

HEALTH FAQ

Metoprolol Rx for palpitations exacerbates anxiety

DEAR DR. ROACH: I just discontinued using metoprolol succinate extended release (ER) at a dosage of 6.25 mg. My heart rate is normally in the 70-80s, and my blood pressure is normal. My doctor prescribed it for palpitations, but it seems totally unnecessary. My issue is that I am experiencing tachycardia of over 100 beats every single night as well as dry mouth.

Could this be anxiety? And do you think an antidepressant like Zoloft or Paxil would help? I had a Holter monitor, which showed nothing wrong with my heart. The palpitations were sporadic only when I was anxious.

I stopped metoprolol because it exacerbated my anxiety and caused me depression as well as panic attacks. My doctor prescribed me 1 mg of Ativan to take at bedtime, but I am very scared of getting addicted to it. So, I thought maybe an antidepressant would help instead. My doctor prescribed 25 mg of Zoloft, but I want another opinion. — S.S.

ANSWER: Generalized anxiety disorder is a common problem and may be associated with panic attacks (sometimes depression as well). The most common and highly effective medication treatment for generalized anxiety disorder, with or without panic attacks, is an SSRI-type drug like sertraline (Zoloft). Therapy is another option, and the two together are more effective than they are separately.

Metoprolol is an effective treatment for the fast heart rate that some people get when they have anxiety, and metoprolol by itself is helpful for many people who have anxiety. (The high heart rate can make people feel even more anxious.) However, it sounds like metoprolol did not work for you. There is a small increased risk of depression among people who take beta blockers like metoprolol.

In my opinion, lorazepam (Ativan) is not a good long-term choice for an anxiety disorder, but it can still be helpful in some people while they're waiting for another treatment to start working (such as therapy or a medicine like Zoloft). It takes six to eight weeks to reach maximum effectiveness.

Addiction is not an issue when both the patient and prescriber agree that it will be only used as a short-term treatment. For Zoloft, 25 mg is a low dose, and some people need higher doses (sometimes much higher) to control their symptoms.

DEAR DR. ROACH: Why shouldn't you use antibiotics for a cold? — T.Y.A.

ANSWER: There are two main reasons. The first is that antibiotics are effective against bacteria; they're not effective against the viruses, which are the cause of colds. It is true that a person (or their doctor) cannot be 100% sure whether they have a virus, but people are generally pretty good about knowing when they have a cold.

The second is that resistance to antibiotics has become a major issue in medicine. There are now strains of bacteria that are resistant to all antibiotics, and I have seen patients die because their bacteria were resistant to all the antibiotics we have. Using antibiotics less often and for shorter durations is a major goal to reduce the rate of antibiotic resistance. (Antibiotic use in animals that are raised for food is a major issue as well.)

Patients can help by not asking for (or demanding) antibiotics for what are almost certainly viral infections.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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UNC Health Southeastern

UNC Health Southeastern named among U.S. News & World Report's Best Hospitals for Maternity Care

Amanda Crabtree
For The Robesonian

LUMBERTON — U.S. News & World Report, the global authority in hospital rankings and consumer advice, has named UNC Health Southeastern as a 2026 High Performing Hospital for Maternity Care. This is the highest award a hospital can earn as part of U.S. News' Best Hospitals for Maternity Care annual study, now in its fifth edition.

In addition, UNC Health Southeastern earned the "Maternity Care Access" designation from U.S. News. That distinction recognizes quality care provided to regions that, if not for the award-winning hospital, would be maternity deserts.

U.S. News began evaluating maternity care hospitals

in 2021, rating hospitals that provide labor and delivery services and submit detailed data to the publication for analysis. For the 2026 edition, approximately 900 hospitals nationwide submitted maternity data for evaluation. Best Hospitals for Maternity Care ratings are intended to assist expectant parents, in consultation with their prenatal care providers, in making informed decisions about where to receive maternity services that best meet their family's needs.

UNC Health Southeastern earned a High Performing designation in recognition of maternity care as measured by factors such as reduced C-section rates in lower-risk pregnancies, less severe unexpected newborn complication rates compared to peers,

exclusive breast milk feeding rates, and birthing-friendly practices, among other measures.

"We are honored to be recognized by U.S. News & World Report as a high-performing hospital for maternity care," said UNC Health Southeastern President and CEO Chris Ellington. "This achievement reflects the skill, compassion, and unwavering commitment of our physicians, nurses, and support teams who care for mothers and babies every day. We're incredibly proud of our team and grateful to the families in our community who continue to trust us with life's most meaningful moments."

"Hospitals designated as a U.S. News Best Hospital for Maternity Care are national leaders. This recognition

means they are consistently hitting crucial patient safety benchmarks compared to other hospitals," said Jennifer Winston, Ph.D., health data scientist at U.S. News. "It's a clear signal to expectant parents about where the highest standards of care are being practiced — when parents see this designation, they can be assured they are choosing a hospital dedicated to exceptional, evidence-based maternity care."

For more information, visit Best Hospitals for Maternity Care and use #BestMaternityHospitals on Facebook, Instagram, Threads, TikTok and X.

Amanda L. Crabtree is the director of marketing & public relations at UNC Health Southeastern. Reach her by email at amanda.crabtree@unchealth.unc.edu.

McLeod, Huggins presented with UNCHSE Medical Staff Excellence Awards



Photo courtesy of UNC Health Southeastern
Dr. James McLeod, center, was presented the D.E. Ward, Jr., M.D., Physician of Excellence Award by UNC Health Southeastern President and CEO Chris Ellington, left, and Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Joe Roberts, right.

Amanda Crabtree
For The Robesonian

LUMBERTON — Dr. James McLeod was named the 2025 UNC Health Southeastern D.E. Ward, Jr., M.D., Physician of Excellence, and Physician Assistant Charles Huggins was named Timothy L. Bell, P.A., Advanced Practice Provider (APP) of Excellence at the UNC Health Southeastern Medical Staff Holiday Party on Dec. 5.

"Dr. McLeod is truly a brilliant physician and a pillar of the community," said UNC Health Southeastern VP and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Joe Roberts, during the presentation.

McLeod joined the medical staff of UNC

Health Southeastern, formerly Southeastern Regional Medical Center, in 2006. He first practiced at the Dr. A.J. Robinson Medical Clinic and then transitioned to UNC Health Medical Group's UNC Health Primary Care at The Oaks. He returned to his hometown as a physician after deciding to redirect his professional life after spending 21 years as a banking executive. He decided to return to school to train for a career in medicine. After earning his medical degree from Wake Forest University School of Medicine in 2003, he completed a residency in family practice at Spartanburg Regional Medical Center in Spartanburg, S.C.

"Charles' dedication and humility are a rare



Photo courtesy of UNC Health Southeastern
Physician Assistant Charles Huggins, center, was presented the Timothy L. Bell, P.A., Advanced Practice Provider (APP) of Excellence Award by UNC Health Southeastern President and CEO Chris Ellington, left, and Vice President and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Joe Roberts, right.

combination and an inspiration to us all," added Roberts.

Huggins completed an undergraduate degree at East Carolina University and physician assistant training at Wake Forest University. He has worked in radiology at UNC Health Southeastern since 2006. He is a member of the N.C. Academy of Physician Assistants and the American Academy of Physician Assistants.

The D.E. Ward, Jr., M.D., Physician of Excellence Award is named in honor of Dr. Ward's 58 years of service on the UNC Health Southeastern Medical Staff and for his tireless devotion to providing the highest quality of care to his patients, as well as his

continuous efforts to improve the health system and the community. Previous winners include Drs. Sadanand Hegde, John Rozier, Robin Peace, Samuel Britt, Obiefuna Okoye, Thomas Walden and Dennis Stuart.

The Timothy L. Bell, P.A., APP of Excellence Award was established in 2024 in memory of Tim Bell, who practiced as a physician assistant in Robeson County for 28 years and was the Executive Director of Children's Health of Carolina. The first winner of this award was Physician Assistant Don Metzger.

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