Dr. Nepal C. Chowdhury and Dr. Mohi O. Mitiek at St. Mary's Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeons are now offering minimally invasive heart and lung surgery, which can decrease pain, lessen blood loss and shorten hospital stays and recovery time compared to traditional open surgery.

The procedures are performed using a thin tube inserted through a small incision that allows the surgeon to see inside the patient. St. Mary's surgeons can also use the da Vinci® surgical robot to perform minimally invasive procedures.

The surgeons offer minimally invasive heart bypass and heart valve surgery to patients who meet the criteria. The procedures are performed through a small incision, which means a faster recovery time with less risk of infection.

“We do a procedure called coronary artery bypass grafting, which is a heart artery bypass without cutting the breastbone,” Dr. Chowdhury said. “Instead, I make only a small incision. This can be done for left-sided bypass of one or two vessels.”

Dr. Mitiek said, “When we do minimally invasive mitral or aortic valve replacement, patients have a smaller scar, recovery is faster and it doesn’t affect breathing, so we see fewer lung problems after surgery.”

Physicians at St. Mary’s are using the da Vinci robot to perform lung surgeries, including lung resection and thoracic tumor resection.

“We use very small incisions, and the instruments of the robot can be manipulated up to 360 degrees, which is not possible with human hands,” Dr. Chowdhury said.

“When we perform a lung resection with a scope or the da Vinci robot, a patient’s recovery time can be two weeks instead of six weeks to three months,” he said. “For patients with cancer, this means they can go to chemotherapy or radiation faster, if they need it.”

For more information about treatments available at St. Mary’s Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeons, call (304) 399-7530.

UPCOMING EVENT

**HEALTHY HEART U**

**Saturday, Jan. 12 • 9 a.m.-3 p.m.**
St. Mary’s Medical Center Outpatient Center, first-floor lobby
- Free health screenings:
  - Glucose
  - Cholesterol
  - Blood pressure
  - Body composition analysis
  - Stroke risk assessment
  - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Cooking demonstrations
- Fitness demonstrations
- Heart Institute facility tours
- Information from St. Mary’s Cardiovascular & Thoracic Surgeons and St. Mary’s Electrophysiology
- Discounted advanced screenings available with pre-registration — look for details soon at www.st-marys.org

HEALTH TIP

Fibromyalgia is a little-understood disorder that causes pain and other symptoms throughout the body. The womenshealth.gov website offers these suggestions for better living with fibromyalgia:

- Get plenty of sleep.
- Exercise as much as you can. Try to be physically active as much as possible if fibromyalgia pain prevents you from exercising.
- Make adjustments at work to help you better manage fibromyalgia. Examples could include reducing your hours or switching to a less demanding job.
- Eat a nutritious, balanced diet.
- Talk to your doctor about ways to control pain.
- Seek emotional support from friends and family members.

— Source: HealthDay News from the U.S. Office of Women’s Health

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How to beat the holiday blues

We all love the holiday season – right? The whirlwind, the food, the parties, the gifts, the decorations – or (can it be) maybe we don’t always love the holidays? Sometimes it’s all just too much. Too much money, too little sleep, too many expectations and too many calories!

According to the National Mental Health Association, reasons for feeling blue around the holidays are numerous. They range from fatigue, as a result of all of the increased holiday activity, to financial limitations and family tensions. Experts say one of the fastest routes to holiday depression is unrealistic expectations.

St. Mary’s wants you to care for your spirit this holiday season. The key to enjoying the season is to be selective, choose the things you really must do or want to do and let the other things go. Remember that “no” is not a four-letter-word. Here are some ideas that will help ensure you get the most out of your holiday season:

1. Delegate – Don’t try to do it all yourself. People often want to help and to be involved. By breaking down tasks and doling them out to friends and family, everything becomes more manageable.

2. Volunteer – One of the best antidotes for the holiday blues is doing something for someone else. Volunteer your time to help others who have less than you do. Taking the focus off of yourself and putting it on others can really make you feel much better. Not only can you help other people, but doing so will add a lot more meaning to your holiday season.

3. Spend some time alone – Some people love the energy and exuberance of big holiday parties and activities. For others, all of it is very taxing. If you find yourself getting a little anxious, take a breather. Find a quiet spot to relax and recharge your batteries.

4. Let go of the past – Don’t be disappointed if your holidays aren’t like they used to be. Embrace the future, and don’t dwell on the fact that the “good old days” are gone.

5. Don’t drink too much – It is easy to overindulge around the holidays, but excessive drinking will only make you feel more depressed.

6. Give yourself a break – Don’t think in absolute terms. You aren’t the best cook in the world, or the worst. You aren’t super mom, or the most horrible mother in the world. These tips and ideas should help you this holiday season. However, if you find your spirits sagging don’t struggle alone. Talk to your doctor about treatment options and find the solution that helps you care for yourself and care for your spirit.

Heart attack a major concern for women

Did you know? Women having a heart attack wait longer before seeking help than men do – one reason women tend to do worse after a heart attack than men.

Although women often think heart attack as something that affects mainly men, heart disease is the number one killer of women. Every 90 seconds, a woman in the United States has a heart attack.

The good news is that if you seek help quickly, treatment can save your life and prevent permanent damage to your heart muscle. Treatment works best if given within 1 hour of when heart attack symptoms begin.

What is a heart attack? A heart attack happens when an artery that carries blood to the heart becomes blocked. This stops oxygen and nutrients from reaching part of the heart muscle. If blood flow is not restored quickly, some of the cells that make up the heart muscle become damaged and start to die. The longer it takes for treatment to be started, the more damage to the heart.

Know the symptoms:

1. Chest pain or discomfort
2. Unusual upper body discomfort
3. Shortness of breath
4. Breaking out in a cold sweat
5. Unusual or unexplained fatigue (tiredness)
6. Light-headedness or sudden dizziness
7. Nausea (feeling sick to the stomach)

If you experience any of these symptoms call 911 to get help immediately.