

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

WATSON CLINIC

Health scene

Specialized care for slow-healing wounds

Inside this issue

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Health Scene is a community health education magazine made possible by generous donations from Watson Clinic Foundation's supporters.



A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a light blue polo shirt, is painting a vibrant, abstract mural on a wall. The mural features bold colors like red, yellow, blue, and green, with stylized patterns and shapes. The man is holding a paintbrush and is focused on his work. The background shows other parts of the mural and the arm of another person in a white shirt.

A Greater Good.

Orlando Health and Watson Clinic
Working Together for Your Health

ORLANDO HEALTH® | WATSON CLINIC®

Lakeland Highlands Hospital

Combining the collective strengths of two powerhouse organizations. Orlando Health and the high-quality physicians at Watson Clinic are expanding access to award-winning specialty care for patients in Polk County and beyond. This exciting collaboration is highlighted by a state-of-the-art hospital opening in 2026. A new day in healthcare is on the horizon. OrlandoHealth.com/Watson

FROM THE DESK OF DR. WILLIAM J. ROTH

What does it mean to be board-certified?

As you turn the pages of *Health Scene* or browse the physician listings on our website, you'll probably notice prominent references to each doctor's board-certification status. You may wonder exactly what this means and how it affects the care you should expect to receive from them.

In a 2018 poll conducted by the American Board of Medical Specialties, 82% of those surveyed listed board-certification status as their most important consideration when choosing a doctor.

Board certification is a voluntary process that many physicians choose to embark upon after receiving their medical degree, working through their internships, residencies and fellowships, and receiving their state licensure. It's the clearest indication of a physician's skill, knowledge and expertise in their chosen field of medicine.

To earn board-certification status, a physician must pass rigorous oral and/or written exams that are presented by a certifying board related to their specialty. This status requires repeated reassessment throughout their medical careers.

The world of medicine is constantly evolving, regardless of specialty. A board certification assures patients that their doctor is committed to staying up-to-date on the latest research and treatment protocols. A doctor's journey of discovery doesn't end when they receive their medical degree—it continues to flourish for as long as they practice medicine. Patients are the most important benefactors of this growth and development.

The next time you search for a physician who can fulfill your healthcare needs, you should consider their reliability, level of training and commitment to excellence. A board certification reflects all of this and more.

For more information on our team of more than 350 board-certified physicians and highly qualified medical providers, visit our website at [WatsonClinic.com/Physician-Search](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Physician-Search).



Yours in good health,
William J. Roth, MD, PhD
Watson Clinic President,
Chair and Managing Partner

A quick look inside



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WHAT IS A CONGENITAL HEART DEFECT?
Here's what you need to know.



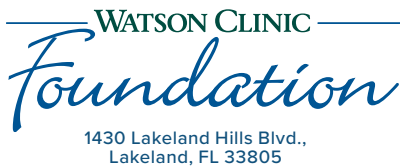
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ARTS IN MEDICINE
Painting honors cancer survivors.

 **Check out our website**

[WatsonClinic.com](https://www.WatsonClinic.com)

Email us at HealthScene@WatsonClinic.com.



Spring/Summer 2026

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If you wish to be added to or removed from the *Health Scene* mailing list, please write to HealthScene@WatsonClinic.com or Watson Clinic's Marketing Communications and Media Relations department at 4263 S. Florida Ave., Lakeland, FL 33813, or call **863-904-4653**. We will facilitate your request before the next issue.

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Information in HEALTH SCENE comes from a wide range of medical experts. Models may be used in photos and illustrations. If you have any concerns or questions about specific content that may affect your health, please contact your Watson Clinic healthcare provider at **863-680-7190**.

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Test scheduling made easy

If a lab test, treadmill stress test, routine screening mammogram or DEXA scan has been ordered by your physician or provider, you can now select the appointment time of your choosing in minutes through your MyChart Patient Portal account.

Once your care team submits the order, you will receive a notification on your patient portal account. Simply go to your “Scheduling Tickets” option on the MyChart menu and select the appointment time and date of your choosing among the options given.

Please note that a lab appointment is separate from your appointment with your care team and takes priority over walk-in lab visits. Scheduling your lab appointments through MyChart—as opposed to coming directly to the lab after your doctor’s appointment—will save you time and maximize the efficiency of your care.

Enjoy the benefits of MyChart

If you haven’t yet registered for a free MyChart Patient Portal account of your own, you’re missing out on a wealth of benefits, including:

- Unlimited access to your healthcare information from your personal computer or mobile app.
- The ability to schedule your next appointment, view your test results, pay your bill online, receive paperless billing statements, communicate directly with your doctor’s office, view your medical history—and much more!

For more information and to register for your free account in minutes, visit **WatsonClinic.com/MyChart**.

If you need guidance while registering or accessing your Patient Portal account, you can reach a representative by calling the MyChart Patient Support line at **863-680-7072** every Monday through Friday from 8 am to 5 pm.

Lab locations achieve reaccreditation

The laboratories at Watson Clinic South and Highlands have recently achieved reaccreditation status from the Commission on Laboratory Accreditation (COLA), one of the leading physician-directed laboratory accreditors in the United States. These accreditations, which are valid for a period of two years, are only presented to laboratories that apply the highest standards of

quality in day-to-day operations, demonstrate continued accuracy in the performance of proficiency testing, and pass a rigorous on-site laboratory survey.

In addition to the South and Highlands laboratories, Watson Clinic operates a lab at Watson Clinic Main, as well as the Mohs Surgery and first-floor Histology labs at the Watson Clinic Bella Vista Building, all of which are

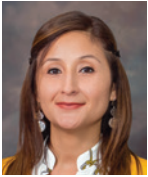


accredited by the College of American Pathologists. All on-site laboratories are licensed by the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments program.

For more information on Watson Clinic’s laboratory services, visit **WatsonClinic.com/Lab**.

Providers on the move

The following providers have moved to different primary care physician offices. Patients of these providers can enjoy an uninterrupted continuity of care by scheduling their next appointment at any of the following locations.



Elfia Alcalá, APRN, now works alongside Internal Medicine specialist **Dr. Lilliam S. Chiques** at Watson Clinic Main. Visit [WatsonClinic.com/Alcala](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Alcala) for more information and to schedule an appointment.



Paul Champino, APRN, now assists patients of Family Medicine specialist **Dr. Jeremy Katzmann** at Watson Clinic Highlands. Visit [WatsonClinic.com/Champino](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Champino) for more information and to schedule an appointment.



William Keeler, APRN, now serves patients of Family Medicine specialist **Dr. Rony Alvarado** at Watson Clinic Highlands. Visit [WatsonClinic.com/Keeler](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Keeler) for more information and to schedule an appointment.

Appointments with any of these three nurse practitioners may be scheduled by visiting their individual webpages or by calling **863-680-7190**.



Meanwhile, **Brenda O'Hair, PA**, a physician assistant who works alongside board-certified Dermatology specialist **Dr. William J. Roth**, has added a second location. She now

accepts appointments from both the Watson Clinic Bella Vista Building and Watson Clinic Highlands in south Lakeland. This expansion provides convenience and a closer proximity for her patient base regardless of where they reside in Lakeland and surrounding communities.

Appointments with Ms. O'Hair may be scheduled by calling **863-904-6201** or visiting [WatsonClinic.com/OHair](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/OHair).



Major league care

Baseball season is upon us once again! As the official medical provider for the Lakeland Flying Tigers and Detroit Tigers Florida Operations, Watson Clinic has worked to keep our cherished hometown team healthy and productive so audiences of all ages can continue to enjoy the magic they produce on the field.

Throughout the year, the Tigers call upon the expertise of Watson Clinic's team for any health-related issues that need to be addressed quickly—from common illnesses to more involved orthopaedic injury repairs.

To read more about this long and fruitful partnership, visit [WatsonClinic.com/Tigers](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Tigers).

Weight Center introduces new meal replacement line



Under the leadership of board-certified Obesity Medicine specialist **Dr. Lilliam S. Chiques**, the Watson Clinic Weight Center now offers ReadyPro—a menu of meal products that deliver serious nutrition without the portion overload. These products are designed to help patients get a jump start on their weight-loss goals while fulfilling their body's natural protein, fiber and hydration requirements.

Located at Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland, the Watson Clinic Weight Center works to empower patients on their weight management journey with sensible, medically sound guidance and proven treatments. For more information and to schedule a consultation, call **863-680-7190** or visit [WatsonClinic.com/WeightCenter](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/WeightCenter).

Welcome, new physicians and providers

Join us in welcoming the latest additions to our team of expert physicians and providers. Appointments are available as listed. For more information on these and all of our highly qualified team members, visit [WatsonClinic.com/Physician-Search](https://www.watsonclinic.com/Physician-Search).



Ray G. Cutro, MD Cardiology

Education: University of Florida College of Medicine, Gainesville, FL, MD

Residency: University of Florida College of Medicine, Gainesville, FL, Internal Medicine

Fellowships: University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, Cardiovascular Disease; Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA, Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology

Board certifications: Cardiology and Clinical Cardiac Electrophysiology

Location: Watson Clinic Main
Appointments: 863-680-7490 or [WatsonClinic.com/Cutro](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Cutro)



Lindsey M. Hill, APRN Cardiology

Education: Polk State College, Lakeland, FL, BSN; University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL, MSN

Membership: American Nurses Credentialing Center

Supervising physician: Joseph Coffman, MD

Location: Watson Clinic Main

Appointments: 863-680-7490 or [WatsonClinic.com/Hill](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Hill)



Amelia Hyland, APRN Infectious Diseases

Education: Polk State College, Winter Haven, FL, BSN; Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL, MSN

Membership: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners

Supervising physician: Tri M. Pham, MD

Locations: Bartow Regional Medical Center, Lakeland Regional Health Medical Center

Appointments: 863-680-7190 or [WatsonClinic.com/Hyland](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Hyland)



Emily Maldonado, APRN Internal Medicine

Education: Western Governors University, Millcreek, UT, BSN; Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL, MSN

Membership: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners

Supervising physician: Stephen G. Swengros, MD

Location: Watson Clinic Highlands
Appointments: 863-680-7190 or [WatsonClinic.com/Maldonado](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Maldonado)



Taylor M. Novak, PA Oncology-Hematology

Education: University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, BSHS; Chamberlain University, Chicago, IL, MPAS

Memberships: National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants, American Academy of Physician Assistants, Florida Academy of Physician Assistants

Supervising physician: Leonard Gitter, MD

Location: Watson Clinic Cancer & Research Center

Appointments: 863-603-4770 or [WatsonClinic.com/Novak](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Novak)



Mehdi Taleb, APRN Pulmonology

Education: University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, BSN; University of Tampa, Tampa, FL, MSN

Membership: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners

Supervising physician: Naem Shahrour, MD

Location: Lakeland Regional Health Medical Center

Appointments: 863-680-7190 or [WatsonClinic.com/Taleb](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Taleb)



Laura Zimmerman, APRN Cardiology

Education: Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL, BSN, MSN

Memberships: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, Polk County Advanced Practice Nurses Association

Supervising physicians: John G. Canto, MD, FACC, Joseph Coffman, MD, and George Ghareeb, DO

Location: Watson Clinic Main
Appointments: 863-680-7490 or [WatsonClinic.com/Zimmerman](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Zimmerman)



QUESTIONS FOR THE EXPERTS

We asked members of our medical staff to answer some common health concerns.

How do I reduce my risk of cervical cancer?

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), a sexually transmitted infection that can also spread through skin-to-skin contact. Risks include early first intercourse, multiple partners, and sexual relations with someone who is having or has had relations with someone else with cervical precancer or cancer. To reduce your risk:

Get screened. Regular screening can find precancers that can be treated before they turn into cervical cancer. Pap smears and HPV tests are the two cervical cancer screening options.

Get the HPV vaccine. The HPV vaccine helps prevent some of the HPV infections that can cause cervical cancer. The vaccine is most effective if you get it before you are sexually active. That's why it's often given to kids ages 11 or 12. If you missed your shot as a child, the vaccine can be administered to people ages 9 to 26, while people ages 27 to 45 can choose to get it with advice from their doctor.



Richard J. Cardosi, MS, MIGS, is a board-certified Gynecologic Oncologist who treats patients at the Watson Clinic Bella Vista Building in Lakeland. For more information and to schedule an appointment, call **863-680-7578** or visit WatsonClinic.com/Cardosi.

How can I manage the arthritis pain in my hands?

To manage the pain, stiffness and swelling:

Exercise and stretch your hand. Movement can help keep your hand joints flexible, strong and less achy.

Wear a splint. Splints may help with pain relief.

Choose hand-friendly tools. Look for scissors, kitchen utensils, pens, and jar and bottle openers designed for people with hand arthritis.

See if heat or cold therapy helps the most. Apply heat to your hands by using heat wraps or paraffin wax. Try using a cold pack for cold therapy.

Consider topical treatments. Topical nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can help relieve pain. Most come in a cream that you apply to the skin over the affected area. And creams containing capsaicin or menthol can act as counterirritants, relieving pain. Always let your doctor know about any medicines or supplements you take.

If at-home treatments aren't working, consider other treatments such as injections or surgery.



Spencer A. Motley, MD, is a board-certified Rheumatologist who treats patients at Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland. For more information and to schedule an appointment, call **863-680-7486** or visit WatsonClinic.com/Motley.

How can I keep my blood sugar at a steady level?

Maintaining a steady blood sugar level can elevate your overall well-being and result in more vitality and productivity in your daily life. Here are a few strategies:

Have your morning meal. Eating breakfast helps keep blood sugar steady throughout the day. It can also help you manage hunger.

Fuel your body. Choose fiber-rich complex carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Pairing carbs with proteins and healthy fats can also result in steadier blood sugar.

Get to bed on time. Missed sleep can raise blood sugar levels. Aim to get seven to nine hours of restful sleep every night.

Keep moving. Being physically active could help you maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

Drink more water. Being dehydrated can spike your blood sugar by making it more concentrated.

If you have diabetes or prediabetes, steady blood sugar is a crucial part of managing the disease.

My team—including registered nurse practitioners **Emily Beriswill, APRN**, **Brandi N. Plummer, APRN**, and **Jennifer Potts, APRN**—and I can help patients achieve and maintain a healthy weight, while preventing the various health conditions that can occur as a result, including high blood sugar.



Guillermo O. Vasquez, MD, is a board-certified Internal Medicine physician who treats patients at Watson Clinic South. For more information and to schedule an appointment, call **863-680-7190** or visit WatsonClinic.com/Vasquez.



Same-day and Saturday pediatric appointments

Watson Clinic’s Pediatrics department is committed to helping you keep your child healthy through every stage of their development. That’s why the department has made it easier than ever for your child to get the care they need whenever they need it most.

Same-day appointments are available for sick visits and other concerns that require immediate attention. These Fast Access appointments may be arranged by following these steps:

- Call **863-680-7337** for our North Pediatrics and South locations or **863-607-3346** for Highlands.
- Request a same-day Fast Access appointment.
- Receive appointment time and location options with the first available Pediatric physician or provider.

Saturday appointments are also available for sick visits only, and they are scheduled every Saturday,

from 8:30 am to noon, exclusively at our Watson Clinic Highlands location. On-site laboratory and radiology services give faster results and more immediate and effective care.

Saturday sick visits cannot be scheduled in advance. They must be made on the day by calling either of the department numbers listed at left.

Here when you need us

Watson Clinic’s Pediatrics department, with four convenient locations, specializes in the care of newborns and children up to 18 years of age and offers a wide array of services, including well-child checkups, sports physicals, immunizations, sick care, management for chronic conditions like asthma and allergies, and more. For more information, visit [WatsonClinic.com/Pediatrics](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Pediatrics).

Meet our Pediatrics team

Watson Clinic Highlands

Appointments: **863-607-3346**



Holly Cunneen, DO



Varsha Ghayal, MD



Sheena H. Tonkin, MD



Katherine Puisis, APRN

Watson Clinic North Pediatrics

Appointments: **863-680-7337**



W. Jason Cornett, MD



Kendra Velez Rodriguez, MD



Ariel Vulgamore, DNP, APRN

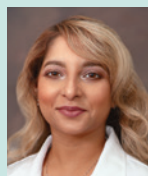
Watson Clinic South

Dr. Cynthia Hutto appointments: **863-647-8012**

Dr. Jolie Szocki appointments: **863-680-7337**



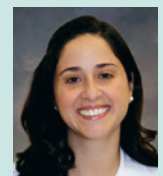
Cynthia H. Hutto, MD



Jolie Szocki, MD

Watson Clinic Plant City

Appointments: **813-719-2500**



Leslie Coello Echeverry, MD

Hope for people with kidney stones

If you've ever had a kidney stone, you know the pain that sends more than half a million people to emergency rooms every year. And you are far from alone—1 in 10 people will get a kidney stone at some point.

What are kidney stones, and what causes them?

Kidney stones are hard, tiny objects that form in the kidneys. Your urine contains a variety of waste chemicals, which are usually swept out of your body when you urinate. But when there isn't enough water in your urine, those chemicals begin to form crystals that clump together and turn into kidney stones.

Once formed, a kidney stone can stay put in the kidneys or pass through the urinary tract. If a kidney stone is very small, it may pass through your system without causing much pain. But stones that don't pass through easily can cause urine to back up in the kidney, bladder or urethra.

The smallest kidney stones are about the size of a grain of sand and cause mild or no symptoms. As they get bigger, they're more likely

to lodge in the ureter, blocking the passage of urine and causing immobilizing discomfort. Surgical intervention may be necessary to remove larger stones.

A treatment breakthrough

Clinical studies have shown that traditional surgical approaches can leave residual stone fragments, which leads to post-procedure issues like pain, hospitalization and the need for additional follow-up treatments.

The CVAC system is a new treatment option designed to remove these risks. **Dr. Genesis Nieves**, a Urologist who treats patients at Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland, is the first specialist in the Lakeland area to offer this groundbreaking procedure, and she has achieved exceptional 98% clearance rates for stones averaging 2 centimeters in size.

"This newer CVAC technology has been a game changer for many patients," she says, "because it significantly improves our ability to clear stone burden in one procedure and reduce the chance of leftover fragments or recurrence. While no surgery can promise 100% clearance, outcomes are excellent in the majority of cases."

The system uses ureteroscopy (a catheter with a tiny camera that travels through the urinary tract) to break up stones with a laser fiber. Then it gently removes the stone fragments with irrigation and vacuum aspiration, leaving behind a stone-free kidney.

Keep kidneys pain-free

For more information and to schedule an appointment with Dr. Nieves, call **863-680-7300** or visit **WatsonClinic.com/Nieves**.

The CVAC system is a new treatment option that uses ureteroscopy (a catheter with a tiny camera that travels through the urinary tract) to break up stones with a laser fiber.



Genesis Nieves, MD

Specialized care

If you're dealing with a wound that just won't heal, our expert Wound Care and Podiatric Surgery specialists offer the services you need to heal comfortably and safely.

Wound Care at Watson Clinic

Our Wound Care department provides specialized treatments for chronic or slow-healing wounds. When left untreated or neglected, these wounds can lead to chronic disease, infection, poor circulation or even amputation.

Appointments with our Wound Care specialists are available by physician referral only. Specialists from other Clinic departments—including Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Podiatry, Oncology-Hematology, Radiology, Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery and Infectious Diseases—frequently refer their patients to our team of three board-certified wound care experts.

These referrals are provided in situations that warrant a more specialized approach, such as for:

- Wounds, cuts or burns that haven't begun to heal within two weeks.
- Signs of infection.
- Patients with conditions that can complicate the healing process, such as diabetes or poor circulation.
- Ulcers or other wounds resulting from radiation therapy.
- Repeated infections of the bone.
- Collaborations with interventional radiologists during revascularization efforts.

Our Wound Care physicians will recommend the course of treatment best suited to each patient's condition, which may include compression wrappings, antibiotics, topical wound medications, customized dressings or the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

For more information on our Wound Care department, visit [WatsonClinic.com/WoundCare](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/WoundCare).

Wound Care specialists



Yeneneh Desta, MD

Watson Clinic Main, Bartow Regional Medical Center and South Florida Baptist Hospital

863-680-7190



Fernando Loret de Mola, MD

Lakeland Regional Health Wound Care & Hyperbaric Medicine department at its Grasslands campus

863-284-1700



Tri M. Pham, MD

Watson Clinic Main and Bartow Regional Medical Center

863-680-7190

for slow-healing wounds

Podiatric Surgery at Watson Clinic

The three expert specialists in our Podiatric Surgery department are specially trained in the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of wounds afflicting the feet and lower extremities.

They treat a number of complex conditions, including:

- Diabetic foot ulcers.
- Venous ulcers.
- Bone infections.
- Pressure sores.
- Traumatic injuries in the form of abrasions, cuts and fractures.

Offering services as varied as sophisticated dressings, medications, surgical efforts and proper guidance on self-care, their efforts can avert severe infection, hospitalization and even amputation.

Podiatric Surgery specialists

Appointments with any member of Watson Clinic's Podiatric Surgery department may be scheduled by calling **863-680-7214** or visiting WatsonClinic.com/Podiatry.



James J. Butler, Jr., DPM
Watson Clinic Main



Zully A. Calvo, DPM
Watson Clinic South



Dominic E. DiPierro, DPM, FACFAS
Watson Clinic Highlands and Watson Clinic Bartow Building A

Surgeon offers minimally invasive bunion surgery

Watson Clinic board-certified Podiatric Surgeon **Dr. Zully A. Calvo** is pleased to offer a new procedure called **Arthrex minimally invasive bunionectomy**, an advanced surgical approach to treating a common foot deformity that afflicts millions of adults in the United States.

A bunion occurs when the first metatarsal bone in the big toe rotates out of alignment. This causes the big toe to turn inward against the other toes. The metatarsal at the base of the big toe protrudes outward as a result. This deformity can cause stabbing pain, redness, swelling, and difficulty

walking and wearing shoes. It's unlikely that many bunions will reverse on their own without surgical intervention.

Traditional surgical treatments have involved long incisions, intrusive realignment efforts and a lengthy period of recovery. Until now.

"The Arthrex minimally invasive bunionectomy offers a wealth of benefits to patients who wish to reclaim their mobility and quality of life," Dr. Calvo explains. "These benefits include a much smaller incision that leaves only a tiny, oftentimes imperceptible scar, a correction of the bunion deformity through highly advanced, pin-sized



instrumentation, significantly less postoperative pain, swelling and stiffness, and a recovery period that's up to eight weeks faster than traditional bunion surgery."

For more information on this procedure and to schedule a consultation with Dr. Calvo, call **863-680-7214** or visit WatsonClinic.com/Calvo.

Understanding congenital heart defects

Each year, about 40,000 children are born with congenital heart defects. What are heart defects, and how do they affect people's lives? First, it helps to understand how the heart works.

The heart has four chambers, separated by a wall called the septum; four valves; and arteries that—when functioning correctly—all work together to pump blood throughout the body. A congenital heart defect happens when the heart does not form correctly in the womb, which may prevent it from working properly.



George Ghareeb, DO

“Heart defects can range from mild, such as a hole between the chambers of the heart, to severe—where part of the heart is missing,” says **Dr. George Ghareeb**, a board-certified Cardiology specialist who treats patients at Watson Clinic Main, every Tuesday through Friday, and at Watson Clinic Highlands, every Monday.

Treatment options

Most congenital heart defects are diagnosed early in childhood—some can even be identified before birth. However, some may not be discovered until adulthood.

“Congenital heart defects often get better on their own,” says Dr. Ghareeb. “However, sometimes medicines or procedures are needed to manage or repair them. The right treatment depends on the type of heart defect and its severity.”

Most children with simple heart defects live to become thriving adults. Children with more complex heart defects may experience health issues or other challenges. Getting routine checkups is an important part of managing a heart defect and staying healthy overall.

Common heart defects



- **Atrial septal defect.** A hole in the septum between the atria, or upper chambers of the heart.
- **Complete atrioventricular canal defect.** A large hole in the center of the heart that affects all four chambers.
- **Coarctation of the aorta.** A narrowing of the aorta, the major artery that carries oxygen-rich blood to the body.
- **Tetralogy of Fallot.** A complex problem involving four issues: the placement of the aorta, a septal defect, an obstruction of blood flow to the lungs and a thickening of part of the heart muscle.
- **Ventricular septal defect.** A hole in the septum between the ventricles, or lower chambers.

While the exact causes of congenital heart defects aren't always clear, genetics, smoking during pregnancy and taking certain medicines during the first trimester are some of the factors that may affect the way the heart develops.

Appointments with Dr. Ghareeb or any member of Watson Clinic's Cardiology department may be scheduled by calling **863-680-7490** or visiting **WatsonClinic.com/Cardiology**.



Chronic hives: Take control

Itchy, bothersome hives are usually temporary, but it's possible to have them almost every day for weeks at a time. While it's not always possible to pinpoint the cause of chronic hives, the good news is that treatment can help.

Know the signs

Hives typically appear as a rash of very itchy skin welts or blotches. On lighter skin, you might notice a pink or reddish rash. On darker skin, the hives may blend in with the skin tone.

"Hives often fade within a day and never come back," says **Dr. G. Weyman Price**, a board-certified Allergy & Immunology specialist who treats patients at Watson Clinic South in Lakeland. "However, chronic hives appear almost daily for six or more weeks."

If you think you have chronic hives, see a doctor to find out.

What helps?

If you do have chronic hives, the best way to control them is to work with your doctor. They will try to pinpoint a cause, such as with allergy skin testing, but even if they're unable to, they can still prescribe treatments that offer relief.

An antihistamine medication may relieve the itch. If that doesn't help, your doctor may prescribe a different antihistamine at a different dose, which may be more effective. Sometimes a combination of antihistamine medications will do the trick. Other medications, including biologics that help calm your immune system, may also be prescribed. In addition:

Keep a trigger journal. Keep track of when you have hives and what you were doing. Did you recently take a medicine or sweat a lot? What were you eating, drinking, wearing or carrying? Reviewing your journal may help you figure out what's triggering your hives.

Rein in stress. Stress can trigger hives. Your doctor may include stress reduction techniques as part of your treatment plan. Techniques like meditation, mindfulness and deep breathing can help manage your stress and reduce flare-ups.

Practice proper skincare. Try not to scratch your hives, since doing so can trigger more hives. If your hives itch, apply a damp washcloth to the area, take a warm bath or use an anti-itch lotion. Using fragrance-free skin products; keeping your skin moisturized; and wearing loose, cotton fabric can also reduce itching and irritation.



Get relief

Watson Clinic's Allergy & Immunology department provides comprehensive testing and treatments for allergies, asthma and a variety of additional conditions that afflict the immune system.



Lionel Vasco Bonini, MD

Watson Clinic Main
1600 Lakeland Hills Blvd.
Lakeland, FL 33805
Appointments: **863-680-7486**



G. Weyman Price, MD

Watson Clinic South
1033 N. Parkway Frontage Road
Lakeland, FL 33803
Appointments: **863-647-8045**



Leah Philpot, APRN

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What to know about kidney dialysis

Kidneys do vital work, including filtering waste products from the blood and keeping minerals in balance. But certain conditions, like high blood pressure and diabetes, can damage them. That can lead to kidney failure (also called *end-stage kidney disease*). When that happens, machines are used to help with some of the kidneys' key functions—a process called dialysis.

Here are answers to common questions about kidney dialysis.

Q How does dialysis help you?

A: Dialysis does some of the work the kidneys did when they were healthy, such as removing excess fluid and waste from your blood.

“Dialysis doesn’t cure kidney failure, since it cannot fully replace the kidneys’ function,” says

Dr. Michael Achinger, a board-certified Nephrology specialist. “It maintains your health until hopefully a kidney transplant occurs.”



Michael Achinger, MD

Q What are the different types of dialysis?

A: With *hemodialysis*, a machine filters your blood outside your body. The filtered blood is then put back into your body. Before starting hemodialysis, a surgeon creates an access site for the dialysis needle in a vein or artery in the arm.

Peritoneal dialysis uses the lining of your abdomen (peritoneum) to filter your blood inside your body. Before starting peritoneal dialysis,



Watson Clinic has long set a standard in home-based dialysis care. To schedule an appointment with a member of our Nephrology department, call 863-680-7190 or visit [WatsonClinic.com/Nephrology](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Nephrology).

a catheter is surgically placed in the abdomen. It’s used to introduce a special fluid that absorbs waste from the blood. Then the fluid and waste are removed using the same catheter.

Q How often do you have dialysis?

A: If you go to a dialysis center for hemodialysis, you will typically have treatments for about four hours, three times a week. Some dialysis centers offer treatments at night while you sleep.

“Hemodialysis can also be performed at home with a small dialysis machine, usually three to seven times a week,” says

Dr. Steven Achinger, another



Steven Achinger, MD

board-certified Nephrology specialist at Watson Clinic. “Home dialysis offers a more flexible treatment schedule.”

With peritoneal dialysis, the process of emptying and filling the dialysis solution happens several times a day. It can be done by hand, or a machine can do it at night while you sleep. This type of dialysis can be done at home or even while traveling.

Q Can you have a good quality of life on dialysis?

A: Dialysis changes your life in many ways and requires a time commitment. Still, many people continue working and enjoying activities.

Additional sources: National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases; National Kidney Foundation

Honoring and empowering cancer survivorship

Last year, the Watson Clinic Foundation's Arts in Medicine program opened a community gallery, called Threads of Hope, in collaboration with the Lakeland Arts Association. Currently on display at the Watson Clinic Cancer & Research Center, the gallery weaves together several meaningful exhibits, including "The Art of Melody," an immersive experience in which local artists pair their visual work with music via the use of QR codes.

One of the featured pieces in "The Art of Melody" is a painting by Rita McIntyre, a mixed-media artist whose creations explore memory, place and discovery. She was so moved by the mission of the gallery that she donated her striking work *Standing Strong*, which is currently being displayed in the second-floor waiting area. Standing tall in both form and meaning, the artwork brings hope, beauty and light, offering quiet strength to all who experience it.

Courage and compassion

McIntyre crafted the painting as a remembrance of a lifelong friend and a celebration of the many cancer survivors who inspire us.

"The bald heads and markings symbolize the journey and the physical impact of cancer treatments, but also resilience and renewal," she explains. "Standing together, the figures embody the community and bond that forms between those walking this difficult but courageous path."

McIntyre was overcome with emotion when she discovered her work was accepted as part of the gallery. "A floodgate opened," she says. "I knew this painting belonged there and nowhere else!"

The Threads of Hope gallery, including "The Art of Melody" exhibit and Legacy Lane cancer survivor



portrait display, is open to patients, caregivers and all members of our community from the Watson Clinic Cancer & Research Center at 1730 Lakeland Hills Blvd. in Lakeland. For more about the Watson Clinic Foundation, visit [WatsonClinic.com/WCF](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/WCF).



Looking for a way to serve your community?

In a recent episode of the Watson Clinic *Health Talk* podcast, Watson Clinic Foundation Executive Director Kim Brunson discusses a series of Foundation programs that can benefit from the involvement of our community, including the Circle of Care Initiative to assist cancer patients, medical scholarships for nurses in training and an Arts in Medicine program that promotes healing through the creative arts.

Scan the QR code or visit [WatsonClinic.com/Podcast](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Podcast) to listen in!



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