Family-first approach

Enhancements to the Augusta Health Birthing Suite put mom and baby first

COVID-19 Guide

› HOW TO PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING
› RELAXATION TECHNIQUES
› UNDERSTANDING QUARANTINE
› HOW TO CLEAN AND DISINFECT YOUR HOME
We will get through this together!

I t’s become a mantra at Augusta Health, and it reflects the quiet strength of our staff and our community during these extraordinary times.

We all understood COVID-19 to be a formidable virus, but as the outbreak has unfolded, the magnitude of the situation has impacted us all. Together, we are facing an unpredictable infection in the only way we can if we are to subdue it—acting as a community and doing what it takes to limit the number of cases and the severity of the cases we experience.

It’s why we’ve all learned to practice social distancing to “flatten the curve,” why school buildings have closed for months, why some businesses have closed indefinitely and why other businesses that are critical for survival—like grocery stores and pharmacies—have doubled down on disinfecting and adapting their hours to serve the community as safely as possible.

It’s why our Augusta Health team has worked tirelessly on emergency plans and surge plans, practicing and drilling various scenarios as the situation changes. It’s why we’ve developed new and specific services like our COVID Care Call Center, staffed by nurses and open seven days a week to speak to those in the community who have questions and concerns, and even screen them over the phone. They are here for you; call them at (540) 332-5122.

It’s why you’ve been here for us. The messages of support and donations of supplies, like gloves and hand sanitizer—and especially masks, sewn by hand and with care from all around our community and delivered to the hospital—have overwhelmed us in a wonderful way. Our local business partners have sent treats and nourishment for our Augusta Health team members. It has overwhelmed us with gratitude, and their actions fill our hearts.

It’s why our physicians and staff continue to come to work and redeploy when necessary to areas where resources are needed, caring for the community while managing the uncertainty of what is to come. They are truly heroes, and we all can’t thank them enough.

This issue is filled with helpful, accurate and clear information to keep you and your family safe and healthy during this time. For current information about COVID-19 and how we’re addressing it as a community, visit our website, augustahealth.com. Other helpful websites are cdc.gov and vdh.virginia.gov.

We are a community. We care for and support each other. We will get through this together!

Mary N. Mannix, FACHE
President and Chief Executive Officer
Augusta Health
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SPRING 2020
WHY WE PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

UNDERSTANDING THE NEW METHOD TO SLOW COVID-19 INFECTIONS

You may not have heard of social distancing until the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Many people have posted on social media the ways in which they are practicing social distancing. So, what is this new practice?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines social distancing as “remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings and maintaining distance (approximately six feet) from others when possible.” The CDC’s most recent recommendation is to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people.

It is important to practice social distancing and to take it seriously during this pandemic because COVID-19 is highly contagious and can be easily spread from one person to another. The chances of the virus spreading quickly and to many people are highly likely in large gatherings. Practicing social distancing helps to reduce opportunities for disease transmission, therefore reducing the number of sick patients and decreasing the burden on healthcare systems and healthcare workers.

You may have heard that social distancing will help to “flatten the curve” (see the graphic on page 5). Social distancing helps to prevent a quick spike in patients who are affected by the disease, which gives hospitals and healthcare workers more time to prepare and to take precautions to help protect us all.

By practicing social distancing, you are not only protecting yourself, but everyone that you could potentially come into contact with as well. Although the symptoms of COVID-19 can take up to 14 days to appear, you can still carry the virus and pass it on to others without realizing it.

Any person of any age and health status can become infected with this coronavirus; however, the elderly and those who are immunocompromised (i.e., people with cancer, heart disease, diabetes and other chronic conditions) are most susceptible and tend to have the most severe infections from the virus. By choosing to practice social distancing, you are protecting the most vulnerable people as well.

Of course, there are situations in which you may not be able to practice social distancing completely. Many people, especially healthcare workers, still have to go to work. People still have to get groceries for their families or go to the pharmacy to pick up prescription medications. However, if we all do our part and distance ourselves unless it is absolutely necessary, we can help to slow the spread of this disease. This will truly be a team effort, but we are all in this together.

In today’s society, many of us are used to being on the go, so social distancing may be difficult for some. However, it does not have to be lonely or boring! Here are just a few ideas of things that you can do while you are at home:

- Go for a walk outside to get some fresh air.
- Video chat or call your family or friends.
- Read a new book.
- Cook or bake something you have been wanting to try for a while.
- Start a new project around the house, or do some yard work.
- Find in-home workouts to do.

Catherine Hill, CHES
Augusta Health Community Outreach
what’s the difference between isolation and quarantine?

Isolation and quarantine are being used interchangeably during the COVID-19 outbreak, but it’s important to understand the difference.

Isolation refers to separating sick people with a contagious disease from those who are not sick. Hospitals use isolation for patients who have a known infectious disease that can be spread easily to others. A person who is ill with COVID-19 needs to isolate themselves in a specific room away from other members of their household. Other members of the household should use a separate bedroom—and even a separate bathroom—from the ill person, if possible.

It is also recommended that the ill person should eat or be fed in their room, away from other household members. Household items such as dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, bedding and other items should not be shared with the person infected with COVID-19. It is important to prohibit all visitors and nonessential people from being in the home.

According to the Central Shenandoah Health District, if a family member has COVID-19 symptoms and has been tested, but the results are pending, that family member should isolate until the results are known. That person should use a separate bedroom and bathroom, if possible, and definitely use separate dishes, drinking glasses, eating utensils, towels and bedding.

Quarantine helps to limit the spread of communicable disease by separating and restricting the movement of people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to watch and see if they become sick. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease but do not show symptoms.

Because of the current COVID-19 pandemic, many people have been told to quarantine. Quarantining means staying home and away from other people as much as possible for a 14-day period. This includes avoiding shopping, eating out, socializing, public places and large crowds.
IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CLEANING AND DISINFECTING?

GUIDANCE FOR KEEPING YOUR HOME SAFE AND CLEAN

We’re all concerned about germs and the spread of viruses today, so it’s important to ask, “What’s the difference between cleaning a surface and disinfecting it?”

Cleaning refers to the removal of germs and dirt from surfaces. Cleaning will not kill germs; it simply removes them or reduces the number of germs, lowering the risk of infection.

Disinfecting is a process that uses chemicals to kill germs. In order to eliminate coronavirus (the virus that causes COVID-19) and reduce the risk of spreading it, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends hard surfaces be cleaned and disinfected frequently with household cleaners and EPA-registered disinfectants.

Areas that should be frequently cleaned and disinfected are commonly touched surfaces such as tables, hard-back chairs, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, cellphones, tablets, remotes, toilets, faucets, sinks and kitchen counters.

DISINFECTING SOLUTIONS FOR THE HOME

1. For disinfection, use dilute household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, disinfectant wipes and EPA-registered household disinfectants.

2. Wear disposable gloves and discard them after each cleaning. If surfaces are visibly dirty, clean them with a detergent/soap and water prior to disinfection.

3. Make sure to have proper ventilation when applying bleach products to surfaces. Always check to ensure products are not expired.

4. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleaners. When preparing a bleach solution, follow one of the guidelines below:

**BLEACH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 tablespoons (⅛ cup)</th>
<th>1 gallon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 teaspoons</td>
<td>1 quart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT**


Gayle Shultz, RN, MSN
Augusta Health Community Outreach

IF SOMEONE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD HAS COVID-19

> The ill person should have their own personal cleaning supplies for their room and bathroom.

> If a separate bathroom for the ill person is not available, the bathroom should be cleaned and disinfected after each use by the ill person.

> Wear gloves when removing garbage bags, handling trash and disposing of trash.
DEEP BREATHING
Of all the skills to help with life’s anxieties, breathing skills are some of the most popular for dealing with stress and anxiety. When you begin to feel tightness in your chest, shoulders or lower back (wherever your stress tends to manifest itself in your body), you can observe that as a signal that you need to find a quiet spot to breathe. Take a deep breath in, and hold it for a few seconds, then let it out over a few seconds. Repeat this once or twice. You can imagine breathing in calm and breathing out tension or breathing in relaxation and breathing out irritability. Our brain believes what we tell it, so the words you say to yourself as you do this have power.

Even one deep, cleansing breath can help. Obviously, you don’t want to breathe in germs, so be mindful of the area around you. There are lots of places where it is perfectly safe to take deep, cleansing breaths.

THE SUPERHERO POSE
Everyone working at Augusta Health right now is here because they care about the health of our patients, neighbors and community. All of us, pulling together to do what is right to keep ourselves, our families and our community safe, are considered superheroes.

The superhero pose can help everyone soothe during an anxious time. To strike the pose, stand with your feet apart, hands on hips, shoulders back, chest out and chin up. Doing this pose for as little as two minutes decreases the cortisol (the hormone associated with stress) in our bodies by 25%. It also increases the testosterone (the hormone associated with power) by 20%. Be mindful, and be safe.
RAISING THE BAR
AUGUSTA HEALTH LEADS THE WAY IN UNPARALLELED PATIENT CARE

Augusta Health continues to make strides in 2020 to live its four core values: patient- and community-centeredness, professionalism, excellence and teamwork. Excellence is a standard that requires continuous improvement to achieve, and the team at Augusta marked the new year with advances in staffing, accreditation and customer service.

To guide this ongoing journey, the Augusta Health Way initiative provides a roadmap for employees to learn skills and find inspiration for the work they do each day. “Everyone here became a healthcare professional because we wanted to improve people’s lives. The Augusta Health Way initiative is our recommitment to doing just that,” explains Richard Covington, director of culture and talent at Augusta Health. Reaching this high level of commitment begins with the Augusta Health team, Covington adds. “A superlative team experience translates into the best possible experience for our patients, their loved ones and visitors.”

Last issue, we noted Augusta’s partnership with Ritz Carlton, a world-renowned leader in customer service, to facilitate educational sessions that focused on building an unparalleled patient-centric environment. The partnership resulted in focus groups, including more than 600 participants from within the Augusta community and hospital, as well as ongoing educational sessions. Since the focus group meetings, the Augusta staff has identified several positive opportunities to reach out and connect with patients. Visitors to Augusta Health Medical Center will notice an immediate difference in the way they navigate the facility. “We call it way-finding,” says Covington. “If visitors or patients ask for directions, we walk them to their destination instead of pointing.”

Another change involves elevator etiquette. When a patient who might appreciate privacy enters an elevator—perhaps because they’re on a stretcher or in a wheelchair—Augusta team members already in the elevator will step out. “It’s one more way we can show how much we care about a patient’s experience, at every single point in their journey,” Covington says.

As part of its commitment to excellence, Augusta is also introducing a new accreditation and certification process this year. Our new partner will promote continual improvement in healthcare quality and patient safety and will ensure that Augusta stays well ahead of the patient safety curve with a more rigorous procedure that spotlights the highest standards in patient and environmental safety.

Every endeavor to champion positive advancements springs from Augusta’s mission: to deliver exemplary medical care with unparalleled warmth and compassion. It is, Covington says, what has and always will differentiate Augusta Health.
Augusta is proud of its 69 physicians who were awarded a Best Bedside Manner Award this past year by *OurHealth Charlottesville & Shenandoah Valley Magazine*. Our team took home 19 first-place honors, eight second-place honors, 14 third-place honors and 28 honorable mentions. The awards recognize providers in the region for excellence in their specialties and were determined by more than 33,000 community votes. Congratulations to all our exceptional physicians!
**welcome, Dr. Sailer!**

A NEW PHYSICIAN EXPANDS CARE IN SOUTHERN ROCKBRIDGE COUNTY

Augusta Medical Group is pleased to welcome Jane Sailer, MD, and the Maury River Family Practice to the Augusta Health family. Dr. Sailer and her practice join Augusta as part of its expanded effort to serve Rockbridge County residents.

Dr. Sailer graduated from Jefferson Medical College of Thomas Jefferson University in 1992. She completed her residency in Newport News, Virginia, then was a staff physician at Palmetto Primary Care Physicians in Charleston, South Carolina, before cofounding Tidewater Family Medicine. Since moving to the area 15 years ago, she has raised four children and started two family medicine practices here.

“Dr. Sailer is an established physician who has been participating in quality initiatives with Augusta Health for the last five years,” says Jackie Sims, director of clinical operations at Augusta. “Her practice will help us provide more primary care and new specialty services that have not been offered in that area.”

Dr. Sailer brings decades of knowledge and compassion to her patients, making her a valuable addition to Augusta. **HM**

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**FITTING YOUR SCHEDULE**

URGENT CARE RESERVATIONS MADE EASIER

Fitting an urgent care or convenient care visit into a busy day has always been a challenge, but Augusta Medical Group has just introduced a way to make it easier than ever.

With a new online service called Clockwise MD, you can not only book an appointment, but also see current wait times. Patients can compare wait times at different Augusta Health locations and choose one that fits their schedule best.

“We’ve always been respectful of patient time, and this is a great new way to show that,” says John Mack, COO, Augusta Medical Group.

You don’t need to download an app to use Clockwise MD. Visit augustahealth.com, and click on “Urgent Care & Convenient Care.” After you make a reservation, you’ll receive text message notifications on the status of your reservation, including if there are delays.

You’ll be asked to indicate a reason for your visit, and Clockwise MD will identify situations where it’s more appropriate to choose an Emergency Room visit instead, such as chest pain.

Another benefit of the service is instant feedback, Mack adds. Clockwise MD lets patients rate their experiences, and that data is sent to Augusta immediately. “That allows us to make improvements faster,” says Mack. “We’re excited to bring this new capability to our patients because it’s part of our ongoing effort to provide the best patient care experience possible.”

**To schedule an appointment with Dr. Sailer, call (888) ACH-HLTH.**

**To make a reservation for urgent care, visit augustahealth.com/urgent-care.**
High blood pressure causes 13% of deaths in the world, according to the World Health Organization. It is now considered an epidemic, with more people developing high blood pressure each year. One in three Americans have high blood pressure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Despite these staggering numbers, only about half of people with high blood pressure have it under control. High blood pressure can go undetected for years and can lead to a stroke, heart attack, kidney problems and an aneurysm.

A blood pressure reading tells us the pressure with which blood flows through our blood vessels, like the pressure of air in a tire. When our blood pressure is too high, the force can damage the heart. When our blood pressure is too low, our brain doesn't receive enough blood.

HYPERTENSION DEFINED
Hypertension is defined as a blood pressure reading that is above 130/80, according to new guidelines from the American Heart Association.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS
One of the unique things about hypertension is that it rarely shows symptoms. Because of this, it’s important to get your blood pressure checked regularly, especially if you have certain risk factors.

WHO’S AT RISK OF HYPERTENSION?
Those who are prehypertensive or have diabetes are at an increased risk of developing high blood pressure. In addition, stress, old age, chronic kidney disease, adrenal and thyroid diseases, sleep apnea and genetics can increase one’s chances of developing hypertension. Experts estimate that around 90% of hypertension cases are related to one’s lifestyle. Smoking, alcohol use, obesity and a high-sodium diet increase the risk of developing hypertension.

LOWERING YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE
In addition to a variety of medications (such as beta-blockers and ACE inhibitors), lifestyle changes can lower blood pressure. Maintain a healthy weight, keep sodium intake low and limit alcohol consumption.
There is no such thing as a typical cardiology patient. Each has unique needs and conditions, requiring personal care. Every cardiology patient is on a journey to better health, and for each of them, the journey is personal.

As a law enforcement officer, Pamela Reedy spent much of her day on her feet, but she knew the pain she was experiencing in her legs was more than a side effect of her work. At times, the pain and swelling in both legs was unbearable. A good night’s sleep was impossible.

“I knew my legs were in extreme pain, but I didn’t know the pain had a name,” Reedy says. “I had no idea that the pain was an actual medical condition.”

PUTTING A NAME TO THE PAIN
Reedy’s pain was the result of chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), a condition that occurs when the valves in the leg veins do not work effectively, making it difficult for blood to return to the heart from the legs. Instead, the blood leaks backward, which can cause prolonged elevated blood pressure in the veins and blood pooling in the legs, resulting in pain and swelling. At Augusta Health, cardiologist Ken Sternberg, DO, FACC, treats many patients with CVI.

“I learned about Dr. Sternberg and Augusta Health from a coworker who had a similar problem,” Reedy explains, “so I decided to give it a try. From the very first visit, I was very pleased with my care and treatment. Dr. Sternberg listened to me and immediately recognized the problem. He was concerned with me as a person and how the pain and swelling were impacting my life.”

Reedy says Dr. Sternberg provided several treatment options to her and carefully explained each one. “This was all very new to me, but he was very good with his explanations,” she says.

“I also researched the options on my own.” She chose to have venous stents surgically placed in both legs, one in her left and three in her right, over two procedures. Reedy says both outpatient surgeries went smoothly.

“Dr. Sternberg and his staff were very professional, but also very personable and genuinely concerned about me,” she adds. “I really appreciate how well they communicated with
my primary care physician, too.” Reedy says she never had to relay information to either physician because they established a good rapport, which was important to her.

**THE FUTURE IS WIDE OPEN**

People she talks to about the procedure are surprised to learn that Reedy’s stents were placed in her legs, she says. “We all know about stents in the heart, but people are really surprised to learn I have venous stents in my legs. Very few people know about the possibility.”

Next up for Reedy is retirement, which she will enjoy without painful, swollen legs. “I’m very involved in my church and its activities, so I’m looking forward to that,” she says. “Because I don’t feel any restrictions from the pain and swelling in my legs, the future seems wide open.”

“From the very first visit, I was very pleased with my care and treatment.”

—Pamela Reedy

Venous disease is extremely common; more than 30 million Americans suffer from varicose veins or more serious forms of the disease, such as chronic venous insufficiency. Pamela Reedy’s story is classic. Patients come to see us with complaints of swelling, pain, heaviness, fatigue, cramping and restlessness of the lower extremities. These are the most common symptoms and can be easily corrected if they are due to venous insufficiency. With new office-based procedures, we can close the culprit veins with a catheter in less than 30 minutes, with no downtime from work or normal daily activities.

Reedy had her superficial veins closed with a catheter using only local anesthesia. She then returned for evaluation of her deep iliac veins due to persistent lower extremity edema, or swelling. She had compression of both iliac veins that required venous stenting as an outpatient procedure. The results are remarkable with almost instantaneous relief of heaviness and swelling.

Here at Augusta Health, I only perform medically necessary vein procedures. These procedures can literally be life- or limb-saving with almost complete healing of ulcers and resolution of edema if secondary to venous disease.
FAMILY-FIRST
approach

ENHANCEMENTS TO THE AUGUSTA HEALTH BIRTHING SUITE PUT MOM AND BABY FIRST
If you ask anyone what the most memorable moment of their life is, you’ll get a range of responses, from first kisses to wedding days. But one moment is almost always at the top of every parent’s list: the day their child was born.

Giving birth is a special experience unlike anything else. The Augusta Health Obstetrics Department realizes this, which is why they’ve spent ample time and energy enhancing the Birthing Suite to ensure moms and babies have the best experience possible. Augusta has two private practices for labor and delivery: The Woman’s Center and Augusta Health Care for Women with locations in Lexington and Fishersville. Both private practices offer labor and delivery services, and Augusta Health Care for Women also offers the option of certified nurse midwives. Staff at both private practices see patients at their offices and at the hospital, offering a seamless transition of care.

“We regularly look at what our patients want and how other communities nationwide are caring for moms and babies,” says Roxanne Harris, director of obstetrics at Augusta Health. “We constantly evaluate what we’re providing and if it’s what our community wants from us.”

From celebratory dinners to family-centered caesarean sections, Augusta Health has made multiple exciting updates to the Birthing Suite.

**PEdiATRIC HOSPITALISTS ON SITE**
In 2013, Augusta Health decided to hire pediatric hospitalists, physicians who care for any pediatric patients (including newborn babies) who have been admitted to the hospital. The use of pediatric hospitalists offers a more streamlined, comprehensive approach to treating new babies, as well as deliveries that need a pediatrician on hand. Instead of waiting for a pediatrician to travel from an outpatient clinic to the hospital, there are physicians on-site who can respond immediately.

“A lot of our patients are first-time moms who haven’t even met the pediatrician yet,” Harris says. “I think they like the idea that someone is here, and they’re able to make rounds during the day.”

Yury Yakubchyk, MD, was the first pediatric hospitalist hired at Augusta Health in 2013. “I think it’s a good step forward because we’re available 24/7, and we’re taking care of these patients whenever they need us,” Dr. Yakubchyk says. “It helps mothers feel better because it reassures them...
that the situation is under control and that their kids are safe.”

Having pediatric hospitalists not only benefits patients, but also the community at large. “It’s been a really good service line for consistency within our hospital,” Harris says. “Before, pediatricians would have to leave their offices when we needed them here. Now, we have pediatric coverage in the hospital for all of our deliveries.”

**COMING SOON**

In 2020, Augusta Health plans to introduce the use of nitrous oxide during labor and delivery. Many people associate nitrous oxide with the dentist; however, when nitrous oxide is used in this setting, it’s set at a 50/50 concentration of nitrous oxide and oxygen, a much lower dose than you would receive when getting a cavity filled.

The use of nitrous oxide during labor and delivery is growing more common each year. Research has shown using it at a lower dose is safe and effective for both mom and baby. At a lower concentration, nitrous oxide doesn’t make moms feel giddy, but rather more relaxed. “It helps moms who need a little something for either anxiety or labor pain, but it doesn’t put them in that giggly state,” says Roxanne Harris, director of obstetrics at Augusta Health.

The nitrous oxide at Augusta Health will be self-administered, meaning moms can control exactly how much they receive. “This gives more control back to the mom, which we wanted to be able to provide for our community,” Harris says.

**COPLET CARE AND FAMILY-CENTERED C-SECTIONS**

The traditional days of keeping newborn babies in a nursery have gone by the wayside. Hospitals across the country—including Augusta Health—have moved toward a practice called couplet care, in which babies are kept in the same room as their mother and taken care of by the same nurse.

In addition to peace of mind, improved sleep has been correlated with new mothers who have their baby in the room, Harris says. Plus, it’s easier to begin breastfeeding, as mothers don’t have to wait for someone to bring their baby from the nursery.

“The babies are able to be with their parents 24 hours a day,” Harris says. “The benefit of that is the parents get to know their babies and care for their babies with the support of our nursing staff prior to going home.”

The Augusta Health Birthing Suite also offers family-centered C-sections in which moms can have skin-to-skin contact with their baby right in the operating room. Moms and babies can also recover in the same room, so long as everyone is doing well.

**CELEBRATION MEALS**

As a small way of giving thanks to moms for having their baby at Augusta Health, the Birthing Suite offers a free celebration meal. Moms and their support person get a choice of tenderloin steak, shrimp scampi and a cheesy flatbread pizza. If a new mom doesn’t feel like having her meal at the hospital, she can also take it home. “We offer the option of taking the dinner home to make their first meal at home easy,” Harris says. The to-go meal includes a baguette and pasta with marinara sauce and Parmesan cheese.

**MEDICATIONS DELIVERED BEDSIDE**

The last thing a new mom or her partner wants to do after having a baby is run errands, like driving to the pharmacy. That’s why Augusta Health implemented “Meds to Bed,” in which new moms are given the option of having their prescriptions filled by the hospital pharmacy and delivered bedside prior to discharge. Meds to Bed was launched in 2019 and is typically offered Monday through Friday.

“It’s completely voluntary, but we’ve had a great response from our new parents that it’s just one less thing they have to do when they go home,” Harris says.
Kathy Carroll was taking part in that autumn ritual of raking leaves when a common task turned into an uncommon injury. As she was pushing a pile of leaves into a trash can, a stick punctured her left breast. As a former breast cancer patient, she was concerned. When February rolled around, and the wound still hadn’t healed, she called her doctor. Carroll was diagnosed with cellulitis, a bacterial infection of the skin, and had two surgeries by the end of June.

There is no typical wound. Each heals at its own pace and in stages. The healing process is dependent on the wound’s size, depth and how quickly the tissue can grow and rebuild itself. Some wounds require specialized treatment.

“It was a terrible time,” says Carroll. “Everything seemed to be going wrong. It was a constant battle. I developed a fungal infection and then reacted to the medication. In the middle of everything, I had a heart attack.”

Even after surgery, Carroll’s wound was still not healing properly, so she was referred to Augusta Health’s Wound Healing Clinic.

Carroll’s regimen included several treatments and procedures—dressings, vacuum procedures, medications and

> Hyperbaric oxygen chambers increase the air pressure to as much as three times the normal pressure of air at sea level. This allows the lungs to gather more oxygen, which stimulates the growth of cells and healing.

“I felt love and joy from everyone at the Wound Clinic and still stop in to see them when I can.”

—Kathy Carroll
more. “I was an extreme case,” adds Carroll. “I didn’t think I would survive this; I was honestly prepared to die.” That’s when Carroll asked her doctor, Joseph Ranzini, MD, medical director of the Wound Healing Clinic, if she was going to die.

Dr. Ranzini assured her, “Not on my watch!”

‘THE BEST EXPERIENCE FOR THE WORST EXPERIENCE’

Carroll completed 39 sessions of hyperbaric oxygen therapy in Augusta Health’s hyperbaric chambers. In a hyperbaric oxygen chamber, the air pressure is increased to three times higher than normal. Under these conditions, the lungs can gather more oxygen, which helps fight infection and promotes healing. Each of Carroll’s sessions was two hours long, and she had five sessions a week for eight weeks.

“At first I was nervous because it seemed like a pretty small place,” Carroll says. “It’s kind of like getting into an

amusement park ride. It went perfectly, though. I felt calm. It was a piece of cake.”

The chamber is transparent, which allowed Carroll to see through and watch TV, but she couldn’t wear her glasses. “I’d tell the nurses to turn on ‘The Price is Right’ because it’s always the same—you don’t need to see it to figure out what’s happening!” Carroll says.

> Kathy Carroll was nervous at first about her hyperbaric oxygen chamber treatments, but before long, she was at ease—thanks, especially, to the medical staff who included her in every decision about her care along the way.

More than helping her stay entertained during therapy, the staff in the Wound Healing Clinic included Carroll in every decision and helped her psychologically return to complete health, she says.

“A wound is a slow process, and the treatments take a long time, so you really form a relationship that goes beyond your regular doctor-and-nurse relationship,” Carroll explains. “I felt love and joy from everyone at the Wound Clinic and still stop in to see them when I can.”

Carroll’s journey at the Wound Healing Clinic ended almost exactly a year after her injury. She is now completely healed and back to work part-time, but her next big step is retirement. She’ll be spending more time with her grandchildren and the daughter who took such good care of her while she was sick. She is, as she says, back to where she was “before the stick.”

Carroll summarizes her care and treatment at the Wound Healing Clinic this way: “It was the best experience for the worst experience of my life.”

A PERFECT STORM

By the time he was referred to the Wound Healing Clinic, Fred Strickler had already tried surgery—twice—and radiation to deal with the uncomfortable fibromas (benign tumors made of connective tissue) on the bottom of his feet. The radiation brought some relief but also left a blister about the size of a silver dollar.

Strickler’s doctor popped the blister and took off the skin, allowing it to heal from the outside in and leaving a scar in the middle. Then in October of 2018, Strickler tugged a bit of skin near the scar—a simple action but one he wishes he could take back.

is hyperbaric oxygen therapy right for you?

Joseph Ranzini, MD, is the medical director of the Wound Healing Clinic. He leads the team to heal wounds, identify underlying conditions that cause wounds and help patients deal with the emotional effects of a chronic wound.

“Hyperbaric oxygen therapy is an important adjunctive treatment for patients who are affected by wounds due to soft-tissue and bone injuries that might occur after radiation,” Dr. Ranzini says.

There are a number of medical conditions that are treated with radiation. Some of the most common diagnoses include breast cancer, prostate cancer, colon cancer, head and neck cancer, and skin cancer.

The most difficult part of the treatment process is committing the time needed to undergo the therapy. A treatment cycle typically includes 40 sessions that take about two hours each to complete. For appropriately selected patients, these treatments can be quite successful and well worth the time commitment.
The skin was attached to a nerve, and Strickler was left with a dime-sized painful open wound.

His family physician referred him to Dr. Ranzini. “I had sort of a perfect storm,” Strickler says. “I had diabetes and radiation on the foot, so there was no circulation. Without circulation, the wound could not get enough oxygen to heal.”

That perfect storm made Strickler a prime candidate for hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Fred Strickler got to know other hyperbaric oxygen therapy patients and his medical team well during his eight-week treatment and shared candy from his job at Hershey’s with his new acquaintances.

Strickler’s wound shrank about 70%, and he’s had skin grafts to fill the hole where the scar was. Strickler’s right foot is better, although small knots remain, and sadly, his hands have started to show symptoms of Viking’s disease, a condition marked by thickening and tightening of the skin on the hands which causes the fingers to contract. But the next step in his journey involves shoes.

“Since this happened, I’ve only been able to wear sandals,” explains Strickler, who’s worn the same leather sandals since October 2018. Soon he will have special diabetic shoes with an insole that will accommodate the knots in his feet. “It’s been a difficult journey,” Strickler says, “but all good. I am where I am now because of this care.”

what is hyperbaric oxygen therapy?

Your body needs oxygen to function every day; the injured tissue of a wound needs even more oxygen to survive. Some people can’t provide enough oxygen to their wounds to allow them to heal. That’s when hyperbaric oxygen (HBO) therapy is useful for healing.

In an HBO therapy chamber, the lungs can gather more oxygen than they can at normal pressure. An increase in the blood oxygen level can improve the oxygen to the injured tissue to promote healing and fight infection.

HBO therapy is especially effective for chronic, nonhealing wounds such as diabetic ulcers, cellulitis, radiation therapy wounds and trauma. It is usually part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes other types of treatments.

At Augusta Health, HBO therapy takes place in a unit designed for one person. The patient lies on a table that slides into a clear plastic tube. It’s done as an outpatient procedure, so it does not require a hospital stay. Sessions are normally about two hours long. Many patients have 40 treatments—five days a week for eight weeks.

Because pure oxygen can cause fire if there is a spark, no metal is allowed inside the chamber. Patients change into a cotton gown. Often, hair care and skin care products are restricted. When the pressure inside the chamber is increased, you may feel the way you would at a high altitude. During the treatment, you can watch TV or movies through the glass and communicate with staff through an intercom system. At the end of the session, pressure is gradually brought back to normal.
The Augusta Health Foundation and Dixie Gas & Oil Corporation are joining forces to support breast cancer awareness and prevention. Dixie, a longtime partner of the hospital, will provide ongoing financial contributions to the Foundation to offer a limited number of 3D mammograms at no cost for those without health insurance and who are unable to pay.

“We are most grateful for this partnership,” says Mary Mannix, president and chief executive officer of Augusta Health. “One in eight women in the United States will develop breast cancer in her lifetime, but survival rates have been improving, in part due to earlier diagnosis. Dixie’s support will assist us in providing these services.”

In addition to financial support, the Foundation and Dixie will work together to increase breast cancer awareness with marketing efforts. Dixie has pink trucks operating throughout the area, which will promote the partnership, and co-branded signage will be placed at Augusta Health and Dixie locations. Also, information will be featured on both organizations’ websites and in various publications and communication materials.

“Dixie is committed to supporting the communities we serve, and we are excited about this ongoing partnership with the Augusta Health Foundation,” says Chris Earhart, president of Dixie Gas & Oil. “Dixie has made significant contributions in the fight against breast cancer over the years, and this is a wonderful opportunity to continue support for this important work.” This cause has a personal connection for Earhart, whose mother had breast cancer.

The Augusta Health Foundation secures philanthropic support to strengthen the health system’s outreach and meet this community’s needs.

Women who wish to take part in the subsidized mammograms must be age 40 or older, not showing any symptoms of breast cancer and have seen a physician in the last two years. Augusta Health offers primary care services for women who need to establish a physician relationship to participate.

—Mary Mannix

> Dixie Gas & Oil’s new pink trucks can be seen around the community, raising awareness of breast cancer and the importance of screening.

> Learn more about August Health Foundation’s initiatives at augustahealth.com/foundation.

> To schedule a mammogram, call (888) AHC-HLTH or visit augustahealth.com/womens-imaging.
patient portal

PATIENTS CAN SCHEDULE APPOINTMENTS, CHECK TEST RESULTS AND MORE THROUGH MYOFFICE PORTAL

Want to request a prescription refill, or pay or view your bills online? MyOffice Portal allows Augusta Medical Group patients to check health information online from almost anywhere. Using the portal, you can do the following:

• Request and view appointments
• Request prescription refills
• Access test results and health information
• Pay or view your bills
• Communicate privately with your AMG provider
• Complete and print health forms

To sign up, visit augustahealth.com and click on the MyAugusta Chart link.

Looking For A Doctor?

We are accepting new patients.

Call (833) AHC-HLTH to schedule an appointment.
7 tips for managing seasonal allergies

SIMPLE WAYS TO LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE TO ALLERGENS

It’s finally springtime, and you couldn’t be happier. You just went on a long walk in the forest preserve with your family and enjoyed the faintly warm air, beautiful spring flowers and great conversation. There was just one problem: You couldn’t stop sneezing and sniffling.

If you suffer from seasonal allergies, know that you’re not alone: More than 50 million Americans experience them. Commonly referred to as allergic rhinitis or hay fever, seasonal allergies occur when you have an allergic reaction to the pollen released in the air by trees, flowers and other plants. Symptoms of seasonal allergies can include everything from sneezing and itchy eyes to a runny nose and congestion.

Read on for seven tips for managing seasonal allergies.

| **19.2 million** | American adults were diagnosed with seasonal allergies last year. |
| **$11.2 billion** | in related medical expenses are spent on allergies annually. |

To make an appointment with an Augusta Health physician to discuss your seasonal allergies, call (833) AHC-HLTH or visit augustahealth.com/primary-care.
can i really get allergies as an adult?

Although most people develop allergies as children, some people don’t develop them until they’re adults, a phenomenon referred to as adult-onset allergies. Most cases of adult-onset seasonal allergies occur in one’s 20s or 30s, though they can happen at any age.

Experts aren’t totally sure why allergies sometimes develop in adulthood, though they hypothesize that it could be due to longer pollen seasons; environmental factors, such as higher temperatures; or changes to our immune systems as we age. Adult-onset allergies can also occur if you moved to a new city or state that has higher pollen counts than the one you lived in before.

The moral of the story? If you have a runny nose, itchy eyes, constant sneezing and other symptoms indicative of seasonal allergies, you shouldn’t discount how you feel simply because you’re older and never had allergies before. Seasonal allergies can happen to anyone at any age.

1. Make sure you’re truly allergic.
Because the symptoms of seasonal allergies are nonspecific, it’s important to make sure you actually have seasonal allergies and not something else, such as a sinus infection or the common cold. If you think you’re experiencing seasonal allergies, visit your primary care physician, who may run blood work and/or refer you to an allergist for further testing.

2. Track the pollen count where you live.
If you have seasonal allergies, consider tracking the pollen count in your area. (Local news stations and weather apps typically share information on pollen counts.) If the pollen count is particularly high one day, you can adapt your schedule to spend less time outdoors.

3. Skip the 6 a.m. run.
Pollen counts are always highest in the morning. If you have seasonal allergies, consider staying inside in the morning and not going outdoors until late morning or afternoon.

4. Change your clothes and shower as soon as you get home.
Pollen can travel for miles, which means that after you’ve been outside, it can be carried all the way inside your house on your clothing. If you suffer from seasonal allergies, it’s important to remove your clothes and shoes as soon as you get home and wash them as soon as possible. You should also consider showering immediately, as pollen can stay on your skin and hair.

5. Keep your indoor air clean.
Pollen is pervasive—once it travels indoors, it can linger for days. Keep your indoor air free of pollen by always keeping windows and doors shut. You should also keep your air conditioner on, and consider investing in an air purifier.

6. Try alleviating symptoms with a saline rinse.
Whether you have mild or more severe seasonal allergies, consider irrigating your sinuses with a neti pot or other nasal irrigation device. The saline in these rinses can break up mucus and reduce sinus swelling.

7. Talk to your doctor about non-prescription medication options.
There are several types of over-the-counter medication for seasonal allergies, from oral antihistamines (like Claritin) and decongestants (like Sudafed) to nasal sprays (like Flonase). Speak with your doctor about which medication is a good starting point for you. HM
Spring back into action

HOW TO GET READY FOR SPRING’S OUTDOOR SPORTS AFTER A LONG WINTER’S NAP

It’s time to say, “So long,” to winter’s bitter chill and welcome spring’s warmer, longer days. Springtime also brings fresh enthusiasm for those outdoor sports that Mother Nature put on hold. However, if you head back to the track, field, court or course too quickly after a sedentary winter, you risk being sidelined before summer arrives.

“In the spring, we see a lot of patients with joint pain in the knees, hips and shoulders due to too much physical activity too quickly, which often causes overuse injuries,” says Stephanie Mims, PT, DPT, Director of Therapy Services and Fitness at Augusta Health.

Here are some tips to ease back into outdoor activities without injuries.

GRADUALLY REBUILD MUSCLE STRENGTH. “One of the quickest ways to injure yourself in spring is to pick up where you left off last autumn,” says Sarah Martin, ACE Certified Health Coach and Fitness and Nutrition Specialist at the Augusta Health Fitness Center. Why? Because fit muscles absorb the impact from repetitive motions and protect your joints. If you lose muscle fitness, your joints are defenseless against overuse injuries.

RECONDITION YOUR CORE BEFORE SWINGING INTO SPRING SPORTS. Core muscles—including the lower back and abs—hips, glutes and pelvis give you better balance and stability, Martin says.

INJURIES DON’T MEAN YOU’RE PERMANENTLY SIDELINED. It’s R.I.C.E. (rest, ice, compression and elevation) to the rescue for new, acute injuries, Martin says. She suggests sticking to light weights and comfortable stretches for older, chronic injuries.

“This is a slow process, so we can gauge progress and avoid any reinjury,” she says.

CHRONIC JOINT PAIN CAN BE REVERSED. Whether new or old, injuries at Augusta are first treated with steps that preserve the natural joint, improve function and enhance quality of life through physical therapy and highly individualized fitness programming created by Augusta’s fitness experts, Mims says. When necessary, however, orthopedic surgery can be used for full and partial joint replacements. This can be an excellent option to regain strength, range of motion and the ability to enjoy life.

STRETCHES HELP REBUILD CORE MUSCLE FITNESS. Martin suggests some simple moves before and after physical activity:

The cat/cow stretch and the bird dog stretch both begin on all fours, with hands under the shoulders and knees under the hips.

The cat/cow
1. To perform the cat/cow, drop your belly toward the floor and lift your chin toward the ceiling when inhaling (cow pose).
2. Next, round your spine up toward the ceiling and bring your chin toward your chest when exhaling (cat pose).

The bird dog
1. To perform the bird dog, raise your right arm and your left leg until they are parallel to the floor, and hold this position for a few seconds. Return to the starting position.
2. Repeat with your left arm and right leg. “Move a little quicker—but never fast—to warm up the body. Hold the stretch a little longer after physical activity,” Martin says.
fun ways to feel better

Whether you’re regaining strength after an injury, recovering from surgery or dealing with arthritis, staying active is essential for your overall health. Step one is finding a low-impact exercise routine that reduces stress on your joints, so you can work out pain-free, recondition your muscles and regain range of motion. Try mixing up your exercise with these activities.

Swimming is gentle on joints because the water supports your body weight. At the same time, it provides an excellent workout for your muscles and lungs. If you’re looking for something with more pizzazz than laps, try Aqua Zumba, a blend of low-impact, high-energy aquatic exercise with Latin-inspired, calorie-burning moves.

Yoga is a great low-impact activity that strengthens muscles that protect your joints, and with regular practice, increases your flexibility. The mindful focus, breathing techniques and meditation or relaxation elements may help you manage stress, depression and insomnia, boost heart health, improve balance and stability and relieve chronic pain.

Tai Chi combines balanced walking techniques and slow movements with controlled stances for flexibility. There’s also a gentle focus on developing a greater inner calm, providing mental benefits similar to yoga.

Augusta Health offers a variety of athletic classes and programs as well as individualized training programs. Learn more about all our community fitness offerings at augustahealth.com/fitness or call (540) 332-5433.
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Sarah Myers has been a part of the Augusta Health Laundry Department for nine years. During her time there, Myers has held various positions within the department and has worked her way up to a team lead role. She doesn’t plan to stop there, though. Her passion for process improvement, teamwork and patient care are what motivate her to continue to strive for excellence.

Myers mostly works behind the scenes and normally doesn’t have much interaction with patients. This gives her the motivation to leave a lasting impression on patients, whom she might never meet, in ways that she can. Myers is just one of the people responsible for delivering fresh linen to the patient floors and other areas of the hospital. Her team continuously inspects and folds all the linen to ensure it is clean and neatly delivered. “We want our patients to feel comfortable,” Myers says. “Most of them are here because they are sick or in need of surgery, so the least we can do is provide clean linen for them because don’t clean sheets make you feel good?” she says.

In the Laundry Department, Myers’ manager, Ron Holly, has entrusted her with various other duties, such as ordering supplies and linen, scheduling and staff evaluations. “We rarely have a routine day,” Myers says. “A patient might lose something, and we will attempt to recover it, a floor might call for their gowns and linen ahead of schedule, or an accident that brings in many unexpected patients. You just never know what you’re going to walk into, but that’s why it’s important to keep an open mind and be ready for anything.”

Myers recalls one time in 2018 when a school bus accident brought in around 30 children. She and her team jumped into action gathering gowns, warm blankets and fresh linens to ensure each child had a clean bed and gown once they arrived. “It was above and beyond medical care! Every employee involved helped those frightened children feel safe after experiencing something so horrific,” she says. “We all felt so proud that day.”

Myers’ level of commitment to her department, patients and hospital goes far beyond most expectations, and Augusta feels fortunate to have such a kindhearted employee. HM
Health Matters magazine now has its own website. Visit augustahealthmatters.com to read current and past issues as well as web exclusives. See which stories are most popular, send us your feedback, and share the site with your family and friends. Check out augustahealthmatters.com today!