The best way to avoid the flu

Sammons Tower grand opening: ‘Awesome day for Dallas!’

Natalie Flores is a walking miracle after a tumor was removed from her spinal cord.
Methodist Joint Academy

Distance yourself from joint pain at the Methodist Dallas Joint Academy — a free, half-day workshop for patients facing total joint replacement. From learning how to prepare for surgery to tips on living with a new hip or knee, you’ll be ready both mentally and physically for upcoming joint replacement. So let’s make your recovery a joint effort, and put the pain behind you for good.

Where life shines bright.SM

Methodist Joint Academy

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MethodistHealthSystem.org

The Hip Joint Replacement and Knee Joint Replacement programs at Methodist Dallas Medical Center have both earned The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval.
**Online and Inside**

**WEB**

*Keep the date* When do I really need to start getting mammograms? And do I really need one every year? Are breast self-exams really worth it?

You’re not the first woman to wonder. Fortunately, four of our specialists — as well as a breast cancer survivor — have teamed up to set the record straight and encourage you to keep the date for your mammogram. Visit MethodistHealthSystem.org/Mammogram.

*Flavors of fall* When the heat starts fading, North Texans start getting ready for the flavors of the season — like cinnamon, cranberry, and pumpkin. In Methodist Health System’s new online Health Library, you’ll find the perfect recipe to combine all three: Cranberry Pumpkin Muffins. A bonus: They’re low in calories and saturated fat. Search for the recipe at MethodistHealthSystem.org/HealthLibrary.

**BLOGS**

*For the love of the game — or the child?* Through organized sports, children learn teamwork and discipline, improve physical fitness, and get to have some fun. But could organized sports be causing harm to your child, your family, or even you as a parent? Read up on five signs that you’re pushing sports a little too hard in our new blog Art of Balance, designed especially for working moms, at ArtOfBalance.MethodistHealthSystem.org.

**ONLINE AND INSIDE**

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With QuickER.org, you can get the care you need — without the wait you hate.

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The Whipple procedure, with the da Vinci® Surgical System, available at Methodist Dallas, was the right treatment at the right time for Rex Whitaker’s pancreatic cancer.

**On the cover**

Natalie Flores made a miraculous recovery from a life-threatening spinal cord tumor.

Read her story on page 12.
BACK TO SCHOOL

Finding your **sleep** rhythm

After a summer of evening bike rides, late-night pool parties, and lazy mornings, it’s no easy feat for families to transition from summer break back into the school year.

After all, elementary-aged kids need at least nine hours of sleep a night, and for adolescents, it means blocking off at least eight hours.

So how do you make sure your children beat the tardy bell without sacrificing much-needed rest? Try these tips:
- Pick a sleep schedule, and then stick to it. That means going to bed and waking up at the same times every day, even on weekends.
- Eliminate caffeine after 2 p.m.
- Avoid bright lights coming from computers and televisions at least 30 minutes before sleep.
- Create a dark, quiet environment with a cool temperature for sleep.

Additionally, kids might have academic or social worries that are affecting their rest. Openly discussing these concerns with your kids can help reduce their stress and ultimately lead to a better night’s sleep.

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**Your time counts with QuickER.org**

NOW OPEN!
Emergency patients now receive care in our brand-new Charles A. Sammons Tower. Learn more at MethodistHealthSystem.org/DallasEmergency.

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**TO YOUR HEALTH ▶**

WE’VE GOT YOU COVERED!
The providers at Methodist Family Health Centers and Medical Groups can handle everything from allergies to sleep issues. Find a location close to you at MethodistHealthSystem.org/FamilyHealth.
In a busy emergency department, the triage process makes sense: care for patients in the most critical condition first. But if you have a non-life-threatening emergency, you might wait a while.

Fortunately, a new service at Methodist Dallas Medical Center changes the way you receive emergency care. You just visit QuickER.org and choose from a list of available times to be seen by a medical professional. You can rest comfortably at home, and the qualified emergency staff at Methodist Dallas will be prepared to treat you when you arrive at your scheduled time.

Erika Pelletier was having health issues late one afternoon and scheduled an appointment at QuickER.org. “Soon after, a nurse called to be sure I didn’t need immediate care based on my symptoms,” Erika says. “I arrived at my selected time and was taken right back. The staff ran tests, ruled out serious possibilities, and arranged for medication. It was fast, convenient, and great care!”

Rumor has it

Q: Can the flu shot give you the flu?
A: The flu vaccine will not give you the flu, says Perry Beckstrom, DO, family medicine physician on staff at Methodist Family Health Center – Timber Creek. “The shot is made with inactive flu viruses, and the nasal spray is made with severely weakened viruses. Both of these are absolutely safe.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends a yearly vaccination as the first and most important step in protecting against flu viruses, as well as other healthy practices, such as frequent hand-washing. “Look at it this way,” Dr. Beckstrom says. “We wouldn’t think of using our computers without virus protection. Should we do any less for our bodies?”

BACKPACK OVERLOAD?

One thing you don’t want a child carrying in a backpack is too much weight.

Backpacks that are too heavy or worn improperly can injure muscles and joints and cause back, neck, and shoulder pain.

Your children may have overloaded backpacks if they:

- Struggle to put the backpack on or take it off
- Change posture while wearing the backpack
- Have red marks on their shoulders
- Feel tingling or numbness in their arms or legs.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics
Get to know your body

Many women don’t think of their breasts as a burden. But for Rene Syler, they were constant reminders of her family’s battle with breast cancer.

The former CBS broadcaster and now Good Enough Mother blogger was only in grade school when her father was diagnosed with the disease. Her mother’s breast cancer diagnosis followed almost 25 years later.

“I would go every year and have a mammogram, and you would see these crazy white flecks,” Rene says. “After four biopsies, I knew this wasn’t the way I wanted to live.”

Rene decided to make a strategic, preventive move to eliminate her breast cancer risk: In 2011, she had a double mastectomy. Her journey to this decision now serves as a platform for empowering women to learn about and be proactive regarding their own breast health.

“You have to be as good to yourself as you are to everyone else,” Rene tells women — and that starts with your wellness.

Know your roots

“You’ve got to ask questions of everyone in your family until you get some answers,” Rene says.

Based on your family history, your doctor can help determine when you should start getting mammograms and how often. Your doctor may also recommend genetic testing to see if you are predisposed to breast and ovarian cancers.

If you don’t have a family history, don’t brush off breast cancer as a possibility. “Family history is actually a factor in only 10 percent of breast cancer diagnoses,” Rene says. “If you’re a woman, you’re at risk.”

Schedule a mammogram

The American Cancer Society recommends that women of average risk schedule their first mammogram at age 40. But many women make excuses, even saying they’d rather not know if they have cancer.

“You’ll know if you have breast cancer, but will you know early enough to do something about it?” Rene says. “Breast cancer, if caught early, is nearly 100 percent curable.

“We have to stay on top of this. You can’t say you’re too busy for a mammogram. No one is that busy.”

Do breast self-exams

“There’s a lot of data that says self-exams don’t help, but I don’t think there can be a bad thing in knowing your body,” Rene says. “You need to be able to tell when things aren’t right.”

For tips on self-exams, visit MethodistHealthSystem.org/HealthLibrary.
John Kimbrell is no novice when it comes to meeting life’s tougher challenges. He’s a father and grandfather and the owner of an oil and gas company, and, as of spring 2013, he was bicycling 125 miles each week.

That’s about the time he started noticing an “odd feeling” in his arms and chest during his bike rides, as well as a drop in performance. John’s primary care physician referred him to cardiologist Imran Afridi, MD, on the medical staff at Methodist Dallas Medical Center.

“I pretty much failed my stress test, so we ended up doing an angiogram [coronary X-ray],” John says. “I had extensive blockage in several arteries. Dr. Afridi wasn’t even sure how I was still walking around.”

That very day, he was introduced to John Jay, MD, thoracic surgeon on the medical staff at Methodist Dallas.

“He came to my bedside and clearly outlined the options for me to consider: stents or bypass surgery,” John says. “I had the bypass surgery in November.”

Planning his tour de force

Two months after surgery, John was referred to the Folsom Fitness and Rehabilitation Center at Methodist Dallas.

“My care team was wonderful,” he says. “Everything felt well-coordinated and well-managed. The staff members’ positive encouragement, combined with the support of my wife, who’s walked with me every step of the way of this journey, helped me get started in the right direction for my recovery.

In fact, John started setting recovery goals as soon as he woke up from surgery.

“You should have something to work toward,” he says. “It may sound cliché, but you’ve got to realize that you’ve been given a second chance.”

Within a few weeks of his release from cardiac rehabilitation, John was walking five miles a day. About three months after surgery, Dr. Jay approved his return to long-distance biking.

“In February, I was able to celebrate my birthday the way I’d been celebrating it for years — by riding my age in miles,” John says. “This year, it was 63 miles in 4½ hours. When the anniversary of my surgery rolls around in November, I plan to ride 100 miles.”
William McCraney. Natalie Sanchez. Javier Ibarra. These are just a few of the people whose emergency and trauma stories you’ve seen in Shine in the past two years.

On July 24, their images were imposed upon the walls of the Charles A. Sammons Tower’s sixth floor for the celebration of the grand opening of this prestigious facility — a place where more patients like William, Natalie, and Javier will find hope and healing.

“I am so proud and honored to stand before you today and represent the thousands of lifesavers here at Methodist Dallas Medical Center,” hospital President Laura Irvine, FACHE, said in her opening remarks to a crowd of more than 200 civic and hospital leaders. “The last two years of planning have been a labor of love and dedication.

“The Charles A. Sammons Tower is an awesome testament to Methodist Dallas’ continued commitment to Dallas and all those we serve and the caregivers who surround them every day.”

Building a safer Dallas

Methodist Health System Board Chairman Levi H. Davis expressed his excitement about the tower’s grand opening.

“This is an awesome day!” he said. Then he addressed the work of Fire Chief Louis Bright III and Police Chief David Brown: “Thank you for leading the first responders of Dallas. We are proud to be an extension of your great team.”

The Sammons Tower is enhancing Methodist Dallas’ ability to provide emergency and trauma care, but City Councilman Scott Griggs emphasized in his remarks that it is only Methodist’s “next chapter” in a much wider effort to better serve the residents of Dallas.

“If I fall today and hurt myself, bring me to Methodist and give me a room with this view down Bishop,” he said good-naturedly and in admiration of the facility’s grand architecture and inviting views.

Ready to serve

Following the remarks, dozens of Methodist Dallas nurses, physicians, and employees took part in a virtual ribbon-cutting. They held a long Methodist-blue ribbon while a screen behind them revealed time-lapse footage of the Sammons Tower’s construction, culminating in a glorious image of the completed facility.
Among the leaders participating in the ribbon-cutting for the grand opening of the Charles A. Sammons Tower are (from left) Methodist Health System Foundation President and CEO and Methodist Health System Senior Vice President External Affairs April Box Chamberlain, CFRE; BrightER Capital Campaign Chairman Chris Kleiner; Methodist Dallas President Laura Irvine, FACHE; Methodist Dallas Advisory Board Chairman George Shrader; Methodist Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Pamela Stoyanoff; Methodist Vice President Pastoral Services the Rev. Caesar Rentie; BrightER Capital Campaign Honorary Co-Chairs Ray L. and Nancy Ann Hunt; Dallas County Commissioner Elba Garcia, DDS; Methodist board member George Shafer; and Methodist President and CEO Stephen L. Mansfield, PhD, FACHE.

WATCH ONLINE!
See what our physicians have to say about the Sammons Tower and the future of emergency, trauma, and critical care in a video at MethodistHealthSystem.org/SammonsTower.

Among those presenting at Methodist Dallas’ grand opening for the Charles A. Sammons Tower were Methodist Health System Board Chairman Levi H. Davis (left) and City Councilman Scott Griggs (center). They are joined here by longtime Methodist Dallas supporter Pete Schenkel.

BrightER Capital Campaign Honorary Co-Chair Nancy Ann Hunt, here with her husband, Ray, said that Methodist Dallas was a “light shining bright” and a “game changer for Dallas and the greater community” at the grand opening of the Charles A. Sammons Tower on July 24.

A balloon drop follows the dramatic virtual ribbon-cutting for the Methodist Dallas Charles A. Sammons Tower.
On Jan. 4 this year, Rex Whitaker’s closest family and friends gathered to celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary — without him.

The securities lawyer was in a Waco hospital bed, corresponding with lawyers in Israel about an upcoming merger in between myriad medical tests.

“Everyone knew something was wrong,” his wife, Marilyn Whitaker, says. “Emotionally, we were deeply concerned.”

“I couldn’t think about it; I had a merger,” Rex says.

While the 71-year-old sounds like he’s all business, in truth, he’s all faith.

For weeks he’d experienced urological issues, jaundice, and rapid weight loss. When test results came in, doctors were almost certain he had pancreatic cancer.

“Cancer calls your faith to the front,” Rex says. “I’ve always been the one outside of the story, praying for the ones in the story. But the Lord said, ‘You’re in the story now.’”

This story reached a turning point with the Whipple procedure.

“My doctor said there was a doctor in Dallas who had done it robotically and that I was a good candidate,” Rex says. “I asked him, ‘If this was your father lying here, where would you send him?’ He said, ‘I’d send him to Methodist and Dr. Mejia.’”

After some time in prayer, the Whitakers had a sense of peace about going to Methodist Dallas Medical Center. Rex set his appointment that very day. Only hours later, his doctor called, confirming he did indeed have pancreatic cancer.

Robotic surgery: ‘Truly remarkable’

While the Whipple procedure has been around since 1935, it has only recently been done robotically with the da Vinci® Surgical System. Whipple involves removing the head of the pancreas and then bypassing the bile duct, pancreas, and stomach.

“The robotic procedure is done exactly the same as the open procedure, except it’s through five small incisions instead of one large incision,” says Alejandro Mejia, MD, FACS, associate surgical director, transplantation and hepatobiliary services, at Methodist Dallas. “Because of the small incisions, it hurts less and it heals faster. Consequently, we’re able to get patients into chemotherapy and radiation treatment faster.”
Methodist Dallas is actually the first hospital in North Texas to make robotic Whipple available and boasts the highest number of the procedure performed in Texas.

Following surgery on Friday, Jan. 31, Rex went home just five days later with the postoperative scan showing no cancer. He was able to start chemotherapy and radiation only three weeks later.

“When I first considered the robot, I thought: ‘There’s a mechanical tool going around inside of me, not a human hand. How much confidence can you place in a tool?’” he says. “But when you understand how precise the procedure is and how much control the surgeon has over the process, you realize it’s truly remarkable.”

The right choice

The Whitakers credit the prayer of loved ones for getting Rex to this point, but they don’t underestimate the medical community.

“Clearly God gave them the gifts to do what they needed to,” Marilyn says.

Rex says they haven’t once questioned their decision to go to Methodist Dallas.

“[I] was genuinely impressed,” he says. “I’ve been in a lot of hospitals, but this one I’d put at the very top. At Methodist, I found a world-class physician and world-class facilities and staff. There was also a real expression of compassion that meant an awful lot. It really did.”
“Don’t give up. Everything is going to be okay, and things work out the way they’re supposed to.”
— Natalie Flores
It’s not what you feel, it’s what you know

When a spinal cord tumor threatened Natalie Flores’ life, the Methodist Moody Brain and Spine Institute fought back

There’s a spot on Natalie Flores’ neck that is extremely ticklish. But for every inch of her body below that spot, all tickling attempts fail.

Since a lifesaving spine surgery in 2010, Natalie has had difficulty feeling from the neck down except in her forefingers and thumbs.

Nevertheless, she has relearned how to walk and drive. She’s remastered the art of straightening her hair. She even has a perfectly firm handshake.

“I’m now at a point where my body does what I tell it to do, but I still can’t feel myself doing it,” the now-26-year-old Sunnyvale resident says. “It’s crazy.”

Even crazier is this: If one thing had gone wrong during that surgery four years ago, Natalie’s story would be much different.

Something’s not right

That story begins in spring 2010. After a car accident, she began experiencing neck pain. As the months passed, things only got worse. Natalie’s mother, Sonia Flores, noticed that Natalie was dragging her left foot and complaining it was asleep.

“Then we noticed her words started slurring,” Sonia says. “I said, ‘This isn’t right.’”

They sought the expertise of a neurologist, who ordered an MRI scan. The results compelled him to refer Natalie to the Methodist Moody Brain and Spine Institute at Methodist Dallas Medical Center.

A young life on the line

“When I saw the MRI, my heart sank,” recalls neurosurgeon Nimesh Patel, MD, with the Institute. “A malignant tumor had split the spinal cord in two and all the way up to the brain stem, affecting her ability to breathe and move.

“If I did nothing, the tumor would take her young life. If I did do something, she had a high risk of being paralyzed. This required one of the riskiest surgeries in neuro, period.”

Hoping for the best, Natalie celebrated her 23rd birthday on Sept. 25 and had surgery on Sept. 30. A team of neurosurgeons worked for hours to remove the tumor as thoroughly and carefully as possible. Then they waited.

A walking miracle

“We took a sigh of relief when we saw she could move her arms and legs,” Dr. Patel says.

Even though Natalie couldn’t control those movements, her body still knew how to do them. This was the sign Dr. Patel needed.

“At Methodist Dallas, we have a specialized team for brain and spinal cord injury patients,” he says. “As soon as surgery is completed, physical therapy is in place to help maximize their ability to heal.”

Natalie started learning to walk again with a walker. She credits these first days of physical therapy in the hospital as a milestone in her recovery.

“I kept thinking, if I can take a couple of steps, I can walk more than this,” she says. “I knew in my head I wouldn’t need a walker forever.”

The Flores family says Natalie received the best care at Methodist Dallas.

“We were totally impressed with all the staff,” Sonia says. “If we needed something, they were always there.”

A future full of hope

Natalie says the weeks and months following the surgery were the hardest she’s ever known. But today she’s gracing the world with a beautiful smile and a mind set to making the most of the second chance Methodist Dallas gave her. She dreams of finishing college, living on her own, getting married, and building a family.

For other young people who may get discouraged by life’s obstacles, she offers these words: “Don’t give up. Everything is going to be okay, and things work out the way they’re supposed to.”

And sometimes, they even work out miraculously.

INTRODUCING OUR NEW NCCU

Methodist Dallas’ neurocritical care unit (NCCU) in the new Charles A. Sammons Tower is designed to help neurosurgery patients recover in body and spirit. To learn more, visit MethodistHealthSystem.org/SammonsTower.
FOCUSING ON THE ‘ME’ IN ‘TIME’:
Methodist Dallas Medical Center hosted its second annual Me Time women’s health event on April 17. The mind, body, and spirit event allowed women to relax, enjoy a style show and fitness demo, and attend speed-meet sessions with physicians.

KICKING UP SPINE EDUCATION:
On May 30, Ben Newman, MD (left), and former mixed martial arts fighter Nate “Rock” Quarry visited the Dallas UPS hub to talk with drivers about spine health. They showcased healthy lifting techniques and discussed minimally invasive spine therapies and surgery.

THANKING OUR DONORS:
Methodist Health System Foundation hosted an event to celebrate the success of the BrightER capital campaign, which raised $20 million to support the recently opened Charles A. Sammons Tower. Campaign Chairman Chris Kleinert (right) and Methodist Health System Senior Vice President and Foundation President and CEO April Box Chamberlain, CFRE, joined by Superman, thanked and honored donors for their heroic efforts.

JUNIOR VOLUNTEERS GAIN EXPERIENCE:
Sixteen junior volunteers gave time to serve at Methodist Dallas this summer. They gained valuable experience working in various roles, including transporting patients and helping nursing staff on the floors.

SOUNDS OF MUSIC:
Dallas Symphony Orchestra Community Concerts visited six park locations in June, including two events at Klyde Warren Park. Methodist Dallas once again sponsored the summer community concert series, supporting music outreach throughout Dallas.

Charles A. Sammons Tower

At Methodist Dallas Medical Center, we are on a mission to save and improve lives. The newly opened, one-of-a-kind Sammons Tower expands our ER and trauma capacity tenfold. When time is critical, more than 3,900 lifesavers stand ready with innovative technology, high-level trauma and orthopedic services, advanced neurosurgery and neurocritical care, one of the area’s leading organ transplant programs, and above all, compassionate quality care. In critical moments, Methodist Dallas is here for life.

Where life shines bright.SM