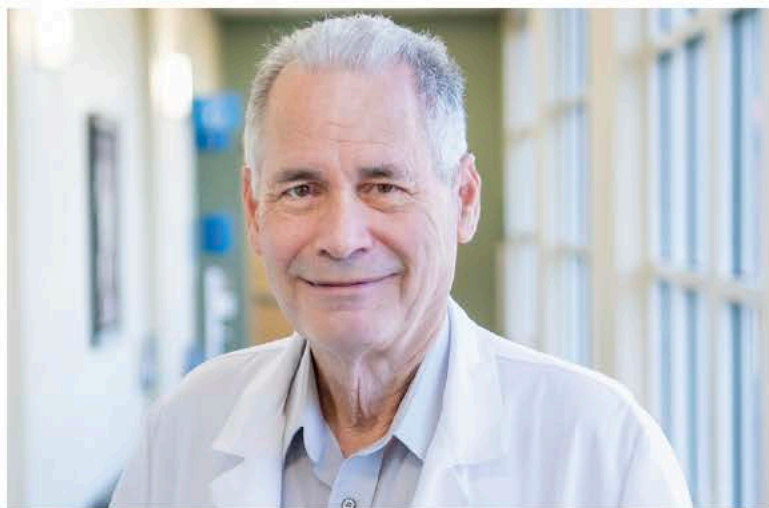


Rheumatologists: What We Do And How We Can Help



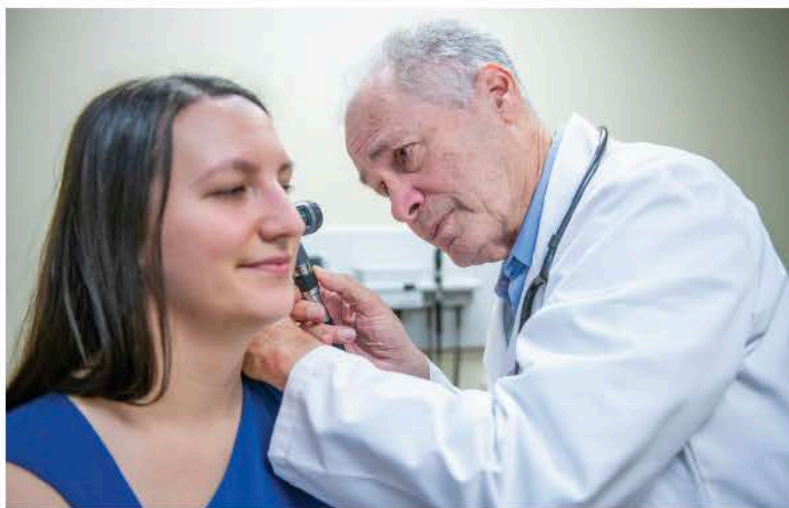
Martin Weiss, MD
HopeHealth in Orangeburg

We all have aches and pains, but when do they become a reason to seek medical treatment? If you experience pain in your joints, muscles, or bones, the pain is severe, or pain lasts more than three to four days, it needs to be diagnosed and treated by your provider. This could be arthritis or another form of rheumatic disease that affects millions of people in the United States.

Rheumatic diseases include many different disorders that can affect one's bones, joints, muscles, and connective tissues. These diseases can impact a person's health and ability to complete daily activities.

Common symptoms of rheumatic diseases include swelling and pain in one or more joints, like the wrist, elbow, or knee, or one or more of the smaller joints in the hands and feet. Other symptoms include stiffness in the joints when getting up in the morning, inflamed joints, or joint tenderness. Talk with your primary health care provider if you notice any of these symptoms. If your case is a challenge to diagnose or treat, your provider may refer you to a specialist called a rheumatologist. A rheumatologist is a doctor with special training in how to diagnose and treat rheumatic diseases.

The most common cause of arthritis in the older population is osteoarthritis, also called degenerative arthritis. It can affect any joint and is often attributed to "wear and tear," but the real cause is unknown. The disease most commonly associated with rheumatologists is rheumatoid arthritis - an inflammatory arthritis caused by an underlying autoimmune disease.



Lupus is another rheumatic disease with many symptoms, including a cheek rash following sun exposure, fatigue, arthritis, hair loss, and brain fog. Additionally, fibromyalgia is a rheumatologic disorder affecting the connective tissues, including the muscles, ligaments, and tendons.

Medications are typically the standard treatment for rheumatic diseases, and lifestyle changes such as diet and physical activity can help. While there is ongoing research into the role of diet in rheumatic diseases, the Mediterranean diet is often recommended for its anti-inflammatory properties. This eating plan focuses on incorporating plant foods that contain vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other plant substances called phytonutrients to help decrease inflammation and damage to cells.

Diet, physical activity as able, and taking medications as prescribed are all important in managing a rheumatic disease. Early diagnosis and treatment can lead to more positive outcomes with less risk of long-term damage to joints and organs. Early treatment can also increase the chance of remission.

Consider requesting a referral to a rheumatologist from your primary health care provider if you have unexplained joint pain and swelling that is not resolved or repeated episodes of joint pain, swelling, fever, skin rash, or fatigue.

Martin Weiss, MD, is a board-certified internist and rheumatologist serving patients at HopeHealth in Orangeburg and is accepting new patients. Referrals not required. For more information, call (803) 535-2272 or visit online at hope-health.org.



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SUMMER 2025



Quarterly

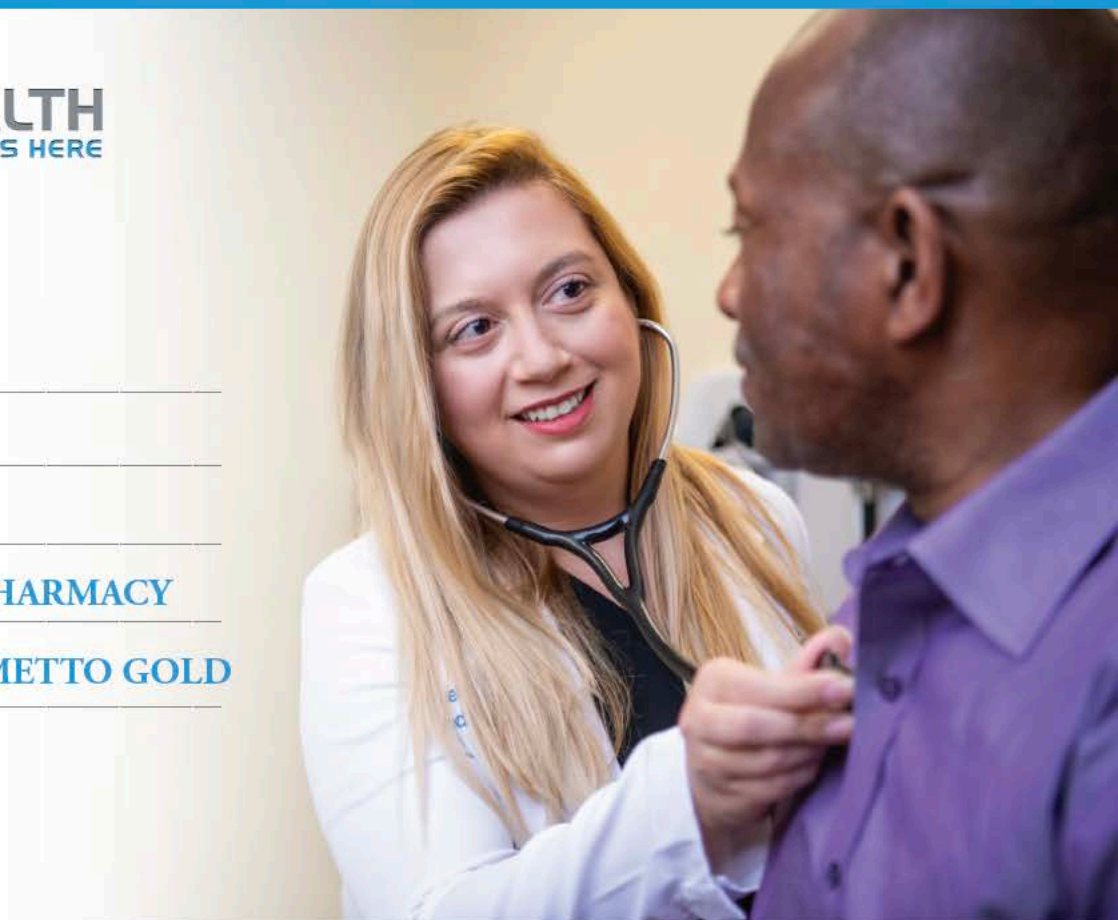
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6 WOMEN'S HEALTH + PALMETTO GOLD





At HopeHealth, we understand the unique health care needs of women throughout their lifespan. We offer gynecological exams, contraception method options, medication therapy for menopause, and consultations for a variety of women's health issues. We are committed to empowering women to make their health a priority. **Women's health services** are offered at the **HopeHealth Medical Plaza** in Florence (360 N. Irby Street) as well as **HopeHealth in Manning** (12 W. South Street). For more information or to become a patient, call (843) 432-2940.



HopeHealth's Palmetto Gold Recipient

*The **Palmetto Gold** award recognizes registered nurses in our state who exemplify excellence in nursing practice and commitment to the nursing profession.*

Congratulations to our **Palmetto Gold** award recipient, Leah Jeffords. A native of Pamplico, SC, Jeffords graduated from Francis Marion University in 2021 with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She started her nursing career in inpatient pediatrics and transitioned to family medicine at HopeHealth. On winning the award, Jeffords says, "HopeHealth has allowed me to give back to the community in more ways than I can count."



NEW PROVIDERS



Neva Bailey, LPC, CASII

Neva Bailey, LPC, CASII, is a behavioral health consultant serving patients at HopeHealth in Timmonsville. Neva has lived in Timmonsville for 22 years and is passionate about her community. Her clinical interests are stress management, grief and loss, anxiety and depression, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and children and adolescents.



Lashonda Dingle, FNP

Lashonda Dingle, FNP, is a family nurse practitioner at HopeHealth in Manning. Her clinical interests are primary care and family medicine. A Manning native, she is a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, the American Nurses Association, and the South Carolina Nurses Association.



Daniel Duarte, DMD

Daniel Duarte, DMD, is a dentist at the HopeHealth Medical Plaza in Florence. Dr. Duarte has served in the US Army National Guard since 2013. He enjoys connecting with patients and fostering trust, understanding, and a personalized approach to a patient's overall well-being. He is fluent in conversational Spanish.



Samantha Dukes, LPC

Samantha Dukes, LPC, is a behavioral health consultant at HopeHealth Pediatrics in Manning. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and a Master of Science degree in Applied Psychology (Clinical/Counseling option) from Francis Marion University in Florence. Her clinical interests are behavioral concerns, anxiety, depression, relationship distress, anger, PTSD, and trauma.



Paul James, DNP

Paul James, DNP, is a nurse practitioner serving patients at HopeHealth in Lake City. He earned a Master of Science in Nursing and a Doctor of Nursing from the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. His clinical interests are COPD, asthma, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. A native of Florence, James is excited to serve this community and the surrounding areas.

Patient Story Spotlight

"I'm blessed because HopeHealth is here. They have been my lifeline, my support, my backbone. They are my family, and I would never let them go." Catherine* has been a HopeHealth patient for several years. She came to HopeHealth when she was escaping a domestic violence situation. "I'm a survivor. I had to run for my life. I gave up everything I had, someone tried to kill me. I had to go into hiding for years."

Catherine and her children managed to escape to a shelter. HopeHealth was recommended as a resource. "They said it was the best medical center, so that's where I came."

Catherine is a patient of Deana Freeman, ANP. "She's everything to me. She is like my lifeline." When Deana first started seeing Catherine, she could tell that Catherine was suffering from depression. "At the time, I denied that I needed therapy. But she sat down with me, I explained to her what happened, and she listened to me."

Deana helped Catherine by prescribing medications to help with sleeping issues and manage her depression symptoms. Deana also referred Catherine to HopeHealth behavioral health services, matching her with Nicholas Lee, LPC, NCC. Catherine shared details of her domestic abuse with Lee. "He was there to talk to me. He explained that he was going to take care of me, that I'm going to be okay."

"HopeHealth is like my family. The front office staff, the nurses, they all know me. They share moments with me, and I couldn't survive if I didn't have them. I have been through a lot of challenges, but HopeHealth makes my life so much better."

**Patient name and information have been changed for anonymity purposes.*

compassionate
care ♥ fund

HopeHealth patients may experience barriers to their health care needs that cannot be met directly by our providers. The Compassionate Care Fund exists to contribute to these unmet needs, such as the cost of specialty care and emergency assistance.



☐ \$20 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$500
☐ \$1000 ☐ Other \$ _____

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☐ Visa ☐ AMEX ☐ Master Card

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Expiration Date

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Signature

☐ This gift is in memory
of (name of deceased):

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(name of individual):

to commemorate _____

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HopeHealth is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations to HopeHealth are tax-deductible according to current IRS laws.
Mail donations to: HopeHealth Community Relations, 360 North Irby Street, Florence, SC 29501.

☐ Yes, I would like to make a donation to the HopeHealth Compassionate Care Fund.





The Diabetes Institute at HopeHealth has expanded services to Clarendon County and surrounding areas. Board-certified endocrinologists Dr. Melissa Gonzalez Lara and Dr. Gulce Solakoglu work with dietitian Anna Rhoads to provide cutting-edge care at **HopeHealth in Manning**. We accept referrals from your primary care provider. Call (803) 433-4321 for more information.

Sister Act: A Family Bond Across HopeHealth Pharmacies

For sisters Lisa Morris (Pharmacist-in-Charge, HopeHealth Pharmacy Greeleyville) and Rachael Atkinson (Pharmacist, Williamsburg Pharmacy), community is everything. The sisters grew up in Cedar Swamp, just outside of Kingstree. Rachael followed in Lisa's footsteps to pursue pharmacy work, and this camaraderie is still clear in their daily interactions. Rachael shared, "We work together usually one day every two weeks, but we talk to each other at least once a day! Our husbands love to pick on us about how much we talk to each other!"

When asked what they like most about pharmacy work, both women take pride in giving back and making a difference, offering support and medication guidance to patients. When it comes to working at HopeHealth, the answer is much the same. Rachael stated, "When Williamsburg Pharmacy partnered with HopeHealth, I felt like it made us an even more valuable asset to the community... it allowed us to provide medications that were affordable for our patients. I like working for a company that truly has compassion for its patients as well as its employees."

Their passion for people is evident in their excellent work as well as their close bond. Lisa shared, "Working together as sisters allows us the opportunity to share time together in a profession that we love, while serving the community that we, as well as our children, grew up in."

