Top Cardiac Care in Your Community

What do you do and where do you go if you suspect you are having a heart attack? You want the best treatment, but most of us don’t plan for this emergency; we simply react when it occurs.

But now you can be sure to receive the best cardiovascular care right in your community. In 2008, Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City was named as a top 100 heart hospital in Thomson Reuters’ coveted annual 100 Top Hospitals®: Cardiovascular Benchmarks for Success study.

The Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City has achieved exceptional door-to-balloon time performance for the treatment of heart attack patients. Door-to-balloon time is the amount of time from heart attack diagnosis to the time when blood is restored to the heart with angioplasty treatment.

Reducing the time from heart attack onset to intervention with angioplasty reduces damage to the heart muscle. This maximizes your chance for survival.

The Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City performs well above the norm on door-to-balloon time, compared with other hospitals. You can check the performance of hospitals in Houston and Katy at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov. The Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City has been recognized for consistent performance with door-to-balloon times in the top 1 percent in the U.S.

Data reported between October 2007 and September 2008.
Startling Facts About Heart Attacks

- On average, 36.8 percent of heart attack victims do not survive.
- In the United States, one in 20 of those having heart attacks is younger than 40, and a recent study showed smokers ages 35 to 39 had five times the risk for heart attacks as nonsmokers of the same age. Of the heart attack patients who are younger than 40, 80 percent are smokers.
- Not every hospital is equipped to treat a heart attack patient, and few are equipped with 24-hour catheterization labs and 24-hour cardiac surgery back-up. In 2006, only 25 percent of U.S. hospitals had catheterization lab facilities to perform angioplasties.
- About half of cardiac deaths occur before transport to a hospital. “The most important thing for people to know is to call 911 and let EMS evaluate them and get them to the best facility and rapid treatment,” says Philip L. Berman, M.D., an interventional cardiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City. “This increases their chances of survival. On the way, we can send a fax of the EKG to the Institute, giving the cath lab an extra 15 to 20 minutes to prepare for their arrival and treatment.”
- Higher volumes at a heart hospital equal better survival outcomes. The American College of Cardiology recommends that a hospital perform more than 400 interventions a year to achieve better outcomes, as studies have consistently reported poorer outcomes by low-volume hospitals.
- If there is a strong family history of heart disease or other risk factors, it is recommended that men and women should be screened at or before age 40.
- Heart attack symptoms are sometimes confused with gastrointestinal disorders, musculoskeletal pain or respiratory ailments. Survival is partly dependent on early recognition. Most people recognize chest pain as a heart attack symptom, but surveys show only 10 percent correctly classified all symptoms and knew to call 911 when someone was having a heart attack.

What a “Top Hospital” Means for You

Thomson Reuters, a leader in business solutions, helps organizations in the healthcare industry improve clinical performance. For its 2008 100 Top Hospitals®: Cardiovascular Benchmarks for Success study, Thomson Reuters examined the performance of 970 hospitals by analyzing clinical outcomes for patients diagnosed with heart failure and heart attacks and for those who received coronary bypass surgery and angioplasties.

According to Thomson Reuters, winners of the award set the new national standard for cardiovascular disease outcomes, process of care and efficiency. The winners, as a group, performed 63 percent more bypass surgeries and 42 percent more angioplasties than peer hospitals. This may suggest that bypass surgery is increasingly performed in centers of excellence.

While the average mortality rate for cardiovascular patients is very low (3.4 percent), the mortality rate for bypass surgery was 26 percent lower in the 100 Top Hospitals cardiovascular winners. The award-winning hospitals demonstrated higher performance on the evidence-based core measures published by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

Quality makes a difference in your chances of survival. Choose your own cardiologist and heart hospital before you encounter an emergency. Compare quality hospital data by visiting the independent, free government Web site at www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov or www.qualitycheck.org.

Dr. Berman is an interventional cardiologist.
Heart Attack Warning Signs – What You Don’t Know Can Hurt You

Chest pain. It’s the classic symptom that means “heart attack” to many people. But a study of more than 400,000 heart attack sufferers reveals that about one-third of patients do not experience chest pain. And it’s these “silent” heart attacks that may be the most deadly.

Age, Gender May Affect Signs
Studies show that certain groups are less likely to experience chest pain with a heart attack. These include women, non-Caucasians of either sex and people who have had a stroke. Also, people who experienced chest pain with a previous heart attack may not have it the next time.

Unfortunately, many people are not as familiar with other heart attack warning signs. So they tend to delay getting to a hospital – or don’t go at all – because they may think that the symptoms they are experiencing aren’t serious. Newer medications and procedures are highly effective in treating a heart attack. But they must be administered within one hour after symptoms begin.

Learn to Recognize Symptoms
A heart attack can cause many warning signs other than chest pain, including:

• Shortness of breath
• Nausea or vomiting
• Pain radiating down one or both arms
• Back, neck, jaw or stomach pain
• Breaking out in a cold sweat
• Severe headache
• Dizziness or fainting
• Anxiety, weakness or a feeling of doom

“Patients should almost always call 911 if they have symptoms,” says Domingo Gonzalez, M.D., F.A.C.C., an interventional cardiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City. “Patients can depend on EMS professionals or Memorial Hermann Life Flight® to monitor their condition on the way to the hospital, sending their EKG electronically to emergency physicians. People tend to minimize their symptoms and delay calling 911. It’s important to wait no more than five minutes for symptoms to subside.”

A Patient Shares Her Story
When the car in front of Kelly ran off the road and flipped over, she called 911 and waited for the ambulance to arrive. She suddenly felt ill and was sweating profusely. An emergency medical services team on site discovered she was having a heart attack.
With every moment counting, Memorial Hermann Life Flight® was called and Kelly was transported to Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City.

“My father died of a heart attack at 49 and his father passed away in his early 60s from heart disease, so I knew it would probably affect me, but I didn’t think I would be in my 30s,” says Kelly, age 33.

The Emergency Center staff examined her and determined that she was indeed having a heart attack. Kelly was taken to the catheterization lab, where a cardiologist performed a catheterization, revealing that her right coronary artery was 100 percent blocked. Kelly immediately underwent an angioplasty and was given medications to thin the blood.

“It was a blessing that it happened when it did and that I was taken to The Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City,” Kelly says.

Today, Kelly’s heart is functioning normally, and she is living a healthy life. She continues to take her medication and travels to The Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City twice a year for follow-up visits.
Can You Be Fit and Fat?  
The Two Sides of Heart Disease Risk

Physical activity is a proven way to lower the risk for heart disease – the number one killer of both men and women in the United States. But if you are overweight, is physical activity enough? In the fight against heart disease, can you be fit and fat? Read on to cut through the confusion.

Exercise and Healthy Weight Key to Happy Heart
Research shows that physical inactivity and a high body mass index (BMI) are independent risk factors for heart disease. BMI is a measure of body fat based on weight and height.

In a recent study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, women who were overweight or obese and exercised at least 30 minutes each day significantly reduced their heart disease risk. But even the highest levels of exercise didn’t fully reverse the risk of carrying excess weight.

Other research confirms the same is true for men.

What does this mean to you? It’s important to exercise and maintain a healthy weight. This means shedding extra pounds if you are overweight.

“Exercising and losing weight will not only help lower your disease risk,” says Shahin Tavackoli, M.D., an invasive cardiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City.

“They also work together to help you reach your goals. Exercise can help you lose weight, and losing weight can make exercise easier.”

You Have the Power to Take Control
So how do you get started? If you are overweight or have a chronic health condition, like arthritis or diabetes, talk with your doctor. Ask for help in developing a plan to lose weight.

One part of the plan: eating a healthier diet. Try to reduce portion sizes and avoid fried or fatty foods. This will help you take in fewer calories, which can add up to consistent weight loss.

The other half of the equation is exercise. To get the recommended 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise a day, follow these tips:

• **Start slowly.** Take short breaks if you need them and work up to your goal.

• **If you don’t have time to do 30 minutes of exercise all at once,** break your workout into three 10-minute sessions.

• **Fine-tune your routine.** Brisk walking is a good way to start. But other options, like swimming and stationary bicycling, may be easier on your joints.

Dr. Tavackoli is an invasive cardiologist.
Get a Leg Up on Peripheral Vascular Disease

Do you experience cramps or numbness in your legs while walking? Don’t ignore these symptoms. They could signal peripheral vascular disease (PVD), a serious health problem. The good news is that self-care and simple treatments for PVD can frequently improve quality of life.

“This buildup can be a sign of significant vascular problems in other locations, including but not limited to the heart, the neck and/or the kidneys,” says Jon E. Heine, M.D., an interventional cardiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City. “Therefore, PVD should be taken seriously and treated as a significant risk factor.”

Know the Warning Signs
The most common symptoms of PVD are pain, aching, sense of fatigue, or cramping in hips or one or both legs while walking. This pain frequently disappears after a brief rest period. Other possible symptoms of PVD that suggest more critical issues include:
- Painful foot and/or toes at rest
- Feelings of weakness, numbness or heaviness in the legs
- Skin color changes, especially in the legs or arms
- Sores that do not heal

Unfortunately, some people with PVD experience no symptoms. A doctor can easily diagnose this condition by taking blood pressures in your arm and ankle.

Who Is At Risk?
While PVD can strike at any age, the typical sufferer is older than 50. Besides age, other risk factors include:
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- A family history of cardiovascular diseases
- High cholesterol
- Obesity
- High blood pressure
- Physical inactivity

Self-Care and Treatment Options
Fortunately, healthy habits can help PVD sufferers improve their prognosis. Experts recommend these lifestyle modifications:
- Exercise regularly. Talk with your doctor about an appropriate fitness routine.
- Don’t smoke.
- Lose weight, if necessary.
- If you suffer from high cholesterol, diabetes, and/or hypertension, be sure these conditions are treated appropriately.

In addition to lifestyle changes, sometimes medicines may be needed to help manage PVD. In some cases, symptoms are refractory and require either interventional procedures (angioplasty, stents, atherectomy, laser, etc.) or surgery.
The Emergency Center at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center now responds faster when you or your family needs it most with our newly launched excelERate emergency care process.

What Is excelERate?
You told us what you wanted in a hospital. We listened. People living in the Houston area identified access to top-quality, quick and efficient emergency care as one of the hospital features they most prefer. Now, from the time you come to our Emergency Center by ambulance or car, we start the clock on your wait time with a goal of providing the highest quality care, fast!

As the Houston leader in emergency medicine, Memorial Hermann Healthcare System’s goal is to balance our superior technology with a new kind of service and efficiency, offering the optimum patient experience. Our staff researched models across the country, and we designed a completely new process and program from the ground up. This is how excelERate works as soon as a patient enters the Emergency Center:

**QUICK LOOK:** We assess every patient within an average of five minutes.

**DOOR TO DOCTOR:** We have a board-certified emergency physician who is affiliated with the hospital assess the patient within an average of 30 minutes.

How Do We Provide Quality Emergency Care?
excelERate is brought to you by Memorial Hermann, a national leader in emergency medicine. Memorial Hermann has eight acute care facilities with 24-hour emergency services. Memorial Hermann emergency centers stand ready to meet the needs of critically ill or injured patients throughout southeast Texas. Memorial Hermann-Texas Medical Center is one of only two Level I trauma centers in Houston.

“Achieving the best possible outcomes for heart attack patients starts with rapid response times by EMS and the emergency physicians,” says Gloria Hui, M.D., an interventional cardiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City. “For example, patients showing symptoms of a heart attack in the emergency room are to receive an EKG within five minutes. At Memorial City, the cardiologists have worked very hard with the team in the Emergency Center and ambulance EMS professionals to offer patients the best possible heart attack treatment times in Houston.”

Dr. Hui is an interventional cardiologist.
Diabetes, or high blood sugar, carries a lot of “clout” in the body. It can influence a wide range of organs including your eyes, kidneys and heart – not for the better, but for the worse. In fact, one of the key concerns for people with diabetes is keeping their blood sugar under control to reduce their risks for complications, such as heart disease.

A Higher Risk for Heart Problems
“People with diabetes are two to four times likelier than people without diabetes to have heart disease,” says Harold A. Condara, M.D., an interventional cardiologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City. “In addition, people with diabetes have the same high risk for heart attack as people without diabetes who already have had a heart attack.”

Why do people with diabetes have higher heart risks? One reason is that those with diabetes tend to be obese and have high cholesterol and high blood pressure. Another problem is that people with diabetes tend to have poor blood flow and blood clotting problems.

Keeping It Under Control
If you have diabetes, you can take steps to protect your heart. Dr. Condara offers these recommendations:
• Eat a healthy diet.
• Exercise. Aim for 30 minutes of activity on most days of the week.
• Don’t smoke. Smoking doubles the risk for heart disease – and stroke – for people with diabetes.
• Keep your blood sugar under control. You should get a hemoglobin A1C test at least twice a year. This test shows the average amount of blood sugar, or glucose, in your blood during the past two to three months. The recommended A1C goal is less than 7 percent.
• Control high blood pressure and have it checked at every doctor’s visit. Aim for less than 130/80 mmHg.
• Also keep cholesterol under control and have it checked at least once a year. The goal for LDL, or “bad,” cholesterol, is less than 100 mg/dL.
• Lose weight if you are overweight.
• Ask your doctor if you should take a low-dose aspirin daily to lower your risk for heart disease. Prescription medicines also are available, such as statins, which may help reduce your heart risks.
What’s Your Heart Emergency Plan?

Four steps to improve your chances of survival:

1. Know the best heart hospital in your area with interventional cardiac cath labs open seven days a week, 24 hours a day, to handle your heart emergencies.

2. Call 713.222.CARE (2273) to find a board-certified cardiologist. If you live nearby, ask for a cardiologist on staff at Memorial City.

3. If you’re older than age 50, schedule a diagnostic checkup with your cardiologist.

4. If you have chest discomfort that lasts more than a few minutes, discomfort in other areas of the upper body, shortness of breath, nausea or lightheadedness, don’t delay. Call 911 immediately.

World-Class Physicians and Specialists

The Memorial Hermann Heart & Vascular Institute-Memorial City has attracted some of the best heart physicians and specialists in the United States. Intently focused on excellence in patient care, this team actively engages in the pursuit of new knowledge and innovation and has made Memorial Hermann a preferred site for patients seeking leading-edge cardiac care. The following physicians are on active staff at Memorial City:

Cardiology
- James Feldman, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.464.2928
- Shahin Tavackoli, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.465.3535
- Philip L. Berman, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.464.6006
- Luis A. Campos, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.465.3535
- Charles H. Caplan, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.467.0605
- Harold A. Condara, Jr, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.467.0605
- Shiraz P. Dhanani, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.973.7445
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- A. Gunawan, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.827.7680
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- Christopher Frank, MD, F.A.C.C. 713.529.5530
- Sohail Jalal, M.D., F.A.C.C. 713.772.1212

Cardiothoracic Surgery
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- Miguel Gomez, M.D. 713.973.7222
- Suryam Kodali, M.D. 713.777.1141
- Michael Macris, M.D. 713.465.7979
- Scott E. Olsson, M.D. 281.890.8004

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