




Health Beat

Smart Medicine | For Our Patients | For Our Community

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Winter 2010

From the heart

Talk to your doctor about your risk of heart disease

Better health can start with a heart-to-heart talk with your doctor.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the U.S., according to the American Heart Association (AHA). When it comes to protecting your heart, your doctor is an important ally. If you haven't already, bring up heart health at your next visit or make an appointment to discuss it.

By working with your doctor, you can learn about your personal risk of developing heart disease—your risk factors—and take steps to reduce that risk. According to Randolph Whipps, MD, division head of Maryland General Hospital's cardiology department, risk factors can include: ▶ Family history ▶ Diabetes ▶ High blood pressure ▶ High

cholesterol ▶ Obesity ▶ Smoking cigarettes ▶ Hardening of the arteries

Taking control. “While you can't do anything about some risk factors for heart disease, such as getting older and having a family history of the disease, you can lower your risk by concentrating on factors you can control,” Dr. Whipps says. “These include smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, physical inactivity, excess weight and diabetes. Your doctor can recommend screenings, medications and lifestyle changes that are appropriate for you.”

A healthy heart for life. Help ensure that your efforts have lasting power by:



- ▶ Scheduling regular checkups
- ▶ Having your doctor review how your plan is working
- ▶ Letting your doctor know if you have questions or concerns

February
is American
Heart Month.

Take
time to
educate
yourself on
the dangers of
heart disease and
get on track to better
heart health. For more
information or a referral
to one of Maryland General
Hospital's cardiologists,
call 410-225-8400.

The weather outside is frightful

When a fierce chill is in the air, safety should be on your mind. Even when



you're in your home, winter weather can be hazardous. But you can take steps to help protect your family.

Heat your home safely. Make sure woodstoves and fireplaces are properly vented. Follow manufacturers' instructions for heaters—pay close attention to safety warnings.

Prevent carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. CO is an odorless gas emitted by fuel-burning devices. Have your heating system and combustion devices serviced every year, and install a carbon monoxide detector.

If you lose power, don't use

generators, grills or camp stoves indoors—and don't use them outdoors near air intakes.

Protect your pipes. To prevent frozen pipes, allow sink faucets to drip continuously. Open under-sink cabinets to let warm air circulate.

Dress warmly. When outdoors, wear layered, loose-fitting clothing. Include a hat, scarf, mittens, and water-resistant coat and boots.

Stay nourished. Well-balanced meals help keep you warm. Avoid caffeine and alcohol; they can increase heat loss.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

You never looked so good!

The marvel of the new 64-slice CT scanner at MGH

Looks aren't everything. Except when it comes to diagnostic computed tomography (CT) scan imaging. It can be hard to find and fix a problem if you can't see it clearly.

Fortunately, when it comes to possible problems inside the body, doctors at Maryland General Hospital use some of the most advanced tools to focus on exactly what they need to see. One of the cutting-edge diagnostic tools our doctors use is the 64-slice CT scanner.

CT scans are noninvasive, painless and fast. According to the Radiological Society of North America, the scanners use special x-ray equipment to take multiple pictures—or slices—of internal structures, such as organs, bones and blood vessels. A computer program then combines all of these slices into detailed, cross-sectional views.

"Compared to the previous generations of CT scanners, 64-slice machines provide much more information," says Allan Skrenta, MD, chief of imaging at Maryland General. "Thinner slices are recorded more quickly, leading to images with even more detail."

These machines are so fast they

can record motion-free images of a beating heart and the blood vessels that feed it. Among other things, images from these advanced CT scanners allow cardiologists to gauge the buildup of dangerous plaque in the arteries without the need for an invasive coronary angiogram.

A 64-slice CT scan can also quickly and accurately show whether or not someone who is experiencing chest pain is having a heart attack.

According to Dr. Skrenta, CT scans are also used to:

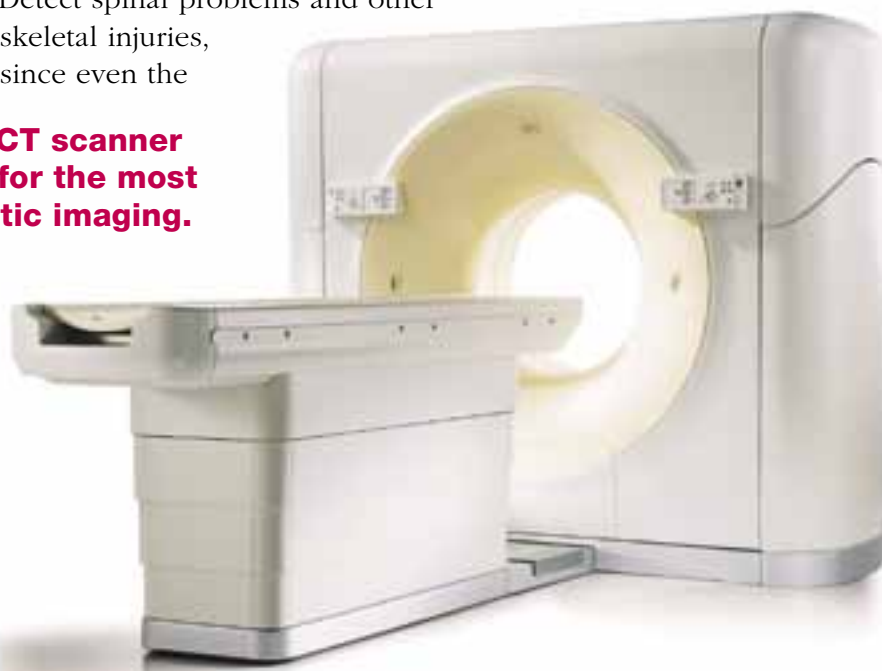
- ▶ Study all types of tissues in the chest and abdomen
- ▶ Find cancers, such as those in the lungs, liver and pancreas
- ▶ Detect spinal problems and other skeletal injuries, since even the

smallest bones and nearby tissues can be seen

- ▶ Locate vascular diseases that can lead to stroke or kidney failure
- "Your doctor might order a CT scan for any number of reasons," Dr. Skrenta says. "For example, it might be used to help guide a biopsy, to plan a surgical procedure or to measure bone density. A CT scan can also quickly spot injuries to internal organs after an accident or more precisely target radiation treatments." If you or a loved one needs a CT scan, Maryland General Hospital offers a smart choice for the most advanced diagnostic imaging. Call **410-225-8082** for more information.



Our new 64-slice CT scanner is a smart choice for the most advanced diagnostic imaging.





- ▶ Obstetrics and gynecology (pregnancy and women’s reproductive system care)
 - ▶ Eye care for adults and children
 - ▶ Ear, nose and throat (ENT) care
 - ▶ Gastroenterology (care for the digestive system)
 - ▶ Urology (kidney, bladder and urinary tract care for men and women as well as prostate care for men)
 - ▶ Dermatology (care for skin conditions)
 - ▶ Behavioral health (care for mental health issues)
 - ▶ Vascular health (care for conditions that involve the blood vessels)
 - ▶ Pain management
 - ▶ Cardiology (heart care)
 - ▶ General surgery
 - ▶ Breast health
 - ▶ Orthopedics (bone and joint care)
 - ▶ Neuroscience (care for brain, nervous system and neuromuscular conditions)
 - ▶ Diabetes and endocrinology
 - ▶ Infectious diseases
- The network also includes

Your home for health care

Primary care to keep you healthy, specialty care when you need it

Getting the health care you need can be a complicated, confusing experience. How do you find a primary care provider? What if you need a specialist? Will it be difficult to get an

appointment?

Maryland General Hospital has the answer to all those questions: Linden Medical Group.

Linden Medical Group brings together physicians from a wide range of specialties into a single network that makes getting the care you need easy. The group provides quality care in:

- ▶ Internal medicine

Time for a checkup? Protect your health with regular visits

OK, grab your to-do list. Here’s an undertaking that’s definitely listworthy: Make an appointment for a checkup.

Going in for regular doctor visits is one of the most important things you can do to stay healthy, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

- Regular checkups:
- ▶ Allow your doctor to keep tabs

on important health markers, such as your weight, blood pressure and cholesterol.

- ▶ Give your doctor an opportunity to find problems early, when they may be easiest to treat. He or she can make sure you receive recommended screenings for heart disease, cancer and other diseases.
- ▶ Help you be at your best.

Together with your doctor, you can plan ways to maintain or improve your health. Be sure to talk about any questions or concerns you have.

Been a while since your last checkup? Take that crucial first step: Call Linden Medical Group—Armory

Place at **410-225-8800** or Bolton Hill at **410-225-8855**.



Maryland General's Community Health Education Center, which offers free screenings for high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes, as well as pregnancy testing.

"The introduction of the Linden Medical Group is part of the hospital's ongoing commitment to providing the people of our community with convenient access to quality primary and specialty care," says Sylvia Smith Johnson, Maryland General's president and CEO. "Now it is easier than ever to make sure you're meeting all your health needs, from working with your primary care physician to proactively protecting your health and receiving the specialty care you need to handle any health issues you face."

Another advantage of the Linden Medical Group network is that when you have a primary care doctor and get regular checkups, you're better able to catch health

problems early. It's much better to treat and control your diabetes, for example, than to face the complications that can develop if the condition is not treated and monitored by a physician.

Convenient locations around town. Linden Medical Group has several locations in the community. Primary care is available at our Armory Place location on the campus of Maryland General and in Bolton Hill. The group welcomes new patients, and there is not a long wait for appointments.

"Maryland General has always been committed to caring for our community, and Linden Medical Group is a great example of that commitment," Smith Johnson says. "By bringing together a network of physicians, we've taken the hassle out of finding quality physicians you can rely on and receiving all the care you need."



Here when you need us

Primary care physicians help patients maintain overall health by focusing on preventive care as well as treating common illnesses, minor injuries, and aches and pains and performing routine health exams.

Linden Medical Group Primary Care

▶ **Armory Place**
827 Linden Ave.

▶ Baltimore, MD 21201
410-225-8800

▶ **Bolton Hill**
1501 W. Mount Royal Ave.

▶ Baltimore, MD 21217
410-225-8855

Linden Medical Group Specialty Care

When you need a specialist, your primary care provider will work with other Maryland General Hospital specialists to coordinate all of your health

care. For referrals, call
410-225-8400.

Community Health Education Center

▶ Free blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes and prostate cancer screenings

▶ Free pregnancy tests

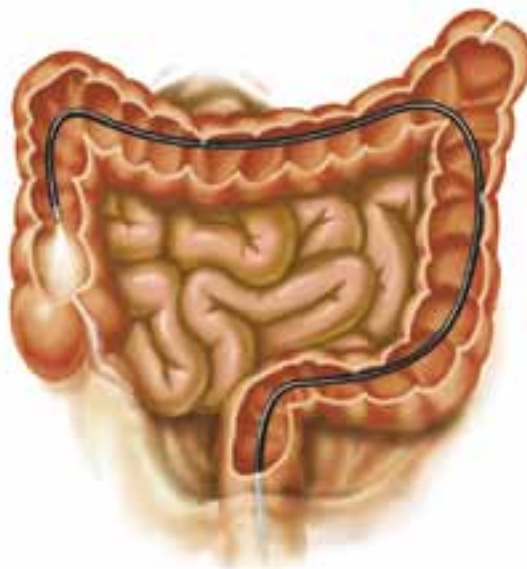
▶ Call 410-225-2000.

Act now against colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer (also known as colon cancer) is one of the deadliest types of cancer among Americans, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Other facts about this type of cancer:

- ▶ It can develop at any age, but most cases occur in people 40 and older.
- ▶ You are at higher risk if your family has a history of the disease.
- ▶ Besides age, risk factors include a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease and colon polyps.
- ▶ Colorectal cancer usually starts with polyp growth. Finding and removing polyps during a colonoscopy is an effective way to prevent colorectal cancer.
- ▶ Symptoms may include rectal bleeding or changes in bowel habits.
- ▶ Screening is recommended beginning at age 50 for both men



and women—earlier if there is a close family member who has had colon cancer.

“Cancer that is found early is generally most treatable,” says Jeffrey Schwartz, MD, division head of Maryland General’s gastroenterology department. “More than half of colorectal cancer deaths could be avoided with regular screening. More importantly, most colon cancers do not produce symptoms early

in the disease, and polyps do not cause any symptoms, which is why screening tests are so important.”

Some tests can even detect precancerous polyps that can be removed to prevent cancer from developing.

According to Dr. Schwartz, tests used to screen for colorectal cancer include:

- ▶ **Stool tests.** These detect blood or other indicators of cancer.
- ▶ **Flexible sigmoidoscopy.** A slender, lighted tube with a tiny camera is inserted into the colon, allowing doctors to look at the rectum and the lower part of the colon.
- ▶ **Colonoscopy.** This is similar to a flexible sigmoidoscopy, except the entire colon is examined.

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness month. If you or a loved one is at risk for developing colon cancer, getting screened is important. Maryland General Hospital’s board-certified gastroenterologists use high-definition, state-of-the-art equipment to perform screenings. For a referral to one of our gastroenterologists, call **410-225-8400**.



Stocked and ready

Have a good first aid kit on hand

No matter how careful we are, life can still bring its share of bumps and bruises—and cuts and scrapes and burns. A first aid kit can help you deal with minor injuries and begin treating some serious medical emergencies.

A good kit should include:

- ▶ A first aid manual
- ▶ Bandages in assorted sizes
- ▶ Butterfly bandages
- ▶ Triangular bandages
- ▶ Elastic wraps for wrist, ankle, knee or elbow injuries

- ▶ Gauze and adhesive tape
 - ▶ Sharp scissors with round tips
 - ▶ Safety pins to fasten splints
 - ▶ Hydrogen peroxide, antiseptic wipes and antibiotic ointment
 - ▶ Disposable cold packs for treating burns and other injuries
 - ▶ Tweezers
 - ▶ Over-the-counter medicines like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, decongestants and antihistamines (use only as directed)
- Be sure to store first aid kits out of the reach of children.

Your privacy matters

Few things are more personal, or private, than your health.

To protect that privacy, federal law sets limits on who can see your health information. At Maryland General Hospital we take steps to help ensure that everyone involved in your care guards your confidentiality.

Under federal health privacy rules, you can:

- ▶ Ask to see your health records. In most cases, copies of your records should be made available within 30 days of your request. You may have to pay the cost of copying and sending the records.



- ▶ Receive a notice that tells you how your health information may be used or shared.
- ▶ Request that corrections be added to your records. If a doctor or the hospital disagrees with your corrections, you have the right to have your disagreement with the record noted in your file.
- ▶ Learn how your information has been used or shared, including when and why. Information can be shared:
 - ▶ With friends or family members you would like to be kept informed
 - ▶ Among health professionals involved in your care
 - ▶ For billing purposes
 - ▶ For police reports or to protect public health in the event of a serious disease outbreak

Questions? If you have questions about privacy rules, please call



Sheryl Blecker, our privacy officer, at **410-225-8310**.



Advance directives

Take time to put your end-of-life wishes in writing

It's a topic that's well worth discussing, even if it isn't easy.

Now might be the time to decide the kind of care you'll want at the end of your life—and to share those wishes with others in case you become unable to do so later.

For example, documents called advance directives let you say what kind of care you want and don't want if you become unable to communicate your decisions because of a serious illness or injury. You can state your preferences about types of care in specific situations, such as the use of a breathing machine or a feeding tube.

You also can name someone you trust, such as a family member, to make medical decisions on your behalf if you are unable to communicate.

Planning ahead can be important, even if you're healthy. You might start by talking with your family and your doctor.

For more on preparing an advance directive, go online to www.putitinwriting.org.



Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians; American Hospital Association

We're here at every stage in a woman's life

- ▶ Annual exams, including Pap tests and pelvic examinations
- ▶ Breast examinations
- ▶ Family planning
- ▶ Pregnancy screening
- ▶ Prenatal and childbirth classes
- ▶ Prenatal care and delivery
- ▶ Treatment and evaluation of common gynecologic disorders, such as abnormal bleeding, gynecologic infections, pelvic pain and incontinence issues
- ▶ Menopause management
- ▶ Screening for gynecologic cancer detection

Take the first step to better health. Call Women's Healthcare Associates at Maryland General Hospital to schedule an appointment today.



410-225-8991



Because we care | *Community calendar of classes and events*



Finding a doctor is easy!

Looking for a primary care physician or a specialist? Maryland General Hospital is your community hospital. We care about you and your family. Our extensive network of physicians offers expert medical care in more than 30 specialties.

Call the Maryland General Physician Referral Service at 410-225-8400, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You can also visit

www.marylandgeneral.org and click on "Find a Doctor."

Maryland General Hospital offers a variety of health screenings and educational classes at the hospital and at locations throughout the community.

free Blood Pressure, Cholesterol, Diabetes and Prostate Screenings
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Community Health Education Center (CHEC),
821 N. Eutaw St., Suite 107

CHEC also provides free screenings at health fairs and community-sponsored events throughout Baltimore. Call **410-225-2000** for dates, times and locations.

free Pregnancy Tests
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Community Health Education Center (CHEC),
821 N. Eutaw St., Suite 107
Call **410-225-2000**.

free Eye Screening Program

Screenings for glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, cataracts, retinal diseases and diseases of the eyelids. Ages 55 and older. Call **410-225-8223** for dates, times and locations.

free Vascular Screenings

Call **443-552-2900** for dates, times and locations.

free Prenatal and Childbirth Classes

Maryland General Hospital, 827 Linden Ave. Taught by our nurse midwives. Call **410-225-8991** for dates and times and to register.

free Great Expectations

Share your great expectations with us. Learn about your journey into motherhood, tour our Obstetrics Center, meet our staff and learn why Maryland General Hospital

is the place to have your baby. Refreshments and a baby shower gift are included. Call **410-225-2000** for dates, times and locations.

Diabetes Education Program

Learning about diabetes is the first step in managing it. The Diabetes Education Program offers individual counseling and group education to people with diabetes about:

- ▶ Making healthier food choices
- ▶ Individual meal planning
- ▶ Knowing how your medications work
- ▶ Understanding your blood sugar (blood glucose) numbers
- ▶ Learning about proper foot, dental and eye care
- ▶ Managing sick days with diabetes

For more information, call **443-552-2960**.

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