

# HEALTH CONNECTIONS

YOUR HEALTH, YOUR LIFE

## ECOTHERAPY:

Walk Away From  
**Your Worries**

**Martin General**  
H O S P I T A L

HEALTH TIPS FOR  
**NAILS, SKIN AND SUN**

**SHAKING SODIUM**  
OUT OF YOUR DIET

# IF YOUR *Nails* COULD TALK

It's normal to clip the occasional hangnail or catch your fingertip in a door. However, you should keep an eye out for the following nail symptoms that could point to more serious medical conditions:

- **Darkened cuticles and colored streaks** that develop on nails are called Hutchinson's nail sign. They can indicate that you have melanoma, the most aggressive form of skin cancer.
- **Splinter hemorrhages** are red streaks in the nail bed and may signal an infected heart valve, especially if you haven't injured your nail recently.
- Heart conditions and lung diseases can cause **clubbing of the fingernails**. Clubbing symptoms include softening of the nail beds, bulging fingertips and increased nail curvature.
- **Brittle nails** and nails that split away from the skin can be signs of an underactive or overactive thyroid. They can also signal the development of psoriasis, a skin disease that causes redness and irritation.

If your nails exhibit any of these signs or if they don't look normal to you, don't hesitate to contact your medical provider.

*Source: National Library of Medicine*

## Know Your ABCDEs

Detecting skin cancer doesn't require a complicated screening or exam. One of the best ways to detect melanoma early is by checking your skin once a month for one or more of these features:

- **ASYMMETRY** — The mole or birthmark has mismatched parts.
- **BORDER** — The edges of the spot are blurred, notched, jagged or irregular.
- **COLOR** — The color changes throughout the mole and may contain shades of brown, black, and — less frequently — white, red, pink or blue.
- **DIAMETER** — The mole or birthmark is wider than a quarter of an inch.
- **EVOLVING** — The color, size or shape of the spot changes over time.

Use both a full-length mirror and a hand-held mirror to check your entire body, including areas that are difficult to see. Ask your doctor about any concerning developments.

*Source: American Cancer Society*



Scheduling an appointment with the medical team at Martin Family Medicine is more convenient than ever. For online scheduling, visit [MartinGeneralAnytime.com](http://MartinGeneralAnytime.com).

## Sun PROTECTION



Protect your eyes and skin from sun damage all year round by:

**applying sunscreen** with an sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or greater to all exposed skin areas

**wearing sunglasses** that block 99 percent or more of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays



**dressing in clothes that cover more of your skin**, especially if their labels display a UV protection factor (UPF) of 30 or higher

**choosing hats** with brims that are at least three inches wide



*Source: Skin Cancer Foundation*



# MEET THE Doctors

Meet some of the doctors on staff at Martin General Hospital.

## Melissa O'Neal, M.D.



**EDUCATION:** East Carolina University  
Brody School of Medicine

**SPECIALTY:** Well-woman care, menopause,  
adolescent gynecology, high- and low-  
risk obstetrics, gynecologic surgery,  
contraception

### HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN MEDICINE?

My enthusiasm for science drew me to the medical field, and the combination of my love for science, surgery, women's health and rural eastern North Carolina drew me to this job. The lasting relationships I have with my patients are what keep me here.

### OFFICE LOCATION:

Roanoke Women's  
Healthcare  
104 Medical Drive  
Williamston, NC 27892  
(252) 421-3845

## Cameron Martin, PA-C



**EDUCATION:** University of New England

**SPECIALTY:** General surgery

### HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN MEDICINE?

I had a 24-year career in EMS/Fire in Maine, first becoming licensed as a basic EMT in 1983. I was a paramedic for 10 of those years. I always admired physician assistants and the role they filled. For years, I dreamed of going back to school to become one. In 2007, I left my job as fire chief and realized my dream. I have worked in orthopedic trauma, pulmonary critical care and acute care surgery since graduation. I now specialize in general surgery and have also developed an interest in wound care.

### OFFICE LOCATION:

Roanoke Surgical  
310 S. McCaskey Road  
Williamston, NC 27892  
(252) 585-5139

## Vincent Iannace, M.D.



**EDUCATION:** SUNY Stony Brook School  
of Medicine

**SPECIALTY:** General surgery,  
bariatric surgery

### HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN MEDICINE?

I was inspired to become a doctor by a relative of mine. I became a surgeon because I felt I had a personal effect on the outcome of patient care at the time of greatest need. Specializing in weight-loss surgery has allowed me to be a part of a patient's health journey.

### OFFICE LOCATION:

Roanoke Surgical  
310 S. McCaskey Road  
Williamston, NC 27892  
(252) 585-5139

## Akpomudaire Otuguor, M.D.



**EDUCATION:** University of Lagos

**SPECIALTY:** Family medicine

### HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN MEDICINE?

As a child growing up in a small community, I received medical care from doctors who were very professional and loved children. I was hospitalized at age 10 for hernia repair. My physician/surgeon always stopped by my bedside or waved to me when he visited the floor. Those early encounters with kind doctors opened the door to my medical career and continues to remind me to offer the same care to my patients.

### OFFICE LOCATION:

Martin Family Medicine  
232 Green Street  
Williamston, NC 27892  
(252) 262-2966

*Drs. O'Neal, Iannace and Otuguor are members of the medical staff at Martin General Hospital.*

*Cameron Martin, physician assistant and a member of the allied health staff at Martin General Hospital, treats patients of all ages.*

# OUTDOOR RX

Whether you prefer exercising outdoors, meditating in a natural setting or simply working in your garden, ecotherapy — healing time spent in the natural world — offers something for everyone.

In the 1980s, Harvard University biologist Edward O. Wilson, PhD, presented a concept called “biophilia” in which he argued that humans have an innate love of and connection to nature. Today, scientific research shows that connection has numerous positive effects on our health.

A slightly unconventional practice called ecotherapy is becoming more commonly used as part of mental health treatment in the United States. Used to treat many conditions, including depression and anxiety, ecotherapy works to address a wide variety of stressors through outdoor activities including adventure therapy, meditating in nature, working in gardens and on farms, playing with animals and getting involved in conservation activities.

## CALL OF THE WILD

Have you ever been sitting at your desk at work and noticed you felt completely unable to focus? Next time that happens, try taking a walk outside. Even a brief period spent experiencing the sights and sounds of plants and animals improves your ability to concentrate and renews your reserves of patience.

This phenomenon of directed attention fatigue is similar to attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), present in both children and adults. While spending time

in natural environments benefits everyone, researchers believe people with ADHD may especially see results.

## LEAVE YOUR TROUBLES OUTSIDE

Approximately 85 percent of Americans don’t have access to forests, according to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, but everyone can reap the benefits of being in nature. Spending time in a park or garden, or strolling down a sidewalk lined with trees, provides some of the same benefits as walking through a traditional forest — inner calm and feelings of well-being.

About 350 million people suffer from depression worldwide. Treatment options for most are psychotherapy, medication or a combination of both. Ecotherapy is a treatment option that most people can access at little to no cost.

Researchers at the University of Essex found a walk in a park improved feelings of depression in about three-fourths of participants, and 90 percent felt a higher level of esteem.

Ready to take a walk for better health? Talk with your doctor about the potential benefit of getting outside and enjoying green spaces.



If you aren’t getting quality sleep, consider a sleep study at the Martin General Hospital Sleep Disorder Center. For more information, please call (252) 200-3793 or visit [MartinGeneral.com](http://MartinGeneral.com) and search “Sleep Study.”



## MORE MELATONIN

When you were younger, did your parents ever send you outside to run around and exhaust yourself? Apparently, they were on the right track. This approach works for adults, too, but it isn't just the exercise that makes you sleep better at night.

Experiencing natural light and its fluctuations prompts your body to produce melatonin, a hormone that helps your body maintain a healthy sleep cycle. Adequate sleep is important — not only for feeling rested but also for things like concentration, proper judgment and memory.

When your body produces enough melatonin, you're more likely to sleep deeply through the night. A good night's sleep allows your brain to process the things you learned and did that day, consolidating memories and allowing you to retain new information.

## TAKE A FOREST BATH

Don't worry — you don't need a swimsuit or towel for this adventure. Forest bathing, also known as *shinrin-yoku*, is a Japanese healing method that refers to the act of simply spending time in the forest. It's not hiking or adventuring with any real destination in mind. You aren't trying to get somewhere. You're there to absorb the experience of being in nature.

The concept of *shinrin-yoku* is an important part of preventive healthcare in Japan and South Korea today and is supported by extensive research.

Known benefits include:

- better mood
- better sleep
- higher energy levels
- improved healing after surgery or illness
- lower blood pressure
- lower stress levels

Whether forest therapy is offered near you or not, you can practice *shinrin-yoku* on your own. Find a park or hiking trail nearby, ideally where you can be covered by a tree canopy, and set aside some time to meander and be present in the greenery that surrounds you.





Q



A

Even if you're not one of the nearly 20 percent of Americans who have allergies, learn more about seasonal triggers from Angela Mebane, M.D., Allergist at Martin Family Medicine.

## ANGELA MEBANE, M.D.

**Q.** What is the difference between having allergies and a cold?

**A:** Allergies are not contagious like a cold or the flu. Allergy symptoms, though similar to those caused by a cold, are the result of your body overreacting to a substance called an allergen. Typical allergy symptoms include sneezing, runny nose, skin rashes, hives, itchy or watery eyes, swelling, nausea, and diarrhea.

**Q.** How are allergies treated?

**A:** Talk with your primary care doctor or allergist about ways to relieve your symptoms. Many different methods treat allergies, including prescription and over-the-counter medications. Immunotherapies, such as drops under the tongue or allergy shots, can diminish sensitivity to a wide range of environmental allergens from dust to tree pollen when taken during a treatment period of months to years.

Sometimes, a few indoor avoidance strategies can help as well, such as switching from carpet to hardwood floors or adding an allergy barrier to pillowcases and mattresses to limit dust allergy symptoms. It's possible to experience minimal symptoms through the proper treatment plan, so try different methods with your doctor before making any drastic changes.

**Q.** What causes allergies to develop?

**A:** Allergies seem to develop based on a mix of genes and environment. For example, you're more likely to develop allergies if one or both of your parents have them as well. Being exposed to allergens when your immune system is weak might also cause allergies to develop.

**Q.** Are allergies life-threatening?

**A:** Allergens can be found both indoors and outdoors, and they affect everyone differently. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening reaction to allergens, such as those caused by bee stings, peanuts or medication.

Carrying an epinephrine auto-injector is often recommended for people with food allergies. Talk with your doctor to see if a prescription is right for you.



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Mebane, who can diagnose and treat allergy symptoms, call (252) 642-6480.

*Dr. Mebane is a member of the medical staff at Martin General Hospital.*



# Sneaky SODIUM


Too much sodium can cause high blood pressure and put your heart at risk. Learn how sodium finds its way into your food and how you can avoid it.

## Ideal Intake



Adults should consume **fewer than 2,300mg** of sodium every day.



To **MAXIMIZE**  **HEALTH BENEFITS**, adults should limit their daily sodium intake to **1,500mg a day or less.**



▶ People need fewer than **500mg of sodium** a day for their bodies to function properly.



Source: American Heart Association

## So Much Sodium

▶ Average Americans consume **more than 3,400mg** of sodium daily.



**>75%**

**MORE THAN 75 PERCENT** of consumed sodium comes from prepackaged, processed and restaurant food — not table salt.



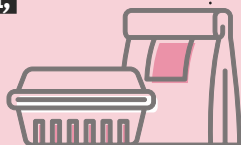
Many products — like chain pizza — contain **more sodium in the U.S.** than in other countries.



Source: Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

## See Ya, Sodium

Prepare fresh meals and **avoid prepackaged, processed and restaurant foods** to cut most sodium out of your diet.



Check the **NUTRITION FACTS LABEL** for foods with 5 percent Daily Value of sodium or less and products marked “low sodium.”

Gradually **reduce your sodium intake** and

**use spices**

to help your taste buds adjust.



Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration



Concerned about the effects of sodium on your health? The medical team at Martin Family Medicine may be able to help. Visit [MartinGeneralAnytime.com](http://MartinGeneralAnytime.com) to schedule an appointment online.

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ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al (252) 809-6300 (TTY: (800) 735-2962).

注意：如果您使用繁體中文，您可以免費獲得語言援助服務。請致電 (252) 809-6300 (TTY: (800) 735-2962)。

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This publication in no way seeks to serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Consult your doctor before undertaking any form of medical treatment or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.

# Next Steps »»»» FOR «««« JOINT PAIN

If you thought you'd need a joint replacement  
"someday," how do you know if someday is today?

Replacement joints now last longer — from 10 to 15 years to as long as 20 in some cases, according to the National Library of Medicine — offering younger patients years of pain-free living. You may be ready if:

- nonsurgical treatments, such as physical therapy and pain management, are not providing relief
- X-rays and other tests confirm damage to the joint
- your physician determines surgery is your best option



Joint pain slowing you down? Roanoke Orthopedics can return you to the active lifestyle you enjoy. Call (252) 231-3970 and get moving!

*Patient results may vary. Consult your doctor about the benefits and risks of any surgical procedure or treatment.*