

Watson Clinic

A community health education magazine made possible by generous donations from Watson Clinic Foundation's supporters.

Health scene

WINTER 2024

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enhances
your care**

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your vision
with an
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On the move to better health

RECOVERING FROM A DEBILITATING ILLNESS OR INJURY

can be arduous and time-consuming. The guidance of a licensed physical or occupational therapist can make all the difference.

Watson Clinic offers comprehensive rehabilitation services from multiple physical and occupational therapy providers across three convenient locations.

Physical therapy

Our physical therapists are experienced in areas such as orthopaedics, neurology, hand therapy and lymphedema management. Using the most advanced rehabilitation technologies in the field—like the revolutionary Anti-Gravity Treadmill™—these medical professionals can help patients avoid surgery by restoring joint mobility and muscle strength. They also help patients recover from:

- Joint sprains, muscle strains, fractures and surgical procedures.
- Neck or back pain from a variety of causes, such as trauma, poor posture and poor workstation ergonomics.
- Physical imbalance issues.
- Extremity and trunk lymphedema (swelling) that limits mobility.
- Problems performing daily activities or exercise due to medical ailments, strokes, accidents or injuries.



Occupational therapy

Our occupational therapists work with patients of all ages who face many different kinds of medical challenges that can impact their everyday activities. Their care is complemented by a certified hand therapist with advanced knowledge in treating a variety of upper extremity and hand ailments.

These therapists assist patients with the following:

- Making splints to protect a surgical repair or improve range of motion.
- Planning safe work tasks for someone returning to a job after an injury.
- Teaching methods for conserving energy to optimize endurance and functionality.
- Training in joint protection and overuse prevention techniques.

Chiropractic medicine

Watson Clinic also offers Chiropractic Medicine specialist **Dr. Jalen Banks**, who focuses on treating chronic and acute pain involving the muscles, joints, bones, ligaments, cartilage and nervous system.

Lakeland locations

Watson Clinic Center for Rehabilitative Medicine*

1430 Lakeland Hills Blvd.

Watson Clinic Center for Specialized Rehabilitation*


2190 E. County Road 540A

Watson Clinic Highlands

2300 E. County Road 540A

Physical & Occupational Therapy
863-680-7700

**Chiropractic Medicine*
863-680-7718

 Visit **WatsonClinic.com/PT** to read bios on our team of therapists or to learn more about our comprehensive rehabilitation services.

FROM THE DESK OF DR. WILLIAM J. ROTH

Elevate your healthcare experience

Have you signed up for the MyChart Patient Portal?

If you have, then you're familiar with the many benefits of using the platform. You can send direct messages to your doctor's office when you have a question, concern or request. You can schedule your next appointment, ask for a prescription refill, view your test results, pay your bill and so much more.

If you haven't signed up for your own free MyChart account yet, now is the perfect time. That's because we've enhanced the features and functionality of the platform, which results in a more interactive and empowering healthcare experience.

Here's just a sample of what you can do:

- Automatically receive paperless billing statements and pay online directly from your account.
- Complete the check-in process from home to save time when you arrive.
- Schedule appointments with more physicians and providers (pending availability and patient eligibility), view open appointment slots based on the type of visit you're looking for or be added to a wait list so that you can be notified if an earlier appointment time becomes available.
- Keep track of preventive care needs, summaries of the care you've received and plans of care you've arranged with your doctor.
- Find charts and trends of your vitals and test results over time.
- Access information for your children and other family members you care for from your account.



William J. Roth, MD, PhD

There's even a free MyChart app available for download in the App Store or Google Play, so you can easily access your healthcare information anytime from the convenience of your mobile device.

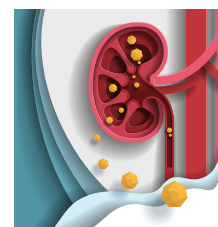
For more information and to sign up in minutes, visit [WatsonClinic.com/MyChart](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/MyChart).

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

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Check out our website

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

Email us at HealthScene@WatsonClinic.com.



1430 Lakeland Hills Blvd.,
Lakeland, FL 33805

Winter 2024

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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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Specialist removes tumor with robotic precision

Dr. Dany K. Barrak, a General Surgery and Surgical Oncology specialist at Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland, recently performed the area's first rectal carcinoma tumor removal via advanced robotic technology.


Following a routine colonoscopy, the patient's gastroenterologist discovered an early stage carcinoma in the rectal area.

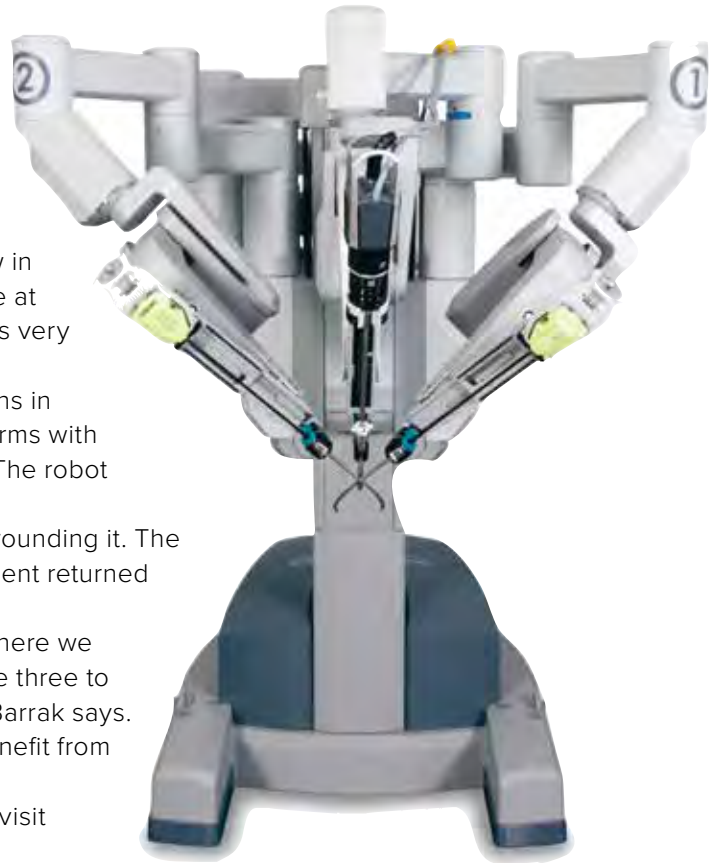
"Sometimes it's very difficult getting to areas that are low in the rectum," says Dr. Barrak, who performed the procedure at Lakeland Regional Health. "That's when the robot becomes very helpful."

During a robotic-assisted procedure, the surgeon remains in complete control every step of the way, directing robotic arms with specialized hand controls while seated behind a console. The robot performs each movement with unparalleled precision.

The tumor was fully removed, as well as the margins surrounding it. The wounds were sutured with minimal blood loss, and the patient returned home within a few hours.

"This is quite different from more invasive approaches where we would have to perform a full resection, which would require three to five days in the hospital and a much longer recovery," Dr. Barrak says. "In the right situation, there are a lot of people who can benefit from this robotic-assisted approach."


 To schedule an appointment, call **863-680-7486** or visit [WatsonClinic.com/Barrak](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Barrak).



Post-COVID Clinic treats long-term symptoms

Board-certified Internal Medicine specialist **Dr. Kathleen Haggerty** continues to accept patients at her Post-COVID Clinic from Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland. Dr. Haggerty started the Clinic in 2020 as an extension of her practice to address the lingering symptoms faced by many patients in the aftermath of their infection.

Patients who may benefit from Dr. Haggerty's care include those who continue to experience side effects such as fatigue, dizziness, chest heaviness, brain fog, malaise, poor concentration and nausea.

 Appointments may be scheduled by calling **863-680-7190**.

Honoring the community's best

Watson Clinic physicians and providers have been serving the healthcare needs of our community since 1941. That kind of legacy leaves a lasting impression, which was evidenced by a series of recent award ceremonies that bestowed top honors on the Clinic in a number of categories as voted by the readership of *The Ledger*.

During the 2024 Official Community's Choice Best of Central Florida Awards, Watson Clinic took home top prizes as the community's **Best Allergy Clinic, Cosmetic/Plastic Surgery Center, Dermatology Clinic, Family Practice, Women's Health Services** and **Urgent Care/Walk-in Clinic**. Additionally, the Clinic was announced as a



From left, Watson Clinic Main Family Medicine specialist Dr. Ravi Patel, Watson Clinic President and Dermatologist Dr. William J. Roth and Watson Clinic Urgent Care specialist Dr. Om Prakash attended the 2024 Official Community's Choice Best of Central Florida ceremony.

finalist in the categories of Foot Care Clinic, Hearing Aid/Hearing Specialist Center, Hospital/Medical Center, Pediatric Clinic, Physical Therapy Clinic and Sports Medicine/Orthopedic Center.

The results of a readers' poll for *LKLD Haven Magazine* prompted similar outcomes for our physicians. Best OB-GYN

was awarded to **Dr. Tarek Garas**, Best Plastic Surgeon to **Dr. Faeza Kazmier** and Best Family Doctor to **Dr. James Hardigan**. The Clinic was also honored for operating the community's **Best Urgent Care**.

Congratulations to all the Watson Clinic winners and finalists, and our sincere thanks for the gratifying support of our community!

Primary care on your schedule

Board-certified Internal Medicine specialist **Dr. Guillermo O. Vasquez** and his team understand that the demands of daily life shouldn't interfere with your healthcare.

They've made it easier than ever to get the care you need on a schedule that fits your lifestyle. Dr. Vasquez and his team of nurse practitioners—including **Emily Beriswill, APRN, Brandi N. Plummer, APRN**, and **Jennifer Potts, APRN**—offer availability on extended weekdays and Saturdays for patients who can't make appointments during regular business hours during the week. Best of all, they even provide same-day appointment availability for primary care concerns that can't wait.

Dr. Vasquez specializes in general primary care services, routine checkups, sick care, diabetes management, and screenings for heart disease and other chronic conditions. Department of Transportation physicals may also be scheduled at his office.



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Vasquez or any member of his team from our Watson Clinic South location at 1033 N. Parkway Frontage Road in south Lakeland, call **863-680-7190**.

The importance of an annual eye exam

AMONG THE MANY routine healthcare screenings that patients are encouraged to prioritize, there's one that is too often overlooked: the annual eye exam.

"Eye exams are essential for screening of potential vision-threatening diseases," says

Dr. Elizabeth

George, a board-

certified Optometry specialist at Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland.

"During a routine exam, we assess the structures of the eye, screen for eye diseases, check eye muscle function and even evaluate peripheral vision. If we notice a change in your vision, we can also provide prescriptions for glasses or contact lenses."

Here are three common conditions that can be recognized and diagnosed during a routine eye exam:

Cataracts

Although a normal aging change, cataracts often cause significant visual difficulties as they progress.



Elizabeth George,
OD

Cataracts are characterized by the natural lens in the eye becoming cloudy. The progression of cataracts is slow and gradual, and a dilated eye exam can detect the presence of the condition early. Minimally invasive surgery can be performed to replace the clouded lens of the eye. This is one of the most commonly performed medical procedures in the United States and boasts a remarkable 95% rate of effectiveness.

Dry eye syndrome

The surface of the eye is a complex and sensitive system. When that system becomes imbalanced, dry eye syndrome can occur. A lot of different factors can contribute to dry eye, but one of the major culprits is prolonged screen time on computers and mobile devices.

"We don't blink as often when we're focusing on a screen, which can cause the surface of the eye to get irritated and dry over time," Dr. George explains. "It is essential to take frequent breaks with screen time, to allow the focusing system of the eye to reset."

Protect your vision



Watson Clinic's skilled Optometrists provide comprehensive eye exams, vision tests and much more for patients 5 years and older. The department offers convenient appointment availability, including select Saturdays with Michelle Espanto, OD and Elizabeth George, OD, as well as swift referrals to Watson Clinic's Ophthalmology department when surgical intervention is needed.

To schedule an appointment with any member of Watson Clinic's Optometry



department, call
863-680-7486.

Glaucoma

Millions of Americans have glaucoma, but nearly half of them may not realize it. That's because glaucoma usually does not result in noticeable symptoms until substantial vision loss occurs. Glaucoma occurs when high eye pressure impacts the optic nerve and causes damage over time. When detected early, the progression of glaucoma may be slowed or prevented with prescription eye drops.

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

TAKE
THREE

Questions for the experts

Should I get a shingles vaccination?

If you've ever had chickenpox, you're at risk for shingles. Shingles is caused by the varicella-zoster virus, which also causes chickenpox.

You can recover from chickenpox and forget all about it for decades—until the virus reactivates in your body and gives you a case of shingles.

Shingles' trademark symptom is a painful rash or blisters that are on one side of the body only. It usually shows up around your midsection or on your face. The blisters typically scab over in about a week to 10 days. Sometimes people experience pain, itching or tingling before the rash even appears. In addition to the rash, symptoms may include chills, fever, headache, upset stomach and an eye infection.

Antiviral medicines can shorten the illness and make it less severe. These medicines work best if shingles is caught early and you start taking medication within three days of developing the rash.

A shingles vaccine is the most effective measure you can take for prevention. The vaccine is recommended for all adults 50 and older, as well as people over the age of 19 with weakened immune systems.



Julia McNeice, DO, is a board-certified Internal Medicine specialist at our Watson Clinic Main location in Lakeland. Call **863-680-7190** to schedule an appointment.

What should I know about psoriatic arthritis?

If you have psoriasis, you should know about psoriatic arthritis (PsA). These related autoimmune diseases both cause itchy, red patches and inflammation on the skin. PsA also causes pain and swelling in your joints.

Be aware that symptoms often appear and disappear. Times when you experience increased symptoms and inflammation are called flare-ups, and they can last for days or months before easing. Symptoms may include painful, itchy spots or silvery white patches of dead skin on the knees and elbows, pain, tenderness or swelling joints, unexplained tiredness, and a low-grade fever.

Left untreated, the inflammation caused by PsA can lead to other serious health problems.

If you have PsA, prompt diagnosis and treatment can boost your quality of life. Every person is different, but a combination of over-the-counter and prescription medications is often used.

You can minimize PsA flare-ups by making lifestyle changes, such as exercising regularly, keeping your skin moisturized, eating an anti-inflammatory diet and managing your stress.



Leen Al Saleh, MD, is a Rheumatology specialist at Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland. Call **863-680-7486** to schedule an appointment.

What are some tips for controlling high cholesterol?

If you've been diagnosed with high cholesterol, here are some steps to help you keep it under control.

Get protein from other foods. Instead of meat and cheese, eat more fish, beans, tree nuts, peas and lentils.

Eat more fiber. Add more fruits and vegetables, whole grains like oatmeal, beans (legumes), nuts, and seeds.

Move more. This can increase your good HDL cholesterol. Shoot for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a week. Try brisk walking, swimming, bicycling and more.

Weight loss makes a difference. Starting at a 5% reduction in body weight, you should start seeing improvements in your lipids profile. If you have obesity, a higher reduction in weight loss will improve upon these cholesterol levels even more.

Quit smoking and vaping. This lowers triglycerides and increases good HDL. It can also improve artery function by reducing damage.

Find out if you need medication. Lifestyle changes are helpful, but some people may need medication too.



Lilliam S. Chiques, MD, is a board-certified Internal Medicine and Obesity Medicine specialist with Watson Clinic's Metabolic & Weight Center in Lakeland. Call **863-680-7190**.

Diabetes 101

DIABETES IS SO COMMON you probably know someone living with it. In fact, 1 in 10 people has it. Here's a crash course on diabetes basics, including causes, how it's diagnosed, and ways to manage and prevent it.

Type 1 diabetes

This occurs when your body doesn't make insulin, a hormone needed to regulate blood sugar. It's usually diagnosed in children but can be discovered in adults.

Type 1 symptoms include:

- Increased appetite
- Frequent urination
- Heavy breathing
- Vision changes

If you spot any of those symptoms, make an appointment with your healthcare provider.

Type 2 diabetes

This is the most common type, where the body doesn't use insulin properly. "It can develop at any age but is more common in adults than in children," says **Dr. M. Karina Solorzano-Klapprott**, a board-certified Family Medicine specialist at our Watson Clinic Bartow Building A location.

Type 2 diabetes symptoms can be hard to spot, so it's important to know the risk factors:

- Having a family history of type 2 diabetes
- Being overweight
- Having prediabetes
- Being physically inactive
- Being older than 45



M. Karina Solorzano-Klapprott, MD

Gestational diabetes

This can happen in pregnant women who've never had diabetes. It usually goes away when the baby is born. It increases your risk of getting type 2 diabetes later down the line.

Prediabetes

This is when your blood sugar is high but not quite high enough for a diabetes diagnosis yet. It's even more common than diabetes—1 in 3 adults has it. A prediabetes diagnosis gives you the chance to prevent diabetes with lifestyle changes.

If you have the risk factors listed above, your healthcare provider will likely give you tests, such as the A1C test, which measures blood sugar levels over time, the fasting blood sugar test and the glucose tolerance test.



Stay healthy if you have diabetes

There are multiple Watson Clinic departments that specialize in the treatment of diabetes and its various impacts, including:

Endocrinology
Appointments: **863-680-7190**

Family Medicine and Internal Medicine
Appointments: **863-680-7190**

Nephrology
Appointments: **863-680-7190**

Optometry and Ophthalmology
Appointments: **863-680-7486**

Obstetrics and Gynecology
Appointments: **863-680-7243**

Podiatric Surgery
Appointments: **863-680-7214**

Basics of blood sugar management

Managing blood sugar is crucial for those with all types of diabetes. If you have diabetes, your healthcare provider will show you how to check your blood sugar with a meter or monitor. "Keeping tabs on your blood sugar levels can help you keep them within a healthy range,"

says **Dr. Vindya Boelke**, a board-certified Endocrinology specialist at Watson Clinic Main and Watson Clinic Plant City.



Vindya Boelke, MD

These are a few simple steps to help keep your blood sugar on target:

- Don't skip meals.
- Take medications as directed.
- Avoid or limit alcohol.
- Don't overeat.
- Replace sweets with fruit.

Reducing your risk

Even if you're at risk for type 2 diabetes or you're living with prediabetes, you can take steps to prevent the disease:

- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Eat a balanced diet, including vegetables, whole grains and fruit.
- Get regular exercise.



DIABETES? Don't skip these tests

A1C blood sugar tests



Dilated eye exams



Blood pressure checks



Foot checks



Cholesterol checks



Kidney tests



Sources: American Diabetes Association; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Setting the sta



LIFE'S LITTLE BUMPS and mishaps are often unavoidable. An unexpected bout of the flu, an injury during a friendly game of football or dehydration from spending time in the scorching Florida sun are just a few situations where you could find yourself in need of immediate medical care.

Thankfully, Watson Clinic's three walk-in care facilities—Urgent Care Main, Urgent Care South and XpressCare Highlands—are equipped to serve the needs of patients who can't wait for a regularly scheduled appointment with their physician and who want to avoid the high costs and hassles of a traditional emergency room visit. You just walk right in and get the care you need without having to schedule an appointment.

"This is not the typical urgent care you find throughout the country," says **Dr. Jarett Gregory**, a board-certified specialist at the Watson Clinic Urgent Care South location. "Watson Clinic has shown a serious commitment to staying ahead of the curve in providing quickly accessible on-demand services of the highest quality."

A stellar team

Unlike many other facilities of its kind, each of Watson Clinic's walk-in care locations features a staff of board-certified physicians who are always physically present. These specialists have extensive backgrounds in

A patient receives care from Jarett Gregory, DO, at Watson Clinic Urgent Care South.

Standard in Urgent Care

fields like family medicine, internal medicine, emergency medicine and pediatrics. Their efforts are complemented by an extended team of highly trained medical providers.

On-site laboratories and radiology units are also tremendously beneficial to patients. Testing and imaging can be performed during a single visit, which results in a greater level of convenience, efficiency and accuracy.

“This is how you do Urgent Care medicine,” Dr. Gregory explains.

The list of conditions that can be addressed at each location includes:

- Cold and flu
- Sore throats
- Upper respiratory, eye or skin infections
- Urinary tract infections
- Lacerations
- Earaches
- Minor burns
- Sprains or strains
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Allergic reactions
- Animal or insect bites
- Minor sports injuries
- Dehydration
- And much more!

Watson Clinic’s walk-in care facilities treat new and existing patients ages 2 and older. For details, visit [WatsonClinic.com/WalkIn](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/WalkIn).

Listen up!

Visit [WatsonClinic.com/Podcast](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/Podcast), or scan the QR code, to stream Episode 5 of the Watson Clinic Health Talk podcast, featuring more insights from Dr. Gregory on Watson Clinic’s walk-in care options.



Open extended hours seven days a week!



Watson Clinic Urgent Care Main
1600 Lakeland Hills Blvd.—
West Entrance
Lakeland, FL 33805
Mondays through Sundays:
8 am to 6 pm



Watson Clinic Urgent Care South
1033 N. Parkway Frontage Road
Lakeland, FL 33803
Mondays through Sundays:
8 am to 6 pm



Watson Clinic XpressCare Highlands
2300 E. County Road 540A
Lakeland, FL 33813
Mondays through Saturdays:
8 am to 6 pm
Sundays: 9 am to 3 pm

Know your numbers for better health

MANY OF US use a scale to tell us how much we weigh at that particular moment—but does this really tell us the whole story?

It's also valuable to know exactly where any excess water weight or fat mass is distributed within the body. That's information you can use to apply more targeted approaches to dieting, exercise, and disease treatment and prevention.

Dr. Rony J. Alvarado, a board-certified Family Medicine specialist at Watson Clinic Highlands,



Rony J. Alvarado, MD

now offers a revolutionary new scale in his office that provides these crucial measurements and much more.

'An even higher level of personalized care'

The seca® Body Composition Analyzer is capable of calculating a series of important health metrics, including height, weight, body mass index, fat and muscle mass, and water retention.

"You simply stand on this scale just like you would any other," explains

Dr. Alvarado. "But as opposed to a routine scale, this one can measure the composition of your body in a way that has never before been possible on a device of this kind."

The noninvasive, user-friendly scale achieves a 97% accuracy rate in its calculations when compared with a more intensive, full-body MRI imaging procedure. Specifically, the scale offers a wealth of advantages in the ongoing management of obesity and the conditions it can cause, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

As a patient begins taking action to control their obesity, the scale can track their progress by indicating where they're gaining muscle mass or losing excess fat and water weight across each specific area of concern within the body. Conversely, the scale can also detect malnourishment, which can complement the care patients receive from specialties like oncology and psychology.

"This is a wonderful tool that will help us provide an even higher level of personalized care," Dr. Alvarado enthuses.



Comprehensive family medicine

Dr. Alvarado and his care team—including registered nurse practitioners **Brooke Pate, APRN**, **Lauren Patterson, APRN**, and **Lindsey Simmons, APRN**—see patients at Watson Clinic Highlands at 2300 E. County Road 540A in south Lakeland. Call **863-680-7190** with any questions and to schedule an appointment.





Welcome

new physicians and providers

FARIA AHMED, MD, MPH

OB-GYN

Education: Washington University, St. Louis, MO; University of Missouri School of Medicine, Columbia, MO

Residency: TriHealth, Cincinnati, OH, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Memberships: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; American Medical Women's Association

Location: Watson Clinic Highlands
Appointments: 863-680-7243



HENNA AHSAN, MD

OB-GYN

Education: University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, WA

Residency: University of Central Florida/HCA Graduate Medical Education Consortium, Gainesville, FL, Obstetrics and Gynecology

Location: Watson Clinic Highlands
Appointments: 863-680-7243



MADIHA M. ALVI, MD, FACP, FACE

ENDOCRINOLOGY

Education: Punjab University/Fatima Jinnah Medical College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan

Residency: Bassett Medical Center/Columbia University, New York, NY, Internal Medicine

Fellowship: University of Vermont/Fletcher Allen Healthcare, Burlington, VT, Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism

Board certifications: Internal Medicine and Endocrinology

Location: Watson Clinic Main
Appointments: 863-680-7190



AHMED EBRAHIM, MD

HOSPITALIST

Education: Texas A&M School of Medicine, Dallas, TX

Internship: Mercer University School of Medicine/Orange Park Hospital, Orange Park, FL, Internal Medicine

Residency: University of Central Florida/HCA Graduate Medical Education Consortium, Gainesville, FL, Internal Medicine

Fellowship: University of Central Florida/HCA Graduate Medical Education Consortium, Gainesville, FL, Hospice/Palliative Care

Board certification: Internal Medicine

Location: Lakeland Regional Health



ADILENE ALVARADO, APRN

FAMILY MEDICINE

Education: Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL

Membership: Polk County Advanced Practice Nurses Association

Supervising physician: Brett Widick, MD

Location: Watson Clinic Highlands
Appointments: 863-680-7190



LEAH PHILPOT, APRN

ALLERGY AND IMMUNOLOGY

Education: Chamberlain University, Addison, IL; Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL

Membership: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners

Supervising physician: Lionel Vasco Bonini, MD

Location: Watson Clinic Main
Appointments: 863-680-7486



BRITTANY SIX, APRN

Oncology-Hematology

Education: Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL

Membership: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners

Supervising physician: Shalini Mulaparthy, MD

Location: Watson Clinic Cancer & Research Center
Appointments: 863-603-4770



Join us in welcoming the latest additions to our team of expert physicians and providers. All are currently available for appointments, except where noted. View full profiles at [WatsonClinic.com/physician-search](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/physician-search).

Kidney stones: Know the signs

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?

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

If a kidney stone is very small, it may pass through your system without causing much pain. Stones that don't pass through easily can cause urine to back up in the kidney, bladder or urethra.

What to watch for

"The smallest kidney stones are about the size of a grain of sand and cause few to no symptoms," says **Dr. Mark Swierzewski**, a board-certified Urology specialist at Watson Clinic Main in Lakeland. "As they get bigger, you're more likely to start feeling discomfort, pain or other symptoms."



Mark Swierzewski, MD

Here are some signs you might have a kidney stone:

- Pain in your side or back
- Blood in your urine
- Upset stomach
- Fever and chills
- Off-smelling urine
- Urine that looks cloudy

What to do if you think you have a kidney stone

If you spot any of the signs of a kidney stone, it's important to seek medical attention. Your doctor may suggest you drink more water to try to flush the stone out.

"If the kidney stone doesn't pass, your healthcare provider may recommend surgery to remove it," says Dr. Swierzewski.

How to prevent kidney stones

There are steps you can take to reduce your chances of developing a kidney stone:

- Drink enough water every day to keep your urine clear or very light yellow.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. These make urine less acidic, which discourages kidney stone formation.
- Avoid animal protein such as meats and poultry. It makes urine more acidic.
- Cut back on sugar. Sugar-sweetened drinks may increase your risk of kidney stones.



Dr. Swierzewski and his team—including registered nurse practitioner **Marty J. Pickard, APRN**, and physician assistant **Arin R. Stephens, PA**—offer the most effective treatments for kidney stones, urinary incontinence, prostate cancer and other conditions that affect the urinary tract. Call **863-680-7300** to schedule an appointment.



Partners in art and in health

The arts have the power to help us find solace and meaning during the darkest periods of our lives. Clinical research supports this dynamic. For example, a recent study conducted by the National Institutes of Health reported an improvement in anxiety, pain and depression levels among cancer patients who participated in art therapy during their treatment.

Those are the results that motivate the Watson Clinic Foundation's Arts in Medicine (AIM) program. Introduced in 2008, the program offers a full range of creative activities—from painting to music to craft projects—designed to empower patients and their caregivers to thrive in the cancer journey.

But the program itself can only thrive with the generous support of donors and volunteers. Over the years, various organizations have joined our mission to help our community heal, and philanthropic individuals have given their time and talents to share their gifts with patients and families in need.

The healing power of creative expression

The Polk Arts & Cultural Alliance is one such organization. The agency promotes cultural arts as an integral contributor to the quality of life in our community. Recently, the Alliance gifted \$7,000 in grant funding to AIM, which will enable us to continue our outreach efforts with two exciting new projects:



POLK ARTS &
CULTURAL ALLIANCE
CHAMBER FOR THE ARTS



Legacy Lane Project. Spotlighting the strength and resilience of cancer survivors, this photography exhibition will hang in the AIM studio on the second floor of the Watson Clinic Cancer & Research Center at 1730 Lakeland Hills Blvd. in Lakeland.

Arts and Health Week 2025. This special observance was started last year as part of a national initiative with the Arts for Everybody campaign, in conjunction with the National League of Cities, and included a proclamation by the City of Lakeland. Arts and Health Week brings together dozens of organizations from across the city to celebrate the role the arts play in our lives. AIM will spearhead a number of activities that promote community engagement in the healing power of creative expression.

We thank the Polk Arts & Cultural Alliance and all of our program's supporters for their involvement and encouragement of our efforts.

Scan the QR code if you wish to donate to the Arts in Medicine program, or visit [WatsonClinic.com/AIM](https://www.WatsonClinic.com/AIM) for more information.





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