

# Small Wonders

*da Vinci* procedures offer smaller incisions and faster recovery

When Cynthia Henderson began having gynecologic symptoms last summer, she chalked it up to the approach of menopause. But in August 2013, the 41-year-old who had recently relocated to Brunswick, had a minor trip-and-fall accident, and within a few hours she was bleeding profusely.

She went to the Emergency Care Center at the Southeast Georgia Health System Brunswick Campus, where an ultrasound revealed a tumor the size of a grapefruit on one of her ovaries.

When she lived in north Georgia, Mrs. Henderson had undergone two cesarean sections, which she describes as “very traumatic.” The prospect of another open surgery horrified her—especially the long recovery time.

“I am married with four children and one grandchild, and I work as a personal accountant,” she

says. “I have a very active life and the possibility of a long recovery process was very upsetting.”

Mrs. Henderson asked Marie O. Easterlin, M.D., FACOG, board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, Lily OB/GYN, about minimally invasive surgery with the *da Vinci*® Surgical System, and Dr. Easterlin agreed it was the best option for removing Mrs. Henderson’s tumor and for performing a total hysterectomy.

“I had the surgery around 8 a.m. and I was up walking the hallways of the hospital that evening,” Mrs. Henderson says. “I was able to go home the next day. I can’t rave enough about how much faster the recovery time is.”

## A BEVY OF BENEFITS

Just how much faster? A traditional hysterectomy requires a four- to six-week recovery. Procedures performed with the *da Vinci* system require just two

to four recovery weeks—and many women feel ready to return to their daily routines even sooner.

According to Dr. Easterlin, the robotic-assisted surgery system requires only a few small incisions instead of a large abdominal incision.

“Patients have much less pain and recovery is quicker,” she explains. “It’s an especially good option for women who have had previous abdominal surgeries and may have scar tissue. Because *da Vinci* provides excellent visualization of the anatomy, we’re able to safely remove scar tissue or adhesions and save women from a big open procedure.”

Two months after her surgery, Mrs. Henderson’s four tiny incisions were barely visible. “It is so much less invasive than open surgery and the recovery time is just amazing,” she says.

## HOW IT WORKS, WHO IT HELPS

When performing a procedure using the *da Vinci* system, the surgeon sits at a console. He or she looks at highly magnified, three-dimensional views provided by a small camera attached to the end of one of the robotic arms inserted into the patient. The system’s other mechanical arm holds tiny surgical tools the surgeon manipulates via controls mounted on the console.

“The robotic arms articulate like our own hands and maybe even a little bit better, so they can go into any position,” says Margaret H. Goodman, M.D., FACOG, board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, Southeast Georgia Physician

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Marie O. Easterlin, M.D.,  
FACOG, and patient  
Cynthia Henderson

Associates–Obstetrics & Gynecology, a strategic affiliate of the Health System. “That makes it more precise and exact, and the instruments make razor-thin incisions that don’t manhandle the tissue.”

Those micro-incisions are a big factor in the shorter recovery time. Patients find recovery is more comfortable, too, and often don’t need narcotic pain medications.

Hysterectomies are one of the most common gynecologic procedures performed at Southeast Georgia Health System, but certainly not the only one, reports Tina Mitchell, M.D., FACOG, board-certified obstetrician and

gynecologist, Lily OB/GYN, and chief, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Brunswick Campus.

“The da Vinci system can be used to treat endometriosis, uterine bleeding, fibroids, prolapse, pre-cancerous conditions—anything related to the uterus, ovaries or fallopian tubes,” she says. “In many cases, the procedure is being done to relieve symptoms, whether it’s heavy bleeding, discomfort from large fibroids, or a concerning cyst or mass on the ovary.”

“The da Vinci system can also be helpful in treating patients who may not be ideal candidates for open surgery,” adds Shirley D. Wilson, M.D., FACOG,

Online

## COULD DA VINCI BE RIGHT FOR YOU?

Consult with your doctor, but you can find more information about the da Vinci Surgical System at [sghs.org/davinci](https://sghs.org/davinci).

board-certified obstetrician and gynecologist, Southeast Georgia Physician Associates–Obstetrics & Gynecology.

“The da Vinci system makes it easier to perform procedures on women who are heavier or who have never had a child,” she explains. “Plus, women who might have refused a traditional open hysterectomy for symptom relief more readily agree to a laparoscopic or da Vinci procedure because the recovery is so much shorter and easier.” ■

## HIGHLY SKILLED PROFESSIONALS

**All of these board-certified obstetricians and gynecologists at Southeast Georgia Health System are specially trained in the da Vinci Surgical System:**

- Mitchell V. Brock, M.D.
- Marie O. Easterlin, M.D.
- Margaret H. Goodman, M.D.
- James F. Gowen, M.D.
- Jason M. Joseph, M.D.
- Tina Mitchell, M.D.
- Darrin A. Strickland, M.D.
- Shirley D. Wilson, M.D.