

# Focusing on You: UHealth Recognized as Mitral Valve Repair Reference Center

UHealth was recognized as a Mitral Valve Repair Reference Center by the American Heart Association and the Mitral Foundation, a recognition that makes it easier for patients to identify the nation's best surgeons and hospitals for mitral valve repair surgery.

In this segment, Joseph Lamelas, M.D., Chief and Program Director of Cardiothoracic Surgery at the University of Miami Health System, discusses mitral valve disease, and how a minimally invasive procedure he pioneered to repair the valve, is helping patients get back to their active lives. Walter Tombs is one of those patients.

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## Meet Walter Tombs

As Chief Financial Officer of Jersey Mike's, Walter Tombs wasn't ready when a heart condition halted his life.

"I had to go to the hospital, and they actually had to shock me back into rhythm," says Walter.

Walter had mitral valve disease, where the valve doesn't function properly, causing blood to leak back into the heart. He traveled to UHealth to see world-renowned

cardiac surgeon Joseph Lamelas, M.D.

“Mitral valve disease is actually quite common. But it should not be taken lightly because when it does progress to the point that it's significant, it will begin to affect the heart muscle,” Dr. Lamelas says.

Walter needed surgery to repair the valve. Instead of traditional open-heart surgery, Dr. Lamelas pioneered a minimally invasive approach called the Miami Method.

“I make a five centimeter or two-inch incision between the ribs on the right side, without breaking the ribs or interrupting the blood supply to the chest wall. And then I utilize special instruments; some that I've developed in order to go in and fix the valve,” explains Dr. Lamelas.

Patients recover much faster. UHealth was recently recognized as a Mitral Valve Repair Reference Center from the American Heart Association and the Mitral Foundation.

“What a reference center is, is an institution where patients should look to have their mitral valve repair, because these are the centers that have the most experience,” Dr. Lamelas says.

After his surgery, Walter is back to work, playing golf, and looking forward to the holidays.

“I feel great. It's really changed my life,” says Walter.

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## **What is the DASH diet?**

It's been the standard for patients who wish to lower their blood pressure with nutrition for years now. Part of the appeal of the DASH diet is its simplicity and flexibility. It's based on foods that are easy to find at any grocery store. Read more.

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