

Alison Starling Hosts New Health Podcast

The former ABC 7News anchor interviews national and local medical experts about today's most pressing health concerns.

By: Stephanie Kanowitz
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Ever feel like you need a medical degree to navigate the health care system and make the best decisions for you and your family? One of Arlington's most recognizable residents—Alison Starling—is hoping to change that.

The Emmy Award-winning former ABC 7News anchor is now the host of *Living Well with Alison Starling*, a podcast presented by VHC Health in partnership with the *Washington Business Journal*. Each month, a new episode will tackle a hot health topic via interviews with national and local guest experts and patients.

The debut episode, released Sept. 25, focused on menopause, with insights from Jen Ashton, a board-certified OB-GYN and former chief medical correspondent for ABC News, and Terri Remy, an internist and certified menopause practitioner at VHC Health.

“The beauty of this podcast is it feels like the opportunity to have that uninterrupted time with a doctor...that we so rarely get,” Starling says. “We go to our appointment, we rush through the little time we have and the few tests we need to do, but you always have more questions.”

To answer those questions, the podcast will offer a deeper dive into topics ranging from nutrition and exercise to Alzheimer’s and children’s health.

On Oct. 23, a second episode centering on breast cancer will welcome fellow journalist and Arlingtonian Katie Couric, who was diagnosed with the disease in October 2022. Starling describes it as “a powerful conversation about early detection and cancer treatment [particularly for women with] dense breast tissue.”

Research shows that women’s concerns about their health are growing, and that women spend 25% more time in poor health relative to men. That “health gap equates to 75 million years of life lost due to poor health or early death per year, the equivalent of seven days per woman per year,” according to a 2024 McKinsey Health Institute report.

“We have to advocate for ourselves,” Starling says. “We have to do the research, and it doesn’t mean go on WebMD or Google and read the worst-case scenario. It just means having a broad understanding of your body, of your health [concerns] and taking those with you into your doctor’s appointment. If a doctor doesn’t have the information you’re looking for, it’s OK to find another one. It’s OK to get another opinion. I think a great point is to really see yourself as an important member of your team.”

A recent study by the American Academy of Physician Associates found that 65% of Americans find managing health care “overwhelming” and “time-consuming”—a number that hits 76% of adults ages 18-34. The podcast aims to cut through the clutter by zeroing on patient stories, promising new treatments and clinical advice put in lay terms.

“The target audience changes based on the topic, but generally, it’s our community,” says Sharon Brickhouse Martin, vice president of health services integration at VHC Health.

Topics will reflect community needs, Brickhouse Martin says, including subjects of concern to women, working parents and members of the sandwich generation who are caring for both kids and aging parents.

“We might see a spike in something that we’re treating, or we may have a group of physicians that have a specific topic they want to get out there,” she explains.

“Sometimes what’s happening in the world might also influence that. For instance, this is flu season. We know the next Covid shot is out and [we are] encouraging everybody to get that.”

Starling, who announced last November that she was stepping down from WJLA to spend more time with her family, is the ideal host, Brickhouse Martin says. She has worked with VHC Health in the past and is a trusted source of information in the community.

For the journalist, the opportunity aligned with her wish to spend more time with her spouse, NBC News chief White House correspondent Peter Alexander, and their two children, ages 9 and 11, while still having an impact professionally. “I knew I wanted to still use my skills and my experience,” she says. “I love the topic...and I live in Northern Virginia. It just felt like a great fit.”

Starling says one of her favorite ways to stay healthy is by taking advantage of the almost 50 miles of paved and multi-use trails in Arlington. “We have a really adorable little dog, and we take her on lots of Arlington walks,” she says.

Find Living Well with Alison Starling on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music and other platforms.