

QUALITY OF LIFE *from*

WINTER 2019

# aiken regional

MEDICAL CENTERS

## *Surviving* a heart attack

Awareness and quick action  
saved Suzanne's life



### INSIDE:

#### **Giving the gift of life**

*Saving lives through organ donation*

#### **Colorectal cancer prevention**

*Important screenings to consider*

Compliments of  
 **Aiken Regional**  
MEDICAL CENTERS



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE WINTER 2019

4

### A full circle of cardiac care

Suzanne Lowe's great  
patient experience

8

### Ask the Doctor

What you should know  
about kidney stones

10

### Sugar rush

Beware of added sugars  
in your food and drinks

## BETTER *health.* BETTER *life.*



As we round out the first quarter of a new year, we look back on 2018 with pride on all we have achieved, including an "A" rating for patient safety in The Leapfrog Group's Hospital Safety Grade. We also earned certification as a Primary Stroke Center from the American Stroke Association®/American Heart Association®.

We aren't resting on these laurels and accolades. We continually look at ways to enhance our patients' experiences, whether its adding new advanced technology like the wireless fetal monitors new mothers have been using in our Women's LifeCare Center or welcoming the Surgery Center of Aiken to the Aiken Regional family. Our goal is to always deliver the quality of care our community deserves and expand our footprint and programs to better serve you.

We're excited to report that the Surgery Center of Aiken has been well received as patients seek care that works best for them. We are continually working to add new services, welcome new physicians to the community and enhance your experience, no matter the type of care you need. From the emergency room, to intensive care, to preventive health, our dedicated, compassionate staff is here to provide support when it is needed the most. Their focus is on how to best transform the lives of the people we serve. There are more reasons now than ever to make Aiken Regional Medical Centers your hospital of choice.

As always, we look forward to the opportunity to provide 24/7 care to our wonderful community I'm grateful to call home. Know that we are always here for you.

All the best,

**Matt Merrifield**

*Chief Operating Officer*

# *Aiken Regional welcomes* **The Surgery Center of Aiken**

The Surgery Center of Aiken (SCA), a same-day multi-specialty outpatient surgical facility, joined the Aiken Regional Medical Centers' family this past fall. It's an option for healthcare services to meet the needs of the community, says Chief Nursing Officer Virginia (Ginger) Hawkins, MSN, RN, NEA-BC.

The recently acquired facility has four operating rooms and two procedure rooms. "We still offer outpatient surgery in the hospital, but some procedures don't necessarily need to be done in an acute care facility," Hawkins says. "It depends on the patient's condition and what they are having done. Their doctor can determine the best facility for them to have their procedure."

The center also operates under the same federal, state, safety and Medicare regulations as the hospital. In addition, the facility is required to have medical staff with emergency and CPR training onsite, as well as the ability to transfer a patient to a hospital in the event of an emergency. "We have the same robust quality control and standard of care here [at SCA] as we do at the hospital. The doctors, nurses and other clinical staff have the same level of training and credentials as the medical staff at the hospital, and many of them work in both facilities," says Hawkins. "New equipment has also been installed and the process has been seamless."

Whether it's for convenience, a more relaxed environment, scheduling or personal preference, some people prefer an outpatient facility, notes Hawkins. "We are proud to offer more healthcare options to our community and the surrounding region," she says. ■

**To learn more: [aikenregional.com/ops](https://aikenregional.com/ops)**



## **Multiple specialties**

**Services in a wide variety of specialties are offered at the Surgery Center of Aiken, including:**

- Gastroenterology
- General surgery
- Gynecology
- Ophthalmology
- Orthopedics
- Otolaryngology (ENT)
- Pain management
- Plastic surgery
- Podiatry
- Urology





# **“I survived a heart attack!”**

*– Suzanne Rye Lowe*

*Having a family history of heart issues and losing her father (age 38) and brother (age 52) to heart attacks, she knew what to watch for and sought care immediately. ➤*

When Suzanne Rye Lowe, 52, was experiencing intermittent chest pain on November 4, 2018, she brushed it off, thinking it was reflux. But then she felt two quick, sharp pains in her chest, and didn't hesitate to call for help. Aiken Regional Medical Centers' emergency department quickly evaluated her and ran blood work and additional tests. Based on the results, they advised she stay the night for observation.

Lowe explains that 45 minutes later, while waiting to repeat some blood tests, she started feeling the classic heart attack symptoms of the crushing feeling in her chest; pain radiating up into her face, her back and arm; and nausea. She alerted the nurse, and another EKG was performed – Lowe was in the midst of having a heart attack.

### **Completely blocked artery**

Doctors quickly moved Lowe to the cardiac catheterization lab, where Interventional Cardiologist David Cundey, MD, FACC, and his team began a procedure, known as an angioplasty, that would save Lowe's life. "I was awake the whole time, and I remember this crushing pain. When Dr. Cundey placed three stents in a completely blocked artery, the blood flow was restored and the pain subsided," says Lowe. "Within an hour, I was finally breathing much better and was so relieved."

Lowe was then transferred to the ICU (intensive care unit) for observation. That's when one of the nurses learned it was Lowe's wedding anniversary and brought dinner in for Lowe and her husband to celebrate. "We were counting our blessings that we were able to even be together on our anniversary, and we were touched by her gesture of kindness," says Lowe.

### **Road to recovery**

In less than 24 hours from when her saga began, Lowe was back home. Soon after, she began the Aiken Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, located in the USCA Wellness Center. "The program included 36 sessions of cardio and weightlifting, one hour each, three times a

week. I loved that the rehab is so close to the hospital. If anything happened, I'm right there," says Lowe, who is feeling much better. "Plus, a cardiologist and two nurses were always present to monitor patients closely. I would be tired after each workout, which they said is normal, but have had no pain or issues since my heart attack," she adds.

Lowe continues to improve, and has lost weight since revamping her diet and following a program provided by her cardiologist. "I am eating less carbs and feel absolutely great," Lowe says.

### **"Invaluable to the community"**

From start to finish, Lowe says her patient experience with Aiken Regional Medical Centers was incredible. "This facility, doctors, nurses and entire staff are invaluable to the community, and I am so grateful," she says.

When talking about her experience, Lowe says she had every symptom imaginable at the time of her heart attack. Which is why she cautions that you should be aware of signs and symptoms you may have leading up to a heart attack. "If you are outside working in your garden, do you get out of breath? Do you feel discomfort? Make sure you see your doctor if you notice these little things. And if you think you are having a heart attack, do not wait – get help immediately! You may not get a second chance like I did," she says. ■

**Learn more about our comprehensive cardiac services: [aikenregional.com/cic](https://aikenregional.com/cic)**



## ***Aiken Cardiac Rehabilitation Program***

If you've had a recent cardiac event, a customized program can help heal your heart. **Learn more at [aikenregional.com/cardiacrehab](https://aikenregional.com/cardiacrehab).**



# *Staying ahead* of colorectal cancer

Screenings and  
knowledge are the  
keys to treatment  
and prevention

The American Cancer Society reports that colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in both men and women, and it's estimated that in the U.S. alone, there will be 101,420 cases of colon cancer and 44,180 cases of rectal cancer in 2019. ►



Colon cancer is known as a “silent” killer because many people are not aware they have it until they experience symptoms. By that time, the disease may be too far along to effectively treat. The irony is that it is one of the most preventable cancers and very treatable, if caught early. “When caught in the earliest stages, about 80-90 percent of patients can be treated successfully,” says Gastroenterologist and Internal Medicine Specialist Ayaz Chaudhary, MD. “But if it’s not diagnosed until further along, the cure rate falls to about 50 percent.”

### The importance of screening

The “gold standard” for evaluation of your colon is a colonoscopy. “The goal is to help prevent colon cancer through screening,” says Dr. Chaudhary. During this procedure, the lining of the colon and rectum is checked for polyps or cancer. About 25 percent of people will have polyps the first time they have a colonoscopy. But by finding and removing them early, you can help prevent colon cancer.

### Get screened

Regular screening should begin at age 50, unless you have risk factors, in which case, screening should begin earlier. Risk factors include having inflammatory bowel disease;

a personal or family history of colorectal polyps or genetic factors; a diet high in red meat and processed meats; low-fiber diet; obesity; smoking; and heavy alcohol use. The American Cancer Society reports that just being over age 50 increases the risk of developing colorectal cancer, and that approximately nine out of 10 people who develop colorectal cancer are at least 50 years old. Your doctor can advise you on the optimal time to get screened.

### Treating colorectal cancer

The first approach to treatment for most patients is surgery, followed by chemotherapy, if needed, explains Brett Slack, Director of the Cancer Care Institute of Carolina. A pathology report determines the stage of cancer and an ultrasound or a CT scan helps stage the cancer preoperatively. Some patients may need chemotherapy and radiation before the surgery to shrink the tumor, making removal easier. “The earlier the diagnosis, the better the prognosis,” he says. Slack also recommends that people take advantage of an in-home colorectal cancer screening kit, which Aiken Regional provides for free during the month of March. ■

### Learn more:

[aikenregional.com/cancer](https://aikenregional.com/cancer)



### Know the symptoms

Awareness is key to prevention, especially if you have a prior or family history of colon cancer. The most common symptom for colon cancer is lower abdominal pain that varies in location and intensity.

Other symptoms may include:

- Changes in bowel habits and consistency
- Rectal bleeding
- Weakness or fatigue
- Unintended weight loss

Many of these symptoms can mimic other health issues, such as hemorrhoids or irritable bowel disease. That’s why it’s important to see your doctor if you experience any of these symptoms, so they can determine the cause.



## GET A FREE COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING KIT!

Colorectal cancer is often preventable and treatable if detected early. Aiken Regional is providing **FREE** colorectal cancer screening kits during the month of March. The kit contains a test designed to detect small amounts of hidden blood in your stool, which can indicate early problems with polyps or cancer. The test is performed in the privacy of your home and requires only a minimal stool sample.

**Get your free kit: [aikenregional.com/kit](https://aikenregional.com/kit)**

# Are kidney stones causing you pain?



Anyone who has had a kidney stone knows they are no laughing matter.

There can be many contributing factors, including family history, diet and dehydration.

**Urologist Darren Mack, MD,**

and **Jessica Luke, DNP,** share information on what causes kidney stones, how they are treated, and how you can help prevent them.



## **Q: What are kidney stones and what can cause them?**

Kidney stones are formed from high concentrations of calcium, phosphorus or oxalate present in the urine. Most times, they pass through the urinary tract, but larger stones can get stuck and block urine flow. This can cause extreme pain and can lead to infection or even kidney failure.

Risk factors include a family history of kidney stones and eating a diet high in protein, sodium or high-oxalate foods, such as dark leafy vegetables and chocolate. Having gout can put you at an even higher risk.

## **Q: What are the symptoms?**

Signs of a possible kidney stone can include severe pain on either side of the lower back; pain near the stomach or a stomach ache that won't go away; blood in the urine; nausea or vomiting; fever and chills; urine that has a foul odor or looks cloudy; or urgency and frequency of urination. However, symptoms may not be present until the stone starts to descend into the urinary tract, and even then, you may not realize the kidney stone is the source of your pain.

## **Q: How are kidney stones treated?**

Treatment can include medication and increased fluid intake or minimally and non-invasive surgical techniques. Medication allows the ureters to relax, and increased hydration can enable the stone to pass on its own. A procedure known as ureteroscopy uses a small tube with a tiny camera that is fed through the urethra to the stone. It can then be removed or vaporized with a laser. Another option is Extracorporeal Shock Wave Lithotripsy® (ESWL), that uses ultrasonic waves to break up the stone so it can pass through the urinary tract.

## **Q: How can you prevent kidney stones?**

Once you've had a kidney stone, you may develop more. Your doctor can determine the type of stone you had and can advise you about any dietary changes or medications to help. For example, if you had calcium oxalate kidney stones, it's suggested that you reduce sodium and combine foods with calcium and oxalate. For uric acid stones, you should avoid red meat, liver and other animal organs, and shellfish. Also, drinking plenty of water is essential, as dehydration can lead to the formation of stones when urine becomes concentrated with mineral deposits. ■

**Find a doctor: [aikenregional.com/doctor](https://aikenregional.com/doctor)**

*Individual results may vary. There are risks associated with any surgical procedure. Talk with your doctor about these risks to find out if minimally invasive surgery is right for you.*



# Giving the gift of life

APRIL IS  
NATIONAL  
DONATE LIFE  
MONTH

## The importance of organ donation and what you should know

LifeLink® of Georgia is a resource for Aiken Regional Medical Centers. "LifeLink works to provide information to families during a difficult time," says Administrative Director of Patient Experience, Eric Muhlbaier, MHA. "When needed, we are there to provide whatever support LifeLink and the families require."

"Donation is rare, and does not happen every day in every hospital," states Tony Cooper, a hospital development liaison for LifeLink. "We want to make sure everyone thinks about donation and makes an informed decision about it, and let the medical professionals decide at the time of death if organ donation is possible," says Cooper. "We are proud to work with Aiken Regional as a valued resource of community support." ■

**SAY "YES"**  
to organ donation



Nationally, more than  
120,000 patients are  
on the waiting list  
for an organ transplant...countless  
others need corneas, tissue, bone  
marrow, blood and platelets



Someone is added to the national  
transplant waiting list every 10 minutes



**ONE** donor can save up to 8 lives through  
organ donation and more than 75 lives  
through eye and tissue donation

### What can be donated?



Lungs



Liver



Pancreas



Kidneys



Tendons



Corneas



Skin



Small  
intestine



Bones



Veins



Cartilage



Heart  
valves



Heart

**\$0**

The cost  
to donors  
and their  
families

**22**

people die  
every day  
waiting for  
an organ

### South Carolina 2017 stats

ALMOST  
**TWO MILLION**  
RESIDENTS ARE  
REGISTERED  
DONORS



ABOUT  
**1,000 PEOPLE**  
ARE ON  
THE ORGAN  
TRANSPLANT  
WAITING LIST

- 560 organ  
transplants  
gave people a  
second chance

- 838 received the  
gift of sight through  
a cornea transplant

- 260 lives were  
enhanced through  
tissue donation

- South Carolina  
became one of the  
top five most giving  
areas in the country



97% said "Yes" to organ donation through the  
South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles

**82%**

of patients  
need a kidney

1 out of 3  
deceased  
donors is over  
the age of

**50**



Anyone can register to be a donor, and a national registry  
matches potential donors with people on the waiting list

Sources: Donate Life® and  
Donate Life® South Carolina

Aiken Regional Medical Centers is your community hospital. Learn more: [aikenregional.com/info](http://aikenregional.com/info)

# *Sugar, how sweet it is – or is it?*

## The impact of sugar and its effects on your health

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), Americans are consuming too much added sugar. And most people aren't even aware of just how much sugar is contained in everyday food and beverages. "Too much sugar equates to weight gain, which can increase blood pressure, blood sugars, heart disease risk and further exacerbate joint issues," says Jackie Enlund, MPH, RD, LD.

### What is added sugar?

Many whole foods have naturally occurring sugars, such as fruits, some vegetables and dairy products. But when sugar is added to something to make it sweeter, such as yogurt, fruit drinks and processed foods, it is referred to as "added sugar." Enlund explains that the AHA guidelines suggest a daily limit of no more than six teaspoons (25 grams) of added sugar for women, and no more than nine teaspoons (36 grams) of added sugar for men. "That's not a lot of sugar, considering a 12-oz. can of soda has about eight teaspoons of added sugar. It really makes you think about your food choices and just how much additional sugar you are consuming," she says. Enlund says that

it's getting easier to track added sugars now that the Food and Drug Administration requires the amount of added sugars on the nutrition labels. But she cautions to check the label's serving size. "A lot of people tend to overlook that. The nutrition facts listed are per serving, not necessarily for the whole item," she says. "Sweetened drinks are especially deceiving."

### What about sugar substitutes?

When patients ask about sugar substitutes or drinking diet soda, Enlund advises that large amounts of artificial sweetener, a sugar substitute, can be problematic. "The key is moderation. I recommend water, low-fat milk and adding lemon or fruit to water for flavoring," she says. "A sugar-free flavored drink is okay to add variety, but not as the primary drink of the day." Enlund also encourages patients to limit their use of sugar substitutes.

### Consult a health professional

Regardless of your reasons to cut down on sugar, registered dietitians and certified diabetes educators stay current on scientific evidence-based recommendations to help you make the best informed decisions about your meal plan choices. "For those with diabetes, using a sugar substitute for long-term diabetes control is a better option than consuming excess sugar," says Enlund. ■

**Learn more: [aikenregional.com/health](http://aikenregional.com/health)**

## *Here's to your health!*

There are many components that play a part in getting and staying healthy. The "Living My Health" page on our website features tips on eating well, getting fit and feeling good, along with healthy recipes you can incorporate into your daily living. Information is updated monthly, so bookmark [aikenregional.com/lmh](http://aikenregional.com/lmh) and visit for the latest healthy news.

# news and events



## Welcome NEW PHYSICIAN



**Kerry L. Hammond, MD**  
**Colon and Rectal Surgery**  
 Colon and Rectal Surgery Associates, PC  
 410 University Parkway, #2100  
 Aiken, SC 29801  
 803-648-1171



## Join Us!

**SATURDAY**  
**MARCH 30**  
**10 A.M. – 1 P.M.**

**AIKEN COUNTY**  
**FAMILY YMCA**

621 TROLLEY LINE ROAD  
 GRANITEVILLE, SC 29829

- Health screenings
- Information booths
- Safety demonstrations
- Face painting
- Fun activities
- Door prizes
- Kid-friendly snacks
- And more



Join us for a healthy  
start to your day!



Darren Mack, MD  
Urologist



Jessica Luke,  
DNP

## Bladder incontinence in older adults

**Date:** Friday, May 10

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Location:**

USC Aiken Nursing Building,  
Room 121

**Save your plate by  
registering at:**  
[aikenregional.com/bc519](http://aikenregional.com/bc519)



## Join us at RUN UNITED

Half Marathon and 5K Kids' Fun Run

Presented by: Aiken Electric Cooperative  
 Touchstone Energy April 27, 2019, in Downtown  
 Aiken, Half Marathon begins at 7:30 A.M.  
 Proceeds benefit United Way of Aiken County, Inc.

**Register:** [aikenco-op.org/RunUnited](http://aikenco-op.org/RunUnited)





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