



Living Well

Heart truth

What women
should know about
heart attacks

**EMBARRASSED?
DON'T BE**
A colonoscopy
could save
your life





William T. Moore,
President and CEO

Letter from the CEO

Dear neighbors,

Best wishes on the start of another year. Perhaps you're feeling pressure, as we are, from how quickly time passes. Maybe you're feeling some anxiety about the New Year and goals you've set for yourself.

As you begin to tackle those goals, remember to make good health a priority. Take care of yourself. Allow time to get the checkups or screenings you need, and make

an effort for good mental health as well.

Check out this issue to meet some of our physicians:

- » Page 3—An infectious disease doctor who reminds us to stay healthy through good handwashing and other practices.
- » Page 4—An internist practicing just down the street in Inman Park talks about the importance of heart health in women.
- » Page 7—A gastroenterologist who is new to the area and practicing on the Atlanta Medical Center campus.
- » Page 8—A psychiatrist who understands the importance of reaching out for help.

As your in-town health care partner, we stand ready to help you with your health needs and goals. We take our partnership seriously and are grateful that you entrust your care to us. Please let us know how we can help meet your needs in the days to come.

William T. Moore, President and CEO



March of Dimes president Dr. Jennifer Howse checks on a newborn in the NICU at AMC.

[Special care for our smallest patients]

During a recent visit, Jennifer Howse, PhD, March of Dimes president, met with Atlanta Medical Center (AMC) staff and saw firsthand the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) family support program in action, a program brought to AMC through its partnership with March of Dimes.

Every year AMC cares for more than 600 premature infants in this special nursery. Through our partnership with March of Dimes, AMC has been able to offer more training and support for parents of preemies, helping them prepare to care for their newborns at home.

To date, the NICU family support program—one of just two such programs in Georgia—has helped more than 200 families.

2008 Tenet Healthcare Foundation and AMC grants

At Atlanta Medical Center, community involvement is top priority. Here's a list of grants we awarded to our community along with Tenet Healthcare Foundation.

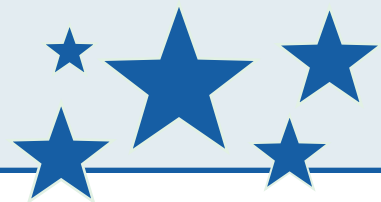
- » **AID Atlanta** Will help AID Atlanta's vision care program.
- » **AIDS Research Consortium of Atlanta** Will help with treatment and research of HIV and AIDS in African American women.
- » **Atlanta Police Foundation** Will provide educational grants to three cadets.
- » **Beacon of Hope—Tabernacle Church Program** Supports "Teen Talk," an inner-city abstinence education program.
- » **Center for Positive Aging** Will help establish and maintain Positive Aging Lifestyles (PALS).
- » **CHOICES—Childhood Obesity Program** Will help provide parent and

child resources for clinically diagnosed and at-risk children.

- » **Families First** Will help young mothers cope with heartbreaking situations while teaching them to manage the responsibilities of motherhood.
- » **Georgia Institute on Aging**
- » **Good Samaritan Health Center** GSHC provides comprehensive medical, dental, mental health, health education and social services to uninsured and underinsured members of our community.
- » **Intergenerational Resource Center, Inc.**
- » **The New Ebenezer Baptist Church Program**
- » **MedShare International** MedShare International ships used medical equipment to third world countries.

The hospital donates equipment and has done so for about five years.

- » **Merial's Miracles, Inc.**
- » **Students Without Mothers SWM** helps college-bound students from households with an annual income of \$50,000 or less with a mother absent due to death or other circumstances.
- » **Surviving, Inc.** This organization helps underserved women during their first month of treatment for breast cancer.
- » **The Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club**





Be prepared for seasonal illnesses

As the seasons change, it's time to get ready for seasonal illnesses.

Understanding common conditions may help you recognize them and learn how to respond.

Colds

Roughly 200 highly contagious viruses can cause the common cold. When people with colds cough or sneeze, they can spread virus-containing droplets through the air up to 10 feet.

SYMPTOMS: You may experience a runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, a cough, a headache, or a mild fever.

TREATMENT: Nothing can cure a cold. Still, there are steps you can take to feel better.

- » Rest, drink plenty of fluids and try saline nasal drops for a stuffy nose.
- » Acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin can ease both a fever and headache. But never give aspirin to a child or teenager; it may trigger Reye's syndrome, a serious illness.
- » Over-the-counter cold remedies may also help, but check with your doctor before giving these to children. **See a doctor** if your symptoms don't improve in a week. If a child isn't better in two days, alert the child's doctor.

Flu

The flu, or influenza, is an easily spread viral infection that sometimes causes serious complications.

SYMPTOMS: Typically, the flu starts suddenly and hits hard. Symptoms may

include a high fever; chills; extreme tiredness; body aches; a sore throat; and a dry, hacking cough.

TREATMENT: The same remedies that ease cold symptoms may also ease flu symptoms. Certain virus-fighting prescription medications may also help you feel better if you start taking them early.

See a doctor if you have difficulty breathing or if your fever lasts longer than three to four days.

Adults older than 65; young children; and people with chronic health problems, such as diabetes—should consult a doctor at the first sign of symptoms.

Sore throats

Often a sore throat accompanies a viral or bacterial infection. In the winter,

dry indoor heat may trigger a recurring, mild sore throat.

SYMPTOMS: You may have difficulty swallowing and might also have an earache, swollen lymph nodes, and patches of pus on your throat or tonsils.

TREATMENT: Viral infections must run their course, but strep throat needs treatment with antibiotics. Your doctor can test you to see if you have strep throat. Gargling with saltwater, drinking fluids and using a humidifier are also often helpful.

See a doctor if you have a severe, persistent sore throat; difficulty breathing or swallowing; a fever higher than 101 degrees; or an earache or rash.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American College of Physicians; American Medical Association; American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



Dennis Melton, MD
Chief, Division
of Infectious
Diseases at AMC

Do your part to stop germs

"You can do more than you might suspect to avoid getting sick this winter," says Dennis Melton, MD, infectious disease doctor at Atlanta Medical Center. He recommends that you take these steps from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help prevent the spread of germs.

- » **Wash your hands frequently.** Scrub, using warm water and soap, for about 20 seconds.
- » **Do the cover-up.** Cough or sneeze into a tissue, then throw it away and wash your hands.
- » **Try not to touch your eyes, nose or mouth**—places where germs often invade.



» **Protect yourself with a flu (influenza) vaccine.**
To find a doctor, call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627).

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



HEALTH TIP

Traveling to the hospital by ambulance will help you receive the quickest possible care if you may be having a heart attack.



Amy Varner, MD
Internist

WOMEN AND HEART ATTACK

What you don't know could hurt you

Could I be having a heart attack? That's a question more women need to ask themselves.

“Women in this country are less likely than men to survive heart attacks—because they wait longer than men to seek potentially lifesaving medical care,” says Amy Varner, MD, an internist at Atlanta Medical Center. There are some likely reasons why:

» Only half of all women are aware that heart disease is the leading cause of death in women, reports the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

“Because of this, women may ignore common signs of a heart attack, such as chest pain that persists for more than a few minutes,” Dr. Varner says.

» Though women may have chest pain, they are more likely than men to experience other symptoms, such as breathlessness, nausea, vomiting, back

If there's any chance that you're having a heart attack, call 911 quickly. Every minute matters.



[Love your heart]

Though heart disease is largely preventable, it's still the No. 1 killer of women. That's why the American Heart Association started Go Red For Women, a nationwide movement to help women band together to wipe out heart disease and save thousands of lives. And now is the time for you to get involved!



CELEBRATE NATIONAL WEAR RED DAY

Join the fight by wearing red on National Wear Red Day, Friday, Feb. 6. It's a simple, powerful way to raise awareness of heart disease.

TAKE YOUR HEALTH TO HEART

Schedule a checkup with your doctor, and make a point to ask about your heart disease risk and how you can protect your heart for years to come.



For information and tools to help you join Go Red for Women, visit

www.goredforwomen.org or www.goredcorazon.org.



or jaw pain, and unusual weakness or tiredness. As a result, they may not realize that they are actually having a heart attack.

The bottom line: If you're a woman, take your heart attack risk seriously.

Doctors today have clot-busting drugs and artery-opening procedures that can stop a heart attack in progress and limit damage to the heart. But to be most effective, these treatments must be given shortly after symptoms start.

For both men and women, many heart attacks start slowly, with mild chest pain that feels like uncomfortable pressure. Be aware of your symptoms. If there's any chance that you're having a heart attack, call 911 quickly. Every minute matters.

Lower your risk

Clearly, it's better to avoid a heart attack in the first place than to treat one. The first step toward prevention—if you haven't already taken it—is to make an appointment with your doctor and determine your personal risk of having a heart attack and what you can do to lower your risk.

One preventive measure that you will want to discuss with your doctor is how to monitor your blood pressure.

"The nature of blood pressure is that it changes. One minute it might be up—another, down," Dr. Varner says.

As a result, the measurements in your doctor's office may be misleading, which is risky because high blood pressure increases heart attack and stroke risk.

Some people have what's known as "white-coat" high blood pressure, which means that they have artificially high readings in a doctor's office. Others have normal readings at checkups but high readings elsewhere.

That's why if you have high blood pressure or suspected high blood pressure, the American Heart Association and other medical groups now advise that you monitor your blood pressure at home.

Dr. Varner recommends that you select an automatic, cuff-style, upper-arm monitor, rather than one that fits around your wrist. Ask your doctor to help you select a monitor, check its accuracy and learn how to use it.

Be sure to do your best to follow through on your doctor's advice, whether it's becoming more active or improving your diet. Your heart will thank you.



You can take a women-only heart quiz online at www.atlantamedcenter.com. Go to "Health Resources" and then look in the "Quizzes" section under "Interactive Tools." Dr. Varner's practice is located at Inman Park Physicians, N. Highland Steel Lofts, 240 N. Highland Ave., Building 3. To make an appointment, call 404-524-2424.

[colorectal cancer]

A test worth your time

Colorectal cancer is a leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Fortunately, screening tests can help doctors spot it early, when it's easiest to treat.

One of these tests—colonoscopy—is the gold standard of colorectal cancer screening, according to the American College of Gastroenterology.

Unfortunately, many people are reluctant to have a colonoscopy. Though screening is recommended for everyone age 50 and older—and sometimes before age 50, some people are embarrassed or worried that it will be unpleasant or painful.

Knowing more about colonoscopy may help ease those concerns.

What's involved?

Colonoscopy allows your doctor to examine the lining of your colon for cancer and remove any suspicious growths before they can become cancer.

The procedure is usually painless and is done while you're sedated but awake enough to follow instructions. Many people remember nothing about the exam once it's over.

To get a good look inside the colon, it must be completely clean. You'll need to follow a special diet and take strong laxatives the day before the



HEALTH TIP

After your colonoscopy, you'll remain at the testing facility for an hour or two while the sedative wears off. Make sure someone is available to drive you home.

exam. Your doctor will give you more specific instructions.

During the exam

After you're given a sedative and pain medication, you'll lie on your side while the doctor eases a hollow, flexible device through your colon.

The device is equipped with a light on the end and a tiny video camera. The camera sends pictures to a monitor viewed by the doctor.

The doctor can also pass small tools through the tube to painlessly remove tissues or apply medication if needed.

The exam usually takes about 30 to 60 minutes. If the results are clear, you most likely won't need another one for 10 years, according to the American Cancer Society.

Don't let fear keep you from getting this important exam. If it's time to be tested, call your doctor for an appointment.



If you don't have a doctor, call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627) for a free physician referral.

[Stopping colorectal cancer before it starts]

Finding colorectal cancer early is a great reason to get a screening test.

But there's another reason too: preventing cancer.

"Polyps—which are abnormal growths—can be present in the colon for a while before they become cancerous," says Atlanta-area gastroenterologist Tommie Haywood, MD. "One of our goals with screening is to find and remove the polyps at this stage, before cancer begins."

"At the very least, we want to find the cancer early, when it is easier to treat."

Screening tests that might be used include:

Flexible sigmoidoscopy. The rectum and lower colon are inspected with a tiny video

camera on a flexible, lighted tube.

Colonoscopy. This test is similar to a sigmoidoscopy, but the entire colon is examined.

Double contrast barium enema. Barium sulfate and air are pumped into the colon so that x-rays can highlight abnormal areas.

Other tests look for signs of cancer in stool. These tests look for blood in the stool, a possible sign of cancer or a large, bleeding polyp.

People at normal risk for colorectal cancer should get their first exam at age 50, Dr. Haywood says.

Talk to your doctor about the advantages and disadvantages of each test and when you should get screened.



During a colonoscopy, the entire colon is inspected with a tiny video camera on a flexible tube.

Trouble on the inside

GASTROINTESTINAL PROBLEMS WOMEN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT



Men and women are not created equal when it comes to some gastrointestinal disorders. Generally speaking, women are more likely than men to develop gallstones, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and, in those younger than 55, colon cancer, says Atlanta-area gastroenterologist Tommie Haywood, MD.

Tommie Haywood, MD
Gastroenterologist

“The challenge for women is to recognize symptoms and seek prompt treatment for these conditions,” he says. “Some of these are life-threatening, and all of

them can greatly affect quality of life. But there are steps you and your doctor can take.”

According to Dr. Haywood and the American College of Gastroenterology, here's what women should know.

1} Gallstones

Women are twice as likely as men to develop gallstones, in large part because of the effects of estrogen and progesterone.

“Women have slower-emptying gallbladders than men because of progesterone,” Dr. Haywood says. “Both progesterone and estrogen affect how the body processes cholesterol too.

“Increased cholesterol in the gallbladder and decreased movement of the gallbladder put women at higher risk for developing gallstones.”

SYMPTOMS: Gallstone pain is usually felt in the right upper region of the abdomen, but the pain may also be felt in the right shoulder or between the shoulder blades, Dr. Haywood says. See a doctor immediately if you have pain that lasts longer than one to two hours or if pain is accompanied by a fever.

TREATMENT: Surgery to remove your gallbladder may be necessary. The removal can be done using traditional surgery, in which the abdomen is opened, or laparoscopic surgery, which requires only small abdominal incisions.

In certain cases, taking medicine may dissolve some gallstones, Dr. Haywood says.

2} Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)

IBS occurs two to six times more often in women than in men—probably because generally women are more sensitive to gastrointestinal tract irritants. Emotional stress may aggravate the condition.



HEALTH TIP

To help keep your digestive system healthy, avoid foods that cause you problems. Eat foods that are high in fiber and low in fat, exercise regularly, and drink plenty of water.

“We really don't know exactly what causes IBS,” says Dr. Haywood. “It may be a problem with how the nerves send messages to the brain and how the brain transmits those messages to the intestines.”

SYMPTOMS: Symptoms can include cramping, stomach pain, bloating, gas, mucus in the stool, and constipation or diarrhea. Some people may also feel an urge to empty their bowels, but nothing happens. During menstrual periods, women may have more (or different) symptoms.

Your doctor will take a medical history of your symptoms and may order tests.

TREATMENT: There is no cure for IBS, but taking medicine may calm your symptoms. It might also help to:

- » Eat fewer gas-producing foods, such as beans, onions and cabbage.
- » Steer clear of milk products.
- » Avoid chocolate, caffeine and alcohol.
- » Find ways to relieve stress.
- » Take time for exercise.
- » Drink six to eight glasses of water daily.

3} Colon and rectal (colorectal) cancer

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in U.S. women. On top of that, Dr. Haywood says that risk for the disease increases if you have a family history of colorectal cancer or if you have had noncancerous colon polyps, ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease.

SYMPTOMS: See your doctor if you have these warning signs:

- » Rectal bleeding.
- » Blood in the stool.
- » Cramping or steady stomach pain.
- » Diarrhea, constipation or narrow stools lasting more than a few days.

TREATMENT: Surgery, radiation and chemotherapy are key treatments for colorectal cancer, but this is one disease where screening might sometimes be considered a form of treatment too. During some screening tests, doctors can remove polyps that might eventually become cancer.

Testing should begin at age 50, even if you don't have symptoms, Dr. Haywood says. It should start earlier if you have risk factors for colorectal cancer.



If you need a gastroenterologist, call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627) for a free physician referral.

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.

William T. Moore | Chief Executive Officer
Jeff Freygang | Chief Development Officer
Kendra Gerlach | Public Relations/Marketing Director

Information in LIVING WELL comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider. Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

Copyright © 2009 Coffey Communications, Inc.
HZN22889c

ATLANTA MEDICAL CENTER
303 Parkway Drive N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30312

Presorted Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Dallas, TX
Permit No. 1807

Support groups

FIND STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



No matter how strong and independent you are, a serious or chronic illness can tax your spirit.

Support groups can help. They offer safe places to discuss practical and emotional concerns and to meet people going through similar experiences.

“Support group participants generally feel less anxious and less depressed, enjoy a higher quality of life, and are more successful coping with their disease or condition than those who don’t attend,” says Jeffrey Klopper, MD, psychiatry

department chairman at Atlanta Medical Center.

Groups can meet face-to-face in the community or over the Internet.

Ask a member of your health care team to recommend a support group. Established nonprofit organizations, such as the American Heart Association or the American Cancer Society, are also good resources.



For a database of national and online self-help support groups, visit the American Self-help Group Clearinghouse at www.mentalhelp.net/selfhelp.



Jeffrey Klopper,
MD
Psychiatrist

Restoring hope

Even people who are very ill can develop a sense of hope. Jeffrey Klopper, MD, psychiatry department chairman at Atlanta Medical Center (AMC), recommends these four helpful steps:

- 1. Exercise and socialize.** Being active, with your doctor’s approval, may improve your mood. Socializing may help reduce loneliness and depression.
- 2. Follow your treatment plan.** Celebrate as you reach diet and exercise goals.
- 3. Learn positive self-talk.** Recasting fears and thoughts in a positive way—telling yourself, for instance, that most people recover and you will too—can make it easier to seek and accept help.
- 4. Keep a journal.** Note when you feel angry, afraid, tired or helpless. If you can pinpoint what triggers the feelings, you may find clues about how to deal with them.



To find a support group at AMC, call **888-457-5204**.