

Wellness

MATTERS

GROWING TO CARE FOR
OUR COMMUNITY

Nursing Excellence
and Innovation

New Observation
Unit Coming

Preparing for
Pregnancy



JOHNS HOPKINS
MEDICINE

Wellness

MATTERS

In this issue of *Wellness Matters*, we explore the recent expansion and growth plans impacting our emergency department and share nursing excellence initiatives.

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Wellness Matters

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Please direct comments regarding *Wellness Matters* to 410-740-7810.

Medical Center Information: 410-740-7890

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President's MESSAGE



Dear Friends,

In this issue of *Wellness Matters*, we focus on the growth and innovation that drive our mission to support your health and well-being. Thanks to your community support and county funding, we're making strides to expand access and care. The discharge lounge, our new emergency department behavioral health unit and the upcoming construction of a new 29-bed observation unit this fall are among efforts underway to help improve

patient flow and reduce emergency room wait times.

We're committed to providing high-quality care across the lifespan — from maternal health to aging well, now underscored by our recent geriatric accreditation. This issue also showcases the breadth of our cardiology services, including our recognition with the American Heart Association's Bronze Award for excellence in stroke care.

At the heart of our hospital is our dedicated staff. We're proud to partner with schools and colleges to develop tomorrow's health care workforce. Through donor-funded scholarships, we're investing in the continued growth of our nurses — who deliver compassionate, expert care each day. We recently launched a virtual nursing program that redefines how care is delivered at the bedside. As we advance on our journey to Magnet® designation and celebrate 20 years of our nationally recognized nurse residency program, we remain focused on innovation, further elevating our standard of excellence.

Thank you for your continued trust, support and patience as we grow to serve you better.

Wishing you and your family continued good health.

Sincerely,

M. Shafeeq Ahmed, M.D., MBA, F.A.C.O.G., *President*

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Keeping Up with the Pulse of New Cardiac Technology



According to the Census Bureau, between 2023 and 2024, Howard County saw the largest increase in rising median age in Maryland. In addition, the county's population of residents over 65 increased 4.11% during the same period — above the national average.

“Cardiovascular death is still the leading cause of death in the United States, and as the community here ages, we’re constantly looking to expand our cardiac services to provide care to these patients,” says **Eric Schwartz, M.D.**, a cardiologist on staff at JHHCMC. “This includes bringing new, cutting-edge technology and procedures that traditionally were only offered at The Johns Hopkins Hospital here to Howard County.”

No Wire About It: Leadless Pacemakers

A pacemaker sends electrical pulses to your heart to help it beat at a normal rate and rhythm. Pacemaker technology has come a long way over the years. Traditional pacemakers are implanted beneath the collarbone with lead wires traveling down to the heart. Today’s leadless pacemakers are a fraction of the size — smaller than a AAA battery in shape and volume — and placed directly into the heart with no wires. Dr. Schwartz recently began placing the new devices in patients at JHHCMC.

“The biggest issue with a traditional pacemaker is the lead that goes into the heart can break,” notes Dr. Schwartz. “Over the course of 15 years, about one in five people will have a lead break resulting in an additional surgery to replace the lead.” People who are more active are more likely to break leads because they’re constantly moving their arms, and that puts pressure on the lead underneath the collarbone. Patients are also often told to avoid heavy lifting. The new device basically removes the lead and contains it within the heart, so now patients have no lifting restrictions and the risk of breaking a long lead is eliminated.

Until earlier this year, the leadless pacemaker technology was limited to a single chamber device. “The majority of patients need two lead pacemaker systems, so the patient population that could get them was very restricted,” says Dr. Schwartz. “The new device released in the last six months is a dual chamber device which expands the opportunity for patients to be able to get these devices.”

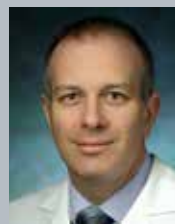
Dr. Schwartz says that good candidates for the new leadless technology include people who:

- are very active
- have had previous devices that have gotten infected, or have had complications from previous devices
- have vascular issues in general, such as dialysis patients, with restrictive use of their vessels

To determine if you are a good candidate for a leadless pacemaker, have a conversation with your electrophysiologist.

Coming Technology

Future planned expansion of cardiac services includes inpatient cardiac imaging with the addition of cardiac CT and cardiac MRI at Howard County as well. “New techniques to open arteries with different types of balloons to help deploy stents in calcified vessels isn’t too far away for us either,” notes Dr. Schwartz. “We are excited to bring these advances to our community.”



Eric Schwartz, M.D., is a board-certified cardiologist with Cardiovascular Specialists of Central Maryland in Columbia. Dr. Schwartz specializes in electrophysiology.

Appointments: 410-997-7979

JHHCMC Initiatives and

On average, JHHCMC sees a staggering 73,000 patients a year in the emergency department (ED), putting the hospital in the top five in the state of Maryland for ED volume.

“As the only hospital in Howard County, one of our big challenges is the number of people we see. Since 2010, the county has grown about 18%, but our hospital has not grown at the same rate. We have been concentrating on our facility initiatives to help manage the community’s needs, because emergency department wait times are not just about the ED, they are about the whole hospital.”

— Shafeeq Ahmed, M.D., President, JHHCMC

New Behavioral Health Unit Opened



County officials joined JHHCMC leadership for a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new unit.

In December 2024, the hospital opened a new, expanded behavioral health unit within the ED, increasing the number of treatment spaces from six to 24.

“We’re feeling the mental health crisis that is sweeping the nation,” says **Andrew Angelino, M.D.**, director of psychiatry at JHHCMC. “We’re seeing more patients than ever before, and our ED was routinely experiencing an overflow of patients with mental illness.”

Patients who require a high degree of attention sometimes wait in the emergency department for a couple of days before being admitted to an inpatient unit. The new unit is a very different, much more therapeutic environment designed specifically for patients with emergency mental and behavioral health needs.

The \$10.3-million expansion was made possible through \$2 million in county funding as well as corporate and individual philanthropy.

EMERGENCY PURPLE ZONE INITIATIVE

“Our capacity constraints present challenges with the delivery of efficient care to all of our patients,” says **Patricia Pugh, D.O.**, chair and medical director of the emergency department. “We are always looking for an opportunity to optimize our processes so that our patients can get the right kind of care at the right time. The ED purple zone helps us to do just that.”

Opened in January 2025, the purple zone provides emergency treatment space for an additional nine medical patients who do not require emergent, acute care and who will likely not need to be admitted. The area is currently open five days a week, 12 hours a day.

“We’ve seen about 1,000 patients a month and have been able to reduce the amount of time a patient stays in the ED by over one hour — allowing our patients to come and go much more efficiently than before,” says Dr. Pugh.

Expansions

Discharge Hospitality Suite

Since opening, the suite has served over **6,800 patients** and saved the hospital more than **130,000 minutes** (or 90 days) of transition time — **opening up beds for new patients.**

Located just off the main lobby, the discharge hospitality suite (DHS) offers a welcoming space for eligible discharged patients to wait for a ride home.

“ED wait times are significantly affected by ED boarders — patients who sit in the ED who have been admitted and are waiting for a bed to become available on the inpatient side. We’ve done a lot of things to work on our throughput

process, and one of the barriers we discovered was that often inpatients weren’t leaving beds in a timely manner when they had their discharge orders in, most commonly because they were waiting for a ride at the bedside,” says Chad Dammers, MSN, RN, support services manager. “We came up with the DHS idea to move those patients out of inpatient rooms more quickly to allow patients to transition out of the ED.”

The DHS has a hospitality atmosphere. Staff can review discharge instructions with patients again, and when their ride home arrives, wheel them out to the circle, so their family doesn’t have to park.

The development of the discharge hospitality suite was made possible through funding by the JHHCMC Foundation.

New Observation Unit Coming



Rendering of observation unit patient room.

Construction will begin this fall to renovate the first floor of the hospital’s pavilion to build a 29-bed observation unit. This new short-term-stay unit will serve patients who are awaiting or undergoing evaluation or testing expected to take less than 24 hours. This unit will help the hospital manage ED patient capacity and reduce wait times.

The hospital received the second installment of \$5 million from the county government toward the building of the new unit as part of an overall \$15-million-funding commitment. JHHCMC is currently running a \$13-million capital campaign to support the unit’s construction. The total cost of construction is expected to exceed \$30 million.

Donor Doubles Support

To support the new observation unit, The Kahlert Foundation has provided a \$3-million grant and has committed to matching every donation, dollar for dollar, up to \$600,000. “I hope to inspire others to join me in support of the hospital because it ensures everyone in the community has access to essential, quality care close to home. It’s an investment in the health and future of our neighbors and families,” says Greg Kahlert, president of The Kahlert Foundation.



Greg and Roberta Kahlert with JHHCMC President Shafeeq Ahmed, M.D.



To double your donation impact, visit bit.ly/HCMC_Observation or scan the QR code.

Growing the Next Generation Workforce

JHHCMC works with numerous partners throughout the community to offer internships and apprenticeship opportunities for students to learn. Below are just a few of the programs the hospital participates in to grow the next generation of our workforce.

Impactful Summer Internships

During the seven-week paid summer internship, students between the ages of 16 and 21 are paired with mentors at the hospital and work 25 hours per week. Christina Hart, a recent Howard High School graduate, spent her summer as an intern in the hospital's NICU and maternal child unit.

Christina worked on a multitude of initiatives during her internship including collaborating with NICU nurse leader Kathryn Zizzo.

“One of her biggest contributions was partnering with me to help launch our hospital's journey toward Safe Sleep Gold Certification,”

Summer intern Christina Hart stands beside the NICU lobby kids area she helped to create.

says Kathryn. “Thanks to Christina's dedication and organizational skills, we've made tremendous progress. She coordinated across multiple departments to help us get one step closer to our goal. Her leadership on this project has been nothing short of incredible.

“Christina also tackled the NICU lobby iPad station/redesign project. She reimagined outdated iPads into child-friendly resources — choosing developmentally appropriate apps, coordinating with IT to ensure the devices were kid-proofed, helping brainstorm securement solutions, obtaining a table and even assisting with redesign ideas for a children's corner to create a calm, family-centered waiting area.”

“*The internship solidified my thinking and gave me the perfect amount of exposure to the clinical and public health side. It was a great match!*”

— Christina Hart, Summer Intern

One-On-One Mentoring Apprentices

JHHCMC's electrical, HVAC and stationary engineer apprentices are building their skills. The first year of the four-year apprenticeship, the high school seniors worked 20 hours a week with their mentors while continuing to attend classes. Apprentices benefit from paid, on-the-job training, classroom instruction and one-on-one mentoring.

Mentor Kevin Gardner with apprentice Luke Kenyon.





< Project SEARCH

Pictured left, participants in the Project SEARCH Internship — a program that prepares young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in their last year of high school with competitive employment. Project SEARCH is a partnership between the Howard County Government, Howard County Public School System, The Arc of Howard County, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) and the Howard County Autism Society.

The medical center’s apprenticeship program is run through a statewide initiative called Apprenticeship Maryland. In partnership with the Maryland Department of Labor, Apprenticeship Maryland offers high school seniors the opportunity to enter the workforce, earn wages and develop the skills needed to fill high-demand job positions.

“I’ve really enjoyed my time so far at JHHCMC. My mentor, Kevin, really took me under his wing and started teaching me right away. He goes the extra mile explaining every little thing making sure I understand it.”

— Luke Kenyon, Electrical Apprentice

“He lets me be hands on as much as I can and always focuses on safety. Kevin also checks in with me and cares about what’s going on outside of work too. The past year has been more than great.”

Luke’s mentor Kevin Gardner, an electrician/mechanical technician in the hospital’s facilities engineering department, was recognized in 2024 as Maryland’s Apprenticeship Mentor of the Year by Governor Wes Moore for his leadership to help grow and advance apprenticeships in Maryland.

His award nomination noted,

“As our first apprenticeship mentor, Kevin’s example has had a profound ripple effect throughout the hospital. His dedication to sharing his knowledge has inspired other employees to step into mentorship roles, creating a culture of learning and collaboration. Because of Kevin’s influence, we now have four apprentices working alongside seasoned mentors at the hospital.”

“By leading the way and building a pipeline of journeymen, Kevin is ensuring that the next generation of electricians is well-prepared, both technically and personally, to carry the trade forward. His leadership is paving the way for a stronger, more sustainable future for the skilled trades, making his contributions invaluable. In every sense, Kevin embodies the spirit of mentorship, leadership and community and is very deserving of the Maryland Apprenticeship Mentor of the Year Award.”

Kevin says, “When you have the opportunity to train the next generation, you have the responsibility to do just that.”



Our Magnet Journey

JHHCMC has been on a journey for many years now — a journey toward Magnet designation.

According to the American Nurses Credentialing Center, “the Magnet recognition program provides a roadmap to nursing excellence, which benefits the whole organization. To nurses, it means education and development through every career stage, which leads to greater autonomy at the bedside. To patients, it means the very best care, delivered by nurses who are supported to be the very best that they can be.”

“Magnet is the gold standard designation in nursing for a hospital,” says JHHCMC Magnet Program Coordinator Linda Sayre, MS, RN, NE-BC. “Designation requires you to have high-performing nurses and high nursing and patient satisfaction as well as high-quality outcomes and a committed and engaged leadership. We have been building a culture of nursing excellence in 102 different Magnet standards and were excited to submit our written document this summer.” Only approximately 10% of U.S. hospitals are Magnet-designated.

In addition to the submission of documents, the application process involves a site visit. A decision is expected in 2026. In the following pages, we invite you to read more about several of the new nursing excellence initiatives guiding care at JHHCMC.

NURSE RESIDENCY PROGRAM CELEBRATES 20th ANNIVERSARY



2024 Nurse Residency Program cohort.

The first year of a nurse’s career is often one of the most difficult. Since 2005, the Nurse Residency Program (NRP) at JHHCMC has provided new nurses the tools they need to succeed. “It can be difficult to transition from an academic to a clinical setting because you’re taking all of this theory and trying to make it practical,” says Stephanie Al-Adhami, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, CAPA, professional practice program coordinator.

New graduate RNs are automatically enrolled in the program upon hiring, which gives them a solid foundation as they join our nursing team. The year-long program is composed of two parts: a clinical orientation when nurses develop skills and professional development coaching.

Colleen Pallozzi, MSN, RN, NPD-BC, works alongside Stephanie to create a safe and understanding environment within JHHCMC’s greater nursing team. “We’re available whether they need to work through a struggle or celebrate

a success,” she says. “We make sure they know they are cared about. We want to make their first year a rewarding and positive experience.”

The program is supported by generous funding from the JHHCMC Foundation and has received national accolades. In 2023, the NRP earned the #3 spot on nurse.org’s list of the top 10 nurse residency programs in the country. Its curriculum has received accreditation with distinction from the American Nurses Credentialing Center making JHHCMC one of approximately 250 hospitals in the world to have earned this level of designation.

Surveys show that the program has helped new JHHCMC nurses safely share their experiences, decrease their stress and anxiety and more. “Nursing is hard – physically and emotionally,” says Colleen, “but we want these new nurses to be successful. That’s what the NRP is all about.”



Learn more about the program’s history at bit.ly/hcmc-nrp

INTRODUCING Virtual Nursing

A Win-Win for Staff and Patients



THIS SPRING, JOHNS HOPKINS HOWARD COUNTY MEDICAL CENTER SUCCESSFULLY ROLLED OUT A VIRTUAL NURSING PILOT PROGRAM ON A 30-BED MEDICAL UNIT.

“We are proud to be one of the first four Johns Hopkins Medicine hospitals to implement this service. This innovative initiative is a major step forward in enhancing patient care, supporting our bedside nurses and leveraging technology to improve health care delivery.”

— Ron Langlotz, DNP, RN, NEA-BC
Vice President of Nursing and Chief Nursing Officer, JHHCMC

Virtual nurses are on-site staff nurses who function from a central space within the hospital rather than from a specific hospital unit. They help monitor up to 30 hospital beds and provide essential care that does not require physical assessment or in-person care. Rooms equipped for virtual nursing have secure two-way communication pathways and include a TV and a camera. Virtual nursing operates through the TV screen — there is no separate monitor.

The virtual nurse can ring into the room, and the patient will allow them to come in and support the bedside nurse. As an extra set of eyes and ears on the patient, virtual nurses can identify priorities and redirect bedside nurses if they notice

that a patient needs support. They can monitor a patient's health in real time and quickly intervene should any issues arise. In addition to being able to see and talk to the patient and their family, the virtual nurses also assist with patient chart audits to ensure timely and thorough documentation.

Virtual nurses partner with bedside nurses and do not replace them. They are available to handle more time-intensive tasks such as the admission database, patient education and providing discharge instructions that require thorough review with the patient. They ensure the patient is knowledgeable about their medications and the side effects, and they are available to answer any care-related questions. “Virtual nursing not only supports the patients but also the staff,” says Ron. “It allows our bedside nurses to provide more direct, hands-on care to those who really need it.”

Virtual nurses also serve as a valuable resource. They can include interpreters and family members in the virtual communication. “If you have a family member who lives out of state and needs to know what to expect post hospitalization, the virtual nurse can add them to the video communication,” says Danielle McQuigg, senior director of nursing administration at JHHCMC. “Our goal is to ensure patient satisfaction by providing all the information the patient needs while continuing to deliver the highest quality of care.”

Supporting Nursing Education

Donors and longtime Howard County residents Tom and Mary Jean Knott had been patients at JHHCMC over the years.

“The Knotts were grateful for the care they had received and for their physician, my husband Dr. Harry Oken,” says family friend Janet Oken. “They wanted to leave a lasting gift in honor of their care that also supported the education of hospital employees, so they included the hospital in their will.”

Upon their passing over 10 years ago, their bequest funded the Thomas and Mary Jean Knott Nursing Scholarship Endowment Fund. The endowment funds scholarships given annually to JHHCMC employees to pursue certifications and advanced degrees to grow their career in nursing at the hospital.

Iheoma Karen Ozioko, a patient care technician, was a recent scholarship recipient and shared her appreciation:

“I cannot thank you enough for your generosity and support through this scholarship. As a single mother of three,

balancing nursing school, work and family life has been a challenge, but your kindness has helped lighten the load and bring me closer to my goals.

“This scholarship has not only eased the financial strain of my education but has also allowed me to focus on my studies and clinical training with greater determination. It is helping me gain the knowledge and skills necessary to make a meaningful impact on the lives of my future patients. Thank you for believing in me and for making this journey a little easier.”

The Knotts, who were both Baltimore City police officers and shared a love for dogs, also used their bequest to fund a visiting canine program and security enhancements to the hospital.



To support nursing education and scholarships at HCMC, scan the QR code.

JHHCMC Celebrates Nurses at First Nurses Week Fun Run/Walk



The first Fun Run/Walk kicked off Nurses Week in May to support our nurses and was a success! Over 175 individuals including staff, families and community members joined us and raised funds to benefit the JHHCMC nursing team’s professional development opportunities. Thank you to everyone who supported us!

Second Annual JHHCMC Nurses Week Award Winners

Congratulations to the Second Annual Nurses Week Award winners who embody the JHHCMC nursing mission to “empower nursing through innovation, professional growth, mentorship and transformational leadership to deliver superior outcomes utilizing evidence-based practice.”



Cecelia Broccolino

Novice Nurse of the Year Award



Lara Wood

Nurse Preceptor of the Year Award



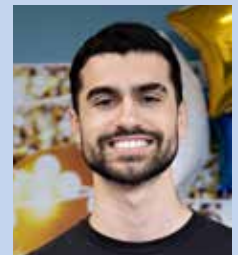
Katarzyna Malas

Nursing Innovation Award



Scott Holz

CNO Award for Clinical Nursing Excellence



Jose Marquez, PCT

Assistant Caregiver Excellence (ACE) Award



Reflecting on Three Years of Partnership with BWFA

At Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center, we know that good health involves more than medical care. It includes the social, emotional and financial aspects of life that support long-term well-being. Over the past three years, our collaboration with Baltimore-Washington Financial Advisors (BWFA) has been grounded in that shared belief. While our areas of expertise differ, our missions both center on supporting our community as they strive to live healthy lives with purpose, security and resilience.

BWFA's financial planning perspective draws inspiration from the Blue Zones. These regions around the world — such as Okinawa, Japan, and Ikaria, Greece — are known for their high rates of longevity and overall well-being. The common thread across these communities is not just access to health care or income, but lifestyle factors such as strong social networks, daily movement, lower stress and a sense of meaning. These ideas have influenced the way BWFA works with clients, encouraging them to align their financial decisions with what matters most in their lives — inviting broader conversations about health, relationships and personal goals. This philosophy aligns with our own commitment to whole-person care at JHHCMC.

Over the years, BWFA and JHHCMC have partnered to present a variety of webinars and seminars focused on the connection between physical health, mental well-being

and financial confidence. These community programs are designed to reduce stress, provide practical tools and help people plan thoughtfully for the future. By offering trusted, accessible education, we can support both immediate needs and long-term stability for the populations we serve.

BWFA's contributions to community well-being extend well beyond our partnership. They are proud supporters of other Johns Hopkins institutions including the Applied Physics Laboratory, Johns Hopkins University and The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Locally, BWFA is engaged with several organizations that enrich the lives of Howard County residents. These include the Columbia Orchestra, which fosters access to the arts; Neighbor Ride, a volunteer-based program that supports older adults with transportation; and the Association of Community Services of Howard County (ACS), which connects and strengthens local nonprofits and human service providers.

As we reflect on three years of collaboration, we're proud of the impact this partnership has made and grateful for BWFA's ongoing commitment to the health and vitality of our community. Working together, we've been able to bring additional resources and support to those we serve. By combining clinical care with trusted community partnerships, we help individuals feel more prepared, supported and empowered to lead fulfilling lives.

Special Thank You to Our Corporate Partners

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Celebrating Our 2025 Heroes in Health Care



(l. to r.) Judy Smith, JHHCMC Foundation board chair with the 2025 Heroes in Philanthropy Cyndi and Ron Gula.

In April, we held our annual Heroes in Health Care celebration event and honored our 2025 Heroes in Philanthropy, Ron and Cyndi Gula, for their extraordinary commitment to enhancing health care at Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center. We also recognized our frontline 2025 Heroes in Health Care: the JHHCMC Adult and Pediatric Emergency Departments for their dedication and excellence in caring for our patients. Thank you to our generous sponsors and all who joined us in support!

If you would like to make a donation in honor of the health care and philanthropy heroes, scan the QR code.



Staff of the Pediatric Emergency Department.



Staff of the Adult Emergency Department.

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Honor a Hero Program Launched

The JHHCMC Foundation recently launched the Honor a Hero Program to provide patients with a way to recognize staff for the quality and compassionate care they received with a donation in their honor. Staff who are honored receive a badge reel and certificate.

Xavior Fernandez, R.N., (pictured) was recently recognized by a patient who shared, *“Xavior is an outstanding nurse whose compassion, professionalism and friendliness showed in everything he did. His performance went beyond expectations. I can’t thank him enough.”*

To recognize a member of the JHHCMC staff, visit bit.ly/hero-hcmc or scan the QR code.



Childbirth and Parenting Classes



Class fees are per couple. Classes include an online course and an in-person, instructor-led class.

Childbirth Preparation and Birthing Center Tour

Learn about pregnancy, labor, childbirth, comfort techniques and medical procedures. Tour the Birthing Center at JHHCMC. \$115.

Childbirth Preparation, Birthing Center Tour and Breastfeeding Bundle

This bundle addresses the same topics as Childbirth Preparation and includes a Birthing Center tour and additional discussion regarding breastfeeding, positioning, latching on, signs your baby is getting enough milk, breastfeeding pumps and partner support. \$140.

Infant Care

Learn about the care of your newborn including crying and comforting, feeding, bathing and sleeping. Our nurse will discuss infant care, newborn behavior and health. \$80.

Infant Care and Breastfeeding Bundle

In addition to the topics covered in Infant Care, this bundle class will also explore the benefits of breastfeeding, positioning and latching on, signs your baby is getting enough milk, breastfeeding pumps and the importance of partner support. \$100.

Infant Care/Infant & Toddler Safety and Childproofing Bundle

Infant care topics will be discussed in addition to crucial information about how to keep infants and toddlers (up to age 4) safe. Learn about car seat and sleep safety, childproofing, injury prevention, consumer-product safety, community resources and emergency preparedness. This class is appropriate for parents, grandparents and caregivers. \$100.

Breastfeeding Support Group

Meet with other breastfeeding mothers and a lactation consultant. For more information, email bmadera1@jhmi.edu. Wednesdays, 12:30-1:30 p.m. Free.

New Moms Group

Meet for discussion of parenting topics, guest speakers and an opportunity to connect with other new mothers of babies up to 5 months old. Wednesdays, 10:30 a.m.-12 p.m. Free.

Birthing Center Tour: Virtual

Our nurse will answer your questions and discuss hospital services, preregistration and more information about your stay at JHHCMC. Virtual via Zoom. Does not include a live video tour. Free.

Online Classes

Online classes are included in all childbirth and new parent classes. The classes may also be purchased separately for those who do not choose to take an instructor-led class. \$40 per online class.

New Understanding Grandparenting: Online

Grandparents will learn the latest information on birth and baby care and will be guided through the grandparenting journey from pregnancy to birth and throughout the first year of the grandchild's life. Learn about health and safety, feeding, birth and mother changes, what's new in baby care, play and milestones and the grandparent's supportive role. This is an online course and does not include an instructor-led class. \$40 for 9 months access.

To register, visit hopkinshoward.org/babyclasses or scan the QR code. For more information, call 410-740-7601 or email HCMC-HealthPromotion@jhmi.edu.

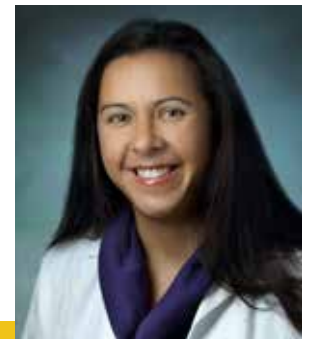


See more classes on the back cover.



Preparing for Pregnancy

WITH
ANDREA KWONG, M.D.



When should I see a doctor if I am planning to become pregnant?

The best time to meet with your OB/GYN is the year before trying to conceive so that if we find a problem or you have a chronic medical condition, we can ensure you are in the best possible health prior to pregnancy. Certain medical problems such as diabetes, chronic hypertension or seizure disorders should be addressed before getting pregnant.

What things will I discuss with my doctor?

We will review your medical, surgical and gynecologic history. If you have medical problems, we want to discuss how those conditions will affect a pregnancy as well as how pregnancy will affect those conditions. If this is not your first pregnancy, we will discuss your obstetric history to be aware of any complications that could happen again. It is also important to review both your and your partner's family history to assess the risk of genetic disorders. We will also talk about your social history including alcohol and drug use, smoking and intimate partner violence.

It is important that anyone with a history of mental health disorders — anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, etc. — have them well controlled with or without medications prior to pregnancy. If you've been on medications, this is not the time to stop them. It is also important to tell your provider if you have a history of postpartum depression or postpartum anxiety. We will work as a team with your psychiatrist to focus on your mental health prior to, during and after pregnancy.

What vitamins and medications can I take?

If you're not on a regular multivitamin, start taking one daily that has at least 400 micrograms of folic acid at least one month in advance. Many medications are safe to continue in pregnancy, but there are some we may want to change or discontinue. Be sure to review those at your preconception visit.

Should I be exercising?

We want everyone to be active and healthy prior to and during pregnancy. If you were not active before pregnancy, this is not the time to take on a strenuous exercise regimen. To prepare for pregnancy, simply taking a brisk walk every day for 30 minutes is a great way to start. This is something you can continue throughout the pregnancy.

What changes should I make to my diet and weight?

It would be ideal if you are at a healthy weight before pregnancy. We recognize that women who have obesity carry higher risks during pregnancy. That doesn't mean you shouldn't get pregnant if you are overweight, but getting as close to a healthy weight makes for a healthier pregnancy.

Once you're pregnant, there are certain foods that are not recommended to eat such as raw fish, unpasteurized cheese and undercooked or raw meat. Start incorporating those changes into your diet a month before pregnancy.

How long should it take to get pregnant?

There's no guarantee that you're going to get pregnant that first month. On average, it takes six to eight months to conceive.

After trying and not conceiving, when should I see my doctor?

Anyone under 35 should try for a year before seeking help from their GYN or fertility specialist. Those 35 and older, or who have polycystic ovary syndrome, should talk with their doctor after six months of trying.

Andrea Kwong, M.D., is a board-certified OB/GYN with Johns Hopkins Community Physicians Howard County.

Appointments: 443-367-4700



New Board of Trustees Chair Named

Welcome to Sheri Lewis, MPH, who has been elected as chair of the JHHCMC Board of Trustees. Sheri is the deputy mission area executive for national health for the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. She leads efforts to develop capabilities that can rapidly detect and respond to changes in health status to better predict and prevent illness, injury and disease.

Sheri earned her master's degree in public health from George Washington University.

Johns Hopkins 2024 Clinical Awards

The awards program, established by the Office of Johns Hopkins Physicians, honors physicians and care teams for their commitment to the mission of Johns Hopkins Medicine and their consistent dedication to providing excellent patient care.

Congratulations to the Johns Hopkins Howard County Medical Center recipients.

Innovations in Clinical Care



Heidi Abdelhady, M.D., and The Code Blue and Rapid Response Team

Armstrong Award for Excellence in Quality and Safety



Cheryl Burruss, M.D.

Physician of the Year Award



Bradley Strunk, M.D.

Excellence in Service and Professionalism



Eric Aldrich, M.D.

Clinical Collaboration and Teamwork



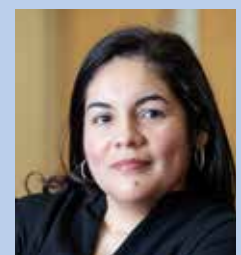
Savya Thakkar, M.D., (not pictured) and Team

Best Consulting Physician



Habib Khan, M.B.B.S.

Advanced Practice Provider



Jessica Williams, N.P.-C., R.N., M.S.N.



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MEDICINE

Howard County Medical Center

5755 Cedar Lane
Columbia, MD 21044

Maternal Health Program

The Maternal Health Program offers short-term case management, prenatal care and postpartum assistance to pregnant people in the community who have no insurance or who are struggling to find prenatal care. For more information, contact **667-261-2145** or **CCT-MHP@jh.edu**. Free.

Programa de Salud Maternal

El Programa de Salud Materna ofrece acompañamiento y seguimiento a corto plazo con personal especializado, en atención prenatal y asistencia posparto a embarazadas de la comunidad que no tienen seguro médico o que tienen dificultades para encontrar atención prenatal. Para más información, llame al **667-261-2145** o escriba a **CCT-MHP@jh.edu**. Servicios gratis.



CLASSES TO SUPPORT Your Wellness

Living Well with Chronic Disease: Toolkit

Learn skills to manage chronic health conditions in this virtual, six-week course. To register, visit bit.ly/start-living-well. Free.

Living Well with Diabetes: Toolkit

Learn to manage diabetes and live a healthy lifestyle in this virtual six-week course for those with diabetes, prediabetes and their support persons and family members. To register, visit bit.ly/Living-Well-Diabetes.

Cancer Self-Management: Thriving and Surviving

Share experiences and identify solutions and tools for solving problems and creating a supportive environment in this six-week program. Support persons and family members may also register. To register, visit bit.ly/cancer-self-management.

Adult Mental Health First Aid: *Virtual*

Friday, November 7, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Learn skills to assist an adult who may be in distress or experiencing a mental health crisis. Free.

Advance Care Planning Help

Receive help completing an advance directive, which includes a living will and assigning a health care agent — a person who would make medical decisions for you should you be unable to speak for yourself. To schedule an appointment, call **443-518-6684** or email **HCGH-ACP@jhmi.edu**. Third Thursday of the month, 1-4 p.m. Free.

Claudia Mayer/Tina Broccolino Cancer

Resource Center offers support to cancer patients, families and caregivers through free counseling, support groups, wig consultations and integrative health services. Learn more: bit.ly/HCMC-CancerResources.

For dates and to register, visit hopkinshoward.org/events.

For more information, call 410-740-7601 or email HCMC-HealthPromotion@jhmi.edu.

hopkinshoward.org



Donate: hopkinshoward.org/give



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