

# Our Doctors Debunk Medical Myths

## Northridge Hospital's physicians clear up some common medical myths and misunderstandings.

### Myth: Men and Women Develop Osteoarthritis at the Same Rate

**FACTS:** "Women get osteoarthritis later in life, but have higher rates than men. One possible cause: Women's broader hips may place long-term stress on their knees," describes



**Jonathan Botts, MD,  
Orthopedic Surgeon**

**Jonathan Botts, MD, Orthopedic Surgeon.** "These strategies to manage arthritis can benefit everyone, specifically women."

- ◆ **Manage weight.** Obese women have nearly four times the risk of developing knee osteoarthritis. Dropping 10 pounds is equivalent to taking 30 pounds of pressure off your knees.
- ◆ **Avoid high heels.** Wearing heels two inches or higher shifts body weight and increases pressure on your knees. This can cause degenerative changes in the joint.
- ◆ **Exercise to reduce arthritis pain and delay loss of function.** Consider low-impact activities, such as swimming, yoga or tai chi.
- ◆ **Talk to your doctor about treatments and supplements,** such as glucosamine, chondroitin and Vitamin D to reduce osteoarthritis pain.



**Zouheir Elias, MD,  
Cardiologist**

### Myth: Heart Attack Signs are the Same for Everyone

**FACTS:** "Heart disease is the leading killer of men and women. But women are more likely to die after a heart attack," explains **Zouheir Elias, MD, Cardiologist, Medical Staff President.**

"The most common heart attack symptom for everyone is chest discomfort—pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain. Both men and women can experience atypical heart attack symptoms, 70 percent of women experience no chest pain."

### Atypical heart attack symptoms:

- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Nausea/vomiting
- ▶ Back or jaw pain
- ▶ Unexplained fatigue
- ▶ Throat discomfort
- ▶ Burping or feeling of indigestion
- ▶ *71 percent of women report flu-like symptoms for two to four weeks prior to having more acute chest discomfort*

### Typical heart attack symptoms:

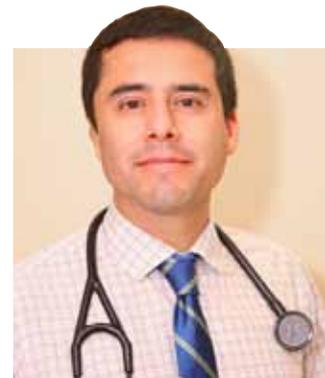
- ▶ Pain, tightness or pressing on the chest (and possibly the neck and shoulders)
- ▶ Profuse sweating
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Dizziness

If you suspect a heart attack, call 9-1-1 and chew an uncoated aspirin, which can reduce heart damage. EMS crews will take you to a **STEMI Heart Attack Center**, like Northridge Hospital—the first one designated in the San Fernando Valley. Our STEMI designation increases the chance of survival, backed by our Healthgrades honors as a five-star award recipient for treatment of heart attack in 2014 and a five-star award recipient for treatment of heart failure for five years in a row.



## Breast Cancer Myths

**FACTS:** "All women have a 1-in-8 chance of getting breast cancer, but men can get it too," explains **Juan Alcantar, MD, Medical Oncologist.** "In 2013, approximately 2,240 men in the U.S. developed breast cancer, according to the National Cancer Institute."



**Juan Alcantar, MD,  
Medical Oncologist**

Here are some other misconceptions about the disease:

- ◆ **I'm bound to get breast cancer since I have a family history.** Age is a bigger risk factor than family history. Seventy-seven percent of breast cancers are diagnosed in women older than age 50, while only 5 to 10 percent are caused by hereditary mutations.
- ◆ **A lump in the breast is breast cancer.** More than 80 percent of lumps found are benign.
- ◆ **Breast cancer always comes in the form of a lump.** Other signs include swelling; skin irritation or dimpling; breast or nipple pain; nipple turning inward; redness, scaliness, thickening of the nipple or breast skin; or a discharge other than breast milk. Breast cancer can also spread to underarm lymph nodes and cause swelling there before a tumor is large enough to be felt.

*Uninsured women over the age of 40 can call our Navigator Program at 818-885-5471 to arrange for a free mammogram.*

## Myth: Surgery Means I'm Out of Commission for Weeks

**FACTS:** "Gone are the days when having gynecologic or other surgeries meant days in the hospital and weeks to months of recovery," **Green Hsueh, MD, Obstetrician/Gynecologist.** "Today, many procedures are minimally-invasive. For example, **da Vinci Si (single incision) Robotic Surgery**, allows surgeons to perform many surgeries through a few tiny incisions or just one small incision. Patients have less pain, scarring and a faster recovery."

Minimally invasive surgery is available in most specialties, including heart, lung, general surgery, gynecology, weight loss, urology, ear, nose and throat, gastroenterology and spinal operations.



**Green Hsueh, MD,**  
Obstetrician/Gynecologist

## Road to Recovery

"The worst headache of my life." That's how **Tina Stibor** describes the symptom that compelled her to request a referral to see a neurologist. "My brother had a brain tumor years ago and that's how he described it—an intense headache and fatigue," she recalls.

Tina works in the office of **Marc Kerner, MD, Otolaryngologist**, who referred her to **Robert Cohenour, MD, Neurologist**. Within one hour of undergoing an MRI, Dr. Cohenour confirmed she had a large brain tumor that needed to be removed. **Asher Taban, MD, Neurosurgeon**, described it as "a benign central neurocytoma—a rare tumor with an excellent prognosis." He performed the surgery followed by **Gamma Knife** radiation treatment with **Afshin Safa, MD, Radiation Oncologist**, to dissolve any residual tumor.



**Asher Taban, MD,**  
Neurosurgeon

Tina spent one month in the **Critical Care Unit** before transferring to the **Center for Rehabilitation Medicine** where she received physical, occupational and speech therapies. "I had to learn how to use my hands, walk, talk and eat," Tina recalls. "My teenage children visited me often and saw me progress."

Today, she's tumor free and has resumed her position at Dr. Kerner's office as well as her number one job as mom.

## Blade-Free Brain Surgery

Requiring no incision, Gamma Knife is a safe, non-invasive treatment. More than 200 precise radiation beams converge deep within the brain to shrink or even destroy damaged tissue. It can be used in conjunction with or as an alternative to surgery.

