



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

ST. JOSEPH MEDICAL CENTER IS RECIPIENT OF THE HEALTHGRADES LABOR AND DELIVERY EXCELLENCE AWARD™

St. Joseph Medical Center, known for many years as “Houston’s Baby Hospital,” continues to demonstrate its commitment to delivering exceptional care to mothers and their newborns. For the third year in a row, Healthgrades, a leading resource that connects consumers, physicians, and health systems, recognized the hospital for the outstanding care it provides to women during and after labor and delivery with the 2020 Labor and Delivery Excellence Award. The distinction places St. Joseph Medical Center in the top 10% of all hospitals evaluated for the honor. The hospital was also recognized as a five-star recipient for vaginal delivery for six years in a row.

“This achievement reflects our team’s commitment to the pursuit of excellence for every mother we care for and every baby we deliver,” said Jackie Lawson, director of the Women’s Services at St. Joseph Medical Center. “We continually strive to improve our processes so we can consistently provide the best possible outcomes for women and their babies.”

Lawson, who has been with St. Joseph Medical Center for less than a year, recognized right away the team’s tremendous focus on providing a safe and compassionate environment for their patients and how they look at each patient individually when it comes to their care. This is of particular importance as expectant parents continue to put more weight on hospital quality and understand it plays a factor in selecting where to deliver their baby, especially as the world continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hospital began building its reputation for providing outstanding care for newborns when Mary Josephine Kelly was born at St. Joseph’s Infirmary on July 18, 1888. Since then, it has reached several more milestones, including opening the first premature nursery in the City of Houston in 1943. In 1950, Allan Bloxson, MD, a pediatrician at St. Joseph Medical Center, made headlines in Newsweek with the invention of the Bloxson Airlock, an early incubator for newborns. As a result, premature infants’ mortality rates declined from 48 percent to 13 percent in the first 10 years.

Today the Women’s Center is part of several national initiatives on a quest to bring women and their newborns the highest quality of care, including the prevention of hypertension and breast cancer in expectant mothers.

“We are always at the forefront of research and innovation, looking for cutting-edge techniques to provide the best results for our patients,” said Lawson. “As the birthplace of one in three Houstonians, St. Joseph Medical Center is dedicated to building upon our legacy of 130 years, serving the Houston community.”





David Soo, MD

MANAGING FLU SEASON DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Flu season is officially upon us, and so is the coronavirus.

New to the Midtown Medical Group, but no stranger to treating patients for the seasonal flu with 35 years of experience, David Soo, MD, says because both conditions present similarly at the onset, it may be difficult for someone to tell the difference without receiving a test.

“It will be imperative for the medical community to provide both flu and COVID-19 testing, especially as we enter the colder months,” said Soo.

While the flu and coronavirus have similar symptoms, people with COVID-19 may find it progressively difficult to breathe and lose their sense of taste and smell. Also, COVID-19 is much more deadly than the flu and twice as contagious.

It’s important to note that medications used to treat flu are not effective in treating the coronavirus.

“Regardless of the reason, people who have typical flu symptoms should get tested for both COVID-19 and the flu,” said Soo. “If someone has been treated for the flu and is not improving within three to five days, they need to be tested for COVID-19 as well.”

It’s not out of the realm of possibility for individuals to come down with both, which is why it’s essential to continue with vigilant hand hygiene, social distancing, and mask-wearing as we progress through flu season.

To protect yourself against the flu, Soo strongly encourages individuals to receive a flu shot. The flu vaccine is 40 to 60% effective in warding off influenza depending upon the type of strain prevalent this year. Flu shots are particularly important for those at high risk for severe illness, notably those 65 or older.

If you’re feeling under the weather and suspect you either have the flu or COVID-19, Midtown Medical Group, conveniently located in the Art Institute of Houston building off the Southwest Freeway, has both in-person and telemedicine appointments available. If you’re experiencing issues with breathing, Soo says to seek emergency care as soon as possible.

“We need to continue being vigilant about mitigating the spread of the coronavirus this fall and winter, as we manage the seasonal flu,” said Soo. “Taking the necessary precautions and getting the flu shot are the best lines of defense.”



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(L to R) Dr. Jeffrey Liang, Dr. Javier Canon, Dr. Fred L. Speck III, Dr. Enrique Garcia-Pena

COPING WITH HOLIDAY DEPRESSION

For many people, the holiday season is anything but happy. Instead, it can be a time filled with grief, loneliness, and stress. This year, those feelings of depression may be more prevalent due to the coronavirus pandemic.

With the lack of family gatherings, events or even eating out at a restaurant, it is easy to feel very isolated. That coupled with loss of loved ones or a job due to coronavirus may drive people to unhealthy or harmful behaviors.

“It’s more important to find ways to stay connected this holiday season to ward off feelings of depression,” said Jim Serratt, executive director for the Center for Behavioral Health at St. Joseph Medical Center. “We won’t be able to do many of the things we normally do during this time of year, which is a great reason to be creative in coming up with new traditions or resurrecting old ones.”

While it cannot necessarily be together physically, there are different activities that we can do to feel closer to one another. Serratt suggests bringing back the lost art of sending holiday cards.

“Sending holiday cards doesn’t require getting together and may conjure up positive feelings of years past,” said Serratt.

Out of all the different self-care steps we can take during the holidays, the most important one is giving ourselves and others a break.

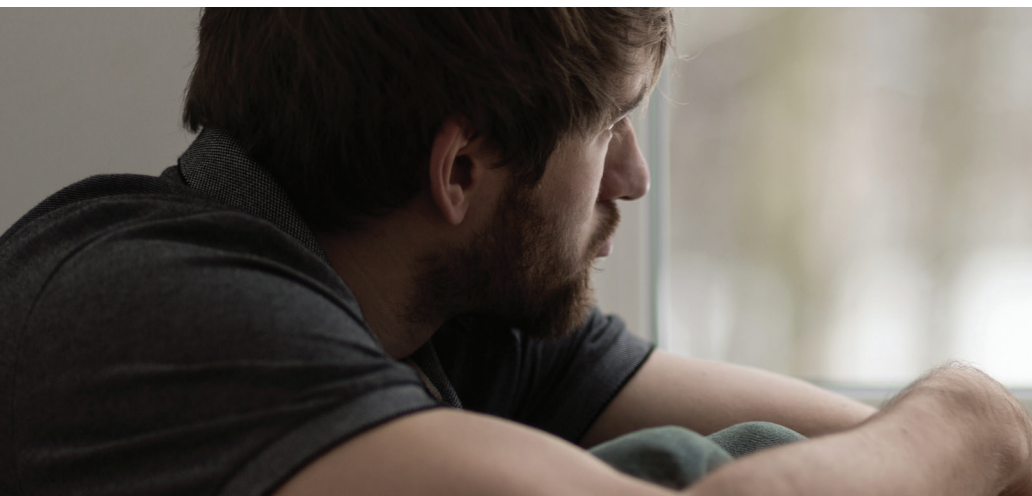
“Set realistic expectations for those and others. Be thankful for the things you do have, and ask for help when you need it,” he said.

For those already suffering from seasonal depression, they mustn’t fall back into bad habits. Keeping medical appointments, taking medications as prescribed, as well as exercising, eating right, and getting plenty of sleep are keys to staving off depression.

“The temptation to self-medicate using alcohol and drugs is always greater this time of year,” said Serratt. “You can’t rely on substances to bring you feelings of peace and joy.”

Those struggling with the ravages of addiction may want to seek help through Matthew’s Hope, a nonprofit organization that partners with St. Joseph Medical Center to provide medical detox, neurofeedback, and rehab for individuals suffering from substance abuse.

“The holiday season will be tougher than usual this year,” said Serratt. “Regardless of your situation, remember it’s only temporary, and brighter days are ahead.”



MATTHEW’S HOPE: PAVING A WAY FORWARD

If you or a loved one is struggling with addiction, Matthew’s Hope offers an inpatient detox program at the Center for Behavioral Health at St. Joseph Medical Center. The program takes a three-tier approach to healing the mind, body, and spirit from the ravages of substance abuse and helps a person get back on the road to recovery.

The founder of Matthew’s Hope, Larry Wedekind, is a successful population health expert in the health care industry who lost his son Matthew to opioid addiction. As such, Larry went on to start the not for profit, Matthew’s Hope Foundation to save lives and bring the promise of sustained long-term recovery to those suffering from Substance Use Disorder.

For admission and further information, call **844-AND-HOPE (844-263-4673)** or the website at matthewshope.com or detoxandrecoveryprogram.com




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