

seniorclass

Baystate  Health

ADVANCING CARE. ENHANCING LIVES.



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Virtual Events



In recognition of National Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Month

Reset The Heart: Atrial Fibrillation Treatments

Monday, September 12, 6-7 pm



Amir Lotfi, MD

Atrial Fibrillation is a common condition with a number of treatments including the successful Watchman procedure. Join Dr. Amir Lotfi, chief, division of cardiology, Baystate Cardiology, for a discussion about atrial fibrillation symptoms such as irregular heartbeat, how it is diagnosed and the treatments that include medications, ablation, and the Watchman procedure, to feel better and reduce the risk for stroke. There will be time for questions and answers.

To register

for any of the virtual events visit **BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass** and scroll to the bottom of the page or visit **BaystateHealth.org/Events**.

Questions?

Email Sue.Fontaine@BaystateHealth.org or call 413-794-5200.



Use cellphone camera, and click the pop-up

Missed a Virtual Event?



Watch recorded events anytime at **BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass**.

Baystate Health Senior Class

is a FREE loyalty program dedicated to health and wellness. The program is open to men and women ages 55 and over.

Questions?

Email Sue.Fontaine@BaystateHealth.org or call

Baystate Franklin Medical Center
413-773-2433

Baystate Mary Lane Outpatient Center
413-967-2200

Baystate Medical Center
413-794-5200

Baystate Noble Hospital
413-794-5200

Baystate Wing Hospital
413-967-2200

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Baystate Health

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Baystate Health is a leading not-for-profit health system with the charitable mission of improving the health of the people in our communities every day, with quality and compassion.

Not a member? **Join us!**

Visit **BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass** to receive monthly email updates and the quarterly publication. It's Free!

Already a member and would like to receive the monthly email or need to make changes to your membership, visit **BaystateHealth.org/SeniorClass**

Medicare Made Easy

Two dates to choose from:

Wednesday, September 21, 1-2 pm

Monday, October 31, 10-11 am



Sarah Fernandes

Are you starting to think about retirement and your Medicare options? Join Sarah Fernandes, Manager, Health New England Medicare Advantage, to learn the A, B, C, D's of Medicare. Topics will include: When do I sign up for Medicare? When can I sign up for Medicare? How much will Medicare cost? What are my Medicare Options? What is the difference between Part A, Part B, Part D, Medicare Advantage and Medicare Supplement? And much more.

When To Worry About Breast Lumps

Monday, October 3, 6-7 pm



Jesse Casaubon, MD

Most Breast lumps are not cancer. What are they, and when should I worry? Join Dr. Jesse Casaubon, Baystate Surgical Oncology & Breast Specialists, for a discussion about the many changes that cause breast lumps, when they are cancerous and when they are not, as well as treatment options. There will be time for questions & answers.

Genetic Testing for Hereditary Breast Cancer Risk

Thursday, October 6, 6-7 pm



Alexandra Richards

Genetic testing has been popular for finding family genealogy, but it is much more than that. Today genetic testing can be used to determine if you carry an increased risk of developing cancer. Join Alexandra Richards, genetic counselor, Baystate Health Family Cancer Risk Program, for a discussion about the latest in genetic testing for breast cancer risk, how it works, as well as information on the Family Cancer Risk Program.

The Signs of Breast Cancer

Thursday, October 20, 6-7 pm



Ann Friedrich, MD

What does breast cancer look like and feel like? Should you worry about breast pain? How is breast cancer diagnosed? Join Dr. Ann Friedrich, Baystate Surgical Oncology & Breast Specialists, for a discussion about breasts, and changes to watch for. There will be time for questions & answers.

Treatment For Nerve Pain

Tuesday, October 25, 6-7 pm



Aparajit Naram, MD

Nerves become injured from trauma to the arms, legs, hands or feet, as well as from prior surgeries or amputations causing pain. Targeted muscle reinnervation, a surgical procedure, is a treatment option. Join Dr. Aparajit Naram, plastic surgeon, Baystate Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery, for a discussion about nerve pain, signs of nerve damage, what is targeted muscle reinnervation procedure and how to know if the surgery is right for you. There will be time for questions & answers.





WHY DO MEN DIE YOUNGER THAN WOMEN?

LEARN THE FACTS

Men: If you think you're invincible, think again.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), men in the United States, on average, die 5 years earlier than women and die at higher rates from the three leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer and unintentional injuries.



Spencer Haller, MD

Dr. Spencer Haller of Baystate Medical Practices – Northern Edge Adult and Pediatric Medicine in Springfield, noted there are many different factors for the grim death statistics.

“Some of it has to do with engaging in riskier professions, but this doesn't explain all of it. In general, there's more risk-taking behavior in men, such as more smoking, more drinking, and driving more aggressively. Lower estrogen levels increase the risk of heart disease, so this might be a factor as well. Suicide rates are also higher in men. And, men tend to go to the doctor less. The good news is that we can improve much of this,” he said.

The leading cause of death in men should be a wake-up call

➔ **Focus on Healthy Living Decisions**

“Anything we can do to bring awareness and help people improve their health, men especially is always a good thing,” said Dr. Haller.

While many parents/caregivers today are diligent about keeping their children's well-visits and vaccinations up to date, people don't always continue their regular wellness visits into adulthood. As they reach young adulthood, children usually need to find a new doctor unless they are seeing a family physician who can continue to see them.

➔ **Men's Health Issues Differ With Age**

Men's health issues differ with age. Cancer, except for testicular cancer, and heart disease are rare in young men. Special to this group, however, are serious health problems that are most often found in a lack of safety precautions resulting in motor vehicle and work-related injuries, as well as smoking, excessive drinking and risky behavior. Men's mental health, including issues with anxiety and depression, can occur at all ages.

Dr. Haller noted that he believes establishing healthy routines from age 25 to 45 with the guidance of your doctor is essential to your future health.

“At this stage in a man's life, he has outgrown many childhood illnesses. Testicular cancer is less common, for example, and men are still young for many of the other cancers like prostate and colon cancer. So, it's a really nice time to make sure that you have set up good routines that will keep you healthy throughout life: getting enough sleep, eating right, getting regular physical activity, not drinking too much alcohol, not smoking, and having friends and family you care about.

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- Spencer Haller, MD

➔ **Modify Your Risk Factors**

Middle-aged men need to understand what modifiable risk factors they have for heart disease and reducing those risks, whether it means losing weight, working with their doctor to identify the best exercise for their age and condition, or taking medications to lower their cholesterol or blood pressure. There are more routine screenings that become important as men have more birthdays. Last year doctors began recommending colon cancer screening to begin at age 45. Prostate cancer screening is worth a discussion with your doctor, noted Dr. Haller.

Older men have the same needs as middle-aged men and more. They often have at least one chronic condition that also needs to be managed such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, arthritis, or heart disease. Older men also have more concerns about impaired eyesight and hearing.

There are also guidelines now recommending that individuals between 55 and 80 years old, who are at high risk for lung cancer as a result of heavy smoking (defined as those who have smoked for greater than 30 years at an average of one pack per day), receive an annual low-dose CT lung cancer screening.

➔ **What Else Helps a Man Stay Healthy?**

Staying healthy means staying active at every age. It's a good idea to check with your doctor to help you choose the best exercise for your age and ability.

“I would always recommend doing things that you enjoy. I think it's hard enough to manage all of life's demands without thinking that you are going to schedule in some other activity that you don't even look forward to. If you like to go to the gym, go to the gym. If you prefer hiking, cycling, walking, do that. If you'd rather work on the yard and around the house, great. If you like to golf, try to walk at least the front 9,” said Dr. Haller.

A recommended “maintenance schedule” for men detailing checkup and screening guidelines can be found at menshealthnetwork.org.

Most doctors also recommend that patients create a checklist of questions to bring with them so they won't forget any concerns they many want to discuss with their doctor.

Also, because many men are procrastinators when it comes to their health, they shouldn't wait until arriving at their physician's office to hurriedly write their questions down, but instead give them some real thought beforehand.

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

To make an appointment with Dr. Haller, call 413-794-5412.

To find a primary care physician, call 413-794-5412 or visit BaystateHealth.org/services/PrimaryCare



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MOST LEG CRAMPS ARE HARMLESS, BUT SOME ARE CAUSED BY AN UNDERLYING CONDITION

Leg cramps are a common annoyance that most everyone experiences at some point in their life. Although most muscle cramps are harmless, some may be related to an underlying medical condition known as peripheral arterial disease (PAD), a form of peripheral vascular disease (PVD).

PVD V. PAD

While only one letter separates the abbreviations for these conditions, a great many blood vessels differentiate PVD from PAD. The key thing to understand is that PAD is a form of PVD. Here's how that works:

As its name suggests, peripheral vascular disease affects all types of blood vessels including arteries, veins, and lymphatic vessels. PVD is an "umbrella term" that encompasses several slow, progressive circulatory diseases caused by the narrowing of, blockage in, or spasms in blood vessels.

Meanwhile, as its name suggests, peripheral arterial disease only affects arteries, most often the arteries of the legs. Left untreated, PAD can lead to lack of oxygen to the downstream organ causing limb loss, heart attack, or stroke.



Stuart Blackwood, MD

PAD FACTS AND SYMPTOMS

According to Dr. Stuart Blackwood, vascular surgeon at Baystate Health, "200 million people worldwide have PAD, and 95% of those have no symptoms and are often unaware they have the condition. When symptoms begin to appear, they're often attributed to aging or other things which can complicate and delay diagnosis."

If you have lower limb PAD, symptoms typically occur in your legs and feet. Blackwood explains, "Fatty deposits in the arteries that carry blood to the legs and feet keep oxygen and nutrients from reaching tissue in those areas. While symptoms may appear to come on suddenly, the condition has often been developing for years."

Among the most common symptoms of PAD are:

- Pain in the calf, buttocks, thighs
- Numbness or weakness in the legs
- Hair loss on legs or feet
- Thickening toenails
- Changing skin color on legs or feet (sometimes pale, red or blue)
- Shiny skin on legs or feet
- Slow- or non-healing wounds on feet and legs
- Erectile dysfunction
- Muscles shrinking (atrophy) in legs
- Weak pulse the feet or legs

Blackwood notes, "It's important to realize that any one of these symptoms on their own doesn't necessarily point to PAD. You need to look at the constellation of symptoms to determine what's really contributing to your condition."

A CLOSER LOOK AT LEG CRAMPS AND PAD

The most common symptom of lower-extremity PAD, painful muscle cramps in calf, buttocks, thighs, or hips, is called claudication

"Claudication occurs when your body can't deliver the oxygen needed by your muscles to engage in an activity, most often walking," explains Blackwood. "You can readily identify a PAD cramp from, say, a Charlie horse by the fact it goes away when you stop the activity; often immediately, sometimes after a few minutes. But if you re-engage, the pain will recur. Depending upon the severity of the PAD, the pain may be mildly discomforting or full-on debilitating."

Blackwood notes, "It's important not to ignore cramping pain that repeatedly occurs when walking. The pain is your body sending a warning that something is amiss, and that part of your body isn't receiving enough blood during."

RISK FACTORS FOR PAD

Of the numerous risk factors for PAD (see below), Blackwood emphasizes that smoking is the most important one. In fact, he says, the risk of smokers and former smokers developing PAD is 2.5x higher than it is for non-smokers.

Both men and women are at risk of developing peripheral arterial disease when they have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Smoking
- Age 50+
- Diabetic, especially those with long-term insulin dependence
- Chronic kidney disease
- Experienced a heart attack
- Family history of PVD
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Blood clotting disorder

TREATING PAD

The goal of treating PAD is two-fold:

- 1. Managing symptoms**, such as leg pain, so you can continue with normal physical activities
- 2. Stopping the progression of PAD and PVD** throughout your body to reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke

Blackwood says, “The good news is you may be able to achieve these goals with simple lifestyle changes, especially if it’s caught early.” He adds, “If you smoke, quit. This is the single most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of complications, including limb loss.”

Beyond that, Blackwood says embracing healthy eating habits and being physically active for 20-30 minutes a day can both work to improve your overall circulation and reduce your risk for complications.

“Baystate offers a Supervised Exercise Therapy program for people with PVD,” says Blackwood. “You work one-on-one with a nurse and exercise physiologists for 36 sessions to improve your walking distance and get you back to living a full life. It’s easy to enroll and is just as effective as some surgical interventions but without the risks.” Contact the Baystate Heart & Vascular Program at 412-794-CARE (2273) to learn more.

In some cases, medications for blood pressure control, cholesterol and blood thinners may be prescribed.

In even fewer (4%) and very severe cases, surgery may be needed. Blackwood says, “The goal always is to avoid surgery. This is true for a couple of reasons. First, the long-term outcome of treating PAD with exercise and diet is typically better than, say, a stent. Second, once you have a surgical procedure, you’re more likely to require repeat procedures to address the condition.”

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200 million people worldwide have PAD, and 95% of those have no symptoms and are often unaware they have the condition. When symptoms begin to appear, they’re often attributed to aging or other things which can complicate and delay diagnosis.

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- Stuart Blackwood, MD

For the 4% who become so symptomatic that surgery is required, the most common options are angioplasty, stenting, and, less often, surgical bypass in the affected area.

However, he notes that 98% of PAD patients can successfully live with the condition without surgery. The remaining 2%, who represent the most severe case, typically require amputation of the foot.

THERE’S MORE TO PAD THAN LEG CRAMPS

If you have trouble with your feet or legs, talk to a doctor about PAD. In addition to the pain and potential limb loss related to PAD, people with PAD have an increased risk of coronary artery disease, stroke and heart attack. Early detection is key. Speak to your doctor if you have any concerns about yourself and encourage friends and loved ones exhibiting symptoms to do the same.

Contact the Baystate Heart & Vascular Program at 412-794-CARE (2273) or visit <https://www.baystatehealth.org/services/heart> to learn more.



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TWO TUMORS, TWO CANCERS, AND TWO SURGERIES

Complex surgery at Baystate Medical Center saved Nick Pignatelli's life.

The change in his health was sudden. He told his wife Maryellen that he was feeling extremely ill, and they went to Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield. Tests showed that Nick had two large tumors, one in his small intestine and the other in his colon. He was bleeding in his gastrointestinal (digestive) tract. His doctors sent him immediately to receive life-saving care at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield.



Nicolas Jabbour, MD



Ziad Kutayli, MD



Armen Asik, MD

EXCEPTIONAL SURGICAL CARE

“When Nick was admitted he needed immediate surgery,” recalls Dr. Nicolas Jabbour, chair of the department of surgery at Baystate Medical Center. “His case was complex because there were two tumors representing two separate cancers, in two different areas, and they were bleeding.”

Doctors needed a plan to surgically treat both tumors. Dr. Jabbour would do a Whipple procedure (a complex procedure to remove the tumor from the small intestine and reconnect organs to allow Nick to digest food normally) and Dr. Ziad Kutayli, colorectal surgeon, would perform bowel surgery to remove the tumor from the colon and complete a colon resection with a temporary ileostomy (a surgical opening in the abdominal wall to release stool). “We did both of these major surgeries, at the same time,” says Dr. Kutayli.

SPECIALIZED TEAMWORK

Due to the bleeding Nick was experiencing prior to surgery and the complexity of the operation, caregivers needed to prepare for every contingency and critical team members needed to be mobilized.

Baystate Medical Center has specialists in-house who were able to orchestrate Nick's complex care including specialists

in cancer surgery, colon and rectal surgery, gastroenterology, pathology to study the tumors, radiology to provide a map of all the major blood vessels around the tumors, and anesthesia to safely manage Nick's breathing and heart rate during his nine hour surgery.

RECOVERING AFTER SURGERY

After surgery, Nick relied on specialized nurses to care for his ileostomy. Dedicated enterostomal therapy nurses (an RN with specialized training in treating patients with ostomies) were there to teach him how to care for it. Nick was able to start his chemotherapy quickly after the operation, allowing for the best outcome. He received chemotherapy and care under the direction of medical oncologist Dr. Armen Asik from the Baystate Regional Cancer Program at the D'Amour Center for Cancer Care, in order to increase his chances of a cure. After his course of treatment, he returned to Baystate Medical Center for his final procedure to close the ileostomy.

LYNCH SYNDROME

“Because of the number of tumors and where they were located, we asked Nick about his family history of cancer,” says Dr. Kutayli.



“

One of our strengths at Baystate is the comprehensive multidisciplinary care we provide. We have a whole system in place for communication among surgeons, pathologists, oncologists, and radiologists, and we are able to deliver this high level of care every day to people who need it in our community.

”

- Ziad Kutayli, MD

Genetic tests conducted in the Pathology department at Baystate Medical Center confirmed that Nick has Lynch syndrome, a genetic predisposition causing a higher risk of certain types of cancer.

“With this identified, his family can now have genetic testing so they would know if they had Lynch syndrome and needed proactive, preventive testing to catch and treat cancers at their earliest stage,” says Dr. Kutayli. Nick will continue to follow-up with his doctors for screening of Lynch related cancers.

"THEY SAVED MY LIFE"

Nick’s surgery was successful. Doctors determined that there were no cancer cells in the margins, which meant no cancer cells at the outer edge of the tissue removed. They expect him to return to his quality of life after recovery, and he will continue to receive preventative testing.

As for the care he received at Baystate Medical Center, Nick says “I couldn’t have gotten better care. They saved my life. Dr. Jabbour, Dr. Kutayli, Dr. Asik, the nurses, everyone – they are true experts and they showed such compassion.”

Nick says of Dr. Jabbour, “I think he is a genius. When I came to Baystate for treatment with another provider, he would

make sure he saw me when I was here. He calmed me with his demeanor. He told me step by step what was going to happen and how I was going to feel and that was reassuring.”

“Our care of Nick highlights our expertise in handling complex medical cases,” says Dr. Kutayli. “One of our strengths at Baystate is the comprehensive multidisciplinary care we provide. We have a whole system in place for communication among surgeons, pathologists, oncologists, and radiologists, and we are able to deliver this high level of care every day to people who need it in our community.”

LEARN MORE ABOUT ADVANCED SURGICAL CARE AT BAYSTATE HEALTH

At Baystate Health, we take pride in providing high quality and safe care. Our surgeons use the latest minimally invasive procedures and robot-assisted techniques, and offer a wide range of both general and specialty surgical care. Learn more about our specialties at <https://www.baystatehealth.org/services/surgery>.



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HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PFIZER'S NEW PAXLOVID ANTIVIRAL PILL

NOW AVAILABLE AT MOST PHARMACIES LOCALLY

As more people continue to test positive for COVID-19 and its variants locally and across the country, Pfizer's Paxlovid pill, introduced on the market in December 2021, is fast becoming the treatment of choice, which some have referred to as the antiviral pill offering hope for "zero COVID deaths."

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR PAXLOVID?

Paxlovid – which was recently prescribed to Vice President Kamala Harris when she was diagnosed with COVID-19 – is an investigational oral medicine used to treat mild-to-moderate COVID-19 in adults and children 12 years of age and older weighing at least 88 pounds, who have tested positive for the virus and are at high risk for progression to severe COVID-19, including hospitalization or death.



Armando Paez, MD

"There was some confusion about which patients were eligible to receive Paxlovid when it first became available, and patients had difficulty finding pharmacies which could fill their prescriptions. However, there are now state and federal campaigns aimed at both the public and prescribers to raise awareness and improve access to the drug, which is now readily available at most pharmacies," said Dr. Armando Paez, chief, Infectious Disease Division, Baystate Health.

Massachusetts residents can find out if they are eligible for Paxlovid via a telehealth visit through Mass.Gov. If you are eligible, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts will arrange for pickup at your local pharmacy or free overnight delivery. Visit [mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov) to learn more and set up a telehealth visit.

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It is readily accessible in many retail pharmacies and more convenient than others available and equally effective outpatient therapies.

”

- Armando Paez, MD

WHAT IS PAXLOVID AND IS IT EFFECTIVE?

Several factors make Paxlovid such a welcome addition to a growing list of treatments in battling the deadly disease, which has now taken more than 1 million American lives.

“Paxlovid is an oral combination medication consisting of three pills taken twice a day at home for five days. This should be started within 5 days of the start of COVID-19 symptoms by patients who have risk factors for severe infection. It is readily accessible in many retail pharmacies and more convenient than others available and equally effective outpatient therapies such as Remdesivir or Bebtelovimab (monoclonal antibody), which are given by infusion,” said Dr. Paez, who noted Pfizer also has stated that it is effective against the predominantly circulating variant.

“The New England Journal of Medicine reported in February that the clinical trial of Paxlovid resulted in an 89% reduction in the risk of hospitalization and death,” he added.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

According to Pfizer, possible side effects of Paxlovid include allergic reactions, liver problems, resistance to HIV medicines, altered sense of taste, diarrhea, high blood pressure, and muscle aches. There may be significant interactions with several common medications taken concurrently, and the dose needs to be adjusted in those with reduced kidney function which should be discussed with your primary care provider before taking this drug.

Once again, the key messages to remember about Paxlovid are:

- The drug should be taken by individuals who have mild to moderate COVID-19 infection and have risk factors for severe illness.
- It should be taken within 5 days of symptoms.
- It is highly effective against the predominantly circulating variant.
- The drug will need a prescription but is available at many retail pharmacies.

If you think you are having COVID-19 symptoms, even if they are mild, take a home-based test or go for a lab test. If you qualify, you should not wait until you get sicker before asking your doctor to prescribe Paxlovid.

Do you need a primary care provider?

Call 413-794-5412 or visit [BaystateHealth.org/services/PrimaryCare](https://www.baystatehealth.org/services/PrimaryCare).



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“

Since I've gotten my estate plans in order, I'm liberated thinking about it. I feel so good about this legacy gift. I am excited to be able to contribute to the greater good. It's all about the greater good.

”

- Donna Feng, Blood Donor & Legacy Society Member

Want to be part of something larger than yourself?

Join with others in the community to create a legacy gift to support the area of Baystate Health that matters most to you. By creating a gift in your will, trust, or through a beneficiary designation, you, too, can make a joyful difference.

We're here to help!

For a free **Will Guide** or to explore ideas, reach out to Kylie Johnson at 413-794-7789 or Kylie.Johnson@BaystateHealth.org. All inquiries are confidential. www.PlanMyGift.BaystateHealth.org



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