Less Pain, Shorter Recovery
MEMORIAL HERMANN SOUTHEAST IS A LEADER IN MINIMALLY INVASIVE COLORECTAL TREATMENT

You may know Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital as a community hospital with compassionate, personalized care. But did you know the hospital is recognized throughout the country for advanced, minimally invasive colorectal treatment?

“We care for the simple to the most complex conditions and diseases of the colon and rectum,” explains Theodoros Voloyiannis, M.D., chairman of the department of Surgery at Memorial Hermann Southeast and a board-certified colorectal surgeon. “Many of the surgical procedures we perform here are offered at few places within the state, and sometimes even the nation.” Read on to learn more about the advanced colorectal care available to Memorial Hermann Southeast’s patients.

**Single-Incision Surgery**

Dr. Voloyiannis takes an advanced, minimally invasive approach to colon surgery using single-incision laparoscopy. The approach can be used to treat colon cancer as well as noncancerous conditions such as diverticulitis and colitis.

With this unique approach, the entire surgery is performed through one small incision hidden in the folds of the belly button. Typically, colon surgery involves a very large, open incision in the abdomen. Even traditional laparoscopic surgery requires three or four small incisions.

“With single-incision colon surgery, we achieve the same outcomes as with other surgical approaches, but with greater benefits to the patient,” says Dr. Voloyiannis. “Patients experience less pain, have a better cosmetic outcome and are back to regular activities more quickly.”

Dr. Voloyiannis was one of the first surgeons to use this advanced technique. Since 2010, he has performed 600 to 700 single-incision colon surgeries at Memorial Hermann Southeast and travels throughout the country teaching this complex technique to other surgeons.

In addition to colon surgery, Memorial Hermann Southeast surgeons apply the single-incision technique to remove tumors in the rectum, using the rectum as the single port.

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Surgeons at Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital are breaking new ground in the quality outcomes arena thanks to a new da Vinci® Si surgical system for robotic-assisted, minimally invasive surgery and an upgraded perioperative unit featuring a state-of-the-art hybrid operating-endovascular suite. Both advancements help provide more efficient, higher quality patient care.

Erin Asprec, chief executive officer of Memorial Hermann Southeast, says the expanded facilities and capabilities underscore the hospital’s commitment to providing residents of Houston’s Bay Area with access to a broader range of medical services, leading technologies and breakthrough treatments.

“We recognize that people want to receive services on par with the Texas Medical Center, close to home, and this expansion in surgical care is one of the ways we are making that a reality for residents in our community,” Asprec explains.

With the high-tech da Vinci® Si, complex, delicate procedures are performed more precisely by translating a surgeon’s hand, wrist and finger movements at a control console into corresponding micro-movements of the instrument’s tip. Similar movements also control a camera to allow a surgeon to see inside a patient’s body. The da Vinci® Si is currently being used at Memorial Hermann Southeast for a range of urology, gynecology and general surgery procedures.

“In my experience, the da Vinci Si platform has made a significant difference in how we approach surgical gynecological care,” says John Dalrymple, M.D., a gynecological oncologist. “We’ve seen remarkable improvements in quality across the board. But for patients undergoing treatment related to endometrial cancer, the results have been particularly impressive.”

Prior to robotic-assisted surgical treatment of endometrial cancer, patients would undergo an extensive open surgery. With the da Vinci® Si, there’s less pain and scarring, and patients can return to work much quicker than before.

“From a surgeon’s perspective, the da Vinci Si also affords a much better visualization of the operative field and anatomy,” Dr. Dalrymple adds. “That allows for finer, more precise dissections, which translates to less tissue damage and blood
Help for Fecal Incontinence
At Memorial Hermann Southeast, patients suffering from fecal incontinence will find expertise and state-of-the-art diagnostic testing in one location.

“People with fecal incontinence often suffer for years in silence. If they do seek help, it can be difficult to find,” Dr. Voloyiannis explains. “We are one of the few places that offers a true diagnostic workup to appropriately address the problem.”

Ultrasound and other diagnostic testing are used to identify structural and nerve-related problems that may be contributing to the incontinence. Based on this evaluation, colorectal surgeons offer unique, minimally invasive treatment options that are performed on an outpatient basis. For example, Interstim involves the neurostimulation of the muscles that control incontinence. Solesta is an injection of material that strengthens the sphincter muscle for greater fecal control.

“Traditionally, fecal incontinence is treated with Kegel exercises or invasive surgery,” Dr. Voloyiannis says. “We are proud to offer patients more options.”

Relief from Hemorrhoids
Memorial Hermann Southeast also offers advanced, minimally invasive surgery for difficult-to-heal hemorrhoids. Colorectal surgeons use an ultrasound Doppler to identify the artery feeding blood to the hemorrhoid. The artery is then meticulously tied off, retracting the hemorrhoid back into the rectum.

“This same-day procedure allows patients to recover quickly,” Dr. Voloyiannis explains. “Instead of a three- to four-week recovery with traditional hemorrhoid surgery, patients are back to normal activities within four days.”
The aorta is your largest artery, extending from the heart to the abdomen. It has an important job: delivering oxygen-rich blood from your heart to your body. So when something goes wrong – such as a thoracic aortic aneurysm (TAA) – it is serious.

A TAA is a bulge in the wall of the aorta located in the chest area. With each heartbeat, the aorta’s walls expand and spring back. If you have a weakened aneurysm wall, this stress can lead to a life-threatening hemorrhage.

What Causes TAAs?
Causes of TAAs include:
• Genetic disorders that affect connective tissue
• Necrosis (breakdown of tissue)
• Atherosclerosis (hardening of arteries)
• Inflammatory conditions
• Less commonly, infections such as syphilis

Additionally, risk factors include age greater than 55, family history, high blood pressure, elevated levels of fats in the blood (hyperlipidemia), diabetes and smoking.

What Are the Symptoms?
The symptoms of a TAA may include:
• Pain in the jaw, neck and/or upper back
• Pain in the chest and/or back
• Wheezing, coughing or shortness of breath
• Hoarseness
• Trouble swallowing

Because these symptoms may resemble other conditions, TAAs can be hard to diagnose. Your doctor will review your medical history and perform a physical examination. He or she might order diagnostic procedures such as a computed tomography (CT) scan, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), echocardiogram, angiogram or chest X-ray.

Advanced Treatment in Your Area
If the aneurysm is small or doesn’t cause symptoms, your doctor may recommend “watchful waiting.” Treatment may include monitoring the size and growth of the aneurysm with MRI or CT scans; medication to control factors such as hyperlipidemia or high blood pressure; and eliminating risk factors by quitting smoking, controlling blood sugar and fat intake, losing weight, etc.

If the aneurysm is large or causes symptoms, your doctor may recommend surgical repair or removal. Traditional surgery requires a long chest incision. But a less invasive procedure called thoracic endovascular aneurysm repair (TEVAR) is available at Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital.

“Using thin tubes called catheters, we insert a stent graft to replace the diseased section of the aorta,” says Naveed Saqib, M.D., a vascular surgeon affiliated with the hospital. “Because the surgery is performed through small incisions instead of a large opening, patients have a faster recovery and less risk for complications.”

Memorial Hermann Southeast offers many of the same advanced procedures as large urban medical centers. It is one of the few Houston hospitals with a hybrid endovascular surgery suite, where surgeons can perform both traditional open surgeries and minimally invasive procedures like TEVAR. Patients undergoing cardiovascular surgery at Memorial Hermann Southeast can have the best of both worlds, staying local and receiving the most advanced care.

Dr. Saqib is a board-certified vascular surgeon.
Esophageal Care Receives Worldwide Recognition

Research published in a few select journals can have a huge impact in the medical community, even shaping how patient care is delivered. Recently, Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital’s cutting-edge approach to esophageal care was spotlighted in one of these prestigious journals. It’s another reminder that, although the hospital offers personalized care to the community, its expertise is world-class.

Study Highlights Specialized Team Approach
Farzaneh Banki, M.D., thoracic surgeon and director of the Esophageal Disease Center at Memorial Hermann Southeast, was the lead author of the study, which was published in the December 2013 issue of the American Journal of Surgery.

The study investigated the outcomes of creating a highly trained, multidisciplinary team focused solely on treating patients with problems of the esophagus.

“Memorial Hermann Southeast’s Esophageal Disease Center is rare in the healthcare community,” Dr. Banki says. “Our multidisciplinary team consists of specialized nurses, physical therapists, respiratory therapists, nutritionists, surgeons and other physicians, all focused on the treatment of esophageal patients.”

The Esophageal Disease Center treats patients with benign and malignant diseases of the esophagus. This includes esophageal cancer, gastrointestinal reflux disease, hiatal hernia and more.

Improved Patient Satisfaction, Outcomes
The study measured the outcomes of treating patients with this focused team approach instead of using a traditional model of care in which various specialists work independently.

The results were significant.

The findings showed that Memorial Hermann Southeast’s team experienced greater patient satisfaction, reduced operating times, shorter hospital stays and less expensive healthcare costs. For example, patients stayed in the hospital an average of one day instead of two.

“The study shows how the power of a focused team can have a tremendous impact on patient care,” Dr. Banki says.

Implementing Success
Implementing a team model of care takes incredible dedication, focus and coordination. Each week, the team meets to review any deficiencies. This can include anything from admission wait times to the availability of wheelchairs to transport patients. They then collectively create a plan to correct the problem.

The team also reviews all new patient cases and discusses what services are needed to support them.

A major emphasis of the team approach is communication. Nurses regularly communicate with patients on all aspects of care, including medications, pain management and self-care after discharge.

“Let’s get started. For an individualized, effective plan for diagnosing and treating your esophageal condition, call the Esophageal Disease Center at 281.929.3321.”

Dr. Banki is director of the Esophageal Disease Center.
Preserve Your Aging Joints

Jogging, tennis, racquetball – many activities baby boomers have enjoyed all their lives have been tough on their knees, hips and other joints. In a quest to stay active and reduce pain, an ever-growing number are turning to joint replacement surgery.

Joint replacements have a high success rate, but there’s an alternative: taking steps to care for the joints you already have. The Arthritis Foundation and the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons suggest being kind to your joints by:

• **Maintaining a healthy weight.** Losing extra pounds reduces stress, wear and tear on knees, hips, back and feet.

• **Exercising regularly.** Physical activity protects joints by strengthening the muscles that support them.

• **Swapping high-impact sports with low-impact activities.** Instead of tennis, racquetball or running, try swimming, water aerobics, walking or golf.

• **Avoiding repetitive stress.** Alternating strenuous activities with rest puts less stress on sensitive joints.

If your doctor believes you’re a candidate for joint replacement, you’ll be referred to an orthopedic surgeon.

“Over the years, surgical techniques have improved and new materials have been developed for implants,” says Dr. Huang. “As a result, these surgeries have become one of the most dependable procedures performed today.”

Dr. Huang is an orthopedic surgeon.
Varicose Veins: More Than a Cosmetic Problem?

Varicose veins can make you self-conscious about baring your legs – and without lifestyle changes or treatment, they can lead to more serious conditions. But what causes them?

The veins in your leg must work against gravity to shuttle blood from your lower limbs back up to your heart. Sometimes, the one-way valves that keep blood moving in the right direction weaken or malfunction. As a result, blood backs up and your veins expand, swell and twist beneath your skin's surface.

“As many as 25 million Americans have varicose veins,” says Gordon Martin, M.D., a vascular surgeon affiliated with Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital. “Risk increases with age, pregnancy, prolonged sitting or standing, and in heavier people and those who inherited weaker valves.”

Heed These Warning Signs
Up to 20 percent of adults have chronic venous insufficiency, meaning varicose veins are preventing blood from traveling back up to the heart. If you have the following signs, see your doctor.

• A heavy feeling in the ankles or legs
• Throbbing or cramping pain
• Swollen ankles or feet
• Fatigue
• Discolored, hard, thickened or itchy skin
• Open wounds called ulcers

Treatment Improves Blood Flow
Lifestyle changes can help, especially if your varicose veins don’t cause pain. Your doctor may recommend:

• Taking breaks from standing or sitting
• Elevating and not crossing your legs
• Exercising
• Avoiding high-heeled shoes
• Wearing compression stockings

Medical treatments can improve the appearance of varicose veins and treat chronic venous insufficiency. Options include:

• Laser, heat or chemical therapies that close off veins

Are You at Risk for Deep Vein Thrombosis?

If you have more than one of these risk factors, you’re more likely to develop deep vein thrombosis (DVT). These blood clots form when blood flow slows down, and usually occur in the large veins of the lower leg. They can cause pain and swelling, and in some cases can be life threatening.

• Major surgery
• An inherited blood disorder that makes your blood thicker or more likely to clot
• Recent broken bone or serious injury
• Higher estrogen levels due to certain medications, birth control pills or pregnancy
• Bedridden or immobilized for an extended period
• Recently confined to an airplane or car for a long time
• Heart disease, cancer or another chronic illness
• A history of DVT
• Age older than 60
• Obesity
• Smoking
Memorial Hermann Health System has taken a great step forward to meet the increasing healthcare needs in the region: A new convenient care center in Pearland is now open! The one-of-a-kind facility offers one-stop, highly coordinated access to adult and pediatric primary care, outpatient imaging and lab services, specialty physicians and a 24-hour Emergency Center.

The opening of the convenient care center is the first step in the development of a new medical campus at Pearland. The new facility is located at a 40-acre site on the southbound side of Highway 288 near FM 518. Groundbreaking for the project took place in July 2013.

The centerpiece of the new campus will be a 64-bed acute care hospital, set to open in late 2015. It will feature an intensive care unit, operating rooms, cardiac catheterization labs, medical/surgical units, Life Flight® helipad and women’s services. The new medical complex will benefit from integration within the larger Memorial Hermann system. Patients can be transported within minutes to Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital or Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center if they need a higher level of care.

“We want to be your healthcare provider of choice and earn your trust by providing safe, high-quality and comprehensive care to your family and others in Pearland and surrounding areas,” says Dan Wolterman, president and CEO of Memorial Hermann. “We appreciate and welcome the opportunity to provide care to the citizens of this great and growing city and county.”

“Pearland is the third largest city by population in the Gulf Coast area and the second fastest-growing city in the state of Texas, and our citizens will now have immediate access to Memorial Hermann’s world-class, patient-centered care,” adds Tom Reid, mayor of Pearland.

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