

centura health building  
nationally renowned  
heart network

# Heart of the matter

by michele conklin



*The 54-year-old farmer from La Junta bids his children goodbye after breakfast and heads out to the fields. Before he makes it too far, he is gripped by a tightening in his chest ...*

*A 66-year-old woman in Highlands Ranch wakes up early feeling nauseated. Unaware that she's having a heart attack, she forces herself to get up and start the day ...*

**T**hese stories are not real—but they could be. Every hour, one Coloradan dies from cardiovascular disease, making it the state's leading cause of death.

Centura Health is the state's largest provider of cardiac services. It operates 12 hospitals throughout Denver and the Front Range, as well as numerous medical clinics, seven senior living communities, Flight For Life® Colorado, and home care and hospice services. More than 170 cardiac physicians on staff at Centura Health hospitals performed more than 8,000 cardiac procedures—ranging from emergency catheterizations to highly sophisticated robotic heart surgery—between July 2008 and June 2009.

#### \* **coordination is key**

A systemwide electronic medical record and a close affiliation between the hospitals and physicians allow patients to be transferred quickly and efficiently within the Centura Health network. Centura Health's Flight For Life

transports patients from rural areas and between hospitals for lifesaving care.

This well-coordinated network provides patients with exactly what they need. The fictional farmer in La Junta, for instance, would be flown to St. Mary-Corwin Medical Center

## 6 steps to a healthy heart

Heart disease is the leading killer of Coloradans, but you have the power to change that. Follow these six key steps to help prevent heart disease:

- 1. Quit smoking.** It is the No. 1 preventable cause of disability and death associated with heart disease.
- 2. Exercise** at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- 3. Maintain a BMI of between 18 and 25**, and a waist size less than 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men.
- 4. Eat a heart-healthy diet**, heavy on fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fish.
- 5. Manage stress and depression.**
- 6. Take your medications** if you've been diagnosed with high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

To get a FREE online assessment of your heart health, visit [centuraheart.org](http://centuraheart.org).

Source: American Heart Association and the National Institute for Health



## heart-smart surgery

Facing the possibility of cardiac surgery can be a frightening experience. Fortunately, less-invasive options are now available.

Surgeons affiliated with Porter Adventist Hospital were the first in Denver to perform minimally invasive heart surgery using the da Vinci® Surgical System. In 2008, Myles Guber, M.D., and Randolph Kessler, M.D., pioneered the use of robotic-assisted surgery for the first mitral valve surgery in the Denver area.

In contrast to traditional heart surgery, the da Vinci system does not require a sternotomy, a procedure in which the surgeon splits the breastbone and spreads the ribs to gain access to the chest cavity. Instead, the heart is accessed through small incisions between the ribs. This approach results in less blood loss, less risk of infection, shorter hospital stays, less pain and scarring, and faster recovery times.

in Pueblo for emergency care, and then might be taken to Penrose-St. Francis Health Services in Colorado Springs for robotic-assisted surgery.

The example of the woman from Highlands Ranch could receive an emergency heart catheterization at Littleton Adventist Hospital and heart surgery at nearby Porter Adventist Hospital or St. Anthony Central Hospital.

“As a system, we provide comprehensive cardiac care all the way from evaluation and diagnosis through treatment,” says John Mehall, M.D., director of cardiothoracic surgery for Penrose-St. Francis and a specialist in minimally invasive cardiac surgery. “Patients have access to the capabilities of an entire system.”

### \* focused on heart health

Because of its specialization in cardiac services and the importance of cardiac health in Colorado, Centura Health has selected heart care to be one of five areas it focuses on over the next decade. By 2020, Centura Health aims to rank alongside Mayo Clinic and Cleveland Clinic as the nation’s preeminent providers of heart care, says Randy Haffner, CEO of Porter Adventist Hospital and chair of Centura Health’s cardiac initiative.

“We will be pooling our resources and the expertise of our affiliated physicians to determine the changes that need to be made to achieve the highest quality outcomes in the nation,” Haffner says. “What that means to patients is that they will have access to the best care available, regardless of where they live.”

### \* cardiac care at home

Centura Health is committed to extending care outside its hospitals as well and currently provides an array of screening

and prevention programs, including home health services. Five years ago, Centura Health at Home began a program that allows nurses to use Telehealth, a Web-based system to monitor patients.

This program is particularly effective for congestive heart failure patients because daily monitoring can head off problems before they require hospitalization, says Erin Denholm, CEO of the division. Telehealth has cared for nearly 900 patients, including 350 with congestive heart failure. Only 9.1 percent of them have had to go back into the hospital within 30 days of the initial hospital visit, compared with 20 percent for all Medicare patients nationally.

“The benefit of the 2020 strategy is that we will identify the centers of excellence, inventory our best talent and brilliance and then spread that throughout every part of Centura,” Denholm says. **v&v**

## heart help

Porter Adventist Hospital offers robotic-assisted cardiac surgery for mitral valve repair, mitral valve replacement and atrial septal defect closure.

To learn more, visit **porterhospital.org/heart** and click Robotic Heart Surgery, or call **303-778-1955**.

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## free heart charm

Centura Health is giving away 1,000 heart charms during February in honor of National Heart Month. To get your FREE charm, visit **centura.org/charm**.



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