

# GET WELL & Stay Well

A Publication of the UMMC Patient Resource Center Spring 2005

## Welcome to Spring

Spring is officially here, and with it, come longer days, warmer weather and outdoor activities. Spring is also host to a variety of important health topics, which we feature in this issue of *GET WELL & Stay Well*.

Warmer weather usually means getting outdoors more often to play, relax, and take in springtime activities. What a great season to walk outside and enjoy the new season, and what better way to get fit. Obesity in this country kills more people than AIDS, breast, lung, and prostate cancers combined. Two out of three Americans are overweight and are getting bigger, because we don't move enough. Walking is a great way to get fit and reduce stress. In fact, this month we're proud to kick off the Get Fit Maryland campaign. Read about this exciting fitness initiative, supported by Governor Ehrlich, and sponsored by the University of Maryland Medical Center, the School of Medicine, and Merritt Athletic Clubs. Another article of interest to many discusses the new Center for Weight Management and Wellness at the Medical Center. On the lighter side, we also feature an article, which reports the benefits of humor and laughter in our lives to combat stress.

The Patient Resource Center is beginning its second year with an expanded class and event schedule. Please look at our course schedule on the back cover and read our informative articles, and learn how to better care for yourself and others. Our vision is to help people—*GET WELL and Stay Well*.

Stay Healthy,  
Anne D. Williams, RN, MS  
Editor

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## “Get Fit Maryland” Program Challenges You to Take 10,000 Steps a Day

**MEDICAL CENTER EMPLOYEES CAN REGISTER APRIL 18TH THROUGH 29TH**



You may notice lots of people walking more places and taking the stairs over the next few months. The Medical Center has joined with the School of Medicine and Merritt Athletic Clubs to launch “Get Fit Maryland,” a 12-week program aimed at preventing obesity and cardiovascular disease by encouraging Marylanders to take 10,000 steps a day. Participants will receive pedometers and log books to keep track of their steps. The program also includes prize incentives, seminars on weight loss and fitness, health screenings and 30-day free fitness center memberships. The official day to start counting steps is May 1.

“More than 60 percent of Americans are overweight or obese, putting them at risk for problems like heart disease and diabetes,” says Suzanne Sysko, MD, Medical Director of the Center for Weight Management and Wellness at the University of Maryland Medical Center.

“Many people aren't aware of how sedentary they've become, but adding just three hours of walking a week can greatly reduce your health risks,” adds Dr. Sysko, who is also an Associate Professor of Medicine at the School of Medicine.

The average American takes about 900-3,000 steps a day, when most people need 10,000 to maintain or lose weight and improve their health. Get Fit Maryland participants will use their pedometers to count how many steps they take each day. The program guides also them on ways to increase those numbers.

Employees can sign-up at the Patient Resource Center April 18 through 29 from 9 a.m. to noon. The registration packet comes with a pedometer, log book, shoelaces, magnet, pen, health screening assessment, 30-day free membership to Merritt Athletic Clubs and a seminar schedule. Medical Center employees can register for just \$5, a discount off the regular cost of \$15.

“We encourage everyone to join and to recruit their co-workers to join them,” says Dottie Laforce, Benefits Manager for the Medical Center. “The Get Fit Maryland program is a great opportunity for everyone to assess their activity level and make changes toward a healthier lifestyle.”

Employees can also take advantage of designated walking paths around campus.

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# Laugh Your Way to Health

Elizabeth P. Fuss, RN, MS, CIC

Do you want to bolster your immune system without taking any drugs or even without visiting an expensive spa? Try laughter!

Author Norman Cousins has provided evidence of the healing power of humor. In his book *Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient* he describes suffering a debilitating illness, during which he noticed beneficial effects of positive emotions on body chemistry. Cousins reports, “we began the part of the program calling for the full exercise of the affirmative emotions as a factor in enhancing body chemistry. It was easy enough to hope and love and have faith, but what about laughter? Nothing is less funny than being flat on your back with all the bones in your spine and joints hurting.” Cousins gathered favorite funny movies like

old Marx Brothers films, watched *Candid Camera* classics and had books of humor read to him. “It worked,” he concluded. “I made the joyous discovery that ten minutes of genuine belly laughter had an anesthetic effect and would give me at least two hours of pain-free sleep.” Cousins’ doctor also documented drops in his sedimentation rate, showing that “there is a physiologic basis for the ancient theory that laughter is good medicine.”

Since Cousins’ illness in 1964, much research has been done about humor’s effects on the body. Humor itself can’t easily be evaluated but its effects can be. We now know that laughter benefits the cardiovascular system, the respiratory tract, the musculo-skeletal, endocrine, nervous and immune systems. Laughter increases the secretion of energizing catecholamines and endorphins, increases oxygenation of the blood and decreases residual air in the lungs. As the arteries relax, heart rate and blood pressure are lowered and peripheral circulation is improved. Physiological evidence has also been shown that laughter relaxes muscles, and the relaxation response can last up to 45 minutes after a hearty laugh.

In fact, in a recent study led by Michael Miller, MD, University of Maryland School of Medicine, researchers found impressive findings supporting the benefits of laughter. After 20 participants watched parts of two movies, *Saving Private Ryan* and *Kingpen*, their overall blood flow increased by 22 percent when watching the funny movie, while decreasing by 35 percent after watching the stressful movie. This study was recently reported in the *Washington Post* in March. Before and after watching the movies, researchers tested the participants’ blood vessel dilation. This study showed a dramatic difference between the groups. Miller and his colleagues hypothesize that laughter may counteract the effects of stress hormones and cause blood vessels to dilate. Based on his results, Miller says that he is “happy to recommend laughing to my patients.”

*“Physiological evidence has also been shown that laughter relaxes muscles, and the relaxation response can last up to 45 minutes...”*

Think about ways that you can add more humor to your own life and your family life. Below are some easy examples:

- Collect jokes and funny stories to share at the dinner table.
- Watch a TV comedy or go to a funny movie. Rent a recent family favorite like *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo*, or *Shrek 2*.
- Get together with a group of friends who enjoy being together.
- Laugh at yourself when you do something “dumb.” Don’t take yourself or your mistakes too seriously. Chalk it up to a character-building experience!
- Tell jokes with a young child. They tend to laugh easily and chances are you will laugh with them!

**Be healthy, be happy, laugh often!**

## “GET FIT MARYLAND”, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In the registration packets, participants will find campus maps with suggested routes, ranging in length from a quarter-mile to a mile-and-a-half.

“Just taking a half-hour walk during lunch can make a difference,” says Dr. Sysko. “You don’t have to start with 10,000 steps a day. At first, try adding just 2,000 steps to your starting number. Once you’re comfortable with that, keep working to increase your goals. Ideally, you should walk 10,000 steps on most days of the week.”

*“Just taking a half-hour walk during lunch can make a difference...”*

And there are incentives for keeping with the program. Participants who complete one month can receive a free Get Fit Maryland water bottle. You must show that you’ve recorded your steps, set a goal for next four weeks and have attended one of the Get Fit Maryland seminars, which will be held weekly at various Merritt club locations and Giant food stores. Topics for these meetings include weight loss, diabetes, heart disease and exercise. The incentives for completing the second and third months are running socks and an Under Armor shirt.

“We hope the program will be a fun way for people to add more activity into their lives,” says Mariellen Synan, Community Outreach Coordinator for the Medical Center. “Employees can get their friends and family involved too. Anyone can sign up at the Merritt Athletic Clubs from April 18-29. Overall, we hope to have 5,000 Marylanders counting their steps.”

**For more information, you can call Mariellen Synan at 410-328-8402 or Dottie Laforce at 410-328-0904 or go to [www.getfitmaryland.org](http://www.getfitmaryland.org)**



# Center for Weight Management & Wellness

The Center for Weight Management & Wellness at University of Maryland Medical Center offers a comprehensive approach to treating obesity in adults that includes long-term after care and emotional support. The Center combines the expertise of a medically supervised Weight Loss Program, a Bariatric Surgery Program, and the Department of Psychiatry.

## A COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENT APPROACH

The Center for Weight Management & Wellness offers a comprehensive, goal oriented treatment approach. While no two treatment plans are alike, most plans feature a combination of therapies designed to help patients achieve a safe method of weight loss.

The Center is committed to providing patients with the tools to achieve lasting weight loss by offering a broad range of programs and services to meet the unique needs of patients.

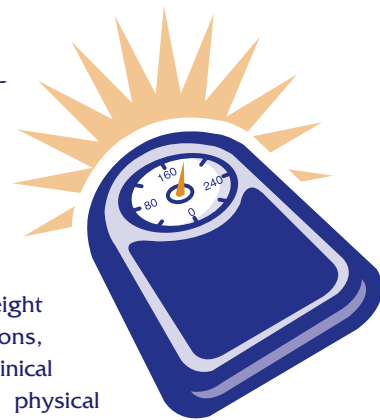
**The Comprehensive Center for Weight Management & Wellness and The Bariatric Surgery Program, led by Mark Kligman, MD,** provides an experienced surgical team offering patients the latest in minimally invasive options to Bariatric surgery. A team of weight loss specialists evaluate and counsel patients as they prepare for surgery and offer a broad range of services to help ensure long-term weight loss success.

**The Medical Weight Loss Program, led by Suzanne Sysko, MD,** is a physician-supervised program that includes behavioral and dietary evaluations and modification for patients who have had difficulty losing weight. Some patients who are at risk for complications from other medical conditions benefit from periodic supervision of diabetes, hyperlipidemia, heart failure, or hypertension while losing weight.

## THE INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

Patients are evaluated by a dedicated, experienced interdisciplinary team. Once this initial assessment is complete, the team

meets to coordinate care and establish an individualized course of treatment for maximum results. Depending on the patient's unique needs, the members of his or her interdisciplinary team include physicians and health care professionals with special training in weight management; bariatric surgeons, endocrinologists, pulmonologists; clinical dietitians exercise physiologists, physical therapists; and psychiatrists.



## SERVICES

- Medical assessments & evaluations
- Drug therapy
- Weight reduction plan (may include liquid supplement)
- Psychological evaluation
- Weight loss educational sessions
- Surgical consultation and evaluation
- Bariatric surgery (both open and minimally invasive procedures)
- Nutritional counseling
- Behavioral weight management
- Supervised exercise programs
- Support groups (both online and in-person)
- Long-term follow-up (include medical, physical and nutritional evaluations)

**For more information about the Center for Weight Management & Wellness at University of Maryland Medical Center, please call 1-800-492-5538.**

# Pediatric Occupational Therapy: Helping Kids Be Kids Through Fun Therapeutic Activities

Cheryl Zalieckas, OTR/L and Loretta Ferrell, MS, OTR/L

Occupational therapists help people of all ages learn or regain skills that enable them to lead purposeful lives. Occupational therapists work in a variety of settings including schools, hospitals, outpatient, mental health and rehabilitation facilities, as well as nursing homes, and community agencies. Pediatrics is a specialty area of occupational therapy. Pediatric therapists take a holistic approach in working with children, where they look at the child, their environment, and the interaction between the two. In all areas of pediatrics, occupational therapists are working to improve the child's functional performance and to improve their ability to interact with their physical and social environments.

At UMMS, there are currently two dedicated occupational therapists working in the pediatric department. These pediatric therapists assess and treat children ages birth to adult

on the acute care floor, the neonatal intensive care unit, the pediatric intensive care unit, full-term nursery, and outpatient settings.

Pediatric occupational therapists at UMMS offer a wide range of therapeutic interventions to assist your child in the areas of:

- Organizing Sensory Input
- Oral Motor Skills and Feeding
- Adaptive Positioning
- Visual Perceptual Skills
- Training in Daily Living Activities
- Splinting
- Motor Planning and Control
- Fine Motor Development
- Brachial Plexus Injuries

If you feel your child is experiencing problems in any of these areas, talk to your physician to see if an occupational therapy consult is appropriate or call 410-328-5820.



## April/May/June 2005 Calendar

To register for classes (except for Stork's Nest, Childbirth and Infant Care), please contact the Patient Resource Center at 410-328-WELL (9355). All sessions are free unless noted.

### Classes

#### Stork's Nest—Prenatal Education

April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

May 6, 13, 20, 27

June 3, 10, 17, 24

All classes run from 10:30 am–12:30 pm every Friday. Please contact Stork's Nest at 410-328-2944 for info and registration.

#### Childbirth Education and Infant Care

Please contact Childbirth Office at 410-328-2944 for fees and registration for the following courses.

#### Childbirth Preparation

Wednesdays beginning May 4, 7–9:00 pm

#### Childbirth Weekend Marathon

April 23 & 24

May 14 & 15

#### Breastfeeding

April 6, 6–8:30 pm

May 9, 6–8:30 pm

#### Infant Care

April 13, 7:30–9:30 pm

May 10, 7:30–9:30 pm

#### Infant Safety and CPR

April 25, 7:30–9:30 pm

May 23, 7:30–9:30 pm

#### Yoga (Prana)

Mondays 6–7:00 pm

Cost: \$10 for employees weekly or \$100 for 10 weeks. \$12 for public weekly or \$120 for 10 weeks. \$15 for walk-ins (Walk-ins are welcome.). \$25 reimbursement for benefit-eligible employees.

#### The Solution® Method Training

Tuesdays 6–8:00 pm

12 Week Group—ongoing. Provides support and training in the skills of self-nurturing and effective limits, which turn off the drive to go to excess with food, working, spending, etc.

Cost: \$399. \$25 reimbursement for benefit-eligible employees.

#### Smoking Cessation—American Lung Association's Freedom from Smoking®

8 weeks. Tuesdays, 12 noon–1 pm beginning April 26

Call 410-328-9355 for registration. Don't have to quit the first day! Cost: Free through a Baltimore City Health Dept. Grant (includes ALA educational packet).

#### Food Safety...It's in Your Hands

Mondays 10:00 am

For any Cancer Center patients, families, or caregivers.

9 Gudelsky Conference Room near the BMT unit entrance.

### Support Groups

#### Strength and Recovery: How Rehabilitation Can Help You

#### Transplant Education Series—Support Group

April 19, 5–6:30 pm

UMMC Employee Learning Center

#### Employment After Transplantation & End of Session Celebration Transplant Education Series—Support Group

May 17, 5–6:30 pm

UMMC Employee Learning Center

#### Leukemia and Lymphoma Support Group

4th Tuesday each month, 3:30 pm

Free to all adults/families with Leukemia, Hodgkins or non-Hodgkins Lymphoma, or Myeloma. Call Tracy Orwig at 410-825-2500 or Beth Wintermute at 410-328-3595 to register or for information.

UMMC Patient Resource Center

### Lunchtime Series

#### Women's Health Topics

To register for the light lunch seminars, please call 410-328-6338. All sessions held in the Patient Resource Center.

#### What's Normal, What's Not—Uterine Bleeding

April 12, Noon

#### The Healthy Woman—Why Pap Smears are Necessary

May 19, Noon

#### Cancer Screening—Innovative Approaches to Early Diagnoses in Women

June 30, Noon

#### Permanent Birth Control—Is It for You?

July 12, Noon

#### Cancer Topics

To register for the light lunch seminars, please call 410-328-6338. All sessions held in the Patient Resource Center.

#### Considering All Options—Complementary Medicine for Cancer Patients

April 28, Noon

#### A Team Approach—Palliative Care Services for the Cancer Community

June 2, Noon

#### Eating Healthy and Staying Strong—The Role of Nutrition in Conquering Cancer

June 16, Noon

### Events

#### Get Fit Maryland

Registration April 18–29, 9 am–Noon

UMMC Patient Resource Center

#### Flower Mart

May 18, 10 am–Dusk

Mt. Vernon Place

#### Blood Drive

May 27, 7 am–7:00 pm

UMMC Employee Learning Center

#### Good Nutrition Day

June 15, 10 am–2 pm

Lexington Market

#### Free Mammograms and Pap Tests

To women over 40 years living in Baltimore City. Offered by the Baltimore City Cancer Program at UMMC Cancer Center. Call 410-328-HOPE (4673).