

# CENTERSCOPE

SPRING 2021

HEALTH NEWS AND UPDATES FROM  
MEDSTAR WASHINGTON HOSPITAL CENTER



COVID-19 VACCINES



CORONAVIRUS AND THE HEART



BREAST CANCER



FIBROID TREATMENT

**How advances  
in medicine  
are improving  
your health.**



LUNG CANCER



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# Get the facts on the vaccine.

The arrival of COVID-19 vaccines is a positive turning point in a public health crisis that has impacted all of us. With distribution of the vaccines starting to rollout in our communities, there may be many questions you are asking yourself about their safety and effectiveness, as well as how you can obtain one. Here are the answers:

**Q: Why is it important to get vaccinated?**

**A:** COVID-19 vaccines work with your body's natural defenses so you will be ready to fight the virus if you are exposed. The vaccines will keep you and your family safe and are very effective at preventing COVID-19. It may also keep you from getting seriously ill, even if you do get the virus. The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19. The vaccination is free.

**Q: Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?**

**A:** The vaccines are safe. There was no compromise in safety in the development and testing of the COVID-19 vaccines, like past vaccines that have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). COVID-19 vaccines were tested with tens of thousands of people to study how they would provide protection to people of different races, ages and ethnicities, as well as those with different medical conditions. Millions of people in the United States have already received a safe and effective vaccination. The vaccine cannot change your DNA and does not cause infertility.

**Q: How were the vaccines developed?**

**A:** For many years, medical experts and doctors have been studying the coronavirus. It is not a new virus. All that research, combined with collaboration

among researchers and public health experts from around the world, and the pharmaceutical industry, contributed to a safe approval process.

**Q: What about side effects?**

**A:** The vaccines may cause minor side effects in some people, like headaches, body aches, and feeling tired. Fewer people experience a mild fever. However, vaccines cannot cause an illness. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will last no longer than a day or two. Having these types of side effects does NOT mean that you have COVID-19.

**Q: How can I get the vaccine?**

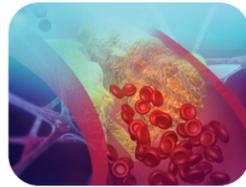
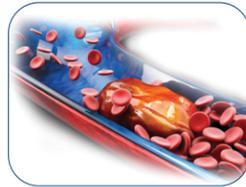
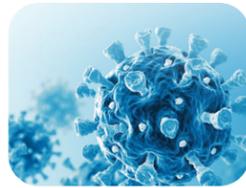
**A:** Qualifying MedStar Health patients may request a vaccination with MedStar Health by visiting **MedStarHealth.org/Vaccine**. If you do not have Internet access, please let your MedStar Health provider know you would like a COVID-19 vaccine. You will be contacted when vaccine supply and appointments are available.

**Q: Will my health information be shared with anyone when I get the vaccine?**

**A:** Your personal health information is protected and will not be shared.

If you are a current MedStar Health patient and eligible in your region, you may request a vaccination appointment by visiting **MedStarHealth.org/Vaccine**.

# Coronavirus and the heart.



Although COVID-19 is largely a respiratory illness, it does not limit itself to the lungs. The virus can affect multiple organs, including the heart. While our understanding of all the ways in which COVID-19 affects the heart is evolving, we have recognized that it can put serious strain on the cardiovascular system. It can injure or inflame the heart directly, as well as trigger a number of other problems for some patients, including:

- Blood clotting, a notable coronavirus symptom, which may trigger a heart attack
- Heart artery blockage, another path to heart attack
- Stress cardiomyopathy, muscle weakness that can cause heart failure
- Irregular heart rhythms, some of which can be life threatening (see Mary Brooks' story on the next page)
- Cytokine storm, which can put the immune system into overdrive and cause sudden and severe loss of heart function. This scenario occurs even as the patient is starting to improve, practically overnight. This is the most common cause of sudden death due to loss of cardiac function.

Some patients have symptoms of heart issues while hospitalized. Others, even those with mild cases of COVID-19, will experience problems weeks or months after they are virus free.

and lingering effects of disease. In addition to cardiovascular care, this program also helps you recover while dealing with chronic fatigue, loss of strength and endurance, orthopedic issues, and even some neurologic challenges. Even if you have no symptoms but have concerns you may seek an evaluation.

**To make an appointment through the Post-COVID Recovery Program, call 202-877-1621 or visit [MedStarHealth.org/mhs/About-MedStar/Clinical-Care-Transformation/COVID-Recovery-Program](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/mhs/About-MedStar/Clinical-Care-Transformation/COVID-Recovery-Program).**

## Post-COVID Recovery Program

As millions of Americans have recovered from COVID-19, physicians have seen a disturbing trend: its impact may linger in some patients. Some problems may be short term, but others can become chronic.

To address these issues, MedStar Health has created the Post COVID Recovery Program. Through this service, patients with a history of COVID-19 can receive cardiac screenings, return-to-work clearance, and rehabilitation to treat any unique

## What you can do

Everyone should be vigilant for any symptoms that may affect heart health. This is especially critical for patients who have recovered from COVID-19.

### • Keep taking your prescribed medications

Early in the pandemic, fear developed around certain heart medications. But we now have data to show there is no reason to stop taking them.

### • Stay in touch with your doctor

Some underlying conditions, including existing heart issues, can complicate recovery from the virus. If you were infected with the virus and have recovered, it's important to report any symptoms or lingering effects.

### • Live healthy

Keep yourself as healthy as possible by getting regular exercise, including plant-based foods in your diet, limiting consumption of sodium and alcohol, avoiding tobacco, and getting enough sleep.

### • Talk to your doctor before strenuous exercise

This is especially important for young athletes who may be harboring heart issues. If moderate exercise brings unusual fatigue, chest pains, palpitations, light-headedness or shortness of breath, tell your healthcare provider.

## PATIENT PROFILE



## Mary Shirlene Brooks' story

Shortly after Mary Shirlene Brooks, a resident of Washington, D.C., was diagnosed with COVID-19, she started feeling as if her heart was beating out of her chest. "It was beating like crazy!" she recalls. Upon arrival at the Emergency Department of MedStar Washington Hospital Center, she learned that her heart was failing. The diagnosis: atrial flutter, a type of heart rhythm disorder (arrhythmia) that causes the heart to beat too quickly.

"Her heart rate was two to three times the normal rhythm for a woman who never had cardiac issues before," explains Cyrus Hadadi, MD, associate director of cardiac rhythm disorders research at MedStar Heart & Vascular Institute.

Brooks was able to immediately receive care from a team who was prepared to treat her COVID-19 symptoms, as well

as her new heart condition. She spent a few days in the hospital, and then was released to quarantine at home, waiting for the virus to clear before she could undergo treatment for her arrhythmia.

Manish Shah, MD, a cardiac electrophysiologist who specializes in heart rhythm disorders, assumed care for Brooks' arrhythmia, while Patricia Davidson, MD, served as her primary cardiologist. The doctors closely coordinated care over the next several months.

"I first saw Ms. Brooks virtually, via telemedicine," says Dr. Shah. "We discussed next steps—an ablation to treat the arrhythmia—and of course, the frustrating delay because of COVID."

Unfortunately, more complications arose for Brooks—double pneumonia, further delaying treatment.

"Her lungs needed to improve before we could perform an ablation, so she began treatment with a pulmonologist," says Dr. Davidson. "She eventually developed congestive heart failure. We know she was frustrated, but she was being cared for by a specialized team, and it was a waiting game until ablation would be safe."

Finally, Brooks tested negative for COVID, her lung status improved, and her ablation treatment was scheduled. Dr. Shah performed the outpatient procedure, she quickly recovered, and was home within a few hours.

"I felt better immediately," Brooks says. "My breathing and heart rate improved, and I even started to regain my cognitive ability."

Today, Brooks is recovering well and will continue to be closely monitored long-term by her team of specialists at MedStar Washington as she continues the process.

## Don't delay care.

Heart trouble can rapidly become irreversible and life-threatening. Get medical help immediately if you have the following cardiac symptoms:

- Chest pain or pressure that lasts more than a few minutes
- Shortness of breath, which can happen without chest discomfort
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- A cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness

The pandemic has not changed our readiness to provide care. We are safe, staffed, and fully equipped to treat our patients.

**To speak to a cardiologist, call 888-354-3422 or visit [MedStarHeartInstitute.org](https://www.MedStarHeartInstitute.org).**

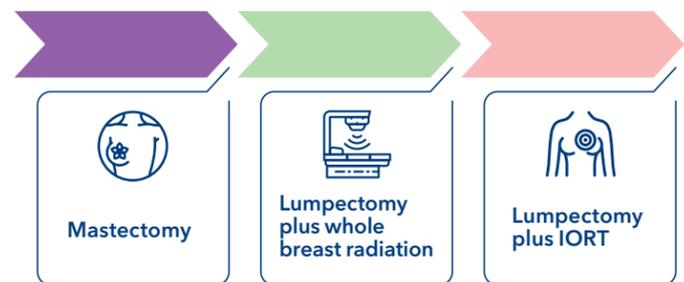
# Breast cancer treatment eliminates need for post surgical radiation.



Over the past decade, advances in breast cancer have been changing women's lives for the better. It used to be that mastectomy—the total removal of the breast—was the most successful method of treating breast cancer. Then lumpectomies became the standard, in which only the tumor is removed surgically, sparing the healthy part of the breast. Then we learned that radiation therapy after a lumpectomy offers the best possible odds of preventing cancer's return.

There is now an approach that delivers a high success rate previously achieved only via mastectomy, says

## Evolution of breast cancer treatment



### Don't delay care.

We know that the best defense is early detection. That's why mammogram screenings are so important. Don't let the pandemic keep you from getting the care you need. Talk to your doctor and stay on schedule with your mammogram plan.

**To schedule a mammogram, call 202-877-DOCS (3627).**

Marc E. Boisvert, MD, breast surgeon and site director of the MedStar Breast Health Program at MedStar Washington Hospital Center.

"Intraoperative radiation therapy, or IORT, lets us direct the radiation precisely where it needs to be—into the tumor bed, the empty space left behind after the tumor is removed, where tumors would most likely recur," he explains. "IORT recently achieved a landmark 18 years of research data—the gold standard for demonstrating a cancer treatment's safety and effectiveness."



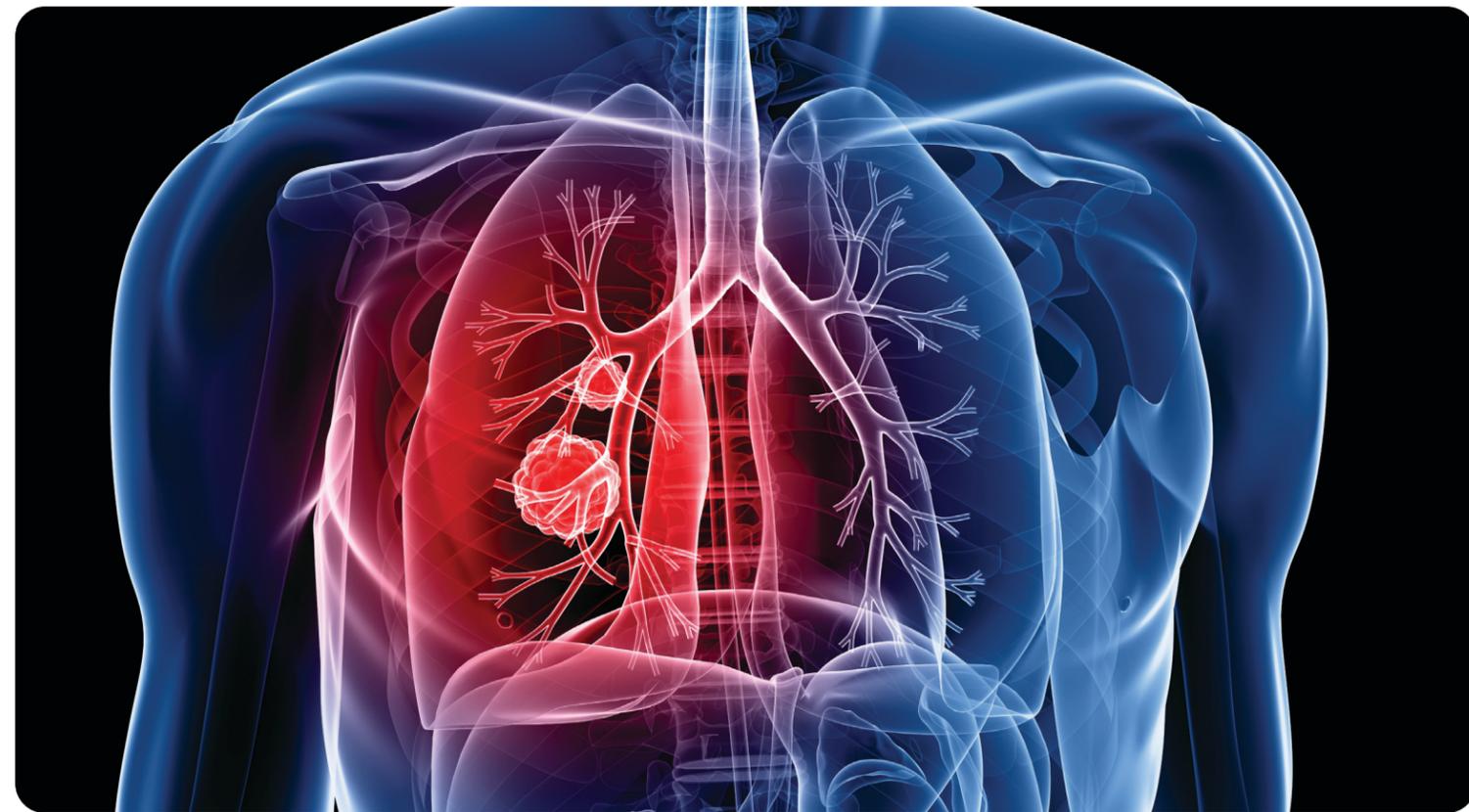
**Marc E. Boisvert, MD**

Although whole-breast radiation after surgery can save lives—and is still a recommended approach for some women—it requires a higher dosage and carries a greater risk of side effects. It also requires post-surgery treatment five days each week for up to seven weeks.

IORT, on the other hand, is performed minutes after surgery, eliminating the inconvenience of follow-up visits to the hospital several days a week for radiation care. We protect the skin where radiation can cause irritation and redness. The radiation field is very shallow, so the heart and lungs are never at risk. IORT adds no extra recovery time, and unpleasant side effects are rare. The treatment is so accurately focused on the tumor site, it gets the job done in just one treatment, at a fraction of the dose typically applied in whole-breast radiation. Plus, research shows it to be as effective in the appropriate patient population as whole-breast radiation.

MedStar Washington Hospital Center and MedStar Georgetown University Hospital are the only medical centers in the Washington, D.C., area equipped to offer this treatment to breast cancer patients.

**To schedule a consultation with a breast surgeon and discuss the option of IORT, call 202-788-7049.**



# Lung cancer: progress and promise.

We've made great progress in recent years when it comes to lung cancer. The percentages of people diagnosed with or dying from the disease have decreased significantly, but more people still die from it than any other cancer in this country.

### The key to stopping lung cancer is early detection.

Unfortunately, in most patients, lung cancer is silent until it's advanced. Many folks don't realize they have a problem until they feel troublesome symptoms, at which point their cancer has likely progressed significantly.

We encourage you to speak with your doctor if you experience unexplained and prolonged fatigue, cough up blood, have a family history of lung cancer, or have a cough that has lasted two to four weeks. A family history of lung cancer is also an indicator for regular screenings.

If you are considered high risk, an annual low-dose computed tomography (CT) scan may be recommended. It is painless, takes only a few minutes, is often covered by insurance, and could save your life!

### You could be eligible for this screening if you meet all the following criteria:

- Between the ages of 55 and 80
- Currently smoke or quit fewer than 15 years ago
- Have a smoking history equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes per day for 30 years (for example, smoking

half a pack per day for 60 years or smoking two packs per day for 15 years)

- Currently have no signs or symptoms of lung cancer

### What happens if the screening finds something?

Early detection is key to finding lung cancer early, when it's easier to treat. If a suspicious growth is found during the screening, we guide you through further tests to better understand the size, location, and tumor type. If surgery, chemotherapy, or radiation is needed, our extensive team of specialists will all work together to determine a plan of action and provide comprehensive support through the entire treatment process.

### What you can do.

To read more about lung cancer and how you can protect yourself, visit [Blog.MedStarWashington.org](https://www.blog.medstarwashington.org), and search 'lung cancer.' You'll find articles from our doctors on how the disease impacts certain populations such as women, young adults, African Americans, and non-smokers. Plus, learn how advances in screenings and treatments are saving lives.

### Schedule a screening or speak with a doctor.

Our doctors can help evaluate your risk factors and determine if a screening could benefit you. Screenings are done in our safe and convenient location.

**Call 202-877-SPOT (7768) to make an appointment.**

# Patient-centered cancer care.

# It's how we treat people.

Washington Cancer Institute at MedStar Washington Hospital Center is both a national model and a regional leader in the diagnosis and treatment of just about every malignant disease imaginable.

It's not just specialty and technological expertise that sets our program apart. Rather, it is our emphasis on going above and beyond clinical care to address the psychological, social, and practical concerns many cancer patients and their families face.

"Just getting through cancer itself is hard enough," says Christopher Gallagher, MD, medical director of Cancer Services and a specialist in breast medical oncology. "So to better help our patients, we've created Patient Support Services - a full range of wrap-around programs to support anyone in our care who needs additional help, comfort, or resources. We don't want any issues or hurdles to stand in the way of our patients' recovery."



## Legal advice

The Cancer Legal Assistance and Well-being (LAW) Project is a collaborative effort of MedStar Health and Georgetown University Law Center. Its goal is to help low-income cancer patients who might face discrimination or other legal barriers because of their illness or treatment.

"A lot of our patients are hourly employees, with minimal sick leave or time-off benefits," says Carrie Miller, LICSW, senior clinical social work coordinator for Patient Support Services. "Often, they're not fully aware of what's legal and what isn't when it comes to their rights."

The Patient Support Services team acts as their advocates, remaining alert to potential problems a patient may have, and then raising it with the lawyers in the Project. Housing and debt relief, for example, are the most common complaints, along with unlawful terminations. An attorney will help decide whether legal lines have been crossed and, if so, the best way to right the wrong.

All costs are covered by the institutional partners; patients don't pay a cent.



## Support groups

Cancer often has a big impact on family members of our patients. Understanding the importance of strong relationships, we offer support groups for caregivers and loved ones.



## Free wigs

In addition to providing free wigs for those who lose their hair due to treatment, we offer other programs focused on rebuilding and maintaining a strong self-image.



## Smoking cessation

Quitting smoking is an important part of getting and staying healthy. We offer comprehensive support programs for current and former cancer patients to help them quit and stay smoke free.



## Nutrition programs

An oncology nutritionist is available to assist patients with eating well before, during, and after cancer therapies. The stronger the body is, the better it may respond to treatment.



## Transportation

Radiation and chemotherapy often require a patient to be at the hospital regularly over the course of several weeks. While that type of commitment can be inconvenient to anyone, for someone with limited transportation options, it can be a nightmare—especially for those undergoing treatment during COVID-19.

"A lot of our outpatients rely on metro or the bus system," Miller says. "But the coronavirus really removed that option, as already sick patients didn't want to put their health further in jeopardy by exposure to crowds."

Uber Health helped solve the problem. Under an agreement between the transportation company and MedStar Health, a social worker or healthcare professional can make arrangements for patients who lack a reliable and affordable way of getting to and from appointments. Drivers then automatically pick up and drop off patients at their destinations, at no cost to the patient.

With masks in place and only one person or family per car, the service has helped assure that lower-income or otherwise vulnerable patients can safely get to the treatment they need, even during the pandemic.



## Insurance and financial guidance

Without the right insurance, some cancer drugs and treatments can be prohibitively expensive. Others may be considered too new or experimental to be covered. But patients shouldn't have to go into debt because of their treatments.

There are many programs out there that will help cover co-payments and other expenses for those in need. Our dedicated financial navigator can coordinate these options so patients can just concentrate on getting better.

## Caring for you before you need us.

We offer several screening programs to detect common cancers.

To schedule your screening, call **202-877-DOCS (3627)**.

# Everything you've ever wanted to know about weight-loss surgery.

with Bariatric Surgeon Ivanesa Pardo, MD

## What actually is bariatric surgery?

Bariatric surgery, or weight-loss surgery, changes the size and position of your stomach and small intestines. The procedures essentially create less room for food in your stomach, while also reducing the level of hunger-signaling hormone that is sent to the brain, so you have less of an appetite.

We use minimally invasive techniques at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, which means smaller incisions, less scarring, quicker recovery, and maximum safety. There are several options for bariatric surgery, and we work with each patient to determine the best approach for their individual goals and needs.

## What are the health benefits, aside from weight loss?

Results from surgery bring a wide range of benefits, from healthier pregnancies, to safer organ transplants and joint replacement surgeries, to the possibility of aging with less disease and dementia. Perhaps most importantly, statistics show that treated patients typically enjoy more years of life as well. Some of the most common benefits are related to:

- **Type 2 diabetes**  
Immediately following bariatric surgery, more than 80 percent of obese patients experience complete remission of their type 2 diabetes.
- **Hypertension**  
Between 52 and 92 percent of obese patients quickly return to healthy blood pressure levels.
- **High cholesterol**  
For about 63 percent of obese patients, cholesterol levels return to normal.
- **Reduced risk of heart disease**  
Patients reduce their overall risk for cardiovascular disease by 82 percent, especially for heart attacks and strokes.
- **Obstructive Sleep Apnea**  
During the first few months of weight loss, 80 to 85 percent of patients experience complete remission of their sleep apnea.



## How much weight will I lose, and will I gain it back?

Weight drops rapidly right after surgery and continues for 18 months to two years. A little weight gain is expected after that, but then it should plateau. This is normal, and we're talking about a few pounds, not a massive amount of weight (usually about 5 percent).

We find that 90 to 95 percent of our patients keep the weight off long term. When you start healthy behaviors, you feel the benefit and your body wants to maintain that.

## What is the recovery process?

Most patients are in the hospital for just one night. A few patients experience nausea or dehydration for the first few weeks after surgery, but that goes away quickly. You'll have a checkup every three months for a year, and yearly thereafter, for five years.

## Who qualifies, and does insurance cover the procedure?

Doctors and insurance providers look at Body Mass Index (BMI) to determine if you qualify and can be covered. If you are otherwise healthy and have a BMI of 40 or higher, you may qualify for bariatric surgery. But if you also have diabetes, high blood pressure, or sleep apnea, you may qualify for surgery with a BMI of 35 or higher. Check with your provider for the details of your policy.

## How do I get started?

Register for the free education seminar:

**Visit [MedStarWashington.org/Our-Services/Bariatrics-and-Weight-Management](https://www.MedStarWashington.org/Our-Services/Bariatrics-and-Weight-Management) or call 202-877-7788.**



Susan, of Prince Frederick, Md., spent 25 years struggling with obesity. After her gastric sleeve surgery, she lost nearly 200 pounds.

"I am so happy," she says. "On vacation, I got the first tan ever on my stomach! But the best part? I can do things with my family. Now I can go to my grandchildren's football games, instead of hiding. I've even been horseback riding with my niece."

## Personalized Support.

Our program supports you throughout the entire weight-loss journey. This includes educational sessions before surgery to help prepare you for the procedure and your recovery, as well as extensive follow-up care, including a support group of your peers to aid your progress long after your procedure.

One of the key members of this team, and one of the most critical to ultimate success, is the bariatric dietitian. Megan Ramaika, MA, RD, LDN, shares some of her most effective strategies for starting and maintaining weight loss.

## Focus on nutrition.

You receive a full evaluation of your diet. Our goal is to prepare for major weight loss by limiting calories while still getting the appropriate levels of lean protein and other nutrients. We focus on serving sizes and regular, balanced meals.

## Make your plan fit your lifestyle and budget.

We take into account nutritional needs but also lifestyle. Suppose you are a mother of three, for example, and must feed your children while also sticking to your own diet. This requires a strategy. Sometimes we'll go grocery shopping together to build a plan for feeding your family healthy foods and sticking to the budget.

## Eat mindfully.

Mindful eating should become a regular habit during weight loss. Give yourself time to eat slowly and taste each bite. By listening to your body and paying attention to when you are full, you can avoid overeating. This practice helps you recognize triggers for emotional eating or other bad habits, and develop strategies for decreasing those patterns. Keeping a food diary can really help.

## Remember that it's a journey.

I encourage my patients to give themselves grace and to celebrate their small victories throughout the weight-loss journey. We want to empower you, provide motivation, and give you the tools that will help you succeed in the long run.



Megan Ramaika, MA, RD, LDN

# Breast reduction: When less is more.

Imagine always carrying extra weight across your chest. Overly heavy breasts can take a toll on the neck, back, and shoulders, and cause painful chafing. There can be emotional repercussions, too.

Bri knows. The 26-year-old Washington, D.C., resident wore a 30G bra by the time she graduated from high school. Bri played softball, "sprinting, running, and sliding wearing double sports bras that caused constant chafing," she recalls. At 5'6" and around 120 lbs., she had pain in her back and shoulders, and also felt hypersexualized because men twice her age would stare at her. "I wore tee-shirts throughout high school and avoided anything that showed cleavage," she says. "I wanted to dress like my friends but couldn't."

After college, she met with several surgeons to discuss breast-reduction surgery before selecting Derek Masden, MD, a plastic surgeon at MedStar Washington Hospital Center.

"Bri is not alone," explains Dr. Masden. "Breast reductions for women were up six percent over the previous year, with more than 60,000 performed." In the past several years, Dr. Masden has performed about 300 breast reduction procedures and says it's one of the "happiest surgeries he performs."

During the two-hour procedure, Dr. Masden removes volume, reshapes, and lifts the breasts. He avoids scarring as much as possible by using one of two techniques: a circular cut made around the areola down to the bottom of the breast; or an incision where the underwire of the bra sits, up between the breasts, and around the areola.

"At MedStar Washington Hospital Center," says Dr. Masden, "we see the complete spectrum of breast surgery and breast reconstruction, including total breast cancer reconstruction, complex congenital breast reconstruction, implant and microsurgical reconstructive techniques, transgender/gender-affirmation breast surgery, breast reduction, and aesthetic breast surgery. Having this background allows the full complement of techniques and applications of breast surgery."

Surgeries are performed at MedStar Washington or one of our surgery centers convenient to the patient. Most patients go home the same day. After surgery, the patient's chest area is protected by a surgical bra, which is worn until the first follow up, at one week. Patients return for follow-ups at three and six weeks, and finally at three months. Many patients feel well enough to return to office work in a week to 10 days. For a more physical job, two to three weeks. Most patients are completely healed at three months.

After her surgery, Bri says, "I immediately felt different-like I wasn't carrying anything. I was standing up straighter, my shoulders weren't hunched. And my posture has improved steadily. And I can wear the clothes I've always wanted to wear. It was life changing."

**For more details about breast reduction surgery, visit:**  
<https://www.medstarhealth.org/ads/mprs-breast-reconstruction-surgery/>

**To schedule a consultation, call 202-788-5014.**

# Fibroid treatments for the modern woman.

Nobody likes pain. But for any number of reasons, people often elect to simply put up with it, rather than seek treatment. That's particularly true for women experiencing pelvic and menstrual pain, excessive bleeding, and other symptoms of fibroids—benign growths in the uterus that typically occur among those in their 30s and 40s.

For many years, a hysterectomy—surgical removal of the uterus—was the most common form of treatment for fibroids. Given that fibroids rarely became cancerous, many women opted against surgery, considering the compromised quality of life a small price to pay to retain fertility.

## Fibroid treatments that enhance, rather than limit, your life.

Today, says James Robinson, MD, director of Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgery at MedStar Washington Hospital Center, fibroid treatment encompasses a wide range of surgical and non-surgical treatment options that can address your symptoms and goals.

"Accommodating your decision on fertility remains our starting point in charting a treatment strategy," Dr. Robinson explains. "We then look for the least invasive treatment approach possible."

The latest breakthrough came just last year, with federal approval of a medication that can help manage fibroid-related heavy menstrual bleeding in premenopausal women. There is now also a non-surgical intrauterine approach that shrinks fibroids using safe doses of radiofrequency energy. In fact, MedStar Health's Vadim Morozov, MD, a minimally invasive gynecological surgeon, was the first in the Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., region to perform this treatment in November.

Another minimally invasive procedure called uterine fibroid embolization (UFE) can alleviate symptoms by

blocking arteries supplying blood to fibroids, causing them to shrink. Once reserved largely for poor surgical candidates, UFE has emerged as a primary treatment option, according to Nora Tabori, MD, an interventional radiologist at MedStar Washington.

"There's no longer a need for overnight hospital stays," Dr. Tabori says. "Patients generally go home within two hours of the procedure and can resume normal activity with no limits in less than a week."

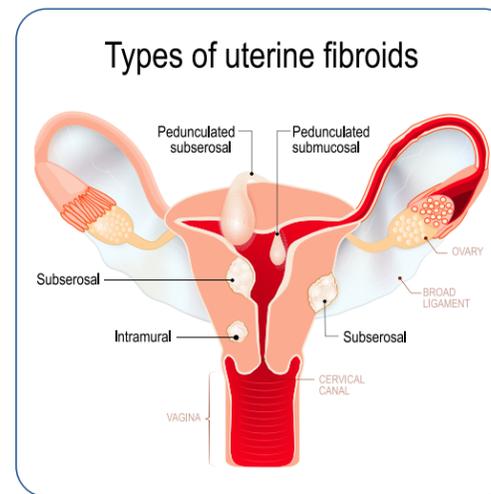
Surgical fibroid removal procedures such as myomectomy have made similar advances through the advent of laparoscopic and robotic technologies. Dr. Robinson notes that even most hysterectomy surgeries are now performed on an outpatient basis.

Greater choice in fibroid treatment alternatives allows a more tailored approach to meet your needs and conditions, making the interdisciplinary expertise in gynecology, surgery, and interventional radiology at MedStar Washington especially valuable.

"As a collaborative group, we can more readily discuss cases and help patients make informed decisions," Dr. Robinson says. "And if it's a complex case, we have the resources to identify the most reasonable and effective treatment strategy."

If there's any obstacle to successful fibroid treatment, Dr. Tabori says, it may well be simply a lack of awareness that these options are available. "I regularly hear patients say, 'if I had known the treatment options were so easy and what a difference it would make in my life, I would have done this sooner.'"

**We can help you determine a treatment plan for uterine fibroids. Call 202-719-0775 or visit [MedStarHealth.org/ads/MWHC-Fibroid-Treatment](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/ads/MWHC-Fibroid-Treatment).**



## Fast facts about fibroid treatment:

- Treatments can accommodate the patient's wish to preserve fertility
- Most procedures are outpatient and no longer require an overnight hospital stay
- Medications are now available to manage fibroid-related heavy menstrual bleeding
- Several non-surgical and minimally invasive treatment options are available

**Bri, a resident of Washington, D.C., says her recent breast reduction surgery changed her life.**



**Plastic Surgeon Derek Masden, MD**



# News from **the leading edge.**

Recent updates on medicine and technology.

Physicians at MedStar Washington Hospital Center are caregivers and researchers. For more than 60 years, we have been at the forefront of many international studies, all focused on the ultimate goal of better care for you. Here are a few recent ways we are staying on the leading edge of medicine.

## Multiple Sclerosis: *Better treatment for a brighter future.*

Nearly a million Americans—about one in 300—have multiple sclerosis (MS), an autoimmune disease affecting the spine, brain and optic nerves. Its cause is uncertain, and although it is more common in certain populations, it can strike anyone.

“Just a few decades ago, medical science had no tools to treat MS,” says Brian Barry, MD, neurologist at MedStar Washington Hospital Center. “But that has changed dramatically. Today, we have more than 20 different therapies, with new agents approved each year, making the disease highly manageable.”

### Diagnostic detective work

MS symptom severity is highly variable. The most common symptoms are fatigue, difficulty walking, numbness, tingling, weakness, dizziness, vision changes, mood changes, and bladder problems.

Diagnosis can be challenging, as many of the signs of MS can be caused by other conditions. Accurate diagnosis calls for detective work. In our MS clinic, we carefully consider the patient’s history, exam findings, tests, and imaging.

### Tailored treatments and therapies

About 30 years ago, injectable agents were introduced and administered under the skin, similar to insulin for diabetics. In the 2000s, oral medications became available. Today’s patient may also receive infusion therapy at an infusion center every month, or every six months, depending on the medication.

“Because MS looks and behaves differently in each patient,” explains Dr. Barry, “we tailor therapies to both the disease and any other underlying conditions. Our strategy can change as the disease evolves and more treatments become available, so it’s not unusual for the you to take different medications over the course of your lifetime.

With proper monitoring, the drugs are well tolerated and safe, can slow or stop the progress, and can give the brain a chance to heal to improve function.”

### The MedStar Health difference

With current MS therapies, we treat the “future you” and the “whole you.” Our game plan is always long term and always holistic. Our goal is to make this illness manageable by improving almost all symptoms, and for you to live a full and productive life. Our patients have access to many different specialists and resources, including:

- Neurologists
- Physical therapists
- Psychiatrists
- Counseling for patients and their families
- Coordinators who work with insurance companies on any necessary medication approvals
- Neuro-radiologists
- Occupational therapists
- Urologists

Our patients also have access to ongoing clinical trials for new treatments. Medical research is seeking to develop methods that will potentially stop this disease before it starts and reverse the damage it causes.

As with many other diseases, early intervention provides the best chance at successful management. Your long-term health is at stake, so don’t ignore any chronic issues that could be symptoms of this disease.  
**For an appointment with a neurologist, call 202-877-DOCS (3627).**



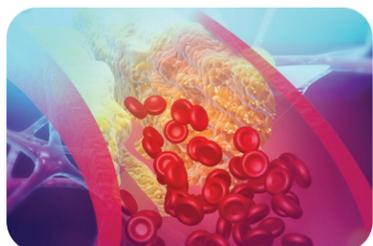
**Live updates from the operating room.**  
Our operating rooms have introduced a new way to keep patients’ loved ones “in the loop” while they are in surgery. Using one-way text message technology, the hospital staff can communicate with family members throughout the procedure, providing updates in real-time. The patient decides who will receive the messages prior to their procedure, and the messages disappear after a period of time, ensuring all information remains protected.



**New FitBit® app helps detect heart problems.**  
Through research conducted at our hospital, a new electrocardiogram (ECG) app from FitBit has been approved by the Food & Drug Administration. This app helps analyze heart rhythm, looking for signs of atrial fibrillation, or AFib, a common heart condition that can increase a person’s risk of stroke and other serious heart problems. Users simply hold their fingers to the device for 30 seconds and the results can then be shared with their doctor. MedStar Health’s Interventional Cardiologist Venkatesh Raman, MD, was the principal investigator for the U.S. clinical study.



**Bloodless surgery for patients seeking care without blood transfusion.**  
Bloodless surgery is a new concept for some patients, but we have been working for many years to provide this alternative option. We use safe, state-of-the-art medical technologies designed to minimize blood loss and maximize the oxygen-carrying capabilities of blood during medical treatment. Benefits include faster recovery time, no fear of contracting blood-borne infections, a lower mortality rate, and fewer complications. Whether for religious, ethical, medical, or other reasons, the techniques may be beneficial for anyone.



**First worldwide to use a new blood clot removal device.**  
We were recently the first in the world to use a device called the ClotHunter™. This device helps surgeons remove blood clots with fewer treatments and shorter procedure times. Blood clots—or deep vein thrombosis—may present a very serious risk to patients, sometimes resulting in death from pulmonary embolism. This first use was performed at our hospital by Vascular Surgeon Steven Abramowitz, MD.



# MedStar Health

MedStar Washington Hospital Center  
110 Irving Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20010

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## Have you avoided medical care during the pandemic?

### It's time to return with confidence.

#### We are 100% committed to preventing transmission of COVID-19.

Strict protocols are keeping our patients and staff safe. Distancing, masking, handwashing, and sanitizing are mandatory. We require temperature checks, and all patients undergoing procedures receive a COVID-19 test. All seats in waiting rooms are six feet apart and anyone entering the hospital is required to respond to screening questions.



#### If you think you are having an emergency, it's not safe to wait.

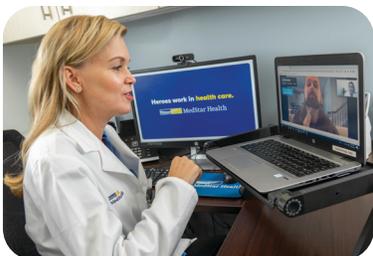
For many medical issues, there's a tremendous risk in delaying treatment. Seek emergency care immediately if:

- You have chest pain or suspect a heart attack
- You suspect a stroke
- You are having difficulty breathing
- You experience high fever, uncontrollable chills, burning, or pain, troubling redness or swelling, excessive vomiting, or other signs of possible infection



#### It's time to get back on track with health screenings.

Our doctors are careful about when we recommend you get your important screenings. Have a "shared decision-making" chat with your doctor to determine the best time to get your screenings for early detection.



#### Telehealth is an easy, effective way to stay connected with your doctor.

If you are not experiencing a medical emergency, telehealth can be a convenient way to keep up with your scheduled appointments, discuss any new concerns or symptoms, or make a plan for screenings.

**Schedule a virtual appointment by visiting [MedStarHealth.org/MedStar-Health-eVisit](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/MedStar-Health-eVisit), or call 202-877-DOCS (3627) for a referral to a physician or screening service.**

CenterScope is produced by the Marketing Department of MedStar Washington Hospital Center 110 Irving St., NW Washington, DC 20010.

MedStar Washington Hospital Center, a valued member of MedStar Health, is committed to its patients, above all else, with a focus on providing high-quality, safe care with compassion for all.

MedStar Washington Hospital Center, a private, not-for-profit hospital, does not discriminate on grounds of race, religion, color, gender, gender identity, physical handicap, national origin or sexual preference.

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Some of the photos in this publication were selected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. All patients and providers are expected to follow the current MedStar Health guidelines for safety, including proper masking and physical distancing where appropriate. Learn more at [MedStarHealth.org/Safe](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Safe).