

# Healthy Living



## Inside the ER

Understanding emergency medicine



**Christine R. Wray, FACHE**  
President, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital  
Senior Vice President, MedStar Health

**Holly Bond Meyer**  
Healthy Living Editor

**Ruby Hawks**  
Assistant Editor

**Deborah Gross**  
Writer

**Megan Johnson**  
Writer

**Sandy Ondrejcek**  
Designer & Photographer

**Bill Wood**  
Photographer

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# Letter from the president

Dear friends,

From gatherings with loved ones to planning out new year's resolutions, the holidays are a busy time—and a reflective one. Life still does not feel entirely "normal," and the pandemic might mean we aren't able to fully celebrate with family and friends as we wish. Thankfully, hope abides; joy and gratitude do, too.

I reflect with deep appreciation upon the commitment of our associates and providers through another challenging year. The Emergency Department (ER) is one of the teams serving our community in complex and ever-changing circumstances. These healthcare workers and providers are highlighted in this issue of *Healthy Living* with a closer look at some of the processes required to deliver emergent care. No one wants to come to the ER—but when you or a loved one are in need of those resources, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is here to assist 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

At other times of need, we are fortunate to have Hospice of St. Mary's working so hard on behalf of our community. Kara Rawlings, director of Hospice & Palliative Care, discusses the value of "supporting inward" toward the patient and their family members in this edition. An overview of hospice services is just the start of what this organization means to so many.

With your support, our non-profit hospital continues to grow. Robotic-assisted surgeries began this fall. Facility upgrades continue, all aimed at improving the patient experience. New specialists offer expertise in endocrinology, gastroenterology, otolaryngology, and orthopedics, just to name a few.

The patient is, as ever, at the heart of all we do. It is an honor to serve you, our neighbors, and we thank you for your continued support.

With my best wishes,

Christine R. Wray

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## Emergency medicine

# The new faces of emergency care.



**Avery Alatis, MD**



**David Hager, MD**



**Dylan Bailey, PA-C**



**Brittany Downing, PA-C**



**Stephen Doyle, PA-C**



**Delys Gribbin, PA-C**



**Maria Lawrynowicz, MD**



**Amy Prescott, MD**



**William TenBrink, Jr., MD**



**Saad Zaatari, MD**

In July, some new faces arrived in our Emergency Department (ED). Provider care in the ED transitioned from U.S. Acute Care Solutions (USACS) to MedStar Emergency Physicians, with 10 new providers joining the Medical Staff.

"I am beyond excited to welcome the Emergency Department at MedStar St Mary's Hospital into our MedStar Emergency Physicians family," said **David Hager, MD, FACEP**, Physician Executive Director, Emergency Medicine, MedStar Medical Group. "We have assembled a truly amazing group of physicians and physician assistants there, practicing world class emergency medicine. Under the leadership of our ED Chair, Dr. James Damalouji (pictured on cover), our Vice Chair, Dr. Babatunde Orogbemi, and Kim Stickney, PA-C, our lead Physician Assistant, we are well-positioned to provide amazing, high quality, and emergency care to the people of St. Mary's County and all of Southern Maryland."



"With our recent transition to MedStar Emergency Physicians, we have an influx of newly minted providers who are tremendously engaged and well trained, energetic and just terrific people."

-James Damalouji, MD

# Facing an emergency.

The Emergency Department, or ER, is often seen as the front door of the hospital. In 2021, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital treated more than 35,000 patients in its ER, nearly a third of St. Mary's County's overall population. And although to a patient or visitor, the ER can be a scary and often confusing place, there is a tremendous amount of coordination going on behind the scenes that ensures patients get the care they need in the hopes of helping them overcome whatever emergency they are facing.

"A heart attack, sprained ankle, broken bone, motor vehicle accident, stabbing, or gunshot wound, you never know what is going to come through the door and our physicians have to be able to treat all these conditions," said **James Damalouji, MD**, chair of Emergency Medicine at MedStar St. Mary's. "It is an exciting place to work, one of those areas of medicine that involves all different disciplines."

Dr. Damalouji has worked in the ER since 2003. A general and vascular surgeon, he leads a team of highly trained physicians and nurses who deliver expert care to as many as 160 patients in a 24-hour period. It can be a complicated dance with the COVID-19 pandemic putting additional stressors on what is already an unpredictable profession.

"The beginning of the week is usually the busiest, but any day could be an outlier," said Dr. Damalouji. "It also typically depends on the season, but COVID has changed all of that."

Locally, MedStar St. Mary's has experienced the same trends many hospitals throughout the country are facing—patients who delayed care during the pandemic and arrive with more serious conditions which have advanced beyond the



Discussing a patient's care in the Emergency Department are **Kristin Keil, BSN, RN, CPEN, CEN, center; Regina Russell, MS, BSN, RN, CPEN, director; and Ernestine Lakner, PA-C, right.**

early interventions that could have reduced the severity of their illnesses. Complicating the situation even more is a nationwide shortage of healthcare workers.

"Our nurses are a special group of people," said Dr. Damalouji. "Right now, there is a national shortage of nurses, so they are seeing longer hours and a higher acuity of patients, and dealing with that has been difficult, but they have reacted and handled it admirably."

When facing an emergency Dr. Damalouji's advice is simple: don't wait to find care.

"My biggest message is not to delay evaluation so the illness can be treated early. Sometimes that initial evaluation may be as simple as a telehealth visit and if it is truly an emergency, providers do not hesitate to refer to our department—we get transfers all the time," said Dr. Damalouji. "Don't hesitate to seek out care, because that's where you get into trouble, a simple issue may become more complex and difficult to treat."

## The ER is not your only option.

### Urgent Care

MedStar Health Urgent Care centers provide convenient access and extended-hour medical care for acute illnesses and injuries. Urgent care may be appropriate for you if you have an illness such as the flu; injury such as a broken bone or sprain, cut or laceration; or if you need minor tests such as strep or urinary tract infection. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/UrgentCare](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/UrgentCare) for more information and to check in online at one of the five Southern Maryland locations.



### Telehealth

MedStar Health Telehealth offers easy to use options to see providers online. Call your provider's office or message your provider via the patient portal. Our team will schedule your visit just like we would a routine visit in the office. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Telehealth](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Telehealth) for more information.



### eVisit

Can't decide if you have seasonal allergies, a cold, or possibly COVID? Get checked out where it's most convenient for you by downloading the app on a tablet or smartphone, or using your computer for consultations 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Visit [MedStarHealth.org/eVisit](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/eVisit) to get started.



## Creating a more comfortable waiting room experience

An all-new Emergency Department waiting room greets patients of MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. Completed in November, the redesigned space now has a more efficient layout, new furniture, bigger televisions, new flooring and lighting, courtesy device charging lockers for patients and visitors, modern artwork, and more. An eye-catching, two-tone terrazzo floor grounds the space and extends into the hospital lobby. A portion of this renovation was completed with funding from MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's Power to Heal associate giving campaign as well as community donors.



**If you are experiencing a medical emergency, please call 911.**

## ER myth vs. fact

### You will receive care quickly in the ER.

We try to see everyone as quickly as possible, however those with life-threatening conditions will be seen first. Those with less severe conditions will most likely have to wait.

### The ER is a great substitute for a primary care physician.

Using the ER for non-emergency conditions causes overcrowding and long waits. Only use the ER for major or life-threatening issues requiring immediate testing and treatment.

### The ER can turn patients away when it is busy and crowded.

Federal law requires Medicare-participating hospitals offering emergency services to provide a screening for an emergency medical condition when requested.

### Building a bigger ER/hospital would solve long wait times.

Most days there is enough space to manage our patient volume, but our volume is unpredictable, which is the nature of emergency medicine. Even with a bigger space, the hospital would need additional staff. There are national standards for ER bed occupancy (by number of hours) and MedStar St. Mary's functions within those recommendations.



# Bee our partner in providing you the best care.

Balancing the needs of everyone in an Emergency Department, or ER, is a complex and delicate task. Use this chart as a guide through the ER. The care team and our patient advocates are available to help with any issues that may develop. Please remember, our main goal is always to save lives.

## 1

### Arrival and evaluation

#### By ambulance



All patients are important to us, but priority must be given to those with the most serious conditions. We see patients by the seriousness of their condition, not according to the time of their arrival. The age of the patient may also have an impact in some cases.

#### Walk in



A greeter will check you in. If the ER is busy, you may have to wait. Patients will go through triage, a process to determine the level of care needed. Those with serious conditions may be triaged first, otherwise patients are seen in the order they arrive. Do not eat or drink until you have spoken with the nurse.

During triage, a highly trained nurse will assess your symptoms and take your vital signs. You will be asked about your medication, allergies, medical history, and any religious, cultural, or social support needs. Inform the triage nurse if you start to feel worse.



## 2

### Treatments

Your treatment is determined by your condition.

#### Life-threatening conditions

Patients having a heart attack or who have stopped breathing will need immediate attention.

#### Major injuries

Providers may need to find out more about a patient's condition and may order tests to determine the right course of treatment.

#### Minor injuries

Providers will determine the best way to relieve symptoms.

#### Non-urgent conditions

Often these patients can be seen and treated in one step, with no tests or procedures required.

## 3

### Testing



It takes time to order, perform, and review the results from tests performed.

Average time for patients to receive results from common tests in the ER:

- Lab test: 1.5 hours
- X-ray: 1.5 hours
- CT scan: 2 hours
- CT scan with IV contrast: 3 hours
- CT scan with oral contrast: 4 hours
- Ultrasound: 3 hours

## 4

### Next steps

#### Transfer



Some patients will need specialized care and be transported by helicopter or ambulance to another facility.

#### Admission or observation



Patients who need further treatment may be placed in a room as an inpatient or put on observation status while they are being monitored and a care plan established.

#### Discharge



Many patients will be able to leave the ER after treatment. When you are discharged from the hospital, you will be given advice about follow-up care. This may include instruction sheets, prescriptions, and outpatient appointments.

## What level of care do you need?

Level	Description	Examples
1- Not breathing/ No heartbeat	Immediate, life-saving intervention required without delay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardiac arrest</li> <li>• Massive bleeding</li> </ul>
2- Emergency	High risk of decline, or signs of a time-critical problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cardiac-related chest pain</li> <li>• Asthma attack</li> </ul>
3- Urgent	Stable, with multiple types of resources needed to investigate or treat (such as lab test plus x-ray imaging)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abdominal pain</li> <li>• High fever with cough</li> </ul>
4- Less urgent	Stable, with only one type of resource anticipated (such as only an x-ray, or only sutures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple laceration</li> <li>• Pain on urination</li> </ul>
5- Non-urgent	Stable, with no resources anticipated except oral or topical medications, or prescriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rash</li> <li>• Cold symptoms</li> </ul>

## Facts about our ER

- 100% of attending physicians have board certifications
- 100% of RNs have specialized emergency training
- Treated 35,899 patients in Fiscal Year 2021
- 453 patients transported by air from the ER in Fiscal Year 2021

## Bee prepared

- Charge your phone or bring a charger with you.
- Visitor policies may change. Please ask the greeter about the current policy or visit our website at [MedStarStMarys.org](http://MedStarStMarys.org).
- If you are coughing, you may be asked to wait in a separate area.

## Bee safe

Our hospital is a smoking and tobacco-free campus. Illegal drugs, and alcohol are not allowed. For everyone's safety, weapons are prohibited. Please leave valuables at home. We partner with our local law enforcement agencies to provide a safe environment of care.

## Bee understanding and kind

Please treat our staff with respect and remember it can take an entire team of doctors and nurses to assist a patient having a heart attack, stroke, or other life-threatening condition.



# News briefs



## Presidency to transition in January

**Christine R. Wray, FACHE**, will retire as president of MedStar St. Mary's Hospital and MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center and senior vice president, MedStar Health, in late January 2022. Devoting her 40-year career to health care, Wray has held the role of president at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital since 1992. Her successor is **Mimi Novello, MD, MBA, FACEP**, who will serve as president and chief medical officer of MedStar St. Mary's Hospital and senior vice president, MedStar Health, effective upon Wray's retirement on Jan. 28.



## Sachtleben named regional COO

**Michael C. Sachtleben**, president of MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, has been named senior vice president and chief operating officer (COO), Washington region, MedStar Health. In addition to his duties at MedStar Georgetown, Sachtleben now oversees MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, MedStar Washington Hospital Center, MedStar Montgomery Medical Center, and MedStar National Rehabilitation Network. He visited with MedStar St. Mary's staff and Administration in this expanded role in September.



## Dr. Michaels to lead MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center

**Stephen T. Michaels, MD, FACHE**, chief operating officer and chief medical officer of MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is being promoted to president of MedStar Southern Maryland Hospital Center, and senior vice president, MedStar Health, effective upon the retirement of current MedStar Southern Maryland president Christine Wray. Dr. Michaels has been in his current position since 2014.



## Moving toward sustainability

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is a recipient of the 2021 Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Award, which recognizes U.S. healthcare facilities that are continuously working to expand upon their environmental sustainability programs. Efforts include waste reduction, energy conservation, mercury elimination, sustainable product sourcing, healthy food initiatives, and more. All 10 MedStar Health hospitals were recognized in 2021.



## Quality care for stroke patients

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital was recently recognized with the American Heart Association (AHA)'s SilverPlus Get With The Guidelines®-Stroke Quality Achievement Award for our commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines. The hospital also received the AHA's Target: Type 2 Honor Roll award for meeting developed quality measures for the "Overall Diabetes Cardiovascular Initiative Composite Score" over 12 consecutive months.

# COVID-19 updates



## A time like none other. Dedication like never before.

Few of us could have imagined what a pandemic future would hold—nor what would be asked of all of us. Through it all, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital associates continue to care for their patients and community.

**Thank you to our healthcare workers** who continue to work through the ongoing challenges of COVID-19. From caring for very sick patients to screening community members, administering vaccines to fielding telehealth calls, we are grateful for your hard work and can-do spirit!

## Delivering doses wherever they're needed

As boosters of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine gained Food & Drug Administration approval this fall, members of our Population & Community Health team deployed to deliver doses in our community. Nurses visited local nursing and rehabilitation facilities to bring the vaccines directly to high-risk patients. The team has also continued to host COVID-19 vaccination clinics, both in the hospital's Outpatient Pavilion and at facilities around the county.



**Community member Jonathan Trent receives a COVID-19 vaccine from Melissa Randolph, RN, IBCLC, in October.**

## Antibody infusions delivered locally

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital began administering monoclonal antibody therapeutics for appropriate COVID-19 patients in September—a boost to the immune system for those fighting the coronavirus in its early stages. In October, administration of treatments moved to an auxiliary building outside the main hospital to allow for a safe, efficient process.

Monoclonal antibody infusions may benefit certain people diagnosed with COVID-19. To be eligible for treatment, patients must be confirmed positive for COVID-19, at least 12 years of age, and experiencing symptoms for less than 10 days. Appointments are required and available by calling the MedStar Health Call Center at **855-416-5244**.

**Deidra Carroll, MA, and Sophia Hubbell, RN, care for patients receiving monoclonal antibodies this fall.**



# da Vinci: Seeing a master at work



The da Vinci Robot Xi is now in steady use at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. Surgeon Tushar Samdani, MD, far right, is pictured with Anya Jongen, Kaylee Hartsfield, BSN, RN, LaRuby Holton, CRCST, and Donna Guy, CSFA.

New robotic surgical system arrives, bringing many benefits for patients

Less pain, smaller incisions, a quicker return to normal activity—patients are already seeing positive results with the da Vinci Surgical System. Its arrival at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital this fall has made robotic-assisted surgery a reality for patients undergoing certain procedures at our facility.

With the assistance of the Perioperative Services team, **Tushar Samdani, MD**, colorectal surgeon now regularly utilizes the da Vinci Robot Xi as an extra set of highly-specialized "hands" during his surgical cases.

Funding through the **2021 Gala Experience** will benefit the acquisition of and equipment for da Vinci, as well as construction to properly house the new system. These measures help ensure our staff is equipped with the tools needed to successfully deploy da Vinci at our hospital. Thank you so much to all who contributed to this year's campaign!

To keep improving for our patients, we turn our sights next to the upgrades and renovations necessary for Central Sterile—the hospital hub through which all surgical procedures are made possible, and all sterilized equipment must be prepped. This critical department needs to be expanded and outfitted with modern equipment to keep pace with the demands of a busy hospital. More details will be shared soon.



Above, associates Kaylee Hartsfield, BSN, RN and Donna Guy, CSFA of Perioperative Services train with Jennifer Harmon before the first surgery utilizing da Vinci in September. Below, Meghan Bryant, BSN, RN, CNOR gets hands-on experience with da Vinci alongside Tara Dooley, BSN, RN, during a dry run.



Partner with us! Visit [MedStarHealth.org/Philanthropy](https://www.MedStarHealth.org/Philanthropy) to give online, or contact Marketing, Public Relations & Philanthropy at **240-434-7766** or email [holly.b.meyer@medstar.net](mailto:holly.b.meyer@medstar.net) to learn more about funding opportunities at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

## Funding opportunities



### Scholarship endowment

Investing in the growth of our team and future of local students is deeply important for our rural facility. To support future healthcare workers, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is creating a scholarship endowment to boost the careers of students pursuing careers in nursing and allied health. In exchange for tuition support, these individuals agree to return to our hospital with their skills and knowledge to serve the St. Mary's community for a predetermined length of time. Since 2001, 169 students and counting have received support.

To sustain our endowment for years to come, MedStar St. Mary's is seeking philanthropic partnerships of \$2.5 million. Investment from the endowment will conservatively allow the hospital to offer \$125,000 in scholarships to an average of six to eight individuals each spring.

### Patient Experience Fund

As a non-profit organization, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is continually reinvesting in new equipment and programs to best serve our patients. At the end of the year, it's common that little funding remains for projects such as remodeling—even when those renovations might be greatly needed.

"First impressions form before a word has been spoken, before any care is delivered—just from what our patients see," said **Holly Meyer**, director of Marketing, Public Relations & Philanthropy, MedStar St. Mary's Hospital. "We want our outsides to match our insides: to deliver quality care in a pleasant, positive environment."

Like many healthcare facilities, heavy patient volumes have led to even more wear and tear throughout the hospital, especially in our inpatient rooms. "We understand how important it is to deliver care in a modern, clean space," said Meyer, "so this is an area where philanthropic support can make a big impact. Room upgrades help our patients feel more comfortable, and confident during their stay with us."

Planned renovations to the Medical/Surgical/Pediatrics unit include bathroom remodeling, fresh cabinetry, new flooring, and refreshed decor. The second- and third-floor hallways have been recently re-wallpapered, and the carpet replaced with fresh and durable laminate.

"We're always looking to improve our facility, both in big ways and smaller ones—through little things that still make a strong impression on our patients," said Meyer. "We're truly grateful for the support that helps us continue to grow and serve others."



# Five-star care.

**Our patients' reviews say it all.**



**Emmanuel Atiemo, MD**  
Sports medicine

"Dr. Atiemo was wonderful. He was friendly, which helped ease my anxiety. I feel like he really listened to my concerns about certain treatment options."

"Can you say awesome!? Cause that's what he is! I will never go to another orthopedic. Never have I ever found another doctor with a better personality and professionalism. Thanks, Dr. A! You're A #1 in my book!"

"Dr. Atiemo is awesome. Listens, answers all questions, and has a wonderful bedside manner."



**John Kuri, II, MD**  
Sports medicine  
Special interest in shoulder and elbow

"Excellent, caring professional. A courteous and knowledgeable physician."

"Dr. Kuri even took the time to draw me different pictures of my knee to show why and where the issue was."

"Dr. Kuri was excellent. Treatment, procedure, and especially follow-up care were all superb!"



**William Lennen, MD**  
Joint replacement

"Loved Dr. Lennen! He greeted me, sat down, and talked with me. He definitely loves what he does, and it shows!"

"Best doctor visit I've ever had, knowledgeable, caring and concerned about my problem."

"Dr. Lennen was very attentive. He listened carefully when I spoke of my concerns. He answered all my questions thoroughly."

# All in the family.

Brothers in medicine bring skills to St. Mary's

**Mohammad Al-Jundi, MD, MBBS**, endocrinologist and **Moutasem Aljundi, MD**, interventional radiologist have a strong connection through medicine—but that's just part of their bond. The brothers, two members of a close-knit Jordanian family, joined MedStar Health as students to continue their medical training in 2016. They now work nearby one another at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

Their paths have been intertwined since birth. Moutasem is two years Mohammad's senior, and the pair also have an older brother, a certified financial analyst, as well as a younger sister pursuing her master's in industrial engineering in Jordan. "Our father completed his PhD in accounting after retiring from the military at age 55, and our mother was a science teacher," Mohammad shared. "I learned from Moutasem along the way since starting medical school in 2008. It was fortunate that we ended up together in Washington, D.C. for training. We remain close."

After completing his residency at MedStar Washington Hospital Center and MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, Dr. Mohammad Al-Jundi continued to the National Institutes of Health to study endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism. "I am fascinated by the interaction between hormones and their effects on the human body," said Mohammad. "I pursued medicine as a way to contribute to society and help patients have a better quality of life."

At the same time, Dr. Moutasem Aljundi worked to complete the vascular and interventional radiology program at MedStar Georgetown. He was previously a diagnostic radiology resident with early specialization in interventional radiology at the same organization, as well as radiology chief resident and a fellow in medical imaging informatics. Moutasem now treats patients as a vascular and interventional radiologist at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital, using image-guided procedures to diagnose and treat diseases with minimally-invasive techniques.

With both of their fellowship programs complete in 2021, the brothers were ready to serve



**Dr. Mohammad Al-Jundi, left, with brother Dr. Moutasem Aljundi.**

patients in full-time roles. "Fortunately, there were openings for both our specialties in St. Mary's at the same time, and because we love MedStar, we took them," Mohammad shared. "It's wonderful to see each other at work almost every day."

Despite their neighboring medical offices, said Mohammad, "We do our best to leave work at work!"

Dr. Moutasem Aljundi performs interventional radiology procedures within MedStar St. Mary's Hospital and also sees patients in the Outpatient Pavilion. Call **240-434-7024** for appointments.

Dr. Mohammad Al-Jundi welcomes patients with endocrinology needs at MedStar Medical Group Specialists at Leonardtown. Call **301-475-7750** for appointments.

**You could be next to experience five-star care!**  
Make your appointment today at our Leonardtown office.

The MedStar Orthopaedic Institute has 49 orthopedic surgeons and locations throughout Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. Visit [MedStarOrthopaedicInstitute.org](https://www.MedStarOrthopaedicInstitute.org) for a complete listing of physicians and locations.

**MedStar Orthopaedic Institute in Leonardtown**  
23503 Hollywood Road, Suite 101  
Visit [MedStarStMarys.org/Ortho](https://www.MedStarStMarys.org/Ortho) or call **240-434-7483**.

# Privileged to care.

Hospice director is grateful to support patients and their families.



**Kara Rawlings, director, Hospice & Palliative Care**

For **Kara Rawlings, MBA, BSN, RN, CHPN, CM/DN**, taking on the role of director for Hospice & Palliative Care Services for MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is a bit like coming home. It is a role she was not only comfortable stepping into, but also one that fits her well.

"I feel like the people who work in hospice are cut from the same cloth," said Kara. "We are all mission driven and that creates a very collaborative and supportive environment."

Kara took on the role as director in January after serving as assistant director for several years. Previously, she worked as hospice director in Calvert County and has held a variety of nursing roles in her career after starting her nursing career at Medstar St. Mary's Hospital on the Telemetry unit. Both of Kara's parents were in the medical profession—her father a doctor and her mother a nurse—but she explored other professions in college and was ultimately drawn into nursing for its flexibility.

"I decided to go into nursing because it is such a versatile field," said Kara. "You can do many types of nursing from behavioral health, ER, OB, or hospice. I found all possibilities very appealing."

It was a personal experience that led Kara to hospice and palliative care. Her mother-



in-law entered hospice care while living with her family and it was Kara who was with her when she passed away.

"I was with her when she passed away and it was such a profound experience and privilege to be with someone at that time," she said. It was this experience that propelled Kara into her hospice career in 2006.

Although Kara is no longer at the bedside with patients, she sees her role and that of the administrative staff as support for the people who directly surround patients and families on this journey.

"From my role as a director, I always see the patient in the center, then my staff surrounding them, then the administrative team, and me surrounding the staff," she said. "We are always supporting inward toward the patient and the family."

Kara sees firsthand the difference that hospice makes in the lives of patients and families and feels privileged to be part of that journey.

"For a brief moment in time you are family for them, you are their rock. You are helping them through the hardest time of their life," said Kara. "People always say they are so grateful to us, but we are so grateful for what we get back from them."



**The Hospice House is a unique feature of Hospice of St. Mary's. The six-bed facility offers a home-like atmosphere for patients in the end stages of life and their families. Built 11 years ago entirely through donations, the house is open to anyone who qualifies for hospice care. Through a variety of fundraising efforts, the community continues to support the house, its upkeep, and the services provided there. "Even during COVID we have gotten great support," said Kara. "It is so nice that people feel that that they want to give back. The community built the house, and they help keep it open."**



## Kick off the holiday season with Hospice Festival of Trees

The Hospice of St. Mary's Festival of Trees, a beloved holiday tradition in St. Mary's County, is being held online for the second year. Bidding for trees and wreaths will be held Dec. 4. Winners will have their tree delivered to them. The festival is one of hospice's biggest and most loved fundraisers, and continues to spread holiday cheer with the generous support of community members and local businesses.

Visit [2021FOT.givesmart.com](https://2021FOT.givesmart.com) for more information or to bid!

## What is hospice?

Hospice of St. Mary's offers wrap around care for patients and their families going through the final stages of life. Care may be delivered in a person's home or at the Hospice House, and varies depending on the individual needs of the patient and their family.

"Many people do not realize that hospice care is an insurance benefit you are entitled to have that provides a nurse you can call 24-hours-a-day to get advice from, or to ask questions of, or just check to see, 'is this normal?'" said Kara. "It is like having your own personal concierge nurse helping you navigate through some tough decisions."

Hospice care is not just nursing care. Hospice provides a variety of services for its patients, from social support, to helping find benefits they may not know they were entitled to or qualified for, as well as providing supplies free of charge such as medication, wound care necessities, and more.

"We do a lot more than people think," said Kara. "Hospice isn't just one person; it is a team of people. While your nurse is at the center helping you most of the time, the whole team is here for you—the doctors, the aides, the chaplain, social workers, volunteers, and our staff in the office are here just to help support you."

Visit [HospiceofStMarys.org](https://HospiceofStMarys.org) for more information about hospice services as well as upcoming events and support groups.

# Worried about kids' pandemic weight gain?

If your child experienced a steep climb on the growth chart in the last year, you're not alone.

With COVID-19 altering life as we knew it, schools shuttered and children were suddenly stationed in front of devices. Instead of participating in physical education and team sports, kids were "home, more sedentary, and had more opportunities to snack," said **Sarah Johnson, MD**, primary care provider at MedStar Medical Group at St. Mary's. For many children, "all of this contributed to weight gain: more calories in than out."

Should we be concerned? As parents, we needn't obsess over the scale. "So much of our lives are focused on numbers—whether it is our weight, blood pressure, a test grade, etc.," shared Dr. Johnson. "In reality, a person who is 50 pounds overweight may be healthier than a person who has an ideal body weight."

Instead of worrying about pounds, consider these tips:

- **Set goals, and make them fun.** Aim to exercise 30 to 60 minutes a day, five days a week. Find something to enjoy together: taking a walk, playing kickball, following along with yoga videos on YouTube, or having a kitchen dance party. "Go on a hike and make it a scavenger hunt," Dr. Johnson suggested. "Kids love games and rewards."
- **Work together.** "Childhood obesity has to be treated with 'family' lifestyle changes," said Dr. Johnson. "Parents cannot force a child to make dietary changes and increase exercise if they themselves do not do the same thing." As a bonus? Grown-ups might feel a health boost, too.
- **Steer around the middle.** When grocery shopping, focus on the periphery of the store. Load up on items such as fresh produce, meats and dairy, and limit your time spent browsing processed foods in those center aisles.
- **Recharge.** Studies have linked poor sleep to weight gain. Late nights can also lead to snacking. Plus, "children need good sleep so their brains can retain



the information they learned at school, and be well rested and focused the next day," said Dr. Johnson. Start with setting a consistent bedtime, and keep children's bedrooms free of electronic devices.

Finally, look for the positive. "I find we are so focused on critiquing what children do wrong that we forget to praise them when they do something right," Dr. Johnson said. "All of us, children and adults, love to hear compliments because it makes us feel good. If you give praise and positive reinforcement, you are more likely to see your children choosing to do the right thing."



**Sarah Ann Johnson, MD**  
MedStar Medical Group at St. Mary's  
41680 Miss Bessie Dr., Suite 301  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
P 301-997-2728

If you have concerns about your child's growth, start by speaking with their primary care provider.

Visit [MedStarStMarys.org/Community](https://www.MedStarStMarys.org/Community) for a list of local resources.

## FY2021 at a glance

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital is a full-service, acute-care hospital delivering state-of-the-art emergency, acute inpatient, and outpatient care. As a not-for-profit facility, earnings are reinvested in the community and into improving patient care.

### Patient encounters

July 1, 2020-June 30, 2021



**Inpatient admissions**  
7,621



**Annual births**  
1,063



**Ambulatory surgery cases**  
6,124



**Number of associates**  
1,118



**Outpatient visits**  
82,140



**Outpatient observations**  
2,434



**Emergency room visits**  
35,899

### Awards and recognitions

- Newsweek – Best Maternity Care Hospitals 2020
- Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade "A" (Spring 2021, Fall 2021) – six consecutive honors
- The Joint Commission Certificate of Distinction for Joint Replacement – Shoulder, Knee, Hip
- National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers – NAPBC accredited, Breast Imaging Center of Excellence
- Healthiest Maryland Businesses Wellness at Work Awards, Exemplar
- Practice Greenhealth Environmental Excellence Awards, Partner for Change
- Aster Awards and Healthcare Advertising Awards 13 honors for excellence in communications, including nine gold distinctions

### Nondiscrimination Statement

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

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

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital يتنضم مع القوانين الحقوق المدنية الفيدرالية المعمول بها ولا يميز على أساس العرق أو اللون أو الأصل الوطني أو السن أو الإعاقة أو الجنس. ملحوظة: إذا كنت تتحدث اللغة، فإن خدمات المساعدة اللغوية متوفرة لك بالمجان. اتصل برقم ١٨٩٨-٥٧٤-١٠٣٠-١

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

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

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital የፌዴራል ሲቪል መብቶችን መብት የሚያከብር ሲሆን ሰዎችን በዘር፣ በቆይታ ቀለም፣ በዘር፣ ሃይማኖት፣ በእኩል ጉዳት ወይም በጾታ ማንኛውንም ሰው አያገለግልም። ማሳሰቢያ: የሚናገሩት ቋንቋ አማርኛ ከሆነ የትርጉም እርዳታ ድርጅቶችን በኩል ሊያገኙዎት ተከጋጅተዋል። ወደ ሚክላው ቁጥር ይደውሉ። 1-301-475-8981.

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital اطلاق وفاقی شہری حقوق کے قوانین کی تعمیل کرتا ہے اور یہ کہ نسل، رنگ، قومیت، عمر، معذوری یا جنس کی بنیاد پر امتیاز نہیں کرتا۔ خبردار: اگر آپ اردو بولتے ہیں، تو آپ کو زبان کی مدد کی خدمات مفت میں دستیاب ہیں۔ کال کریں 1-301-475-8981۔

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

MedStar St. Mary's Hospital تبعیضی بر اساس نژاد، رنگ پوست، اصلیت ملیتی، سن، نژاد یا جنسیت افراد قائل نمی شود.

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

# Winter 2021 calendar



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

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

## Support groups

### Bariatric Support

Meetings are currently online only Dec. 11, Jan. 31, Feb. 28, 10 a.m. Call 301-475-6019.

### Breast Cancer

Meetings are held in person on the last Monday of each month Dec. 27, Jan. 31, Feb. 28, 6 to 7 p.m., Outpatient Pavilion, Cancer Care & Infusion Services Call 301-997-1315 or visit [Facebook.com/groups/MedStarBreastHealthProgram](https://www.facebook.com/groups/MedStarBreastHealthProgram) for support.

### Epilepsy

Currently on hold due to COVID-19. Call 240-434-7929 for updates.

### Lactation (Breastfeeding)

Weekly on Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to noon, Outpatient Pavilion, Health Connections Registration required as space is limited or search and join the "MedStar St. Mary's Lactation Support Group" on Facebook. Call 301-475-6019 for information.

### Parkinson's

Second Tuesday of each month, Dec. 14, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, 6 p.m. Call 301-475-6019.

### Stroke Survivors

Third Tuesday of each month, Jan. 18, Feb. 15, 5:30 p.m. Call 301-475-6019.

## Cancer care

### Cancer support group

Currently meeting virtually on the first and third Wednesday of each

month. In-person options may also be available. Call 240-434-7241 to register. Search and join "MedStar St. Mary's Hospital Cancer Support Group" on Facebook.

## Diabetes education

### Take Control of Diabetes with Education

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

### Simple Changes (Pre-diabetes)

March 16, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., Health Connections Participate in our free, year-long class designed to eliminate possible diabetes risk factors by making simple, healthier changes in your life. This one-year program is a combination of weekly and monthly sessions. Call 301-475-6019.

## Exercise, nutrition & weight management

### Bariatric information sessions

Learn more about weight loss surgeries offered with surgeon Nicholas Tapazoglou, MD, with a free online seminar. Required for those pursuing surgery. Visit [MedStarStMarys.org/WeightLoss](https://www.MedStarStMarys.org/WeightLoss) or call 240-434-4088.

### MedFit program

Currently unavailable due to COVID-19. Call 240-434-7143 for updates.

## Body composition analysis

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

## Childbirth & family education

Classes are held in the Outpatient Pavilion at MedStar St. Mary's Hospital.

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

In-person sessions and online options available. Dec. 4, Jan. 15, Feb. 5, March 5, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Health Connections, \$100/couple Combines four traditional parenting classes into a one-day overview. Topics include childbirth, breastfeeding, infant CPR, and practical baby care skills such as bathing and diapering. Call 301-475-6019.

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

### Safe Sitter

In-person session, Jan. 22, March 26, 8:45 a.m. to 4 p.m., Health Connections, \$65 Adolescents 12-14 learn babysitting tips, basic first aid, and CPR. Call 301-475-6019.

## American Heart Association classes

Held in MedStar St. Mary's Hospital's Education and Simulation Center, 41550 Doctors Crossing Way, Leonardtown. Register at [sitelms.org](https://www.sitelms.org) with registration codes (below). Two-year certification cards are emailed upon course completion. Call 202-643-1841 to learn more.

### CRT 105 CPR for the community (Formerly known as Heartsaver CPR/AED)

Dec. 12, 5 to 9 p.m., \$85

Learn CPR and AED use on adults, children and infants; and how to relieve choking for any age.

### Overdose Response Program

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

## Pulmonary

### Better Breathers Club

Dec. 18, Feb. 17, Noon to 1 p.m., Health Connections Individuals with pulmonary disease, such as COPD, learn breathing techniques, home health care, and exercise in this free program offered in partnership with the American Lung Association. Registration required as space is limited. Call 240-434-7143.

### Tobacco Cessation Program

Tuesdays, Jan. 4-Feb. 22,

5:30-6:30 p.m., virtual course In this free eight-week program, you will learn behavioral modifications, stress management, and other techniques to help quit using tobacco products. Visit [SMCHD.org/Tobacco](https://www.SMCHD.org/Tobacco) to register.

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



## Grief during the holidays

The holidays can be a difficult time for anyone living with loss of a loved one. Please join Hospice of St. Mary's in honoring the loss and grief in the Holiday Grief Support Workshops in December at the Leonardtown Library. During a season when loved ones normally gather, these workshops are meant to offer solace, community, and potential coping skills. There will be workshops for adults only, 9th-12th graders, and a workshop for adults of children who have lost a loved one.

These events are free of charge, but space is limited and registration is required. Additional sessions will be created if needed. Participants must wear a face mask. Please call **301-994-3023** for details.

## Did you miss a screening?

## Now is the time to get caught up.

During the past year, many people delayed getting screened for important health conditions such as cancer and diabetes. Timely screenings can lead to early detection and better outcomes. Now is the time to get caught up. Take the following assessments to see if you should get screened.

### Diabetes



### Heart risk

or text HEART to 410-680-3337



### Lung cancer

or text LUNG to 410-680-3337



### Knee pain assessment

or text KNEE to 410-680-3337



Our team remains committed to quality, safe care, and we have many protocols in place for a safe screening environment.



First Last Name  
Address Line 1  
Address Line 2  
City, State, Zipcode Here

# New year, **new career.**

Your future starts with us.



If a new job or career is part of your New Year's goal for 2022, we can help. At MedStar Health, we know it is a challenging time to work in health care, which is why we work hard to support our employees both professionally and personally. As the largest healthcare provider in Maryland and the Washington, D.C., metro area, we are dedicated to caring for our patients and our staff. We want our employees to feel supported now and in the future.

That's why we offer exceptional benefits for our employees, such as:

#### **Time away from work**

We know people need time for their life, which is why we offer personal holiday hours, along with a generous paid time off program.

#### **Career development**

We empower people to reach their goals. MedStar Health provides robust training opportunities for leaders at every level through our EdAssist program, clinical ladders, and other initiatives.

#### **Flexible options**

Sometimes career goals—and life—change along the way. With more than 300 locations including 10 hospitals, ambulatory, and urgent care centers, our employees have greater flexibility for future career moves across our vast system.

#### **An exceptional team**

The community of people we've built is our strongest asset. We're proud of our teamwork, collaboration, and friendships. As a result, our employee engagement rates are significantly above the national average.



Don't wait to take the next step.

Visit [MedStarStMarys.org/Careers](https://www.MedStarStMarys.org/Careers) and start your journey to a new career.