

**Thyroid surgery**

Better view,  
quick recovery—  
and no visible scar

**Men's health**

It's wise to have  
a primary care  
doctor

**Playing it safe**

Don't let injuries  
take the fun out  
of kids' sports

**Calendar**

AMC events for  
your health and  
wellness

# Living Well

Spring 2010

## Mini-strokes

No time  
to lose

Atlanta Medical Center

*Your intown health care partner* <sup>SM</sup>





# Letter from the CEO



William T. Moore,  
President & CEO

Dear neighbors,

Spring is always a time that brings to mind new beginnings. I hope you and your family are eagerly anticipating the many good things that each new season promises.

Here at Atlanta Medical Center, we're focusing on providing more of the services you want and need. We recently surveyed more than 400 consumers in our primary service area to better understand what you're seeking in a hospital partner.

In light of the recent addition of midwifery and water birth options, we also held a focus group specifically to hear thoughts from women about the childbirth services we offer.

These efforts and the information gathered from them help us listen and respond to your needs and continue to refine ourselves as a hospital that serves the needs of its community.

Check page 3 to read about a unique and innovative procedure—a thyroidectomy that does not require an incision across the neck and leaves the patient without a prominent scar.

New services and new technologies are ways we're continuing to develop ourselves as your health care partner. As always, if you need a physician, call **404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627)** and options will be provided for you. If there are other ways we can assist you, visit our website at [www.atlantamedcenter.com](http://www.atlantamedcenter.com) or call **888-457-5204**.

Best wishes to you and yours for a happy and rewarding spring.

William T. Moore, President & CEO

## news

### Gold from American Heart Association

Atlanta Medical Center (AMC) is one of only three hospitals in the state to achieve Gold status on all three levels of the American Heart Association's (AHA) 2009 Scientific Sessions Recognition Awards. The awards were presented to hospitals that realized quality improvements by using the AHA's Get With The Guidelines initiative.

AMC received Gold awards for performance achievement in the heart failure and coronary artery disease categories and a Gold Plus award for performance achievement in treating stroke. The Gold Plus designation—the highest award—honors hospitals that have demonstrated an established level of compliance for a specific group of quality measures.

Get With The Guidelines is an innovative program that helps hospitals analyze quality of care and improve outcomes for patients with coronary artery disease, heart failure and stroke. Approximately 35 percent of U.S. hospitals are involved in Get With The Guidelines.

The awards from the AHA came on the heels of another significant achievement: AMC was recently recognized for its quality improvement efforts in *U.S. News & World Report's* annual "America's Best Hospitals" issue.

"Our staff continually strives to provide the highest standard of care to patients and to raise the bar for that standard," says William T. Moore, president and CEO of AMC. "So, we are pleased to be honored by the American Heart Association with three Gold awards for our efforts. It's gratifying to receive this kind of tangible acknowledgement."



AMC president and CEO William T. Moore (center) receives the awards from representatives of the AHA.

Gold for  
your health

Learn how you can benefit from the outstanding quality we provide at AMC. Call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627).

### To Haiti, with love

When 15 employees were personally affected by the recent earthquake in Haiti, the staff of Atlanta Medical Center (AMC) rallied round their own, opening their hearts, their wallets and—quite literally—their mouths.

AMC supplied the food for a special Haitian-themed meal and bake sale, held in the hospital cafeteria on Jan. 28. More than 350 employees purchased

meals and sweet treats and raised more than \$1,800 for co-workers with family members in Haiti. The financial assistance was distributed among the affected employees through the hospital's Golden Heart Fund.

The staff at AMC continue giving support and encouragement to their co-workers from the grief-stricken nation.



William T. Moore, president and CEO (left), hands relief checks to employees who have family members in Haiti.

# Thyroid surgery

## Underarm technique avoids neck scar

### What to expect

The procedure is performed under general anesthesia and can take from one to three hours.

Patients typically go home the next day and can resume their normal routines in two to six days.

If your doctor has recommended thyroid surgery, ask if this approach performed at AMC may be an option for you.



Titus Duncan, MD

If your knees are scarred from childhood sports, you can conceal them under a pair of jeans. But if you have a significant scar on the front of your neck—what then? Your neck is hard to hide, and that may worry

you if you're facing the prospect of thyroid surgery.

However, there's a reason to put worry aside. A procedure available at Atlanta Medical Center (AMC) leaves no neck scar at all. In fact, endoscopic transaxillary thyroidectomy—performed under the direction of Titus Duncan, MD, director of minimally invasive and bariatric surgery at AMC—doesn't involve a neck incision. Instead, it allows surgeons to perform thyroid surgery through small incisions under the arm.

### A new approach

The traditional approach to thyroid surgery involves a 6- to 8-centimeter neck incision, through which surgeons may remove all or part of the thyroid to treat problems including very large goiters and growths called nodules.

Goiters can press on the windpipe, causing breathing and swallowing problems. Nodules, though they're not usually cancerous, may be removed if a biopsy test is unable to confirm that they're benign. Patients are often women, who develop thyroid disorders at higher rates than men.

"And when we take the thyroid gland out, it's almost always benign," Dr. Duncan says. "But that patient now has a permanent scar—and from a benign disease process."

Surgical neck scars are usually noticeable, and they can make some people feel self-conscious, Dr. Duncan says. With the



A clear advantage of the underarm approach is the absence of a neck scar, which may be particularly important for those prone to severe hypertrophic scars, like the one shown below, or keloid scars, which may be painful.



underarm approach, treatment goals can be achieved without obvious scars. "When the arm is in its natural position (down to the side), no scars are visible," he says.

### Better view, quick recovery

Improved cosmetic appearance isn't the only benefit, Dr. Duncan says. Another advantage is that the endoscopic technique may be safer than open surgery because an endoscopic camera provides a magnified, high-definition view of the thyroid on a video screen, giving a clear view of nearby critical anatomy.

Another benefit: Recovery time may be faster than with open surgery.

### Did you know?

Atlanta Medical Center is one of just a few medical centers nationwide to offer a thyroid surgery that doesn't leave a neck scar. Unlike the traditional approach, the operation is performed with special instruments inserted under the arm.

Take care  
of yourself

For a free referral to a physician at AMC, call the physician referral line  
at 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627).



# Mini-strokes need care

Speech therapy can do much to help survivors regain language skills or learn ways to communicate effectively.

**P**ERSISTENT SYMPTOMS are what usually get our attention.

But fleeting ones deserve it too—especially when symptoms are strokelike. They’re a red flag of a transient ischemic attack, or TIA. Sometimes called a mini-stroke, a TIA typically lasts only a few minutes and doesn’t cause permanent damage. Even so, it’s a warning from your body.



Husham Mishu, MD

The American Medical Association warns that about one-third of all people who have a TIA eventually have a full-blown stroke—sometimes only days later. And unlike a TIA, an actual stroke can cause permanent problems—such as paralysis or trouble talking—and can even be deadly.

## An opportunity

But along with being a warning, a TIA is also an opportunity. “If we recognize—and treat—a TIA, we can greatly reduce the chances of a full-blown stroke from happening,” says neurologist Husham Mishu, MD, medical director of stroke services at Atlanta Medical Center.

A TIA can occur when a blood clot temporarily clogs an artery, starving part of the brain of blood. Depending on what part

of the brain is affected, a TIA may trigger these symptoms:

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden confusion and trouble speaking or understanding.
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, and loss of balance or coordination.
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause.

Call 911 right away if you have any TIA symptoms—no matter how quickly they go away. If tests reveal you did have a TIA, a doctor can determine why and—most important—help you avoid a stroke and its consequences.

Depending on the cause of the TIA, you may need to take aspirin daily to keep new clots from forming. If you have blockages in your neck arteries, which make a full-blown stroke more likely, your doctor might advise surgery to remove them.

As 90 percent of all strokes are preventable, talk to your doctor about controlling hypertension, cholesterol and diabetes. Lifestyle changes, such as not smoking, limiting salt and exercising regularly, can keep you healthy and also help ward off stroke.

Be  
prepared

To schedule an appointment with a physician at Atlanta Medical Center, call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627).

## Coping with language loss after stroke



Ann Scheraldi

Imagine you are robbed of your ability to communicate.

You struggle to come up with an everyday word, like *car* or *table*.

Perhaps you can no longer speak in complete sentences.

Or suddenly it seems as though everyone around you is speaking in a foreign language. You can't understand what's said.

These are examples of what life can be like for someone with aphasia, a language disorder brought on by a brain injury.

### When brain cells die

Typically, aphasia happens rapidly and is triggered by a stroke—one that kills cells in parts of the brain that control language.

Not all strokes cause aphasia. But up to 40 percent of stroke survivors have a loss of speech and language, the National Aphasia Association reports.

Depending on where the brain is injured—and how much tissue is damaged—aphasia affects people in different ways. For example, those with:

- ✓ Broca's aphasia have trouble finding the right words and expressing themselves when writing or speaking.
- ✓ Wernicke's aphasia rarely understand conversation. They may also have problems controlling what they say.
- ✓ Global aphasia have severe problems both speaking and understanding language.

### Restoring language

Most people with aphasia triggered by a stroke recover at least some of their lost ability to use language, the American Heart Association (AHA) reports.

Some survivors—even those with severe language loss—may demonstrate recovery in months. Others, however, face permanent problems.

According to Ann Scheraldi, a speech-language pathologist with Atlanta Medical Center, speech therapy is a way of helping patients regain language skills: "Even if there may not be a full recovery, people can still learn efficient communication through other means, such as writing and gestures," she says.

### A family's role

If someone you love has aphasia, your support is invaluable. To help, consider these tips from the AHA:

- ✓ Most people with aphasia still think clearly despite jumbled speech. Aphasia doesn't affect intelligence.
- ✓ Speak simply. Use short sentences. Give the person time to grasp one idea before moving on to another.
- ✓ Lower or eliminate background noise.
- ✓ Set up a daily routine. Give the person a regular time to rest and to practice communication skills.
- ✓ Take care to include your loved one in conversations and in making decisions.

## Stroke's two types

Nearly 9 out of 10 strokes occur when a blood vessel to the brain is clogged, cutting off blood flow to brain cells. This is called an ischemic stroke.

A stroke can also happen when a blood vessel breaks and bleeds into the brain. This is called a hemorrhagic stroke.

Both types of strokes are medical emergencies. Unless blood flow to the brain is restored, brain cells can die, causing disability or death.

Thus, it's vital to call 911 immediately if you have these stroke symptoms or see someone with them:

- ✓ Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- ✓ Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.
- ✓ Sudden lack of coordination.
- ✓ Sudden confusion or difficulty speaking.
- ✓ Sudden, severe headache.

American Heart Association; American Stroke Association

transient

ischemic

attack

**TIA** = mini-stroke



## Why you need a doctor

“It’s really important that men have a medical home. That means having a physician who gets to know you and is familiar with risk factors you might have for different diseases.”

*David C. Dale, MD, past president of the American College of Physicians*

## Men’s health

# Having your own physician

## And the survey says...

Consider these findings from an American Academy of Family Physicians survey on men’s health:

**55%** Fifty-five percent of men haven’t seen their primary care physician within the past year.

**29%**

Twenty-nine percent of men wait as long as possible before seeking medical help when they feel sick, are in pain or have other health concerns.

Eighteen percent of men 55 and older haven’t received recommended screenings for colon cancer.

**18%**



**79%**

Seventy-nine percent of men describe themselves as being in “excellent,” “very good” or “good” health.



Nishant Shroff, MD

You’re sniffing and sneezing. This cold—or whatever it is—has been hanging on far too long. It’s time to call...hmmm...let’s see....

If you have a primary care doctor whom you see regularly, you won’t need to stop and wonder whom to call. And that is just one advantage of having a doctor you know—and who knows you.

“There are many excellent reasons why you ought to have a primary doctor,” says Nishant Shroff, MD, from Inman Park Physicians, an Atlanta Medical Center primary care practice. Here’s another: A doctor you see regularly will know more about you, including your personal health history, your family health history and personal situations that affect your health. And that means your doctor can provide better, more personalized care for you.

Plus, seeing your own doctor on a regular basis for checkups—rather than waiting until you are already sick—can help you focus on preventing health problems and staying in optimum health.

If you don’t already have a regular doctor, now is the time to get one. You might choose, for example, a family physician, who cares for children and adults of all ages. Or you might prefer an internist, a doctor who focuses on caring for adults. Your primary care doctor can also refer you to a specialist if the need arises.

Don’t put it off

Take your care in your own hands now.  
Call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627).

# Teach your kids to play it safe

## Preventing injuries

While children often get hurt while playing, there are things you can do to help kids avoid sports injuries, says the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

For example:

- ✓ Make sure kids understand and follow the rules of the sport.
- ✓ Insist that all protective gear—such as helmets, shin guards and pads—fit properly.
- ✓ Don't let kids play when they are very tired or in pain.
- ✓ Encourage rest breaks during practices and games.
- ✓ Make sure kids drink plenty of fluids before, during and after activities, especially in hot and humid weather.



## Playing sports has both benefits and dangers



Steven Kane, MD

Whether your kids are scoring the winning goal, nailing the perfect landing or just having some active fun outdoors with friends, sports can provide all kinds of cherished childhood memories.

When kids are involved in sports, they take a big step toward improved physical fitness, greater self-reliance and enhanced social skills.

“But alongside the benefits of sports, there are dangers too,” cautions orthopaedic surgeon Steven Kane, MD, director of the Orthopaedic Surgery Residence Program at Atlanta Medical Center. “And injury is foremost among them.”

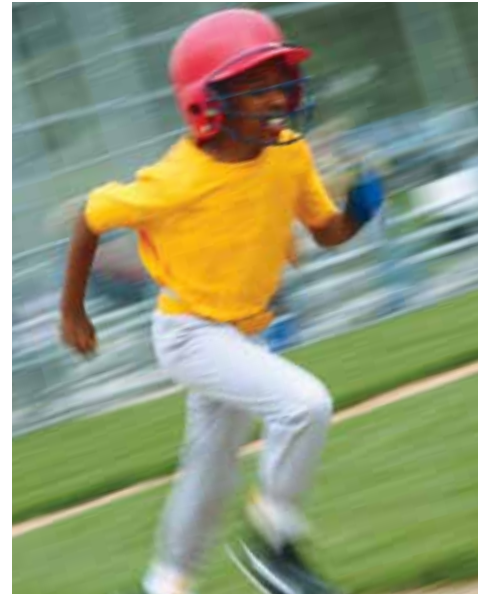
### Common injuries

Kids are most apt to get hurt playing football, basketball, baseball or soccer. And they are more likely to be injured during physical education classes or pickup games than during organized sports, according to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.

Most injuries involve simple cuts, bruises, sprains or strains. Only about 5 percent of sports injuries involve broken bones.

Like most athletes, children are susceptible to repetitive motion injuries,

Kids—simply because they're kids—are uniquely prone to certain injuries and other sports-related problems.



To help reduce the risk of injury, insist that your child wear protective gear that fits properly.

such as stress fractures and tendonitis. Ongoing overuse of a joint can lead to these types of injuries.

And kids—simply because they are kids—are uniquely prone to certain injuries and other sports-related problems. For example:

**Growth plate injuries.** Growth plates are areas of developing tissue at the ends of long bones in children and teens. These areas are weaker than nearby tissues and susceptible to injury.

**Heat illnesses.** Dehydration, heat exhaustion and heatstroke are dangerous conditions but are especially so for children, who sweat less than adults.

Be on  
the ball

Find out now how Atlanta Medical Center can help you stay fit, healthy—and safe. Call 404-265-DOCS (404-265-3627).

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# Calendar of events

## Birth Options at AMC

Learn about midwife services and water birthing, and take a tour of Labor and Delivery.

First Wednesday of each month  
7 to 9 p.m.  
Call **888-457-5204** to register.

## Childbirth Preparation Class

Great for first-time moms. Covers topics needed to prepare for childbirth.

Six consecutive Tuesday nights  
6 to 8 p.m.  
Four sessions offered each year  
Maximum seven couples  
Call **888-457-5204** to register.

## OB Tours

First Monday of each month  
6:30 to 8 p.m.  
Cafeteria Conference Rooms  
No maximum size  
Call **888-457-5204** to register.

## Water Birthing Class

Every other Thursday  
7 to 9 p.m.  
4 West Conference Room  
Maximum 15 couples  
Call **888-457-5204** to register.

## Bariatric monthly meetings

### Tuesdays

- **Support Group:** Noon to 1 p.m.
  - **Exercise Class:** 2 to 3 p.m.
  - **Exercise Class:** 5 to 6 p.m.
- Wellness Center  
Call **1-866-542-LOSS**  
(**1-866-542-5677**) to register.

### First Thursdays

- **Pre-Op Class**
- Registration required.  
Call **404-265-6466** or  
**404-265-6497** to register.

### Second Thursdays

- **Pre-Op Class**
- Registration required.  
Call **404-265-6466** or  
**404-265-6497** to register.

### Third Thursdays

- **Pre-Op Class**
- Registration required.  
Call **404-265-6466** or  
**404-265-6497** to register.

### First Saturdays

- **Bariatric Seminar:** 1 to 3 p.m.
- Facilitated by Clarence Hixon, MD  
Health Pavilion  
Call **1-866-542-LOSS**  
(**1-866-542-5677**) to register.

### Second Saturdays

- **Bariatric Seminar:** Noon to 2 p.m.
  - **Support Group:** 9 to 11 a.m.
- Facilitated by Celio Burrowes, MD  
Health Pavilion  
Wellness Center  
Call **1-866-542-LOSS**  
(**1-866-542-5677**) to register.

### Third Saturdays

- **Bariatric Seminar:** 1 to 3 p.m.
- Facilitated by Titus Duncan, MD  
Wellness Center  
Call **1-866-542-LOSS**  
(**1-866-542-5677**) to register.