The DCH Health System brought advanced technology closer to home for residents of West Alabama when it introduced robotic surgery in July 2009. Since then, Urologist Dr. Howard Winfield, Director of Robotic Surgery at DCH Regional Medical Center, and a skilled operating room team have been busy.

“Two or more robot-assisted surgeries have been performed essentially every week since last summer,” Dr. Winfield said. “Over the last few months, area gynecologists have also initiated robot-assisted procedures for hysterectomy.”

Dr. Winfield came to DCH from the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in Iowa City, where he was a professor in the Department of Urology and director of laparoscopic, robotic and minimally invasive urologic surgery. He is an internationally recognized pioneer and teacher of robotic surgery and laparoscopic techniques.

And the robot on his team goes by the name da Vinci.

The da Vinci Si Surgical System, manufactured by Intuitive Surgical.

For our patients, procedures performed with da Vinci mean more surgical precision, less pain and faster recovery.

**THE DA VINCI DIFFERENCE** With laparoscopic surgery—sometimes called minimally invasive surgery—a specially trained surgeon, such as Dr. Winfield, uses a camera, a scope and specialized instruments passed through small incisions to perform surgery that would otherwise require larger incisions.

The state-of-the-art da Vinci surgical system extends the surgeon’s capabilities through a four-armed robotic machine, complete with 3-D, high-definition visualization and enhanced magnification. Because of its precision, robotic surgery makes it possible to treat a broader range of conditions using the minimally invasive approach.

For the patient, benefits may include:
- Significantly less pain.
- Less blood loss.
- Less scarring.
- A shorter recovery time.
- A faster return to normal daily activities.
- Better clinical outcomes, in many cases.

**MORE SURGICAL OPTIONS** With the aid of the da Vinci surgical system, the Regional Medical Center is offering new surgical techniques for such urologic conditions as prostate cancer.

“I have been able to use some advanced laparoscopic urology procedures since I’ve been here, including laparoscopic cryosurgery to freeze a tumor on a kidney,” Dr. Winfield said. “Laparoscopic removal of kidneys harboring large malignant tumors is now routine in our practice here.

“I also use robot-assisted surgery for treating ureteropelvic junction obstruction of the kidney,” Dr. Winfield said. UPJO is a partial or total blockage of urine flow where the ureter joins the kidney.

“Often the obstruction occurs due to crossing blood vessels at the UPJO or some intrinsic abnormality of the musculature of the ureteral wall at that level,” Dr. Winfield explained.

He said his immediate goals are to increase minimally invasive surgical procedures and to expand treatment for women with urologic issues.

“It is anticipated that the gynecologic surgeons at DCH will continue to increase their robot-assisted procedures over the coming months,” Dr. Winfield said.

Currently, gynecologists Dr. Kristine Graettinger, Dr. Dwight Hooper and Dr. Marion Reed have privileges to perform robot-assisted gynecologic surgeries.

**LEARN MORE** You can go to an interactive site for more information about the da Vinci surgical system. At www.dchsystem.com, click on the da Vinci surgical system link in the lower right corner of the home page.
Bringing families together
New family room helps children heal faster

The Ronald McDonald Family Room at DCH Regional Medical Center opened following a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 23. The family room is the only one in Alabama and is one of only 80 in the United States.

The new area serves families of children being treated in the Pediatrics Unit or the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the Regional Medical Center. It includes a kitchen with light snacks, a computer, Internet access, a large-screen television and recliners.

The family room is meant to be a special place of rest, relaxation and privacy for families and is located only footsteps away from their children’s bedsides.

“This is very important, because research shows that children heal faster when family is present,” DCH Health System President/CEO Bryan Kindred said. “And staying close by allows parents to better communicate with their child’s medical team.”

Connected to the family room is a separate playroom, which is open to patients who feel well enough to move around but are not ready to be discharged from the hospital.

The Ronald McDonald Family Room is the result of a partnership among the Regional Medical Center; the DCH Foundation, Inc.; Ronald McDonald House Charities; Ronald McDonald House Charities of Alabama; and McDonald’s owners and operators in Tuscaloosa County. Support for the project also comes from several foundations, corporations, service clubs, physicians and individuals throughout the DCH Health System service area.

If you’d like to make a donation to the Ronald McDonald Family Room, call the DCH Foundation at 205-759-7349. To learn more about supporting the Foundation, go to www.supportdch.org.

DaVita Dialysis Clinic coming to PCMC

A DaVita Dialysis Clinic will open at the end of this year in a new building currently under construction next to the HealthPlex at Pickens County Medical Center. The clinic will have eight treatment stations and allow residents of Pickens County to receive dialysis close to home. The two-story complex also will house and serve as the new location for Carrollton Primary Care.

Flipping for joy!
Gymnastics meet raises $100K for Breast Cancer Fund

The DCH Health System and the DCH Foundation’s Breast Cancer Fund received $100,000 at The University of Alabama 2010 Power of Pink gymnastics meet in February.

UA Gymnastics Head Coach Sarah Patterson started the annual Power of Pink event five years ago to help promote awareness of breast cancer. Many gymnastics teams in the Southeastern Conference and in other regions now hold a Power of Pink meet each year.

In the fall, the Tuscaloosa Toyota/DCH Foundation Golf Classic—with Nite on the Green event held the evening before—also benefits the DCH Breast Cancer Fund. In addition to covering the cost of breast cancer screening, the DCH Breast Cancer Fund promotes early detection, education and awareness among women and minority populations regardless of their ability to pay.
A new and expanded diagnostic service—called urodynamic testing—is now available at West Alabama Urology Associates. This service helps determine the cause of urological problems such as urine leakage or blocked urine flow.

Elizabeth Mitchell, RN, started conducting urodynamic testing at WAUA in late March. Before joining Dr. Kenneth Aldridge and Dr. Howard Winfield at WAUA, Mrs. Mitchell gained 13 years of experience performing these tests in Atlanta.

The urodynamic testing area offers privacy and is located in DCH Medical Tower I. For patients’ convenience, there is an adjacent parking deck and valet parking.

“Urodynamic testing is done on men and women, and it’s the only way to watch the bladder function in real time to learn where the problem lies,” Mitchell said.

Urodynamic testing can show how well the bladder and the muscles that are involved with its proper functioning are working. Some of the problems that may be detected are:

- Incontinence.
- Frequent urination.
- Strong, sudden urges to urinate.
- Problems emptying the bladder completely.
- Recurrent urinary tract infections.
- “I also test men prior to their prostate surgery to help determine the treatment and surgery plan,” Mrs. Mitchell said.

If you’re having urinary problems, talk to your physician. He or she may refer you for urodynamic testing.

For more information, call Susan Windham, CRNP at WAUA at 205-344-9393, ext. 4.

Kathy Griffith named Alabama Hospital Hero

Kathy Griffith, Assistant Administrator of Patient Care Services and Chief Nursing Officer at Fayette Medical Center, was honored in February as one of 10 Hospital Heroes in Alabama. The Alabama Hospital Association presented the award at its seventh annual Hospital Heroes luncheon in Birmingham.

Mrs. Griffith and nine other Hospital Heroes were selected from a field of more than 100 hospital employees who were named regional Hospital Heroes in January. Mrs. Griffith was one of the five DCH Health System employees selected to be a regional Hospital Hero.

The Hospital Heroes from DCH Regional Medical Center are Jeff Beans, RN, Medical/Surgical Intensive Care Unit; Bernadine Della-Penna, Social Worker, DCH Cancer Center; and Stephen Eure, Pharmacist. Timothy Mayhew, Home Medical Equipment Delivery Technician at Pickens County Medical Center, is the other honoree.

As a 32-year veteran of the health care field, Mrs. Griffith has received several honors, including the Most Outstanding RN Student Award from The University of Alabama, the Fayette County Hospital Employee of Excellence Award and the Fayette County Hospital Nurse of the Year Award.

Mrs. Griffith is also active in the community, serving as a licensed associate pastor in a local church and as a Sunday school teacher.

Cookin’ up chili for a good cause

DCH’s Code Red Chili Cook-Off Team recently participated in the Tuscaloosa Exchange Club’s 2010 Chili Cook-Off event. Team members included (from left) Marvin Lucas, Assistant Laboratory Supervisor and Phlebotomy Instructor; Dexter Hancock, DCH Regional Medical Center Nutritional Services Director; Lori Roer, Human Resources Compensation Director; Gary Lane, DCH Executive Chef; Bill Cassels, Regional Medical Center Administrator; and Beth Francis, Human Resources Vice President.

Mr. Hancock and Mr. Lucas are Exchange Club members who served on this year’s cook-off planning committee. This annual fundraiser benefits initiatives to end child abuse as well as other community service projects.

Throughout the year, the DCH Health System recognizes employees from its hospitals in Tuscaloosa, Northport, Fayette and Carrollton with special awards for their service to their respective hospitals and their patients.

“These employees are role models for each of us in the outstanding way that they go about their jobs caring for patients and working with other employees,” said Bryan Kindred, President/CEO of the Health System.

The employees were nominated by their peers to receive recognition awards based on various criteria, including outstanding job performance, attitude, dependability, and dedication to the mission of the Health System and its patients and employees.

DCH Regional Medical Center. Tamia Ellis and Mary Richardson were the recipients of the Excellence Award for the first quarter of 2010.

Ms. Ellis is a Patient Care Assistant and Unit Secretary on the Obstetrics Unit and has been employed by the Regional Medical Center for four years. Ms. Richardson is an Ultrasonographer in the Radiology Department and has been employed by the Regional Medical Center for eight years.

Fayette Medical Center. Tammy Cork, Pharmacy Technician, was the recipient of the Employee of Excellence Award for the first quarter of 2010. Ms. Cork has been employed at Fayette Medical Center since February 2000.

Pickens County Medical Center. Rita McCafferty was named the recipient of the Employee of Excellence Award for the third quarter of 2009. She is a Medical Social Worker for Quality Management and has been employed by PCMC for 13 years.
for centuries, people have known the short-term effect of not getting enough sleep: being tired the next day. But now we know that sleep deprivation has long-term effects, too—some harmful. Lack of sleep can be a major factor in many medical and psychosocial problems.

Sleep deprivation can lead to neurobehavioral (the way the brain affects emotion, behavior and learning) deficits that can lead to poor job performance and sleepiness-related errors, as well as industrial and motor vehicle accidents.

Night after night, millions of Americans are not getting the recommended adequate sleep of seven to eight hours for a variety of reasons, including sleep apnea.

SLEEP APNEA: STANDING IN THE WAY OF REST Sleep apnea is the most common sleep disorder, affecting millions of Americans. The Greek word apnea means “without breath.” People with untreated sleep apnea repeatedly stop breathing during sleep, sometimes hundreds of times a night and often for a minute or longer, many times unnoticed. Simultaneous drops in hormonal stability and oxygen level can occur several hundreds of times, causing severe cardiovascular and metabolic instability.

You are at risk if you are male, overweight, over the age of 40 or a woman who has experienced menopause. However, sleep apnea can happen to anyone at any age, even to children.

Untreated, sleep apnea can be a contributing factor to high blood pressure and other cardiovascular disease; memory problems; metabolic problems, such as diabetes and weight gain; impotency; and headaches. In addition, untreated sleep apnea may be responsible for job impairment, motor vehicle crashes and relationship problems. It can also disturb the sleep of partners.

There are three types of sleep apnea:

- **Obstructive sleep apnea.** The most common type of sleep apnea, OSA is caused by a blockage of the airway during sleep, usually when the soft tissue in the rear of the throat collapses and closes.
- **Central sleep apnea.** With this type of sleep apnea, the airway is not blocked, but the brain fails to signal the muscles to breathe.
- **Mixed apnea.** This is a combination of OSA and central sleep apnea.

TREATING SLEEP DISORDERS Most causes of sleep deprivation, including OSA, are treatable. Several treatment options exist, and at present the most effective treatment is continuous positive airway pressure therapy. With CPAP therapy, a mask is placed around the nose, forcing open the airways with positive pressure. After a sleep specialist diagnoses sleep apnea and CPAP therapy is prescribed, a sleep study will help determine the optimal air pressure and CPAP equipment for each patient.

Once CPAP therapy is begun, the majority of patients find that many of their symptoms are improved, including fatigue, excessive sleepiness and difficulty breathing. Significant improvement in blood pressure, diabetes and other disorders is often achieved, which can mean a decreased need for medication.

Patients should remain in the care of a physician who specializes in sleep to make sure they are using their CPAP machines correctly and to make any adjustments to the pressure or how the masks fit their faces. Most medical insurance fully or partially covers the sleep studies and CPAP equipment.

OTHER CAUSES OF SLEEP DEPRIVATION Other major causes of sleep deprivation include insomnia and inadequate sleep hygiene. Improper use of some medications for sleep can have disastrous consequences and can lead to drug dependency.

Cognitive behavioral therapy has been shown to be superior to medication. Group therapy is the typical treatment format, with counseling and reinforcement at multiple sessions.

**COULD YOU HAVE A SLEEP DISORDER?** If you think you may have a sleep disorder, inform your physician. Your physician can then determine if a referral to a sleep specialist is necessary. The sleep specialist may, in turn, refer you for a sleep study.

DCH Sleep Services, accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, offers several rooms for patients to stay overnight for sleep studies. All rooms are warm and inviting, with hotel-like surroundings, traditional furnishings and a television.

During a sleep study, experienced sleep technicians attach sensors to the sleepers body so they can check for several activities, including leg movement, nocturnal seizures, drops in oxygen levels, snoring and signs of sleep disorders, such as rapid eye movement behavioral disorder. The process is completely painless.

Following your test, the sleep specialist will review your results for an accurate diagnosis and treatment recommendation. These findings will be reported back to your primary physician.

If you or someone you know has sleep problems, call 205-343-8628 or visit www.dchsystem.com/sleep to find out how DCH Sleep Services can help.

Information in this article comes from Dr. Narayan Krishnamurthy, Pulmonary and Sleep Medicine Specialist at Tuscaloosa Lung and Sleep Consultants and Medical Director of the DCH Sleep Lab.
While you and your children are eating On the go, parents can set a food survival kit at home and make sure they have good choices when they travel or eat on the go.

A PREPARED PARENT: Registered Dietitian Ashley Maughan knows the importance of teaching healthy eating habits at an early age. She encourages her children, Andrew, 4, and Danyele, 3, to eat healthy snacks at home and makes sure they have good choices when they travel or eat on the go.

PACK A FOOD SURVIVAL KIT

Parents can set up their children for success physically and mentally before the day ever starts by making sure they don’t miss the most important meal of the day—breakfast.

Breakfast doesn’t have to be traditional, suggests Kim Chism, Registered and Licensed Dietitian and Culinary Specialist in the DCH Nutritional Services Department. And if you find yourself short on time, she offers the following quick, nutrient-packed ideas:

- A bagel with almond butter and sliced apples.
- Oatmeal made with skim or low-fat milk, chopped apples, dried fruit, or nuts. Add vanilla for extra flavor. Microwave one to two minutes.
- Smoothies made with low-fat yogurt and frozen mixed berries.
- Flour tortillas spread with natural peanut butter and sliced bananas.
- Leftover rice mixed with yogurt, fruit and nuts.
- Egg white omelets and frittatas prepared with reduced-fat cheese and add-ins, such as salsa, peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes, onions, scallions or fresh herbs.

EATING ON THE GO

While you and your children are busy this summer with ball games, trips or shopping, you may have to adjust family eating times. This can make it more tempting to choose the quick route for convenient fast foods.

To avoid fast-food temptations, make a commitment to go through the drive-through less frequently during the week. When you choose to eat fast food, pick out healthier choices for yourself and guide your children to do the same.

When you’re going to be away from home for a few hours, stock a cooler with ice packs (for perishables) and nutrient-packed snacks your children like.

When shopping, let your children make choices for foods and beverages for the cooler. Some ideas include:

- Part-skim string cheese.
- Light cheese spreads with a favorite multigrain cracker.
- Fruit cups and fresh fruit.
- 100 percent juices (4- to 8-ounce portions).
- Graham crackers and animal crackers with natural nut butters.
- Nuts and dried fruits.
- Dry, unsweetened cereals.
- Prepopped light popcorn.

WAY TO GO KIDS! PROGRAM

Just like adults, children come in all shapes and sizes. While genetics determines children’s shapes, the amount and kinds of food children eat each day determine their size.

The DCH Nutritional Services Department is offering Way to Go Kids! for children ages 7 to 12 to help them and their parents learn how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through proper eating and being physically active.

To learn more about Way to Go Kids! and other upcoming sessions, call 205-759-7514 or e-mail clinicalnutrition@dchsystem.com.

Health Educator Amy Richardson teaches the Way to Go Kids! camps at the NorthRidge Fitness Center. The next camps will be June 7 to 11, July 12 to 16 and July 26 to 30 from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

EATING WELL ON THE ROAD

It’s very easy to fall off the healthy-eating wagon when you’re on vacation. Irregular routines, tempting foods and a relaxing environment can contribute to poor choices. But with a little common sense and work, you can still manage to eat healthy and have fun without feeling deprived.

Plan ahead

When you reach your destination, think ahead of time about which meals will be “cheats,” and do this for only one meal a day. Remember also to include something active in each day’s schedule. These little tips can save you from too much sodium and fat, hidden calories, sleep problems, and lack of energy.

Fast food finds

When necessary, it’s possible to find healthy options at fast food establishments. But be warned that even a house salad can easily become just as much of a problem as a supersized burger meal if it’s dressed with all the extras, such as high-fat dressings and garnishes.

Slender U can keep you on track

If you’re looking for support to get you back on track and keep you there, consider the Slender U Weight Management Program offered at The SpineCare Center.

DCH registered dietitians and exercise specialists lead the sessions, which provide support for people who want to lose those extra summer pounds or who want to improve overall health and wellness, says Kim Chism, Registered and Licensed Dietitian in the DCH Nutritional Services Department.

For information about upcoming sessions of Slender U, call 205-343-8864 or e-mail clinicalnutrition@dchsystem.com.

Strawberry banana cooler

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Instructions

In a blender, combine all ingredients and blend until smooth. Makes about 4 servings.

Ingredients

- 2 cups unsweetened orange juice
- ½ cup whole frozen strawberries
- 1 banana, sliced
- 4 ice cubes

To learn more about Way to Go Kids! and other upcoming sessions, call 205-759-7514 or e-mail clinicalnutrition@dchsystem.com.
Medical Center, other swallowing exercises and techniques was added to his therapy. Later, during outpatient rehabilitation at Northport Medical Center, where it was discovered that he had suffered a brainstem stroke. As a result of this stroke, he showed signs of oropharyngeal dysphagia (pronounced oro-fah-rin’je-al dis-fay-jah), which is difficulty swallowing caused by weakness and decreased coordination of the muscles in the mouth and throat.

Tests revealed that liquids were entering the lungs rather than the stomach when Mr. Flowers swallowed, a condition called aspiration. He began rehabilitation at the DCH Rehabilitation Pavilion at Northport Medical Center, where he initially received liquids and nutrition through a feeding tube.

Speech Therapist Kelly Sullivan, MS, CCC-SLP, began using VitalStim therapy to help stimulate the muscles in Mr. Flowers’ throat to help achieve proper swallowing. Later, during outpatient rehabilitation at Northport Medical Center, other swallowing exercises and techniques were added to his therapy.

“What more than anything else, Mr. Flowers wanted to be able to drink a glass of sweet tea,” said Lisa Morris, MS, CCC-SLP.

What are swallowing disorders?

Having trouble swallowing (dysphagia) is a symptom that accompanies a number of neurological disorders. There could be problems with any stage of the swallowing process as food and liquid move from the mouth, down the back of the throat, through the esophagus and into the stomach.

Difficulties can range from a total inability to swallow, to coughing or choking because the food or liquid is entering the windpipe, which is referred to as aspiration.

When aspiration is frequent, a person can be at risk of developing pneumonia. Food may get stuck in the throat, or people may drool because they cannot swallow their saliva.

Conditions that can cause dysphagia include:

- Stroke (the most common cause).
- Traumatic brain injury.
- Cerebral palsy.
- Parkinson’s disease and other degenerative neurological disorders, such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease).
- Multiple sclerosis.
- Huntington’s disease.
- Myasthenia gravis.

Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke

Find the help you need with DCH’s Dysphagia Program

The Dysphagia Program at the DCH Rehabilitation Pavilion at Northport Medical Center treats people with dysphagia, or swallowing difficulties. Certified and licensed speech-language pathologists evaluate and manage patient care through individualized therapy programs based on the type, extent and severity of each patient’s swallowing disorder. If untreated, dysphagia can affect a person’s eating and breathing.

Who is eligible for the Dysphagia Program?

The following patients can take advantage of this program:

- Patients who have had swallowing difficulties before.
- Patients with medical symptoms of a swallowing disorder, such as coughing, choking or excessive drooling.
- Patients who have had recurring pneumonia or respiratory infections or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Patients with problems caused by inadequate nourishment.

A physician referral is required for an evaluation through the Dysphagia Program.

For more information about the program and other treatment options for swallowing disorders, go to www.dchsystem.com/rehab and click on “Services.”

How VitalStim works

VitalStim therapy applies neuromuscular electrical stimulation to the swallowing muscles to create or reteach functional muscle-use patterns that are necessary for swallowing.

“Speech therapists from throughout the United States who use VitalStim therapy have reported incredible success, particularly for those patients for whom traditional swallowing therapy has failed,” Mrs. Sullivan said. “Benefits of this VitalStim therapy include decreased severity of dysphagia, reduction or elimination in aspiration, decreased pain with swallowing, improved nutrition and hydration, improved facial function, and decreased health care costs.”

The road to recovery

After Mr. Flowers had completed months of outpatient rehabilitation, Mrs. Morris, his treating therapist in the Rehabilitation Pavilion Speech Therapy Department at Northport Medical Center, tested his swallowing abilities. The test showed that Mr. Flowers was able to tolerate thin liquids without any restrictions.

“VitalStim therapy was extremely beneficial in helping Mr. Flowers regain normal swallow function,” Mrs. Morris said. “He is now able to drink tea, coffee or any other liquid he desires without special preparations to thicken the liquids.”

While Mrs. Morris praises VitalStim for Mr. Flowers’ success, he praises her expertise. “Lisa Morris and the Rehabilitation Pavilion staff have been a lifesaver to me,” Mr. Flowers said. “They are wonderful, and they are very knowledgeable. I know that I would not have come this far without them. And I no longer take swallowing for granted.”

To learn more about the Dysphagia Program and other therapy services at the Rehabilitation Pavilion, visit www.dchsystem.com/rehab or call 205-333-4900.

Fayette Medical Center:

Emergency Department gets a new look

The Emergency Department and admission area at Fayette Medical Center have undergone face-lifts, including freshly painted walls and new floors, fixtures and furnishings.

“With the completion of the renovation and the earlier addition of a new Emergency Department/Outpatient entrance area, this much-needed project has now ended,” Fayette Medical Center Administrator Barry Cochran said. “This project, along with a new, soon-to-be-added area for outpatient registrations only, is our way of trying to better serve our community.”

A SPOONFUL OF SUGAR: William Flowers follows therapy directions from Lisa Morris, one of the speech-language pathologists at the DCH Rehabilitation Pavilion who helped him regain his ability to swallow normally.
TUNE IN TO YOUR MEDICATIONS

You can take an active role in your health care by being involved and informed about your medications and treatment.

“Medication safety means that patients receive the right medication, the right dose, at the right time and in the right way,” said Beth Wattigny, PharmD, a Pharmacy Resident in the DCH Regional Medical Center Pharmacy Department.

And what helps keep those medications straight is your involvement in your health care. In fact, Dr. Wattigny said health providers encourage that involvement.

“You and your family or caregivers are part of your health care team and share the responsibility of safe medication use,” she said. “Your physician decides which medication is best for you by selecting the proper drug, dosage (strength), frequency (how often you take) and the route (by mouth, to eyes, to ears, to skin, etc.). Your pharmacist checks for potential drug interactions with other medications and dispenses and clearly labels the prescribed medication.

“Your responsibility is to take the medication as prescribed, notify your physician or pharmacist if you experience any unusual problems, and learn why you are taking the medicine and what you can expect from taking it,” Dr. Wattigny said.

Improving patient safety requires constant learning and thorough communication among patients, their family or caregivers, and their health care providers. You can help ensure your safety and increase your awareness by taking an active role in your health care by knowing your medications.

For more tips, see the checklists at right.

An easy way to keep track of your meds

The DCH Health System and the Pharmacy Department, in collaboration with the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists, have shared several online resources for patient medication lists. Patients and their families and caregivers can carry these lists—completed with their current medications—with them at all times to be a quick reference for physicians and other health care providers.

“We encourage you and your family or caregiver to use any of the links listed below to develop your personalized medication list and bring it with you to every physician office visit, emergency room, hospital, rehabilitation facility or nursing home,” said Beth Wattigny, PharmD, a Pharmacy Resident in the DCH Pharmacy Department.

These forms can help support your health and safety by:

- Providing your health care providers with more accurate and complete information about your medication history to help you receive a higher quality of care.
- Make sure all of your providers have a complete, up-to-date list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications that you take, including vitamins and herbal products.
- Update your medicine list whenever your physician changes or stops your medication.
- Make sure you understand the instructions from your physician or pharmacist.
- Read the medication label slowly and carefully.
- Double-check the name of the medication and that your name is on the prescription bottle before taking it.
- Ask your pharmacist if you do not recognize the name of the medication that you have been prescribed.
- Medications can have a brand, or trade, name and a generic name.

Questions to ask

- What is the reason for taking this medication?
- What is it safe to drink alcohol while taking this medicine?
- Is there anything I should not eat or drink while taking this medication?
- What can I expect it to do? What side effects will this medication have?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Will this medication interact with other medications that I take?
- Is there anything I should not eat or drink while taking this medicine?
- How should I store this medication?

Avoiding problems

Dr. Wattigny also offered these tips:

- Let your physician or pharmacist know immediately if there is anything keeping you from taking your medicine as prescribed.
- Take medication exactly as prescribed or as directed by your physician. Do not skip, reduce or stop unless directed by your physician or health care provider.
- Keep your medications in their original containers.
- Throw away any expired or outdated medications.
- Do not share your prescription medication with others.
- Take medications in a well-lit room.
- Keep your medication list with you at all times.
- If possible, have your medications filled at one pharmacy. If you are using multiple pharmacies, let the pharmacist know about other medications in order to avoid potential drug duplications and interactions.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about any reactions or adverse effects you may experience from your medications.

Use these checklists for medication safety

It’s important to take an active role in decisions about your medications. These checklists, courtesy of Beth Wattigny, PharmD, a Pharmacy Resident in the DCH Pharmacy Department, will help you cover all of your medication bases:

- Make sure all of your providers have a complete, up-to-date list of all prescription and over-the-counter medications that you take, including vitamins and herbal products.
- Update your medicine list whenever your physician changes or stops your medication.
- Make sure you understand the instructions from your physician or pharmacist.
- Read the medication label slowly and carefully.
- Double-check the name of the medication and that your name is on the prescription bottle before taking it.
- Ask your pharmacist and cabinet to label clearly the reason for taking the medication on your prescription label.
- Always ask your pharmacist if the color, shape or dosage of your medication changes when your prescription is refilled.
- Make sure the directions on the prescription label match the directions from your physician.
- Ask your pharmacist if you do not recognize the name of the medication that you have been prescribed.
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- Ask your physician or pharmacist about any reactions or adverse effects you may experience from your medications.
BETTER HEALTH

American Red Cross Blood Drives
- Wednesday, June 30, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. DCH Conference Center, DCH Regional Medical Center
- Thursday, July 1, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. DCH Conference Center, DCH Regional Medical Center
- Wednesday, July 7 Faucett Auditorium, Northport Medical Center
Call 205-333-4840

DCH Golden Years Program
Fourth Mondays, January through April, June, September and October, 2 p.m. Open to people 50 and older. Call 205-759-7931.

DCH Open-Heart Surgery Club
First Tuesdays Willard Auditorium, DCH Regional Medical Center
Call 205-759-7660.

Genesis
Third Thursdays, 6 p.m. Willard Auditorium, DCH Regional Medical Center
This one-time class helps grandparents develop their role in the growth of their grandchildren. Free. Call 205-752-2501.

Grand Grandparents
Women’s Pavilion, OB Classroom, Northport Medical Center
This one-time class helps grandparents discuss what life will be like with a new family member. Free. Call 205-333-4600.

Lollapalooza 2010
Saturday, Oct. 9 Pickens County Medical Center
Mark your calendar and watch for details about this annual fundraiser benefitting our community. Free. Call 205-932-5966.

Safe Sitter Classes
Monday and Tuesday, June 7 and 8 Fayette Medical Center
Open to boys and girls ages 11 to 13. Call 205-932-1279.

United Ostomy Association of America (UOAA)
Tuscaloosa Group
Sunday, Sept. 5, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. DCH Conference Room A, DCH Regional Medical Center
The UOAA Tuscaloosa group is open to people who have, or will have, a bowel or urinary diversion. Call 205-759-7358.

Way To Go Kids!
June 7 to 11, July 12 to 16 and July 26 to 30, 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. NorthRidge Fitness Center
Program for children ages 7 to 12 to help them maintain a healthy weight through diet and exercise. Call 205-759-7514.

DCH CANCER CENTER PROGRAMS

To learn about classes or to register, call 205-759-7877.

Art Workshops
- Wednesdays, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. DCH Cancer Art Room
- Thursdays, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. DCH Cancer Center, floor 3

Breast Cancer Screening
- Monday, July 19, 5 p.m. DCH Cancer Center, first floor
Free breast screening for all, and women 40 and older receive a coupon for a free mammogram. Call 205-759-8493.

Cancer Wellness
Fourth Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. DCH Cancer Center Wellness Room
Reservations recommended.

IMPACT
Third Thursdays, 11 a.m. Parker Fireside Room, Tuscaloosa United Methodist Church
IMPACT is a support group for women who have been diagnosed with breast cancer. Free.

Look Good...Feel Better
Fourth Mondays, 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. DCH Cancer Center Wellness Room
This program helps women undergoing cancer treatment deal with the psychological side effects of treatment. Free.

Prostate Cancer Support Group
Second Wednesdays, bimonthly, noon to 1 p.m. DCH Cancer Center Wellness Room
Open to prostate cancer patients and their families. Lunch will be served. Reservations are required. Free.

Staying Strong—Nutrition Can Make a Difference
Third Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. DCH Cancer Center Wellness Room
Open to patients, family, caregivers and community members.

STRETCH
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 a.m. University of Alabama Student Recreation Center
STRETCH is an exercise class for women who have or have had breast cancer. Sponsored by the DCH Cancer Treatment Center and the UA Student Recreation Center. Free.

HEALTH AND FITNESS PROGRAMS

HealthPlex at the Pickens County Medical Center in Carrollton is a community-based wellness and fitness center complete with equipment and programs to meet the needs of many different people. Call 205-367-8111.

ONGOING PROGRAMS

DCH Regional Medical Center
Childbirth Education Classes
For information, call the Department of Organizational Development and Education at 205-759-7745.

- Beginning Breastfeeding
For expectant parents who are interested in learning about breastfeeding.

- Caring for Your Infant
Focuses on the first days after bringing your newborn home.

- Early Pregnancy
Answers commonly asked questions and offers expectant parents information about having a healthy baby.

- Helping Siblings Adjust
This one-hour class acquaints big brothers and sisters with their new roles.

- Preparing for Childbirth
For expectant mothers and fathers.

- Refresher to Childbirth
A review for expectant parents who have already experienced childbirth.

DCH Diabetes Center
At this education and resource facility for people with diabetes, nurses and nutritionists teach self-management skills, including how to control blood sugar, prevent diabetes complications and improve self-care skills. A physician referral is required. Call 205-759-5260.

Marvelous Multiples
This class is for expectant parents of twins or more. Call 205-333-4600.

Sleender U Weight Management Program
DCH’s SpineCare Center
This one-hour class acquaints big brothers with what to expect when a new family member arrives. You will discuss what life will be like with a new baby.

Breathing and Relaxation
For couples at least 34 weeks pregnant who want to learn natural labor and birth techniques.

- Comprehensive Childbirth Class
First-time parents learn about labor, delivery and postpartum.

- Healthy Pregnancy
“Entering the third trimester.” This class, specifically helpful for first-time parents, is taken during the second trimester, at 22 to 28 weeks, to go over what’s normal and what can happen during the third trimester.

- Infant/Child CPR and Safety
Learn how to perform CPR, rescue a choking infant or child, and prevent childhood injuries.

West Alabama Aphasia and Stroke Support Group
Third Mondays of every other month, 5:30 p.m. DCH Rehabilitation Pavilion
Call 205-345-5488.

Fayette Medical Center
CPR and First Aid Classes
These classes are offered to community groups on request. Call 205-932-1279.

Touch Cancer Support Group
Fourth Tuesdays, 5 p.m. to 6 p.m. Call 205-932-1279 or 205-932-5966.

Pickens County Medical Center
Narcotics Anonymous
Making Progress, Monday, 5 p.m. Education Room
Call 205-367-1855.

Pickens County Cancer Support Group
Second Tuesdays, 6 p.m. Education Room
Open to cancer survivors and their families. Free. Call the American Cancer Society at 205-758-0700.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

HEALTHY COMMUNITY is published as a community service for the friends and patrons of DCH HEALTH SYSTEM, 805 University Blvd., E., Tuscaloosa, AL 35401.

DCH Regional Medical Center, 205-759-7111
Fayette Medical Center, 205-932-5966
Northport Medical Center, 205-333-4500
Pickens County Medical Center, 205-367-8111
www.dchsystem.com

Information in HEALTHY COMMUNITY comes from a wide range of medical experts. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your health care provider. Models may be used in photos and illustrations.

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