

LOWELL GENERAL HOSPITAL

for your health

FALL 2005 • *Your resource for healthy living*

FIVE-STAR RATING:
What It Means for You

THE SURGERY CENTER
Offers Choice for Day Surgery

CHILDHOOD OBESITY:
A Weighty Problem

FREEDOM FROM SMOKING
A Program that Works

We hope
you like our
new look!

www.lowellgeneral.org

Dear Friends,



As your community hospital, we challenge ourselves every day to find new and better ways to serve you with the highest level of service, expertise,

and integrity. And it is certainly rewarding when those efforts are recognized. As you will read in this issue, for the fourth year in a row, The Birthplace at Lowell General Hospital has earned a perfect five-star rating, ranking us in the *top 5 percent of maternity centers in the nation*.

While it is incredibly gratifying to earn this level of distinction, it is only one way we measure our success. We also measure success by the health of the residents of our community. That's why we are very excited to announce a series of major initiatives to improve the health of Greater Lowell over the next five years. We have targeted several key areas—including heart disease, smoking, colorectal and breast cancers, diabetes, and infant mortality—and have pledged our energy and resources to reduce the incidence of death and disease in those areas.

These initiatives are ambitious, but we know that by working closely with community leaders and our affiliates—Lowell Community Health Center and Visiting Nurse Association of Greater Lowell—we can achieve these goals to make Greater Lowell a healthier place to live and work.

In good health,

NORMAND E. DESCHENE
PRESIDENT AND CEO
LOWELL GENERAL HOSPITAL

Give Your Baby a Five-Star Be



Debby Asselin, RN, is one of the highly trained Special Care Nurses who provide around-the-clock care to our tiniest patients.

You want only the best for your family. You research every item before you buy and choose only the highest-rated goods and services. So why would you do anything less when it comes to finding the best hospital to deliver your baby?

Fortunately, HealthGrades has made that easy for you. For the fourth year in a row, HealthGrades—the nation's health quality experts—have ranked The Birthplace at Lowell General Hospital *among the top 5 percent of maternity hospitals in the nation*. HealthGrades awarded Lowell General a perfect five-star rating for clinical excellence, earning The Birthplace the coveted “Maternity Care Excellence Award”—awarded to only three other hospitals in the entire state of Massachusetts.

For Sheryl MacFadgen, of Tyngsboro, that meant peace of mind. As an expectant mom older than age 35 with a history of health problems, Sheryl needed a hospital prepared to handle a potentially difficult pregnancy and delivery. The five-star rating told her everything she needed to know about Lowell General: ■ the area's lowest complication rates, giving her and her baby a better opportunity for a safe, healthy delivery ■ highly trained maternal fetal specialists, who are specialists for

ginning

women at high risk for difficult pregnancies

■ a Level II Special Care Nursery, which provides specialized care to babies born early, very sick, or underdeveloped.

“If problems ever did come up, the Special Care Nursery and neonatal experts are right there, ready to handle the situation,” Sheryl says. “That really gives a new mom peace of mind.”

Sheryl and her husband Stuart had already experienced the incredible care at Lowell General with the birth of their two older children, Lindsay, 8, and Sam, 5. “I remember asking my friends about maternity hospitals, and everyone who had been to Lowell General had a very positive experience,” she says. “The nurses treat you like family. I felt like I had a sister or second mother right by my side. They were wonderful.”

In fact, when Sheryl delivered their third child in July, the nurse who had been with her throughout her labor stayed an hour after her shift had ended—just so she could be there for the birth. Sheryl says her nurse seemed as excited as she was when little Charlie was born—8 pounds, 10 ounces of healthy baby boy.



WHAT MAKES THE BIRTHPLACE A FIVE-STAR MATERNITY CENTER?

HealthGrades independently analyzed hospitals nationwide, using methods developed by a team of board-certified physicians, including experts in obstetrics, neonatology, family practice, and internal medicine. They objectively graded hospital performance and quality on criteria including complication rates (problems during or after birth), volume of deliveries, and the presence of a neonatal intensive care unit.

“I’ve had wonderful experiences at Lowell General Hospital,” says Sheryl MacFadgen. “I wouldn’t have had my babies anywhere else.”

“It is very important for women and their families to be aware of this information and the outstanding clinical quality ratings earned by Lowell General Hospital for maternity care,” says Sarah Loughran, HealthGrades Executive Vice President. “Women can use this information to make informed decisions regarding where to receive health care.”

For Sheryl MacFadgen, the five-star rating gave her peace of mind that she had found absolutely the best place for her son’s birth. ●

LOOKING FOR A DOCTOR FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY? CALL OUR PHYSICIAN REFERRAL LINE AT 1-877-LGH-WELL (1-877-544-9355) OR VISIT WWW.LOWELLGENERAL.ORG.

Battling Childhood Obesity: Keeping Your Kids Trim and Healthy

As children grow out of the toddler years, excess weight can become a serious concern—perhaps putting them at risk for some very grown-up health problems.

At your child's regular checkups, the doctor will look at body mass index (BMI) and growth charts to determine if your child is within healthy weight limits. Children are usually considered overweight if their BMI is at or above the 85th percentile, and clinically obese if their BMI is at the 95th percentile or above. You also can make your own diagnosis simply by looking around the playground, says Tricia Vasco, MD, a family practitioner with Chelmsford Family Practice. "Look at your child compared to other children in their age group," she says. "Are they within the norm, or are they looking a little different than their classmates?"

NO LAUGHING MATTER

If your child is overweight, it's important for you to address the problem, says Dr. Vasco. That's because overweight kids are at risk for developing typically adult health problems, including type 2 diabetes, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

Plus, unlike their slimmer peers, they're much more likely to develop serious health problems down the road, such as heart disease.

EATING RIGHT

Even if your child is overweight, you shouldn't spend too much time counting or restricting calories, says Kelly Balcourt, RD, LDN, a registered dietitian at Lowell General Hospital. Instead, focus on providing nutritious meals and snacks and teaching healthy food choices. That means:

- cutting out snacks with little nutritional value, like potato chips
- offering whole-grain crackers,

low-fat cheese, yogurt, fruits, and vegetables

- limiting soda and sugary fruit drinks and giving them skim milk or water instead.

Balcourt also suggests that instead of offering food as a reward, you can offer a visit to a favorite place.

GET THEM MOVING

Doctors recommend children exercise 60 minutes a day most days of the week, but that doesn't necessarily mean 60 minutes in organized sports. "Have your kids rake leaves, or send them on a treasure hunt around the house and yard," Balcourt suggests.

"Kids who are outside all day aren't sitting around eating potato chips," says Dr. Vasco. "It's important to get your kids outside and running around instead of sitting inside watching television and playing video games." ●



Family activities, such as kicking a ball around the park, can contribute to the 60 minutes of daily physical activity that's recommended for children.

DR. TRICIA VASCO SPECIALIZES IN FAMILY MEDICINE WITH OBSTETRICS. SHE IS ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS AND MAY BE REACHED AT CHELMSFORD FAMILY PRACTICE AT 978-251-3159.

The Skinny on Childhood Obesity

Just how serious a problem is childhood obesity? Consider these facts and figures:

- Over the past three decades, the childhood obesity rate has more than tripled.
- Today, about 16 percent of children and teens are overweight and another 30 percent are at risk for becoming overweight.
- Children with a high BMI are more likely to have enlarged hearts, putting them at risk for heart disease later in life.
- According to one study, 60 percent of obese children have at least one heart disease risk factor, such as high cholesterol or blood pressure, and 25 percent have two or more risk factors.
- Type 2 diabetes, previously seen mostly in adults, is increasingly common among children. Experts believe childhood obesity is the cause.
- Overweight children are more likely to develop metabolic syndrome, which is really a group of health problems—including high blood sugar, high blood pressure, and low levels of "good" cholesterol—that put kids at risk for diabetes and heart disease.



New Physicians

Lowell General Hospital welcomes these new physicians to its outstanding medical staff.

Rebecca Shore, MD



—General Surgery

Dr. Rebecca Shore completed her medical degree and surgical residency at University of Massachusetts Medical Center in

Worcester. In addition, she completed a fellowship in minimally invasive and bariatric surgery at Tufts—New England Medical Center in Boston.

Dr. Shore may be reached at Lowell Surgical Associates, 33 Bartlett Street, in Lowell, at **978-452-5050**.

Shilpa Rahangdale, MD



—Pulmonology

Dr. Shilpa Rahangdale completed her medical degree at University of Michigan Medical School. At Boston University Medical Center, Dr.

Rahangdale completed her internship and residency in internal medicine, as well as a fellowship in pulmonary and critical care.

Dr. Rahangdale joins Lung Specialists of the Merrimack Valley, 275 Varnum Avenue, in Lowell. She may be reached at **978-934-9220**.

Vijay Nayak, MD



—Otolaryngology (Ear, Nose, and Throat)

A graduate of Albany Medical College in New York, Dr. Vijay Nayak completed his internship in general surgery at

Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital. He completed his residency in otolaryngology—head and neck surgery—through Harvard Medical School's combined program.

Dr. Nayak may be reached at Mass ENT Associates, 3 Meeting House Road, in Chelmsford, at **978-256-5557**.

Win Travassos, MD



—Gastroenterology

Dr. Win Travassos completed his medical degree at New York's Cornell University Medical College. He continued on to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in

Boston, where he completed an internship and residency in internal medicine, as well as a fellowship in gastroenterology.

Dr. Travassos joins the practice of Digestive Health Specialists, 33 Bartlett Street, Suite 505, in Lowell, and may be reached at **978-454-9811**.

LGH Online Express Registration:

NEW CONVENIENCE FOR YOU!



Quick and convenient, Lowell General's Online Express Registration makes pre-registering for your scheduled hospital appointment as easy as surfing the web.

Avoid lines and lessen wait times. LGH Online Express Registration is the easiest way yet to pre-register for a variety of tests including X-rays, mammograms, ultra sounds, CT scans, and routine lab testing.

To use LGH Online Express Registration, visit **www.lowellgeneral.org/expressregistration** at least 24 hours before your scheduled appointment or test day. Just have your insurance card, referral form, and physician and emergency contact information handy while you fill in the easy-to-navigate online pre-registration pages. In just minutes, you will be pre-registered for your test. That's it. No hassles. Now you can go directly to the appropriate department and check in—because you are already registered.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON LGH ONLINE EXPRESS REGISTRATION OR TO PRE-REGISTER, VISIT WWW.LOWELLGENERAL.ORG/EXPRESSREGISTRATION. TO PRE-REGISTER BY PHONE, CALL **978-937-6500.**

Lowell General Hospital offers a network of the area's best, brightest, and most highly trained physicians. From primary care to dozens of specialties, you'll find doctors with expertise, training, and experience from some of the country's most prestigious medical institutions. More than 400 independent physicians make up the medical staff at Lowell General Hospital. To find a doctor who's right for you, call our FREE Physician Referral Line at **1-877-LGH-WELL (1-877-544-9355)** or meet our physicians online at **www.lowellgeneral.org**.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FALL 2005

Lowell General Hospital Support Groups

Lowell General Hospital offers many support groups that provide support and education to members of the community. For more information on the following support groups, call **1-877-LGH-WELL (1-877-544-9355)**.

- **New Mothers Support Group**
- **Down Syndrome Support Group**
- **Arthritis Support Group**
- **Perinatal Loss Support Group**
Call **978-937-6324**

Cancer Support Groups

The Cancer Center at Lowell General Hospital provides many cancer support groups to provide support and education to cancer patients, their families, and friends. For a complete listing and descriptions of all Cancer Center support groups, visit **www.lowellgeneral.org**. Unless noted, you may register for all Cancer Center support groups by calling **978-937-6142**.

Registration is required for all classes. Unless noted, you may register by calling **1-877-LGH-WELL (1-877-544-9355)**.

WELLNESS PROGRAMS

■ CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION

Lowell General Hospital invites you to participate in classes to give you a rewarding childbirth experience and help the entire family prepare for the birth of your newest family member. Lowell General offers **Prepared Childbirth** over six weeks or an accelerated one-day session; a **Refresher** class designed for parents who have previously had a baby; **Hypnobirthing** class; and a **Breastfeeding** class. *Please register early for all childbirth classes as many reach maximum enrollment several months before they begin.*

■ PRENATAL YOGA

This seven-week prenatal yoga class will utilize stretching, modified yoga postures, breathing, and relaxation techniques to help honor and support the body during pregnancy and the birthing process. Medical permission is recommended for this class. Women should be in their second or third trimester. Class is for expectant mothers only. Fee: \$70. *Meets seven Monday evenings, November 7 to December 19, 5:45 to 7 p.m.*

■ INFANT MASSAGE

Parents learn special strokes and moves to soothe and stimulate babies ages 4 weeks to 6 months in a nurturing, bonding experience. Fee: \$70 (includes

two sessions and instruction book). Classes begin this fall. Call for upcoming dates.

■ SIBLING CLASS

This class provides children, ages 3 to 8, with the opportunity to explore their feelings concerning the arrival of a new baby. Children learn how to hold and diaper the infant and, together with their parents, tour The Birthplace to see where their new baby sister or brother will be born. Fee: \$20. *Meets one Tuesday, November 8, December 13, or February 14, 3:45 to 4:45 p.m.*

■ BABY-SITTING BASICS

Designed to help develop baby-sitting skills for boys and girls age 10 and older. Topics include: basic safety issues, first aid, growth and development, baby-sitter activities, bottle-feeding, bath time and bedtime, care and handling of infants, and more. Fee: \$30. *Meets one Saturday, November 12, January 21, or February 18; 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

COMPLEMENTARY CARE

Lowell General Hospital offers Complementary Care therapies including **Tai Chi, Guided Imagery, Meditation, Therapeutic Massage, and Yoga** to our Cancer Center patients. Call Carole Legro, MA, RNC, at **978-937-6396** for more information, to schedule an appointment, or to register.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

KEYS TO SURVIVORSHIP: EMPOWERING CANCER SURVIVORS THROUGH EDUCATION

This free conference is perfect for cancer patients and their families, friends, and caregivers, or for anyone touched by cancer. Topics include: strategies for self-empowerment, complementary and alternative therapies, caregiver concerns, and management of treatment side effects. Cosponsored by MA Chapter of the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Ortho Biotech, and

The Cancer Center at Lowell General Hospital. To register for this FREE program, call **978-937-6393**. *Saturday, October 22, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., LGH Clark Auditorium*

CAREGIVERS' AWARENESS DAY ART EXHIBIT AND HIGH TEA

November is National Family Caregivers month, recognizing the value of caregivers. There are 12 to 25 million unpaid caregivers helping loved ones across the nation and the

numbers continue to grow. Join us for a FREE "High Tea" and a touching multimedia art exhibit entitled "Next of Kin," dedicated to these caring and compassionate individuals. To register for this FREE program, call **978-937-6393**. *Sunday, November 13, 1 to 4 p.m., LGH Clark Auditorium*

FREEDOM FROM SMOKING

A four-week program starting November 28. See page 8 for more information.

LGH Offers Choice for Day Surgery

The Surgery Center at Drum Hill offers patients the total experience for almost every day surgery—from orthopedic repairs to biopsies to liposuction.

When Maureen Olson of Chelmsford learned that she needed surgery, she was naturally a little apprehensive. Fortunately, her doctor scheduled her surgery at The Surgery Center at Drum Hill.

“I was really amazed at how different it was than being at a hospital,” Maureen says. “There’s just something less stressful about the environment at The Surgery Center. I was so much more relaxed about my surgery.”

She is not alone. The Surgery Center—an outpatient center in Chelmsford—has become the surgical center of preference for many of the area’s top surgeons.

“My patients just love it here—and so do I,” says Nonnie-Marie Estella, MD, FACOG, Chief of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Lowell General Hospital. “It has a very warm atmosphere and the staff goes above and beyond to cater to the needs of every doctor and every patient.”

DOING ONE THING, AND DOING IT WELL

Surgeons at The Surgery Center use state-of-the-art equipment to perform procedures using minimally invasive techniques—which means that patients spend less time in actual surgery and less time in recovery. Nearly every type of day surgery is performed at The Surgery Center, including a range of orthopedic, plastic, gynecological, and general surgeries, from joint repairs to biopsies to liposuction.

“At The Surgery Center, outpatient



Maureen Olson, pictured with Renee Clancy, RN, Clinical Manager, found her surgery less stressful because of the comfortable setting at The Surgery Center at Drum Hill.

procedures are all we do,” says John A. Pizzuto, DPM, Chief of Podiatry. “The staff is very efficient and very respectful of the patients’ time. Usually my patients are in and out in just a few hours.”

For many patients, one of the biggest benefits of The Surgery Center is the individual attention they receive from their doctors and nurses.

“With a smaller staff and facility, our patients receive a lot of personal attention,” says Renee Clancy, RN, Clinical Manager of The Surgery Center. “It’s also very quiet and private, which is a benefit for patients who want to have their surgery done as discreetly as possible.”

EXTRA CONVENIENCE

The Surgery Center offers convenience prior to surgery as well. Every patient must go through a pre-screening process that can typically be conducted over the phone, eliminating the extra trip. An onsite Patient Services Center offers pre-surgery X-rays or lab work done on a walk-in basis. And because it’s located in North Chelmsford right off Route 3 and Interstate 495, The Surgery Center is easy to get to.

Comfort. Convenience. Compassion. The Surgery Center at Drum Hill. ●



YOU HAVE A CHOICE

Lowell General is pleased to be the only community hospital in the area to offer patients a choice for day surgery. If you would like to learn more about The Surgery Center, please ask your doctor, or call us directly at 978-275-1300.

Be a Quitter: Your Lungs Will Thank You

About half a million Americans die each year as a direct result of inhaling tobacco smoke.

We all know that smoking is bad for your health, but did you know that being a smoker more than doubles your risk of heart disease and stroke? It causes 87 percent of deaths from lung cancer and results in as many as nine out of 10 deaths from a condition called chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.

COPD, an incurable disease, is the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. "Unlike heart disease, cancer, and stroke, which have all decreased in mortality, the mortality rates for COPD continue to rise," warns Dr. Joseph W. Walek, a pulmonologist with Lung Specialists of the Merrimack Valley.

Dr. Walek, who practices pulmonary and critical care medicine, explains that the lung function, like every other organ in the body, normally declines with age. "Lung function can be compared to an elastic band. Everybody's lung function declines with age, similar to elastic losing its 'snap.'" However, he said, smokers suffer a much steeper rate of decline of lung function compared to nonsmokers. Smoking also inflames the airways and can lead to chronic mucus production with airway obstruction.

THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF QUITTING

But, Dr. Walek points out, "Quitting smoking immediately decreases the rate of lung deterioration." And that's not all:

- The minute you quit, your heart and circulation also will begin to improve.
- Within months after quitting, it should feel easier to breathe.
- A year after quitting, your risk for stroke, cancer, and lung disease will begin to drop.
- By one year, your risk for developing heart disease will shrink to half of what it was.
- Within approximately 10 years of quitting, your risk of cancer will return to that of a nonsmoker.

WHY IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

Dr. Walek says it's never too late to quit, and a recent study backs him up. The Lung Health Study followed more than 5,800 smokers ages 35 to 60 who had mild or moderate airway blockage at the beginning of the study. After 14½ years, successful quitters

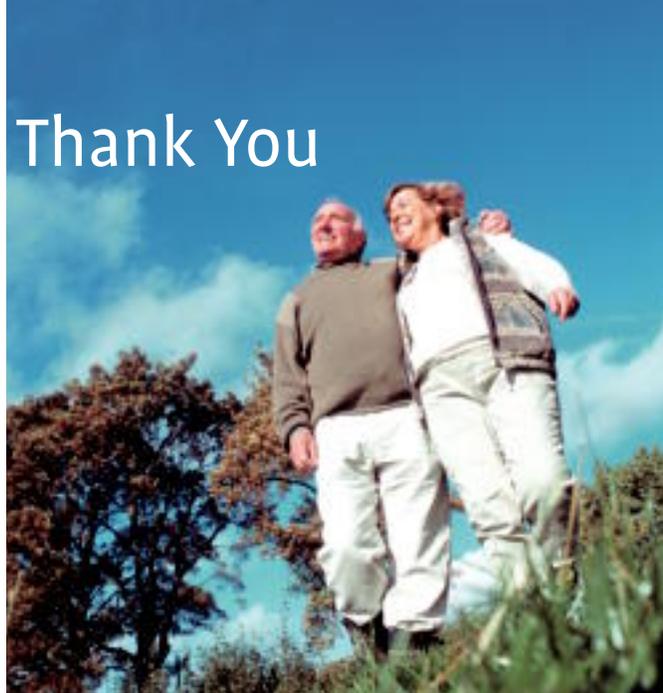


FREEDOM FROM SMOKING

Declare your independence from smoking forever! *Freedom from Smoking* is a "quit-smoking program," sponsored by Lowell General Hospital's TeamWalk for CancerCare in partnership with the American Lung Association. Targeted to adults age 19 and older, this four-week program will give you the tools you need to end your dependence on smoking and improve your health and well-being.

FREEDOM FROM SMOKING

Start date: Monday, November 28 (four-week program)
For more information or to register, call 978-937-6393.



Within months after quitting, a former smoker will find it easier to breathe in fresh air.

were much less likely than continuing smokers to have died of heart disease, cardiovascular disease, or lung cancer.

If you agree that now is a great time to quit smoking, contact your physician, call the MA Department of Public Health's Quitworks, or join Lowell General Hospital's *Freedom from Smoking* Program. ●

NEED A DOCTOR? CALL OUR PHYSICIAN REFERRAL LINE AT 1-877-LGH-WELL (1-877-544-9355) OR VISIT WWW.LOWELLGENERAL.ORG.

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