

Health Connection

Martin General
HOSPITAL

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FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT MARTIN GENERAL HOSPITAL

Become a nurse!

By Jo Anne Nance, Chief Nursing Officer

If you're like many Americans, you're probably wondering how to steer your career toward helping people. Nursing can fulfill that goal. Due to population increases, particularly among baby boomers, our country is facing a shortage of nurses that will last for years. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there are more than 2 million nursing jobs in the country, and the profession is one of 10 projected to have the largest numbers of new jobs.

WHY NURSES ARE NEEDED

The current nursing population is aging, and healthcare institutions can't find replacements fast enough. Healthcare delivery is also shifting away from physician care to nursing care. For example, in the emergency room a nurse, not a physician, will perform stitching duties. So how can you join these in-demand professionals? Get an education!

DIFFERENT TYPES

Licensed practical nurses (L.P.N.s) go through one year of training at a hospital, vocational school or community college. Once they've passed their state-licensing exam, they'll likely work under a registered nurse (R.N.) and have limited duties. R.N.s have more responsibility and greater income than L.P.N.s but require more education.

IS THIS CAREER CHANGE FOR ME?

Learn about nursing to determine whether it's for you. Many people choose nursing because of past experiences



as a patient or through the experiences of a loved one or a close friend. Giving your time to Martin General Hospital's volunteer program is another way to see if you're interested. Volunteers are trained to assist patients and their families in tasks such as reading and helping with wheelchair transportation.

! Questions?

To learn more about nursing scholarships, contact Deborah Everett, education and clinical recruitment director, at (252) 809-6193 or deborah_everett@chs.net. If you're already a nurse and would like to find out about career opportunities, contact Jo Anne Nance at (252) 809-6296 or e-mail jo_anne_nance@chs.net.

Minimally invasive surgery

Less pain, faster recovery

Minimally invasive surgery (MIS) is the buzzword in healthcare right now. And with good reason.

With advancing technology and surgical techniques, patients now have the benefit of undergoing procedures that require just a few small incisions. In years past, those same procedures would have required large cuts and left equally large scars.

HOW IT WORKS

MIS—sometimes referred to as laparoscopic surgery—mirrors the techniques of traditional surgery but decreases the patient's surgical trauma. Because surgeons using MIS lose some visibility with smaller incisions, they have to create a larger workspace. They do this by making a small cut in the skin, then gently expanding the body cavity with a gas (such as carbon dioxide). A small camera (laparoscope) is then inserted through the incision and into the newly expanded space to help surgeons see where to operate.

While MIS isn't suited for all types of surgery, it has been used for such procedures as appendectomies, hernia repair, gallbladder surgery, hysterectomies, brain tumors, herniated spinal discs, knee and hip replacements, sinus surgery and certain types of heart procedures.

MINIMAL TRAUMA, MAXIMUM BENEFITS

The goal of MIS is to treat patients with the least amount of trauma. In addition to minimized scarring, this type of surgery also:

- **Minimizes bleeding.** Decreased blood loss means a decreased chance of blood transfusion.



- **Lessens pain.** Small incisions reduce trauma to the skin and underlying muscles, meaning less postoperative pain.
- **Reduces infections.** Unlike a traditional operation, where the body is wide open, tissue isn't exposed to the air for extended periods during MIS.
- **Shortens hospital stays.** Reducing bleeding, pain and the chance for infection means you'll get to walk out of the hospital sooner.
- **Hastens recovery.** MIS can dramatically reduce recuperation time—in some cases, by half.

Other minimally invasive procedures

Endoscopic surgery is similar to laparoscopic surgery because it also requires a small camera. However, the equipment (endoscope) passes through an existing opening such as the mouth, anus or urethra.

Robotic laparoscopic surgery uses techniques identical to laparoscopic surgery but allows surgeons to use robotic arms to perform the procedure.

Ablation targets and destroys diseases, such as kidney and prostate cancer, with high-frequency energy, leaving normal tissue nearby intact. It's also been used to correct benign heart arrhythmias.

WAITING TO INHALE

Breathing problems you shouldn't ignore

Take a deep breath." The command sounds easy, but for some people it's not so simple.

Being unable to breathe deeply or feeling short of breath may be a sign of a serious condition.

If you have any of the following symptoms, get them checked out by a physician:

- inability to take a deep breath
- shortness of breath without exertion
- shortness of breath after mild exertion, such as climbing a short flight of stairs
- wheezing
- tightness in the chest
- pain or discomfort when inhaling and exhaling
- a chronic cough or clearing of the throat
- difficulty breathing when you lie down
- a lack of energy
- coughing up blood or mucus

Difficulty breathing shouldn't be taken lightly. Lung disease is the number three killer in the United States.

It takes on many forms, including:

- Asthma, a chronic disease in which the passages that

carry air in and out of your lungs become sore and swollen. Asthma is characterized by wheezing, coughing, chest tightness and trouble speaking.

- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. In COPD, your airways and air sacs lose their shape and become floppy, like a stretched-out rubber band. Coughing up mucus is often a first sign of this disease. COPD is typically caused by cigarette smoking.
- Pneumonia, an inflammation of the lungs, usually caused by an infection. It's normally accompanied by shortness of breath and a cough or a fever.
- Lung cancer, which can take years to develop. If it's diagnosed early, before it spreads, the survival rate is almost 50 percent.

Breathing difficulties can also be a sign of heart disease or a heart disorder, such as congestive heart failure, heart arrhythmia or pulmonary hypertension.

In these or any other case of breathing distress, your physician can help you find the source of the problem with a thorough physical exam.



If you're having trouble catching your breath, it's time to see your doctor.

When cough drops don't do the trick

A chronic cough—one that lasts more than three weeks—may be your body's way of telling you a problem exists. Your cough could be the result of:

- allergies, particularly postnasal drip, which often triggers coughing
- asthma
- heartburn, where acid from your stomach backs up into your throat
- medicines, including beta-blockers for high blood pressure, migraines and glaucoma and ACE inhibitors

Meet your trusted team

When you stay at Martin General Hospital, an entire team of healthcare professionals will be here to meet your needs. Since you may not be familiar with our clinical and nonclinical staff, we want to introduce you to these professionals.

PATIENT-CARE STAFF

Registered nurses (R.N.s) and licensed practical nurses (L.P.N.s) provide specific treatments or medications based on your doctor's orders. They assess your progress and report concerns to your doctor. Nurses comfort you, answer your questions and handle emergencies.

Nursing assistants, or nurse's aides (N.A.s), support nurses. N.A.s will help you bathe, assist you at meal time, change your sheets and take your temperature and blood pressure. They can also pass your questions to a nurse.

Our patient-care team also includes laboratory technicians, radiology technicians, respiratory therapists, dietitians, rehabilitation therapists and others, depending on your condition and the tests your doctor has ordered for you.

BUSINESS OFFICE PROFESSIONALS

Financial professionals help check you into the hospital. The registration staff asks for your personal information, including your name, address, telephone number and Social Security number, as well as information about your employer and insurance.

Patient financial counselors are available to help you with paying your hospital bill, setting up a payment plan or exploring payment programs that may be available to you. They can be contacted at **(252) 809-6124**.

Patient account representatives are team members who bill your insurance company and collect your part of the bill. You'll usually receive at least two bills—one



Learn more!

The team at Martin General Hospital is available to answer your questions and connect you with the person best able to address your needs. For more information, call **(252) 809-6300**.

from the hospital and one from your physician. If you have questions about billing, you can contact the business office at **(252) 809-6124**. Telephone numbers are also listed on each bill. Account representatives can assist you by telephone or mail.



Same-day care, close to home

Outpatient surgery has radically changed the healthcare industry in recent years. Martin General Hospital has kept pace, providing faster, safer and less-invasive surgical procedures that offer a quicker path to recovery.

OUTPATIENT SURGERY

“Outpatient surgery has become a reality because of the use of scopes, from top to bottom,” says Melissa O’Neal, M.D., obstetrician/gynecologist at Roanoke Women’s Healthcare. “Often diagnosis and treatment can be done with one procedure. Laparoscopy—in general and gynecological procedures—has advanced the surgical approach to abdominal and pelvic disease. Arthroscopy is widely used to diagnose and treat bone and joint disorders. Upper and lower flexible endoscopes are used to diagnose and treat stomach, intestinal and colonic conditions. These procedures and many more are done in outpatient surgery.”

A DEDICATED UNIT

A preoperative appointment may be scheduled to educate patients before surgery. “Briefing

patients on medications, what they should or should not do, what time to arrive and what to expect the day of the surgery helps relieve anxiety,” says Bonnie Speller, R.N., operating room manager. Preadmission paperwork, lab tests and a brief medical history form are completed during the pre-op visit, making the day of surgery less complicated. The same team that cares for patients before and after surgery in the dedicated outpatient surgery unit also arranges their discharge plans.

“The concept of outpatient surgery has revolutionized surgical care,” says Todd Tanner, M.D., general surgeon with Tarheel Surgical Specialists. “Without sacrificing quality, we can provide a streamlined process from preparation before surgery to recovery afterward. Less-invasive techniques and advanced anesthesia allow faster recovery from most surgeries. The combination of a dedicated team of healthcare professionals and a dedicated unit make outpatient surgery at Martin General Hospital not only doable, but preferable,” says Dr. Tanner.



Todd Tanner, M.D.
General Surgeon



Melissa O’Neal, M.D.
Obstetrician/Gynecologist

! Trust MGH

For more information about outpatient surgery, call (252) 809-6171.

HEALTHWISE QUIZ

How much do you know about **sleep disorders**?

Take this quiz to find out.

1

Lack of sleep may put you at a higher risk for:

- a. type 2 diabetes
- b. low blood pressure
- c. asthma
- d. gastric ulcers

2

Which of the following changes in your sleep routine may be a result of an underlying heart problem?

- a. waking up during the night to urinate
- b. waking up during the night due to shortness of breath
- c. not being able to fall asleep
- d. both a and b

3

Restoring your body with sleep has been shown to:

- a. improve skin tone
- b. improve red blood-cell count
- c. reduce eye strain
- d. improve reaction time and attention span

4

Women diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea often experience these symptoms:

- a. snoring loudly with periods of gasping or snorting
- b. waking up with a sore throat
- c. waking up with a headache
- d. all of the above

5

The most common treatment for sleep apnea is:

- a. antihistamine medication
- b. surgery
- c. a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) mask worn at night
- d. analgesic medication

ANSWERS: 1. A; 2. D; 3. D; 4. D; 5. C



WOMEN: Is a heart attack in your future?

A heart attack may seem to come out of the blue. Yet your personal risk factors and lifestyle habits may hold clues to your heart's health and what your odds are of suffering from a heart attack.

LOOK FOR THE SIGNS

High blood pressure (140/90 mm Hg and above) and high blood cholesterol (240 mg/dL and above) are significant clues that you may be developing heart blockages in the form of plaque. Being postmenopausal and having diabetes or rheumatoid arthritis can also increase heart attack risk.

Talk with your healthcare provider about what risk factors are significant for you. He or she can help you control your blood pressure and cholesterol levels and may also recommend testing for metabolic syndrome. Recent research shows this condition may be useful for detecting signs of heart disease in women who might appear healthy. The signs of metabolic syndrome include a waist size greater than 35 inches, higher-than-normal levels of triglycerides and glucose, and insufficient levels of HDL, or good cholesterol.

Also, be aware of what a heart attack might feel like for a woman, as some symptoms can differ from those of men. Chest pain or pressure; nausea; vomiting; indigestion; cold sweat; shortness of breath; light-headedness; fatigue; or discomfort in the arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach are all possible signs.

GO HEART SMART

- Aim for a normal weight.
- Exercise for 30 minutes every day.
- Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
- Avoid foods high in saturated or trans fat and curb refined carbohydrates—cookies, white bread, sweet drinks—sometimes referred to as “high-glycemic-index” foods.

Know your numbers

Common lab tests reveal a lot about your health



By Jennifer Neilsen, M.D.
Obstetrics/Gynecology
Roanoke Women's Healthcare

When your physician orders or performs laboratory tests, you may sometimes feel unsettled and concerned. These tests, though, are important tools for managing your health. A few common tests should be performed regularly.

GLUCOSE TESTING

Glucose testing measures the body's sugar level to diagnose diabetes, which occurs when sugar levels become too high. Normal fasting glucose range is less than 100 mg/dL. A fasting range of 100 to 126 indicates glucose intolerance, a pre-diabetic condition. A fasting range greater than 126 mg/dL is consistent with diabetes. Diabetes is associated with many conditions, including blindness, kidney failure, heart attack, stroke and neuropathies (painful nerve conditions).

BLOOD COUNT TEST

A complete blood count test is used as a broad screening check for disorders such as anemia and infections.

URINALYSIS EXAMS

Urinalysis exams are typically conducted with a reagent strip that's dipped into a urine sample. A urinalysis may cover the following:

- pH: measures the amount of acid in urine
- Specific gravity: measures how diluted the urine is with water
- Glucose: measures glucose in the urine, which is typically found in patients with diabetes
- Protein: measures protein in the urine, which may indicate kidney damage, the presence of blood or an infection
- Blood: measures blood in the urine, which may indicate an infection, kidney stones, bleeding from the bladder or a kidney tumor

CHOLESTEROL TESTS

Cholesterol levels should be checked at least once every five years for those over age 20. Low cholesterol levels reduce heart disease and stroke risk. The cholesterol test evaluates low density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol; high density lipoprotein (HDL), or "good" cholesterol; total cholesterol levels; and triglycerides. If cholesterol levels are too high, various treatments—from dietary and lifestyle changes to medication—may be recommended.

If you have questions or concerns about other laboratory tests, consult your physician.

! Make an appointment

To schedule an appointment, call Roanoke Women's Healthcare at (252) 809-6341.

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