



Living Well

Stroke
Start now to
reduce your risk





Find relief from fibroids

Atlanta Medical Center will host a discussion about uterine fibroid embolization, a minimally invasive, nonsurgical alternative to hysterectomy. Uterine fibroids are noncancerous tumors that grow on or within the uterus.

» **Wednesday, Aug. 13, 6:30 p.m.**

Featuring *Scott Monen, MD, interventional radiologist*. Call **888-457-5204** to learn more.



Scott Monen, MD,
interventional radiologist

Letter from the CEO



Dear neighbors,

I know how important it is that you have confidence in your health care providers. That's why I like to use this space to showcase the outstanding practitioners caring for our patients at Atlanta Medical Center.

Recently, our NICU coordinator and physician oncologist were recognized among the Health Care Heroes of our city. Mescal Hunt, RN, was honored for caring for the very smallest of our patients and Erich Randolph, MD, was recognized for working

to overcome treatment obstacles for minorities.

It makes us proud when our caregivers are recognized, and we hope it fills you with confidence to know you're in good hands when you allow us to partner with you for your health care needs. As always, we're standing by, ready to be your intown health care partner.

William T. Moore, President and CEO

AMC events

All events, unless otherwise noted, take place at the Health Pavilion, 320 Parkway Drive. For more information, call Tranquility Salon and Spa at **404-525-6161**. To register for cancer support groups or Project Serenity, or for more information about screening, call **888-457-5204**.

» **Wednesday, Aug. 6, 11 a.m., Look Good...Feel Better**

» **Wednesday, Aug. 27, 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m.,**

Body Care at Tranquility Salon and Spa

» **Thursday, Aug. 28, 11 a.m., Cancer support group and Project Serenity**

» **Wednesday, Sept. 3, 11 a.m., Look Good...Feel Better**

» **Wednesday, Sept. 10, 1 to 5 p.m., prostate cancer screening**

» **Sept. 15 to 17, Camp Bluebird at Georgia Baptist Assembly**

» **Wednesday, Sept. 24, 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m., Nail Care at Tranquility Salon and Spa**



GOVERNOR, FORMER SPEAKER HOST PRESS CONFERENCE AT AMC
Governor Sonny Perdue (second from right) and former House Speaker Newt Gingrich (right) held a bill-signing ceremony at Atlanta Medical Center on May 7. The bills make high-deductible health plans paired with health savings accounts more affordable and available for Georgians. AMC CEO William T. Moore (second from left) and Tenet Healthcare Regional Vice President John Holland (left) hosted the governor and speaker in a press conference just before the signings.



AMC PHYSICIAN, NURSE PART OF HEALTH CARE HEROES
Each year, *Atlanta Business Chronicle* nominates the best in health care as part of its Health Care Heroes section. Atlanta Medical Center's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Coordinator Mescal Hunt, RN, (right) ranked as a finalist in the category of Allied Health. Erich Randolph, MD, oncologist with Atlanta Oncology Associates, practicing at AMC, was this year's winner in the physician category.

MRSA: Protect yourself from a dangerous infection

Bacteria may not seem newsworthy, but one type of bacteria has been getting a lot of press lately—MRSA, or methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Staphylococcus aureus, or staph, is not new bacteria. It's been known since the 1880s to cause skin infections, and according to the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), about one-third of the world's population is carrying staph on their bodies at any time. Although the bacteria can be present without causing trouble, they sometimes cause infections.

Most staph skin infections are minor irritations that are easily treated. But the antibiotics historically used to treat staph—penicillin and methicillin—have become less effective over time, creating a resistant strain. If you're carrying the MRSA strain of the bacteria, an infection can become life-threatening.

What you should know

MRSA often develops on skin damaged by cuts or scrapes and can appear as a boil or abscess. The area is often red and painful, and it may ooze.

The bacteria are usually spread through direct skin contact or through contact with personal items used by an infected person. As a result, people at risk for infection include those who play contact sports, live in crowded or unsanitary conditions, work in health care settings, or live with health care workers. Children are also susceptible because their immune systems aren't fully developed.

How to prevent infection

To prevent infection, the NIAID offers the following advice:

- » Keep your hands clean by washing with soap and water.
- » Carry an alcohol-based sanitizer to use for handwashing when soap and water aren't available.
- » Shower after exercising.
- » Don't share towels, razors or uniforms.
- » Keep wounds bandaged until healed.
- » Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.

When to see your doctor

If a skin infection or wound doesn't heal, see your doctor. Fortunately, almost all MRSA skin infections can be treated by your doctor draining the wound site.

Other treatment options include using antibiotics that may still be effective against MRSA, including vancomycin and doxycycline. However, these drugs may also one day become ineffective.

➔ Get more information about MRSA at www.atlantamedcenter.com by typing "MRSA" in the search box.



MORE ABOUT MRSA

Your doctor can tell you more about MRSA prevention. To find a physician, call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627).

[Wash up right]

Next time you wash your hands, you might want to break into song. More specifically, a chorus of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"—twice.

That should take you about 20 seconds, the amount of time the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends you spend scrubbing and rubbing when you wash up.

Frequent handwashing is one of the best things you can do to protect yourself and others from illness. It's worth doing, and it's worth doing right.

Here are five steps to washing your hands correctly, according to the CDC:

- 1 } Wet your hands under clean, running—preferably warm—water. Apply soap.
- 2 } Make a lather by rubbing your hands together.
- 3 } Continue rubbing and scrubbing for about 20 seconds. Be sure to scrub all surfaces—front and back.
- 4 } Rinse well under running water.
- 5 } Dry using a paper towel or air dryer. If possible, use your paper towel to turn off the faucet.



[stroke]

Start now to reduce your stroke risks

Don't delay: That's the most important thing to know about stroke. You shouldn't wait to get help if you're having a stroke. And you shouldn't wait to do the things that may prevent you from having a stroke in the first place.



Husham Mishu, MD

Stroke, a condition that occurs when adequate blood isn't reaching the brain, can rob people of their independence and result in death



or long-term disability. There are many steps you can take to reduce your risks, and you can start taking them today.

Certain stroke risk factors, such as age and race, are out of our control. For example, nearly three-quarters of all strokes occur in people older than 65, reports the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). And stroke is more common among African Americans than people of other races.

However, there are some risks we can control, says Husham Mishu, MD, medical director of stroke services at Atlanta Medical Center. To reduce your chances of stroke:

Don't smoke. According to the NINDS, cigarette smoking can contribute to the buildup of fatty substances in the carotid artery of the neck. This buildup

can cause blockages that lead to stroke.

Smoking also makes your blood thicker and more likely to clot, which could result in blocked arteries.

If you smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting. Even if you've tried and failed before, there are medications and programs that can help you kick the habit for good.

Control your blood pressure. Blood pressure that's too high stresses your blood vessels and arteries and contributes to the risk of blockages and blood clots that could result in a stroke.

You should have your blood pressure checked regularly. The goal is to keep readings below 120/80 mm Hg, advises

There are many steps you can take to reduce your stroke risks, and you can start taking them today.

A quick and easy test can reveal narrowed arteries

If your doctor suspects you're at risk for stroke, a quick test may offer some insight.

Carotid ultrasound uses sound waves to create images of the two carotid arteries in your neck. Narrowing of these arteries because of plaque—a combination of fat, cholesterol and other substances found in the blood—can increase your chances of having a stroke.

A doctor might suggest this test if you have stroke risk factors, such as high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol or diabetes; a family history of stroke; or had a stroke previously.

The painless test takes about 30 minutes. In most cases, you'll lie on an examination table while a radiologist runs a wand against the outside of your neck. The ultrasound images are transmitted from the wand to a monitor.

In some cases, a radiologist or your doctor may discuss preliminary results with you immediately after the test.

If the test shows narrowed arteries, your doctor may recommend medical or surgical treatments to help open the arteries and reduce your stroke risk.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute



HEALTH TIP

If you're older than 50, taking aspirin regularly may help reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke. However, aspirin isn't safe for everyone. Ask your doctor if it's a good prevention strategy for you.

Recovering through rehabilitation

Many times, stroke means loss. You may lose your ability to walk or move your body like you did before. Your speech or communication skills can be affected. You may have difficulty remembering or thinking clearly.

Some people even lose their ability to perform daily tasks and live on their own. But, in many cases, rehabilitation can help you regain your independence.

Recovering physically. Stroke rehabilitation starts soon after a stroke—sometimes within 24 to 48 hours of the stroke itself. Hospital rehabilitation specialists may begin by helping you exercise the arms and legs affected by stroke. This can help you recover strength and control of your body.

Eventually, you may start working on sitting up and moving between the bed and chair and then standing and walking, with or without help.

After leaving the hospital, further rehabilitation in a nursing center or at home is possible.

Returning life skills. Along with walking and moving around, rehabilitation can help you regain or find new ways to do your job, dress, bathe, cook and eat.

You may also work on improving your speech, language, problem solving and social skills. The idea is to help you live as independently as possible.

The success of rehabilitation depends on the extent of damage to the brain. Your health care team can give you more information about your specific care.

Sources: American Stroke Association; National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

the American Heart Association.

“Exercising 30 minutes or more on most days of the week and eating a diet that’s low in salt and high in fruits and vegetables can help reduce high blood pressure,” Dr. Mishu says. Eating more potassium—found in sweet potatoes, bananas, fish and other foods—may also help.

If these changes aren’t enough, your doctor may prescribe medicines too.

Keep cholesterol in check. High blood cholesterol can result in deposits of fat in your arteries. This can contribute to blood clots that block blood flow to the heart, causing a heart attack, or to the brain, causing a stroke.

Ask your doctor how often you should get your cholesterol checked. If your levels aren’t where they should be, exercising more and eating a low-fat diet can help get them to healthier levels. A doctor may also prescribe medicines.

Manage diabetes. Diabetes that’s not under control can harm blood vessels

throughout the body, including those inside the brain. Keeping diabetes under control will help prevent health problems. Know your target blood sugar levels, how to check them and what to do if they become too high.

Know how to spot a stroke

Call 911 at once if you spot signs of stroke in yourself or anyone else, urges the NINDS. The quicker you get treatment, the greater the chance of survival and the less likelihood of severe disabilities.

Warning signs may include sudden:

- » Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- » Confusion or trouble talking or understanding.
- » Trouble seeing from one or both eyes.
- » Trouble walking or dizziness.
- » Severe headaches with no known cause.

“Sometimes these symptoms may last only a few moments,” Dr. Mishu says. “This may signal a transient ischemic attack, or mini-stroke. It is important to alert a doctor about these too.”

» For more information about stroke, including care tips and symptoms, visit www.atlantamedcenter.com and click on “Health Resources” and then “S.”

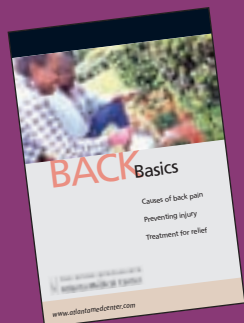


Atlanta Medical Center has been designated as a Primary Stroke Center by the Joint Commission.

Back to basics

You should seek help if you have:

- » Pain after a fall or injury.
- » Numbness or tingling.
- » Severe pain.
- » Difficulty with bladder or bowel control.



To receive a free booklet about back pain, call 888-457-5204.



HEALTH TIP
You're more likely to have back pain if you are not in good shape. Stretching and low-impact aerobic exercise can benefit your back.

Answers for an aching back

You rely on your back to handle life's heavy load. But sometimes that can cause you pain—real pain.



Ernest Howard, MD

Low-back pain is the fifth most common reason for doctor visits in the United States, according to the American College of Physicians. In fact, most people will experience at least one case of low-back pain some time in their lives.

Fortunately, most low-back pain will go away within a few weeks, according to Ernest Howard, MD, medical advisor to the Spine Specialists at Atlanta Medical Center. "However, if the pain persists, treatment must be directed at its specific cause," Dr. Howard says.

Most low-back pain will go away within a few weeks, but if the pain persists, treatment must be directed at its specific cause.

What causes the pain?

Your lower back is made up of several vertebrae, or bones; disks of soft cartilage; muscles; joints; ligaments; and nerve tissue. All of these work together to allow you to turn, twist and bend. They also give you the strength to stand, walk and lift.

Many things can cause back pain. As you age, wear and tear on your spine, ligaments and disks may cause a disk to bulge out or collapse. According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, heavy lifting, bending and reaching, and conditions such as arthritis can affect the various parts of your back too.

Bounce back

Generally, you don't need to see a doctor for low-back pain, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. A couple days of rest can help make your back feel better, but it's best to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Exercising and

stretching to restore motion and strength may be helpful too.

You can also try medications, such as anti-inflammatory drugs or acetaminophen; hot or cold packs; or massage.

When these treatments aren't enough, however, one of two fairly new procedures may provide an answer. Vertebroplasty and kyphoplasty are treatments that stabilize fractured vertebrae.

Vertebroplasty is a minimally invasive treatment for compression fractures that's been widely available in this country since 1997, according to the Society of Interventional Radiology. A more recent procedure, called kyphoplasty, is similar to vertebroplasty but adds an extra step that can help restore lost height.

In both procedures, a surgeon accesses the spine through one or two small incisions. Then, he or she injects a quick-drying cement

into the fractured vertebra.

Kyphoplasty is unique, however, because the procedure involves inserting a small balloon into the fractured vertebra and then inflating it, creating a gap. Before the cement is injected, the balloon is removed.

Benefits and risks

"Both vertebroplasty and kyphoplasty may effectively relieve pain, and you can usually go home the same day of the surgery," Dr. Howard says. "But the procedures also carry potential risks, including infection, bleeding and problems related to cement possibly leaking from the fracture area."

Your doctor can provide more information about whether one of these treatments may be right for you.



Back pain getting you down? Call the Spine Specialists at Atlanta Medical Center at 866-SPINE-55 (866-774-6355) to learn more about which treatment is right for you.



Give your back a break

There are many ways you can hurt your back, but there are also many ways you can prevent back injuries.

To keep your back in good shape:

» **Practice good posture.** Don't slouch. Maintain the natural arch in your lower back when standing or sitting.

» **Lift with your legs.** Bend your knees and keep your back straight. Don't twist when you lift.

» **Sit with care.** When sitting, make sure you have good back support. Get out of your chair occasionally and move around.

» **Drive in comfort.** Select a driving position where your knees are slightly bent and your back is arched. Stop frequently and get out and walk.

» **Watch your weight.** Being overweight puts additional stress on your back. Exercise regularly and eat a diet low in fats and high in fruits and vegetables.

Source: American Physical Therapy Association

 **THE SPINE SPECIALISTS**
of
Atlanta Medical Center

[Hydration is key to summer fun]

Did you know that approximately 55 to 65 percent of your body weight is water? The proper balance between water and electrolytes determines how our body functions. Staying hydrated is extremely important, especially during hot summer months and while exercising. Here are a few facts:

- » Watery foods, such as soup, yogurt and fruits (an orange is 90 percent water) count toward your daily water needs.
- » If you are properly hydrated, you should have to use the bathroom every 2 to 4 hours and your urine should be light in color.

» Your body hides mild dehydration very well. Headaches and cramping are common late signs of dehydration.

» A 2 percent drop in body water can cause dehydration, and a 3 to 4 percent drop can cause physiologic changes, such as an increase in heart rate and body temperature.



If you have problems with dehydration or questions, let the doctors and specialists at Atlanta Medical Center help you! Call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627) to find the right physician for you at Atlanta Medical Center.

Know when you need help

Could you recognize a medical emergency? It's not always easy to do.

In fact, human nature being what it is, some of us who urgently need medical attention may worry that our symptoms aren't severe enough to "bother" emergency care providers.

That's why it's particularly important to know when your symptoms could indicate something serious. A little bit of knowledge could keep you from second-guessing yourself.

If you're uncertain about whether

to go the hospital emergency department, err on the side of caution and let a doctor examine you, reports the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP).

Signs of trouble

According to the ACEP, the warning signs of a medical emergency include:

- » Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- » Chest pain or pressure.
- » Fainting, sudden dizziness or weakness.
- » Changes in vision.
- » Confusion.
- » Sudden or severe pain.
- » Uncontrolled bleeding.
- » Coughing or vomiting blood.
- » Suicidal feelings.
- » Unusual abdominal pain.



Get ready for summer with a free first aid kit, while supplies last! Call 888-457-5204.

If there's any chance your condition is life-threatening—or could become so on the way to the hospital—call 911 rather than driving yourself or relying on a friend or family member.


Emergency Department
Atlanta Medical Center

LIVING WELL is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of ATLANTA MEDICAL CENTER, 303 Parkway Drive N.E., Atlanta, GA 30312, 404-265-4000, www.atlantamedcenter.com.

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