

HEALTH WORKS



Fall 2025

Simple Ways to Beat Loneliness

Find a PCP
Right for You

From Mystery Pain
to Lifesaving Care:
A Neighbor's Story

Pumpkin
Overnight
Oats for
Glowing Skin

See page 15



A Letter from Our President & CEO



As fall settles in and the busy holiday season approaches, I encourage you to make your health a priority. Now is the perfect time to schedule annual checkups and screenings for yourself and your loved

ones. In this issue of *Health Works*, discover how to access lifesaving cancer screenings, the value of compassionate providers who truly listen, a guide to healthy skin, and more.

We are proud to share the exciting progress of our **Transforming Health** campaign, including plans for a new Emergency Department on our main campus. This vital project will help us meet the evolving needs of our community – now and for generations to come. Discover more at emersonhealth.org/transforminghealth.

Whether you need a routine visit, care for a sudden illness or injury, or lifesaving treatment, Emerson is here for you – trusted, safe, and close to home. Through our strong clinical partnership with Mass General Brigham, we ensure you have seamless access to world-class specialty care.

Thank you for trusting Emerson with your health.

Christine

Christine C. Schuster, RN, MBA
President and CEO

» Thank you for supporting Emerson. Please visit emersonhealth.org/donate to make a difference.

American Heart Association Gives Highest Honors to Emerson



Emerson Hospital received the American Heart Association's highest recognition – the Gold Plus Stroke Award – for providing rapid, exceptional stroke care. This award highlights our commitment to using advanced research-based treatments to achieve the best possible patient outcomes. Recognize the signs of stroke at emersonhealth.org/stroke.

Emerson Recognized as a *Forbes'* Best Employer

Based on an independent survey of more than 160,000 U.S. employees, Emerson Health was honored in 2024 and 2025 as one of *Forbes'* Best Employers by State. This recognition reflects our commitment to satisfaction, career growth, and a supportive workplace. For career opportunities, visit emersonhealth.org/careers.



Emerson Named Top Hospital for Cancer Care



We are proud to be named a 2025 Castle Connolly Top Hospital for Cancer Care. This national honor reflects Emerson's expertise, exceptional care, and strong partnership with Mass General Brigham Cancer experts at Emerson Hospital. Our multidisciplinary cancer team includes Mass General Brigham oncologists and highly trained

Emerson surgeons, radiologists, and clinical staff with extensive experience in cancer care. Learn more at emersonhealth.org/cancer.

Check out **page 4** for tips to find a primary care provider.

Where to find us ...

Connect, follow, and engage with us on social media.



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Loneliness: A Silent Health Crisis

Loneliness is more than a passing feeling. It happens when the social connections we want do not match what we have. Nearly 40% of the adults in the U.S. have reported feeling lonely. The good news is that simple actions help build connections at any age.

Read on for tips that can help, or talk with a healthcare provider about ways to build connections.

Start small. Say hello.

Make eye contact and smile at someone in the grocery store. Greet your neighbor. Small interactions can brighten both of your days.

Reconnect with someone.

Reach out to someone you have not talked with in a while. A simple “thinking of you” message or planning a time to get together opens doors to a meaningful exchange.

Get involved.

Being part of a community with shared interests builds belonging – consider a book club or adult education class. Libraries, senior centers, faith communities, and recreation departments offer free or low-cost options.

Exercise with others.

Exercise releases feel-good hormones, and exercising with a friend or group adds a social boost. Visit emersonwellness.org for classes.

Be a helper.

Volunteering reduces feelings of isolation by helping others, while creating opportunities for new connections and friendships. Follow your passions to identify volunteer opportunities in your community. Visit emersonhealth.org/volunteer for programs that support Emerson patients.

Limit screen time.

While technology can connect us, too much scrolling leads to feeling left out or “less than.” Try replacing some screen time with real conversations.

Talk with a professional.

If loneliness leads to sadness, anxiety, or hopelessness, reach out to your primary care provider or therapist. Visit emersonhealth.org/mentalhealth to find mental health resources.

Many people feel lonely at some point in their lives. Loneliness is a sign telling us we need connection. Take small steps to feel more grounded, supported, and connected to your community and feel less lonely and more fulfilled.

Are You Lonely?

» Ask yourself these questions. If you answer yes to any, you may be experiencing loneliness, and that is OK – millions of people are; you are not alone.

- Is there someone in my life I can talk with about things that matter to me?
- Do I feel disconnected, unnoticed, or left out?
- Do I wish I had close friends or deeper relationships?
- Do I go days without meaningful social interaction?

Scan the code for community resources to reduce loneliness.



A Guide to Accessing Healthcare

Finding healthcare or knowing where to go can feel overwhelming. While urgent care and the emergency department are designed for immediate urgent and emergency needs, they should not replace your primary care provider (PCP). Your PCP is essential for staying healthy, preventing illness, and providing ongoing personalized care.

We know it is not always easy to find a PCP. Here are some tips:

Look online. Check the website of your insurance plan for in-network PCPs. You can also call the phone number on your insurance card for help.

Branch out. Many PCPs offer virtual visits for some appointments, so you may not need a provider close to home. Consider nurse practitioners or physician’s assistants in addition to medical doctors.

Consult family and friends. A personal recommendation can help you find trusted providers.

- Ask questions.** When considering your options, call the PCP’s office to learn more, such as:
- The provider’s experience and special interests
 - How far out they are booking patients – if a provider cannot see you soon, ask the office staff to add you to a waitlist
 - Virtual appointment options
 - Insurances accepted.

Visit emersonhealth.org/findpcp to find a PCP and request an appointment.



» Access a podcast with tips to find a PCP.



Know Where to Go

	When to Go	Examples
Primary Care	Routine care, annual visits, managing health conditions	Checkups, vaccines, minor illnesses, prescriptions
Urgent Care	When you need quick care and your PCP is not available	Sprains, minor illnesses or injuries, infections, cuts
Emergency Department	Life-threatening emergencies	Severe pain, serious injury, trouble breathing





Why Screening Colonoscopies Save Lives – And How to Schedule Yours Easily

Colon cancer is the third most common cancer in the U.S., and one of the most preventable with a screening colonoscopy. During a colonoscopy, an experienced gastroenterologist examines the colon and removes any precancerous polyps, which can stop cancer before it even starts.

At Emerson Health, colonoscopies are performed in a safe, comfortable environment. The procedure is easier than many expect, and it saves lives.

Who Needs One, and When?

- Most adults should have a screening colonoscopy when they are 45 years old, even if they feel healthy. If your first screening is normal, your gastroenterologist will let you know when you need your next screening, likely in 5 to 10 years.
- If you have a family history of colon cancer, polyps, or symptoms like blood in your stool, changes in bowel habits, or abdominal pain, you may need a screening before you are 45.

Colonoscopy Prep: Now Easier Than Ever

Colonoscopy prep has come a long way in recent years. To clean out your colon before your screening, Emerson Health

Gastroenterology offers a pill-based prep that many people find easier than traditional liquid prep. You will receive easy-to-follow instructions and support throughout the process.

Bottom Line

Colonoscopies save lives. They are safe, effective, and, with the new prep, easier than ever.

» Schedule Your Screening Today

Emerson Health Gastroenterology offers Fast-Track colonoscopies to get you in quickly. Call **978-287-3835** or visit **emersonhealth.org/colonoscopy**.

» Scan to access podcasts and request an appointment.



Weight Loss for Life

More than 70% of adults in the U.S. are overweight, and many struggle with health issues like high blood pressure, diabetes, sleep apnea, depression, and joint pain. For some, diets, exercise, and medications have not provided long-term weight loss.

There is hope. At Emerson Health's Center for Weight Loss, a supportive team of experts helps people lose weight and keep it off – safely, effectively, and with a long-term personalized plan for success.



Is Weight-Loss Surgery Right for You?

The answer depends on your health, goals, and the amount of weight you want to lose. These questions can help you decide:

- Do you want to lose more than 50 pounds?
- Do you have a BMI of 35 or higher or a BMI of 30 or higher with conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, or sleep apnea?
- Is weight affecting your health, mobility, or day-to-day life?
- Are you ready to commit to long-term success with expert guidance?

If any answer is yes, scheduling a no-pressure consultation at Emerson is the best next step.

Why Choose Weight-Loss Surgery?

Weight-loss surgery – such as gastric bypass or sleeve gastrectomy – is backed by decades of medical research and proven results. Unlike weight-loss medications, surgery does not require ongoing injections. By reversing or improving serious health conditions, surgery often eliminates the need for many medications. Patients who have weight-loss surgery also enjoy increased energy, mobility, self-esteem, and mental health.

“We work closely with each patient to ensure they have the information they need to decide whether surgery or medication is the right path for them,” shares Laura Doyon, MD, obesity medicine-certified bariatric surgeon at Emerson.

No Judgment, Just Help That Works

“No one should ever feel shame because they cannot lose weight on their own,” explains David Lautz, MD, nationally recognized bariatric surgeon and medical director of Emerson's Weight Loss Center. “Obesity is a complex medical condition. It is not about willpower. It is about biology, hormones, and health, and we provide safe, effective, and proven ways to treat it.”

Ready to Learn More?

At Emerson's Center for Weight Loss, you will meet with a warm, kind, experienced team of experts who listen and help you explore options. There is no pressure to commit – just clear answers, guidance, and a customized plan that works for you.

» Call **978-287-3532** or visit **emersonweightloss.org** to learn more.

Compare Your Options		
	Medical Weight Loss (GLP-1s)	Surgical Weight Loss
Weight Lost	Generally less than surgery	50–70% of excess weight
Time to Results	Gradual over several months	Faster, more significant results (6–12 months)
Long-Term Success	Likely to regain after stopping medication	Proven long-term success
Health Improvements	Improves some conditions	Often resolves conditions like diabetes, sleep apnea, and high blood pressure
Method	Daily or weekly injections	Safe, minimally invasive surgery
Commitment	Ongoing medication	Follow-up care, diet, activity
Insurance Coverage	Sometimes covered; expensive without insurance	Often covered if you qualify
Maintenance	Medication often needed long-term	No long-term medications
Safety and Effectiveness	Not proven long-term – medications are new and research is underway	Proven safe by decades of research and patient results

PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT

Olivia Liao, MD

President of the Massachusetts Medical Society



Emerson Health physicians are shaping the future of healthcare in Massachusetts. Dr. Olivia Liao, an Emerson ophthalmologist at Lexington Eye Associates, was recently named president of the Massachusetts Medical Society, the leading voice in healthcare advocacy, medical education, and clinical excellence across the state. Scan the QR code to access a Q&A with Dr. Liao.



Welcome New Providers



Endocrinology
Samara Pena, MD
Emerson Health
Endocrinology
Maynard
978-287-8520



General Surgery
Ting Yu (Dana) Xu, MD, FACS
Emerson Health Surgery
Concord
978-287-3547



Orthopedic Surgery
Zina Model, MD
Orthopedic Affiliates
Concord
978-369-5391



Christopher Worgul, MD
Orthopedic Affiliates
Concord
978-369-5391



Primary Care
Amy Gao, DO
Emerson Health Primary Care
Groton
978-448-4300



Pulmonary/Critical Care
Camille Petri, MD
Emerson Health Pulmonary
Concord
978-369-4238

» Learn more about these and other Emerson physicians at emersondocs.org.





Ryan's sons
were born at
Emerson Hospital.

From Mysterious Pain to Lifesaving Care: Ryan's Story

For more than a year, Ryan Jessee lived with mysterious pain in his back and abdomen. A busy father of two young boys, the construction professional from Bedford chalked it up to stress, workouts, and the physical toll of his job. Then, in 2021, what started as discomfort after a round of golf evolved into something much more serious.

"I had been to different emergency rooms. The doctors prescribed pain relievers and muscle relaxants. Nobody could tell what was actually wrong," Ryan says. "At 35, I think they assumed I was too young to be seriously sick. There was never imaging or a diagnosis to discover why I continued to suffer from pain."

In spring 2022, Ryan's symptoms

worsened. He experienced severe fatigue, dizzy spells, and collapsed at work. By August, an intense headache sent him back to the Emergency Department (ED). After hours of waiting at a Boston-area hospital, he left with no answers, discouraged, and still in pain.

That night, everything changed when his brother took him to the Emerson Hospital ED.

“Choose your hospital wisely. Not all care is the same.”

– Ryan Jessee, who received lifesaving care at Emerson

Finally, a Lifesaving Answer

“It was a different experience at Emerson, starting when I first arrived,” Ryan says. “Finally, my pain was taken seriously.”

Ryan Kring, MD, was the physician who cared for Ryan in the ED. He took the time to listen to him – and act. “I remember Dr. Kring saying, ‘Let’s run a CT scan just to be safe,’” Ryan recalls. “No other doctor had ordered imaging.” That scan revealed the answer: pancreatic cancer with a 6-centimeter tumor that was pressing on Ryan’s spine.

“He saved my life,” Ryan says. “If Dr. Kring had followed the typical route – fluids, pain relief, send me home – I would not be here today.”

Dr. Kring remembers the moment vividly. “We were able to make a life-changing diagnosis that night and connect Ryan with the cancer care he urgently needed,” he says. “Helping people like Ryan is why I love what I do.”

The Care He Needed

What followed was a whirlwind. Within days, Emerson’s team biopsied the tumor, connected Ryan with a Mass General Brigham oncologist who works at Emerson, and scheduled him for treatment. He began chemotherapy at Emerson’s Naka Infusion Center to shrink the tumor. He also qualified for immunotherapy, a breakthrough treatment that eventually shrank the tumor from 6 centimeters to just 1.3 centimeters.

This spring, Ryan underwent a complex abdominal surgery at Mass General Hospital to remove the rest of the cancer. Today, there are no signs of the disease. He is planning his future and recently started a home construction firm serving the region.

“Emerson was the anchor through it all,” Ryan says. “The care there was personal, not just clinical. The nurses

knew my name. My parents still text with the doctors to express our gratitude. I did not have that experience anywhere else.”

His experience changed how he sees healthcare, and life. “I learned how important it is to speak up. If you feel something is off, tell your doctor. Choose your hospital wisely. Not all care is the same.”

Grateful for the expert, compassionate care he received, the Jessee family made

a generous donation to support Emerson Hospital’s plans to build a new ED. “We will never forget what Dr. Kring did that night,” says Ryan’s parents, Jim and Kim. “He gave us our son back.”

» Learn about Emerson’s plans for a new Emergency Department at emersonhealth.org/transforminghealth.

Honor Your Care Team

A meaningful way patients and loved ones can honor the care they receive at Emerson Health is through the Gifts of Gratitude program. Visit emersonhealth.org/support to learn more.



Ryan Kring, MD (left), took care of Ryan in the Emergency Department.

10 Surprising Symptoms of Menopause – And Experts Who Can Help



Menopause. When some people hear the term, they imagine hot flashes and the end of periods. In reality, the journey to menopause – called perimenopause – often begins years earlier and can bring a range of physical and emotional changes that many women do not expect.

Learning about menopause can help women feel empowered and receive support sooner. Read on to discover more about this phase of life.

When Does Menopause Start and End?

Perimenopause is the time leading up to menopause when hormones, especially estrogen and progesterone, begin to fluctuate. Perimenopause typically begins in your 40s, but some women notice changes in their mid-30s. This phase can last anywhere from a few months to 10 years.

Expert Help Is Available

The symptoms are real, common, and treatable. If you experience anything that feels unusual or affects your quality of life, let your primary care provider or gynecologist know. They have the expertise and resources to help reduce or eliminate challenging symptoms. Visit emersondocs.org to find an experienced provider.

Menopause is when a woman has gone 12 consecutive months without a period. For most women, this happens between the ages of 45 and 55.

Surprising Symptoms You Might Experience

Here are some lesser-known signs of perimenopause and menopause:

1. Brain Fog and Memory Lapses

You might find yourself forgetting names, losing your train of thought, or feeling mentally fuzzy. As hormone levels decline during menopause, cognitive clarity may be affected.



2. Increased Anxiety or Mood Swings

Sudden waves of anxiety, irritability, or sadness, especially if these feelings are new for you, can be caused by fluctuating hormone levels that affect your brain.



3. Sleep Disturbances

Falling asleep or staying asleep may become more difficult.



4. Heart Palpitations

Some women experience a racing or irregular heartbeat, often described as “fluttering.” While it is important to let your primary care provider know about this symptom to rule out heart problems, hormonal changes are a common cause.



5. Teary or Watery Eyes

Hormonal shifts can affect your tear glands, leading to either excessive tearing or dry, irritated eyes.



6. Heavier or Longer Periods

Before your period stops entirely, you may experience heavier flow, longer bleeding, or more frequent periods. Talk with your provider about any changes in your period.



7. Dry or Itchy Skin

Estrogen helps skin stay hydrated and elastic. As hormone levels drop, the skin may feel dry, thin, or itchy – often on the face, arms, or chest. *Learn more about skin health on page 14.*



8. New or Worsening Migraines

Headaches that follow a cyclical pattern – especially around your period – can become more intense during perimenopause due to hormone fluctuations.



9. Body Aches and Joint Pain

Estrogen has an anti-inflammatory effect, so lower levels may lead to muscle stiffness or joint and back pain.



10. Dental and Gum Issues

Gums may feel more sensitive, bleed easily, or become inflamed, making regular dental checkups important.



» Scan the QR code to access podcasts with women's health experts at Emerson.



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You helped raise \$155,000 to support patients at the
Mass General Cancer Center at Emerson Hospital.



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Save the Date

Emerson Health's
2026 5k
Run~Walk
for Cancer Care

Saturday,
May 2, 2026



@EmersonHealth5k

Photography courtesy of Edward Feather
Photography, Matt Boger, and Trevor Delaney

Mammograms: The Simple Scan That Saves Lives



» Scan the code
to access a breast
cancer risk quiz.

Breast cancer is on the rise, particularly among women under 40. There is good news – when caught early, breast cancer is highly treatable. What is the best way to detect breast cancer? With a routine screening mammogram.

Mammograms detect breast cancer often years before someone can feel it. Early detection improves treatment options and survival rates. The advanced 3-D mammogram technology used at Emerson creates high-resolution images of the breast. This improves cancer detection and reduces the number of false positives and unnecessary callbacks.

Who Should Get a Mammogram?

- According to the American Cancer Society, women should begin getting annual mammograms at age 40. Those with a family history or other risk factors may need to start sooner. Talk with your primary care provider for guidance.
- Between ages 35 and 40, women are eligible for one baseline mammogram. This baseline scan provides a comparison for future screenings that can help detect subtle differences as you age. Slight changes may be normal or an early sign of cancer.
- If you notice a new lump or mass in your breast that does not improve in two weeks, you should have a mammogram, even if you are younger than 35.

Optimal Patient Care and Comfort

Emerson's Hermel Breast Health Centers are designed for your care and comfort. Located in Concord and Westford, the standalone offices are separate from the main hospital and offer:

- Welcoming and experienced staff known for their outstanding compassionate care
- A quieter, more personalized experience
- Free and ample parking
- Convenient hours, including evenings and weekends
- Fast results – experienced radiologists read the images, and patients are notified within two business days if further scans are needed.

From Scan to Specialist – Seamlessly

When you visit Emerson for a mammogram, you are never just a number. Experienced and kind technologists are with you every step of the way, answering your questions and ensuring your comfort. If the scan finds anything unusual, Emerson's coordinated care connects you directly with breast health experts, including specialists from Emerson and Mass General Brigham Cancer at Emerson Hospital.

Results are usually available within just a few business days. If follow-up is needed, our breast health experts will be able to see you soon.

» Visit emersonhealth.org/mammo to request an appointment, or call 978-287-8107.

Emerson's centers are accredited by the National Accreditation Program for Breast Centers and designated Breast Imaging Centers of Excellence by the American College of Radiology. This recognition reflects the expertise and compassionate care that Emerson is known for.



Healthy Skin from the Inside Out

In the quest for radiant skin, some people turn to expensive serums, elaborate skin care routines, or trendy supplements. However, when it comes to long-term skin health, success is in your daily habits – what you eat, how you sleep, and how well you protect your skin from damage.

Nourish Your Skin from Within with Natural Collagen

Collagen is the most abundant protein in your body and plays a key role in keeping your skin firm, plump, and smooth. As we age, our natural collagen production begins to decline – starting as early as our 20s – leading to wrinkles, sagging, and dryness. While you cannot stop time, you can give your skin the building blocks it needs to stay strong.

Protein is at the top of the list. Your body needs amino acids from protein-rich foods like eggs, chicken, fish, beans, and tofu to create collagen. If your diet lacks sufficient protein, your skin (and hair and nails) will likely show it.

Vitamin C is also essential. This powerful antioxidant not only helps defend skin from sun and pollution damage, it is also critical for collagen synthesis. Citrus fruits, berries, peppers, and leafy greens are excellent sources.

Other nutrients that play a role include zinc (found in nuts, seeds, and whole grains) and copper (in shellfish, seeds, and organ meats), both of which support collagen stability and formation.

Lifestyle Habits Matter

Do not underestimate the power of **sleep**. During deep sleep, your body goes into repair mode, producing collagen and healing damage caused by the sun and environmental stressors. Aim for seven to nine hours each night.

Hydration also affects your skin's appearance. While water does not directly boost collagen, staying well-hydrated helps skin cells function optimally and keeps skin looking supple. Seal in moisture by applying a moisturizer daily.

Curious About Collagen Supplements?

Collagen is a popular beauty supplement, available in powders, capsules, and drinks. But do collagen supplements improve skin health?

While research is still evolving, some small studies suggest that collagen supplements may improve skin elasticity, hydration, and even joint health.

Supplements may help. However, the best foundation for glowing skin will always be healthy habits.

» Emerson Health's board-certified dermatologists provide expert care for conditions affecting the skin, hair, and nails. Visit emersondocs.org/derm or scan the QR code to find a dermatologist.



» Visit emersonhealth.org/skin to access a podcast with Emerson dermatologist Eileen Deignan, MD, about skin health as women age.



The background of the page is a close-up photograph of several bright orange pumpkins. The pumpkins have a ribbed texture and green stems. The lighting is warm, highlighting the natural colors of the pumpkins.

Pumpkin Overnight Oats for Glowing Skin

Embrace the flavors of fall and the promise of glowing skin in one delicious jar. These Pumpkin Overnight Oats are a delicious way to start your day – packed with cozy spices, nourishing ingredients, and a boost of beauty benefits your skin will thank you for. Serves 1.

Ingredients

- ½ cup rolled oats
- ⅔ cup pumpkin puree (high in vitamin A to help skin glow)
- ½ cup unsweetened almond milk (or milk of choice)
- 1–2 tsp. chia seeds (omega-3s for skin elasticity)
- ¼ tsp. cinnamon
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract
- ⅛ tsp. nutmeg (optional)
- 1–2 tsp. pure maple syrup or honey (optional)
- 1 tbsp. plain Greek yogurt (optional – adds probiotics and protein to help with skin clarity)
- 1 tbsp. ground flaxseed or a few chopped walnuts (optional – adds vitamin E, a powerful skin antioxidant)

Topping Ideas

In the morning, add:

- Sliced banana or berries (vitamin C and antioxidants)
- A few pumpkin seeds (zinc, good for acne-prone skin)
- A dollop of almond or peanut butter (healthy fats)

Directions

1. In a mason jar or container, mix oats, pumpkin puree, almond milk, chia seeds, cinnamon, vanilla, nutmeg, and maple syrup (if using).
2. Stir well until combined. Add Greek yogurt and flaxseed.
3. Seal the container and refrigerate overnight (or at least six hours).
4. In the morning, stir and add your favorite skin-boosting toppings. Enjoy!



Protect Your Skin

Ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun are one of the biggest collagen-destroyers. To keep skin looking younger, wear sunscreen daily (at least SPF 30) – even on cloudy days!





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11135M

We see you.

**At Emerson Health, you
are more than a job title.**

Your work is meaningful, your team
has your back, and your career has
room to grow.

Join our team where your expertise is
valued, your individuality is respected,
and your talent is nurtured.

Our strength is our community.



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