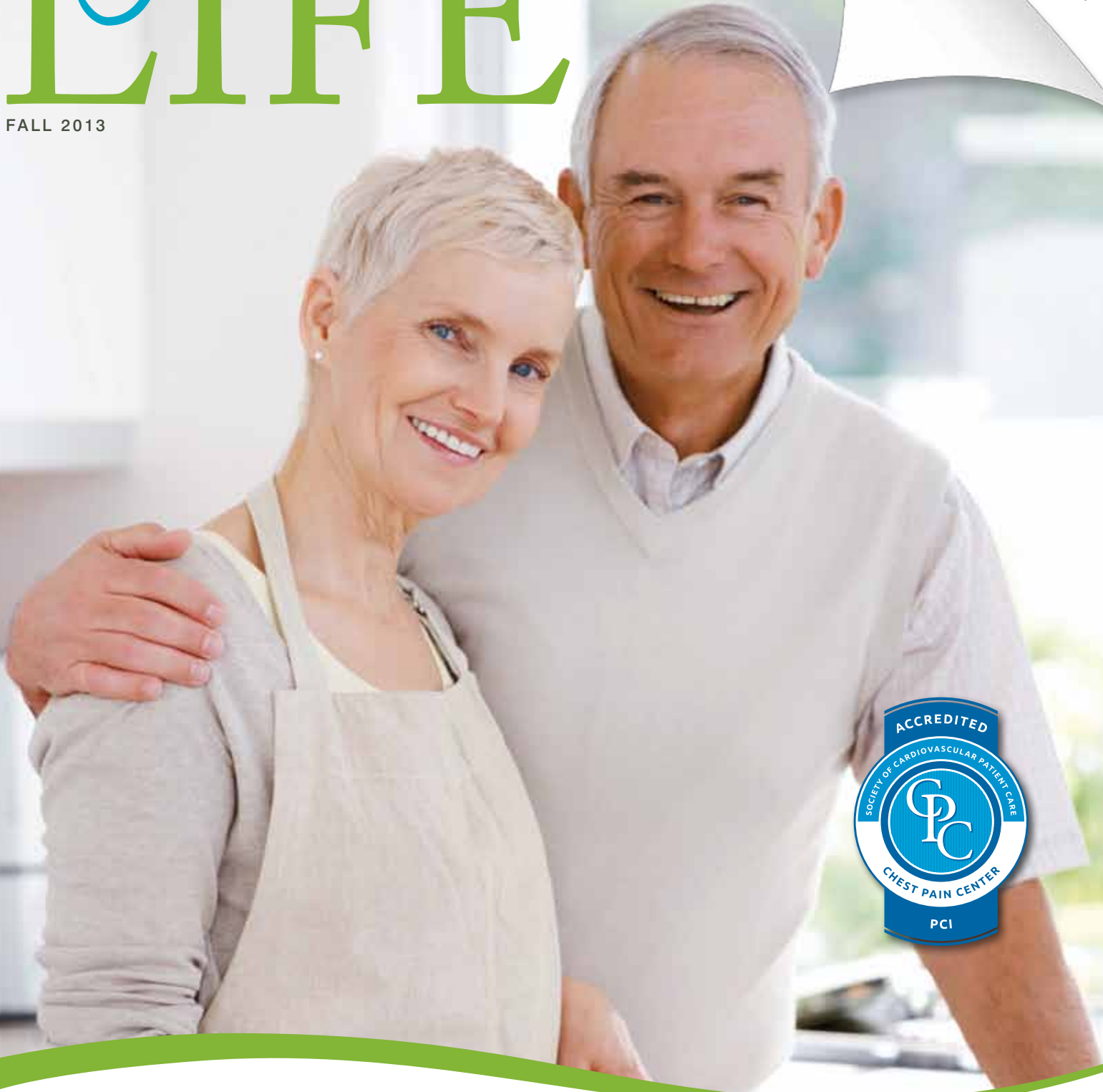


# Your LIFE

FALL 2013

RANKED #1  
IN SOUTH CAROLINA FOR  
CARDIAC SURGERY - 2010-2013  
HEALTHGRADES



**Grand Strand**  
Regional Medical Center

▶ *Page 3*  
Our new  
pediatric unit

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When you  
need surgery

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Certified  
Stroke Center

## DEAR FELLOW RESIDENTS,



Flu season is approaching, which makes now a good time to get vaccinated for the upcoming season. Flu seasons are unpredictable in several ways, including the timing, severity and length of the season. Flu activity most commonly peaks in the United States in January or February, but seasonal flu activity can begin as early as October and continue as late as May.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises immunization when vaccines are available, typically in mid- to late-September and beyond. Each year, the flu vaccine is manufactured to protect against the three main flu strains that research indicates will cause the most illness during the flu season. Getting the vaccine when it is available provides protection throughout the flu season.

The CDC recommends a flu shot for everyone ages 6 months and older, with some exceptions. Those who are allergic to eggs, have had a severe allergic reaction to the flu vaccine or have a history of Guillain-Barré syndrome should not receive the flu vaccine.

Protect yourself and those around you with a flu shot this year. In addition, practice prevention by washing your hands frequently and staying home from work or school if you are sick to prevent spreading flu to others.

Talk to your physician if you have questions about influenza or about the pneumonia vaccine, which is recommended for adults older than age 65. I wish you good health.

Sincerely,

John Charles, MD  
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Visitor management program

▶ **ALL VISITORS TO GRAND STRAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER MUST SHOW GOVERNMENT-ISSUED PHOTO IDENTIFICATION AT ONE OF THE HOSPITAL'S THREE ENTRANCES—THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT (ED), MAIN LOBBY OR HEART CENTER.** Visitors will be issued a badge with their photo, name and intended hospital location. Children younger than age 16 will receive a duplicate copy of the adult's badge; children will not be photographed. The badge system ensures that individuals have a reason to be in the hospital and improves the safety and security for our patients, staff members and visitors. Patients arriving at the ED are exempt from this process.

### Caring for heart attacks quickly

▶ **GRAND STRAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER'S DOOR-TO-BALLOON RESPONSE TIME FOR CLEARING A BLOCKED ARTERY IS 34 MINUTES, WELL BELOW THE NATIONAL STANDARD OF 90 MINUTES.** Door-to-balloon is the response time from a heart attack patient's arrival at the hospital to when a blocked artery is cleared in the cardiac catheterization laboratory. Thanks to the teamwork of area EMS personnel and hospital departments, our hospital has averaged 34 minutes over a rolling 12-month period. The average is updated monthly at [grandstrandmed.com](http://grandstrandmed.com).

NEWS BRIEFS continued on page 7 ▶▶

## CONTEST



### Find the starfish and win!

▶ **LOCATE THE STARFISH HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE!** Send us your name, contact information and the location of the starfish, either by mail (Marketing Department, Grand Strand Regional Medical Center, 809 82nd Parkway, Myrtle Beach, SC 29572) or at [grandstrandmed.com](http://grandstrandmed.com). Click on "Contact Us," complete the information and select "General Questions/Comments" in the subject box. You will be entered for a chance to win a \$100 gas card!

The deadline to enter is Nov. 4, 2013. Grand Strand Regional employees and their family members are not eligible for the drawing. Congratulations to **Anthony Puza of Carolina Shores, N.C.**, who won a \$100 gas card for finding the starfish in the summer issue.

# Special care for our youngest patients

A dedicated pediatric unit is now available

► **SINCE JUNE, PATIENTS YOUNGER THAN AGE 18 HAVE BEEN ADMITTED TO AN EIGHT-BED PEDIATRIC UNIT AT GRAND STRAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER, RATHER THAN INTERSPERSED WITH ADULT PATIENTS ON THE GENERAL MEDICAL FLOOR.**

“It was an area of need in our community,” says Sally Deskins, Grand Strand Regional’s OB/Women’s Services nurse director. “There was not a dedicated pediatric unit in any of the other hospitals in the area, and we see quite a few pediatric patients through our emergency room. We felt that we could improve our quality of care by providing a dedicated unit with pediatric nurses.”

The new unit, which is locked for added security, has patients as young as newborns. The staff is specifically trained in neonatal resuscitation and pediatric advanced life support. Pediatricians, specialists, surgeons and pediatric-trained nurses see patients.

“We have had a number of staff members train in large pediatric hospitals,” Deskins says. “Additional training in our newborn nursery also helped increase their exposure to infants.”

Most pediatric patients are admitted for illnesses, such as asthma or bronchitis; trauma, such as car accidents or sports-related head injuries; or surgeries, such as appendectomies and tonsillectomies.

## **Being a kid**

The pediatric unit has been designed to help children focus on things other than their health. The rooms are decorated with large, colorful, ocean-themed paintings, featuring cheery mermaids, turtles and fish. And the unit’s communal playroom has a big-screen TV and a variety of age-specific toys to entertain children of all ages.

“We have books, wagons, hula hoops, balls, blocks, trucks and more,” Deskins says. “Visiting brothers and sisters can also play, but it’s mainly for the patients.”

Parents are always welcome in the pediatric unit, even when hospital visiting hours are over, and they are encouraged to spend the night in their child’s room whenever possible.

“We have a chair in each room that can be converted into a twin bed,” Deskins says. “There is a separate shower room for parents in the department, and we order meals for parents at no additional fee so they can eat with their child.”

## **More services close to home**

Within the next 18 months, Grand Strand Regional plans to expand the pediatric unit to provide more services for more children.

“We hope to have an additional pediatric unit and convert the original eight beds into a pediatric intensive care unit,” Deskins says. “There are also plans to bring in specialty physicians who can assist with pediatric disease processes, so patients in Myrtle Beach don’t have to leave the area for advanced pediatric care.”



# Surgical solutions

Appendicitis, colon cancer, gallstones—learn the signs

▶ **LEARNING THAT YOU NEED SURGERY MAY SEEM FRIGHTENING, BUT YOU CAN REST ASSURED THAT GRAND STRAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER'S SURGERY TEAM HAS THE EXPERIENCE AND ADVANCED PROCEDURES TO GET YOU BACK TO YOUR LIFE SOONER AND WITH LESS PAIN.**

Grand Strand Regional surgeons perform a wide range of specialty procedures, but among the hospital's most common procedures are appendectomy, colon cancer surgery and gallbladder removal. Here's when each is necessary and what patients can expect:

## Appendectomy

The appendix is a finger-shaped organ attached to the large intestine that has no known purpose. Most people do not give their appendix a second thought, but if it becomes



Jason Sciarretta, MD

inflamed or infected—a condition known as appendicitis—the organ must be removed during emergency surgery. Appendicitis occurs most commonly in men under age 30. "It can afflict all ages and both sexes, but the typical population is young males," says Jason Sciarretta, MD, a general/trauma surgeon with Grand Strand Surgical Specialists.

Patients experience sharp pain near the belly button that migrates to the lower right side of the abdomen. They may also have nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, a swollen abdomen or a low-grade fever.

Surgeons at Grand Strand

Regional usually perform an appendectomy (removal of the appendix) as a laparoscopic, or minimally invasive, procedure. "The majority of the time, it's done this way," Dr. Sciarretta says.

During laparoscopic surgery, surgeons make small incisions in the abdomen to insert their tools as well as a video camera to guide their movements. The appendix is removed through one of the incisions. Recovery time is shorter after laparoscopic surgery, compared to traditional appendectomy.


## Colon cancer surgery

More than 100,000 people nationwide are diagnosed with colon cancer each year. The disease is most common in people older than age 50, with men affected slightly more often than women. African-Americans and Jews of eastern European descent are diagnosed more frequently than other groups.

Poor lifestyle habits can increase a person's risk of developing colon cancer, such as eating a lot of red meat and processed meats (including hot dogs), being obese, smoking cigarettes, being physically inactive and drinking too much alcohol. A family history of colon cancer and other diseases also increases a person's risk, as does inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease, notes Dr. Sciarretta.







Colonoscopy, a screening test for colon cancer and precancerous polyps, is recommended beginning at age 50. Some patients with increased risk may also be given a fecal occult blood test. Blood in the stool is one symptom of colon cancer. So is a change in bowel habits.

When colon cancer is diagnosed, surgeons at Grand Strand Regional may perform minimally invasive surgery or traditional surgery, depending on the patient.

“For an otherwise healthy, low-risk patient, we try to offer a minimally invasive procedure,” says Dr. Sciarretta. “If a patient has other medical conditions, traditional surgery may be more appropriate.”

During a minimally invasive laparoscopic procedure, the surgeon makes small incisions for tools and a camera, then focuses on removing the cancerous section of the colon. The minimally invasive procedure typically shortens a patient’s recovery time and makes it easier to control pain, Dr. Sciarretta says, although he notes that traditional surgery is also effective.

### **Gallbladder surgery**

The gallbladder is a small organ located near the liver that stores a substance called bile and delivers it to the small intestine to help with digestion. Occasionally, people develop gallstones that are large enough to block the duct connecting the gallbladder to the small intestine, which can cause severe pain and tenderness in the upper right abdomen, nausea, vomiting, fever and chills.

### *Need surgery?*

Visit [grandstrandmed.com](http://grandstrandmed.com) and click on “Patients and Visitors” for more information about what you and your family can expect during your hospital stay.

Gallstones are more common in women (especially older women), people who are overweight or obese, people who eat a high-cholesterol diet, people who gain or lose significant amounts of weight very quickly and people of Mexican or Native-American heritage. Sufferers may experience gallstone pain, as well as other symptoms, after eating a fatty, high-cholesterol meal.

Doctors often choose to simply observe patients who have had gallstones, because a blocked bile duct can be an isolated event. However, people who have repeated painful gallbladder “attacks” often need surgical intervention. Fortunately, the gallbladder is a nonessential organ, and its removal is one of the most common surgical procedures performed in the nation.

Surgeons at Grand Strand Regional usually remove the organ

in a minimally invasive procedure. Small incisions are made in the abdomen so the surgeon may insert tools and a camera to guide his or her actions. The gallbladder is removed through one of the incisions.

The minimally invasive surgery usually requires only an overnight stay and has a considerably less painful recovery than traditional surgical gallbladder removal. (Traditional surgery may be required in certain cases, especially if the gallbladder is infected or severely inflamed.) After the gallbladder is removed, the body uses an alternate route to get bile to the small intestine, and there is no further risk of having painful gallstones.



## Think FAST!

Stroke is a medical emergency, and if you think you are having a stroke, call 911 immediately. Treatment depends on the type of stroke, but early intervention can save lives and reduce disability.

- ▶ **FACE DROOPING**—Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?
- ▶ **ARM WEAKNESS**—Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
- ▶ **SPEECH DIFFICULTY**—Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?
- ▶ **TIME TO CALL 911**—If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 911 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Check the time so you will know when the first symptoms appeared.

# A Primary Stroke Center *close to home*

Early intervention can save lives and reduce disability

▶ **STROKE, OR A "BRAIN ATTACK," IS ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH IN THE UNITED STATES.** A stroke occurs when a blood vessel to the brain is blocked by a blood clot and blood flow to the brain is cut off. Just as with the heart, once blood flow is cut off, the tissue starts to die. A second, less-common stroke, called a hemorrhagic stroke, results from a burst in one of the blood vessels of the brain. Quick recognition and care at a designated stroke center are the best defenses to reduce the chances of death or disability.

Grand Strand Regional Medical Center was recently awarded The Joint Commission's Advanced Certification for Primary Stroke Center and is the only hospital in Horry, Georgetown and Brunswick counties with this designation.

"The certification signifies the hospital's dedication in working toward better outcomes for patients," says John Charles, MD, who led the multidisciplinary stroke committee. "Grand Strand Regional has demonstrated that the stroke program meets critical elements of performance to achieve long-term success in improving outcomes for stroke patients. This is particularly important in this area since South Carolina has one of the highest mortality rates for stroke in the nation."

The Joint Commission's Primary Stroke Center Certification program was developed in collaboration with the American Stroke Association. The designation signifies that the hospital is in full compliance with the most up-to-date treatment guidelines and medical advancements

for stroke and transient ischemic attacks, or mini strokes.

Studies have shown that being treated at a certified stroke center improves a patient's chance of survival and decreased disability.

"Designation as a primary stroke center indicates that protocols are in place to provide immediate assessment, evaluation and treatment," says Dr. Charles. "We have worked with EMS providers for pre-hospital assessment to ensure that we are ready when the patient arrives in the emergency department for diagnostic testing and treatment with TPA [a clot-busting drug that must be given within three to four hours after symptoms appear] when appropriate."



# Advanced wound care coming in November

► **GRAND STRAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER WILL OPEN THE ADVANCED WOUND CENTER ON NOV. 6, 2013, AT THE SOUTH STRAND MEDICAL CENTER, 5050 HWY 17 BYPASS, MYRTLE BEACH.**

The center will care for individuals whose natural healing process is hampered by poor blood circulation, diabetes or other causes and provide treatment for chronic, nonhealing wounds—wounds that have not healed after eight weeks or have not improved after four weeks.

Millions of Americans suffer with chronic open sores as a result of diabetes, circulatory problems, pressure

ulcers and traumatic and postoperative wounds. People with diabetes commonly suffer with nonhealing foot ulcers, which can lead to amputation if not properly treated.

Through an aggressive and comprehensive therapeutic outpatient program, the Advanced Wound Center will address both the wound and its underlying causes by following an evidence-based clinical pathway for wound healing.

“Our goal is to help individuals experience optimal quality of life,” says Dana Pournaras, MD, medical director. “We have multiple therapies

to help patients achieve healing results in the shortest time possible.”

A multidisciplinary medical team, including physicians, nurses and wound care specialists, will provide patients with customized treatment plans. Services include hyperbaric oxygen therapy, dressing changes, debridement, biological skin applications, compression therapy and negative pressure wound therapy.

The Advanced Wound Center will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday–Friday. For more information, call **(843) 839-6000**. Patients may call the center directly or be referred by a physician.

## NEWS BRIEFS Continued from page 2

### Sepsis certification achieved

► **GRAND STRAND REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER IS THE SECOND HOSPITAL IN THE NATION TO ACHIEVE DISEASE-SPECIFIC CARE CERTIFICATION FOR SEPSIS BY THE JOINT COMMISSION.** Sepsis strikes an estimated 750,000 people annually in the United States, and 250,000 people die each year from sepsis. The numbers have increased in recent years due to an aging population and increasing antibiotic resistance.

Sepsis is the body’s response to infection and is a life-threatening illness that should be treated rapidly and appropriately by healthcare professionals. The body normally fights infection on its own, but once sepsis begins, the body’s normal process goes into overdrive, setting off a cascade of events that can lead to widespread inflammation and blood clotting in tiny vessels throughout the body.

Risk factors include having had surgery or having a weak immune system or an infection such as pneumonia, meningitis or a urinary tract infection. Symptoms include chills, fever, shortness of breath, decreased urination, confusion and nausea or vomiting. Sepsis is treated with antibiotics and intravenous fluids.

Grand Strand Regional has assembled a dedicated team approach to treat sepsis that has been shown to improve outcomes. The Sepsis Alert program educates and assists nurses with identifying potential sepsis and expediting treatment. In achieving Joint Commission certification, Grand Strand Regional has demonstrated a commitment to the highest level of care for patients with sepsis.

## welcome new physicians



**GREGORY L. BECKER, MD**  
*Pulmonology/Critical Care Medicine*

**BOARD CERTIFIED:**  
Pulmonary Medicine

**MEDICAL SCHOOL:** St. Louis University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO

**INTERNSHIP/RESIDENCY:**  
Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, DC

**Carolina Health Specialists**  
**(843) 497-5929**



**VIRGINIA WILLIAMS, MD**  
*Pediatrics*

**MEDICAL SCHOOL/RESIDENCY:**  
University of


South Carolina, Columbia  
**Grand Strand Pediatrics**  
**(843) 449-1438**



[grandstrandmed.com](http://grandstrandmed.com)

This publication in no way seeks to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Consult your physician before undertaking any form of medical treatment or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.

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## classes and more ▼●●

PLEASE VISIT [GRANDSTRANDMED.COM](http://GRANDSTRANDMED.COM) EACH MONTH FOR A COMPLETE LISTING.  
CALL (843) 692-4444 TO REGISTER FOR ALL SEMINARS AND CLASSES.

### ▶ SCREENINGS

#### • Cholesterol Screenings



Fingerstick total cholesterol screening, \$7; lipid profile (requires a 12-hour fast), \$20.

**When:** Wednesdays, Oct. 9 and Nov. 13, 9–10 a.m.

**Where:** Grand Strand Regional Medical Center

**When:** Wednesdays, Oct. 16, Nov. 6 and Nov. 20, 8:30–9:30 a.m.

**Where:** YMCA Classroom, Myrtle Beach

**When:** Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–7 p.m.

**Where:** HealthFinders\*

#### • Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) Screenings

PAD can be accurately measured by a quick, simple, noninvasive screening. Appointments required. Free.

**When:** Wednesday, Nov. 13, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.

**Where:** HealthFinders\*

**Call:** (843) 692-4444

#### • Diabetic Foot Screening



Podiatrists from Coastal Podiatry Associates will conduct diabetic foot screenings. Appointments required. Free.

**When:** Thursday, Nov. 21, 6–7:30 p.m.

**Where:** HealthFinders\*

**Call:** (843) 692-4444

### ▶ CLASSES & SEMINARS

#### • Knee Replacement Seminar



Joe Jarrett Jr., MD, of Strand Orthopaedic Consultants, will discuss symptoms, risk factors and treatments for knee replacements.

**When:** Thursday, Oct. 10, 6–7 p.m.

**Where:** HealthFinders\*

**Call:** (843) 692-4444

#### • Safe Sitter Babysitting Class

A seven-hour class for 11- to 13-year-olds. Participants learn childcare techniques, appropriate responses to medical emergencies and more. Registration and pre-payment required.

**When:** Monday, Oct. 14, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. (school holiday)

**Where:** HealthFinders\*

**Fee:** \$35 includes book bag and materials

**Call:** (843) 692-4444

#### • Family & Friends CPR Class

Learn the lifesaving skills of adult Hands-Only® CPR, child CPR with breaths, AED use, infant CPR and relief of choking in an adult, child or infant. This class is for the general public and not for certification. Limited space; registration required.

**When:** Tuesday, Nov. 19, 11 a.m.–1 p.m., and Wednesday, Nov. 20, 3–5 p.m.

**Where:** YMCA Classroom, Myrtle Beach

**Fee:** \$15 includes book

**Call:** (843) 692-4444