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A PUBLICATION FROM MERCY REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Making helmets fit kids' lifestyles

Gray Matters takes on vital community role of protecting brains.

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An arthritis primer

Joint pain is no fun, but solutions may be at hand (or knee, or hip).

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Surgery prep and recovery 101

Do you have an upcoming surgery? Learn what you can do before and after surgery to improve outcomes.

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Lesley Barbour, MD, MPH

A warm welcome

PALLIATIVE CARE AND HOSPICE PHYSICIAN JOINS THE MERCY FAMILY

Mercy welcomes fellowship-trained, palliative care and hospice physician Lesley Ann Barbour, MD, MPH, to Mercy Home Health and Hospice of Mercy. Dr. Barbour will also care for patients in Mercy's Emergency Department.

Dr. Barbour earned her Doctor of Medicine and Master of Public Health degrees from the University of Arizona. She completed her residency in emergency medicine at Boston Medical Center and her fellowship in palliative care and hospice at the University of New Mexico.

Prior to joining Mercy, Dr. Barbour served as the Associate Medical Director at Kindred Hospice in Albuquerque, N.M. In addition, she provided care at Albuquerque's Lovelace Medical Center Emergency Department.

To learn more about Dr. Barbour, turn to **page 14**.

CONTACT US:

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On the Cover:

For a decade, Mercy's Gray Matters program (currently run by Amy Haggart pictured) has provided helmets to children in need and spread the word about traumatic brain injury throughout the community.

Learn more about this program on page 5.

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John Peel is a contributing writer for Health+Care.



Recent recognitions showcase the commitment of Mercy's associates and physicians

Each and every day, Mercy's associates, advanced practice providers, and physicians provide compassionate whole person care to the communities we serve. It is because of this commitment, that Mercy has been the recent recipient of multiple recognitions:

- Mercy earned its fourth straight **Medicare 5-star rating for quality**. In its February 2019 hospital quality ratings data release, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) once again recognized Mercy with a five-star rating for overall hospital quality. Mercy has received a five-star rating in each of Medicare's three previous data releases, the first of which was in July of 2016. Mercy is one of only six hospitals in Colorado and the only hospital in the Four Corners to receive a five-star rating for overall hospital quality in the most recent release.

The overall hospital quality star ratings are based on a variety of measures from seven categories, including mortality, safety of care, readmissions, patient experience, effectiveness of care, timeliness of care, and efficient use of medical imaging.

For more information about the CMS hospital quality ratings, visit <https://www.medicare.gov/hospitalcompare/Data/Hospital-overall-ratings-calculation.html>.

- Mercy Home Health was recognized as a **Top 100 HomeCare Elite** agency by Ability and DecisionHealth. HomeCare Elite identifies the top 25 percent of agencies based on performance measures. This year, those measures include quality of care, quality improvement, patient experience, best practices implementation and more. Since 2005, Mercy has been recognized as a "Top 100" agency six times, as a "Top 500" agency four times, and among the top 25 percent of agencies once.

For more information, visit <https://abilitynetwork.com/blog/landing/hce-2018/>.

- Mercy was named one of the **2019 Top 100 Rural & Community Hospitals in the U.S.** by The Chartis Center for Rural Health. The annual Top 100 Rural & Community Hospitals award is a designation of performance excellence based upon the results of the Hospital Strength INDEX from iVantage Health Analytics. Mercy was one of four hospitals in Colorado and the only hospital in the Four Corners region to receive the award. Mercy was also recognized as a Top 100 Rural & Community Hospital in 2016 and 2018.

Hospitals recognized as Top 100 facilities scored in the top 100 among all rural and community hospitals in the U.S. based on 50 rural-relevant indicators across eight pillars of hospital strength. Each of the INDEX's 50 indicators is culled from publicly-available data sources.

More information about The Chartis Center for Rural Health's Top 100 Rural & Community Hospitals award can be found at www.ivantageindex.com/top-performing-hospitals.



A GOOD DEED, and a TAX BREAK



MERCY HEALTH FOUNDATION'S ENTERPRISE ZONE DESIGNATION RENEWED

Some charitable gifts leave donors feeling good about what they've done on multiple levels. Enterprise Zone donations certainly fit that bill.

Donors who make a cash contribution of \$250 or more to one of the Mercy Health Foundation's approved programs can receive a 25 percent tax credit through the state of Colorado. That's 25 percent of your cash donation taken straight off the top of your tax bill.

Mercy Regional Medical Center, through Mercy Health Foundation, has several programs that qualify for state Enterprise Zone tax credits because they contribute to improving the economic health and general health needs of the surrounding community. At the beginning of 2019, Mercy Health Foundation was renewed for another five years as an Enterprise Zone Contribution Project for the following programs/projects:



1) **MERCY REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER EXPANSIONS AND ADVANCEMENT IN HEALTH CARE:**

- Heart and Vascular Fund (includes the Incredible Dream Campaign).
- Greatest equipment needs (crosses all facets of the facility).
- Flight for Life.
- Expansions for behavioral health.
- Emergency Department expansion and security (including safe rooms).

2) **COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECTS:**

- Mercy Project (assistance for uninsured patients who can't meet financial obligations).
- Gray Matters (preventing traumatic brain injury in youths).
- Journey of Hope Fund (pays for mammograms for those in need).
- Employee financial assistance (Mercy employees donating to other employees).

Also, Hospice of Mercy and Mercy Hospice House is another Enterprise Zone Contribution Project that runs through December 2019.

For specific information on how all these tax breaks affect you, it's best to consult your financial advisor.

That's all you really need to know, but maybe you're curious as to why this Enterprise Zone designation exists.

Colorado began the Enterprise Zone designation statewide in 1996 as a way to help economically distressed areas. All of Dolores, Montezuma and San Juan counties, as well as some of Archuleta and La Plata counties, lie within the Southwest Enterprise Zone. Businesses and nonprofits that meet specific criteria can qualify for tax credits.

Mercy Regional Medical Center, a nonprofit, spurs economic growth by making rural Southwest Colorado attractive to families and seniors relocating to the community. Mercy continues to create jobs and construction projects that employ additional workers. The projects listed contribute to community's overall well-being and factor into economic growth.

Mercy Health Foundation



TO DONATE

Donate online at mercydurango.org/foundation.
For more information, contact **Mercy Health Foundation** at **970-764-2800**.

Making helmets fit kids' lifestyles

GRAY MATTERS TAKES ON VITAL COMMUNITY ROLE OF PROTECTING BRAINS

For a decade now, Gray Matters has been protecting kids' heads and spreading the word about traumatic brain injury throughout the community. It's impossible to say how many children's brains have benefited. But we can say with certainty that more of them now wear helmets – and that Gray Matters has played a major role.

This region's children are well above average on the activity scale. While that keeps them fit, some activities can expose them to risk. Gray Matters was created in February 2009 when Dr. Mark Stern, Trauma Medical Director at Mercy Regional Medical Center, saw one too many avoidable head injuries from kids skateboarding, skiing, or bicycling.

He asked Mercy Health Foundation for help in fixing this problem. The solution was to fund helmets for kids who can't afford them, and to educate the public about the need for wearing a helmet. Gray matter, you may know, is that valuable squishy stuff inside your skull that controls your central nervous system.

Since 2015 the Gray Matters program has been run by the energetic Amy Haggart, a long-time outdoor adventure education teacher and former director of DEVO, a Durango-based mountain bike program for youths. Haggart is now Community Outreach Coordinator for Mercy's Marketing Department. With Gray Matters, Haggart has not only delivered helmets to children around the region, but has tirelessly talked about why it's important to protect that gray matter.

And she has made it fun.

Much of her Gray Matters time is spent visiting schools, talking to kids about the brain and fitting helmets on individual heads.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk-taking is not just extreme sports on Red Bull commercials. "It's how we grow as people," Haggart says. It can be very simple – whatever

TO DONATE:

Donations to Gray Matters through Mercy Health Foundation fund helmets and educational materials. Visit mercydurango.org/foundation and click on "donate today." After you choose an amount, make sure to choose "Gray Matters" under "Give to" in the drop-down menu.



takes you out of your comfort zone, which can be something as basic as going for a 10-minute run or talking in front of an audience. When it comes to sports, wearing a helmet or other protective gear is an action that lowers the calculated risk. That action, in turn, reduces injury risk, and empowers people to make healthy choices that lead to a long, active life.

On school visits, Haggart brings along a model brain so kids can see how soft and vulnerable it is. She explains which part of the brain controls various functions. And then she demonstrates what happens when a concussion muddles those functions.

In one game, students don "concussion goggles," which distort the vision, and then compete in relay races in which they have to put brain balls in a bucket. In another game, using bulky "concussion gloves," students attempt to take pinto beans out of a bucket. These games simulate how simple tasks become difficult or impossible using a concussed brain.

Between Haggart's short talk and the games, kids make the connection that their brain might malfunction after a concussion or traumatic brain injury; coordination, eyesight, language skills, and memory problems may occur.

At that point they're ready for the helmet, which, she explains, dissipates the force of an impact by lengthening the period in which the head is suddenly brought to a halt. Haggart spends a good deal of time fitting each individual helmet.

During 2018, by going to schools, health fairs, and other events, the Gray Matters program reached 14,000 people in the region (Pagosa Springs, Ignacio, Bayfield, Durango, Cortez, Mancos, Dolores, and into New Mexico), and gave away 500 helmets to youths.

You try to coach them wisely, but kids are going to take risks. Gray Matters helps them do it safely.



Mercy's SANE Program there when needed

If you have been sexually assaulted, you want to feel like someone is there to take care of you.

Thanks to some dedicated nurses, backing from the hospital's senior leaders, Mercy Health Foundation and a recent large grant, Mercy Regional Medical Center is ready and well-trained to help victims — no matter when they show up at the Emergency Department.

Mercy's six Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE nurses) are ready to appear at a moment's notice virtually around the clock. Their care includes everything from an examination, to collecting evidence, to assuring victims that their immediate needs are being met.

Bethany Bernal, BSN, RN, SANE, RNC-OB, has been SANE Nurse Coordinator since April 2015, and she's grateful for the backing she's received from Mercy leaders to strengthen the program. Also, a recent VOCA (Victims of Crime Act) federal grant has allowed Bernal to expand the SANE Program, fund education for the six nurses, and allowed her time for community outreach — which includes educating everyone from law enforcement to the general public. The VOCA grant means she has 24 hours a week instead of 7 to administer the SANE Program.

Mercy's SANE Program began in 2000 when an emergency room nurse was troubled by the long waits victims endured to see a nurse trained in sexual assault. As the program has grown, and more nurses have been trained, the number of patients has risen sharply. Mercy had 12 cases in 2013, and 59 cases in 2018.

Perhaps counterintuitively, this is actually a good thing, Bernal said. She hopes to see those numbers increase. It means that more victims feel safe coming to the emergency room for care. It may have nothing to do with the number of incidents; studies show that only one in three victims report a sexual assault.

Bernal attributed the rise both to public awareness spurred by the #MeToo movement, and to word spreading of Mercy's readiness and expertise in the SANE Program.

This combination "has given women some empowerment and some reassurance to know they can come and be cared for and they don't have to talk to law enforcement if they don't want to," Bernal said. "They know we have a reliable program at Mercy."

Although victims are not required to report to law enforcement, about 90 percent who arrive at Mercy do. If victims are under 17 or over 69, a sexual assault must be reported. Twenty-five percent of Mercy's cases involve a minor (under-17). Twenty percent involve a Native American. A small percent of victims are men.

TRAINING

SANE nurses have a difficult but rewarding task. Nurses often enter an exam room where a woman lies in a fetal position in a bed or cowering with her back to the wall, unable to make eye contact. The reward comes at the end, when the relieved victim is able to make eye contact with the nurse and leaves with her dignity restored.

"She's so grateful for what you've done for her," Bernal said. "And she feels safe; she feels believed."

Nurses must take 64 hours of online training, a two-day clinical skills lab, and more before they're qualified. Three years' critical care experience is required.

"I really want to highlight the team," Bernal said. "They're very committed. They're compassionate. They do see it as a community service and a true commitment to Mercy's mission. They absolutely love the job."



Bethany Bernal
BSN, RN, SANE, RNC-OB

Each case is different. Victims range from children to those with substance abuse issues, to the homeless, to those with mental health problems. Or none of the above. Cases generally take from four to six hours, but can last as long as nine.

FUNDING

Over the years funding has come from various sources. Originally, Bernal's position was paid for by Sexual Assault Services Organization through a federal VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) grant. In 2017 Mercy stepped up to make sure the position continued, and for the last two years a VALE (Victim Assistance and Law Enforcement) grant through the local District Attorney's office has greatly funded the SANE Program.

In 2018, due to the efforts of Karen Midkiff, director of the Mercy Health Foundation, the VOCA grant came through. Midkiff started the ball rolling to coordinate seven Catholic Health Initiatives Colorado Foundation-Centura hospitals to co-write a grant. This gave them more recognition, kept them from competing for the same money, and eased the workload for VOCA. The nearly \$1 million grant — 14.5 percent goes to Mercy — is good for 2019 and 2020.

"The Foundation has been very instrumental in raising funds to support this very worthy program that often doesn't get a lot of attention," Midkiff said. "Those people who need SANE's services are impacted in a big way."

Bernal is confident that funding will continue into the foreseeable future.

"The nation sees we have to have this type of nursing in every community," she said. "I don't see this slipping through the cracks."

+ TO DONATE:

To contribute to the SANE Program, visit mercydurango.org/foundation



How the SANE nurse helps

Mercy and its community partners offer a spectrum of understanding, care, help, and resources for sexual assault victims. Here's a quick look at the process for those who show up in the emergency room at Mercy Regional Medical Center.

First, a triage nurse immediately summons the on-call Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE nurse). A doctor sees the victim only for a major injury. One of the six highly skilled and trained SANE nurses arrives as soon as possible to provide one-on-one comfort and medical attention. (The nurses rotate on-call coverage.) That care includes, as needed:

- Protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Evidence collection, such as specimens and forensic photography.
- A head-to-toe assessment.
- A mental health expert, particularly if the victim is suicidal or homicidal.
- If the victim requests law enforcement, a detective will conduct an interview.
- The SANE nurse, with the help of Sexual Assault Services Organization (SASO), will make sure the victim has a safe place to go before being discharged. Mercy's SANE Program has community partners in both Colorado and New Mexico, including SASO, Alternative Horizons, and Housing Solutions for the Southwest.

Victims sometimes arrive at Mercy on their own. If their first contact is law enforcement or SASO, those agencies may usher them toward the emergency room. The SANE nurse and SASO advocate evaluate each victim and help them find the necessary resources. Fort Lewis College students will be referred to the school's Title IX coordinator, Molly Wieser. Group counseling and support groups are available for anyone from high school to adult age. Each victim leaves Mercy with a folder detailing all the resources available to them in La Plata County.

Emergency room stays can last four to six hours. But costs are minimal. If evidence is collected, law enforcement pays for that. If there is an injury outside the SANE nurse exam, a victims' compensation program will pay for that.

+ Important phone numbers:

- If there's immediate danger or urgent medical care needed: **call 911**
- Sexual Assault Services Organization 24-hour hotline: **970-247-5400**
- SASO office: **970-259-3074**

An arthritis primer

JOINT PAIN IS NO FUN, BUT SOLUTIONS MAY BE AT HAND (OR KNEE, OR HIP)

Although a great number of Americans put up with arthritis, there comes a point when joint pain becomes a lifestyle burden and you throw in the towel and go see a specialist. What should that point be? Who should you see? What can they do for you?

Our specialists will begin to answer those questions here.

More than 50 million Americans — about one in every six of us — have arthritis, making it the top cause of disability in the U.S., according to the Arthritis Foundation. The two types of arthritis stem from non-inflammatory causes (osteoarthritis, or wear and tear of cartilage) and inflammatory causes (mostly autoimmune diseases, of which rheumatoid arthritis is the prototype).

INFLAMMATORY

Your local rheumatologist is Dr. Wendy Grant, who is presently the only such specialist in all of Southwest Colorado and Northern New Mexico. Her main office is in Durango, but she and Physician Assistant Erika Stensen maintain clinics in Ignacio, Towaoc, and Shiprock.

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease, which occur when the immune system attacks cells or tissues as if they're a threat, and this attack continues unabated. If you experience joint swelling for more than six weeks, you probably need to get it checked out, Dr. Grant says.

Rheumatoid arthritis cases make up about 70 percent of Dr. Grant's patients, but she can list a dozen or more other less-common rheumatic

diseases such as gout and psoriatic arthritis that she also treats. The key in successful treatment is identifying it early and preventing joint damage that can occur over time. Rheumatology is a multi-organ specialty, so these diseases are not limited to the joint.

What triggers these diseases is unclear — “we wish we knew,” Dr. Grant

says — but there is likely a genetic predisposition plus a trigger. Smoking is definitely a trigger. Also, stressors such as psychological, physical, and environmental are potential triggers.

Biologic therapies are directed at turning down the body's immune response. Fortunately, these medications can target specific parts of the immunesystem. Finding the correct medication for each patient is the “holy grail” of rheumatology, but Dr. Grant feels blessed that there are many to choose from.

She marvels at the strides made in her field. Before the 1980s, a rheumatologist's office was cluttered with patients in wheelchairs. Doctors prescribed large doses of aspirin. In the mid-1990s, when Dr. Grant entered the field, an explosion of biologic therapies occurred. Now, it's rare to see someone totally disabled by rheumatoid arthritis.

It's also important to eat right (see accompanying story) and get proper exercise. Physical activity, Dr. Grant says, is “a drug with no side effects.”

OSTEOARTHRITIS (NON-INFLAMMATORY)

Half of all arthritis cases of any type are osteoarthritis, which occur when cartilage breaks down in a body joint. Most commonly it affects knees, hips, lower back and neck, finger joints and the bases of the thumb and big toe.

Dr. Paige Mallette, Orthopedic Surgeon with Mercy Orthopedic Associates, says that osteoarthritis can be caused, over time, by obesity, injuries, changes in the anatomy, or simply general wear and tear. Some have a genetic predisposition to osteoarthritis, and obesity can hurry it along. Rheumatoid arthritis also can contribute to osteoarthritis.

Each patient has a different level of tolerance, and there's not necessarily a correlation between what an X-ray shows and how much pain a patient is experiencing. As osteoarthritis worsens over time, cartilage breaks down, causing pain, swelling, and joint stiffness. Spurs may develop on the bones and may even break off, further impinging joint movement. When cartilage is gone and bone rubs on bone, pain often increases dramatically.



Wendy Grant, MD

“If you have persistent, daily pain that is impacting your quality of life, I think it’s definitely reasonable to get it checked out,” Dr. Mallette says.

If a physical exam and an X-ray or MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) shows there is arthritis, treatment options are fairly limited: either manage the condition, or get a new joint. “There’s not a whole heck of a lot in between,” Dr. Mallette says. To avoid or delay osteoarthritis, she offers these tips:

- Maintain a healthy weight or lose weight to decrease stress on weight-bearing joints.
- Keep those joint muscles and ligaments strong with physical activity, whether it’s at the gym or walking around the neighborhood. “If you lose muscle tone,” Dr. Mallette says, “you load the joints abnormally with different forces.” Weakness and atrophy alter the mechanics of the joint.
- Stretching muscles and joints can improve flexibility and reduce pain. Yoga, for instance, may help.
- Medications are very low on Dr. Mallette’s list of treatments. They might help a bit with pain management, but none have been shown to help the underlying causes of osteoarthritis.

More and more frequently, patients ultimately opt for knee or hip replacement surgery. This is a great last option to get you walking normally again, but the earlier you listen to what your joints are telling you, the better off you’ll be.

More information:

Arthritis Foundation: arthritis.org

American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons: <https://orthoinfo.aaos.org>

American Association of Hip and Knee Surgeons: <https://hipknee.aahks.org>

+ CONTACT US:

CHPG Southwest – Rheumatology

1 Mercado St., Suite 275, Durango, **970-764-3740**

Mercy Orthopedic Associates, 1 Mercado St., Suite 202, Durango, **970-764-9400**



Paige Mallette, MD

Diet tips to manage inflammation

In many ways, it’s possible to eat badly for your joints, says Dr. Wendy Grant, rheumatologist with Centura Health Physician Group Southwest-Rheumatology.

Although she doesn’t recommend one specific diet, she will list for arthritis patients a few foods to avoid if possible. These can increase inflammation, and thus increase pain and the breakdown of the joints:

- Processed foods, particularly those high in trans fats (such as hydrogenated vegetable oil).
- Foods high in saturated fat. (Such as butter and cheese.) Those with arthritis should watch cholesterol levels because they are at higher risk for heart disease.
- Refined sugar (soda pop is an obvious one here, as are candy, cake, and cookies).
- Fried foods such as French fries, which are high in trans fats.

Some foods that seem to be good for an anti-inflammatory diet include berries, foods with fiber,

and cold-water fish high in omega-3 fatty acids. A Mediterranean-style diet with fish, olive oil, fruits and vegetables, nuts and seeds, and beans may benefit arthritis victims, and certainly can’t hurt.

Following these tips should keep your weight down, and that is beneficial for osteoarthritis victims, says Dr. Paige Mallette, orthopedic surgeon with Mercy Orthopedic Associates. Keeping weight in the healthy range is also an advantage when rehabilitating after joint replacement, she notes. And really for anyone, bad joints or not, all of the above diet tips can help.

Online resources:

The Arthritis Foundation website offers several tips on what to eat and what not to eat, and how to lose weight: www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/arthritis-diet

Nutrition information on the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons website: orthoinfo.aaos.org/en/staying-healthy/sports-nutrition/



Are push-ups really the best predictor of heart health?

A RECENT STUDY FOUND THAT MEN WHO CAN DO 40 OR MORE CONSECUTIVE PUSH-UPS HAD A LOWER RISK OF HEART DISEASE, BUT ARE THERE BETTER WAYS TO DETERMINE YOUR OVERALL HEALTH?

The push-up is a great exercise that involves several muscle groups, most obviously the arms. No doubt, if you can do a lot of them your risk of heart disease is lower than the average person's. But if push-ups just aren't your forte, and you can't bust out a quick set of 40, don't worry too much. A recently released study led by Harvard University found that men who could do 40 or more consecutive push-ups had as much as a 96 percent lower risk of serious heart problems over the next 10 years. The study followed 1,104 active male firefighters.

"Forty is a lot of push-ups. The average person off the street can't do 40," says Dr. Susie Kim, board-certified interventional cardiologist with Mercy Cardiology Associates.

So, there's no reason to overreact. But there is reason to stay in the best shape possible. Our chair-bound jobs, sometimes accompanied by inactive activities (TV watching, computer games), don't help our overall health.

"Every decade our overall health in the U.S. plummets because we're so sedentary," Dr. Kim says. "We're a product of our system: 'Just Google it.' You don't even have to walk anywhere to answer a question."

The answer to the health question isn't to keep practicing push-ups until you can do 40. That might help. But the real answer is to get your body moving any way possible. Get up out of your chair often. Get a half-hour of activity a day. And also, Dr. Kim advises, be certain to re-evaluate your diet every five to 10 years. The body changes as we age, and the metabolism slows down. If you eat the same amount that you did 10 years ago, you'll begin to gain weight.

Dr. Kim says it's important, particularly for women as they reach their 30s (women lose muscle mass more quickly than men) to do something to battle muscle loss, such as weightlifting. Having more muscle increases your metabolism, says Jolie Ensign, Wellness

Coordinator at Mercy Wellness Center and Mercy Sports Medicine. The body burns more calories to maintain muscle.

Even seemingly healthy people can have heart issues. With enough stress, even small amounts of plaque buildup on heart artery walls can lead to a heart attack. Plaques not even big enough to show up on a stress test can rupture, beginning a thrombus – a clot of red blood cells, platelets, etc. — that blocks the artery. Dr. Kim discussed how a low-risk man in his 50s was backcountry skiing with friends, and pushed himself to the extreme to keep up with his friends. He became hot and sweaty, and suddenly was having a massive heart attack.

He recovered. People who exercise tend to have heart disease at a later age. A corollary is that healthy people tolerate heart disease better and recover quicker when they do face it, Dr. Kim says.

Doing 40 push-ups? That's great for some, but it's just an indicator of overall health. If you can't do a quick 40, do something else to stay in shape, and watch what you eat. And in case you haven't figured out the obvious bottom line here: Pay attention to your health.

Online:

One source of good information is the **American Heart Association** website, www.heart.org.

From the main page, click the drop-down menu "healthy living." Try "Eat Smart" and "Getting Active," for starters.

CONTACT US: Mercy Cardiology Associates, 1 Mercado St., Suite 130, Durango, **970-247-1120**





The art of the proper push-up

Are you ready to throw in the towel when it comes to push-ups? Before you banish them from your fitness routine give the following suggestions a try.

While push-ups aren't complicated, they do require strength and engagement from many parts of your body, and proper form is paramount.

A push-up is basically a moving plank. To set up for a standard push-up, position your hands shoulder-width apart or a little bit wider. As you bend your elbows and lower toward the ground, your elbows should be at about a 45-degree angle to your body. (If you find this angle uncomfortable, you may adjust by either moving your arms closer or farther away from your body.) Your fingers should be splayed. It is important to keep your core engaged and your back flat, so that your body is one straight line from the top of your head to your heels.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR FORM IS CORRECT?

"Have someone watch you or use a mirror," recommends Jolie Ensign, Wellness Coordinator at Mercy Wellness Center and Mercy Sports Medicine. "After continual practice of push-ups, you should develop better body awareness, and this mind-body connection will let you know if you have the correct form."

The number one contributor to improper form, Jolie says, is that people neglect to engage their chest muscles, the primary muscle group used in a push-up.

"Women especially have less of a connection with their pectoral or chest muscles," Jolie explained. "These muscles are not a woman's go-to muscles, so we tend to compensate with our arms and shoulders, which should be the secondary muscle group to engage."

It's important to remember to engage your core as well so that you can keep your lower back flat, and not allow your hips to sag or your back to arch.

NEW TO PUSH-UPS?

It's OK to start slow. You can start with your hands on a wall, countertop or bench. Any elevation that ensures you complete a proper push-up with a full range of motion. Every few weeks, lower your incline a little bit.

You can also modify your plank by dropping to your knees, but make sure you maintain the right form. To do this, start in a regular high plank position and engage your core. When you drop to your knees, keep the same muscles contracted. Jolie recommends you only go as deep as you can while maintaining good form. Start by lowering from a plank to the point that's hardest for you. It's more important to nail the form and focus on engaging the primary muscle group – your chest and pectorals - than to push yourself to a full-body push-up when you simply aren't ready.

"If you practice push-ups everyday you should make huge strides and advance quickly," Jolie said. "Start with what you've got and do what you can. We get caught up in bigger, better and harder, or some people tend to get hung up on what they used to be able to do. Instead, try and enjoy the process and where you are today. Starting small is just fine."

WHAT IF YOU EXPERIENCE WRIST PAIN WHEN IN A PUSH-UP POSITION?

Jolie suggests to try grasping dumbbells while in the plank position. This will take some pressure off the wrist joint. However, you should work to strengthen and increase mobility in your wrists.

"Instead of compensating for an imbalance, I would encourage people with wrist pain to visit a physical therapist who can suggest exercises to strengthen them," Jolie stated.

LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO START?

There are a lot of great push-up challenges designed to slowly increase your strength available online.

"I do like challenges, especially if someone is working to create a new habit," Jolie explained. "The challenge can keep them engaged and motivated."

Though Jolie feels there may be better ways to gauge your overall health than how many push-ups you can complete, she does believe it is important to maintain muscle, especially as you age.

"We can focus too much on cardio, but it's just as important to work on keeping strong," Jolie said. "Any exercise will benefit your heart."

+ CONTACT US: Mercy Sports Medicine
327 S. Camino del Rio | Durango, CO | 970-259-9530

+ Surgery prep and recovery | 101



Most people know by now not to eat or drink right before going “under the knife.” But how many have attended a day-long class in order to prepare for surgery?

Mercy Spine Center of Excellence, together with Mercy Physical Therapy and Mercy Integrative Care Services, has nudged patient participation in their own surgery to a new level. The results have been overwhelmingly positive.

“It’s a partnership and a marriage,” says Dr. Douglas Orndorff, fellowship-trained, board-certified orthopedic surgeon with Durango-based Spine Colorado since 2009. “Surgery is a commitment both from the surgeon and the patient.”

In other words, you don’t expect your spouse to do all the work around the house (at least you shouldn’t!), so don’t expect the surgeon to do all the work. A good outcome depends a great deal on the patient, and Dr. Orndorff and surgical partner Dr. Jim Youssef go to great lengths to emphasize this. Your health, and their reputation, depends on the patient’s recovery. Mercy has been named a top 100 spine hospital in the country for the last five years.

“The technical part of the surgery is our responsibility,” Dr. Orndorff says. “But the after-care is really something the patient has to own and commit to.”

PRE-SURGERY

Orndorff and Youssef ask patients to focus on several things:

- Stay fit, stay active, and work on weight loss if necessary. Each patient is different, but the more you can keep your muscles toned and your weight down, the better the outcome.
- Don’t smoke. They’ll actually cancel your surgery if you test positive for nicotine. They have found that smoking decreases outcomes and increases the complication rate.

- Participate in their education system, run by the **Spine Center of Excellence** (a collaboration between **Spine Colorado** and **Mercy Regional Medical Center**) and Mercy’s Integrative Care Services that emphasizes holistic patient care. Every patient receives a comprehensive educational manual that explains the pathology of your condition and the nuts-and-bolts of your procedure. Patients participate in an education day where they attend a class with fellow patients, are fitted for a brace, visit again with the surgeon and a physician assistant, and more. Orndorff and Youssef will emphasize managing expectations. They’ll talk about the physical therapy you’ll be doing post-surgery, pain control that’s available, and answer questions.

POST-SURGERY

You’ll have time for reading and watching TV, but don’t expect to recline 24 hours a day after your spine surgery. Basically from about the moment the anesthetic wears off, you’ll be expected to get up and walk around. The goal is a mile per day.

“We really believe in an active recovery,” Dr. Orndorff says. “The more mobile you are, the more active you are. That has led to a decreased length of stay in our hospital and I definitely think it’s helped us achieve those very good outcomes that we have.”

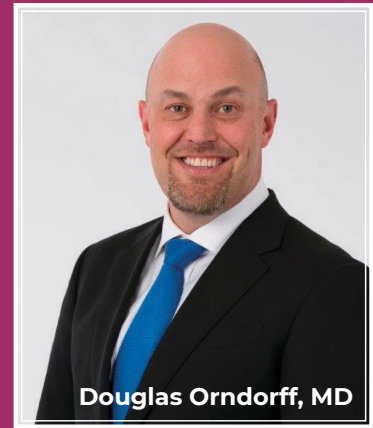
Activity provides multiple recovery benefits. It increases lung capacity, and decreases risk of pneumonia. It also decreases chance of blood clots and other possible complications. Being active often makes patients feel better, and many find they actually like to walk and move.

In contrast with 10 or 20 years ago, where back surgery was usually fusion and meant a huge scar, today’s cutting-edge techniques involve screws and rods that stabilize the spine, and a small incision. Thus, it’s possible for a patient to get up and about much more quickly.

Orndorff sees over and over how the more invested patients are in surgery — the more they learn, get fit, prepare mentally and physically — the better their outcome. Whether you're having gall bladder, ACL, or spine surgery, mindset and expectations are crucial. "It makes a huge difference," he says.

At Mercy Spine Center of Excellence, patients respond to that realization that surgery is a partnership, that they have a huge role in their outcome.

"We want our patients to feel like people, not like a number," Dr. Orndorff says. "That's super important."



Douglas Orndorff, MD

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call **970-382-9500**.



Jim Youssef, MD

What is the essential ingredient to surgical success? **You!**

At Mercy, we believe that personalized, thorough pre-operative education is essential. That's why we offer the **Steps to Surgical Success** program. Because your time is valuable, the program offers pre-operative education and testing in one day.

We believe in and have seen the benefits of treating the whole person – body, mind and spirit. Mercy's Integrative Care Services will help you develop a personalized surgical plan that empowers you to make certain choices that can enhance your surgical experience. Our Touch, Love, and Compassion (TLC) program offers holistic preparation for surgery including a personalized healing plan, pre- and post-surgical relaxation and more. Research has shown these therapies can reduce anxiety and the perception of pain.

You will also receive detailed, educational notebooks that explain everything you need to know about the procedure and what to do before and after surgery. Newsletters and in-room posters outline daily goals for recovery, so you know what to expect and what your daily recovery goals are.

The power of healing and wellness is within you. We're just here to support and help you along the way.





Ex-tennis star learns another way to serve



Growing up as a self-driven, globe-trotting tennis prodigy in southern Africa, Lesley Barbour couldn't possibly have envisioned the satisfying career in medicine she has since created for herself. She now resides in a small community on the opposite side of the world, treating and counseling patients who are nearing the end of life.

Dr. Barbour in January joined Mercy Home Health and Hospice of Mercy as a fellowship-trained palliative care and hospice physician. It's an honor for her to walk patients through their final life choices.

"I love having those conversations with patients about end-of-life wishes, trying to help family and patients make those decisions," she says.

Lesley Barbour grew up in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), the adopted child of an athletic father and Scottish-born mother. She grabbed a racket early in life, dragging her father (an Olympic field hockey player) out to play before and after school. She became Zimbabwe's top-rated junior tennis player by 1989, and qualified to play junior singles and doubles at Wimbledon. Playing singles there was nerve-racking, although in doubles she did quite well.

A college tennis scholarship brought her to America, but a series of back injuries derailed what she naively assumed would be a career in professional tennis. She remained at the University of Arizona to earn medical and master of public health degrees. Dr. Barbour completed her residency in emergency medicine at Boston Medical Center.

During this time she used her study breaks to take runs—long runs. She ended up running several marathons, including the famed Boston

Marathon, and returned to her home continent briefly to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, Africa's highest point.

She took a job in Albuquerque and remained there for nearly a dozen years, mostly as an emergency room doctor. About five years ago, while with Lovelace Health System, she had a chance to try hospice work. "I absolutely loved it." So she completed a fellowship in palliative care and hospice at the University of New Mexico in order to be board certified.

During her time in New Mexico she discovered Southwest Colorado; two of her fellowship rotations were in Durango. So when the opportunity came to join the Mercy Home Health and Hospice staff, she jumped. (She also works several shifts a month at Mercy as an emergency room doctor.) The girl from a nearly snowless country is now into cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, as well as mountain biking and hiking. The outdoor life suits her, and so does the small community feel. Doctors, nurses, technical aides – everyone is a team.

"Because it's such a small town, I feel that everyone is very respectful and really tries to work together," Dr. Barbour says. "And the patients are lovely."

After a childhood that she admits was focused on "me, me, me," the Zimbabwe native is glad to have found a niche helping others.

"I feel unbelievably fortunate what this country has offered me and what I've been able to take advantage of," Dr. Barbour says. "There's so much opportunity if you're willing to put a little work into it."



Lesley Barbour, MD



SOUP FOR THE SOUL

A HEART WARMING BENEFIT TO SUPPORT HOSPICE OF MERCY

One of the largest fundraisers for hospice has been **Soup for the Soul** held each year by Mercy Health Foundation, the fundraising arm of hospice. This signature event is one that nourishes the body, warms the heart, and supports the soul of hospice care.

Soup for the Soul provides guests an opportunity to taste soups, appetizers and desserts from some of the area's finest restaurants while at the same time giving them the gratifying feeling that they have helped so many in need of hospice care.

This year, Soup for the Soul raised over \$70,000 through ticket sales, sponsors, silent auction items, outright gifts and a special fundraiser for floral and candle donations in memory and in honor of friends and family. Proceeds support terminally ill patients and their families through Hospice of Mercy's dedicated team of doctors, nurses, chaplains, bereavement counselors, social workers and volunteers.

Thank you to our community for your continued support.

Thank you to our sponsors: Spine Colorado • TBK Bank • Alpine Bank • Morehart/Murphy Subaru • FCI • Hood Mortuary • United Methodist Thrift Shop • First Southwest Bank • Visiting Angels • Basin CO OP • LPEA • St. Columba Catholic Church • Tafoya Barrett and Assoc. PC

Thank you to our restaurants: Carver Brewing Co. • Chimayo • CJ's Diner • Durangourmet • Mercy Garden Terrace Café • Cyprus Café • Digs • East by Southwest • Glacier Club • Mineshaft Bar & Grill • Mahogany Grille • Ore House • Seasons • Manna Soup Kitchen • Mutu's • Nortons • Zia • Doubletree Cookies • BREAD • ENO • Steamworks • Star Liquors

Hospice of Mercy relies on charitable giving to cover services like spiritual care, bereavement services and volunteer coordination not reimbursed by Medicare hospice benefit or other insurances.

Please consider a gift today!

I/We would like to donate in memory of _____

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Make checks payable to **Mercy Health Foundation**, call **970.764.2800** or visit **www.mercydurango.org/foundation**

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Women's Beginner Summer Series

Interested in learning or improving your mountain bike or standup paddleboard skills in a supportive, safe and fun women-only environment?

Join Mercy Sports Medicine for the Women's Mountain Biking and Standup Paddleboard Beginner Summer Series.

The series will take place from 5:15 - 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays from May 22 to Aug. 14. You can attend one or all of the sessions. The cost is \$5 per ride or paddle.

Mountain Biking Foundations: Are you new to mountain biking? Or do you need to brush up on your skills? This is the place to start building your confidence on two-wheels in a fun, supportive, all-female environment. Bring your own bike.

SESSION WILL FOCUS ON:

- Learning body position and balance
- Proper braking
- Climbing and descending techniques
- Gearing and shifting
- Approaching obstacles/front wheel lift



Standup Paddleboard Foundations: Learn everything you need to get started in the exciting sport of standup paddelboarding in a relaxed women-only environment. SUP offers a great total body workout and is the perfect activity for lakes and rivers. No experience necessary. Bring your own board.

SESSIONS WILL FOCUS ON:

- Standing up
- Balance
- Falling and getting back on
- SUP strokes and turning
- SUP yoga



\$10 discounts are available on SUP rentals from 4CRS River Sports.

✦ To see the schedule and reserve your spot, visit [MercySports.ZenPlanner.com](https://www.mercysports.zenplanner.com)
For more information, call Jolie Ensign at **970.764.2718**.

Mercy Sports Medicine

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