

your health matters

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7 Steps to a Heart-Healthy Holiday

Thanks to Wound Center,
Bus Driver Back in Gear

Navigators Guide
Patients' Journeys

Don't Delay This
Important Cancer
Screening

7 Simple Habits

TO KEEP YOU HEART-HEALTHY OVER THE HOLIDAYS— AND ALL YEAR LONG

Sometimes if a little bit is good, more is even better—especially when it comes to healthy habits and heart disease.

In fact, the American Heart Association (AHA) has pinpointed seven habits that have been found to contribute to a healthy heart. Follow one or two, and you're doing your heart some good. Do all seven, and you're doing your heart even better.

“Most of us find it difficult to eat right and exercise on a regular basis,” said Norwalk Hospital interventional cardiologist David Lorenz, MD, director of the Hospital's Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory. “Add in the hectic pace of the holidays, and it can be even more difficult, making us more likely to skip the gym or decide to get dinner from a drive-through, rather than from where we can get a salad or piece of fish. But it's important to make healthy lifestyle choices year-round and not let ourselves fall into unhealthy habits.”

According to both the AHA and Dr. Lorenz, adopting heart-healthy habits will not just reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease; it will improve your overall health.

Tops on the list of healthy habits are these seven lifestyle choices:

1 Manage blood pressure. High blood pressure is the most significant risk factor for heart disease. Optimal blood pressure is lower than 120/80 mm Hg.

2 Get active. Getting moderate exercise 30 minutes a day helps reduce the risk of heart disease. It also helps lower blood pressure, increases good cholesterol, and controls blood sugar and body weight.

3 Control cholesterol. Too much “bad” cholesterol in the blood can clog arteries, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. Get your cholesterol checked. If your total cholesterol is higher than 200 mg/dl, follow your doctor's advice for lowering it.

4 Eat better. Vegetables, fruits, whole-grain products, and fat-free or low-fat dairy products pack a powerful nutrient punch without a lot of calories. Include more of these foods and reduce your intake of highly processed and high-fat foods and salt.

5 Lose weight. Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease. Visit www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi to find your body mass index (BMI). If it's 25 or higher, start losing excess pounds.

6 Reduce blood sugar. Adults with diabetes are more likely to have heart disease. Get your blood sugar level checked. If it's above 100 mg/dl, follow your doctor's advice for lowering it.

7 Stop smoking. Smoking increases the risk of heart disease, especially if you have other risk factors. “Not smoking is probably the single most important thing you can do to improve your health today,” Dr. Lorenz said. •

» Norwalk Hospital offers free stop-smoking programs twice a year. Call 203-852-2484 for upcoming program dates.

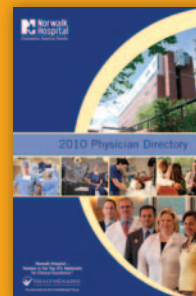


NORWALK HOSPITAL PHYSICIAN DIRECTORY AVAILABLE

The updated Norwalk Hospital Physician Directory is now available. The more than 500 physicians listed in this popular guide are all members of the Norwalk Hospital Medical Staff. The directory includes each physician's education and training background, as well as office location and contact information.

To obtain a free printed directory or digital CD, call **203-852-2250** or e-mail sharon.simon@norwalkhealth.org.

Norwalk Hospital's online “Find a Doctor” database is at www.norwalkhospital.org. It offers the option of searching by physician name, specialty, or practice name.



Redding Couple Thankful for ‘Gift’ of Baby’s Health

Melissa and Mark Lukas don't want any holiday presents. The Redding couple say they received their gift 11 months ago, when the physicians and staff at Norwalk Hospital's Bauer Newborn Intensive Care Unit (NICU) provided the specialized medical expertise needed to get their newborn daughter, Alia, breathing normally and safely home.

Looking back, Mrs. Lukas remembers most of the five days Alia spent in the sophisticated NICU as “one big blur.” One minute, it seemed, doctors were telling Mrs. Lukas that the delivery—and Alia herself—were perfect. The next, doctors were telling her Alia was having trouble breathing, and that her mouth was turning blue—a sign that Alia wasn't getting enough oxygen.

“I can't find the right words to describe that time, except to say that it was scary, but that it was also comforting,” recalled Mrs. Lukas. “The doctors and nurses were so confident that Alia was ultimately going to be all right. That confidence rubbed off on Mark and me, too. The Norwalk Hospital NICU staff provided great care to all of us.”

Family-Centered Care

Following a family-centered care model that includes support for the entire family, Norwalk Hospital NICU staff members pride themselves on not just providing “exceptional” care to newborns, but for their willingness “to go the extra mile wherever it's needed,” said neonatologist and NICU Medical Director Meltem Seli, MD.

Norwalk Hospital is the only hospital in Connecticut that staffs its Maternity and NICU units around-the-clock with in-house, board-certified neonatologists—physicians with advanced training in caring for newborns and preemies. All practice with Onsite Neonatal Partners.



Melissa and Alia Lukas of Redding with, left to right, Norwalk Hospital NICU specialists Anne White, RN, and Nancy Zander, RN.

“One of our neonatologists is always here, ready to immediately respond if a complication occurs,” Dr. Seli explained. “There's no waiting for a physician to be paged and drive in.”

The experienced nurses on the unit are also specially trained in neonatology. Other members of the multidisciplinary NICU team include lactation consultants to assist with breast-feeding and help infants learn to suck and eat properly.

The Lukases said they are grateful for both the quality and convenience of care Norwalk Hospital provided their family. “There aren't enough great words to describe Norwalk Hospital's NICU staff,” Mrs. Lukas said. “One of the techs on the unit was named ‘Miracle,’ and that is what Norwalk Hospital gave us—a healthy baby: our miracle, Alia.” •

» To find out more about Norwalk Hospital's NICU, Childbirth Center or other Women's and Children's Services, visit www.norwalkhospital.org.

HOSPITAL RECOGNIZED FOR MAXIMIZING TECHNOLOGY TO HELP PATIENTS

Norwalk Hospital is one of just three hospitals in Connecticut—and only 134 in the nation—to be recognized by the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS) for achieving a stage 6 designation for use of advanced information technology (IT) to support clinical care and patient safety.

According to Vice President and Chief Information Officer Jamie Mooney, this important, national distinction is a testament to the Hospital's commitment to using automated electronic and information technology to “make our nationally recognized patient care and safety even better.”

A leader in rating healthcare technology processes, HIMSS identifies and scores hospitals on a scale of zero to seven. Stage 7 is the highest score a hospital can achieve.

The electronic tools that helped earn Norwalk Hospital a stage 6 recognition include:

- Computerized physician order-entry system
- Computerized clinical documentation
- Electronic medication administration
- Bedside computerized medication carts
- Electronic medical records
- Digital radiology

“We're committed to using the latest medical technology to enhance our quality of care and patient safety,” said President and CEO Dan DeBarba.

Have You Been Screened for Colorectal Cancer?

If you're age 50 or older and dread the thought of getting a colonoscopy, you're not alone. But that's no excuse to skip out on getting screened for colorectal cancer, the second leading cause of cancer-related death in this country.

Unfortunately, however, that's what too many people do. Screening for colorectal cancer is recommended for people ages 50 to 75, but half of those who should be screened are not. There is good news, though: A colonoscopy is not as bad as most people imagine, and it remains the best way to prevent colon cancer.

The Importance of Screening

According to the National Cancer Institute, screening for colorectal cancer saves lives. When a doctor screens for colorectal cancer, he or she looks for signs of, or actual, precancerous polyps, or abnormal growths, in the colon or rectum.

If there are polyps, the doctor can remove them during a colonoscopy, before they have a chance to become cancerous, said gastroenterologist Frank Sammarco, MD, who practices with Soundview Medical Associates in Norwalk and is a member of the Norwalk Hospital Medical Staff.

Health experts like Dr. Sammarco agree that colonoscopy is the most effective method of screening for colorectal cancer. During

the procedure, a doctor inserts a long, thin, flexible, lighted tube called a colonoscope through the rectum, and into the colon, to look for polyps, abnormal areas, or cancer. If polyps are found, the doctor removes them. The procedure takes about 45 minutes, with the patient allowed to go home roughly an hour later, after the anesthesia has worn off.

"Most people feel uneasy about the idea of getting a colonoscopy," Dr. Sammarco explained. "But their fears are worse than reality. During a colonoscopy, the patient is sedated and feels nothing, and there is no pain or discomfort after."

Health experts like those at the National Institutes of Health say that colonoscopies performed every 10 years, or as recommended by one's doctor, can reduce a person's risk of developing colon cancer by as much as 90 percent. When cancer is present, early detection also increases a person's survival rates.

"The importance of getting regular colonoscopies, as recommended by your doctor, can't be stressed enough," added gastroenterologist Charles J. Adelman, MD, who also practices with Soundview Medical Associates in Norwalk and is a member of the Norwalk Hospital Medical Staff. "If you're 50 or older, talk with your doctor about colonoscopy. It could save your life." ●

» Drs. Sammarco and Adelman have offices at Soundview Medical Associates, 761 Main Ave., Suite 201, in Norwalk. To make an appointment, call 203-838-4000.

GI ENDOSCOPY UNIT NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED FOR QUALITY, SAFETY

Norwalk Hospital's Gastroenterology (GI) Laboratory, where screening colonoscopies and other endoscopic procedures are performed, is the only hospital-based endoscopy facility in Southern Connecticut recognized for quality and safety by the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE).

Headed by Endoscopy Director Dennis Meighan, DO, the lab is part of Norwalk Hospital's nationally ranked Center for Digestive Diseases and one of just 48 facilities in the nation to receive ASGE certification.

Earlier this year, HealthGrades® rated the Hospital's GI services in the top 5 percent for clinical excellence nationally.

In addition to colonoscopies, Dr. Meighan and other specially trained gastroenterologists use the lab to perform endoscopic ultrasounds, polyp removals, and other minimally invasive procedures that require an endoscope to look inside the digestive tract.

The ASGE designation comes after a rigorous, voluntary review and signifies that the lab meets or exceeds ASGE guidelines on quality assurance, endoscopy reprocessing, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention infection guidelines, among others.

Lab staff were also required to complete an ASGE-sponsored "Improving Quality and Safety in Your Endoscopy Unit" course.

» Learn how Norwalk Hospital's Digestive Diseases Services can help you or someone you love. Visit www.norwalkhospital.org or call 1-866-NHB-WELL (642-9355).



Patient Navigators Offer Care Beyond Medicine

When a person is first confronted with the possibility of cancer, he or she embarks on a journey to find answers and the best medical care available. The journey can be scary and often can feature a dizzying array of tests, meetings with physician specialists and options for treatment.

Going through such a process without expert guidance can be daunting and anxiety-provoking. For this reason, Norwalk Hospital has patient navigators—highly trained nurses who provide guidance and support.

Norwalk Hospital's Mary Heery, APRN, is one of these navigators. A nurse with more than 20 years of experience, Heery works at Norwalk Hospital's Smilow Family Breast Health Center as a breast health specialist, helping women with breast concerns, including cancer, through the often-confusing healthcare system.

Part of an emerging healthcare subspecialty, Heery's job is to assess patients and their families to ensure they receive timely access to the comprehensive, nationally recognized medical services available at Norwalk Hospital and its Whittingham Cancer Center.

"A possible breast cancer diagnosis doesn't just affect the patient, it affects the whole family," said Heery, whose background and experience give her the ability to help meet each patient's individual clinical, educational, and psychosocial needs. "What follow-up and diagnostic tests might be needed? How do we coordinate care? How can we help alleviate both the woman's and her family's fears?"

"I also help women with breast cancer coordinate treatments, understand what treatments are supposed to accomplish, and manage side effects. My goal is to help each woman be as psychologically and physically strong as possible," Heery continued. "Having cancer doesn't mean you can't have quality of life."

Norwalk Hospital also has a Lung Health Navigation Program for patients who need additional testing after an initial chest X-ray, or other test, shows an abnormal result. Similar to the breast health program, specially trained nurses work one-on-one with lung patients to

ensure they receive access to the sophisticated diagnostic and treatment services available at Norwalk Hospital—and that they don't do it alone.

"A possible cancer diagnosis can leave a person feeling overwhelmed and confused," said Whittingham Cancer Center Research Director Richard Frank, MD, adding that the center is currently offering several national clinical trials that offer eligible lung and breast cancer patients access to the latest treatment options. "Our navigators help provide crucial guidance in terms of treatment." •

» For more information about Norwalk Hospital's breast and lung health navigators, call 1-866-NHB-WELL (642-9355) or visit www.norwalkhospital.org.



Norwalk Hospital Breast Health Specialist Mary Heery, APRN, guides and supports women through the often-confusing healthcare system.

TOP SURGEON JOINS SMILOW CENTER



Jeanne Capasse, MD

A widely respected breast surgeon has joined Norwalk Hospital's Smilow Family Breast Health Center, giving women convenient and local access to one of the leading surgeons in the field.

As the Smilow Center's new surgical director, Jeanne Capasse, MD, works hand-in-hand with longtime Smilow Medical Director Richard Zelkowitz, MD, to provide women with the most advanced and compassionate breast health care—from prevention and screening to diagnosis and treatment.

This integrated approach enhances the already comprehensive breast care Norwalk Hospital and the Smilow Center provide.

"For any breast-related concern—an abnormal mammogram, a painful lump or a concern about being at high risk for breast cancer—the Smilow Center can help," Dr. Capasse said. "Our goal is to make excellent and timely breast care available to all women in our community, as well as to guide women step-by-step through what can sometimes be a frightening or confusing process."

A member of the Norwalk Hospital Medical Staff since 1995, Dr. Capasse is a graduate of Cornell University Medical College. She completed her internship and residency at St. Luke's—Roosevelt Hospital Center and was an assistant attending physician there, as well as director of its Breast Screening Center. A medical instructor at Columbia University, she is a fellow of the American College of Surgeons. Her awards include the Frank J. Scallon Award for Surgical Innovation for establishing the sentinel node biopsy protocol for breast cancer staging.

"The fact that the Smilow Center is focused only on breast health and breast care means women are provided with a multidisciplinary team of experts with a singular focus," Dr. Capasse added. "This leads to better care, compassion, and outcomes."

» Discover how the Smilow Family Breast Health Center at Norwalk Hospital can help you or someone you love. Call 203-852-2300 or visit www.norwalkhospital.org.

Lighten Up the Comfort Foods You Love

If your mind has been fixed on a buttery heap of mashed potatoes or a batch of homemade fudge, don't blame your stomach. It could just be your mood—and the time of year.

Many of us have used food as a stress reliever since we were kids. Foods are comforting not only because they taste good, but also because they bring back pleasant memories. Unfortunately, many favorite comfort foods are high in fat and calories. Plus, they tend to be in abundance around the holidays.

But don't worry—there are ways to trim down some of your heart-warming family favorites.

Say Goodbye to Empty Calories

Consider these ideas to ease up on fat, salt, and empty calories:

- If a dip or spread calls for cream cheese, substitute half a cup of ricotta cheese blended with half a cup of fat-free cream cheese. Serve with whole-grain crackers.
- Add creaminess to soups and casseroles with evaporated fat-free milk instead of heavy cream. Bulk up

casseroles, stews, and soups with beans and vegetables.

- Cradle your pie filling with a crust of crumbled graham crackers instead of pastry dough.
- Cut the butter and oil from baked goods by using applesauce instead. A half-cup of applesauce equals 1 cup of oil or butter.
- Instead of setting out a bowl of candy, decorate your table with a basket of fresh, washed fruit.

Don't Go It Alone

Norwalk Hospital's Clinical Nutrition Services Department offers two programs to help families become healthier eaters and smarter grocery shoppers:

- **Transformations** is an eight-week program for adults that includes weekly weigh-ins, strategies for keeping an effective food diary, and advice on how to become a more avid exerciser. Led by a registered dietitian and nutrition lifestyle specialist, the program is tailored to meet each participant's individual weight-loss needs and goals.

- **Kids Healthy Weight** is a three-week program that offers kids and their parents practical, kid-friendly eating, exercise, and weight-loss strategies. A Spanish translator is available. •

» To learn more about Norwalk Hospital's healthy eating and weight-loss programs, call 203-855-3548 or e-mail us at nutrition@norwalkhealth.org.



DESSERTS AND DIABETES CAN GO TOGETHER

It's tough avoiding all the sweets that come with the holiday season. But managing your carbohydrate intake is important when you have diabetes. Use these suggestions to enjoy the offerings without sacrificing healthy blood sugar levels.

- **Plan ahead.** As you approach the dessert table, look over everything before you take anything. Then choose carefully.
- **Make a trade.** Desserts with sugar can still be part of special occasions when you have diabetes. But you need them to fit into your meal plan. This means they count toward your total carbohydrates. Don't simply add holiday desserts on top of your usual meal plan. Instead, trim carbohydrates

elsewhere in your meal so you can have dessert.

- **Watch portion size.** To fit dessert into your meal plan without sacrificing nutrition, eat a small portion. Get a friend or family member to split a dessert with you.
- **Bring your own.** Give yourself at least one low-sugar choice by

bringing a dessert of your own. You can cut up to half the sugar in many recipes. Increase flavorings, like cinnamon or vanilla, or use a sugar substitute.

- **Eat slowly.** Whatever you choose from the dessert table, savor each bite. Take your time so you're likely to enjoy it more and eat less.



» Norwalk Hospital offers an **Outpatient Diabetes Self-Management Education Program** recognized by the American Diabetes Association for providing patients with the knowledge and skills to successfully manage this potentially life-threatening condition. To learn more or to contact a certified diabetes educator, call 203-852-2181 or visit www.norwalkhospital.org.

NORWALK HOSPITAL PROGRAMS



☎ To learn more or to register for a class, please call 1-866-NHB-WELL (642-9355) or the number provided. All programs are free and take place at Norwalk Hospital, 34 Maple St., Norwalk, unless otherwise noted. For a complete list of programs and events, visit our website at www.norwalkhospital.org.

OSTOMY SUPPORT

Ostomy Support Group

Led by the same experienced ostomy nurses who provide patient care, Norwalk Hospital's Ostomy Support Group offers the opportunity to learn and talk about an array of topics related to having an ostomy, including self-image, needed nutrition, medication, skin care, product updates, and overall health and wellness.

Meets the third Wednesday of each month, 7 to 9 pm, in the Hospital's fifth-floor boardroom.

Call Linda Mascolo, APRN, at 203-852-2170.

PARENTING AND CHILDBIRTH

Registration is required for the following programs offered by the Norwalk Hospital Childbirth Center.

Call 1-866-NHB-WELL (642-9355).

Beginnings Early Pregnancy Program

Designed for women in their first trimester to learn about what to expect in pregnancy, fetal growth and development, how to manage pregnancy discomforts, and potential risks and problems.

Fourth Tuesday of each month, 7 to 9 pm.

Breast-Feed and Care for Your Newborn

A certified lactation consultant covers the normal process of breast-feeding, care of the umbilical cord, circumcision, and bathing your new baby. Fee: \$25.

First Saturday of the month. Please call 1-866-NHB-WELL (642-9355) for times.

Prepared Childbirth Class

Includes Lamaze-style breathing, relax-

ation techniques, and stages of labor and delivery. Led by a certified childbirth educator. Fee: \$175.

Four Wednesdays or four Thursdays in a row, 7 to 9 pm, or one Saturday, 9 am to 4:30 pm.

WEIGHT CONTROL

Bariatric Surgery Seminars

Free informational seminars for those considering gastric bypass or gastric banding surgery, where members of Norwalk Hospital's nationally accredited Surgical Weight Loss Center present an overview of the procedures and program.

To register or receive more information, call 203-852-3100 or visit www.goodbyebmi.org. Dates include:

- **Tuesday, December 7, 5:45 pm,** Richard S. Perkin Auditorium, Norwalk Hospital
- **Wednesday, December 15, 5:45 pm,** Stamford Italian Center, 1620 Newfield Ave., Stamford
- **Saturday, December 18, 9:15 am,** Richard S. Perkin Auditorium, Norwalk Hospital

Kids Healthy Weight

Three-week program offers kids and their parents practical, kid-friendly eating, exercise, and weight-loss strategies. A Spanish translator is available. Sponsored by the Hospital's Clinical Nutrition Services Department. New sessions begin monthly.

Tuesdays, 6 to 7 pm. Fee: \$72.

E-mail nutrition@norwalkhealth.org or call 203-855-3548 for upcoming dates.

Transformations

An eight-week program that teaches how to become a healthier eater, smarter grocery shopper, and more avid exerciser. Led by a registered dietitian and nutrition lifestyle specialist, the program is tailored to meet each participant's individual needs. Sessions include weekly weigh-ins and strategies for keeping an effective food diary. Limited to 12 participants. New sessions begin every two months.

Choose Tuesdays, noon to 1 pm, or Thursdays, 5:30 to 6:30 pm. Fee: \$180.

E-mail nutrition@norwalkhealth.org or call 203-855-3548 for the next start dates.

EXERCISE

Tai Chi

This gentle form of exercise is designed to relieve stress; increase strength and flexibility; and improve balance, coordination and circulation. New eight-week sessions begin every two months. Class sizes limited.

Choose introductory session on Tuesdays, 7 to 7:30 pm, for \$40, or continuing session for previous students on Tuesdays, 6 to 7 pm, for \$80.

E-mail nutrition@norwalkhealth.org or call 203-855-3548 for the next start date.

EDUCATION

Health Talk TV Program

Tune in to Norwalk Hospital's "Health Talk" on Cablevision Channel 84.

A new topic airs each week.

Every night at 6:30, 8, 9:30, and 11 pm.



Wound Center Helps Bus Driver Get Back in Gear

It wasn't pain but fear that caused 46-year-old Heriberto Torres to seek medical help for several oozing, quarter-sized leg wounds that wouldn't heal.

"I'm a family man, but I knew that if I wanted to be there for my family, I needed to get this problem taken care of," said Mr. Torres, a Norwalk Transit District bus driver. "Nothing I did at home was making these sores go away. They were there for three years and looking worse. What if I lost my legs?"

With wounds on both legs noticeably infected, Mr. Torres turned to Norwalk Hospital's Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine Center.

"I can't say enough good things about Norwalk Hospital. The doctors and staff there changed my life."—Heriberto Torres

There, working one-on-one with Center Medical Director Sandra Wainwright, MD, he received the specialized treatment needed to help the wounds—caused by poor circulation—heal. He was also given the education and inspiration to live an overall healthier life.

"Dr. Wainwright explained that to improve my blood flow, and prevent wounds like these from occurring again, I needed to lose weight, exercise more, and lower my blood pressure," Mr. Torres said. He explained that he suffers from venous insufficiency, a condition that occurs when

leg veins are not able to effectively pump blood up through the body and back to the heart. Lower leg ulcers that can become severely infected are a common result. Other symptoms include swollen ankles, tight calves, and leg aches or heaviness.

"Dr. Wainwright taught me how to recognize the first signs of the sores returning, so I can begin treatment before they get infected, rather than after," Mr. Torres said.

"Dr. Wainwright really changed my life. She guided me through the whole treatment process and even made me laugh."

Mr. Torres, in fact, said all the clinicians he met at Norwalk Hospital made him feel like family. Staff at the Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine Center worked hard to schedule appointments that coincided with his breaks between bus routes. Another benefit was the Center's location at Norwalk Hospital, he said. Additional care, such as when he needed a referral to a vascular specialist, was only steps away.

"I can't say enough good things about Norwalk Hospital. The doctors and staff there changed my life," he added.

A leader in wound care, Norwalk



Heriberto Torres, of Stratford, with Norwalk Hospital Wound Care and Hyperbaric Medicine Center Medical Director Sandra Wainwright, MD.

Hospital was the first in Fairfield County to offer outpatient hyperbaric oxygen therapy—a sophisticated process that can significantly expedite healing.

Norwalk Hospital inpatients also benefit from Dr. Wainwright's availability for consultations. A multidisciplinary team of wound care experts make daily rounds on Norwalk Hospital inpatients, helping assure earlier diagnoses, improved outcomes and, when needed, the comprehensive nutritional counseling, diabetes education, pain management help, and other services wound care patients often need. ●

» For more information about Norwalk Hospital's Wound Care and Hyperbaric Center, call 203-852-2434.