

HEALTH REPORT



Prince George's Hospital Center is here for your heart's health

By Christa Avampato

As we age, many of us focus our attention on the wrinkles around our eyes. However, the key to health lies in a part of the body we can't see—the heart. Cardiovascular disease, which encompasses heart disease, high blood pressure, vascular disease, and stroke, remains the number one killer of women and men in the United States. In the Washington Metropolitan Area, we're fortunate to have an exceptional cardiac surgery program at

Prince George's Hospital Center (PGHC). The PGHC cardiac team has crafted numerous programs and initiatives that embrace the latest technology and techniques to prevent and treat cardiovascular disease.

Patient experience

The number one priority of the approximately 20-member team of doctors, nurses, and technicians at PGHC is patient safety

and experience. Quality and safety sit at the epicenter of its new patient care model. With a multi-disciplinary approach, a dedicated surgery team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Every effort is made to bring all services directly to the patient, right in his or her hospital room.

The highest levels of care don't end once a patient is discharged. Comprehensive follow-up care is critically important to ensure that a patient heals and makes lifestyle changes that will greatly reduce the chance of a repeat episode. Cardiac rehabilitation is an essential part of the program to help patients regain their confidence and alleviate their fear.

The team also makes a point to support the loved ones of a patient during and after the administration of care. The team benchmarks its performance against national standards and among its peers in an effort to constantly improve its methods and procedures.

Speed matters

When a patient experiences a cardiac event, every second counts. Kevin Garner, a senior program manager from Bowie, Maryland, knew something was wrong. A simple walk up a flight of stairs left him more exhausted than running a marathon.

"Before I could get in to see the doctor on Thursday, I had a heart attack on Wednesday," said Garner.

"His [Kevin's] heart didn't have enough blood flow all of a sudden," said Dr. Jamie Brown, director of cardiac surgery at Prince George's Hospital Center. "When a patient like this arrives at the emergency room, things need to start moving more quickly."

Kevin's situation required open-heart surgery to remedy his condition, and a regimen of cardiac rehabilitation for his recovery. Thanks to the expert care administered by the PGHC cardiac team and Kevin's strong desire to heal, he walked his daughter down the aisle at her wedding four weeks after his heart attack.

Feel empowered to take care of your heart

Knowing the risk factors, warning signs, and emergency treatment processes for cardiac disease is critical to saving a life and preventing or limiting permanent damage to the body if and when a cardiac event happens.

Checkups. It's important to get an annual checkup with your doctor. Even if you feel completely healthy, a checkup with a healthcare professional can catch disease at its earliest warning signs before a major problem occurs.

Know your numbers. Regularly monitoring your blood pressure is one of the best ways to mitigate your risk of cardiovascular disease. High blood pressure has no symptoms and yet is a major contributor to cardiovascular disease. Regular monitoring is the only way to assess your blood pressure. The same goes for cholesterol and blood sugar.

You are as healthy as the food you eat. Diet is a major contributor to overall health, and especially to heart health. Limit your sodium and fat intake, cut your consumption of processed foods, boost the amount of fiber you eat, and have at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day. The more colorful your plate, the better!

Weight matters. Forget vanity and the old clothes that may no longer fit. Maintaining a healthy weight is vital to good health and can significantly lower the risk of disease. Your healthcare provider can help you determine a healthy weight range for your body type.

Get moving. Exercise is another important aspect of overall health. The Surgeon General recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week for all adults. This exercise can occur in spurts and can be folded into your daily schedule in inventive ways—take the stairs, walk part of the way to work, and be active during your lunch breaks.

It's time to quit. Smoking is a major contributor to cardiovascular disease. Don't start. And if you smoke, now's the time to quit. Alcohol consumption can increase blood pressure, and high blood pressure can lead to cardiovascular disease. Limit how much and how often you drink alcohol.

Take your medicine. If you're taking prescribed medication for high blood pressure or diabetes, it's critical that you follow the instructions carefully and don't miss a dose. If you experience any side effects from your medication or have any questions about the medication you're taking, speak to your healthcare professional immediately.

The team at PGHC is here to help you achieve optimal heart health for you and your family. For additional information, go to <http://cardiacarepgcounty.org/>, or call 301.618.2131. Here's to your heart's health!

Kevin vowed to walk his daughter down the aisle.



We got him to the church on time.



When Kevin Garner's heart attack hit, he thought, "this can't be happening. I have to walk my daughter down the aisle."

A timely diagnosis, reassuring consultation and the extraordinary skill of Prince George's Hospital Center's exceptional cardiac surgery team saw Kevin through. With the wedding just four weeks away, Kevin and the Prince George's Hospital Center Cardiac Rehab Team kept their eyes on the prize. "Recovery is about motivation," he says with a smile. "And, it was a beautiful wedding."

State-of-the-art heart surgery at Prince George's Hospital Center puts patients like Kevin first. Visit www.CardiacCarePGCounty.org or call 301.618.2131 to find out just how close to home great cardiac care has come.

A powerful new partnership with the University of Maryland Medical Center is transforming cardiac care in Prince George's County.



About this section: This special advertising section was prepared by independent writer Christa Rose Avampato. The production of this section did not involve the news or editorial staff of The Washington Post.