

NorthernVirginia

Alison Starling Hosts Women's Health Podcast

Former WJLA news Anchor Alison Starling hosts a monthly podcast that asks doctors the questions many people don't get the chance to ask.



By Rick Massimo October 8, 2024

She was one of the D.C. area's best known news anchors; now she's hoping her new venture helps women stand up for their own health.

Alison Starling, who spent 20 years at WJLA, is the host of the podcast, [Living Well with Alison Starling](#), which released its first episode last month. She says that after leaving the station to spend more time with her kids, ages 11 and 9, "I knew I wanted to keep using my skills, but I didn't really know how."

That was when VHC Health and the *Washington Business Journal* approached her to host a podcast they'd been developing about women's health and wellness.

"It's a topic I'm really interested in," she says, "and I'm excited to work with such huge, important names in our community."

The first episode concerned menopause, which Starling says is “having such a moment in culture, women’s culture in particular.”

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, so this month’s episode will be about breast cancer and breast health in general. Future episodes will deal with Alzheimer’s awareness, nutrition, exercise, keeping families and kids healthy, and more. “So each month, we’ll find a topic that’s timely and interesting to women and their families and dive into it into some detail,” she says.

The podcast includes discussions with doctors and other experts, and Starling says the goal is to give the listener the sense of having “that extended time with a doctor or an expert that we all wish we had. You know, we go to a doctor’s appointment, we rush through with our tests and our questions, and then we kind of rush out with our prescription.”

In the podcast format, Starling gets to prepare questions “I want to know, and that hopefully are the same questions most women out there are wondering.”

Guests so far have included Dr. Jen Ashton, the former chief medical correspondent for ABC News, and longtime news anchor Katie Couric.

“And we hope to have a lot of bigger names like that, that will draw people in that to find out more. But I think the idea is really just a comfortable conversation where we can get those questions answered [when] we just don’t always have time to spend with our doctors and learn more,” she says.

In her time at the TV station, Starling spent plenty of time looking for the local angle on national and international news, and that’s the goal with the podcast as well: “I want it to be interesting to people who live in California too, or wherever else. But I think because we are tapping into the doctors who are right here in Northern Virginia, it not only gives people an opportunity to see how many high-level medical experts we have in this region, [but] to hear from them directly.”

She says she's already heard from listeners who appreciate the NoVA touch: "Oh, you interviewed my doctor,' or 'Oh, my neighbor goes to that doctor and really likes them; I'm so glad I got to hear from them.'"

That's the kind of reach Starling wants *Living Well* to have.

"I don't think we're coming out here thinking we're going to be the next No. 1 podcast in the country," she says. "I think we just want to serve the local people with information. I feel like what's most important is that we advocate for ourselves when it comes to our health, and I don't think people are always comfortable doing that."

That's an challenge in and of itself, she says. "Women don't always put their health first. They take care of their parents and their partners and their kids, and I think it's time that women empower themselves a little bit more, and hopefully we can help them do that," Starling says.

She's also hoping that empowerment can cross boundaries: When she interviewed Katie Couric as a breast cancer survivor, Couric said she had access to early detection and excellent health care. "And she said she learned in her research how that's not the case for a lot of lower-income and minority women."

With any luck, listeners will be able to hear doctors discussing symptoms or conditions that sound familiar.

"If they can hear some of these doctors talk about symptoms or talk about, you know, 'If this is happening to you, here's the type of doctor you should go see,' maybe even just hearing people verbalize these things will make people more comfortable to go and get the help that they need."

Living Well with Alison Starling is available on [Apple Podcasts](#), [Spotify](#), or wherever you get your podcasts.

Feature image courtesy Caffeine Photography