



# A DISAPPEARING ACT

The latest in cardiac stent technology — dissolvable stents — is now available at Southeast Georgia Health System



**W**hen a broken bone heals, the cast is taken off. When a surgical site closes, the stitches are removed. And now, when a weakened artery regains its strength, the stent that has been holding it open simply dissolves away.

Dissolvable stents are the latest advancement in the treatment of coronary artery disease, and the Southeast Georgia Health System Brunswick Campus hospital is the first community hospital in the United States to offer it to patients.

“Some larger hospitals across the United States have had access to this new stent technology; however, it was not available to smaller, community-based hospitals until now,” says Michael H. Butler, M.D., chief, Department of Medicine, and medical director, Cardiology, Brunswick Campus. “Our cath lab volumes and positive outcomes resulted in us being the first community hospital chosen to offer patients this technology.”

## How It Works

Stents have been in use for decades to treat clogged arteries and have traditionally been made of flexible metal mesh. Second-generation stents were coated with medication to help prevent restenosis, the relogging of an artery. In 2016, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Absorb GT1™, a new type of drug-coated stent that’s bioresorbable, meaning it dissolves away once the artery no longer needs it.

## BE HEART SMART!

For more information about Southeast Georgia Health System cardiology services, visit [sghs.org/cardiology](http://sghs.org/cardiology).

To find a cardiologist, call **1-855-ASK-SGHS** (1-855-275-7447).



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**Interventional cardiologists**  
*Michael H. Butler, M.D., Marsha J. Certain, M.D., and Matthew E. Certain, M.D.*

## A Closer Look at Absorb

The new dissolvable stent in use at the Southeast Georgia Health System Brunswick Campus hospital is Abbott's Absorb GT1™ Bioresorbable Vascular Scaffold System made from bioresorbable polymer. FDA-approved in 2016, the device has been implanted in more than 150,000 patients worldwide and has a more than 98 percent procedural success rate, which is comparable to previous-generation drug-eluting stents.

Southeast Georgia Health System board-certified interventional cardiologists trained to implant the new stent include:

- **Michael H. Butler, M.D.**, Coastal Cardiology
- **Marsha J. Certain, M.D.**, Strickland Certain Jones
- **Matthew E. Certain, M.D.**, Strickland Certain Jones

"It's pretty remarkable technology," says Matthew E. Certain, M.D., vice chief, Department of Medicine, Brunswick Campus, and the first physician to implant the dissolving stent at the Health System. "The traditional drug-coated metal stents are excellent and clearly have a role in many patients. However, this is the next iteration of cardiac stent technology, and over time I expect the dissolvable stent to be the preferred option."

The Absorb stent begins to dissolve into the body after about a year, which is plenty of time for an artery to heal from stenosis, and it completely dissolves over the course of three years.

### What's the Difference?

As far as deployment goes, dissolvable stents are inserted in the same way as bare metal and drug-eluting stents.

"There's no difference in the procedure from the patient's perspective," says Dr. Butler. "From the physician's perspective, the Absorb stent is slightly more bulky than a normal stent, so it requires more exact vessel measurements to determine which artery is best suited for the stent. But placement is done in the same minimally invasive way as other stents."

Dr. Butler explains that dissolving stents allow the artery to flex and pulse freely once the device has dissolved away. Because there is no fixed metal in the artery, there are no restrictions on what the artery can do. There's also less

chance of a blood clot or plaque getting caught at the site of the device. And should doctors need to re-intervene for any reason, not having a metal stent in the way gives them easier access for future treatment.

### What It Means for You

Offering access to this new technology is just one more way Southeast Georgia Health System is committed to its community.

"The Health System has traditionally been in favor of pursuing new technologies for the patients it serves, and this continues that tradition," says Dr. Certain. "It's good for our patients to have access to lifesaving, quality care close to home."

Valory Peoples, MBA, RRT, director, Cardiopulmonary Services, Brunswick Campus, says there are very few reasons a cardiopulmonary patient would need to travel outside Brunswick, including for procedures that require catheterization or the examination and treatment of the heart chambers and arteries.

"We just opened a second catheterization lab a little over a year ago, and it's fully comparable to any other cath lab in the Southeast. Our technology is state-of-the-art," she says. "We do just about everything — cardiac catheterization, interventions, peripheral studies, pacemakers and cardiac monitor implants. Patients in other small communities often have to go to larger cities to find these services, but we have them right here." ●