



WINTER 2023 DELIVERING QUALITY HEALTH CARE TO SOUTH CENTRAL GEORGIA

SOUTHWELL

with you for life

BRITTLE BONES:
PREVENTING OSTEOPOROSIS

2

PRIORITIZING YOUR OWN
LONG-TERM WELLBEING

3

PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT:
SUPPORTING WOMEN
AND CHILDREN

7

*Women,
Stress &
Gut Health*

4

FIND US ON
SOCIAL MEDIA



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BY VISITING [MYSOUTHWELL.COM](https://mysouthwell.com)

Did You Know?

Because of the hormone changes that occur during menopause, women are more at risk of developing **osteoporosis** than men.



Bone loss is a natural part of aging—but it doesn't mean that you can't slow the process down and keep your body feeling good as you get older. For women of all ages, building strong bones means:

- Getting (and staying) active—especially weight-bearing activities like running, walking, lifting weights, and even gardening.
- Avoiding cigarettes and alcohol—if you drink alcohol, make sure it is in moderation, which for women is no more than one drink per day.
- Ensuring that you're getting enough vitamin D and calcium—your doctor can help you know if diet changes or supplements are needed.

Take care of yourself *now* to help prevent pain and discomfort in the *future* through regular, healthy habits that you engage in daily.

DIGITAL CONNECTION:

"The oath that Dr. Felton took, she lives up to it."

— TONY JOHNSON, SR., A PATIENT OF THE
ARTHRITIS AND OSTEOPOROSIS CENTER
OF SOUTH GEORGIA



Hear more about the care that **Carolyn Felton, MD**, and the physicians of the Arthritis and Osteoporosis Center of South Georgia take with their patients by visiting mysouthwell.com/arthritis.

NOT YOUR MOTHER'S MIDWIFE

If you've ever heard the term "midwife" and immediately think of a home birth in the early 1900s, think again! Midwives play a pivotal role in providing holistic care to women of all ages, extending beyond the traditional focus on labor and delivery.

Beyond pregnancy, midwives offer personalized care to women throughout various life stages. From adolescence to menopause, midwives prioritize women's health, addressing reproductive concerns, conducting routine check-ups, and providing guidance on family planning.

During prenatal visits, midwives closely monitor the health of both mother and baby, offering support, education, and fostering trust. In labor, they provide emotional support, monitor progress, and assist with pain management. During the postpartum period, midwives continue to guide new mothers through maternal recovery and newborn care.

Located in Valdosta, Southwell OB/GYN is excited to welcome Michelle Shifflett and Hillary Midler, both of whom are certified nurse midwives. Along with Joe Clifton, MD, Hillary and Michelle bring a wealth of experience to address every woman's unique needs.

To make an appointment with Hillary or Michelle,
call (229) 262-6810.



Michelle Shifflett,
FNP-C, CNM



Hillary Midler, CNM



The Important Things

According to the 2022 annual Gallup Health and Healthcare poll, nearly 1/3 (32%) of women report that they have delayed medical care for a very or somewhat serious condition.

Regular visits with your primary care provider are a key part of getting, and staying healthy, so that you can keep focusing on the things that matter most to you. Many women delay care because they are busy people with busy lives—a trend that Southwell providers have noticed.

Margaret Richardson-Nixon, MD, of Southwell Medical Clinic – Internal Medicine, shares: “It’s not at all uncommon for women to put off their regular visits with their primary care doctor, or to avoid going to the doctor when larger healthcare concerns arise, especially when they are busy taking care of the family or with work (or both!). Regular healthcare visits are an important part of self-care that will help keep women living healthy lives and doing what they love.”

Katie Hudgens, MD, of Southwell Medical – Adel Primary Care, agrees with Dr. Richardson-Nixon. “I work with both pediatric and adult patients, and I know many women that work very hard to stay on top of their children’s regular healthcare needs—but will often neglect their own! Don’t let the busyness of your day-to-day lives keep you from getting the important preventative healthcare that your primary care doctor can provide.”



Why is it so important to stay on top of regular, preventative healthcare visits? Seeing a doctor regularly can help identify healthcare problems and treat them before they become larger problems that may require more extensive care. For women, preventative healthcare can include regular screenings for cancers, osteoporosis or other rheumatic diseases, or other common ailments like diabetes or high cholesterol. Having a primary care doctor who knows you well can help identify your risk factors and make sure you’re getting the right care at the right time.

Getting regular preventative care helps you stay focused on the important things in life, knowing that you’re doing everything you can to be healthy.

Still searching for the right primary care provider for you? Visit mysouthwell.com/providers to find a primary care partner that can help you get, and stay, healthy in the long run.



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Taking Care:

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

Not taking time for yourself? You may be at higher risk for gastrointestinal issues.

GUT HEALTH—MORE THAN A BUZZWORD

If you engage in social media, you've probably realized that 'gut health' is becoming a bit of a buzzword online. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for unqualified online influencers to tout pills, yogurts, juice cleanses, and more that are supposedly designed to improve your gut health and thus, improve many other aspects of your health.

This online trend is unfortunate, not only because it is spreading misinformation about what a healthy lifestyle really looks like, but because it may lead you to believe that your gut health is nothing more than a social media trend—which is not the case. We sat down with George Yared, MD, of Southwell Medical Clinic - Gastroenterology to better understand what really makes a gut healthy, and how gut health can impact a women's overall health and wellbeing.



George Yared, MD
Southwell Medical Clinic
- Gastroenterology

THE GUT-BRAIN CONNECTION

Dr. Yared shares that inside of our digestive system is the enteric nervous system (ENS), which is mainly responsible for controlling digestion, like breaking down food and ensuring that nutrients from our food are absorbed into our body. This nervous system is connected to our brain, and these two important parts of our bodies are constantly sending signals back and forth.

To make it simple—the gut has millions of bacteria that work together to maintain a healthy environment and when things get out of whack, it can send signals to the brain that something isn't quite right. Similarly, when our brain is aware that something isn't right, it is sending those signals to the gut. These signals can cause more issues on either side—for example, with the gut causing issues that result in the brain releasing less of the important hormones that support our mental health, or, with the brain causing the gut to release hormones that negatively impact our digestive processes.

WOMEN, STRESS, AND GUT HEALTH

It is well documented by researchers that stress can impact gut health—contributing to problems like stomach ulcers, heartburn, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and acid reflux. It is also well known that women are more likely to experience many of these disorders than men. Why is that?



Dr. Yared shares, “There are many factors that impact gastrointestinal issues, and every person is different. However, it is well-known that ongoing or chronic stress, especially high stress, can negatively impact the gut and may be a part of many gastrointestinal issues. Women who may be internalizing stress and not taking the necessary steps to relieve it may find that their stress results in stomach problems.”

“We’ve all heard of getting ‘butterflies’ when we’re excited or nervous about something. That kind of physical reaction to emotions can occur with negative emotions and negative physical reactions. That is why we sometimes see mental health issues, like stress and anxiety, causing physical health issues. Similarly, we sometimes see ongoing gastrointestinal issues impacting a women’s levels of anxiety and stress.”

WHOLE-BODY HEALTH

It’s important to remember that a healthy gut—or unhealthy gut—doesn’t necessarily mean that it is the solution or cause of all your health problems.

Dr. Yared shares that you can’t just assume that these problems are caused by the gut. “When women experience health problems like these, it’s very important to consider all of the possible causes,” Dr. Yared says. “Treating any type of health problem requires a provider that can consider the whole patient—including anything else that can result in the issues that they may be having. Working with a gastroenterologist can help you identify if there are problems in your gut that may be causing the health issues that you see and can help you treat them if that’s the case. It’s always important to work with a doctor who can consider multiple points of view and who can help you consider the best direction for your treatment.”

BEYOND THE BRAIN

Researchers have explored other possible reasons that women are more likely to experience certain gastrointestinal issues than men. Two factors that may impact this include:

Hormones: Researchers have said that gastrointestinal symptoms may be impacted by the fluctuation of hormones that women experience throughout the monthly menstrual cycle (the menstrual cycle typically lasts 23-35 days) and early menopause.

Slow-Moving Digestion: Some research has shown that the nerve cells that are controlling how food moves through our intestines may be slower to respond in women than in men, which can cause more feelings of nausea or bloating.

George Yared, MD
Southwell Medical Clinic –
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Tifton, GA 31794



Pelvic Floor Therapy

For Halee, pelvic floor therapy was the answer to problems that she, and many women, experience after giving birth.



When we first spoke with Halee, she shared, “I grew up here in Dublin, smack dab in the middle of Georgia. It’s a small town, where everybody knows everybody. We had our son Mason in November of 2022, and he is such a blessing.”

Two weeks after Mason’s birth, Halee knew that something was wrong:

“I stood up and it was like something inside of me just dropped. There was an intense pressure that was only alleviated by lying flat. And I started to have issues with incontinence. You know, people always say that after giving birth you won’t be able to sneeze or jump on a trampoline, but I didn’t really believe it until then.”

Halee went to her doctor and was told that she had a bladder prolapse. “She said that it was no big deal, and I

said, ‘No, this needs to be fixed.’” After seeing two doctors and learning that surgery is a last resort in situations like this, Halee was ultimately recommended to pelvic floor therapy with Neeli Fortson Mims, a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) at Tift Regional Medical Center’s Outpatient Therapy Services.

Halee wasn’t expecting much but found that pelvic floor therapy was the answer to the problems she was experiencing. Halee shares, “Pelvic floor therapy can be very intimate, but with Neeli it wasn’t awkward. She was very careful to make me feel comfortable, and she explained things so well.”

“Neeli and I discussed my goals and planned my therapy around those. I had six weeks of sessions with her and, it’s really cheesy to say, but it made such a big difference.”

“I don’t want women to think, ‘Oh, well, I had a kid. This is just something that I have to deal with for the rest of my life’ because it’s really not true. Women should be able to have children and still have a healthy sex life and not have pain during intercourse. We should not have to write off incontinence as something that just is what it is when you have a child.”

To learn more about pelvic floor therapy, call 229-353-6188.

“I don’t want women to think, ‘Oh, well, I had a kid. This is just something that I have to deal with for the rest of my life’ because it’s really not true.”

Provider Spotlight

Say Hello to **HANNAH GAYLE BATTEN, MD,**
Pediatrician with Affinity Pediatrics – Tifton



SERVING THE REGION: “I am a south Georgia native, born and raised on my family’s farm in Douglas, Georgia. I attended Mercer University in Macon, Georgia, where I completed my undergraduate studies and earned my medical degree. I completed my pediatric residency training at Navicent Health in Macon.

Before moving to Tifton, I was an active member of Northway Church and I enjoy sports, music, farm life, and helping my local community. In my free time, I enjoy being outdoors with my dog, Cricket.”



A SHARED PASSION: “The providers at Affinity Pediatrics are as passionate as I am about the pediatric specialty. I knew after meeting all of the staff and providers at Affinity that I wanted to become a part of this community.

To put it simply: kids are the best! They’re curious, creative, and playful, and see the world through a unique lens. What I love most about the pediatric specialty is getting to know my patients and their families, and equipping families with the comfort that they are receiving the utmost care and dedication to their child’s health. I am honored to be able to care for our community’s precious children and walk beside them and their families as they learn and grow into happy, healthy adults.”



SUPPORTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN: “Welcoming a new infant into the world is a joyful and exciting time, but it can also be a time of great stress, anxiety, and even depression. More than half of mothers will experience postpartum blues within the first few weeks after delivery and about 20% of mothers will develop postpartum depression.

Postpartum depression has a significant impact on children’s cognitive, emotional, and physical development. The American Academy of Pediatrics has developed guidelines for screening mothers for postpartum depression at early well-infant visits, placing pediatricians in a good position to screen mothers for postpartum depression.

As pediatricians, we are oftentimes in contact with mothers more frequently than their OB/GYNs and primary care physicians. It is our goal to provide a judgement-free, safe environment for mothers to have an open conversation about their own wellbeing while providing the best care for their infants. Strengthening the relationship between mother and child sets the tone for healthy growth and development for the child and for the mother in her new role.”



Dr. Batten is accepting
new patients at Affinity Pediatrics –
Tifton. Call 229-353-7337 to learn more.



901 East 18th Street
Tifton, GA 31794

FOR QUESTIONS about Southwell and *Southwell* magazine, call 229-353-6318.

This magazine is not intended as specific medical advice and is not a substitute for professional medical treatment or diagnosis. Consult your physician with any questions about your health.

Access your health information via the Southwell Patient Portal. Learn more at mysouthwell.com/portal.

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RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER

NEW LIFE-SAVING PROCEDURE AVAILABLE AT SOUTHWELL

Robotic-assisted bronchoscopy is used to detect lung cancer—the third most common cause of cancer and leading cause of cancer-related death. Early detection, diagnosis, and treatment lead to better outcomes for this serious illness.

Rubal Patel, MD, FCCP, Director of Pulmonary and Critical Care at Southwell, now offers robotic-assisted bronchoscopies using the Ion platform, which allows her to examine and collect tissue samples from hard-to-reach areas of the lung in a minimally invasive, outpatient procedure.

Learn more at mysouthwell.com/services/pulmonary-and-critical-care.



Find a physician at mysouthwell.com

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE 38TH ANNUAL

Tree of Life

Tuesday, December 12th | 6:00 p.m.

On the Front Lawn of Tift Regional Medical Center

Remember your friends and loved ones by purchasing a light for the **38th Annual Tree of Life**. By supporting this event, your tax-deductible gift will help provide for the special needs of patients of **Hospice of Tift Area** and the **Anita Stewart Oncology Center** of Tift Regional Medical Center. **Each light is in memory or honor of one person.**

On **Tuesday, December 12th**, please join TRMC as we light the Tree of Life at **6:00 pm on the front lawn of Tift Regional Medical Center**. Together we can enjoy music, a tree lighting ceremony and a presentation honoring our friends and loved ones.

 **HOSPICE
OF TIFT AREA**

 **ANITA STEWART
ONCOLOGY CENTER**
TIFT REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

For more information or to make a contribution, call **229.353.6330** or visit **MySouthwell.com/tol/**.

Learn more at MySouthwell.com 