



For Life!

**Total Joint  
Replacement**  
Community Contributor  
**Helping Kids Avoid H1N1**



**MEADOWS**

REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

# Meadows Earns Top 100 Honors for the Third Time



Only one Georgia hospital was named to the prestigious Thomson Reuters 100 Top Hospitals® for 2009: Meadows Regional Medical Center in Vidalia. This marks the third time in the past four years that Meadows has earned this honor. That's an achievement only attained by a select few of the nation's best healthcare providers.

"We're extremely pleased to be among such an elite group of medical centers," says Meadows CEO Alan Kent. "This award reaffirms that we are in fact delivering some of the highest-quality healthcare for our area's families."

The Thomson Reuters 100 Top Hospitals list ranks hospitals on key performance measures such as patient safety, complication rates, and the average length of

patients' stay. They then compare those scores to other hospitals with similar bed size, teaching status and residency program involvement to determine their 100 Top Hospitals in the nation.

According to Thomson Reuters, the 100 Top Hospitals have higher survival rates and keep more patients complication-free than other comparably sized hospitals.

They also state that the 100 Top Hospitals award winners create higher overall patient satisfaction and provide a higher level of patient safety than non-winning hospitals.

While this award represents the hospital's current success, it's also a powerful motivating factor in developing further advances in clinical care, customer service and management techniques yet to come.

"Thomson Reuters scores are a tool our Meadows management team uses to continually measure performance, evaluate improvement measures and keep us advancing care," explains Kent. "For us, it's not enough to achieve a high standard of care. We want to remain at the top and that requires constant improvement."

Learn more about what it means to have a 100 Top Hospital in our area at [www.MeadowsForLife.com](http://www.MeadowsForLife.com)

## NAMED A 100 TOP HOSPITAL FOR THE THIRD TIME

Thomson Reuters estimates that if all Medicare inpatients received the same level of care as those in the 100 Top Hospitals winners:

- More than 107,500 additional patients would survive each year
- More than 132,000 patient complications would be avoided annually
- Expenses would decline by an aggregate \$5.9 billion a year
- The average patient stay would decrease by nearly half a day

# Is it time to talk to your doctor about joint replacement?

Have your years of sports given you more than great memories and an attic full of trophies? Did they leave you with increasingly sore, stiff joints as well?

If you suffer from nagging joint pain, from sports or any other cause, you may want to talk to your doctor about joint replacement surgery. "Many adults don't know when it's time to approach their doctor about joint replacement. The basic rule is that if joint pain is interfering with your life – it's time," offers Vidalia-based orthopedic surgeon Cullen Scott, MD.

*Continued on page 7*



## **Are you a candidate for joint replacement? Take this quiz and find out.**

- Are you unable to complete daily tasks without help?
- Do you have significant pain every day?
- Does your pain keep you awake at night despite the use of medications?
- Have nonsurgical approaches (medications, use of a cane, physical therapy) failed to relieve your pain?
- Does your pain keep you from walking or bending over?
- Does your pain continue even when you rest?
- Can you not bend or straighten your knee?
- Is your hip so stiff that you cannot lift your leg?
- Do your pain medications or other medications needed to control your joint symptoms cause severe side effects?
- Do you have advanced arthritis or other severe damage?

**If you answered yes to any of these questions, it may be time to talk to your doctor.**

# Give Kids a Hand in Staying Healthy

**S**chool has started and kids across our area are reuniting with their friends. That means it's time to remind them about the importance of proper hand washing.

"Hand washing is the number one way that we as individuals can stop the spread of viruses and bacteria," explains Tammy Rowland, Director of Infection Prevention at Meadows Regional Medical Center.

All day long, especially in confined environments such as schools, kids accumulate germs on their hands. These come from other people and contaminated surfaces, as well as food and animals. If kids don't consistently wash these germs away, they could infect themselves or spread germs to others.

## How washing works

"Kids often don't understand how hand washing works," explains Rowland. "Many kids think that it's all about the soap and water, but it's actually the friction from rubbing their hands together that removes the bacteria and germs."

Kids should wash the tops and bottoms of their hands and wrists, as well as in between fingers and under nails with soap and warm running water. And they should really scrub them together to remove germs.

## How long is long enough?

Proper hand washing takes at least 15 to 20 seconds. Unfortunately, that small amount of time can feel like an eternity to a small child.

This is why it's not enough to trust that singing the ABCs or "Row,

Row, Row Your Boat" during hand washing will keep kids at the sink for enough time to kill germs.

"Studies show that kids will often sing faster when they're in a hurry. So, it's best to time it (hand washing) out," says Rowland.

## For best results: sanitize

Hand sanitizer often can be used in lieu of washing hands. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it's okay to use hand sanitizer rather than wash your hands except at mealtime, after using the bathroom or if hands are visibly soiled.

They also say that any hand sanitizer will work as long as it contains at least 62 percent ethyl alcohol.

This is especially important for small children. The sanitizer itself will disrupt bacteria's cell membranes and kill germs while it dries – eliminating the need for 20 seconds of scrubbing.

**If you have questions about proper hand washing, contact Tammy Rowland, Director of Infection Prevention at Meadows Regional Medical Center, at 912-538-5897.**

**ALWAYS**  
wash and sanitize hands:

- \* After going to the bathroom
- \* After touching pets or other animals
- \* Before and after eating
- \* After nose blowing
- \* After coughing or sneezing
- \* After handling garbage
- \* Anytime hands are visibly soiled



# Costs, Care and Community Contributions

The traditional role of a healthcare organization is to provide for the health of the families in its community. This is true of any hospital. At Meadows Regional Medical Center, however, this role is just the beginning.

The hospital has recently been recognized as both a top-quality healthcare provider and a major contributor to the health of its local economy – qualities that are closely related.

According to the Georgia Hospital Association 2006 Economic Impact Study, Meadows is one of the area's largest employers, providing jobs and income for area families. It's also one of the area's largest businesses, adding to the local and state economy through direct spending and by increasing the demand for ancillary businesses.

Many local businesses rely on the hospital as a primary customer. Many others generate revenue by meeting the needs of Meadows employees and their families. The ripple effect runs throughout our community.

Meadows management takes this role very seriously, constantly examining the hospital's economic practices and how they impact individual patients as well as the community.

"Patient care and economics are inseparably tied," explains Alan Kent, CEO. "Our financial and business practices provide the foundation that enables us to deliver advanced clinical care for those we serve."

These financial practices involve constantly monitoring and self-auditing the hospital in search of new ways to control costs, give back to the community and employ area citizens. This has resulted in efficient

healthcare practices that have actually lowered costs – a savings that the hospital has passed on to its patients.

In fact, Data Advantage – an independent healthcare information company – reports that Meadows is below the state's median in price as measured by average charge per adjusted discharge. This means that a procedure at Meadows often costs less than the same procedure at other Georgia hospitals.

Additionally, Meadows has optimized its practices to such a point that they recently were recognized for having the lowest average length of stay of any hospital their size in all of Georgia.

"By only keeping patients in the hospital for the time they actually need to be here, we can reduce their expenses and make proper healthcare more affordable," says Kent.

In addition to lowering healthcare costs for patients, the hospital's efficient use of resources enables clinical advances such as new, more advanced equipment, additional clinical service lines and more physicians. It's also enabled the hospital to purchase technologies such as one of Georgia's first high-definition 64-slice CT scanners. And to recruit our area's only orthopedic surgeon specializing in hand and spinal surgeries.

On the bottom line, it's all about providing healthcare at the highest possible level. According to Kent, "It's very important to us that we're good stewards of our community resources. By doing so, we can provide the highest quality healthcare at the lowest possible cost."

## Beyond Healthcare

In addition to top-quality healthcare services, Meadows Regional Medical Center is a major contributor to the state and local economy. According to the Georgia Hospital Association 2006 Economic Impact Report, Meadows provides:

**600**  
**MEDICAL CENTER JOBS**

**500**  
**JOBS IN RELATED INDUSTRIES**

**\$29 million**  
**IN INCOME  
FOR HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES**

**\$48 million**  
**IN REVENUE FOR STATE AND  
LOCAL BUSINESSES**

**\$4.5 million**  
**IN COST-FREE  
HEALTHCARE SERVICES**

**\$118 million**  
**IN INCOME FOR STATE  
AND LOCAL FAMILIES**

# The Sooner You Know

According to the Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Public Health, breast cancer is the most common cancer and second leading cause of cancer death in Georgia women. Every year in our state, more than 5,000 new cases are diagnosed and more than 1,000 lives are lost.

Your best advantage is to detect breast cancer early. "An earlier diagnosis is definitely better for the patient," explains Meadows Regional Medical Center registered X-ray technologist and mammographer China Arline. "The earlier cancer is found, the sooner we can begin treatment."

## **Mammography at Meadows**

Meadows utilizes the most advanced mammography technology available: digital mammography. This delivers the best possible quality, comfort and convenience. It's faster, more comfortable and captures better images than older methods of mammography.

*Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Georgia women*

Georgia Department of Human Resources  
Division of Public Health

"Digital mammography provides a much better image, especially for younger women," explains Arline. "Younger women tend to have very dense breasts and with the digital image's higher contrast, we actually can see much better inside the breast."

As opposed to film-based mammography, which requires several minutes to develop, digital images appear within two or three seconds of exposure. "I immediately can see if I need to take a new picture or not. If the image is clear, the patient can be on her way much sooner," says Arline.

Additionally, the digital images are immediately stored in the medical center's picture archiving and communication system (PACS). Radiologists can instantly see the images from any computer, enabling them to analyze the images and deliver a diagnosis, speeding follow-up care.

Mammography also is more comfortable. "We try to be as gentle as possible while getting the best possible image," Arline says. "We also place a soft pad on the machine to make it softer and not as cold."

## **SCHEDULE YOUR SCREENING**

**IT IS SIMPLE  
IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE**

For a routine mammogram, simply call us at **912-538-5804**. We can set up your appointment over the phone. It's that easy.

If you're experiencing breast pain, feel a lump or have other trouble, see your physician before scheduling a mammogram. If you don't have a regular physician, we'll be happy to refer you to one.



## **ARE YOU DUE FOR A MAMMOGRAM?**

Talk to your doctor, or call for an appointment today. To learn more about Meadows' digital mammography, call 912-538-5804.

# HOW TO

During a stroke, every second counts. Knowing how to recognize stroke symptoms, and what to do when they appear, can save brain cells and possibly even a life.

## > Recognize a Stroke

### Stroke victims experience:

- > Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- > Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- > Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- > Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- > Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

If you or someone you're with experiences one or more of these symptoms, immediately call 911.

After you've called 911, note the time that symptoms began. Certain clot-busting medications may be able to reduce long-term disability in the most common form of stroke if administered in the first three hours after symptoms appear.

Source: American Stroke Association

Visit the new [www.meadowsregional.com](http://www.meadowsregional.com) for wellness advice, hospital information and videos from Meadows Regional Medical Center physicians including Cullen Scott, MD.

### Is it time to talk to your doctor about joint replacement?

Continued from page 3

"You could discover that you don't need joint replacement surgery at all," says Dr. Scott. "In fact, surgery is generally not the first option. Patients are frequently surprised by the pain relief they can get with some of our nonsurgical options."

If you do learn that surgery can help, ask your doctor about your surgical options. There are many out there.

"For some people with pain in both knees, it may be possible to have both knees repaired simultaneously," explains Dr. Scott. "When joints have significant damage that doesn't require a total replacement, a partial joint replacement may be the best choice."

Techniques, such as resurfacing procedures, are available as are a wide variety of different implant devices. Your doctor can explain the pros and

cons of each. Together, you can choose which course of action is best for you.

You'll also want to discuss your expectations. "Talk to your doctor about what you'd like to do after your surgery that you can't do now. Also discuss your role in recovery and how much therapy and rehabilitation you can expect," offers Dr. Scott. "While the success rate for knee and hip replacement is 90 to 95 percent, the work you put in after your surgery can make an enormous impact on your results."

And if you have any fears or concerns regarding joint replacement surgery, this is the time to let your doctor know. Together, you can address these issues so you can begin the surgical process with confidence.

To learn more about joint replacement surgery, visit us at [www.meadowsregional.com/orthopedics](http://www.meadowsregional.com/orthopedics) or, call Cullen Scott, MD, at 912-538-0040.

### Cullen Scott, MD Orthopedic Surgeon

BS, Applied Biology: Georgia  
Institute of Technology

MD: Mercer University  
School of Medicine

Orthopedic Surgery  
Fellowship: Atlanta  
Medical Center

Specializing in:  
Total joint  
replacement,  
hand and upper  
extremity repair, foot  
and ankle surgery, sports  
medicine, trauma and  
spinal procedures



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Contact Cheryl Gay, Director of Marketing and Community Relations at Meadows Regional Medical Center, at 912-538-5892.

If you have specific concerns about your health, please contact your doctor.

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For Life!

1703 Meadows Lane  
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## Meadows Breaks Ground on New Medical Center

**M**eadows Regional Medical Center held the official groundbreaking ceremony for a new 190,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art medical center on Wednesday, August 26, 2009.

The \$75 million facility is being raised on Highway 280 in Vidalia, across from the hospital's Wellness Center. The 70-bed hospital will feature private rooms for all patients as well as new, state-of-the-art technology and a future-focused design.

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**The new hospital will feature all private rooms, state-of-the-art technology and a future-focused design.**

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Working with Meadows nurses and staff members, management mocked up and tested various patient suite designs. In the mock patient suite, nurses and staff members were able to test different room layouts, supply placements and equipment locations to help develop a room design that facilitates both clinical care and patient comfort.

This focus on care and comfort will also lead to a number of new public spaces, such as a restaurant-type cafeteria and easily accessible courtyards for patients and visitors to enjoy.

Quality clinical technology will continue to be a focus for Meadows as the new facility progresses. Imaging equipment, surgical technology and even medical record keeping will all feature some of the latest generation, most advanced digital technology. Even the hospital's signage will be advanced, with digital displays to help direct patients through the new facility and screens to carry valuable health and wellness messages in the cafeteria, waiting rooms and patient rooms.

Possibly the most advanced feature of the new medical center is how it's being built to accommodate future growth.

Specialized areas such as the operating rooms and emergency department have been designed to easily and affordably accommodate expansion as the needs of our community grow.

The new hospital site itself nearly triples the available space of the current medical center campus, offering much-needed room for future expansion. Already, plans have been approved for a cancer center to feature our area's first linear accelerator for radiation therapy. Additional plans could include a long-term care center and a community park that will support general health and wellness initiatives.

**For more information on the new Meadows Regional Medical Center, contact Cheryl Gay at 912-538-5892.**



Groundbreaking for the new Meadows Regional Medical Center took place on August 26, 2009.