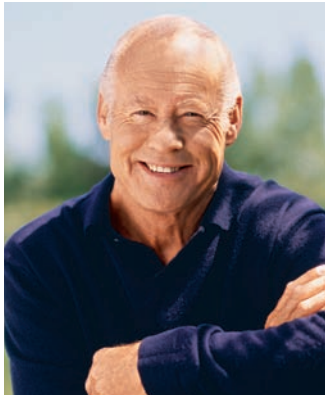


UCI Medical Center

# UCI Health

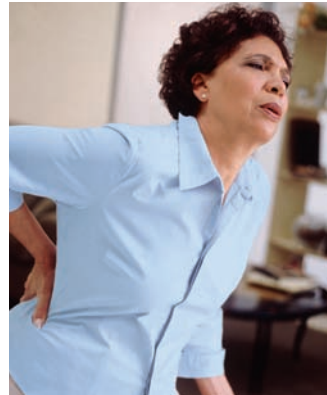
FALL 2005  
Vol. 9, No. 3

[www.ucihealth.com](http://www.ucihealth.com)



**When Every  
Minute Counts**

①



**Minimally Invasive  
Back Surgery**

②



**Uterine  
Fibroids**

③



**UCI Education  
Connection**

④



**Recovering  
From a Stroke**

⑥



**High-Risk  
Pregnancies**

⑦

# UCI Health [www.ucihealth.com](http://www.ucihealth.com)

## WHEN EVERY MINUTE COUNTS

Studies show that heart attack patients who receive balloon angioplasty soon after arriving in an emergency room do better than those simply treated with clot-busting drugs.

**But to ensure the best outcome,** hospitals must be staffed and equipped to perform balloon angioplasty—also known as percutaneous cardiac intervention (PCI)—within 90 minutes of the time a heart-attack patient enters the doors of the emergency room.

As a result, the phrase “door-to-balloon time” has assumed vital importance at hospitals across the nation. “This method of unclogging arteries with a balloon-tipped catheter and inserting stents reduces the risk of a second heart attack significantly,” says

**Dr. Chowdhury Ahsan**, a UCI Medical Center cardiologist. “But timing is critical. The longer a patient’s heart is deprived of an adequate blood supply, the greater the damage to the heart muscle.”

Heart attacks are like forest fires. If they’re brought under control soon after they begin, there’s a very good chance of saving the entire forest.

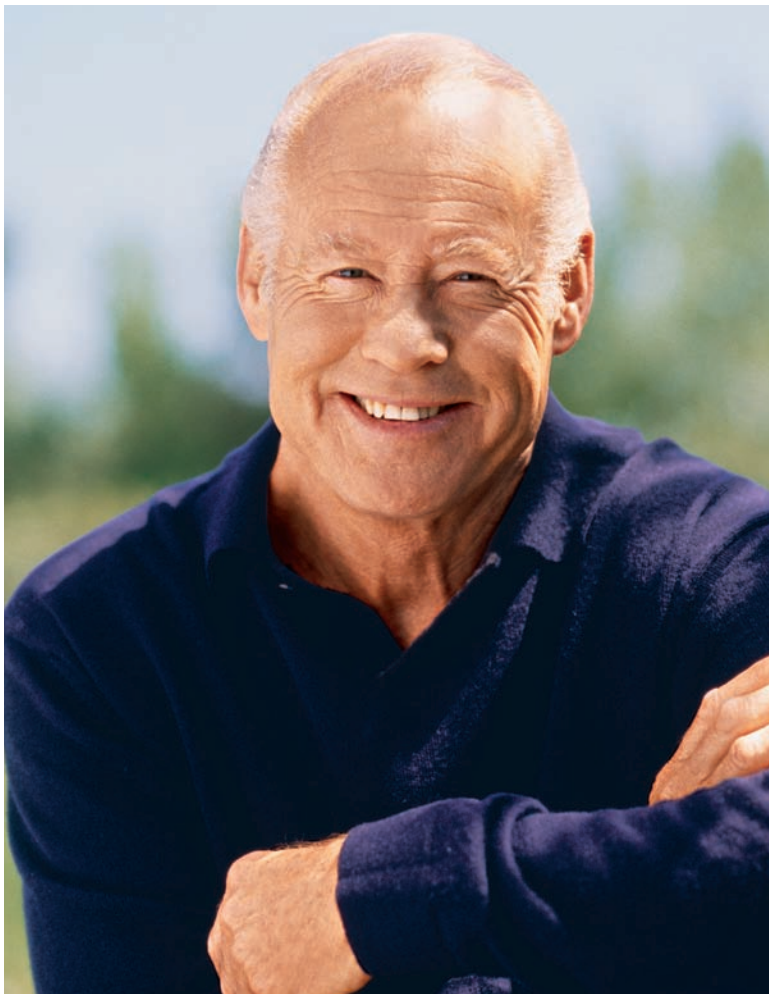
To ensure that all heart attack patients have access to the best treatment, Orange County Emergency Medical Services recently designated a select group of hospitals as official cardiovascular receiving centers. UCI Medical Center was among the first in the area to receive this designation.

At UCI, treatment is like clockwork. “We’re prepared to care for the most critical cardiac cases without delay,” says Ahsan. From the moment a heart attack patient arrives in the Emergency Department, a dedicated team of cardiac specialists takes charge. Diagnosed, medicated and prepped, the patient is rushed to the hospital’s cardiac catheterization lab, which has been readied for the procedure. The PCI team awaits, ready to locate the blockage, clear the clogged artery, and keep it open permanently with a tiny wire cage called a stent. “Heart attacks are like forest fires,” says Ahsan. “If they’re brought under control soon after they begin, there’s a very good chance of saving the entire forest.”

**An important advancement.** Designated cardiovascular receiving centers represent an important advancement in the treatment of heart attacks. In the past, paramedics transported people suspected of suffering a heart attack to the nearest hospital. But many of these facilities were not equipped to perform PCI, which requires round-the-clock staffing and immediate access to high-tech equipment.

Today, however, paramedics are equipped with digital transmission and 12-lead electrocardiogram (EKG) monitors. Unlike the four leads on older EKG machines, this equipment gives a full picture of the heart’s electrical rhythm. When paramedics transmit an EKG to UCI Medical Center, emergency physicians and cardiologists review it immediately. “The diagnosis determines the destination,” says Ahsan. “Designated cardiovascular receiving centers provide the best and fastest treatment available.”

For an appointment with a UCI cardiologist, call 714-456-6699.



# Minimally Invasive Back Surgery

The spine is a miracle of construction. Composed of 24 hollow bones called vertebrae that are separated by donut-shaped discs, it supports the entire body. Running through its center is the spinal cord—a highway of nerves that controls the body's ability to move and feel.

**But the spine's complexity** makes it vulnerable to a wide range of problems. Among the most common is lumbar spinal stenosis—a condition that develops in the lower back when bone spurs,

damaged discs or unstable vertebrae narrow the space for the spinal cord. This compresses nerve roots, causing foot numbness, aching legs and shooting pain in the lower back, buttocks, thighs and shins. In some cases, lumbar spinal stenosis can even cause bladder and bowel incontinence, as well as leg weakness so severe that patients are no longer able to walk.

**New hope.** For those who have unsuccessfully tried conservative methods to control stenosis-related pain, there's new hope. Now, minimally invasive surgical techniques are being used to correct the condition. "Before microsurgical methods

for spine surgery were perfected, a five-inch incision was necessary, starting at the buttocks and traveling up to the small of the back," says **Dr. Nitin Bhatia**, a nationally respected orthopedic surgeon with the UCI Multidisciplinary Spine Program who is an expert in cervical and lumbar spine disorders, spinal trauma and pediatric scoliosis. "To expose the spine, the back muscles had to be separated, sometimes traumatizing them. Today, most of these surgeries can be performed through two half-inch openings on either side of the spine."

**Surgery.** The most common surgery to relieve the pain of lumbar spinal stenosis is a decompressive laminectomy. "During this procedure, the back portion of the vertebra and any thickened tissue exerting pressure on the nerve roots are removed," says Bhatia. If a damaged disc is also impacting the nerve roots, portions of it may be removed during the same procedure.

Depending on the situation, the laminectomy may also be combined with a spinal fusion to stabilize wobbly vertebrae infringing on nerves. Also performed using minimally invasive techniques, fusion involves the placement of a tiny, hollow metal cage into the space between two vertebrae where a faulty disc has been removed. Then finely ground bone fragments removed from the patient's hip are packed inside the cage. Over time, the bone grows through the holes in the device and around it, fusing the two vertebrae.

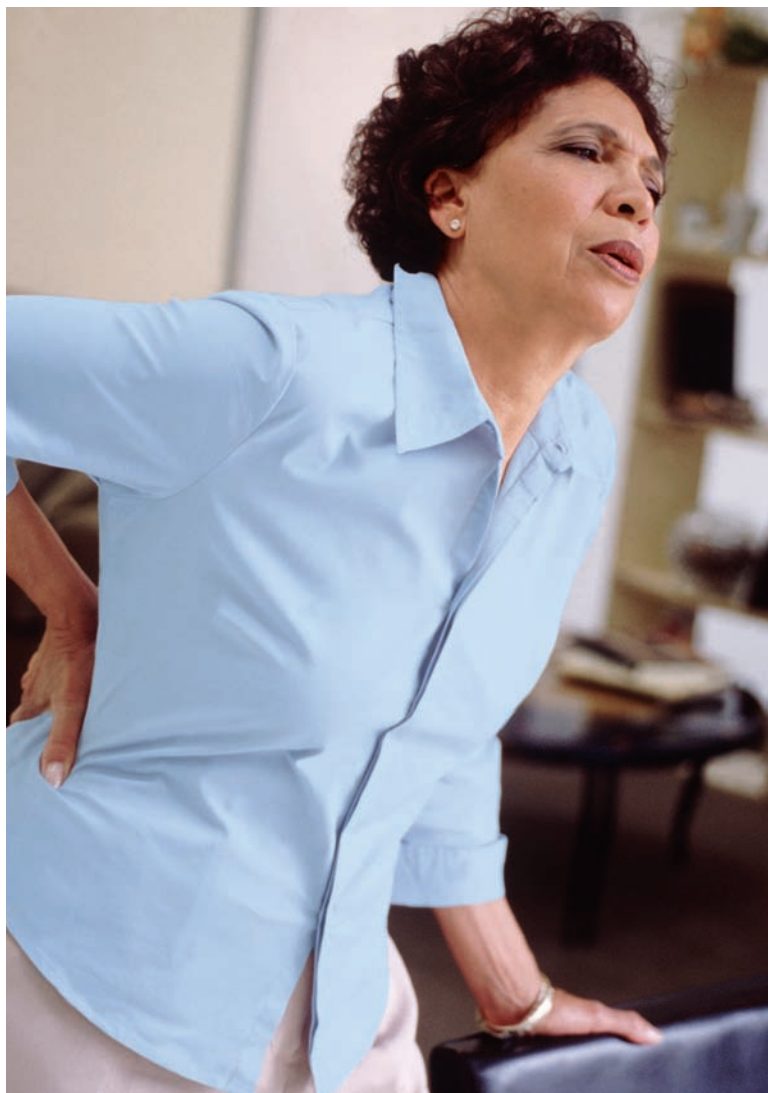
**The spine's complexity makes it vulnerable to a wide range of problems.**

Not only does a minimally invasive approach result in less blood loss, reduced pain and shorter hospital stays, it also has the potential to prevent one of the more troublesome complications of open spine surgery—failed back syndrome. This debilitating condition sometimes occurs due to muscle trauma caused when gaining access to the spine. "Thanks to microsurgical advances, doctors can now operate on the spine with minimal effects on adjacent muscles and ligaments," says Bhatia.

Surgery, however, remains the last resort for spinal stenosis patients, recommended only after physical therapy and anti-inflammatory medications have proven ineffective. "We see hundreds of spinal stenosis patients each year at UCI and only a small percentage require surgical intervention," says Bhatia.

For an appointment with a UCI spine specialist, call 1-877-UCI-DOCS, or visit [www.ucihealth.com/spine](http://www.ucihealth.com/spine).

**Dr. Nitin Bhatia will speak about treatments for back pain at a free seminar on Friday, Oct. 7, at 10 a.m. at The Bowers Museum, 2002 N. Main St., Santa Ana. To register for the seminar, call 1-877-UCI-DOCS.**



# UTERINE FIBROIDS

Each year, approximately 600,000 American women undergo hysterectomies. The most common reason for this major operation is the elimination of uterine fibroids.

**Growing from the wall** of the uterus, these noncancerous tumors sometimes cause heavy menstrual bleeding and severe cramping.

Now there's good news for women who want to rid themselves of painful fibroids without losing their uterus in the process. "Today, several uterus-preserving options are available," says **Dr. Jonathon Solnik**, an OB/GYN at UCI Medical Center. Among them are:

- **Uterine arterial embolization (UAE).** This procedure involves a tiny incision in the patient's groin. Under X-ray guidance, an interventional radiologist passes a narrow tube through the incision directly to the arteries that supply blood to the fibroids. Microscopic spheres are then injected through the tube, forming a barricade that stops blood flow to the tumors. "The growths are essentially starved to death when the spheres cut off their blood supply," says Solnik. Patients remain in the hospital overnight to receive pain medication for cramping. Most return to everyday activities within a week. About 85 percent of UAE patients experience relief from large fibroids following the procedure. "UAE is not recommended for women who may wish to become pregnant," says Solnik.

- **Myomectomy.** During an abdominal myomectomy, the surgeon removes individual fibroids through a low "bikini" incision, leaving the uterus intact and preserving the potential for childbearing. Because a myomectomy can weaken

uterine walls, a Caesarean section may be required for women who conceive after having the procedure.

A laparoscopic myomectomy is a minimally invasive alternative, requiring only three or four half-inch abdominal incisions. The surgeon removes the fibroids using a thin tube outfitted with a light, tiny video camera and miniature surgical instruments. "A laparoscopic myomectomy is an option when fewer fibroids are involved and they're attached to the outside of the uterus," says Solnik.

Another version of the procedure—a hysteroscopic myomectomy—allows doctors to remove fibroids located only within the uterine cavity. The surgeon uses a narrow tube called a resectoscope, which is passed through the vagina, eliminating the need for an incision. The instrument has a built-in wire loop that generates high-frequency electrical energy to shave out the fibroids. "Women go home the same day," says Solnik.

Now there's good news for women who want to rid themselves of painful fibroids without losing their uterus.

Additionally, certain medications can offer temporary relief by shrinking fibroids. "They're often not effective in treating large fibroids and may have unwanted side effects," says Solnik. Some women may also benefit from acupuncture, stress management, vitamins and herbal remedies.



If all uterus-saving options fail, a hysterectomy may be necessary. "Removal of the uterus is the only sure way to eliminate uterine fibroids permanently," says Solnik. Fortunately, minimally invasive methods have also changed the way hysterectomies are performed, saving patients from the pain and scarring of a large abdominal incision.

For referral to a UCI Medical Center gynecologist, call 714-456-2911.

Interested in uterine fibroid treatment and other women's health issues? Learn more at "A Day of Women's Health" on Tuesday, Oct. 11, at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove. To register, call 714-456-3770 or visit [www.ucihealth.com/womensevents](http://www.ucihealth.com/womensevents).

**Toll free 1-877-UCI-DOCS**

# the UCI Education Connection

Classes are free of charge if you are a patient with UCI University Physicians and Surgeons, UCI Medical Center or CalOptima, with the exception of the Joslin Diabetes Center, Mind Over Mood, meditation, yoga and Health Care Skills programs. Certain programs are also available in Spanish (S) & Vietnamese (V). Unless otherwise indicated, all classes are located at UCI Manchester Pavilion, 200 S. Manchester Ave., Suite 840, Orange. Registration is required. Call toll free 1-877-UCI-DOCS or 1-877- 824-3627 for registration and information.

## FAMILY HEALTH

### Asthma and Children

Assist children with asthma and their families to understand the disease and the steps to control it. Topics include what is asthma, how to control it, triggers, peak flow meters, how to use an inhaler, medications, going to school and exercising with asthma. Cost: \$10. Free peak flow meter.  
Friday, Nov 18 5-7 p.m.

### Asthma and Adults (1 Session)

Learn how to control asthma and not have it control you. Cost: \$10. Free peak flow meter.  
Friday, Oct 28, Nov 4, Dec 9 5-7 p.m.

### Attention and Behavior Problems (10 Sessions) (S)

Support and education for parents of children ages 3-5 with attention and behavior problems offered through a joint project of UCI and Children's Hospital of Orange County. Information: 949-824-2462 or www.cuidar.net. Call for meeting dates, times, and locations throughout Orange County.

### Breastfeeding (1 Session) (S)

Includes process of milk production, how to breastfeed, avoiding potential problems and returning to work. Cost: \$10.  
Thursday, Nov 17 6-8:30 p.m.  
Spanish  
Tuesday, Nov 1, Dec 13 5:15-7:30 p.m.  
Location: UCI Family Health Center Santa Ana

### Diabetic Diet (1 Session)

Food choices, portions and how they affect diabetes. Cost: \$10.  
Monday, Oct 17, Dec 19 4-6 p.m.

### Diabetes Management Overview (1 Session) (S) (V)

Methods to control blood-sugar levels through diet, exercise, medication and lifestyle changes. Cost: \$10. Free glucometer.  
Monday, Oct 10, Dec 12 4-6 p.m.  
Spanish  
Wednesday, Oct 5, Nov 2, Dec 7 6-8 p.m.  
Location: UCI Family Health Center Anaheim  
Wednesday, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 14 6-8 p.m.  
Location: UCI Manchester Pavilion  
Vietnamese  
Wednesday, Nov 9 8:30-10:30 a.m.  
Location: UCI Westminster Medical Center

### Diabetes Management Series (4 Sessions)

Meal planning, exercise, medications, monitoring your blood sugar and lifestyle changes to help you avoid complications. Cost: \$40. Free glucometer.  
Monday, Nov 14, 21, 28, and Dec 5 4-6 p.m.

### Early Pregnancy (1 Session)

For expectant mothers and their birth partners in the first four months of pregnancy. Includes nutrition, exercise, prenatal care, warning signs and car safety. Cost: \$10.  
Wednesday, Nov 16 6-8 p.m.

### Heart Healthy Diet (Cholesterol Awareness) (1 Session)

Learn the American Heart Association guidelines about low-fat, low-sodium and low-cholesterol diets. Cost: \$10.  
Tuesday, Oct 25, Nov 22, Dec 27 4-6 p.m.

### Hypertension (High Blood Pressure) Management (1 Session) (V)

How to control blood pressure through diet, exercise, medication and lifestyle changes. Cost: \$10.  
Wednesday, Oct 12, Nov 16, Dec 14 6:30-8:30 p.m.

### Living Well With Heart Failure (1 Session)

Overview of heart failure, symptoms and basic lifestyle changes to manage the condition, including diet, exercise and medications. Cost: \$10.  
Thursday, Nov 3 12:30-2:30 p.m.

### Maternity Tea & Tour

Learn about maternity services and tour the UCI Maternity Unit. Cost: Free to all.  
Thursday, Oct 27, Nov 17, Dec 15 1:30-3:30 p.m.  
Location: UCI Medical Center, Neuropsychiatric Conference Room 101

### Meditation for Health (4 Sessions)

An introduction to the art of meditation, including a discussion of the various types and styles. No special clothing or equipment is required. Cost: \$20.  
Mondays, Oct 3, 10, 17, and 24 6-7 p.m.

### Meditation Intermediate/Advanced (2 Sessions)

For those who have an established meditation practice and want additional guidance. No special clothing or equipment is required. Cost: \$10.  
Monday, Nov 7 and 14 6-7 p.m.

### Mind Over Mood

Cognitive therapy group for depression, anxiety, anger and stress-related disorders. Pre-registration: 714-456-5902. Cost: \$40 per session, plus \$23.63 for book.  
Mondays 6:15-7:45 p.m.  
Location: UCI Neuropsychiatric Center, Room 302

### Newborn Care (1 Session) (S)

Infant feeding, dressing, bathing, diapering, normal newborn appearance and signs and symptoms of illness. Cost: \$10.  
Monday, Oct 17, Dec 12 6-8:30 p.m.  
Spanish  
Tuesday, Nov 8, Dec 20 5:15-7:30 p.m.  
UCI Family Health Center Santa Ana

### Nutrition, Weight & You (1 Session)

Strategies for permanent weight loss and easy exercise programs. Cost: \$10.  
Wednesday, Oct 12, Nov 16, Dec 14 4-6 p.m.

### Parenting (1 Session)

For parents and child care providers of 1-6 year olds. Developmental approach to building communication skills and self-esteem, injury and accident prevention, positive parenting and discipline. Cost: \$10.  
Monday, Nov 21 6-8 p.m.

### Prepared Childbirth (6-Session Series) (S)

Offered in conjunction with Santiago Canyon College Continuing Education. For expectant mothers and their birth partners beginning the 6th month of pregnancy. Topics include relaxation, Lamaze techniques, labor and birth, Caesarean delivery, medication and anesthesia. Cost: Free to all.  
Wednesdays, Oct 26, Nov 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 7-9:30 p.m.  
Thursdays, Oct 27, Nov 3, 10, 17, Dec 1, 8 7-9:30 p.m.  
Location: UCI Medical Center Library, Room 2105  
Spanish : Prepared Childbirth (4-Session Series)  
Tuesdays, Oct 4, 11, 18, 25 5:15-7:30 p.m.  
Tuesdays, Nov 15, 22, 29, Dec 6 5:15-7:30 p.m.  
Location: UCI Family Health Center Santa Ana

### Siblings (1 Session)

For children about to become big brothers and big sisters who want to learn what will happen when Mom goes to the hospital to have the baby. Cost: \$10.  
Wednesday, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 7 4-5 p.m.  
Location: UCI Medical Center 2 Tower Conference Room (2nd floor of main hospital)

### Stop Smoking (4-Week Series)

Stop smoking by discussing what to do before you quit smoking and how to live life afterward. Cost: \$40.  
Thursdays, Oct 6, 13, 20, 27 Noon-2 p.m.  
Tuesdays, Nov 1, 8, 15, 22 Noon-2 p.m.  
Wednesdays, Dec 7, 14, 21, 28 Noon-2 p.m.

### Stress Management (1 Session)

Effects of stress, coping strategies, relaxation techniques, nutrition, exercise and available resources. Cost: \$10.  
Tuesday, Nov 8 6-8 p.m.

### Joslin Diabetes Center Education Classes

Joslin Diabetes Center at University of California, Irvine offers two types of classes to help people learn how to successfully manage their diabetes. "Steps to Success" is a five-session, comprehensive educational program. "Diabetes Today" offers single-topic sessions that address specific issues of diabetes management. Classes are held at the Center, located at Gottschalk Medical Plaza on the UCI campus in Irvine. There is a fee and insurance pre-authorization is recommended. For a full description of the programs or to register, please call Joslin Diabetes Center at UCI at 949-824-8656 or visit www.ucihealth.com/joslin.



**Joslin Diabetes Center**  
at University of California, Irvine



### Weight Control (4-Week Series)

Identify your healthy weight and learn about meal planning, the food-guide pyramid, exercise, label reading, restaurant dining, recipe modification and maintenance. Cost: \$40. Wednesdays, Oct 19, 26, Nov 2, 9 4-6 p.m.

### Beginning Hatha Yoga (Monthly Series)

Wear loose-fitting work out clothes. Pack a cool-down sweatshirt and a yoga mat or beach towel. It's best not to eat or drink two hours prior to class. Cost: \$30 per month. Every Tuesday and Thursday 5-6 p.m. Location: 200 S. Manchester Ave., Basement Training Room

## SUPPORT GROUPS

All support groups are free and held at UCI Medical Center, 101 The City Drive South, Orange, CA, unless otherwise noted. For a complete list, please visit [www.ucihealth.com/events](http://www.ucihealth.com/events).

### Bariatric Surgery Support Group

Offers support for patients before and after laparoscopic weight-loss surgery. Information: 888-717-4463 Third Tuesday every month 6:30-8:30 p.m. Location: UCI Manchester Pavilion, 200 S. Manchester Ave., Room 840, Orange

### Bone Marrow Transplant Support Group

For people who have had or will have a bone marrow or stem cell transplant, and for their caregivers. Information: 714-456-7489 Fourth Wednesday every month 6:30-8 p.m. Location: Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, fourth floor conference room

### Brain Injury Support Group

For patients and families. Information: 800-986-4487 Every Saturday except holiday weekends 7-8:30 p.m. Location: The Associates Conference Room

### Breast Cancer Education and Support Group

Education and support for women newly diagnosed with breast cancer. Speaker at each meeting. Information: 714-456-8609 Wednesdays, Oct 12, 19, 26, Nov 2 2-4 p.m. Location: Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, fourth floor conference room

### Burn Survivors Support Group

Information: 714-456-5304 or 714-456-8938 Third Thursday every month 6-7:30 p.m. Location: Acute Rehabilitation Unit/3-South, recreation room

### Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)

For parents and professionals interested in learning about ADD/ADHD in children and adults. Guest speaker at every meeting. Information: 714-630-5214, 949-824-2343 or [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org) Second Wednesday every month 7-9 p.m. UCI Child Development Center, 19262 Jamboree Road, Irvine

### Dry Eye Support Group

Registration: 949-824-9276 Wednesdays, Sept 21, Nov 16 Noon-1:20 p.m. Location: Gillespie Neuroscience Research Building conference room on the UCI campus in Irvine. Call for directions and parking permits.

### Epilepsy Support Group

Social and educational support for adults with epilepsy, offered in collaboration with the Epilepsy Alliance of Orange County. Guest speaker at every meeting. Information: 714-965-1512 Third Friday every month 7-8:30 p.m. Location: UCI Neuropsychiatric Center, Room 101

### Hepatitis C Support Group

Provides support and education to people with hepatitis C. Open to anyone interested in or concerned with the disease. Information: 714-456-5948 Third Thursday every month 6:30-8 p.m. Location: UCI Manchester Pavilion, 200 S. Manchester Ave., Room 845, Orange

### Korean Women's Share and Care Group

Help and support for Korean-speaking women with cancer. Information: 714-456-8609 First Thursday every month 3-4:30 p.m. Location: Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, 4th floor conference room

### Living with Cancer

For cancer patients and loved ones. Information: 714-456-8609 Second and fourth Thursdays every month 6:30-8 p.m. Location: The Associates Conference Room

### Look Good, Feel Better

Help with appearance changes during cancer treatments. Reservations: 949-261-9446, option #3 Second Monday every other month (Nov. 14) 10 a.m.-noon Location: Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, 4th floor conference room

### National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)

Support and education for those caring for someone with mental illness. Information: 714-456-5843 Every Wednesday 6-7:30 p.m. Location: UCI Neuropsychiatric Center, Occupational Therapy, Room 207

### Sibshops (S)

Therapeutic workshop for children ages 8-12 with siblings who have disabilities or chronic illnesses. Information: 714-532-8778 Third Saturday every month 9:30 a.m.-noon Location: UCI Neuropsychiatric Center, Room 101

### Support for People with Oral, Head & Neck Cancers (SPOHNC-UCI-Orange)

Information: 714-456-5235 First Monday every month 6:30-8 p.m. Location: The Associates Conference Room



### Winners on Wheels

Therapeutic support for children with disabilities, focusing on individual strengths through group activities. Offered in conjunction with Children's Hospital of Orange County. Information: 714-532-8778 or 949-351-7799 First and third Saturdays every month 2-4 p.m. Location: Classroom 2103-04, above UCI Medical Center library

### Women's Care and Share Group

Support and education for women with cancer. Information: 714-456-8609 Second and fourth Tuesday every month Speaker on fourth Tuesday 10-11:30 a.m. Location: Chao Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, 4th floor conference room

## HEALTH CARE SKILLS

### Basic Life Support Health Care Provider

Adult, pediatric and infant CPR, two-rescuer CPR, foreign-body airway obstruction, AED and barrier devices. Based on American Heart Association standards and guidelines. Registration: 714-456-5611 or 714-456-7291. Cost: \$72 (includes parking pass, card and book). Wednesday, Oct 26 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesday, Nov 23 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Thursday, Dec 22 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

### Basic Life Support Instructor Course

Provides the candidate with the knowledge and skills to conduct BLS education according to the American Heart Association standards. PREREQUISITES: Current BLS Provider card and letter of recommendation/acceptance from a recognized AHA Training Center. Registration: 714-456-5611 or 714-456-7291. Cost: \$245 (includes parking pass, card and book). Wednesday, Oct 5, 12 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Register for classes online at

[www.ucihealth.com/events](http://www.ucihealth.com/events)

Toll free 1-877-UCI-DOCS



## Transformations

**Construction has begun** on UCI Medical Center's new university hospital, a seven-story tower that will provide a state-of-the-art and patient-friendly setting for the latest advancements in health care, education and research.

At a gala event in June, dignitaries and officials from UC Irvine and the community gathered to break ground for the \$372 million hospital, which is being built on the north side of UCI Medical Center. Patient care will continue uninterrupted during construction, which is expected to conclude in late 2008.

"The new university hospital will represent a significant and meaningful contribution to the Orange County community and will enhance patient care, medical education and research," said **Dr. Ralph W. Cygan**, chief executive officer for UCI Medical Center.

As part of the construction, the drive-up entrance and parking for the Emergency Department have been moved. Drivers dropping off patients should ask for instructions at the information kiosk on UCI Medical Center Drive or watch for signs.

UCI thanks patients and visitors for their understanding during this time of transformation.

For more information about UCI Medical Center's campaign to transform the future of health care, please call 714-456-3768 or visit [www.ucihealth.com/newhospital](http://www.ucihealth.com/newhospital).

[www.ucihealth.com](http://www.ucihealth.com)

# Seniors: Ask the Doctor

## Recovering from a Stroke

Each year, about 750,000 Americans suffer a stroke. The care they receive in the days, weeks and months following the stroke can determine their quality of life for years to come. As the only hospital in Orange County certified as a Primary Stroke Center by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), UCI Medical Center is a national leader in stroke treatment and rehabilitation. Join Dr. Steven C. Cramer, co-director of the UCI Stroke Center, as he discusses the opportunities and challenges of stroke recovery.

### Q What happens during a stroke?

**A** An artery supplying blood to the brain becomes damaged or blocked, obstructing blood flow. Brain cells in the stricken area begin to die within minutes. This may affect a person's ability to move, speak, see and think.

### Q What are the first steps toward recovery?

**A** During the first three months following a stroke, a patient is at highest risk for having another attack. For this reason, medical therapy and lifestyle changes to treat the cause of the stroke are a major emphasis. Contributing factors can include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, excessive cholesterol levels and an irregular heartbeat. Additionally, managing the medical complications that can occur following a stroke is also important. During the early months, pneumonia, urinary tract infections, bedsores and pressure ulcers can be problems. Later, it's urinary incontinence, falling and balance problems.

### Q Are there any other common stroke complications?

**A** Yes, depression affects up to half of all patients. It can be triggered by biochemical changes in the brain or a response to the circumstances. Depression can seriously hamper rehabilitation efforts and is typically treated with antidepressants.

### Q What other challenges do stroke survivors face?

**A** Feelings of isolation are an ever-present possibility with stroke patients. Friends may fall by the wayside, and limited mobility may make it difficult to get out. At UCI, the stroke team works with patients to develop a sense of empowerment. This comes from learning how to cope with their new circumstances so they can begin to restore their quality of life.

### Q What's the key to a successful recovery?

**A** Getting into an excellent long-term rehabilitation program, treating depression, working hard, and having a strong support group. Family members play a critical role. They know how to motivate the patient better than anyone else and offer unconditional love at a time when people need to be loved for themselves—not for what they can do.

### Q Does rehabilitation influence a patient's final outcome?

**A** Emphatically, yes. Rehabilitation helps to restore a person's overall function and prevent many serious complications. This includes falls, which happen to 40 percent of patients during the first year after a stroke. These accidents often occur because the stroke weakens one side of the body, affecting balance and gait. Rehabilitation specialists address these problems and many others. Relearning how to walk, talk, swallow, understand, bathe, dress and use a toilet are crucial to regaining functional independence.



Dr. Steven C. Cramer will discuss stroke prevention at a free seminar on Wednesday, Nov. 9, at 1 p.m. at the Merage Jewish Community Center, 1 Federation Way, Irvine. For reservations or information, call 1-877-UCI-DOCS. For information on Cramer's stroke research and how you can participate, visit [www.ucihealth.com/trials](http://www.ucihealth.com/trials).

# HIGH-RISK PREGNANCIES



At UCI Medical Center, high-risk mothers are cared for by specialists called perinatologists who manage their complicated pregnancies.

They team with neonatologists, experts in the care of very sick newborns, to create a continuity of care that helps ensure the best possible outcomes for high-risk mothers and their infants.

“From the beginning of the pregnancy, the maternal-fetal team cares for two patients—the

“State-of-the-art testing and treatments have contributed greatly to the success of many high-risk pregnancies.”

mother and the unborn child,” says Porto. “State-of-the-art testing and treatments have contributed greatly to the success of many high-risk pregnancies.”

Today, doctors can monitor the status of the fetus with sophisticated tests only days after a woman becomes pregnant. Ultrasound also provides a window into the womb. From checking the fetus for structural abnormalities and blood flow patterns to monitoring the amount of amniotic fluid in the birth sac, this sound-wave test provides valuable information about the well-being of the fetus. If a problem such as a heart defect is discovered, sophisticated surgical methods can sometimes be used to operate on the fetus in the womb. Blood transfusions and medications can also be delivered to the unborn child, if needed.

Prematurity always looms on the horizon as a potential problem. “More than 470,000 preterm

babies are born each year in the United States,” says UCI neonatologist **Dr. Jack Sills**. “The earlier the birth, the greater the chance of death or disability for the baby.”

One strategy to prevent premature births involves weekly injections of a progesterone derivative called 17P. “Studies show that progesterone therapy reduces premature deliveries by 33 percent among women who have experienced previous preterm births,” says Porto, who is currently conducting research on 17P.

**Testing for risk.** To determine if there’s an increased risk for premature labor, the maternal-fetal team uses two tests pioneered by UCI researchers. The first screens for the presence of fetal fibronectin, a protein that’s a red flag for preterm labor. The second—high-resolution ultrasound—measures the length of the cervix. The shorter the cervix, the more likely premature labor will occur.

If labor begins too early, women are given tocolytic drugs to stop contractions. They may also receive corticosteroid medications to hasten the development of the unborn child’s lungs and other organs. “A few extra days in the womb can mean the difference between two days or two months in the hospital for a newborn,” says Sills. “UCI Medical Center’s regional Neonatal Intensive Care Unit is able to provide treatment for the frailest newborns. But there’s no place like the womb for a fetus to grow and mature.” To make an appointment, visit [www.ucihealth.com](http://www.ucihealth.com) or call 714-456-2911.

**First, a set of quintuplets, then two sets of quadruplets. UCI Medical Center had a baby boom this year!**

**The multiple sets of** multiple births are living testimony to the advances made in maternal-fetal medicine over the past few years.

Pregnancy can be a challenge for women with serious medical conditions, the expectation of multiple births, or a history of pre-term deliveries, miscarriages and hereditary diseases. “Up to one in 10 pregnant women are considered high risk,” says perinatologist **Dr. Manuel Porto**, chairman of UCI’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. “But with expert care, 95 percent of these pregnancies result in the birth of healthy babies.”



**Toll free 1-877-UCI-DOCS**

UCI Medical Center

## University of California, Irvine

333 City Blvd. W., Suite 1250  
Orange, CA 92868-2990  
[www.ucihealth.com](http://www.ucihealth.com)

©2005, The Regents of the University of California

The information contained in this newsletter is not meant to replace the advice of your physician. Please send comments to UCI Medical Center, Marketing Department, 333 City Boulevard West, Suite 1250, Orange, CA 92868.



Construction has begun on UCI Medical Center's new university hospital!  
See page 6 for more information.

UCIrvine

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Santa Ana, CA  
Permit No. 1106