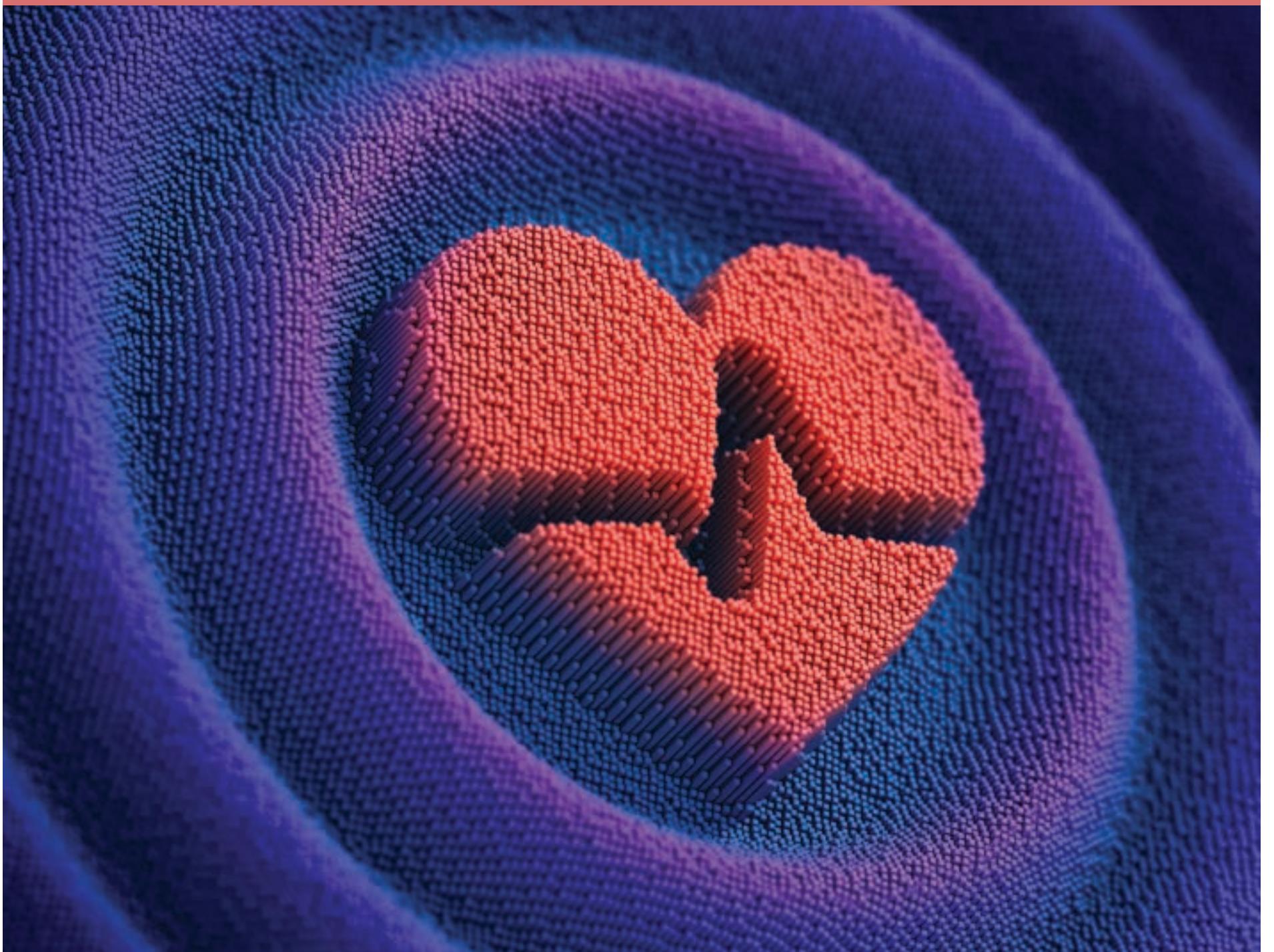


BRANDED CONTENT

FEBRUARY 24, 2025

# HEART HEALTH

A W A R E N E S S



**H**EART HEALTH IS AT THE CORE OF OVERALL WELL-BEING, YET CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE REMAINS ONE OF THE leading causes of illness and mortality worldwide. The good news is that many heart conditions are preventable with the right lifestyle choices, early intervention, and awareness of risk factors. This collection of articles is designed to provide valuable insights and the latest information on keeping your heart strong and healthy.

From understanding the impact of diet and exercise to recognizing early warning signs of heart disease, these articles offer expert-backed guidance on maintaining cardiovascular health. You'll find practical advice on heart-friendly nutrition and the role of physical activity in promoting circulation and reducing heart disease risks, along with stress management techniques that can help lower blood pressure and improve overall heart function.

Whether you are looking to make small changes to your daily routine or seeking in-depth knowledge about cardiovascular wellness, this section serves as a comprehensive guide to heart health. By staying informed and proactive, you can take meaningful steps toward reducing your risk of heart disease and enjoying a vibrant, heart-healthy life.

## HEART HEALTH AWARENESS

# Protect Your Most Valuable Asset: Your Heart

Between the demands of career, family and life in vibrant Los Angeles, it is easy to overlook the state of your heart. For adults 40 and up, heart health is not a luxury, it's a necessity. This is the time where personal choices may significantly impact your well-being.

Many factors affect how well your heart functions, including lifestyle habits, age and family history. In 2020, more people died from cardiovascular disease than in any year since 2003, with Asian, Black and Hispanic people most significantly impacted.

This is not about drastic life changes; it is about informed, sustainable choices. Below are some heart-healthy habits you can adopt today to help prevent serious cardiovascular issues later:

- **Dietary Optimization:** Prioritize vegetables, fruits and whole grains. Limit intake of sodium, sweets, sugar-sweetened beverages, red meat and processed meats.
- **Cholesterol Management:** If you choose to shop for packaged foods, find foods low in saturated and trans fats. Enjoy at least 8 ounces of non-fried fish each week.
- **Healthy Blood Pressure:** Weight loss, and limiting sodium and alcohol intake, helps to reduce risk for a stroke, heart attack, heart failure and kidney disease.
- **Physical Activity:** Choose activities you and your loved ones enjoy. Wear comfortable clothes and exercise at the same time each day for at least 30-minutes.
- **Smoking Cessation:** It is never too late to quit smoking or vaping. You may be able to breathe easier, regain smell and taste, and lower your risk of heart disease.

In cases where lifestyle changes alone are not enough, you can learn to identify the warning signs of heart attacks and what to do when a heart attack happens to you or someone else.

## WHAT IS A HEART ATTACK?

In the US, someone has a heart attack every 40 seconds. A heart attack happens when the body's blood flow to the heart is severely reduced. Your heart is a muscle that needs oxygen-rich blood to survive. The heart's arteries often become narrowed from a buildup of fat, cholesterol and other substances called plaque. When plaque within a heart artery breaks away, a blood clot forms which can block blood flow to the heart muscle.

Heart attacks are not always a boardroom chest-clutching scene. Sometimes they develop slowly, starting with mild discomfort. While left arm pain is often associated with men, remember that heart attacks show up different-



ly in everyone. If you notice anything on this list, call 911 immediately.

- **Chest Discomfort:** Pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of your chest lasting more than a few minutes.
- **Upper Body Discomfort:** Pain or discomfort spreading to one or both arms, your back, neck, jaw, or stomach.
- **Shortness of Breath:** This can happen with or without chest discomfort. Suddenly gasping for air is a red flag.
- **Other Signs:** Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, lightheadedness – these are not just symptoms of a bad business dinner.

Know the signs, save a life (maybe yours). Seconds count and fast action can help with a full recovery. If you suspect a heart attack, call 911. It is the fastest route to life-saving treatment.

## SPECIALTY HEART CARE NEAR YOU

Now is the time to treat your symptoms, manage your risk and optimize your cardiac health. Dignity Health hospitals in Downtown

and business professionals should consider evaluating their heart health with their primary care physician. For specialty heart care, Dignity Health hospitals are ready to help you find a cardiac specialist near your work or home.

When it comes to choosing a heart specialist, trust a health care partner whose patient outcomes are a beat above the rest. Across LA County, Dignity Health hospitals have been named as high performing hospitals for heart attack by U.S. News & World Report and recognized by Healthgrades as a five-star recipient for the treatment of heart failure.

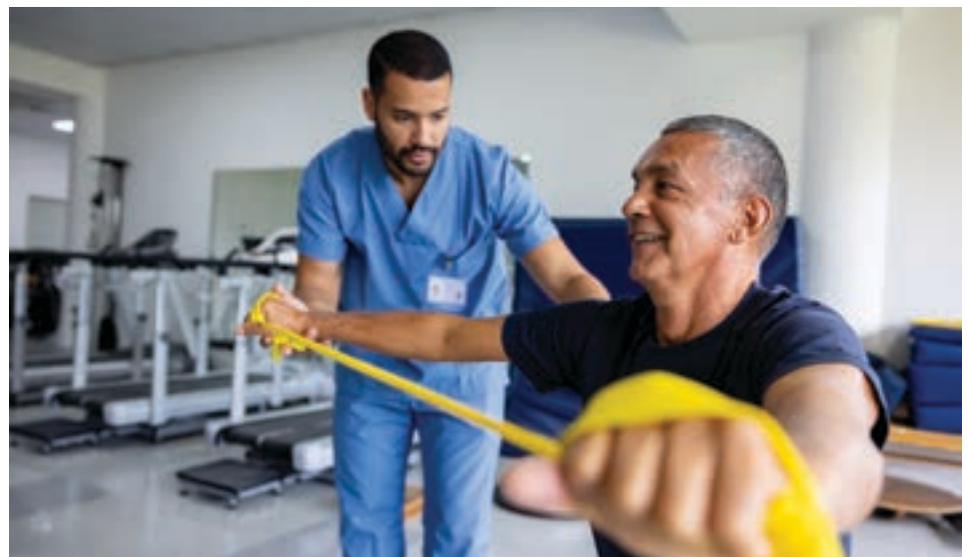
You and your loved ones deserve a heart specialist who understands the importance of cardiovascular health and offers a comprehensive suite of interventional care, surgical services, and cardiac rehabilitation to address your needs. That means top-notch care, advanced diagnostics, and treatments so you can get back to living your best life.

Learn more about Dignity Health's advanced cardiac care before a heart emergency happens at [dignityhealth.org/socal/heart](https://dignityhealth.org/socal/heart).

**In cases where lifestyle changes alone are not enough, you can learn to identify the warning signs of heart attacks and what to do when a heart attack happens to you or someone else.**

Los Angeles and the greater LA area offer community health classes on-campus and throughout the community at no cost to you.

You can take an online heart risk assessment to understand the risk factors for developing heart disease. All community members





Show your heart  
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Recognizing early signs of heart disease is key to protecting your heart's future. Our cardiologists are leaders in advanced heart care and are here to guide you with precision, experience, and personalized attention—*because your heart deserves the best.*

Schedule an appointment  
with our cardiologists today at  
**[PIHHealth.org/Doctors](https://PIHHealth.org/Doctors)**

## HEART HEALTH AWARENESS

# Prioritize Your Heart Health This February

February is Heart Month, a time to raise awareness about heart health and encourage proactive prevention. Heart disease is the leading global cause of death, but most conditions are preventable through lifestyle changes, early detection and risk management. Let's take steps for a healthier heart!

## UNDERSTANDING HEART DISEASE

Heart disease refers to conditions affecting the heart and blood vessels, including coronary artery disease, heart attacks, strokes and heart failure. Atherosclerosis — a buildup of plaque in the arteries that restricts blood flow — is a common cause. When blood flow is restricted, the heart must work harder, increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes. While heart disease can seem intimidating, many risk factors are within your control.

## KEY RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE

Understanding personal risk factors is the first step in preventing heart disease. While some factors, like age and family history, are beyond your control, many others can be managed. Here are the main areas to focus on:

- **High Blood Pressure:** Hypertension forces the heart to work harder, damaging arteries and raising the risk of heart disease.
- **Cholesterol Levels:** High levels of LDL (bad cholesterol) contribute to plaque buildup in the arteries. Keeping cholesterol in check is crucial for heart health.
- **Smoking:** Smoking damages blood vessels, reduces oxygen in the blood, and raises blood pressure, all of which can lead to heart disease.
- **Sedentary Lifestyle:** Inactivity can cause weight gain, high cholesterol and increased blood pressure — all risk factors for heart disease.
- **Poor Diet:** Diets high in unhealthy fats, salt and sugar raise blood pressure and cholesterol levels, increasing the likelihood of heart problems.
- **Obesity:** Excess weight, especially around the abdomen, increases the risk of high blood pressure, diabetes and heart disease.
- **Diabetes:** Type 2 diabetes significantly raises the risk of heart disease due to the damage that high blood sugar causes to blood vessels.
- **Stress:** Chronic stress can lead to high blood pressure and unhealthy habits, such as overeating or smoking, further increasing heart disease risk.

**Heart disease is the leading global cause of death, but most conditions are preventable through lifestyle changes, early detection, and risk management.**

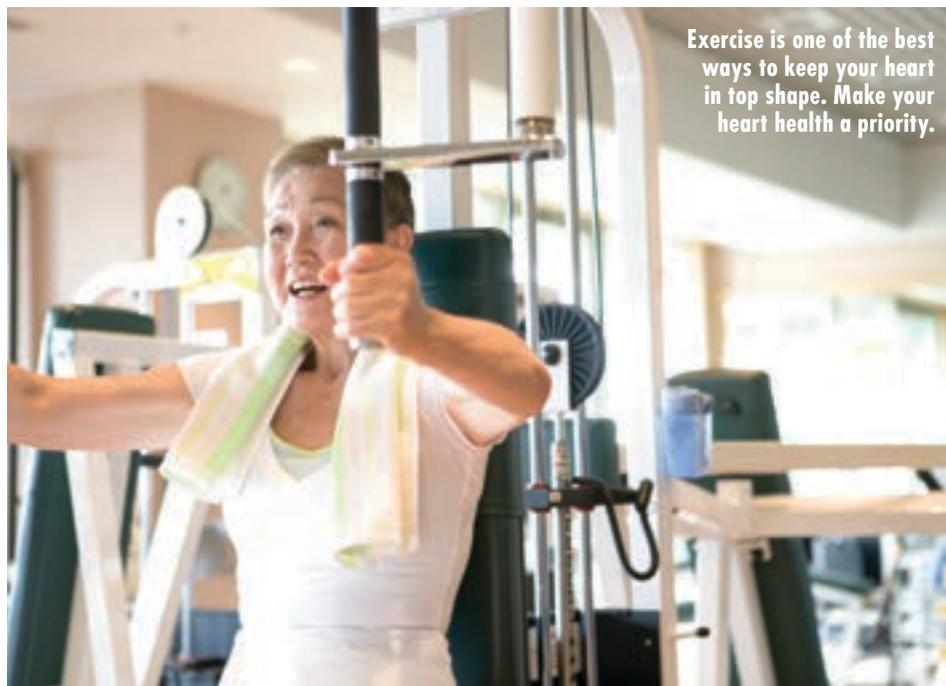
## PREVENTING HEART DISEASE

Although heart disease is a leading cause of death, it is largely preventable. By adopting heart-healthy habits, you can take control of your cardiovascular health and lower your risk. Here's how:

### 1. STAY ACTIVE

Regular physical activity is essential for

**Small lifestyle changes can make a big impact on the health of your heart. Let's take care of it, together!**



**Exercise is one of the best ways to keep your heart in top shape. Make your heart health a priority.**



**A healthy diet is key to keeping your heart strong. Fuel your heart with every bite!**

heart health. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week. Walking, swimming, cycling, and strength training are great ways to stay active.

### 2. EAT A HEART-HEALTHY DIET

A heart-healthy diet emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats. The Mediterranean diet — rich in olive oil, nuts, fish and legumes — has been shown to reduce heart disease risk. Limiting processed foods, sodium, and added sugars is essential for keeping your heart in top shape.

### 3. MONITOR YOUR HEALTH

Keep track of your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels to catch potential problems early. Many pharmacies and clinics offer free or low-cost screenings, making it easy to stay informed about your heart health.

### 4. QUIT SMOKING

Smoking is one of the most preventable causes of heart disease. Quitting smoking significantly improves heart health, even if you've been a smoker for years. Seek help from your doctor or use cessation programs to support your efforts.

### 5. MANAGE STRESS

Chronic stress can take a serious toll on your heart over time. Finding healthy ways to cope—such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing, or spending time outdoors—can reduce stress levels and protect your heart. Prioritize relaxation and self-care to support long-term heart health.

### 6. GET REGULAR CHECKUPS

Routine checkups help detect risk factors early and provide an opportunity to manage them. Discuss your family history, lifestyle, and

any concerns with your healthcare provider to create a personalized plan for maintaining heart health.

## TAKE ACTION FOR YOUR HEART

This Heart Month, commit to heart-healthy changes for a longer, healthier life. Exercise, eat better and get checkups — every step counts. Encourage loved ones to join you in protecting their hearts. Act now to prevent heart disease and improve well-being. A healthy heart means a happier life!

*This article was provided by PIH Health. To find a physician near you or learn more, visit [PIHHealth.org/Doctors](https://PIHHealth.org/Doctors)*

# Smart Medicine to Repair. Not Replace.



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At UCLA Health, we're pushing the boundaries of heart and vascular care by conducting leading-edge research that results in real-world clinical impact. From prevention to groundbreaking, collaborative approaches utilizing advanced technology, we are improving patient outcomes.

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## HEART HEALTH AWARENESS

# Cardiac Surgery Consortium Leverages Data for Improved Clinical Outcomes, Savings in Direct Costs and Bed Days

## University of California's five health centers share best practices for patient care

For more than a decade, the University of California's five health centers have pooled data from their cardiac surgery procedures to share best practices and markedly improve patient care.

Advanced analytics on 200 data elements from each patient have provided significant insights into local and systemwide performance, allowing the University of California Cardiac Surgery Consortium (UCCSC) to build standardized and sustainable quality improvements. Importantly, the metrics are vetted, audited and aligned to those of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS), a national database.

"We can benchmark ourselves against national data, and that allows us to be sure that we are among the best quality among elite institutions performing cardiac surgery, not only in California and in our local markets, but nationally," said Richard J. Shemin, MD, chief of the division of cardiac surgery and a distinguished professor at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.

The consortium's health centers perform about 4,000 cardiac surgery operations annually. Clinical outcomes in isolated coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG), the most common procedure, showed improved early extubation, reduced blood utilization and reduced readmissions between 2015 and 2023.

Overall, they resulted in 132 bed days saved and a financial margin improvement of about \$15 million.

### CONSORTIUM DATA

Dr. Shemin founded UCCSC in 2012, bringing together University of California health centers in San Diego, Irvine, Los Angeles, Davis and San Francisco. The cardiac surgery chiefs and database nurse coordinators confer biweekly and formally meet annually. In addition to increasing the volume of procedures and reducing their variability, the consortium aims to optimize costs and explore contracting opportunities, such as joint purchasing.

Each health center uploads its clinical data every quarter. Biome Analytics, a cardiovascular technology firm, then performs multi-variable regression analyses on single site and systemwide outcomes.

The health centers' 4,880 CABG procedures between 2015 and 2023 demonstrated several improvement markers:

- Any blood product utilization decreased by 8.26%
- Rate of early extubation (less than six hours) increased by 22%
- Average initial ventilator hours decreased by 1.5 hours
- Median length of stay in the ICU decreased by 0.38 days
- 30-day readmissions decreased by 3.96%
- New onset atrial fibrillation, at 25.4%, was below STS benchmark

Associated cost savings were also analyzed. For example, early extubation resulted in a margin improvement of about \$6.7 million and

decreased ventilation in about \$3.6 million. The 132 bed days saved equaled a cost savings of about \$486,000.

"It's amazing that through collaboration and data analysis we have been able to improve patients' lives as well as optimize the health systems' economic efficiency," said Nancy Satou, RN, director of informatics & database management in the division of cardiac surgery at UCLA Health.

**'Our goal is to minimize complications that drive longer hospital stays as well as having highly efficacious operations.'**

**RICHARD J. SHEMIN, MD**  
UCLA

In a further bid to reduce complications and readmissions, UCLA Health uses advanced technologies to monitor patients at home. These include wearables and tablets with Bluetooth to assess vital signs such as blood pressure, heart rhythm and blood oxygen levels. Adverse trends are addressed quickly with a physician consult to help prevent later emergency room visits or hospital readmissions.

"UCLA Health is the only one in the consortium that does this," said Dr. Shemin, who is also co-director of the Cardiovascular Center at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. "We've been able to reduce our readmission rates from the 20% range down to single digits. Patients' satisfaction levels go up and they feel cared for."

"We're just at the beginning of the revolution of wearables and monitoring technology, giving people who are willing to engage the feedback they need."

### AI AND MACHINE LEARNING MODELS

In addition to assessing clinical outcomes, the consortium has begun using machine learning models on preoperative factors to predict resource utilization and clinical outcomes.

A 2022 study primarily examined length of stay (LOS), with 30-day mortality, acute kidney injury and reoperation, among others, as secondary endpoints. In addition to its predictive capabilities, the machine learning models also identified several risk factors associated with increased resource use.

Future AI applications will require updating the database more frequently than its current quarterly schedule. The consortium's next challenge is to update monthly, and eventually, in real time.

Further down the line, the consortium aims to measure outcomes beyond its current 30 days. It's a difficult and expensive proposition that would require linking its robust database with other data sets, such as Medicare, to provide yearly, five-year and 10-year follow-ups.

"Our goal is to minimize complications that drive longer hospital stays as well as having highly efficacious operations," said Dr. Shemin. "And we're looking at the long-term efficacy of what we do."

Richard J. Shemin, MD



UCLA Health is among the world's most comprehensive and advanced health care systems, with a mission to provide state-of-the-art patient care, support pioneering research and train future generations of health care professionals. UCLA Health offers an integrated network of primary and specialty care services at more than 280 clinics across Southern California and the Central Coast and at five medical centers and hospitals – Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital, the Stewart and Lynda Resnick Neuropsychiatric Hospital

at UCLA, UCLA Santa Monica Medical Center and UCLA West Valley Medical Center. For 35 consecutive years, UCLA Health hospitals have earned a place on the U.S. News & World Report national honor roll, a distinction reserved for the relative few providing the highest-quality care across multiple medical specialties. UCLA Health also includes the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. UCLA Health is where discovery leads to world-class care.

Learn more at [uclahealth.org](http://uclahealth.org).

# In an emergency, time is critical.

## Advanced Cardiac Care

When alarming symptoms arise, you want the best care possible. And when it comes to your heart, and the ones closest to you, that means getting to a hospital with specialized cardiac services including advanced diagnostic and treatment capabilities. At Dignity Health hospitals in L.A. County, we've been named a High Performing Hospital for Heart Attack by the U.S. News & World Report, with Healthgrades recognizing us as a Five-Star Recipient for the Treatment of Heart Failure. Get to know more about our advanced cardiac care before an emergency strikes at [dignityhealth.org/socal/heart](https://dignityhealth.org/socal/heart).

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