጾታ ማንኛውንም ሰው አያገልግም። ማስታወሻ: የሚናገሩት ቋንቋ እንዲሁ ከሆነ የትርጉም አርዳታ ድርጅቶች በገንዘብ ለማግኘት ተዘጋጅተዋል። ወደ ሚክሳው ቁጥር ይደውሉ 1-301-475-8981.

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital اطلاق وفاقى شهري حقوق كقوانين كى تعميل كرتا بيه اور يه كه نسل، رنگ، قوميت، عمر، معذورى يا جنس كى بنياد پر امتياز نيين كرتا. خبردار: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ كو زبان كى مدد كى خدمات مفت مين دستياب بيين۔ كال كرين ١-٣٠١-٤٧٥-٨٩٨١

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital लागू होने योग्य संघीय नागरिक अधिकार कानून का पालन करता है और जाति, रंग, राष्ट्रिय मूल, आयु, वकिलांगता, या लिंग के आधार पर भेदभाव नहीं करता है। ध्यान दें: यदि आप हद्दी बोलते हैं तो आपके लिए मुफ्त में भाषा सहायता सेवाएं उपलब्ध हैं। 1-301-475-8981 पर कॉल करें।

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital تيعوضنى بر اساس نژاد، رنگ پوست، اصليت مليتى، سن، ناتوانى يا جنسيت افراد قابل نمى شود.

توجه: اگر به زبان فارسی گفتگو می کنید، تسهیلات زبانی بصورت رایگان برای شما فراهم می باشد. با 1-301-475-8981 تماس بگیرید.

# Summer 2022 calendar



Visit [MedStarStMarys.org/Calendar](https://www.MedStarStMarys.org/Calendar) to learn more about community classes and support groups.

Class availability is subject to change, particularly during COVID-19. After enrolling, you will be notified should a session need to be postponed. Because no registration is required for support groups, please reach out using the phone numbers below to verify if meetings are still scheduled.

## Support groups

### Bariatric Support

Meetings are currently online only June 11, July 9, Aug. 13 10 a.m. Call 301-475-6019.

### Breast Cancer

Meetings are held in person on the last Monday of each month June 27, July 25, Aug. 29 6 to 7 p.m., MedStar Georgetown Cancer Institute, Outpatient Pavilion Call 240-695-6904 or visit [Facebook.com/groups/MedStarBreastHealthProgram](https://www.facebook.com/groups/MedStarBreastHealthProgram) for support.

### Lactation (Breastfeeding)

Weekly on Wednesdays, two sessions: 10 and 11:15 a.m. Health Connections, Outpatient Pavilion Registration currently required as space is limited; call 301-475-6019. Search and join the "MedStar St. Mary's Lactation Support Group" on Facebook

### Parkinson's

Second Tuesday of each month June 14, July 12, Aug. 9, Health Connections, Outpatient Pavilion Call 301-475-6019 for details.

### Stroke Survivors

Third Tuesday of each month, June 21, July 19, Aug. 16, Health Connections, Outpatient Pavilion Call 301-475-6019 for details.

## Senior wellness & events

### Senior Gold Card Luncheon

Currently on hold. Call 301-475-6019 for updates.

## Cancer care

### Cancer support group

Currently meeting first and third Wednesday of each month. In-person options may also be available. Call 240-434-7241 to register and provide your email address to be sent an invite. Search and join "[MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Cancer Support Group](https://www.facebook.com/MedStarStMarysHospitalCancerSupportGroup)" on Facebook.

## Diabetes education

### Take Control of Diabetes with Education

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital offers one-on-one appointments with our registered dietitian. A provider's order for diabetes education is required. Services may be covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance plans. Call 301-475-6019 for more information.

### Living Well with Diabetes

Beginning Sept. 12, 6 p.m., Health Connections. This six-week workshop can help individuals with diabetes manage this condition, carry out normal activities, add healthy activities to their lives, and manage emotional changes. Call 301-475-6019.

### Simple Changes (Pre-diabetes)

Begins Oct. 5, 5:30 p.m. Participate in our free, year-long class designed to eliminate possible diabetes risk factors by making simple, healthier changes in your life. Program includes free body composition screenings, handouts, giveaways, and support between sessions. This one-year program is a combination of weekly and monthly sessions. Call 301-475-6019.



## Exercise, nutrition & weight management

### Bariatric information sessions

Learn more about weight loss surgery through a free online seminar. Required for those pursuing surgery. Visit [MedStarStMarys.org/WeightLoss](https://www.MedStarStMarys.org/WeightLoss) or call 240-434-4088.

### Body composition analysis

By appointment only, Health Connections, Outpatient Pavilion Screening includes an in-depth look at body composition. Cost is \$15. Call 301-475-6019.

## Childbirth & family education

Classes are held in Health Connections, Outpatient Pavilion at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

### One-day Parents-to-Be workshop

In-person sessions and online options available. June 4, July 16, Aug. 6, Sept. 17 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Health Connections, \$100/couple

Combines four traditional parenting classes into a one-day overview. Topics include childbirth, breastfeeding, infant CPR, and practical baby care skills such as bathing and diapering. Call 301-475-6019.

Please note: some classes require a minimum number of participants to hold the course. If the need arises to cancel a class, we will make every effort to accommodate you on an alternate date.

### Safe Sitter

In-person session, July 8, Aug. 12, Oct. 22 8:45 a.m. to 4 p.m., Health Connections, Outpatient Pavilion, \$65 Adolescents ages 12-14 learn babysitting tips, basic first aid, and CPR. Call 301-475-6019.

## American Heart Association classes

### CRT 105 CPR for the community

Held in MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's Education and Simulation Center, 41550 Doctors Crossing Way, Leonardtown. *Learn CPR and AED use on adults, children and infants, plus how to relieve choking for any age. See upcoming dates and register online by searching "CRT 105" at [SITELMS.org](https://www.SITELMS.org), or call 202-643-1841 to learn more.*

## Overdose Response Program

The St. Mary's County Health Department offers a free Overdose Response Program to train individuals on administering Naloxone and caring for someone until emergency help arrives. Visit [SMCHD.org/Overdose](https://www.SMCHD.org/Overdose) or call 301-475-6806.

## Pulmonary

### Tobacco Cessation Program

Eight-week, virtual program to help participants quit using tobacco products through

behavioral modifications, stress management, and other techniques. Visit [SMCHD.org/Tobacco](https://www.SMCHD.org/Tobacco) for dates and registration.

Please note: all Health Connections class fees are subject to change.

## Join in the Juneteenth Celebration!

The 2022 Juneteenth Celebration will return to an in-person event on Saturday, June 18, at Lexington Manor Passive Park, 21675 Coral Drive, Lexington Park.

A day of celebration and reflection, the annual community event will feature entertainment, a variety of food vendors, and activities for the entire family. The event is coordinated by the United Committee for Afro-American Contributions.

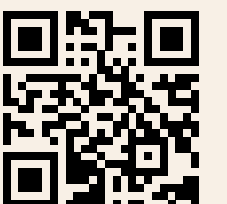
Visit [UCACONLINE.org/Juneteenth](https://www.UCACONLINE.org/Juneteenth) for more information.

## Are you at an increased risk for colon cancer?

Research has shown new cases of colorectal cancer are occurring at an increasing rate among younger adults. Why? Colon cancer typically has no symptoms until it has already progressed to later stages—making it much more difficult to treat.

The good news is that a routine colonoscopy every 10 years starting at age 45 could help save thousands of lives in this country every year.

Take our free colon cancer risk assessment to learn if you may be at an increased risk for colon cancer or eligible for a colon cancer screening. It's simple and takes only a few minutes—text COLON to **410-680-3337** or scan this code.





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# When accidents happen, we are here to help.

The fact is accidents happen. And when they do, the team of expert surgeons at MedStar Orthopaedic Institute in Leonardtown is dedicated to making sure you and your family receive prompt, compassionate care. We will help you recover from whatever life throws at you as quickly as possible whether it is a sports injury, accident, or age-related illness or joint pain.

### **MedStar Orthopaedic Institute in Leonardtown**

Davis Professional Park  
23503 Hollywood Road  
Ste. 101  
Leonardtown, MD 20650



 Call **240-847-6746** or visit [MedStarHealth.org/OrthoTeam](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/OrthoTeam) for more information or to request an appointment.

We are a part of MedStar Orthopaedic Institute, the area's largest and most experienced group of fellowship trained orthopedic surgeons, with a network of more than 35 physicians at 14 locations throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.