

NEW CENTER FOR



A MORE COMFORTABLE



VIRTUAL • PERSONALIZED



Washington Commanders Select VHC Health
as the Official Women's Health Partner

SEE BACK COVER

Now, Mammograms and Breast MRI Scans Are More Comfortable

Having a mammogram can be painful due to the breast compression necessary to achieve the clearest pictures. But new technology at VHC Health is changing that—making the mammogram experience more comfortable—and more accurate.

Siemens Healthineer's MAMMOMAT Revelation mammography system uses Personalized Soft Compression technology that allows patients to adjust compression for comfort without losing accuracy. "Compression panels are room temperature and comprised of softer, flexible plastic, which causes less

"Our new, wide-angle mammography system provides us with better resolution and contrast of subtle masses, thus leading to greater detection of breast cancer."

SARAH MEZBAN, MD

pinching," says Erin Ratzler, Director of Women's Imaging. "Plus, patients don't have to hold their breath to prevent movement, which can lead to blurred images."

What's more, the Revelation system has a wider angle that allows for much more detailed 3D images. The machine's X-ray tube moves in a 50-degree arc around the breast, taking 25 images from many angles that are then sent to a computer that assembles them into a 3D picture of the breast.

"We are able to detect much smaller lesions than we could before," Ratzler says. "VHC Health also adopted new computer-aided detection technology that uses artificial intelligence to scan images and flag areas that look different from surrounding tissues."

Revelation is also the first mammography platform to provide automated breast density measurements during the exam. Previously breast density was estimated during the image-reading process, usually after patients had left the center. Because high breast density can increase the risk of developing cancer, getting this information right away enables immediate and personalized risk assessment.

Additionally, Women's Imaging has a new MRI for breast scans that automatically adjusts to patients' unique body type, providing a more comfortable scanning experience. The MAGNETOM Sola 1.5T from Siemens Healthineers has a wider opening and features to reduce anxiety, such as a MoodLight ring that provides music, calming lighting and noise reduction to minimize the clicking sounds common in MRI machines.



State-of-the-art MRI for breast scans

"With this new MRI technology, we expect to see reduced scan times," says Jeffrey Sapolsky, MBA, MS, CPHQ, Administrative Director of Medical Imaging. "Patients will be in the scanner for less time overall, but it still provides excellent image quality."

All in all, Women's Imaging is using advanced technology to create a more streamlined experience to fit into women's busy schedules. Upon arrival for their appointment, patients check in using a kiosk with secure biometric facial recognition. With the VHC Health App and the MyVHC patient portal, much of the pre-registration tasks can be done in advance before leaving home.

"The kiosks expedite check-in, which has reduced waiting times when patients come in for a mammogram," Ratzler says.



October Is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

It is a great time for women to get their annual mammograms done.

Women's Imaging is open:

Monday – Friday | 6:45 am – 5:00 pm

Saturday | 7:00 am – 4:30 pm

Sunday | 7:00 am – 2:30 pm

Schedule your appointment online through MyVHC or call 703.558.8500.

Finding the Positive in a Triple-Negative Breast Cancer Diagnosis

Michelle Cleave wasn't worried when she was asked to return for further screening after her routine mammogram in November 2022. "Because I have dense breast tissue, this wasn't unusual. But this time was different. I was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive form of cancer," says Michelle, 47.

Triple-negative breast cancer means that the cancer cells lack estrogen or progesterone receptors and don't have amplification of HER2 receptors, a sign that the breast cancer cells can grow quickly. About 15% of women with breast cancer have this cell type.

"Because triple-negative breast cancer can be aggressive, patients are frequently treated with chemotherapy first before any other treatment," says **Molly Sebastian, MD, FACS**, breast surgeon at VHC Health Reinsch Pierce Family Center for Breast Health, who oversees Michelle's care.

Isabelle Le, MD, medical oncologist, recommended that Michelle have six months of chemo combined with immunotherapy, which has become a standard treatment for this type of cancer.

"I tolerated the treatments well, only having some peripheral neuropathy and fatigue," Michelle says. "I was prepared for the worst, but it didn't really happen."

"The team manages side effects very aggressively today," Dr. Sebastian says. "About two out of three women are able to work full time when going through chemo for breast cancer."

After chemo, Michelle's tumor was barely detectable. In July, Dr. Sebastian performed breast conservation surgery to keep her native breast tissue but remove the cancer site. At the same time, **Marilyn Nguyen, MD**, plastic & reconstructive surgeon, performed breast reconstruction surgery to achieve breast symmetry.

But Michelle's treatment didn't end there. The protocol for breast conservation surgery calls for radiation. "When there is a single focus of breast cancer, the combination of a lumpectomy and radiation is just as effective as a mastectomy for survival after 35 years," Dr. Sebastian says.

"A big fear is that radiation therapy can cause side effects, but Michelle did not have any," says **Robert L. Hong, MD**, Chief, Radiation Oncology. At VHC Health, radiation therapy employs Deep Inspiration Breath Hold, a technique where patients hold a deep breath to reduce how much radiation reaches the heart and lungs. "It's much safer and minimizes side effects," Dr. Hong says. "Our goal was to get Michelle through treatment with minimal disruption to her daily life. Her overall prognosis is excellent."

The psychological toll on Michelle was another story. "I needed to begin treatment very quickly, so I had no time to process the diagnosis," she says. "The first few weeks, I didn't know if I was going to live or die."

Margaret Navarro, RN, MSN-BC, Breast Health Nurse Navigator, helped alleviate those fears. "She became my sounding board," Michelle says. "Without Margaret, I could not have gotten through this."

"My role is to meet newly diagnosed patients at their first appointment with their breast surgeon, who triages the services they will need," Navarro says. "I translate the medical jargon and take notes for the patient. As they go through treatment, I'm available to answer questions, identify resources and help whenever issues come up."

Because the rareness of triple-negative cancer can be isolating, Margaret recommended that Michelle join a breast cancer support group at VHC Health. Now, Michelle has become a mentor to other patients in the group with triple-negative cancer.

"Reaching out to other women with the same diagnosis has been part of Michelle's healing process," says Navarro.

"I am so grateful I got my mammogram because my cancer was detected early before it had spread," Michelle says, who is now going through her final round of chemotherapy and immunotherapy to reduce the risk of recurrence. "If I had to have breast cancer, I'm glad my care was at VHC Health. Almost everyone on my team is female. I feel like it's women supporting women. This is the best place I could be treated and supported."

"I am so grateful I got my mammogram because my cancer was detected early before it had spread."

MICHELLE CLEAVE



Michelle Cleave

Advanced Diagnosis, Long-Term Treatment for Acid Reflux

Hearthburn is one of the most common gastrointestinal disorders, affecting about 60 million people at least once a month and as many as 15 million once a day. When it's frequent, it may be gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD. Symptoms range from a burning sensation in the middle of the chest to stomach pain, persistent cough and even vomiting. Fortunately, VHC Health's [Heartburn Center](#) can provide relief.

G. Kevin Gillian, MD, FACS,

Director, Heartburn Center, has 25 years of experience in state-of-the-art evaluation and surgical care of patients with GERD, and has performed about 5,000 anti-reflux procedures. A decade ago, Dr. Gillian pioneered the LINX™ Reflux Management System in the Washington, DC metro area. In 2022, he performed it more than any other physician in the world.

Here, he explains what GERD is and how the Heartburn Center can treat it.

WHAT CAUSES GERD?

Dr. Gillian: When fluid from your stomach moves backward into your esophagus, throat and lungs, pain and other problems occur. Acid reflux, GERD, heartburn, indigestion and esophageal spasms are all terms associated with the issue.

DO PEOPLE WITH GERD PRODUCE MORE STOMACH ACID?

Dr. Gillian: No. Many people think GERD is due to excess acid because when they take acid-reducing medications, their symptoms improve. In actuality, GERD is often caused by an anatomic problem that causes the valve between the stomach and esophagus to leak. The most common example is a hiatal hernia, which allows the upper stomach to slide through the diaphragm and into the chest, impeding the valve's function.

WHAT CAN HELP?

Dr. Gillian: Reducing stomach acid with over-the-counter medications such as Nexium and Prevacid may help people feel better, but that doesn't stop reflux. When they stop taking those medications, their valve is still not working, reflux happens, and symptoms like regurgitation can return. In short, acid belongs in the stomach; it helps digest food and protects us from infections. But the only way to keep it there is to repair the valve between the stomach and esophagus.

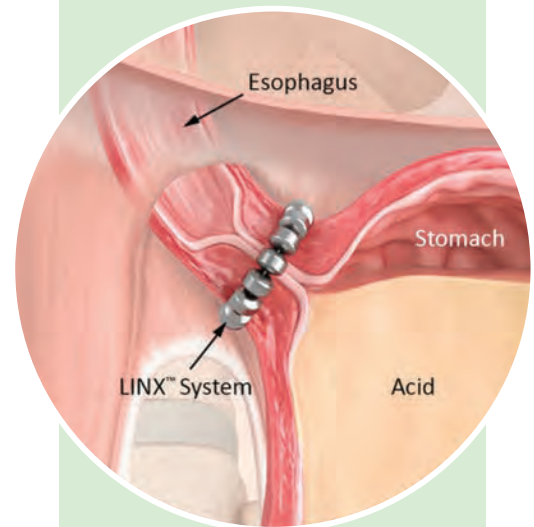
HOW EFFECTIVE IS SURGERY?

Dr. Gillian: Several procedures can provide long-term treatment for GERD. One of the most effective is LINX®, a short, minimally invasive, same-day procedure. LINX is a small, flexible ring of magnets placed around the lower esophageal sphincter (LES) above the stomach opening. It helps the valve stay closed when it is supposed to be closed, preventing acid from going backward. When you swallow, the esophagus pushes the magnets apart to allow food or liquid to go through and then they close again. This also reduces excess gas and stomach bloating.

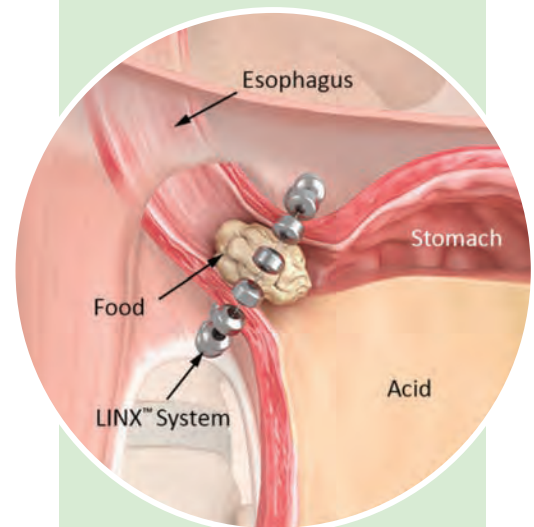
HOW DO YOU DETERMINE WHAT TREATMENT IS BEST?

Dr. Gillian: At the Heartburn Center, we evaluate whether patients with GERD are candidates for surgical intervention or medical management by studying how their esophagus and valve are functioning. We do this through esophageal function testing, a state-of-the-art diagnostic tool that assesses esophageal movement, and through pH impedance testing, which shows how much reflux patients experience in a 24-hour period. Both tests help us determine the most appropriate treatment.

HOW LINX WORKS



LINX is a flexible ring of small magnets placed around the LES during a minimally invasive procedure.



The strength of the magnets helps keep the weak LES closed to prevent reflux. When patients swallow, LINX opens temporarily to allow food and liquid to pass into the stomach.

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At 88, Anne is Walking Again After a Spine Fracture

The arrival of summer meant the start of the Water Walkers, an hour-long exercise class that 88-year-old Anne Butler was excited to attend at her local pool. But she made it to only a few sessions before she fell on her right side as she pushed open a heavy bathroom door. Instead of walking in the water, she found herself in a hospital bed at VHC Health.

Anne suffered a very severe spine fracture. “She had a severely unstable spinal injury, with a fracture pattern very unusual for a ground level fall,” says **Matthew Piazza, MD**, who determined that surgery was necessary.

A neurosurgeon, Dr. Piazza has a special interest in degenerative spinal conditions, spinal oncology and traumatic injuries to the spine. After earning his medical degree at Columbia University, he completed his residency in neurosurgery at the University of Pennsylvania where he also received subspecialized, training as a complex spine fellow.

“For Anne’s surgery, I used a minimally invasive technique to place screws and rods through several small incisions at various locations along her spine,” Dr. Piazza says. “This means less blood loss, less tissue disruption and a shorter surgery.”

He also used computerized navigation to perform Anne’s surgery to repair



Dr. Piazza discusses treatment options with a patient.

the fracture. “We have surgical GPS to see exactly where we are placing screws without having to expose the spine,” says Dr. Piazza, who recently joined VHC Health’s medical staff. “In stereotactic navigation surgery, screens in the operating room show precisely where I place my instruments in a 3D-reconstructed CT scan. It’s highly accurate and decreases risk to patients.”

In Anne’s case, the goal of the surgery was to stabilize the fracture so she could walk again. “Without the operation, Anne would have had debilitating pain and would not even have been able to sit up,” says Dr. Piazza.

After surgery, Anne recovered at VHC Health for a couple of weeks. Then, she spent 10 days on the hospital’s Inpatient

“The successful outcome of this complex spine surgery is a testament to Dr. Piazza’s unique skill set. We are very fortunate to have him as part of the neurosurgery team and larger VHC Health community.”

RICHARD D. MURRAY, MD,
CHIEF OF NEUROSURGERY

Rehabilitation Unit. “I could walk down the whole gym before I left the hospital,” she says. “It was wonderful. I am much stronger than when I came here. Without surgery, I would have been in bed for the rest of my life.”

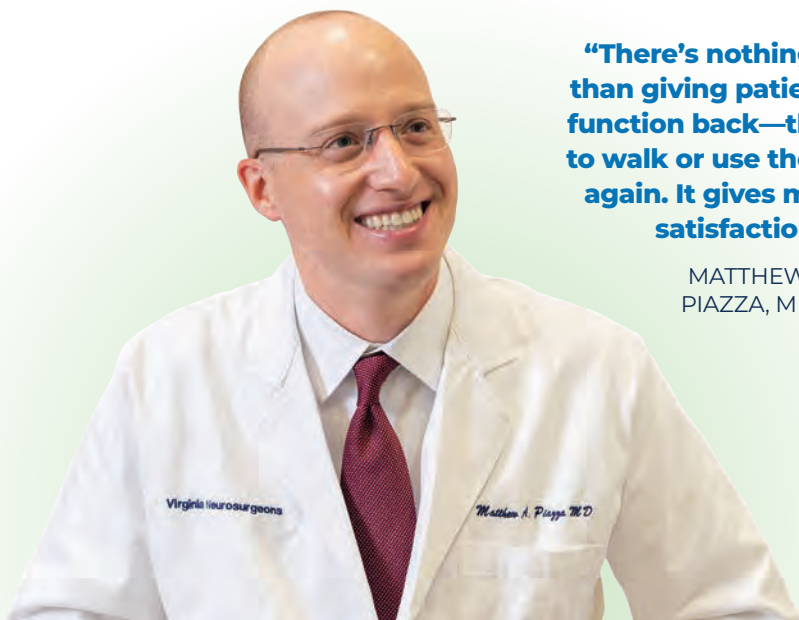
Dr. Piazza says Anne’s recovery is remarkable. “She had a terrible injury, but by using modern surgical techniques to achieve fracture stabilization, she has a good, functional outcome with minimal pain,” he says. “Today’s technology is key. It lets us perform fusion, fracture stabilization, and decompression surgery less invasively and with greater accuracy. There’s nothing better than giving patients their function back—the ability to walk or use their hands again. It gives me great satisfaction.”

Anne’s good fortitude and overall positive attitude helped in her recovery too.

“I believe in trying to make the best of things,” Anne says. “I’m proof that life is possible even after very bad things.”

“There’s nothing better than giving patients their function back—the ability to walk or use their hands again. It gives me great satisfaction.”

**MATTHEW
PIAZZA, MD**



PRIMARY CARE ARLINGTON

Natalie Burkhart, MD



Special interests:
women's health,
diabetes
prevention,
skin disorders,
anxiety and
depression

A Reston native, Dr. Burkhart grew up watching her father and grandfather, both primary care physicians, treat patients. "I saw how they came up with a collaborative plan for care," she says.

Inspired by that, Dr. Burkhart earned her medical degree at Georgetown University School of Medicine and completed her residency in internal medicine at Medstar Georgetown University Hospital. Since 2017, she has worked at VHC Health during her medical training, most recently as an attending physician in the Outpatient Clinic for underserved patients in Arlington.

"If you look at the most common health issues people have—heart disease, diabetes and cancers—many can be found early through screening before patients become symptomatic. Heart disease in women is especially underdiagnosed," she says. "It's important to have a good relationship with a primary care physician."

OB/GYN ARLINGTON

Sonia Amin, DO



Special interests:
patient-centered
obstetric care,
family planning,
minimally
invasive
gynecologic
surgery

After shadowing an OB/GYN, Dr. Amin knew that was the career for her. "I was inspired by all the amazing things you could do—seeing patients from the time they're a teenager through menopause and serving people in all aspects of their health, not just during their reproductive years," Dr. Amin says.

Dr. Amin earned her medical degree at Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine in North Carolina. During her OB/GYN residency at the University at Buffalo, she gained experience treating high-risk pregnancies and complex gynecologic patients.

"I'm passionate about patient-centered care, particularly for prenatal patients," Dr. Amin says. "I get to know patients' comfort with and understanding of their health so that we can engage in shared decision-making. I want them to know they can trust me throughout their life."

Melanie Polin, MD



Special interests:
LGBTQ care,
high-risk
obstetrics,
minimally
invasive
surgery

Fluent in Spanish

"OB/GYN is a special field, to care for women during some of their really personal and pivotal moments, but also their day-to-day concerns," says Dr. Polin, who treats the full spectrum of women's health. "I was drawn to VHC Health because the people are clinically excellent, compassionate and prioritize women's health."

She has a special interest in treating the LGBTQ community and says she understands how essential it is to listen to patients without judgment and with dignity. "It's important to have someone who understands what it's like," Dr. Polin says. "I want to be the doctor who listens."

Dr. Polin earned her medical degree at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons and completed her OB/GYN residency at Columbia University Irving Medical Center/ New York-Presbyterian Hospital.

Abbe Schickner, DO



Special interests:
minimally
invasive surgery,
comprehensive
obstetric care,
routine
gynecologic
care

Assisting women with navigating their many life transitions drew Dr. Schickner to specialize in OB/GYN. "I'm a very compassionate provider and good at listening to patients," she says. "I strive to understand my patients' unique concerns and goals and align them with the latest evidence-based treatments. I empower patients with education and tools to make the best decisions about their health."

Originally from Vermont, she earned her medical degree from the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine and completed her OB/GYN residency at MedStar Washington Hospital Center/Georgetown University. Dr. Schickner chose to join VHC Health Physicians because of its focus on evidence-based medicine and the opportunity to work in a teaching hospital with medical residents.

VHC Health Physicians New Kingstowne Location



Joylene Thomas,
MD, Primary Care

Joylene Thomas, MD

The new Kingstowne location of VHC Health Physicians feels like home to **Joylene Thomas, MD**, a primary care physician there. That's because she lives in the community.

"So many of my patients have said it's so convenient to come to the doctor—some even walk here because they live only five to 10 minutes away," Dr. Thomas says.

A multispecialty practice, the Kingstowne team includes OB/GYNs **Sali Jordan, MD, MS**, and **Jessica Sommer, DO, FACOG**. In November gastroenterologist **Ami Patel, DO**, will also start seeing patients at Kingstowne (see page 9). "It's a one-stop shop. Patients can see specialists here without having to travel across town," Dr. Thomas says.

Dr. Thomas earned her medical degree from Meharry Medical College in Nashville and completed an internal medicine residency at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C. After that, she worked in an underserved area of Southeast D.C. and for the military as a primary care manager for active-duty service members, retirees and their dependents. Her special areas of interest include preventive medicine and musculoskeletal pain.

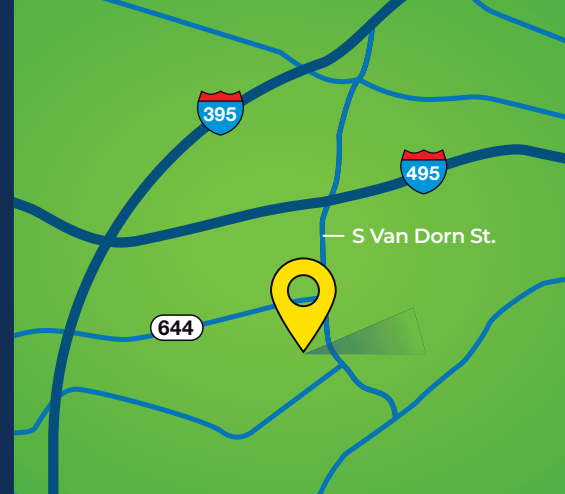
"I chose primary care because it allows me to develop relationships with patients and their family members," Dr. Thomas says. "Together we can optimize your blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol that can lead to complications or hospitalizations if not monitored. My goal is to keep you healthy and living your best life."



Sali Jordan, MD,
MS, OB/GYN



Jessica Sommer,
DO, FACOG,
OB/GYN



VHC Health Physicians—Kingstowne

5971 Kingstowne Village Pkwy.
Suite 300 | Alexandria, VA 22315
vhchealth.org/kingstowne

Kingstowne is a multispecialty practice providing:

- Primary care and OB/GYN services
- Gastroenterology services (starting November)
- Same-day, urgent appointments
- Convenient telehealth visits
- Lab services



NOW OPEN!



WELCOME NEW PHYSICIANS

PRIMARY CARE

Annandale

7611 Little River Tpke.
Suite 108 West
Annandale, VA 22003
703.717.7215

Arlington

1851 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 3B | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4282

Arlington North

1715 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 404 | Arlington, VA 22205
703.525.2898

Arlington South

950 S. George Mason Dr.
Suite 107 | Arlington, VA 22204
703.717.7311

Falls Church

400 S. Maple Ave. | Suite 200
Falls Church, VA 22046
703.532.5436

Kingstowne • NEW

5971 Kingstowne Village Pkwy.
Suite 300 | Alexandria, VA 22315
703.717.7378

McLean

6862 Elm St. | Suite 600
McLean, VA 22101
703.992.0649

National Landing

764 23rd St. South
Arlington, VA 22202
703.717.7030

Old Town

700 S. Washington St.
Suite 330 | Alexandria, VA 22314
703.528.8260

Shirlington

2800 S. Shirlington Rd.
Suite 500 | Arlington, VA 22206
703.717.4245

Tysons

1760 Old Meadow Rd.
Suite 305 | McLean, VA 22102
703.717.7278

Vienna

527 Maple Ave. E.
Suite 200 | Vienna, VA 22180
703.717.7284

West Alexandria

3475 N. Beauregard St.
Suite 201 | Alexandria, VA 22302
703.717.4148

West Springfield • NEW

5803 Rolling Rd. | Suite 110
Springfield, VA 22152
703.717.7375

SPECIALISTS

Breast Health

The Reinsch Pierce Family
Center for Breast Health
1851 N. George Mason Dr.
5th Floor | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4217

**Cardiac, Vascular
& Thoracic Surgery**

1625 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 288 | Arlington, VA 22205
703.558.6491

Cardiology

- 1851 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 3C | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.7780
- 700 S. Washington St.
Suite 330 | Alexandria, VA 22314
703.717.7780
- 1760 Old Meadow Rd.
Suite 305 | McLean, VA 22102
703.717.4281

Colorectal Surgery

- 1851 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 4D | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4180
- 3475 N. Beauregard St.
Suite 201 | Alexandria, VA 22302
703.717.4180

Irma Hashmi, DO



GASTROENTEROLOGY
ARLINGTON

Special interests:
GI issues in pregnancy,
preventive medicine

Dr. Hashmi earned her medical degree at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in Portland, ME. She completed her internal medicine residency at the University of Massachusetts and her gastroenterology fellowship at Virginia Commonwealth University, where she served as chief fellow and completed a women's health track.

A lack of female gastroenterologists led her to become a GI specialist. She has particular interest in treating pregnant women with gastrointestinal issues and preventive GI health, such as cancer screening.

"Few areas in medicine address vulnerability more than gastroenterology. I want my patients to feel welcome. Many people can be very shy to talk about problems such as diarrhea or constipation," Dr. Hashmi says. "I strive to provide a safe space for us to discuss what's happening with them."

Executive Health

1635 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 130 | Arlington, VA 22205
703.717.4700

Gastroenterology

- 1851 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 3A | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4792
- 400 S. Maple Ave. | Suite 200
Falls Church, VA 22046
703.717.4795
- 1760 Old Meadow Rd.
Suite 305 | McLean, VA 22102
703.717.4277

Infectious Diseases

1715 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 305 | Arlington, VA 22205
703.717.7851

**Maternal Fetal
Medicine**

1851 N. George Mason Dr.
5th Floor | Arlington, VA 22207
703.558.6077

**VHC Health
Rehabilitation**

- 7611 Little River Tpke.
Suite 108B
Annandale, VA 22003
703.717.7262
- 3475 N. Beauregard St.
Suite 202
Alexandria, VA 22302
703.717.7112

Ami Patel, DO



GASTROENTEROLOGY
ARLINGTON

Special interests:
gastroenterology, colorectal
cancer screening, colitis

“I decided to become a doctor at a young age,” says Dr. Patel, whose father was also a doctor. “I like people and I like science. Medicine is the intersection between the two.”

A Northern Virginia native, Dr. Patel earned her medical degree and a master’s degree in business administration at Lincoln Memorial University–Debusk College of Osteopathic Medicine in Tennessee and completed her residency with Advocate Health Care in Illinois.

“We need to get more people screened for colorectal cancer. Having a colonoscopy seems very daunting, particularly to women. I understand their hesitancy. That’s why I take the time to explain options for colon cancer screening to my patients to help overcome their reluctance to be screened,” says Dr. Patel.

In November, Dr. Patel will also start seeing patients at the multispecialty Kingstowne practice.

Ali Kahn, MD



GASTROENTEROLOGY
ARLINGTON

Special interests:
general gastroenterology,
gastroesophageal reflux
disease, motility disorders

Dr. Khan earned his medical degree from Pakistan’s Lahore Medical and Dental College, and completed his residency at Mount Sinai St. Luke’s and Mount Sinai West Hospital Program in New York City. He worked as a hospitalist for a couple of years before doing a gastroenterology fellowship at the United Health Services Wilson Medical Center in Binghamton, NY.

In addition to the Arlington Gastroenterology office at the Outpatient Pavilion, Dr. Khan will also see patients at the multispecialty Tysons practice. “My primary focus is providing patient-centered care that addresses the unique needs of each patient,” he says. “I aim to cultivate a relaxed atmosphere where patients can feel comfortable discussing sensitive digestive health issues.”

Dr. Khan is also fluent in Urdu and Hindi.

OB/GYN

- 1851 N. George Mason Dr.
5th Floor | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4600
- 700 S. Washington St.
Suite 300 | Alexandria, VA 22314
703.940.3364
- 5971 Kingstowne Village Pkwy.
Suite 300 | Alexandria, VA 22315
703.717.4196
- 7611 Little River Tpke.
Suite 108 West
Annandale, VA 22003
703.717.7240
- 950 S. George Mason Dr.
Suite 107 | Arlington, VA 22204
703.717.7313
- 1760 Old Meadow Rd.
Suite 305 | McLean, VA 22102
703.717.4264

- 527 Maple Ave. E.
Suite 200 | Vienna, VA 22180
703.717.7288

Palliative Medicine

(Inpatient Only)
1635 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 115 | Arlington, VA 22205
703.558.5291

Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

1715 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 305 | Arlington, VA 22205
703.248.0006

Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery

1851 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 4B | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4296

Podiatry

3475 N. Beauregard St.
Suite 201 | Alexandria, VA 22302
703.940.3810

Surgery – General & Bariatric

1851 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 4C | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4250

Urology

- 1851 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite 4A | Arlington, VA 22207
703.717.4200
- 3475 N. Beauregard St.
Suite 201 | Alexandria, VA 22302
703.506.8590
- 1760 Old Meadow Rd.
Suite 305 | McLean, VA 22102
703.717.4200

Wound Care & Hyperbaric Medicine

1701 N. George Mason Dr.
Suite G200
Arlington, VA 22205
703.558.6600

URGENT CARE

764 23rd St. South
Arlington, VA 22202

Open 8:00 am – 8:00 pm
7 days a week

No appointment
necessary
703.717.7000

Rare HPB Specialist Joins VHC Health

George Younan, MD is a fellowship-trained hepato-pancreato-biliary (HPB) surgeon, performing complex surgeries for benign and malignant diseases of the liver, pancreas, gallbladder and bile ducts. VHC Health is only one of two health systems in Northern Virginia performing such surgeries.

"Generally, these conditions are cancerous, and the surgeries are some of the biggest and most complex that can be done in the abdomen," says Dr. Younan. He uses minimally invasive and robotic-assisted surgical techniques, which mean less pain, shorter recovery time and improved outcomes for patients.

"We've come a long way in making HPB surgery and recovery in the hospital more efficient, enabling patients to get back to their normal lives or begin chemotherapy and other cancer treatments sooner."

Dr. Younan, who is fluent in Arabic and French, earned his medical degree from the American University of Beirut in Lebanon and did a general surgery internship at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and finished his residency at Fairfax Hospital. He then completed an HPB fellowship at the Froedtert and the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee.

After being in private practice in Northern Virginia since 2015, Dr. Younan recently joined VHC Health Physicians, becoming part of a growing number of highly specialized cancer surgeons and physicians here.



George Younan, MD, FACS

"In the past, HPB surgery was confined to only the largest tertiary care centers," says Dr. Younan. "I feel very proud to bring this expertise to the community, where patients can access highly specialized care close to home."

Managing Menopause

Menopause can be physically and emotionally challenging, and every woman experiences it differently.

"The continuum of care should begin when women enter the menopause transition," says **Terri Remy, MD, FACP**, primary care internist and certified menopause practitioner. The menopause transition begins with early symptoms of menopause and continues through the first 12 months without having periods. "Start thinking about what menopause means for your health and take proactive measures to address symptoms."

Many women experience bleeding changes during the menopause transition. Although common, bleeding that is unusually heavy, prolonged or frequent should be evaluated because this could be a sign of another condition. "Your provider may recommend an ultrasound, change in hormone regimen or an endometrial biopsy," says OB/GYN and certified menopause practitioner **Amanda Rohn, MD, FACOG**.

Dr. Remy speaks with patients about menopause symptoms they are having, as well as their OB/GYN and family medical histories. "I need to know about breast cancer, blood clots and cardiac health risks," she says. "I see patients who have had breast cancer and have surgically or medically induced menopausal issues related to cancer treatment."

It's also important to discuss vaginal health because a decline in estrogen during menopause can cause genitourinary syndrome, symptomized by vaginal dryness, pain or discomfort with sexual activity, and urinary tract infections. "A very low dose of vaginal estrogen can often alleviate these symptoms, but women often don't bring these concerns up. I mention it in my consultations," Dr. Remy says.



Amanda Rohn, MD, FACOG

A change in libido is another common symptom. "Everything from stress to body image to relationship issues to hormonal changes and pain can interfere with sexual function," Dr. Rohn says. Persistent pain, irritation or itching should be evaluated by an OB/GYN. "If libido changes still occur after addressing these symptoms, medical treatments are available."

Ultimately, it's about creating an individualized treatment plan and providing a continuum of care for all stages of menopause. "There is a lot of treatment and support available for menopause today. We want to make sure women have access to the care they need," says Dr. Remy.



Terri Remy MD, FACP



Oncology

All Dewberry Cancer Resource Center events & support groups are virtual via Zoom unless otherwise noted.



To register for these free programs, visit vhchealth.org & look for classes & events, call 703.558.5555, or scan this code.

Weekly Yoga

A gentle class to teach cancer patients & survivors to safely build strength & flexibility.

Fridays, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Bon Air Rose Garden Tour

Take a guided stroll with the landscape manager & learn about the Rose Garden's history, as well as gardening tips.

Wednesday, 10/18, 10:30 – 11:30 am

850 N. Lexington Ave., Arlington, VA 22205

Chronic Pain in Cancer Survivorship

One in three cancer survivors report chronic pain due to cancer or cancer treatment.

Learn about options to relieve pain.

Tuesday, 10/24, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Collage to Relax Your Busy Mind

A local artist demonstrates how to make a collage greeting card. No "artistic talent" necessary. Tools & supplies provided.

Thursday, 11/2, 4:30 – 5:30 pm

Cancer Resource Center

DIY Aromatherapy Spa at Home

Join the Cancer Resource Center team as we demonstrate how to make bath bombs at home using essential oils & natural colors.

Wednesday, 11/8, 4:30 – 5:30 pm

Cancer Resource Center

Healthy Holiday Cookie Swap

Holidays are for special treats, but we don't always have to overindulge. Join in the fun as we make healthy baked goodies to bring home to family & friends.

Tuesday, 11/14, 5:00 – 6:30

Outpatient Pavilion, Outpatient Rehabilitation, Garden Level

Chair Yoga for Seniors & Beginners

If you've been curious about yoga, but are worried you don't know the poses or aren't mobile enough, this is the class for you.

A Certified Yoga for Cancer instructor walks you through everything you need to know from the comfort of your own chair.

Thursday, 11/30, 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Knitting with Friends

Spend time with fellow patients, caregivers, survivors & staff while sharing conversation & work on your knitting projects. Beginners welcome.

Wednesday, 12/6, 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Wednesday, 1/10, 3:30 – 4:30 pm

Outpatient Pavilion, Main Level/Lobby

Managing Side Effects of Radiation

Radiation treatment may cause bothersome side effects. A radiation oncology nurse practitioner explains how to manage fatigue, skin changes & other side effects.

Tuesday, 12/12, 1:00 – 2:00 pm

SUPPORT GROUPS

Call 703.558.5555 or email cancersupport@vhchealth.org

Breast Cancer Patients with Children
Please call for more information.

Breast Cancer
3rd Tuesday, 5:00 – 6:30 pm

Prostate Cancer
4th Tuesday, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Opening Windows • For individuals with recurrent or metastatic cancer.
1st Thursday, 2:00 – 3:30 pm

Write Away Group
Patients share writings about their cancer journey.
[Call for more information.](#)

Reiki • Free half-hour session for cancer patients. **3rd Wednesday, 7:00 – 9:00 pm. Appointment only.**

C.H.A.N.C.E. Head & Neck Cancer
4th Wednesday, 6:00 – 7:30 pm

Young Adults with Cancer
1st Wednesday,
7:00 – 8:30 pm



ANNUAL Breast Cancer CONFERENCE

Sandhya Pruthi, MD, Mayo Clinic, provides a breast cancer screening update, discusses prevention & risk management, & presents strategies to address side effects of treatment. Her talk is titled "Breast Cancer: Enhancing Quality of Life. Predict. Prevent. Early Detect. Personalize." Q&A to follow with VHC Health's breast cancer team.

To view a videotape of the Breast Cancer Conference, visit vhchealth.org/cancer.





Women & INFANT HEALTH

Convenient, Virtual Prenatal Visits

When Courtney Aldo was pregnant with her first baby, getting to her prenatal doctor’s visits was tough. At the time, her job wasn’t very flexible, making it hard to take time off to get to appointments. She and her husband, Sean, then moved from Fairfax to Stafford, making it even more difficult to get to in-person appointments. So, when her OB/GYN said she was a great candidate for VHC Health **OB Connect**, Courtney jumped at the opportunity.

OB Connect is a program that equips expectant mothers with at-home remote monitoring tools, allowing them to do some prenatal appointments remotely by video with a dedicated nurse practitioner or nurse-midwife, who works under the supervision of the VHC Health Physicians–OB/GYN team.

OB Connect provides patients with a fetal Doppler to hear the baby’s heart rate and an electronic blood pressure cuff to check their blood pressure. Two days prior to their video visit, patients send the results of those tests to their OB Connect nurse via the MyVHC patient portal. The nurse reviews your results and care plan with a physician before your visit.

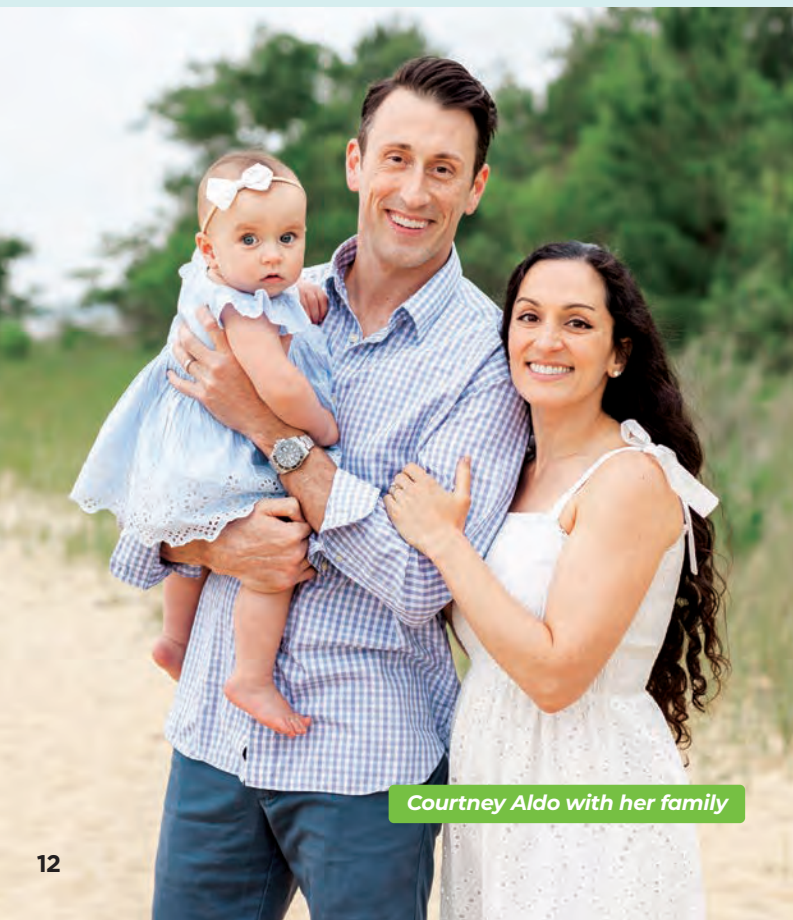
“During an in-office appointment, I was shown how to use everything—how to apply gel for the Doppler and how to put the blood pressure cuff on. It’s very easy to use,” says Courtney, who worked with **Debbie Smith, CNM, DNP**, a certified nurse-midwife. “During my first virtual visit with Debbie, I used the Doppler and took my blood pressure with her watching to make sure I was



At-home equipment

doing everything right. She guided me through it, and I became a pro at it.”

“The monitoring equipment is easier to use than people think it will be,” Debbie says. “People with kids often like to do the virtual visit with their children so that they can listen to the baby’s heartbeat. But most important, my



Courtney Aldo with her family

PHOTO: ERIKA WADDLES

WHY VHC OB CONNECT MAY BE RIGHT FOR YOU



OB Connect prenatal care is:

CONVENIENT. Do some prenatal visits virtually, rather than in the office, with a dedicated VHC OB Connect nurse-midwife or nurse practitioner.

TIMESAVING. Take less time off work and save on childcare to attend office appointments.

REASSURING. Use at-home equipment to check the baby’s heart rate and monitor your blood pressure.

PERSONALIZED. Spend time with your OB Connect nurse reviewing your care plan, getting answers to your questions, and learning about pregnancy specific to your needs.

INCLUSIVE. Include loved ones in your virtual visits.

OB Connect is available with physician approval to prenatal patients of VHC Health Physicians–OB/GYN. To watch a video about VHC OB Connect, scan this code or visit vhchealth.org/obconnect.



patients like not having to come to the office for all their prenatal visits.”

For Courtney, OB Connect meant her husband could be at her side for every virtual appointment. “Sean works from home,” she says. “He popped in for all my virtual visits. If my appointments had been onsite in a doctor’s office, that could not have happened.”

What’s more, Courtney says it was reassuring to have the Doppler and blood pressure equipment to monitor her and the baby’s health.

“Debbie was great at assuaging our fears as first-time parents,” Courtney says. “Sean and I feel like Debbie is our second mom. We’ve really gotten to know her and have created a personal relationship with her. At the end of our virtual appointments, we just catch up with her on life, which is really nice.”

When Courtney became pregnant with her second child, she considered switching to a hospital closer to her home in Stafford, but her experience with delivery at VHC Health and the OB Connect program, including Debbie’s personalized attention, made her decision to return there easy.

“Even though there is a hospital just five minutes from my house, making the drive to VHC Health and participating in VHC OB Connect again is definitely worth it,” Courtney adds.

BABY'S FIRST YEAR

All classes & support groups are online via Zoom. For class times & to register, visit vhchealth.org/objourney.

The First Year • Important information for first-time parents about parenting, safety, communication & sleep. **\$60/couple**

Starting Solids • Learn when to start and what to offer. **\$45/couple**

The Art of Pumping • Learn more about breast pumps & pumping strategies for the early weeks. **\$45/person**

Breast Pump Rentals • Rent a hospital-grade breast pump. For information & pricing, call 703.558.6744.



FREE SUPPORT GROUPS

Childbirth Experience • A safe space to discuss & process trauma related to childbirth. Led by a clinical facilitator experienced in Trauma Informed Care.

Postpartum • Group support for feeling anxious, angry, irritable or sad.

Breastfeeding • Get support & tips from others.

Breastfeeding for Working Moms • Learn breastfeeding & work-life balance strategies.

Moms4Moms • Receive support from others for your parenting journey.

PREGNANCY & BIRTHING CLASSES

Plan to take childbirth classes in your second trimester. For times & to register, visit vhchealth.org/objourney. For questions, email childbirth-education@vhchealth.org.

What to Expect When Having a Baby at VHC Health

Engage in a live chat with former Labor & Delivery nurses who review what to expect from admission to discharge. **FREE**

Advanced Comfort & Relaxation

Prepare for a natural, low-intervention birth that promotes comfort & support for you, your partner & baby. **\$80/couple**

Childbirth Preparation: 2-Week Series

Full format childbirth preparation course offered over two evenings for your convenience. **\$115/couple**

Childbirth Preparation: Full Format

This in-depth “Preparation for Childbirth” course is a great introduction for first-time parents or women planning for an unmedicated birth. 4 hours. **\$115/couple**

How to Prepare for Your C-Section

Starting with the third trimester, we explain how you can help your body prepare for delivery & recovery after Cesarean delivery. **\$75/couple**

Breastfeeding Basics

Get breastfeeding off to a good start, including making milk, positioning, latching & feeding. **FREE**

Infant Care Skills

Caring for your newborn during the first two weeks, including infant safety, sleep, diapering & bathing. **\$80/couple**

Big Brothers & Big Sisters

Prepare siblings-to-be two to five years of age to meet & interact safely with the new baby. **\$20/child**

Grandparenting

Learn the latest evidence-based infant care practices to prepare for caring for your new grandchild. **\$40/person**





Fitness & HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

DETAILS & REGISTRATION

- All sessions are 6 weeks unless otherwise noted.
- Date listed is the session start date.
- Drop-in & pro-rated registration available for classes already underway.
- Winter 2024 sessions will begin the week of January 8.

TO REGISTER

Visit vhchealth.org/healthy or call 703.558.6740.

LOCATION KEY

- V** = Virtual Class Online Via Zoom
- H** = VHC Health
- M** = McLean Baptist Church
- F** = Faith Lutheran Church

Body Sculpt

Tone & strengthen your upper, lower body & abs. All levels welcome. \$46
Mon, 5:30 – 6:15 pm begins 11/6 **H**
Tues, 5:30 – 6:15 pm begins 11/7 **V**
Wed, 5:30 – 6:15 pm begins 11/8 **H**

Cardio Kickboxing

Pump up your strength & stamina in this higher intensity class. \$46
Tues, 5:30 – 6:15 pm begins 11/7 **F**

Cardio Strength Circuit

Intermediate level class featuring faster-paced cardio & strength exercises. \$46
Thurs, 6:00 – 6:45 pm begins 11/9 **H**
Sat, 8:10 – 8:55 am begins 11/11 **V**

Core Challenge

Strengthen your abs & back. \$46
Thurs, 5:30 – 6:15 pm begins 11/9 **V**

Fitness Fusion

Combine cardio, strength & stretching. \$46
Tues, 4:30 – 5:15 pm begins 11/7 **F**

Functional Fitness

Mechanically correct strength & cardio training to enhance stamina, mobility & bone health. \$46
Tues, 1:00 – 1:45 pm begins 11/7 **F**
Sat, 9:00 – 9:45 am begins 11/11 **V** (Seated)

Low-Impact Cardio

Safe & fun movement to a variety of music. Class also includes balance & range of motion exercises. \$55
Tues, 10:00 – 11:00 am begins 11/7 **M New!**
Wed, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm begins 11/8 **M**

Zumba

Dance your way to fitness! \$55
Mon, 6:30 – 7:30 pm begins 11/6 **F**

Feldenkrais for Self Care

Learn how gentle, playful movement can help de-stress, ease pain & improve mobility. \$73
Tues, 12:15 – 1:15 pm begins 11/7 **V**

Prenatal Yoga

Stretch muscle groups essential for efficient labor & delivery. Physician approval required. \$73
Mon, 7:00 – 8:00 pm begins 11/6 **H**
Wed, 7:00 – 8:00 pm begins 11/8 **V**

Postpartum Yoga

Rebuild strength as you bond with baby (age 6 weeks to almost crawling). \$73
Tues, 10:30 – 11:30 am begins 11/7 **V/H**

Hatha Yoga

Classic yoga style combines postures & breathing techniques to improve the mind/body connection. \$73
Mon, 5:00 – 6:00 pm begins 11/6 **H**
Tues, 12:00 – 1:00 pm begins 11/7 **V/H**
Wed, 6:30 – 7:30 pm begins 11/8 **H New!**
Thurs, 4:00 – 5:00 pm begins 11/9 **V**



ONE ON ONE ASSESSMENTS

To make an appointment, call 703.558.6740. Screenings are held at the VHC Health Shirlington Campus—Health Promotion Office.

Body Fat Analysis • Assess your percentage of fat, muscle & water. \$15

Bone Density Screening • Ultrasound of the heel. \$35

Resting Metabolic Rate Screening
Help determine your daily calorie budget & weight management goals. \$55

Dermascan • Non-invasive scanning examines head & neck for potential or existing sun damage. \$10

A1-C Diabetes Screening* \$25

Cholesterol Screening*
Full Lipid Profile plus Glucose. \$25

Hemoglobin* \$15

Blood Type Testing* \$25

Thyroid Function (TSH)* (mailed results) \$35

Vitamin D* (mailed results) \$50

High Sensitivity C-Reactive Protein* (mailed results) \$35

**All blood tests are finger stick.*

SENIOR HEALTH

Gentle Yoga

Reduce stress as you increase strength & flexibility. \$86

Tues, 9:30 – 10:45 am begins 11/7 ▼

Thurs, 9:30 – 10:45 am begins 11/9 ▼

Adaptive/Seated Yoga

For those with limited mobility, chronic pain or neuropathy. All ages & ability levels welcome. \$73

Tues, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm begins 11/7 ▼

Thurs, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm begins 11/9 ▼ **New!**

Yin Yoga

Strengthen connective tissue for bone health, increased mobility & self-calming. \$73

Fri, 6:00 – 7:00 pm begins 11/10 ▼

Sat, 10:00 – 11:00 am begins 11/11 ▼

Gentle Pilates

A mat-based class with modifications to suit all abilities. \$73

Tues, 6:30 – 7:30 pm begins 11/7 ▼

Sat, 11:15 am – 12:15 pm begins 11/11 ▼

Mindful Movement

Practice elements of Qi Gong, breathing techniques & self-massage to improve mental & physical health. \$55

Tues, 2:00 – 3:00 pm 11/7 **F**

Tai Chi

Class follows the 37-posture Yang short form. *10-week sessions begin 10/9 & 1/8/24. \$120

Level 1: Mon, 4:10 – 5:10 pm **F**

Level 2: Mon, 5:15 – 6:15 pm **F**

Foam Roller Workshop **New!**

A VHC Health physical therapist shows how a foam roller can reduce muscle pain & improve circulation. Cost includes a foam roller for each participant. \$40

Wed, 11/15, 6:15 – 7:15 pm **H**

Pelvic Health Workshop

Education & exercise led by VHC Health physical therapists specializing in pelvic floor health. This two-session workshop is open to women of all ages, but is not focused on pre/postnatal issues. \$40

Tues, 6:00 – 7:15 pm. 10/17 & 10/24 **H**

Boost Your Balance

Reduce your fall risk by improving balance & stability. \$55

Wed, 2:00 – 3:00 pm begins 11/8 ▼

Thurs, 2:00 – 3:00 pm 11/9 **F**

Strength & Stretch for Seniors

Improve range of motion, muscle strength & bone health. \$46

Mon, 1:00 – 1:45 pm begins 11/6 ▼

Tues, 10:30 – 11:15 am begins 11/7 ▼ **New!**

Thurs, 1:00 – 1:45 pm begins 11/9 **F**

To register or for information, contact 703.558.6859 or seniorhealth@vhchealth.org.

Alzheimer's & Dementia Caregiver Support Group

3rd Wed of every month from 10:00 – 11:30 am

Senior Associates Program

Join today to take advantage of exclusive hospital benefits for adults 60 years and older. \$65/year for single; \$90/year for couple. Register at vhc.memberclicks.net or call 703.558.6970.

Lifeline Emergency Response

A 24-hour medical alert system personally over seen by Senior Health Department staff.

Stress Relief – A Gift to Yourself

As the holidays approach, you may feel anxious about traveling, hosting guests or managing expectations. What can you do to manage stress?

Start by understanding the root cause of your stress and devising manageable steps to improve the situation. Next, do things that you enjoy. Focus on activities that give you pleasure and stimulate your brain to release endorphins, the “feel good” hormone that helps to stabilize mood. Going for a walk, talking with a friend, reading or meditating are simple ways to feel more relaxed.

Exercise is an excellent stress reliever. VHC Health offers in-person and virtual fitness classes for all levels, including low-impact classes, with discounts for Senior Associates members. Drop in anytime to Walk-Fit, a free walking and stretching program led by VHC Health staff.

Last, joining a support group may be a good option. VHC Health has a variety of support groups, including one for caregivers. Plan now for ways to cope with stress and optimize your health during the holidays and year-round.



Seated Senior Fitness

Strengthen muscles, improve cardiovascular fitness & enhance overall physical function while seated on a sturdy chair. \$84

Mon & Fri, 10:30 – 11:30 am begins 11/6 ▼

Walk-Fit

A free fitness program featuring walking, stretching & blood pressure checks.

Thurs, 8:30 – 9:30 am, Lubber Run Community Center

Seniorcise

Class includes light cardio & exercises to maintain & regain strength & balance. 10-week fall sessions are underway. Call 703.558.6740 to join a class in progress. Winter sessions begin week of 1/8/24. Check vhchealth.org/healthy for dates.

M/W/F with Azita. 9:00 – 10:00 am. \$210 ▼

T/Th with Azita. 9:00 – 10:00 am. \$140 ▼

M/Th with Robin. 9:00 – 10:00 am. \$140 ▼



Arlington Health System
1701 N. George Mason Drive
Arlington, VA 22205-3610

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Christopher T. Lane
President & CEO

Russell McWey, MD
Chair, VHC Health System Board of Directors

J.J. Sverha, MD
President, Medical Staff

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The information offered in this magazine is general in nature. Your personal healthcare provider is your best source of medical advice. To be added or removed from the mailing list, call 703.558.6595.

vhchealth.org

Charlotte S. Benjamin Center for Women's Health

OPENS OCTOBER 31



Washington Commanders and VHC Health Join Forces for Women's Health



In recognition of her five decades of leadership and dedication to advance healthcare for women, VHC Health is proud to announce the new Charlotte S. Benjamin Center for Women's Health. "I am honored for this charitable recognition and am enthusiastic about the launch of a women's health fund to care for women in the region," says Benjamin.

"We are proud to select VHC Health as our official women's health partner," says Jason Wright, President, Washington Commanders. "Working together, we can all make a significant difference in the lives of countless women in our region," says Christopher T. Lane, President & CEO, VHC Health.



[Charlotte S. Benjamin](#) | [VHC Health Board of Directors \(Retired\)](#)

Read more at vhchealth.org/news