



CalvertHealth

The Weight is Over

Bariatric surgery
helping patients
create a
brighter future
for themselves.

See story page 10



A Message from the President

In This Issue



Facing Forward Together

Even as we continue to navigate the unprecedented challenges created by the pandemic, we continue to face forward and plan for the future – from partnering with Sheppard Pratt Health to provide expanded behavioral health services to creating a bariatric surgery program that takes direct aim at the widespread obesity in our county and its toll in driving up the rates of heart disease, stroke and diabetes locally (*see story page 10*).

It's been more than 660 days since the team at CalvertHealth began caring for patients with COVID. Now, more than ever, our healthcare workers need your support. Please exercise patience and kindness and know that our care teams are doing everything in their power to keep up with the extremely high demand. I want to reaffirm to our readers CalvertHealth Medical Center is safe, ready and waiting to care for you and your loved ones.

Being your community hospital means we look out for you – from constantly improving our quality and safety to investing in programs and services important to those we serve. Last year, we started a multidisciplinary breast cancer clinic where patients can see multiple providers in just one visit; alleviating anxiety and added travel. Giving local residents access to advanced surgical options has been another big push for us.

We have gifted hands at our surgery center – some of the best and the brightest. Our goal is to invest in the resources they need to do the best for our community (*see story page 16*). I am so proud of all our team has accomplished in the midst of this pandemic. They have worked tirelessly to deliver quality health care in these extraordinary times.

I am honored to stand by their side - facing forward together.

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El Centro Médico de CalvertHealth no discrimina con respecto a admisiones de pacientes, asignaciones de habitaciones, servicios al paciente o empleo sobre la base de raza, color, origen nacional, religión, discapacidad, edad, sexo, incapacidad, identificación de género o sexual orientación.

Trung tâm Y tế CalvertHealth không phân biệt đối xử về việc nhập viện của bệnh nhân, phân công tại phòng, dịch vụ bệnh nhân hoặc việc làm dựa trên chủng tộc, màu da, nguồn gốc quốc gia, tôn giáo, khuyết tật, tuổi, giới tính, khuyết tật, nhận dạng giới tính hay huynh hưởng tình dục.

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The power of community

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CalvertHealth is pleased to announce the addition of the Metabolic & Bariatric Surgery Program. See story page 10.

Colorectal Cancer Screening Age Lowered

Following guidelines can greatly reduce your risk

With colorectal cancer cases on the rise among young people, the screening guidelines were recently lowered to age 45, rather than the previous 50 years of age.

In 2020, 12 percent of colorectal cancer cases in the U.S. were in individuals under the age of 50. It claimed the life of Chadwick Boseman, star of the film “Black Panther,” at the age of 43. African Americans are 20 percent more likely to get colorectal cancer and about 40 percent more likely to die from it than most other racial/ethnic groups, according to the American Cancer Society.

Colorectal cancer is the second most common cause of cancer deaths in men and women combined and was expected to cause nearly 53,000 deaths in 2021 (American Cancer Society). Yet, these deaths are highly preventable with early detection.

The most recent Community Health Needs Assessment (2020) shows colorectal cancer incidence rate (2012-2016) for Calvert was higher than state and national averages. It is the fourth most common cancer among CalvertHealth patients.

The good news is the death rate from colorectal cancer is dropping in large part due to early detection resulting from removal of polyps during screenings before they can develop into cancers.

Dr. Bilal Ahmed said there are more than 200,000 cases of colorectal cancer each year and the stage in which the cancer is identified determines the prognosis, success, and need for chemotherapy. If the cancer is found in the precancerous stage or the earliest stage, the chances of success are high.

“It’s very important to get the screening done and diagnose it early,” Dr. Ahmed said. Community members are urged not to delay colorectal screenings, even during the pandemic.

The American Cancer Society recommends people at average risk of colorectal cancer begin regular screenings



Colonoscopies not only detect disease, but prevent cancer because precancerous polyps can be removed during the procedure.

at age 45 and continue through the age of 75. For those ages 76 through 85, screening decisions are based on prior screening history, overall health, life expectancy, and personal preference.

Individuals may often delay colorectal cancer screenings that involve colonoscopies because of the preparation involved. There’s also a population of older patients who believe they don’t need it anymore. According to Dr. Ahmed, “It’s always important to have that conversation with your own primary care provider before making a decision regarding delaying or foregoing screening.”

Colorectal screenings require a patient to fast and take medications to clear the colon. Then, under sedation, a doctor uses a camera to detect the presence of polyps and to remove them, if applicable. “Early detection truly does save lives,” said Dr. Ahmed. In many instances, polyps removed during the colonoscopy or in a subsequent procedure means that no further treatment, such as chemotherapy or other treatment, is needed.

While most insurance companies will cover the cost of the screening from age 45, those who are underinsured or not insured may be able to take advantage of the Calvert County Health Department’s no cost screening program. See below for more information.

The Calvert County Health Department has grant funding to provide screenings at no-cost to qualifying individuals. You may qualify if you are a Calvert County resident, 45 or older, experiencing symptoms or have a family history; younger than 45 if you have a family or personal history of colorectal cancer or a personal history of Crohn’s disease or ulcerative colitis; uninsured or under-insured; or meet income guidelines. Call 410.535.5400 x343 to see if you are eligible.

Local Pediatricians Address Parents' Concerns About COVID Vaccines for Kids



After and leading up to the Food and Drug Administration's approval of the COVID-19 vaccination for children under 12 years old last fall, some parents were excited, while others were concerned. Two Calvert pediatricians, **Dr. Bethany God** and **Dr. Monica Mehta** address some of the common concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine and children.

Q *What are the risks and benefits of COVID vaccination for children?*

Dr. God: The risks are the same as adults for short-term side effects. The vast majority of people only have a sore arm. That's the same as the placebo. Mild side effects the first few days are the biggest risks. Myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) happens to a very small percentage of adolescents and young men and has been mild. Myocarditis is 30 times more likely if you were to get COVID.

Dr. Mehta: I keep hearing COVID doesn't affect children but that's simply not true. Pediatric COVID cases have been surging over the past few months, and there have been over 600 pediatric deaths from COVID in the U.S. While the risk of death from COVID is still relatively low, no parent should lose their child from something that can be prevented with a vaccine. Everything in life has a risk-benefit ratio. When it comes to the COVID vaccine, the benefit is huge: you are not only protecting yourself from severe disease, but also protecting your family and community by helping stop the spread of this deadly virus. Vaccines continue to reduce your risk of catching COVID. Vaccines are still highly effective at preventing hospitalization and death from COVID.

Q *What kinds of medical conditions do you recommend that parents have a conversation with the pediatrician before proceeding with COVID vaccination?*

Dr. God: If your child is on an immunosuppressant or on chemotherapy. There are really no other health conditions that would make me say they aren't a good candidate for the vaccine.

Dr. Mehta: Honestly, very few. The only contraindications to getting a COVID vaccine are if you had anaphylaxis with the first dose or one of the vaccine ingredients. The COVID vaccines do not contain heavy metals, formaldehyde, gluten, eggs, wheat, fetal cells, preservatives, latex, or microchips. Most underlying medical conditions are reasons to get the vaccine because those underlying conditions place your child at risk of more severe disease if they were to catch COVID.

Q *How does vaccination status of parents, family and caregivers impact their children's health?*

Dr. God: It certainly decreases the likelihood the child would get the disease. We are encouraging all families to have all eligible adults in the house get the vaccine. It's common for children

to get COVID from a family member. Kids can get sick from COVID and have long-term consequences. So, the less likely they're exposed, the better.

Q *How do you as a pediatrician stay up to date on current research about COVID-19, vaccination, and vaccination of children?*

Dr. Mehta: We are constantly reading! Our sources are not Google. Rather, we get our information directly from scientific journals and trusted sources like the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as attending seminars by leading pediatricians, immunologists, vaccine experts and scientists. It's also mandatory that board-certified physicians keep up to date on multiple topics every year (not just COVID but many other pediatric topics because science is always helping us provide better and better care).

Q *What is a pediatrician's role when it comes to educating families about COVID vaccination?*

Dr. God: It's essential because we have the best access to the latest information. We have training in medical school and our residency on how to look at data and interpret it. It puts us in a better position to interpret data when it comes out and educate patients and their families about their health.

Q *Figures are often cited about the low number of children who have lasting effects from COVID-19 infection or death. How much of an impact should these factors be when considering vaccination?*

Dr. Mehta: It's all about transmission. Getting vaccinated stops the chain of transmission and prevents the virus from being able to use your body to make new variants. Just because children are less likely to die or have severe side effects from COVID doesn't mean they shouldn't get vaccinated. The vaccine helps reduce and prevent the spread of COVID. Kids can still spread COVID. So, getting the vaccine helps them break the chain of transmission to others. Getting the vaccine helps prevent new variants from emerging. Unvaccinated people make perfect hosts for virus transmission and allow viruses to mutate and make new variants.

Q *Some parents have concerns about a fast timeline for vaccine, research, approval and rollout. How do you respond when parents express this kind of concern?*

Dr. God: The actual length of the trials is the same as other vaccine trials. The process has been expedited but not the trials. It's streamlining the approval process. The actual study has been done safely and appropriately.

Dr. Mehta: They did make this vaccine quickly! But that doesn't mean you should be concerned it wasn't thoroughly researched and evaluated. Some information was already known. The technology used in these vaccines has been around for decades. The protein structure of COVID's spike protein has been known for years. Trials on COVID vaccines were able to be done quickly because there are so many cases of COVID. So, researchers were able to test the effectiveness of the vaccine easily compared to other vaccine trials. Also, companies prioritized this research over research on other things during the pandemic! The FDA expedited the review process. This doesn't mean they skipped any steps. Remember the FDA re-analyzes the data companies provide as a double-check process.

Q *What if a child already had COVID-19? Do they already have antibodies against it?*

Dr. God: When they studied people who had COVID, how quickly their immunity drops varies wildly between people. Many children who have been tested 3-6 months after having COVID have undetectable antibody levels. In adults, there is a better immune response for those who had COVID and got vaccinated afterward, and a more predictable immunity. Absolutely, the recommendation is even if your child has had COVID to still get vaccinated and follow the same schedule.

Latest CDC Vaccine UPDATE

In January, the CDC expanded its recommendations for COVID-19 vaccine boosters to include ages 12 and older. The extra shot is also recommended for children 5 to 11 years who are moderately or severely immunocompromised.

MEET THE DOCTORS

Board-certified pediatrician **Dr. Bethany God** served in the U.S. Navy for 11 years before joining Bay Shore Pediatrics in 2019.



Dr. Bethany God

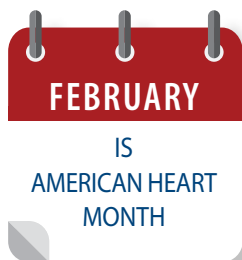


Dr. Monica Mehta

Board-certified pediatrician **Dr. Monica Mehta** joined her father's practice, Mehta Pediatrics, in 2020.

Both God and Mehta have a special interest in preventive medicine.

Tips to Help Keep Your Family's Heart BEATING STRONG



Quick & easy heart-healthy breakfast recipes for busy mornings

While we focus on heart health during February, keeping your heart healthy is really an everyday job. You are never too old or too young to begin taking care of your heart. It all begins with a healthy lifestyle and that includes a well-balanced diet and plenty of physical activity.

Too often, CalvertHealth registered dietitian **Karen Mohn, RD, LDN** said, she hears people say heart-healthy eating is time-consuming and expensive. But she stresses it doesn't have to be – *if you plan ahead.*

“Getting carryout or nuking a frozen dinner is tempting because we think it’s quick,” she said. “But you can actually have a very healthy diet without over-thinking it ... just by eating what we call ‘clean’ foods that are fresh and not processed or packaged, which is what people tend to grab.”

Learning the Basics

So, what does a heart-healthy diet look like? According to Mohn, it includes: three to five servings of fruits and vegetables every day, eating more whole grains and lean protein (*chicken and fish*), limiting fatty meats like sausage, hot dogs and cold cuts, using healthy fats like olive oil instead of butter and margarine and adding nuts and legumes (*that provide good fats, lean protein and high fiber*).

“Eating more plant-based is definitely more heart healthy,” said Mohn. “Also, be sure to check the labels on processed foods for hidden salt and sugar. And keep in mind your portions because you can get too much of a good thing even in a heart-healthy diet.”

Green Eggs & Ham Breakfast Sandwich

This quick & easy recipe is ready in just 5 minutes.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 whole-wheat English muffin | 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil |
| 1 slice low-sodium American cheese | ½ cup baby spinach, coarsely chopped |
| 1 slice Canadian bacon (or lean ham) | Pinch of freshly ground pepper |
| 1 large egg | |

DIRECTIONS

Toast muffin. Put cheese and Canadian bacon on the bottom half. Heat oil in small nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add egg, spinach and pepper and cook stirring, until set. About 1 minute. Place the egg mixture on the cheese and bacon. Top with the remaining half and wrap up to eat on the go.

TIP: Swap 1 oz. (1/4 cup) feta for American cheese and cook with egg and spinach.

NUTRITION FACTS:

Per sandwich: 426 calories, 27 grams carbohydrates, 22 grams protein, 4 grams fiber and 1 gram sugar



Planning Ahead

“I get it. We’re all busy,” said Mohn, “but when we don’t plan ahead what ends up happening in the rush at the end of the day is that we don’t make the best choices.” She advises taking just a few minutes to plan meals for a couple of days at a time.

“Planning just means you know what you’re going to have ... what it’s going to take to get it done,” she said, “like preparing a grocery list and making sure you have the foods you need to make a healthy meal.

“For instance, last night it was late when I got home,” said Mohn. “I took out the turkey cutlet, thawed and prepped it. It didn’t even take 5 minutes. So, I know what we’re going to have tonight. It’s just a matter of getting it in the oven and roasting the vegetables I bought over the weekend.”

She went on to add, “I can get dinner on the table in 15 minutes. You’ll spend more time in the drive-thru line. A few weeks ago, they had a sale on cutlets, so I stocked up. Take advantage of the sales. Again, that takes planning.”

Living by Example

Mohn underscores how important it is for parents to model heart-healthy behavior. “We all need to do our best to walk the walk, if we want our kids to eat healthy and exercise. Don’t make exceptions for kids. Their tastebuds change all the time. So, don’t assume all they’ll eat is mac and cheese and chicken tenders. If you’re eating a salad, they’ll eat a salad.”

There’s lots of ways to get kids more involved in the process from picking out new recipes to try to helping choose different fruits and vegetables while grocery shopping. “By including them and giving them a voice, you foster ownership,” she said.

Getting a Healthy Start

“Starting your day with a healthy breakfast doesn’t have to be complicated,” said Mohn. “It just has to include the components to set you up for a healthy day ... it can be as simple as a fruit and yogurt smoothie or whole-wheat toast with peanut butter.

“It gives your heart a boost for the start of the day,” she explained. “It starts your metabolism, so you’re burning calories. You’ll find when you start the day with a healthy breakfast and eat at regular times during the day, then you’re likely to make better choices because you’re not hungry.”

Personally, she likes to get a head start on breakfast while making dinner or cleaning up. “You’re already in the kitchen, so prep what you can. While one person is washing the dishes, let the kids make their overnight oats or a yogurt parfait. It’s something for them to look forward to because they created it.”

Fruit & Yogurt Smoothie

This super simple smoothie calls for just three ingredients.

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup nonfat plain yogurt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup 100% fruit juice
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups frozen fruit, such as blueberries, raspberries, pineapple or peaches

DIRECTIONS

Puree yogurt with juice in a blender until smooth. With the motor running, add fruit through the hole in the lid and continue to puree until smooth.



NUTRITION FACTS

Per serving (2 cups): 279 calories, 56.4 grams carbohydrates, 11.6 grams protein, 6.5 grams fiber and 45.7 grams sugar and 2 grams fat

Apple-Cinnamon Overnight Oats

Get a head start and prepare a batch for the week.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup old-fashioned oats
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup unsweetened almond milk
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon chia seeds (optional)
1 teaspoon maple syrup
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cinnamon
Pinch of salt
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced apple
2 tablespoons chopped pecans, walnuts or almonds (optional)



DIRECTIONS

Step 1: Combine oats, almond milk, chia seeds, maple syrup, cinnamon and salt in a pint-sized jar and stir. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

Step 2: Before serving top with apple and nuts.

TIP: To make ahead – prepare through step 1 and refrigerate for up to 4 days.

NUTRITION FACTS

Per serving (1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups): 215 calories, 40.8 grams carbohydrates, 5.7 grams protein, 6. grams fiber and 11.3 grams sugar and 4.4 grams fat

CalvertHealth Board Welcomes Three New Members

The CalvertHealth Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of small business owner **Scott Reeves**, the **Rev. Christopher Garcia**, rector of Christ Church in Port Republic and **Dr. Chang Choi**, who heads up the adult hospitalist team at CalvertHealth Medical Center. Composed of volunteers from the community and the medical staff, the board plays a vital role in ensuring the organization meets the needs of the community.

“We’re excited Scott will be joining our board,” said CalvertHealth President and CEO **Dean Teague**. “His background and desire to give back to the community are exemplary. We look forward to his outstanding leadership.”

Reeves is the president of KAIROS in California in St. Mary’s County and has more than 20 years of professional experience in organizational, program and project analytics. He founded the company in 2013 with his dad, in large part to spend more time with his two children. As the son of a retired Navy captain, Reeves takes great pride in supporting the mission of his Department of Defense customers.

He has a bachelor’s degree in business administration with a concentration in management from Towson University and is a certified Project Management Professional (PMP). Reeves is a Leadership of Southern Maryland graduate (class of 2014). He is active in the community volunteering for youth sports along with his involvement in KAIROS KARES, which supports local charitable endeavors.

“Rev. Garcia possesses a depth of knowledge in so many areas,” said Teague. “His passion for the hospital and its role in the community is at the highest level.”

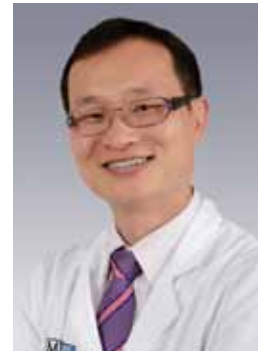
Rev. Garcia brings a diverse perspective to his role as board member. Since 2017, he has been the pastor at the county’s oldest church. Before entering the seminary, he was an Army lawyer for 25 years and earned an MBA. His upbringing



Scott Reeves



Rev. Christopher Garcia



Chang Choi, MD

Composed of volunteers from the community and the medical staff, the board plays a vital role in ensuring the organization meets the needs of the community.

as an Army “brat,” growing up overseas, exposed him to a wide variety of healthcare models. He also draws on his own personal experience as a prostate cancer survivor.

“I believe an excellent local hospital is part of the solid foundation for a thriving community,” said Rev. Garcia. “Patients with access to quality care at a hospital they trust will seek out care early, rather than waiting to travel far away for care. That’s better for all of us.”

Since joining the active medical staff in 2013, Dr. Choi has served as medical director for the adult hospitalist program, which specializes in caring for

patients while they are in the hospital. Additionally, he has served on many committees having a direct impact on patient care including quality improvement, hospital-acquired conditions, medication safety, credentialing and critical care.

Dr. Choi is also the medical director of Informatics, which uses information technology to organize and analyze health records to improve outcomes. He also led the yearlong project to upgrade CalvertHealth’s information system to a totally new platform laying the groundwork for the hospital’s IT future.

“Dr. Choi has many years of experience with our health system and has established a strong rapport with our providers,” said Teague. “His insight as the medical representative will be particularly beneficial as we focus on our mission to provide the very best care to our patients.”

People, Programs and Services in Our Community

CalvertHealth is proud to bring you classes, wellness programs, health screenings and events to help you live a healthier life. Many classes and events are offered virtually so you can explore from the comfort of your home! For more information about the events listed here, please contact the CalvertHealth Community Wellness Office at 410.535.8233.

DIABETES EDUCATION

Diabetes Self-Management Class

Taught by certified diabetic educators, this comprehensive three-part series includes individual meal planning, meter training, health assessment and goal setting by a registered nurse and diabetic educator. Physician referral required, covered by most insurance plans. *To register, call 410.414.2778.*

CCHD Living Well With Diabetes

This six-week interactive workshop for adults with type 2 diabetes is discussion based and covers a variety of topics such as how to deal with changes in your blood sugar, nutrition planning, label reading, depression and more. **For more information, call 410.535.5400 x 459.**

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Rock Steady Boxing for Parkinson's

This 12-session course helps fight Parkinson's through non-contact boxing exercises focusing on gross motor movement, balance, core strength, rhythm and hand-eye coordination. This type of exercise favorably impacts range of motion, flexibility, posture, gait and activities of daily living. *This class is offered virtually and in person.*

Early Riser Fit for Life & Fit for Life

This virtual class meets twice per week for 6 weeks and is designed for all fitness levels. The exercises are focused on functional training to help you perform everyday activities safely and efficiently. Choose from early or afternoon sessions.

HEALTHWISE

Medical Nutrition Therapy

Specialized one-on-one appointment for those in need of a personalized strategy for focusing on a healthier lifestyle, meeting healthy weight loss goals and much more. *A physician referral is required.*

FREE Quit Tobacco Classes

The classes will be offered in person and virtually at CCHD. Class is one hour a week for 8-weeks. *Call 410.535.5400 x 359 for more information or to register.* Paid for by MD Cigarette Restitution Fund.

MATERNITY & FAMILY EDUCATION

Baby Care Basics

This class for new and expectant parents offers a comprehensive overview of baby care basics (*grandparents are invited, too*).

Understanding Childbirth

This interactive online course covers essential information on labor and highlights ways partners can help throughout the process. You'll also get a sense of what labor is really like as you watch several birth stories. You'll even have an opportunity to create your own birth plan!

Understanding Breastfeeding

This interactive online course covers the essentials of breastfeeding, including clear animation and plenty of video examples. It lets you know when to call for help and includes partner tips.

SUPPORT GROUPS/WELLNESS WORKSHOPS

Lactation Services

Lactation services for pre and postnatal mothers with one-on-one instruction is available. Call 410.414.4819 to schedule.

Breast Cancer Support Group

This group meets every 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information email megan.hance@calverthealthmed.org.

Cancer Support Group

Meets every 1st Tuesday of the month where patients and loved ones can gain support as they go through their healing journey. ALL cancer types are welcome. Registration is required. Please call 410.535.8233 for more information.

Diabetes Support Group

A FREE support group that meets the 2nd Thursday of the month from 7-8 p.m. This is a great opportunity to ask questions, share your journey and offer support to fellow diabetics. Register online.

Parkinson's Wellness Workshop

This group of Parkinson patients, family members and caregivers meet the 1st Monday of the month for people struggling or have a loved one struggling with Parkinson's disease. Registration is required. Call 410.535.8233 to register.

Stroke Support Group

This group meets every 1st Wednesday of the month for people who have suffered a stroke, are survivors of a stroke and for those caring for someone who has suffered and survived a stroke. Registration is free and required. Call 410.414.4759 for more information.



Learn how you can thank a doctor by scanning the QR Code with your mobile device or tablet.

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MARCH

NATIONAL
DOCTORS'
DAY



The Weight is Over

Introducing the New Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Program at CalvertHealth Medical Center

“The key to successful outcomes with bariatric surgery is the short- and long-term follow-up,” said board-certified general surgeon **Dr. Ramzi Alami**, who directs the Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery Program at CalvertHealth Medical Center (CHMC). “That’s why a local program is so important because these patients need a lot of support.”

The multidisciplinary program, which launched last May, takes direct aim at the county’s growing obesity epidemic and the toll it has taken in driving up the rates of heart disease, stroke and diabetes locally. A 2020 survey showed the percent of Calvert County adults who are obese *is higher than state and national averages* and is rising.

In a recent interview, Dr. Alami stressed how the expertise, education and follow-up at CHMC combine to produce a highly effective program for those needing weight-loss management. Dr. Alami, who is fellowship trained in advanced minimally invasive and bariatric surgery, has performed more than 2,000 procedures and has taught other surgeons in the field.

Surgical Expertise Emphasized

“I’ve been doing this for 16 years now,” said Dr. Alami, “I’ve basically dedicated about 80 percent of my practice to bariatric surgery (including sleeve gastrectomy, laparoscopic and open gastric bypass and adjustable gastric banding). The vast majority of these procedures are done minimally invasively, resulting in less pain and a faster recovery.

“When you’ve done a lot of these operations, you can foresee where the issues are going to be and what you need to do before they arise,” said Dr. Alami.

“Safety is what dictates everything. We’ve learned over time, if you improve these issues before surgery – for example, bringing the patient’s diabetes more under control – then you have much better outcomes.

“This surgery has to be very individualized,” he added. “It is not a one-size-fits-all approach. A lot of tests and consultations are done prior to bariatric surgery to choose the most appropriate procedure for each patient’s needs and aspirations.”

Dr. Alami said a lot of thoughtful planning and consideration went into elevating the many different areas needed to support the more advanced surgical



care at CHMC. “We’re very well equipped and ready to face this challenge.”

Patient Education Highlighted

He also stressed the impact education has in ensuring patients are prepared. “Patients really need to know what they’re getting themselves into and they need to understand it to be able to commit to it.”

Dr. Alami went on to add, “We know that all patients are going to lose weight after bariatric surgery ... but how much they lose and whether they are able to maintain that weight loss will depend on their eating habits and level of physical activity.”

This is where the short- and long-term follow up comes into play. There are regularly scheduled visits in the weeks and months after bariatric surgery to monitor how well the patient is adapting to their personalized diet and exercise plan and to make adjustments. Additionally, support groups are available to provide practical guidance and advice.

“This is why I say a local program is so important,” he said. “If a patient has to drive an hour and a half to appointments, we know their participation is going to dwindle over time and this will likely affect their overall success.”

Lifestyle Change Key to Long-Term Success

Dr. Alami emphasizes that bariatric surgery is not a “quick fix” but instead a tool for lifelong weight management. “Surgery is just the beginning of the journey. For long-term success, patients need to understand surgery is only one-third of the equation. Nutrition, lifestyle and exercise make up two-thirds.”

He explained, “The patient’s commitment to change is essential. Most of my patients (some 80 percent) tell me this is the best thing they’ve done for themselves. Change is not easy but it’s also not difficult. The key is making sure they are really prepped and ready for the changes they need to make.”

From his very first encounter with patients, Dr. Alami encourages them to focus on their relationship with food and what they want to achieve. “A healthier lifestyle is pretty much what everyone wants and that usually means moving around a lot more, thinking about what we eat and enjoying life to the max.”

“It’s given me hope.”

Sixty-one-year-old Calvert County native **Duane Chapman** sums up his decision to have bariatric surgery at CalvertHealth in four words: “I want to live.” A work-related injury in 2013 in Texas resulted in five back fusions, three years of rehab and added more than 140 extra pounds to his 6’3” frame.

Chapman describes the impact the injury had on his life as devastating. The once vigorous outdoorsman grew increasingly frustrated as the scales climbed higher. “I tried for years to lose and just couldn’t. I tried all kinds of diets, joined gyms and worked out,” he said. “I just got so wore out from the extra weight that I couldn’t do anything. I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t put my own shoes on.”

He was also taking medication for type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure brought on by the extra weight.

“Let me tell you, when you’re 365 pounds, you’re miserable. It’s like you’re carrying an extra person around with you. This surgery was like my Hail Mary.” Chapman readily admits he was surprised to learn bariatric surgery was performed at CalvertHealth Medical Center. But says he was sold right after his first meeting with **Dr. Ramzi Alami**. “We really hit it off. He’s a very personable guy. I went home and read his history. He’s got 2,000 of these surgeries under his belt and actually teaches this.”

Looking back, Chapman realizes he was ready to make a major lifestyle change. “Once you have a 4-ounce stomach, you can’t put 20 ounces of food in it.” He was hospitalized overnight after the minimally invasive gastric bypass on Aug. 26 but quickly adds, “I did not have one bruise, not one ache, not one pain pill. Four hours after the surgery, I was up walking the halls.”

Five weeks after surgery, he’s down 47 pounds and completely off medication. “If that doesn’t make you stand up and yell, nothing will,” he smiled. “I’m riding a bike three times a week and learning new habits.” He’s drinking a lot of water – 140 ounces a day, taking his vitamins, eating small bites and chewing slowly.

For him, the single biggest benefit is “feeling better”. The married grandfather of four laughs, saying: “I’m a lot more help around the house. This surgery has given me hope. I’m starting to realize the things I really wanted. The things that were really important to me. I believe they’re obtainable now.”



“For me, it’s all about having a better quality of life.”

– Duane Chapman, Prince Frederick

TO LEARN MORE

Click here for an in-depth look at the program.



Simple Steps to Take Better Care of Your Urologic Health

Your bladder is one of those body parts you probably don't think about until it stops working properly. The first thing to realize is bladder conditions are extremely common. The good news is by making simple lifestyle changes, like diet and exercise, you can reduce your risk of developing problems.

Recently, we sat down with urologist Dr. John Cooper of the CalvertHealth Medical Group to discuss what men and women can do to take a more active role in keeping their urinary system (kidneys, ureters, bladder and urethra) healthy.

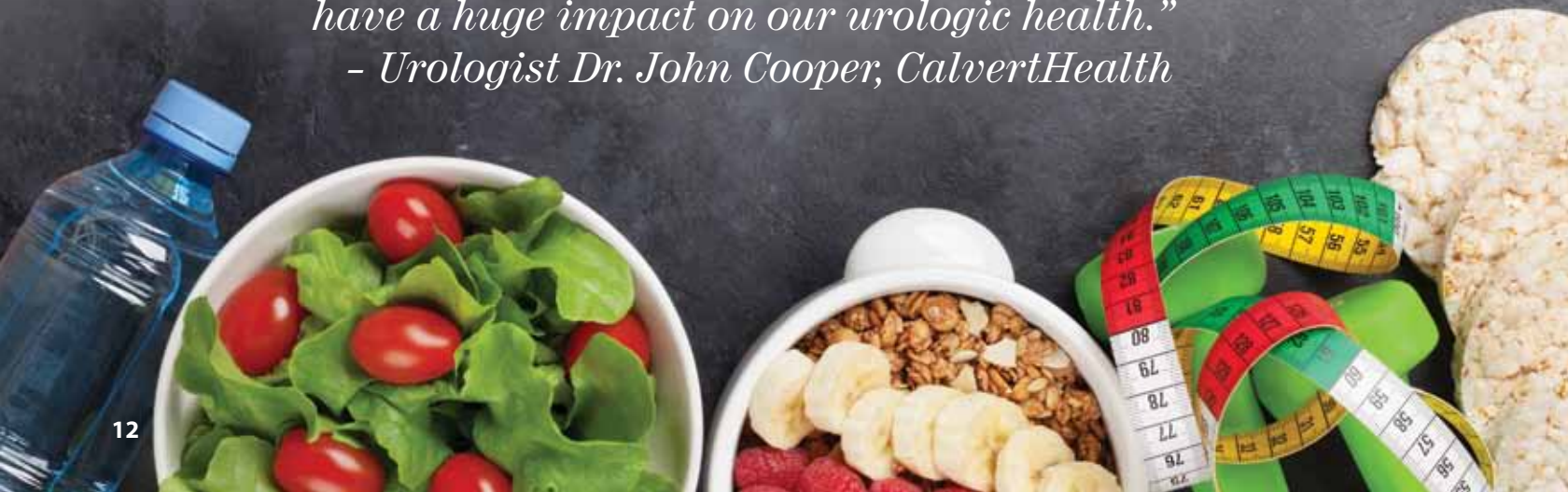
Q *What are some tips to improve overall urological health?*
Drinking more water often helps with many urinary issues, including overactive bladder, BPH (enlarged prostate) and kidney stones. Other beverages, especially coffee, tea and soda, can contain irritants. Water is very soothing to the bladder and kidneys, leading to fewer urgent episodes of needing to urinate. It also helps prevent the formation of stones as well as keep existing stones from getting larger and more difficult to treat or pass. So, how much is enough? The answer is: it depends. Most people require around 64-80 ounces of water per day but this can vary based on the season and weather. In general, a good rule of thumb is to drink enough water to maintain clear or very light yellow urine.

Diet and exercise also play an important role in the prevention of many urologic conditions in men including enlarged prostate, low testosterone, erectile dysfunction, and even certain cancers like prostate and kidney cancer. Multiple studies have shown the high-carb and high-fat "Western diet" is associated with a significantly increased risk from prostate and kidney cancers when compared to a more balanced diet higher in fruits and vegetables. Additionally, these diets are also associated with accelerated enlargement of the prostate and decreased levels of testosterone. Finally, smoking and tobacco use significantly increase the risk of cancers including prostate, kidney and bladder cancer and can also lead to early-onset erectile dysfunction.

Q *What diet changes can help with an overactive bladder?*
The caffeine and carbonation found in coffee, tea and soda can lead to involuntary bladder spasms and increase the

"There are simple steps we can all take that can have a huge impact on our urologic health."

- Urologist Dr. John Cooper, CalvertHealth



sensation of needing to urinate more frequently and urgently. Similarly, spicy foods and artificial sweeteners can have the same effect in certain individuals. Finally, maintaining a balanced diet to stay at a healthy weight and eating foods high in fiber to prevent constipation can also have beneficial effects to increase your bladder capacity and reduce frequency and urgency episodes.

Q When is frequent urination at night a problem?

Urinating frequently overnight, or *nocturia*, is a common symptom especially for patients with an enlarged prostate or overactive bladder. Urinating up to once overnight is considered normal, while twice or more is considered abnormally frequent. This can be due to or worsened by excessive urine production overnight from common medical conditions such as obstructive sleep apnea or diabetes. Overnight urinary frequency is a problem when it lessens one's quality of life. While this condition is not an emergency and there are no long-term complications that would potentially shorten one's life, patients should make their own treatment decisions based on how much it bothers them and by balancing the benefits of treatment with potential side effects.

Q What are some simple steps for preventing kidney stones?

The single most important step to preventing kidney stones is to drink more fluids, especially water. I tell all of my patients to remember that "*dilution is the solution.*" Diet changes can also help. I often recommend adding 2 teaspoons of pure lemon juice to an 8-ounce glass of water to create a homemade lemonade. Foods high in oxalate, a mineral that commonly binds with calcium to form stones, should generally be avoided or limited – these include spinach, nuts, chocolate, rhubarb

and most teas. Additionally, foods high in salt and sugar should be limited along with animal proteins.

Finally, it is a common misconception that because most stones are calcium-based that one should limit or avoid calcium intake. While it is true that excessive calcium should be avoided, it is important to maintain normal dietary calcium intake to eliminate harmful oxalate in the gut and prevent absorption to the kidney where it can lead to stone formation.

Q What are some strategies to improve incontinence?

Incontinence is generally divided into three categories: *urge incontinence*, where leakage occurs with a sudden urge to urinate and the inability to make it to the bathroom on time; *stress incontinence*, where leakage occurs when strain or pressure is put on the bladder and you're unable to hold urine in (*i.e. during coughing, laughing or sneezing*); and *mixed incontinence*, where a combination of both of the above occurs. Strategies to prevent and improve incontinence generally differ based on the type of incontinence. All types, however, will improve with weight loss to take pressure off of the bladder and Kegel exercises to strengthen the muscles that support the bladder.

Urge incontinence is often a symptom of overactive bladder, which may require a prescription for medication or sometimes a minimally invasive surgical procedure to help treat. Stress incontinence is sometimes treated with surgical procedures as well. Ask your doctor if a medication or surgical procedure will benefit you based on your symptoms.

WATCH THIS >
if you always try to
go "just in case".



New Urologist Joins CalvertHealth



Urologist **Dr. John Cooper** has joined CalvertHealth Medical Group. While he has a special interest in treating complex and large kidney stones, Dr. Cooper enjoys providing care for a well-rounded general urology practice including the treatment of enlarged prostate, erectile dysfunction, low testosterone and overactive bladder.

"I chose this field because it allows me to make a difference in my patients' quality of life and wellbeing every day," he said.

Dr. Cooper comes to us from Christiana Care Health System in Delaware where he treated a diverse patient population and built a thriving urology practice. His philosophy of care focuses on educating patients so they feel empowered and informed about their health. "I hope every patient that comes to my clinic will expect to be treated with the utmost respect and have all of their concerns listened to and addressed."

He earned his medical degree at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 2015 and went on to complete his urologic surgery residency at The Ohio State University Medical Center in 2020, where he trained with leaders in the fields of urologic oncology and endourology (*using the latest minimally invasive approaches*).

Dr. Cooper has conducted research, authored articles published in peer-reviewed journals, including the *Journal of Urology*, and presented at conferences both nationally and internationally.

Early Intervention Key for Pediatric Development

Therapists Skilled at Assessing Each Child's Specific Needs

From the first hints of a smile to their triumphant first steps, parents anticipate their children's milestones with excitement. But what if something feels off with how the child is developing and progressing?

CalvertHealth Outpatient Rehabilitation offers pediatric physical and occupational therapy at their Prince Frederick office. The therapists are a key part of a parent's support system for early intervention if issues are detected in early childhood development. Physical therapy involves strength, balance and motor skills while occupational therapy involves components of these same skills but focuses on daily activities. For children, this means dressing, toileting, and tackling the barriers to these kinds of life skills.

"It's hugely important because if we don't address the small barriers they're experiencing in their early childhood, we tend to see issues down the road," **Emily Phipps, ORT/L, MSOT** said. Particularly in the first year of life, children develop at such a rapid pace and it is crucial to catch issues early.

"If you feel funny about something, talk to your doctor and keep bringing it up," said **Kathy Moore, OTR/L, CEAS1**, director of rehabilitation services and wound care at CalvertHealth Medical Center (CHMC).



A Team Dynamic

“A lot of times when parents are told their child needs physical therapy, they start thinking something is really wrong with their child. But a lot of times it simply means the child needs more help or facilitation to achieve the milestones and developmental goals,” Sarah Nessel, DPT said.

When a child isn't hitting milestones as expected, Nessel can assess what might be the cause. For example, by seeing a child in person who isn't walking yet, she can determine if the child has muscle weakness or tightness in different areas. It could also include sensory components.

If a parent has a concern, they should speak to their pediatrician and ask to have it monitored by a therapist. It doesn't mean treatment will be needed right away. An assessment might be all that is needed, stated Nessel.

Therapists (PT/OT) can help differentiate between the varying degrees of normal development. Most pediatricians give parents a checklist of skills to mark during well-child visits. Phipps recommends parents look at those checklists and see if they have any concerns. Instead of simply checking yes or no, think through the skills to determine if something may be off and bring those concerns to the pediatrician. Parents shouldn't feel pressure to memorize what skills their child should have and when. The PT or OT communicates with the pediatrician and the parent regarding treatment, which is tailored specifically for the child's needs and how they are developing.

“We become an advocate between doctor and family because we can provide that validation. It becomes a team dynamic,” Phipps said.

“When a child is not hitting milestones as expected, our job is to pinpoint why.”

- Sarah Nessel, DPT



Small Signs, Big Impact

All parts of the body are linked to one another, Phipps said, so seemingly small or insignificant issues or delays could potentially lead to larger problems later in life. For example, an infant with plagiocephaly (flatness on the head) can also have vision issues stemming from one eye sitting more forward than the other. There could also be asymmetry in the jaw, which can impact the inner ear.

Nessel cautions parents whose children seem to skip crawling to see this as a concern, not a triumph. Crawling is important developmentally for many reasons. It's the first time a child coordinates the right and left sides of the body and puts weight on their hands and shoulders. This helps with hand/eye coordination, problem solving and visual scanning skills. Studies show later on the skills that result from

crawling promote fine motor skills later in life such as writing.

Additional signs Phipps and Nessel recommend bringing up to the pediatrician are asymmetry in reach, difficulty lifting head during tummy time, a floppy feeling baby or low muscle tone when picked up, an overly stiff/tight baby, delay in any major milestones (*rolling, sitting, crawling*), *abnormal walking patterns (on toes, feet turned)*, tripping and falling more frequently than normal, and difficulty keeping up with children their own age on the playground.

Parents as Advocates

If a parent has a concern about their child's development, it can be a scary thing to notice and to bring it up to the pediatrician. Could it mean something is wrong with their child?

“If a parent has a concern they have already asked their pediatrician about, we are here to provide additional insight. Again, it doesn't mean treatment is needed, but an assessment can give parents an added assurance to their child's development,” Nessel said.

Monitoring and assessing can be a good middle ground before going straight to treatment and is still a proactive approach. It's not always a straight path directly from pediatrician referral to treatment.

Physical and occupational therapists can also gauge between the degrees of normal childhood development. It is a delicate balance between those degrees of normal and the ranges of when typical milestones occur. Phipps said she works to determine whether a delay is significant or not and to look closely at what is expected at the child's particular age.

“We are there as a support system to differentiate that,” Phipps said.

Impacting Lives. Every Day.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

CalvertHealth has continued to innovate while addressing growing and diverse healthcare needs. This would not be possible without the philanthropic spirit and advocacy of the community.



The CalvertHealth Foundation hosted two of its most successful events ever in 2021. The 32nd Annual Benefit Golf Classic engaged more than 150 individuals and raised \$101,700 in support of Women's Health. The Breast Cancer 5K to benefit the Sheldon E. Goldberg Center for Breast Care raised \$48,704 and had more than 560 participants!

Access to local health care has never been more important than it is today. The dedication of CalvertHealth's care team, physicians, community board members, Foundation supporters, health system leaders and more than 1,500 employees and volunteers have enabled us to remain independent and flexible in the midst of today's challenges.

We take pride in our commitment to responding to the healthcare needs of our community with services and resources that enable our patients to receive expert care close to home. We are committed to ensuring that we are here for you when you need us – just as we have been for more than a century.

We are honored to share with you how your 2021 support of the Foundation impacted CalvertHealth this past year. Throughout the ongoing pandemic, we have faced many challenges. We are so incredibly grateful to the following 2021 supporters for coming together to support our local community hospital.

The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the following individuals and organizations for their gifts in 2021. If there are any errors or omissions, please accept our apologies and contact the Foundation Office at foundation@calverthealthmed.org or by calling 410.414.4570.

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The CalvertHealth Surgery Center is home to some of the best and brightest surgeons. CalvertHealth remains steadfast in its commitment to invest in the talent and technology to provide our patients and our community access to advanced surgical options close to home.

Over the years, the CalvertHealth Gala has helped raise nearly \$5 million toward medical center initiatives and this year was no different! By the end of the evening, through your generosity, the Foundation exceeded its fundraising goal of \$250,000 to expand surgical technology and programming at CalvertHealth!

Thank you for helping us realize our vision of making a difference in every life we touch.

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The CalvertHealth Virtual Gala was a huge success, raising \$288,585 for the Giving for Gifted Hands Campaign. Thanks to the generous support of donors like Kent Island Mechanical (pictured above), among others, the campaign raised \$306,085 - exceeding the \$250,000 goal.



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