

A publication by St. Joseph Medical Center for Houston Area Residents

## STEWARD HEALTH CARE INVESTS \$80 MILLION INTO EXPANSION AT ST. JOSEPH MEDICAL CENTER

As part of its continuous pursuit of excellence, St. Joseph Medical Center will be embarking on an \$80 million renovation project, which will change the face of Houston's oldest hospital.

"We're looking forward to this renovation and how it will enhance the care we deliver to our patients and their families," said Scott Flowers, Chief Operating Officer of St. Joseph Medical Center. "The overhaul will create a more modern and inviting environment, positioning us well for future growth."

The renovations will take place in phases over the course of the next four years. A significant part of the project will be the makeover of all the patient rooms, transforming them into more comfortable and functional areas, as well as a facelift for the emergency room, where the hospital sees most of its behavioral health patients.

Construction of the first phase of the project began in mid-February. This first phase will encompass the renovation of St. Joseph Medical Center's cardiology services, including the cath lab, as well as interventional radiology and mammography.



(L to R) Stan Adams, CFO; Lisa Cox, RN, CNO; Kim Bassett, President; Scott Flowers, COO and Dr. Stephen Nesbit, CMO

"The renovation project will enable the installation of more state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, allow us to perform more innovative procedures, and increase the overall capacity of many of our service lines," said Flowers.

Another part of the first phase will be constructing an urgent care clinic, which will provide added convenience for Houstonians who live and work in the downtown area. Staffed by primary care physicians, the clinic will treat patients needing care immediately but who do not require going to the emergency room.

"The modernization of our campus will amplify the rich history of St. Joseph Medical Center and will serve as a continuation of our story, impacting future generations," said Flowers. "Our goal is to provide an attractive, state-of-the-art facility offering an array of health care services to the Houston community."



Jeffrey Liang, MD

## SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE WHEN STARTING A NEW EXERCISE PROGRAM

When starting an exercise program, our natural desire is to see results and see them quickly, especially if we're trying to lose excess weight. We may lose patience with ourselves and, as a result, overdo it.

"If you're not in shape but aspire to achieve any fitness goal, whether that's to lose weight or run a marathon, it will be important to build up your strength and endurance over time gradually," said Jeffrey Liang, MD, an orthopedics and sports medicine specialist with St. Joseph Medical Center. "Your first step towards starting an exercise routine might be buying a new pair of shoes or taking a walk around the neighborhood. And that's OK."

Liang says the most common conditions he sees when patients overextend themselves in starting an exercise routine are muscle soreness, strain, and overuse.

"While these injuries are not serious, they may set you back on your exercise goals, which is why it's important to take it slowly," he said. "It's important not to bite off more than you can chew and set realistic expectations for yourself."

An essential component of any exercise program is stretching. Liang says it's best to do so after you've warmed up and gotten your blood pumping. He recommends going for a light jog and then stretching to prepare for a workout.

Thirty minutes of exercise at a moderate intensity every day not only helps prevent heart attack and stroke; it also improves range of motion, strengthens bones and muscles, enhances flexibility, and keeps joints healthy.

"Exercise is medicine," said Liang. "You derive the most benefits when you do the prescribed amount, lose benefits when you don't, and increase the risk of injury when you do too much."



## WELCOMES NEW SMG GASTROENTEROLOGIST DR. AHMAD FAROOQ

St. Joseph Medical Center recently welcomed a new gastroenterologist to the Steward Medical Group.

Ahmad Farooq, MD, joined the practice where he treats patients for a wide range of GI conditions, including peptic ulcer disease, gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and abdominal pain, irritable bowel syndromes, gastrointestinal malignancies, and pancreatic and liver diseases.

"As a member of the Steward Medical Group, I look forward to serving patients in traditionally underserved populations of Houston," said Farooq. "It means a lot to me both personally and professionally to be a member of the St. Joseph Medical Center family."



Ahmad Farooq, MD

# COPING WITH COVID-19 DIAGNOSIS AT HOME

People have begun receiving their COVID-19 vaccines, and there's a small glimmer of hope on the horizon about eventually making coronavirus pandemic a thing of the past.

Despite this forward progress, there is and will continue to be a high infection rate for a while. And while a percentage of the population requires hospitalization, most COVID-19 cases are treated at home. But how?

Thien Nguyen, MD, a critical care pulmonologist and the director of the St. Joseph Medical Center Intensive Care Unit, says there are several steps a patient should take when they are riding out a diagnosis of COVID-19 at home.

**Get a pulse oximeter:** A pulse oximeter is a small device that measures your oxygen saturation level. Pulse oximeters are inexpensive, easily purchased online, and a good way to keep tabs on this important vital sign. "If a patient's pulse oximeter is showing their oxygen level is below 90, it's time to seek medical assistance," said Nguyen. "It could signal a potential decline and need for supplemental oxygen."

**Monitor fever:** Fever with the coronavirus is intermittent, meaning it comes and goes. Over-the-counter medications that contain ibuprofen should help relieve symptoms. However, Nguyen says if your fever is persistently over 100.4 degrees, it could be a red flag and a sign you may need to receive medical attention. "In addition to COVID-19, a high fever could be indicative of something else – another infection – that is co-existing with the coronavirus," said Nguyen.

**Sleep on your stomach:** Patients treated in a hospital setting for COVID-19, particularly those on ventilators, are often positioned on their stomachs because the oxygen is redistributed better. For this reason, Nguyen recommends for patients managing their COVID-19 at home do the same thing. "When you sleep on your stomach, you're not compressing your lungs like you would do when you're on your back," said Nguyen. "Your lungs can more readily access oxygen."

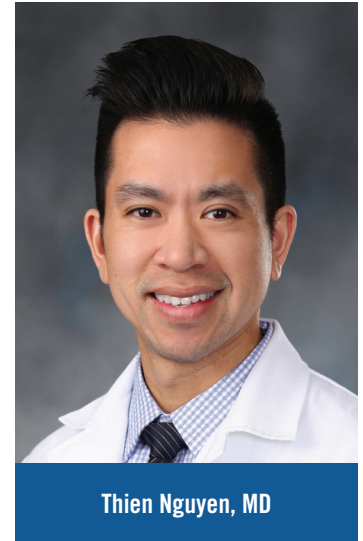
**Be mobile:** While it's essential to rest, Nguyen says it's also essential to stay mobile. COVID-19 is a virus that impacts circulation, which is why it's important to move as much as you can. "The coronavirus has a tendency to make the lungs sticky, which is why it's important to take deep breaths, which exercises the lungs," said Nguyen.

**Eat meals high in protein:** While losing your sense of taste is a symptom of COVID-19, it's important to keep up your nutrition. "Fighting COVID-19 can deplete you of nutrients and can even lead to being malnourished," said Nguyen. "For this reason, it's important to keep up your strength by eating lots of protein."

**Self-isolate away from others:** If you live with others, you should quarantine yourself away from them as much as possible to help prevent them from becoming infected. "It can be challenging but do the best you can," said Nguyen. "Avoid sharing personal household items such as drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, and linens with others in your home."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also recommends cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces, often including phones, remote controls, tabletops, doorknobs, and bathroom fixtures.

For more information and further guidance on managing COVID-19 at home, visit the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).



Thien Nguyen, MD

St. Joseph Medical Center

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## ST. JOSEPH MEDICAL CENTER EXTENDS HOPE AND TIME TO HEART PATIENTS

The cardiovascular team at St. Joseph Medical Center is offering hope to patients with the implant of the world's smallest heart pump.

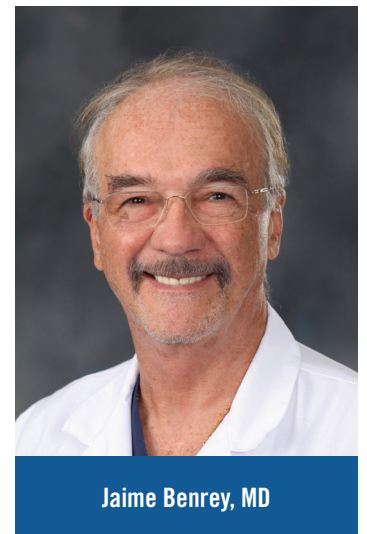
Jaime Benrey, MD, a cardiologist and director of chest pain with St. Joseph Medical Center recently performed the first implant of the Impella® heart pump into one of his patients. The patient recovered quickly and was home two days later.

“The Impella serves as a great alternative to high-risk coronary angioplasty procedures and as a bridge to a permanent left ventricular assist device,” said Benrey. “Implantation is less-invasive, results in fewer days in the hospital, and provides patients with an improved quality of life. And because we now offer the implantation of the Impella at St. Joseph Medical Center, we don't have to send patients elsewhere for this type of treatment.”

Designed to give the heart a rest while assisting with the heart's pumping function, the Impella is inserted using standard catheterization techniques, going in through the leg artery and then guided to the heart. Once in place, it mirrors the natural pathway of blood flow from the heart to the ascending aorta, improving blood and oxygen flow to the vital organs.

In addition to the Impella implant, St. Joseph Medical Center provides a full spectrum of cardiac services, all delivered with compassionate care. An accredited Chest Pain Center by the American Heart and American Stroke Association, St. Joseph Medical Center is proud to be downtown Houston's first option for heart care services and treatments for the local community.

For more information about heart care at St. Joseph Medical Center, visit our website at <https://www.sjmctx.org/heartcare>.



Jaime Benrey, MD