

IT'S ABOUT THE POWER OF YOU

HEALTH U



Hackensack
Meridian Health

Spring 2024

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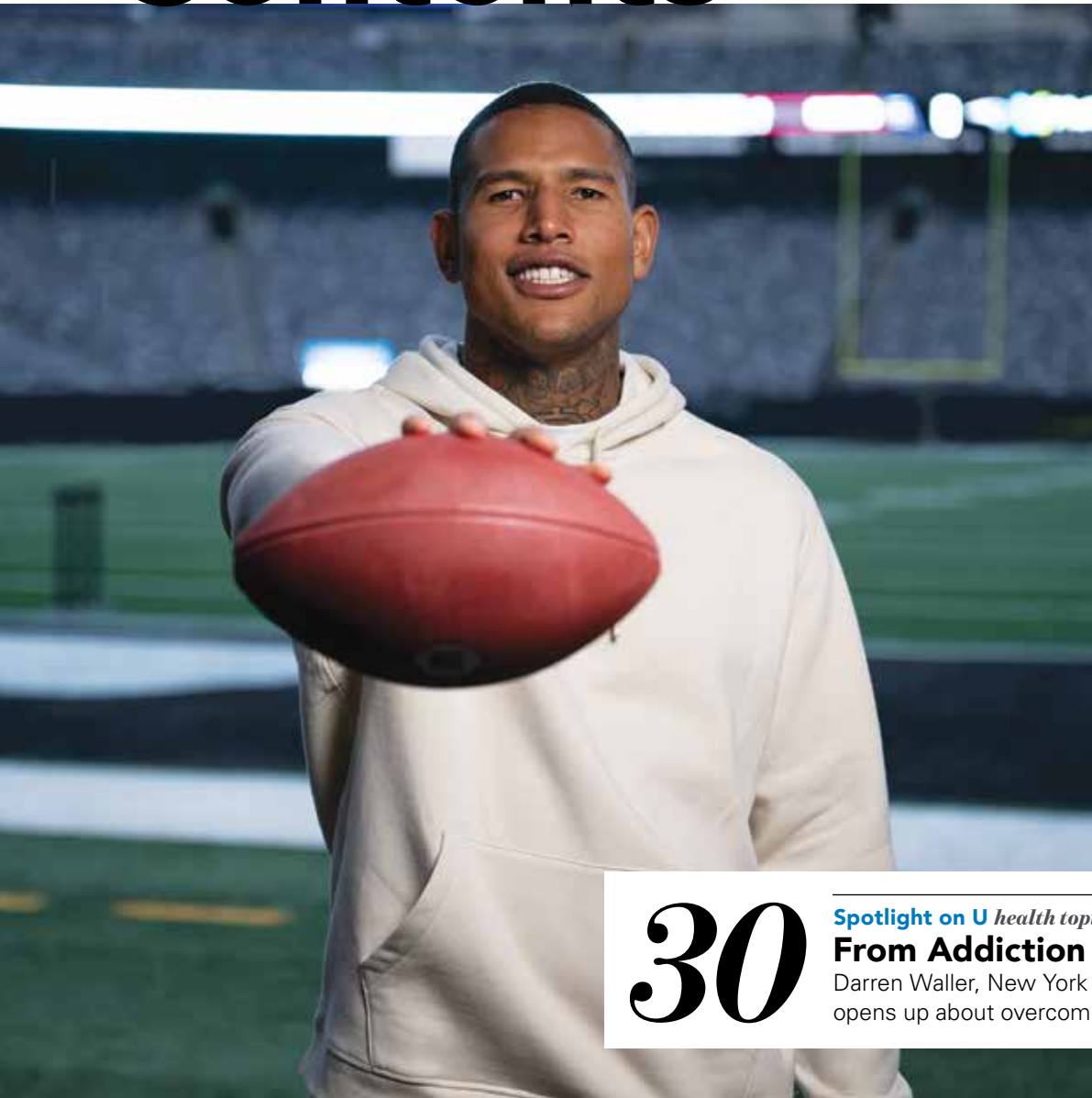
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GIANTS

From Addiction to Ambassador

**New York Giants tight end Darren Waller
opens up about his journey to good health.**

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From Addiction to Ambassador
 Darren Waller, New York Giants tight end for 2023 season, opens up about overcoming addiction.



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HEALTH U
ONLINE EXCLUSIVES



Could a fast heartbeat be a sign of a serious concern? Learn what you need to know at [HMHforU.org/FastHeartbeat](https://www.hmhforu.org/FastHeartbeat).



Do loud toys and earbuds lead to hearing loss in young kids? Find out at [HMHforU.org/KidsHearingLoss](https://www.hmhforu.org/KidsHearingLoss).



Back pain? Find out if epidural steroid injections could help you find relief: [HMHforU.org/BackInjection](https://www.hmhforu.org/BackInjection).



Tune in to our HealthU podcast! For more details, visit [HMHforU.org/Podcast](https://www.hmhforu.org/Podcast).

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BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

Shifting the Narrative

We're just a few short months away from the 2024 Summer Olympics when all will marvel at the strength, skill and endurance of the world's greatest athletes. What we don't always recognize or see on our screens are the mental health difficulties that these athletes who compete at the highest level sometimes face.

It's not just Olympic athletes who are at higher risk for mental health or addiction challenges. Professional athletes from all sports—football, baseball, basketball, soccer and everything in between—are shifting the narrative when it comes to their mental health.

One of these incredible athletes is Darren Waller, a tight end with the New York Giants, who has been impacted by addiction and had a near-fatal overdose before turning his life around. We are proud to partner with Darren in his efforts to help others who are affected by substance use or mental health issues.

Darren has joined our team as our newest Health Ambassador and is bravely sharing his journey as the cover story of this issue. If you are facing mental health or addiction challenges, we hope his story will help you realize that you are not alone and resources are available.

At Hackensack Meridian Health, we provide a comprehensive range of services for behavioral health, from inpatient and out-patient mental health and addiction treatment to walk-in urgent



To relax and manage stress, Bob enjoys walks with his beloved family dog, Mallomar.

care for mental health needs. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/BehavioralHealth](https://www.hmhforu.org/BehavioralHealth).

In this issue, we also provide resources you can use to support your mental health, help manage stress and cope with life's difficulties. On page 6, our music therapist Zach Fischer explains how music therapy can enhance moods, improve communication and reduce anxiety.

Gardening is another activity that can bring positive changes to our mental health. With the weather turning, now is the perfect time to dig in. Never gardened before? On page 11, you can find some tips for getting started as a beginner.

Whether you take advantage of professional behavioral health resources, join a support network, engage in calming, therapeutic activities or simply talk about how you are feeling with people you trust, we hope you will put your mental health first this spring. 🌸

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
Hackensack Meridian Health



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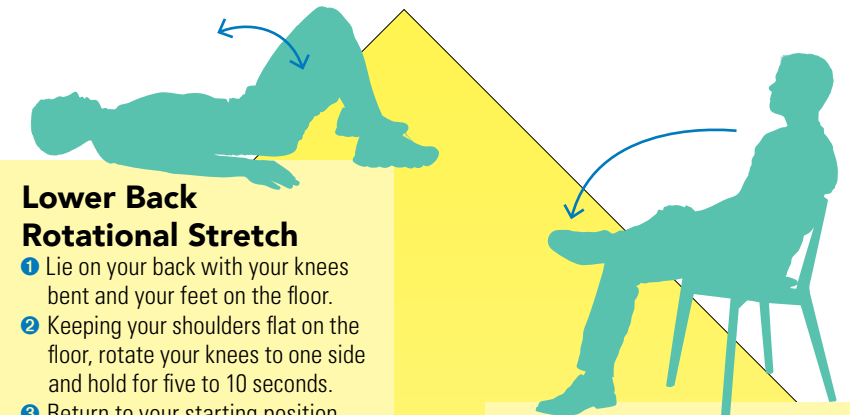
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Stretch It Out

Our expert provides three helpful stretches to alleviate back pain.

Lower back pain can be one of the most frustrating ailments to have. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory pain medicine and hot or cold compresses often do the trick for immediate back pain relief. But for potentially long-term results, **Laurent Delavaux, M.D.**, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at **Hackensack University Medical Center** and **JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute**, recommends strengthening your core.

Always remember to breathe while exercising and don't rush; these exercises are designed to relax your body.



Lower Back Rotational Stretch

- 1 Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet on the floor.
- 2 Keeping your shoulders flat on the floor, rotate your knees to one side and hold for five to 10 seconds.
- 3 Return to your starting position and repeat on the other side.
- 4 Repeat these stretches two to three times a day.

Seated 4 Stretch

- 1 Sitting on a stool or chair, cross your right leg over your left leg.
- 2 Brace your left ankle against the outside of your right knee.
- 3 Lean forward to feel a stretch, hold for 10 seconds.
- 4 Repeat on the opposite side.
- 5 Repeat exercise three to five times on each side, twice a day.

Cat Stretch

- 1 With your hands and knees on the floor, slowly arch your back and lift your abdomen.
- 2 Slowly let your back down and let the abdomen sink.
- 3 Return to your starting position and repeat three to five times, twice a day.



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Laurent Delavaux, M.D.
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Go Online

Find more tips on working out at [HMHforU.org/Exercise](https://www.HMHforU.org/Exercise).



The Healing Power of Music

Research shows that music therapy can have a positive influence over mental and physical health. Here's how music can heal.

Have you ever felt lousy but your favorite song helped lift your mood? Music therapists recognize the power of music to help patients improve their health.

Music therapy, an evidence-based field of study, uses music to improve patient outcomes. Research shows that music therapy can influence mental and physical health. "Music is a companion for people on that journey to find themselves," says **Carrier Clinic** music therapist **Zachary D. Fischer, Ph.D., MT-BC**. "It is a cost-effective and efficient way to help people. It has the ability to transform our mental, emotional and even physical health."

Music Used for Therapeutic Purposes

Doctors refer certain patients for music therapy if they may benefit from the treatment.

Music therapy may be beneficial for people who have:

- ▶ Chronic pain
- ▶ Learning disabilities
- ▶ Physical disabilities
- ▶ Autism spectrum disorder
- ▶ Substance use disorder
- ▶ Stroke
- ▶ Traumatic brain injury
- ▶ Parkinson's disease
- ▶ Dementia
- ▶ Anxiety

When you meet with a music therapist, they may ask about your music preferences. They will determine what treatment you require based on your diagnosis and your musical taste.

During music therapy sessions, patients may:

- ▶ Listen to music
- ▶ Move to music
- ▶ Play musical instruments
- ▶ Sing
- ▶ Compose songs with the help of the music therapist
- ▶ Improvise musically
- ▶ Talk about the music that they listen to

How Music Therapy Can Be Healing

Here are five benefits to using music as a healing tool.

1 Connects us to our emotions
Music has a profound impact on our emotional state. "When individuals are hospitalized or diagnosed with mental illness, they often internalize stereotypes and negative messages associated with their conditions. Music therapy provides a safe space where patients can work together to reveal their authentic experiences, thereby challenging and dismantling these harmful stigmas," Dr. Fischer says.

2 Enhances mood and boost positivity
Listening to uplifting, cheerful tunes has been linked to an increase in dopamine levels in the brain, leading to improved mood and a sense of joy. "Incorporating music with a positive tone can create an uplifting environment and foster a sense of hope and optimism in people facing difficult circumstances," Dr. Fischer says.

3 Improves communication and expression
For some patients, verbal communication can be challenging, but music provides an alternative means of expression. "Engaging in music-making activities can improve communication and social skills, especially in individuals with autism or social anxiety disorders," Dr. Fischer says.

4 Reduces anxiety and creates a soothing environment
Studies have shown that music therapy is a powerful tool for reducing anxiety and temporal distortion. Environmental music therapy involves creating a soundscape to soften the harsh edges of clinical spaces.

5 Is cost-effective and efficient
As a therapeutic practice, music has been an integral part of human history. Music therapy is a cost-effective and efficient way to help people on their healing journeys. Unlike conventional therapies, music therapy doesn't require expensive equipment and can be adapted to various environments.

Not everyone needs music therapy, but nearly anyone may benefit from interacting with music. "Music has the innate ability to touch our souls and facilitate healing. All we need to do is open our hearts to its melody," Dr. Fischer says.

Find a behavioral health specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/BehavioralHealthDoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/BehavioralHealthDoc).

Am I Addicted to Processed Foods?

If you've found yourself digging at the bottom of an empty bag of chips or clutching the remnants of a package of cookies, you may have asked yourself, "Am I addicted to snack foods?" **Alex Fu, D.O.**, family medicine doctor at **Palisades Medical Center**, explains how ultra-processed foods—things like cookies, cakes, chips and frozen meals—may affect the brain and your overall health.

"Certain types of food can trigger a brain response similar to the reaction people have to other addictive substances," he says. "Consuming highly processed foods high in sugar, fat or salt, can affect dopamine levels in the brain. The brain gets signals to repeat the experience because it feels good."

A diet high in unhealthy fat (saturated and industrial trans fat), sodium and sugar can lead to a number of health concerns, including increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, obesity, stroke and cancer.

How Do You Know if You Might Be Addicted to Processed Foods?

If you're having difficulty finding moderation in the foods you eat, consider these questions:

- ▶ Are you eating more than you intend to?
- ▶ Are you eating even when you're not hungry?
- ▶ Does overeating cause you to feel ill?
- ▶ Have your eating habits impacted your relationships or responsibilities?

The Yale Food Addiction Scale can assess signs of addictive-like eating behaviors.

If You Think You're Addicted to Processed Foods

If you think you might be addicted to processed foods, work with a registered dietitian or primary care doctor to better evaluate your intake and help you make positive changes. Support groups like Overeaters Anonymous can also help.



Alex Fu, D.O.

Family medicine doctor

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Fort Lee and North Bergen

Gain tips for healthy eating at [HMHforU.org/HealthyEating](https://www.hmhforu.org/HealthyEating).



Zucchini Ribbon Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 large zucchini
- 1½ cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cup fresh basil, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon each, salt and pepper

① In a small bowl, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Just before serving, pour over ribbons and toss.

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 90 calories, 2g protein, 7g carbohydrate (2g fiber), 7g fat (1g sat, 6g mono/poly), 161mg sodium

Preparation

- ① Using a vegetable peeler, shave the zucchini lengthwise to get lasagna-like ribbons. Continue until you get to the seeds in the center, for approximately 3 cups of ribbons.
- ② Place ribbons in large bowl. Add tomatoes and basil.

Seasoned Cook

Shave and discard the tougher skin on larger zucchini. Smaller, more tender zucchini can be prepared with the skin on. Double the recipe and bring to your next potluck. To add more color, use yellow summer squash, too.

Find more recipes and tips for healthy eating at [HMHforU.org/HealthyEating](https://www.hmhforu.org/HealthyEating).

Is it safe to detox from alcohol at home?

Justin Kei, M.D., weighs in:

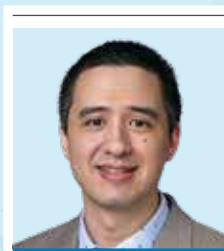
Hackensack Meridian Health addiction medicine specialists recommend medically supervised inpatient care rather than at-home detoxing.

During detox, the body is cleared of alcohol or drugs. If you are addicted to alcohol, you may experience withdrawal symptoms that can last from a few days to a few weeks. Those symptoms may include:

- ▶ Irritability or agitation
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Muscle pain, weakness or tremor
- ▶ Nausea
- ▶ Sweating
- ▶ Insomnia
- ▶ Seizures
- ▶ Visual or auditory hallucinations, such as threatening voices
- ▶ Tactile hallucinations (such as bugs crawling on skin)
- ▶ Frightening, vivid dreams or nightmares

It's best to be in a medically supervised environment as you begin recovery in case you experience severe withdrawal symptoms or an emergency.

If you or someone you love is in need of detox treatment, don't hesitate to reach out for support. Clinical professionals are here to help you make the best decision.



Justin Kei, M.D.

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Maywood

Learn more at [HMHforU.org/Detox](https://www.hmhforu.org/detox).



How can I relieve my allergies this spring?

Juan Ravell, M.D., weighs in:

Before pollen season begins, see an allergist for testing. Once you know which allergens cause a reaction, work with your allergist to develop an action plan using these tips:

- 1 Monitor the local pollen forecast and stay indoors on high-count days. Try to avoid outdoor activities, especially on windy days.
- 2 Wear sunglasses or a wide-brimmed hat when you're outdoors to prevent pollen from coming into contact with your eyes.
- 3 Keep your house and car windows closed during pollen season, if needed using fans or air-conditioning in your home and car to filter out pollen.
- 4 Place a HEPA filter in your air-conditioning unit to reduce your exposure to pollen while you're indoors. HEPA filters may need to be changed more frequently during high-pollen season.
- 5 Shower and change your clothes after being outside, especially before going to bed.
- 6 Hang dry clothes and bedding indoors rather than outdoors, or use a clothes dryer, as clothes can collect pollen.
- 7 Minimize physical contact with pets that spend a significant amount of time outdoors during pollen season.
- 8 Use a neti pot to rinse pollen out of your nose.
- 9 Go outside after a steady rainfall, when the pollen has been washed out of the air.
- 10 If you have to spend time outdoors on a day with a high pollen count, wear an N95 mask, KN95 mask, KF94 mask or surgical mask, especially if you'll be doing yard work or going for a hike in the woods.



Juan Ravell, M.D.

Allergist

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Learn more at [HMHforU.org/SpringAllergies](https://www.hmhforu.org/springallergies).

Why do my ears feel clogged?

Brian Benson, M.D., weighs in:

The first step in relieving ear discomfort is identifying the cause of the clogged sensation.

Impacted Earwax

If your ears are full of wax, they may feel clogged, and buildup can be tough to remove. Instead of using cotton swabs, try over-the-counter drops. If the wax doesn't come out in a day or two, talk to your doctor.



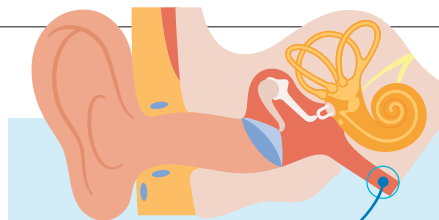
Teeth Grinding

Grinding your teeth can cause problems with your jaw joints, which can eventually put stress on your ears. That might cause a clogged ear sensation, among other problems with your ears.



Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can sometimes be perceived as a clogged feeling. If your ears feel clogged without an obvious cause, consider getting a hearing test.



Eustachian Tube Dysfunction

Eustachian tube dysfunction occurs when the Eustachian tube, which connects the middle ear to the back of the throat, doesn't open and close properly. That causes a clogged-up feeling.

Sinus or ear infections, allergies and other respiratory viruses—all of which can cause swelling and fluid in the ear—are common causes of Eustachian tube dysfunction. If you think your clogged ears are caused by a respiratory illness, over-the-counter medications recommended by your doctor can decrease fluid accumulation and swelling.

If your clogged ears persist after home treatment, talk to your primary care doctor about your symptoms.



Brian Benson, M.D.

Otolaryngologist

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Learn more at [HMHforU.org/CloggedEars](https://www.hmhforu.org/cloggedears).

Why is my urine cloudy?

Nitin K. Yerram, M.D., weighs in:

Urine color can signal many things about the state of your body, such as your level of hydration, what you've been eating recently and medications you're taking. If your urine is cloudy, it could signal a few different things:

- ▶ **Preeclampsia in pregnant people.** If you are pregnant, cloudy urine can be a symptom of preeclampsia, a condition that occurs after the 20th week of pregnancy or after giving birth that can cause high blood pressure or organs to not function properly.
- ▶ **Certain kidney conditions and chronic diseases.** Cloudy urine that has foam can be a sign of a serious condition such as diverticulitis or Crohn's disease.

If you experience this, talk with your doctor immediately. For any change in your urine that lasts for more than a day or two, you should speak to your doctor to determine the cause.



Nitin K. Yerram, M.D.

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Learn more at [HMHforU.org/UrineColor](https://www.hmhforu.org/urinecolor).

Doctor Spotlight

AMELIA PAWAROO-BALRAM, M.D.

Family medicine doctor
Hackensack Meridian Medical Group
Primary Care—From Road in Paramus

When family medicine doctor Amelia Pawaroo-Balram, M.D., was still in high school, she was considered a budding artist skilled at drawing and painting, winning awards in local competitions. Her parents thought she would follow that creative path in college, but she surprised them by saying, “I’m going to study medicine.”

Born in New York, she grew up in Montville, New Jersey, with her parents, who are from Guyana, South America. With ancestors from India, she completed her residency at St. Joseph’s University Medical Center in Paterson, New Jersey.

Dr. Pawaroo-Balram began her practice with Hackensack Meridian Health in September 2023, and is now affiliated with **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

What fuels your passion for primary care?

Because of my international background, I enjoy working with people from different backgrounds, and I can assimilate into different scenarios. I like working as a team with my patients to achieve a common goal. Just like my patients, I get excited when the information comes together perfectly to achieve that.

What is your favorite thing to do?

Spending time with my 5-year-old daughter, Madison—who is going on age 20—is such a joy. She’s into art, as well. She told me she wants to be a doctor because then she can work with me!

How do you engage in philanthropy?

I fund the Wi-Fi at an orphanage in Guyana. When my daughter grows out of her clothes, I pack them up and send them there, too. I used to send baby bottles—I mean, I had 20 at one time,

and I think of someone there who has none, and how important that one thing is to them. I want to continue to remain grounded, and this helps me.

If you could have dinner with anyone, past or present, who would that be?

Bill Gates. His story is so inspiring: dropping out of college, then starting Microsoft and doing so well as a global business leader and philanthropist. He used his creativity to mold technology, and it’s a big reason why we are where we are with tech today. I have a ton of questions for him! 🌟



Growing up, Amelia Pawaroo-Balram, M.D., spent her time drawing and painting. Today, her young daughter loves art, as well.

Spotlight on U

health topics that matter the most to you

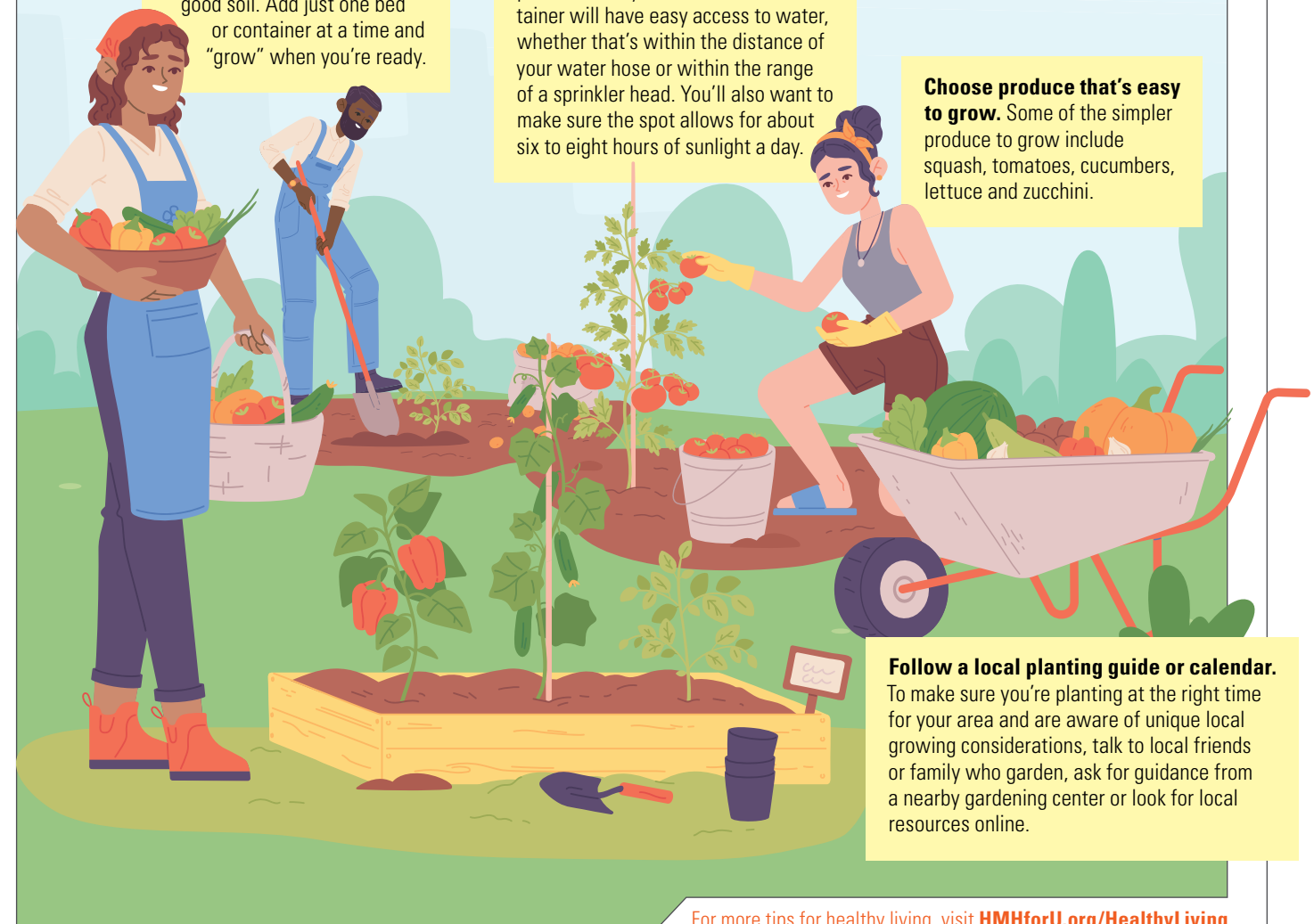
Dig In

Gardening has many positive effects on mental health, from reducing stress and anxiety to promoting relaxation and enhancing confidence. These four tips can help you get started if you’ve never gardened before.

Start small. Consider using a small raised bed or container that can be easily filled with good soil. Add just one bed or container at a time and “grow” when you’re ready.

Find the right spot. Make sure the placement of your raised bed or container will have easy access to water, whether that’s within the distance of your water hose or within the range of a sprinkler head. You’ll also want to make sure the spot allows for about six to eight hours of sunlight a day.

Choose produce that’s easy to grow. Some of the simpler produce to grow include squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce and zucchini.



Follow a local planting guide or calendar.

To make sure you’re planting at the right time for your area and are aware of unique local growing considerations, talk to local friends or family who garden, ask for guidance from a nearby gardening center or look for local resources online.

For more tips for healthy living, visit [HMHforU.org/HealthyLiving](https://www.hmhforu.org/HealthyLiving).

To make an appointment with Dr. Pawaroo-Balram or a doctor near you, call 800-822-8905 or visit [HMHforU.org/FindADoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/FindADoc).

The Diet and Stroke Connection

Is what you eat impacting your risk of stroke? Our expert weighs in.



Which Foods Increase Stroke Risk?

Certain staples of the standard American diet are high in fat or nutrient-poor. When eaten regularly, they may increase your risk of stroke.

These foods include:

- ▶ **Meat**, including red meat and processed meat, which are high in saturated fat (they may raise cholesterol levels and increase heart disease risk, raising stroke risk)
- ▶ **Full-fat dairy products**, including butter and cheese, which are high in saturated fat
- ▶ **Sugary sweets**, including soda, energy drinks, cookies, cakes and candy (they affect blood sugar levels and may lead to diabetes, which increases stroke risk)
- ▶ **Foods high in salt**, including chips, pretzels and many processed foods (salt may raise your blood pressure levels, increasing your risk of stroke)

Which Foods Reduce Stroke Risk?

Following a nutrient-dense, plant-based diet may help to lower stroke risk. Fruits, vegetables, nuts and other foods contain vitamins, minerals, fiber and healthy fats.

To reduce your risk of stroke, incorporate these foods into your diet:

- ▶ Fiber-rich fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors
- ▶ Beans, which are low-fat, fiber-rich and nutrient-dense
- ▶ Whole grains rather than foods made with white flour
- ▶ Nuts and seeds, which contain healthy fats and fiber
- ▶ Low-fat or fat-free dairy products
- ▶ Fish or shellfish
- ▶ Olive oil and other healthy monounsaturated fats
- ▶ Water, instead of soda or sweetened beverages

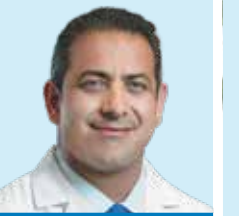
“Your diet can be a powerful factor in reducing stroke risk,” says **Kevin Crutchfield, M.D.**, neurologist at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.



Kevin Crutchfield, M.D.
Neurologist
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Go Online

For more healthy eating tips, visit [HMHforU.org/HealthyEating](https://www.hmhforu.org/HealthyEating).



Reza Karimi, M.D.
Neurosurgeon
800-822-8905
Hackensack and North Bergen

Marisol Vargas gave birth to a healthy daughter, Isabella, 2 ½ years after experiencing an unexpected stroke at age 35.

After an unlikely stroke at age 35, satellite radio host Marisol Vargas is back on the air thanks to quick treatment at two Hackensack Meridian Health hospitals.

After a vigorous workout in May 2019, Marisol Vargas dismissed two weeks of blurry vision and headaches as work-related stress. But the North Bergen, New Jersey, resident was actually feeling the effects of a tear in her carotid artery that likely stemmed from her workout—and would soon blossom into a stroke.

Marisol, who was about to turn 36, was cleaning up from her birthday party when she felt an odd tingling on the side of her nose. A few minutes later, her tongue felt tingly and she couldn't get any words out when talking to her husband, Alex, who called 911. “I'd always been considered very healthy and rarely went to a doctor,” recalls Marisol. “In the ambulance, one of the EMTs handed me a mirror and asked if my face always looks like that—half of it looked frozen. After I said no, they turned on the siren.”

Sophisticated Imaging

Marisol was taken to **Palisades Medical Center**, where doctors immediately

administered a powerful clot-busting drug called tPA (tissue plasminogen activator). Her symptoms quickly eased, but her precarious situation necessitated transfer by helicopter to **Hackensack University Medical Center**, which has been designated a Comprehensive Stroke Center by the Joint Commission.

There, **Reza Karimi, M.D.**, neurosurgeon at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at Hackensack, led her care using sophisticated imaging. It showed that Marisol now had adequate blood flow to both sides of her brain and wouldn't require the insertion of a cage-like stent to prop open her carotid.

“Since we had a special scan that showed good blood flow despite a complete carotid blockage, we knew it was safe to treat her with blood thinners and by raising her blood pressure to promote flow to the brain,” Dr. Karimi explains. “If you have a lot of experience with these types of patients, like we do, you know who can be managed through medical means instead of higher-risk interventional procedures.”

New Baby, New Perspective

After more than a week of brain monitoring in the hospital, Marisol returned home feeling emotionally fragile and afraid of experiencing another stroke. Fortunately, within four months, imaging scans showed her carotid artery had completely reopened from blood thinner medications. “Instead of walking around with three working arteries to her brain for the rest of her life, she has four again,” Dr. Karimi says.

After moving to a daily baby aspirin regimen to ensure her continued recovery, Marisol—an on-air host for Sirius XM's “Caliente” show and a freelancer for Telemundo—turned toward the future. She gave birth to her daughter, Isabella, in October 2021.

“This whole experience has changed me a lot. It makes me not want to waste my time,” says Marisol, now 40. “One thing I tell everyone is to listen to your body, which I didn't do with my headaches and blurry vision. Your body is telling you to slow down or get checked out.”

Learn your risk for heart attack or stroke. Schedule an AngioScreen near you: [HMHforU.org/AngioScreenEvent](https://www.hmhforu.org/AngioScreenEvent).

Deep Dive

Deep brain stimulation is providing new hope for patients with Parkinson's. Here's what you should know.

People living with Parkinson's commonly experience tremors, stiffness and involuntary movements, and medications don't always help. But a treatment called deep brain stimulation (DBS) offers hope.

What Is DBS?

DBS is a therapy for selected patients in which a surgeon implants electrodes into specific parts of the brain. These electrodes are connected to a generator implanted under the skin of the chest. A movement disorders neurologist can remotely manipulate the electricity moving through the electrodes in the brain to reduce motor symptoms of Parkinson's, like stiffness, slow movements and tremors.

Who Should Consider DBS?

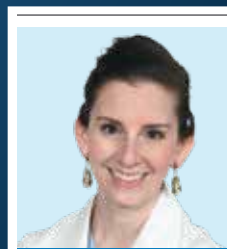
Certain Parkinson's patients with uncontrollable tremor can benefit from DBS when:

- ▶ Medication is not effective at controlling tremor
- ▶ Medication wears off well in advance of the next dose
- ▶ Medication is causing disruptive side effects

Elana Clar, M.D., movement disorders neurologist at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, says DBS can't improve all Parkinson's symptoms, especially issues that aren't motor-related, such as memory, speech, pain or mood. "DBS is an important therapy that can play a crucial role in smoothing out motor symptoms that become increasingly challenging to manage on medication alone," Dr. Clar says. "It's not the treatment of choice if patients are most bothered by non-motor symptoms like anxiety, apathy, insomnia, constipation or difficulty with word recall."

Does DBS Work?

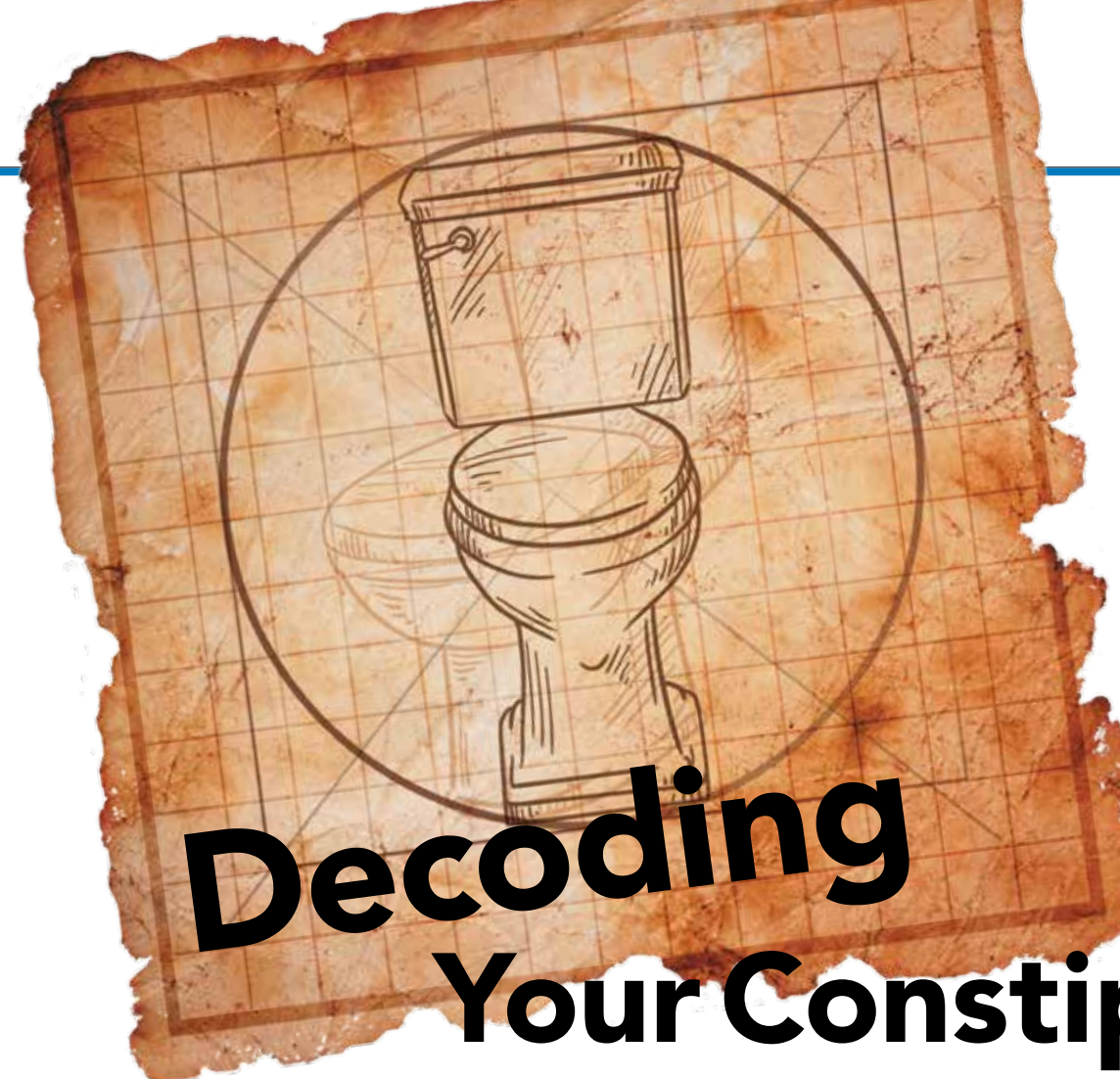
Parkinson's is a progressive disorder, and DBS won't halt the disease entirely. While DBS is not meant to replace medications, many people see a reduction in the medication they need to manage their Parkinson's. "DBS is not a cure but rather a means to significantly improve quality of life," says Dr. Clar. 🌀



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Decoding Your Constipation

Learn how constipation and Parkinson's can be connected.

Most of us have experienced temporary constipation at one point or another. But did you know that constipation is a common symptom of Parkinson's?

How Does Parkinson's Cause Constipation?

"Parkinson's can cause nerve cell changes that affect muscles that push food through the digestive system," says **Osama Abu-Hadid, M.D.**, movement disorders neurologist at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "Basically, the disease can slow down the digestive tract, which results in constipation."

Constipation also can be a side effect of some Parkinson's medications. The issue can worsen with certain lifestyle behaviors, such as lack of movement, low-fiber diet and low fluid intake.

Symptoms of Constipation in Parkinson's Patients

Constipation is usually thought of as not being able to have a bowel movement. But that's not the only symptom. Other common signs of constipation include:

- ▶ Difficulty passing stool
- ▶ Pain when passing stool
- ▶ Dry and hard stool
- ▶ Infrequent bowel movements, less than three per week

Get Relief

There are a variety of options available to treat and prevent constipation related to Parkinson's. Dr. Abu-Hadid recommends:

Lifestyle changes: Simple actions such as staying hydrated, exercising regularly and consuming more fiber can make a noticeable difference.

Medication: If lifestyle changes aren't enough, there are many options to treat constipation including laxatives, stool softeners, lubricants and stimulants. However, consult your doctor before using them to make sure you use what's right for you.

Probiotics: Maintaining a healthy gut biome may treat or prevent constipation. Probiotics can be obtained by eating certain foods, such as yogurt, or taken as a supplement. Speak with your doctor before changing or starting any new diet or supplement regime. 🌀

Go Online

Learn about our Parkinson's clinical trials at [HMHforU.org/ParkinsonsTrial](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/ParkinsonsTrial).



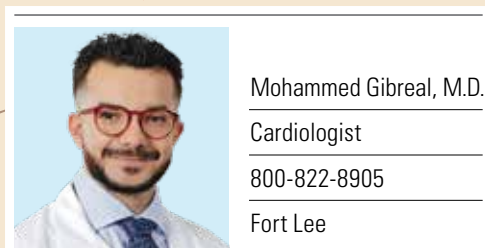
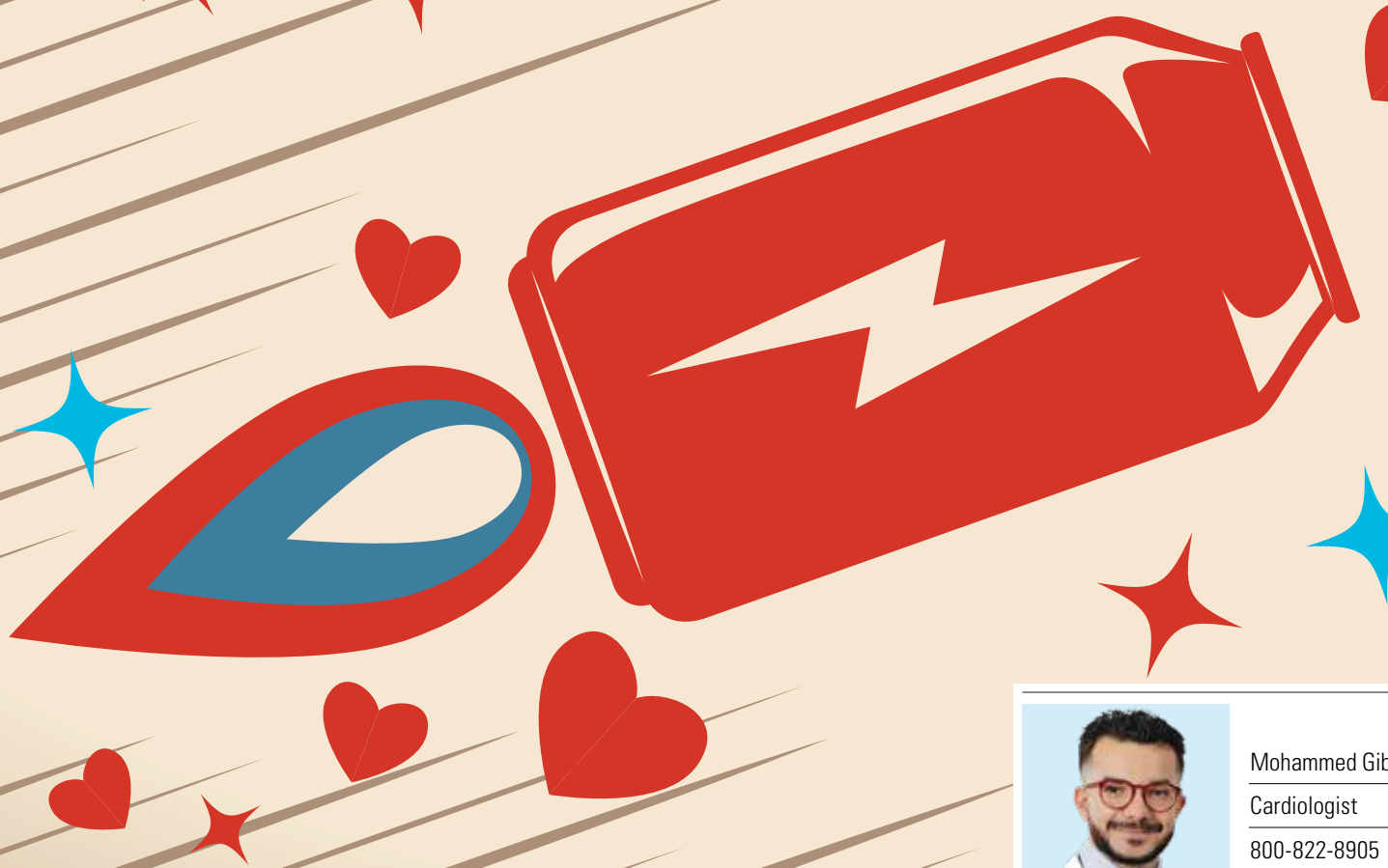
Osama Abu-Hadid, M.D.
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Find a Parkinson's disease specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/ParkinsonsDoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/ParkinsonsDoc).

Get Energized!

As you enjoy the flavored bubbles of your favorite energy drink, you may wonder: Are energy drinks bad for your heart?



Mohammed Gibreal, M.D.
Cardiologist
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Fort Lee

Energy drinks have become more popular over the years because they promise to boost energy and focus, but do you have to sacrifice heart health to reap the benefits? **Mohammed Gibreal, M.D.**, cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, explains how energy drinks affect your heart and what's safe to consume.

How Energy Drinks Affect the Heart

Many energy drinks contain excessive sugar and stimulants that can strain your heart. "For people with preexisting conditions, these drinks can be especially problematic," Dr. Gibreal says.

Drinking energy drinks can cause the following:

- ▶ **Increased heart rate and blood pressure.** The high amount of caffeine in energy drinks acts as a stimulant, interfering with specific neurons in the brain intended for alertness, which releases a hormone that increases heart rate and blood pressure.
- ▶ **Impact on blood vessels.** Consumption of stimulants can constrict blood vessels, which leads to reduced blood flow to the heart and other organs. This puts additional stress on the heart, forcing it to work harder.
- ▶ **Arrhythmias.** With the increase in blood pressure and heart rate, energy drinks may also increase your risk of arrhythmias, which are irregular heartbeats that disturb the normal rhythm of the heart.

Safe Energy Boosters

Although energy drinks don't cause heart disease, they can affect preexisting conditions, so it's important to stay cautious.

- ▶ **Moderation is key.** When energy drinks are consumed in moderation, you can obtain the benefits while minimizing your risks. Set limits such as only one energy drink every other day.
- ▶ **Read labels.** If you want to take control of your health, read labels to look for additives, added sugar and calorie content.
- ▶ **Hydrate with water.** Many of the ingredients in energy drinks have dehydrating effects, so it's vital to balance these ingredients by staying hydrated with water.
- ▶ **Opt for coffee or tea.** If you're looking for a drink with a boost, try coffee or tea in moderation. Coffee is rich in antioxidants, which can be beneficial for your health.

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Love Your Heart

Whether you've been diagnosed with a heart disease like congestive heart failure or atrial fibrillation, or you just want to live a more heart-healthy life, take these small steps every day for better heart health over the years.

Do these nine things every day to keep your heart healthy as you age:

- 1 Get a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate exercise every week. For example, a half-hour walk during your lunch break on weekdays would tune up your heart and leave you feeling refreshed for your afternoon work.
- 2 Watch your sodium/salt intake. The recommended amount of salt a person should consume daily is 1,500 mg, but it's very easy to consume more. Read food labels, and opt for fresh versions of foods rather than canned ones.
- 3 Cook at home as much as possible. Home cooking makes it easier to control sodium content and portion sizes.
- 4 When eating at restaurants, look for heart-healthy options on the menu.
- 5 If you smoke, get help to quit. Smoking is bad for your heart and encourages snacking on high-sodium foods.
- 6 Limit your alcohol intake.
- 7 Focus on maintaining a healthy weight.
- 8 Team up with a buddy to achieve your heart-healthy goals: Share recipes, plan meals and exercise together.
- 9 Work with your doctor to ensure that other health conditions, like diabetes, stay under control.

By keeping your heart healthy, you dramatically increase the likelihood that you will enjoy better health for as long as you live.

Are you at risk of heart disease? Take our quiz to find out.



Be a Quitter

Quitting vaping can be just as difficult as quitting traditional tobacco products. These tips from our expert can help.



John Villa, D.O.
Pulmonologist
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Lodi

In 2014—just seven years after they entered the U.S. market—e-cigarettes or vapes became the most used tobacco product among teens and young adults.

Initially vapes were marketed as safer than traditional cigarettes, but studies have shown that 99 percent of vapes contain nicotine, and some vaping products provide higher doses than traditional tobacco. Despite these risks, the number of young people vaping continues to grow—but so does the number who want to quit.

Our expert **John Villa, D.O.**, pulmonologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, provides five tips to quit.

1 Motivate Yourself to Quit

“You need to be ready to quit,” says Dr. Villa. You need to want it for yourself. If you aren’t ready and committed, it’s not going to work.

2 Choose a Quit-by Date

Select a date by which you intend to stop vaping. “Hopefully this is within two weeks of deciding you are ready to quit,” says Dr. Villa. The key is to select a date that gives you time to prepare—but not too far out that you might change your mind or lose motivation.

3 Prepare Yourself to Quit

Once you’ve chosen your stop date, prepare a plan that will help you stay on track. “Initially, quitting is very hard, so it’s important to break all the connections and have a plan,” says Dr. Villa.

Your plan should:

- ▶ **Identify triggers.** List the specific people, places, activities and things that may make you feel like vaping. Devise ways to avoid these triggers.
- ▶ **Find alternatives.** Through this process you will experience cravings. These cravings will be temporary but can be intense. Create a list of alternate activities you can do when you experience a craving. This will distract you and help the craving pass more quickly.
- ▶ **Consider a nicotine replacement.** If your vaping product has nicotine in it, it may be beneficial to use a nicotine replacement. Talk with your doctor to see if nicotine replacement may be right for you and what product would work best.

4 Find Support to Help You Quit

When you are ready to quit, tell your friends and family of your plan. Your loved ones can be a huge asset to you on your journey to quit. For those people who are not supportive of your resolve, you may need to distance yourself to avoid triggers and difficult cravings.

Additionally, professional support is a powerful resource. “I strongly recommend working with a medical team. Counseling is key and can help you through the day-to-day issues you may face when trying to quit,” says Dr. Villa.

5 Find Ways to De-stress

Many people vape to manage stress. Finding alternate ways to destress, such as exercise and meditation, can increase your rate of success.

Quitting is hard and may take a few tries to achieve, but be kind to yourself and remember you are not alone. “Your team will always be there to help you every time you try to quit,” says Dr. Villa. 🌟

Go Online

Do you need help quitting smoking or vaping? Find resources to quit at [HMHforU.org/QuitSmoking](https://www.hmhforu.org/QuitSmoking).

Emmanuel Nelli/Getty Images



In October 2023, Mark Antonacci walked his daughter Stephanie down the aisle at her wedding at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City.

Father of the Bride

After he was diagnosed with lung cancer, Mark Antonacci is healthy and was able to enjoy his daughter’s wedding thanks to a successful clinical trial.

When Mark Antonacci, 63, developed a cough in 2020, he naturally suspected it was COVID-19. But after testing negative for the coronavirus and being treated unsuccessfully for pneumonia, Mark sought out the expertise of a pulmonary doctor who ordered a CT scan of his chest. The scan showed a suspicious mass, and a biopsy confirmed the diagnosis: advanced-stage small-cell lung cancer, a rare and fast-growing type of cancer.

Innovative Cancer Treatment

Mark and his wife, Jane, sprung into action to find the best care and treatment for him. “My doctor said I didn’t have much time, so we started going through the process of trying to get into hospitals and get insurance lined up.”

Their efforts pointed them to **John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center**. There, Mark was given the option of being part of a promising new phase II clinical trial for his treatment. **Martin Gutierrez, M.D.**, a medical oncologist specializing in thoracic oncology and early drug development, was the principal investigator at John Theurer Cancer Center for this trial.

“The goal of the trial is to improve upon the results of the standard-care chemotherapy for

small-cell lung cancer,” says Dr. Gutierrez. “The trial includes chemotherapy, but it has two different drugs as maintenance therapy, as well. One is an immunotherapy, which manipulates the immune system to have better outcomes, and the second is a targeted therapy that attacks specific proteins.”

Mark was one of three patients from John Theurer Cancer Center being treated as part of this global study. The study is now closed, and data is being collected and analyzed. “Every single drug has to go through a very detailed process of development,” says Dr. Gutierrez. “Part of that development is clinical trials to answer specific questions on specific diseases. If the results of the clinical trials are positive and show improved outcomes for patients, then the drug or treatment will eventually replace the standard-of-care therapy.”

Moving Ahead with Life

After Mark finished six rounds of chemotherapy, he spent the next two years going back to John Theurer Cancer Center once a month for maintenance therapy. Both the chemo and maintenance therapy meant being at the hospital for hours at a time, so Mark became good friends with the team there. “They all knew

my name, and they were friendly and fun. They deserve a standing ovation for how they took care of me,” he says.

Even during his treatment, he kept working full-time, which for Mark—who manages an auto parts store and works at a local stadium when it’s open—can mean six or even seven days a week. “I kept my life moving ahead. I didn’t have any problems going to work other than the days I had to be at the hospital for chemo,” says Mark.

Mark is now in remission and doing well, with no evidence of disease. In October 2023, he walked his daughter Stephanie down the aisle at her wedding at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. “I made it to her wedding. I made it!” he says. “I’m so grateful that I got into the trial. It saved my life.”



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ORTHOPEDICS

The Gym vs. the Great Outdoors



There is no one-size-fits-all approach when choosing where to train, but our expert explains the pros and cons to each.



How healthy are your hips and knees? Take our online joint pain assessment to find out.

“Exercising in a gym and exercising outdoors each offer unique benefits and potential risks, making it a subjective decision,” says **Oscar Vazquez, M.D.**, sports medicine, shoulder and knee orthopedic surgeon at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

Benefits of Training Outdoors

- ▶ **Accessibility and fresh air.** Outdoor training is easily accessible and can be done in local parks, trails or neighborhoods. Enjoying the fresh air and natural surroundings adds to the overall experience.
- ▶ **Sunlight and vitamin D.** Exercising outdoors exposes you to natural sunlight, which promotes the production of vitamin D, which is essential for strong bones and a healthy immune system.
- ▶ **Stress relief in nature.** Being surrounded by nature during outdoor workouts can reduce stress levels and provide a calming effect on the mind and body.

Benefits of Training in the Gym

- ▶ **Wide range of equipment.** Indoor gyms offer a diverse selection of exercise machines, free weights and specialized equipment, allowing for targeted workouts and variety in routines.
- ▶ **Social interaction and motivation.** The gym provides opportunities for social interaction, whether it’s working out with friends or joining group classes. The supportive environment and camaraderie can boost motivation and enjoyment.

- ▶ **Professional guidance.** Trainers at the gym can offer expert guidance, ensuring proper form, technique and personalized workout plans to help you reach your goals safely and effectively.
- ▶ **Easy on your joints.** Gyms typically have even surfaces and cushioned flooring, reducing the impact on joints during activities like running or high-intensity workouts.

Finding the Right Balance

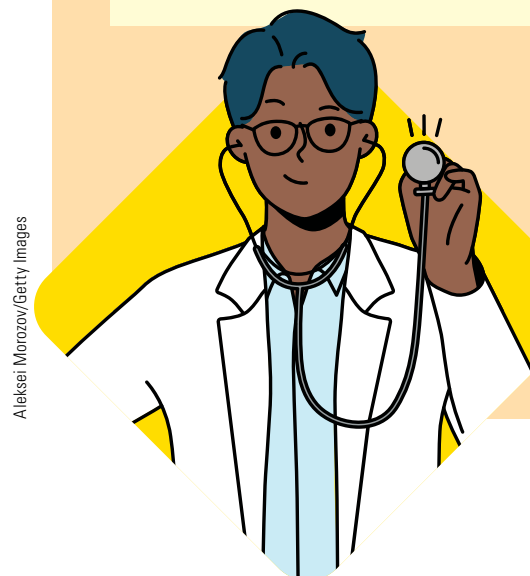
Outdoor environments are ideal for sporting activities like running and biking, while weightlifting is more effectively performed in a controlled gym environment with specialized equipment.

“The key is to find a balance that incorporates the benefits of both outdoor and gym training to create a well-rounded fitness routine that suits your needs and promotes overall health and well-being,” says Dr. Vazquez. 🌀



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Aleksei Morozov/Getty Images

Slow It Down

Too much exercise can have negative effects on the body. Our expert offers signs that you may be hitting the gym a little too hard.



Siddhant K. Mehta, M.D., Ph.D.
Orthopedic surgeon
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Hackensack, North Bergen and Hoboken

It seems that almost every ailment can be prevented or improved with exercise. But when working out, more isn’t always better. It’s possible to exercise too much or do what’s called “overtraining.”

Siddhant K. Mehta, M.D., Ph.D., orthopedic surgeon at **Hackensack University Medical Center** and chairman of orthopedic surgery at **Palisades Medical Center**, shares signs that you may need to pull back on your exercise regimen.

Why Your Muscles Need Rest

When it comes to understanding when you might be overtraining, let your pain be your guide. If you have pain with certain exercises or activities, take a break and give your body rest.

“It’s true that in order to get stronger, sometimes you need to push your body,” Dr. Mehta says. “But remember that your body needs rest and your muscles need time to recover.”

Without rest, your muscles are continually strained and can break down, which can lead to health problems.

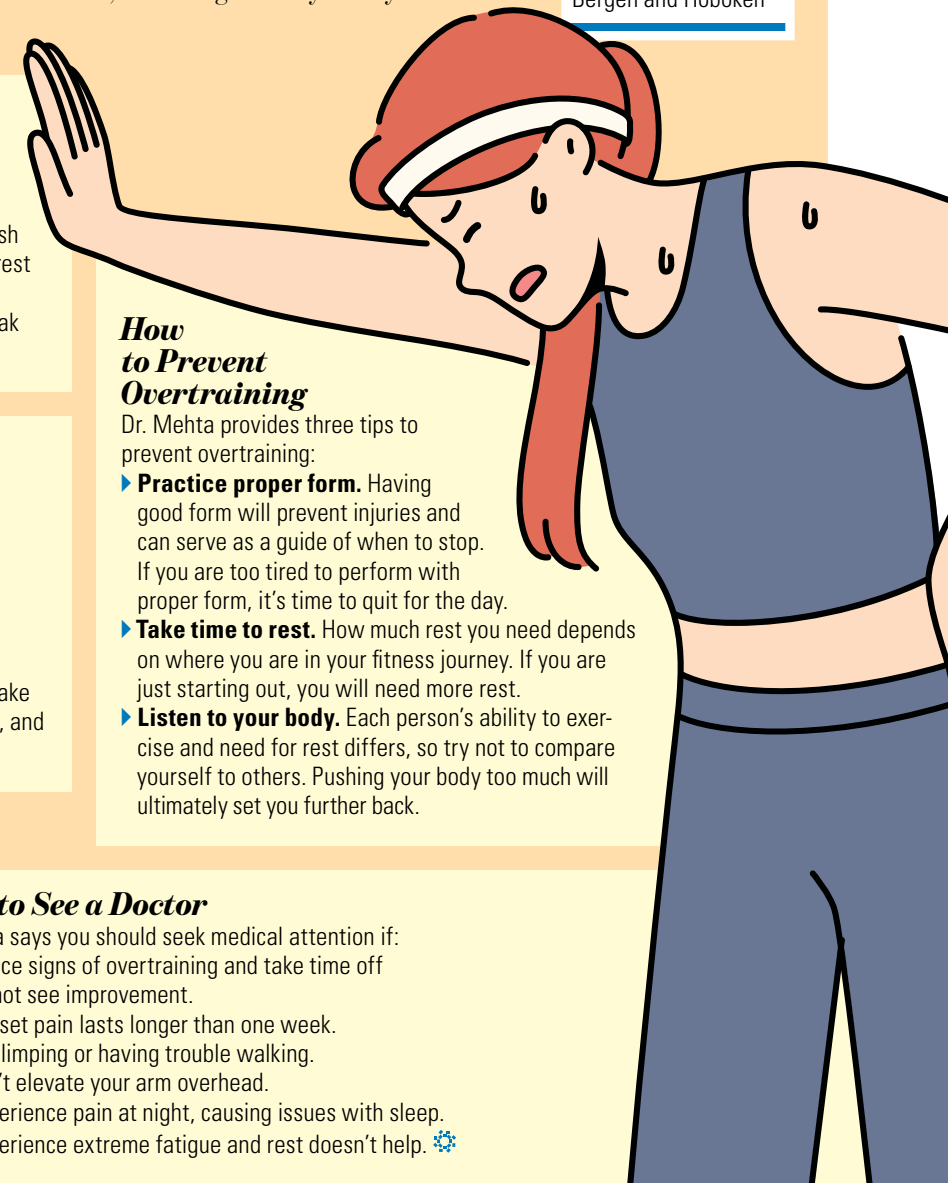
Signs of Too Much Exercise

Signs of too much exercise include:

- ▶ Pain during certain activities
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Swollen or painful joints
- ▶ Limited movement
- ▶ Performance plateaus or declines
- ▶ Poor sleep quality

If you notice symptoms of overtraining, give yourself a period of rest, then see how you feel.

After a few days, you can attempt exercise again, but take it slow and easy. Gradually return to your exercise routine, and if any symptoms of overtraining return, back off again.



How to Prevent Overtraining

Dr. Mehta provides three tips to prevent overtraining:

- ▶ **Practice proper form.** Having good form will prevent injuries and can serve as a guide of when to stop. If you are too tired to perform with proper form, it’s time to quit for the day.
- ▶ **Take time to rest.** How much rest you need depends on where you are in your fitness journey. If you are just starting out, you will need more rest.
- ▶ **Listen to your body.** Each person’s ability to exercise and need for rest differs, so try not to compare yourself to others. Pushing your body too much will ultimately set you further back.

When to See a Doctor

Dr. Mehta says you should seek medical attention if:

- ▶ You notice signs of overtraining and take time off but do not see improvement.
- ▶ New onset pain lasts longer than one week.
- ▶ You are limping or having trouble walking.
- ▶ You can’t elevate your arm overhead.
- ▶ You experience pain at night, causing issues with sleep.
- ▶ You experience extreme fatigue and rest doesn’t help. 🌀

ORTHOPEDICS

Knee Deep

Take the stress out of knee replacement surgery with this simple guide for a successful recovery.



How healthy are your knees? Take our hip and knee health risk assessment.



For many people, a knee replacement can mark the end of years of pain and limited mobility. But it's important to give yourself time to heal.

"Most people will recover in approximately three months, but for some, it could take a full year," says **Stephen Rossman, D.O., FAAOS, FAOAO**, orthopedic surgeon at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "It's important to listen to your body, plan ahead and proceed at a recovery pace that is best for you."

It's also helpful to set yourself up for success:

- ▶ Make sure your house is easy to move around in. Clean up any clutter on the floor and clear pathways.
- ▶ See if friends and family are willing to help in the first few days after surgery, which will relieve some of your stress.
- ▶ Stay active. This will make the recovery process easier.

Immediately After Surgery

Immediately after surgery, you will be taken to a recovery area. Here's what to expect:

- ▶ The length of your hospital stay will depend on factors including age, type of surgery and mobility. Some people go home the next day, while others need to stay for several days.
- ▶ Your doctor will help manage pain through a combination of methods, including pain medication.
- ▶ Shortly after the procedure, you may be asked to stand and take a few steps. Most people can walk the same day.



Stephen Rossman, D.O., FAAOS, FAOAO
Orthopedic surgeon
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Hackensack and North Bergen

1-3 Weeks Post-surgery

In the first few weeks after surgery, you will experience the following:

- ▶ You will need to use assistive devices—first a walker, then graduate to a cane.
- ▶ You'll likely experience pain in the initial weeks. Your doctor may prescribe medications to mitigate all pathways of pain. At the end of three weeks, your need for pain management should greatly decrease or cease.
- ▶ You will begin physical therapy. You may receive in-home physical therapy for the first week or two. Then, you'll likely begin outpatient physical therapy two or three times a week at week three.
- ▶ Your ability to return to work will greatly depend on the job. If you have a sedentary job, you may be able to slowly begin to return to work within this time frame.

4-6 Weeks Post-surgery

In this phase, you will start to see progress. You may notice:

- ▶ You rely less on supportive devices.
- ▶ Your mobility will have noticeably increased.
- ▶ Your pain will be significantly reduced.

6+ Weeks Post-surgery

"Hopefully, at six weeks, the patient is hitting their stride, has returned to their typical everyday life, and the replacement is starting to feel like a normal knee," says Dr. Rossman.

For continued recovery success:

- ▶ Keep putting in the work at physical therapy for three months, or as your doctor recommends.
- ▶ Work to maintain a healthy weight and manage comorbidities, such as diabetes, by eating well, moving often and eliminating bad habits such as smoking. 🌱

WEIGHT LOSS



Douglas Ewing, M.D.
Bariatric surgeon
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Paramus



Journaling to Success

If you want to lose weight—whether it's a few pounds or many more—keeping a journal of your eating habits, exercise and weight can be a great way to keep you on target.

"Journaling can be a really powerful tool in a number of ways," says **Douglas Ewing, M.D.**, director of minimally invasive/bariatric surgery fellowship at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. By keeping a written record, journaling can track progress and clearly show successes.

Benefits of a Weight-loss Journal

Dr. Ewing says journaling can also:

- ▶ Make you feel more involved and active in the process
- ▶ Help you understand your eating patterns
- ▶ Hold you accountable
- ▶ Remind you of your goals
- ▶ Help you make more mindful choices
- ▶ Help you identify problem areas
- ▶ Help health care providers see your habits, progress and continuing goals

"Journaling can help you sort through emotions with particular issues instead of coping through food," says Dr. Ewing. Journaling can also help you identify emotional triggers that

may cause you to crave certain foods or want to eat. Once you understand these triggers, you can develop alternative, healthier coping behaviors.

How to Keep a Weight-loss Journal

"There isn't a right or wrong way to journal," Dr. Ewing says. It can be a simple log of what you eat and what exercises you perform. Or it could be a much more detailed log of your eating habits and the events of the day, and how they may have influenced your choices. It's a personal choice of what you want to include.

Obviously, a weight-loss journal is about your weight, so regular weighing is necessary and can be helpful to keep you on track. You don't need to weigh yourself every day, but you should do it weekly or at least monthly. The key to success is consistency. 🌱

Go Online

To download a sample weight-loss journal template, visit [HMHforU.org/WeightLossTracker](https://www.hmhforu.org/WeightLossTracker).



More people are taking weight-loss medications without a doctor's guidance, and that can cause health risks. Our expert offers tips to use medications safely.



Scan the QR code to find out if you're a candidate for weight-loss surgery.

These days, weight-loss medication is getting a lot of attention—on TV, on social media and in everyday conversations between family members and friends.

But talking about them is one thing, and taking them without a doctor's guidance is another, says **Karl W. Strom, M.D.**, medical director of the weight-loss program at **Mountainside Medical Center**.

What are these buzzed-about drugs with the generic name semaglutide?

What to Know About Weight-Loss Medication

These medications work by slowing the emptying of the stomach so you stay fuller longer. They do this by mimicking the chemical glucagon-like peptide-1

(GLP-1) that the small intestine produces to target gut hormone receptors. The drugs also alter brain receptors to cut the urge to eat.

This often helps people lose weight, but at what cost? A slowed transit through the gastrointestinal tract can cause reactions—some uncomfortable and others potentially dangerous.

"We've seen more and more side effects because people want to get to their goal faster and don't follow proper protocols," Dr. Strom says.

Potential side effects can include:

- ▶ Nausea
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Cramps
- ▶ Heartburn
- ▶ Constipation
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Fatigue

Denis Novikov/Getty Images

How to Use Weight-loss Medication Safely

Dr. Strom offers seven tips on how to scale down safely:

1 Take Drugs at the Proper Pace

Doctors prescribe semaglutide in single-use syringes often injected at home. Patience is vital. The best approach is to raise weekly doses gradually to avoid aftereffects.

"It may take four to five months to reach the optimal dose," Dr. Strom says. "But if taken correctly, semaglutide can help you lose weight successfully and healthily. That can change your life, physically and mentally, for the better."

2 Choose a Qualified Doctor

"Go to a weight-management doctor or bariatric surgeon who offers a comprehensive program with a multidisciplinary team," Dr. Strom says. "They understand what it takes to help you reach your goal weight, they make sure you're getting your proper nutrition, and they know how to limit side effects and manage them if they do occur."

3 Know that Injectables Aren't for Everyone

Semaglutides focused on weight loss are not intended for those hoping to shed five to 10 pounds. They're approved for people with a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or higher, and people with a BMI of 27 or higher if they have weight-linked medical issues such as high blood pressure.

People with a personal or family history of thyroid cancer, pancreatitis (an inflamed pancreas) or gallbladder disease are at greater risk for serious complications and should not take weight-loss medication.

Though the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved drugs for ages 12 and up, some doctors won't prescribe them for children. Rather than risk stunting their growth and bone-building, some physicians, including Dr. Strom, prefer to wait until children turn 18.

4 Avoid Buying Injectables Online or from Compound Pharmacies

You may save money while getting a quicker fix, but neither you nor your health care practitioner may know what the compound contains—or the complications it can cause, Dr. Strom says. If you were denied a prescription for medical reasons, buying the drug anyway may endanger your health, especially if you don't reveal that when seeking help for symptoms later on.

5 Recognize that a Shot Is Not a Fix-all

While weight-loss drugs can help you drop pounds, they won't necessarily affect your high cholesterol, high blood pressure, sleep apnea, diabetes or heart disease. "If you need to lose 100 pounds or more, bariatric surgery may be a better alternative, since it can counter those diseases," Dr. Strom says.

6 Maintain Proper Nutrition

Without proper nutrition, you risk heart palpitations, vitamin deficiencies, nerve damage and hair loss. Your doctor can monitor your blood sugar, vitamin levels and electrolytes to ensure you're getting the nutrients needed to keep your heart, kidneys and other organs running smoothly.

7 Develop Good Habits for Long-term Success

When you stop taking injectables, pounds may return. Your genes, environment and behavior all play a role in gaining and losing weight, Dr. Strom says.

That's why you may need support from doctors, dietitians, trainers and counselors to reduce fat, inactivity and emotional eating. "Success, confidence and better health are good side effects that come from a safe approach," Dr. Strom says.

Signs You Need to See a Doctor

When taking weight-loss medication, talk to your doctor if you:

- ▶ Are constipated
- ▶ Are bloated
- ▶ Are dizzy
- ▶ Have abdominal pain
- ▶ Have other complications
- ▶ Are vomiting constantly and can't tolerate food

"The latter may be a sign that your GI tract is not contracting, which is essential to moving food through it," says Dr. Strom. "You also could become dehydrated, which could lead to kidney and heart problems."

Go to the emergency room immediately if you have an allergic reaction, such as difficulty breathing, swelling of the throat or all-over hives. 🚑

Go Online

Learn more about weight-loss services at Mountainside Medical Center at [HMHforU.org/MountainsideWeightLoss](https://www.HMHforU.org/MountainsideWeightLoss).



Karl W. Strom, M.D.

Bariatric surgeon

888-973-4MSH (4674)

Glen Ridge, Holmdel and Manahawkin

Teen Talk

Talking to teens about drugs starts early, begins with trust and requires parents to be prepared and nonjudgmental.

For parents, talking to teenagers in the years when they may be seeking distance and independence can be a challenge in general—talking to them about sensitive topics like drug use can be even tougher.

“It’s normal for teenagers to keep some things from parents as they explore their identities and want to make decisions on their own,” says

Eric Alcera, M.D., vice president and chief medical officer at **Carrier Clinic**.

“Discussions about the dangers of drug or substance use, or any dangerous behaviors, are built on a foundation of nonjudgmental openness and trust that is developed long before the teenage years. Start as early as possible to have candid conversations with children about uncomfortable topics by being straightforward in age-appropriate ways.”

Experimentation and Rebellion Are Part of Growing Up

Trying new things is part of growing up and maturing, and experimentation with things parents would not approve of is part of that process. But today, with fentanyl, the consequences of adolescent experimentation can be deadly and immediate.

“Parents should expect teenagers to be exposed to and possibly experiment with drugs, and be prepared to help them make good decisions rather than control their behavior or demand information,” says Dr. Alcera.

“Rather than think of them as teenagers with a lot to learn, think of them as young adults with the capacity to make good and safe decisions.”



Eric Alcera, M.D.
Psychiatrist
800-822-8905
Brick and Shrewsbury

Five Tips for Talking to Teens About Drugs

- 1** **Avoid accusatory language.** Rather than ask if they are using drugs, respectfully inquire if there is much drug use at their school and how they feel about it.
- 2** **Frame the conversation around health and safety.** Ask if they are aware of the dangers of fentanyl rather than say that drugs can kill you.
- 3** **Differentiate “drugs” from medications.** If a teen pushes back that you or others use “drugs” all the time, calmly explain that medications are substances prescribed by your doctor with a medical purpose and drugs are substances people may use to deal with painful feelings or emotions.
- 4** **Let them speak in third person.** It may feel safer for them to speak as if they have a friend who is doing some of these things. Support open dialogue by asking if the friend is having problems at school or doing these things due to peer pressure or feeling depressed.
- 5** **Let them know you love and trust them.** Lay the foundation for the next conversation by finishing tough conversations with: “I love you and trust you to make good decisions.”

Be Prepared to Acknowledge Double Standards

Today’s teenagers are savvy and might see conversations about drug use as hypocritical since alcohol is all around us, vape shops are everywhere and many states have legalized marijuana. Being open to acknowledging these perceived double standards will build credibility.

“With the pervasive nature of social media, the internet, and often glorified drug use and culture in music, movies and TV, it is reasonable to assume your kids are being exposed to things like drugs in more ways than imaginable in our youth,” Dr. Alcera says. “Equipped with that understanding and a plan for calmly discussing how they are feeling and doing is a great approach for parents to build a strong relationship, self-confidence and resilience in their children.”

Go Online

Find a behavioral health specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/BehavioralHealthDoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/BehavioralHealthDoc).



Aseel Al-Jadiri, M.D.
Developmental behavioral pediatrician
800-822-8905
Hackensack

Toddler TV Time

Our expert explains how much screen time is OK and how to incorporate it into your routine in a productive way.

You see it everywhere: Kids on cell phones, watching tablets or glued to the TV. It’s almost impossible to be screenless, but how is all this screen time affecting our children?

Aseel Al-Jadiri, M.D., a developmental behavioral pediatrician at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, explains what parents should be focused on to create healthy relationships in this screen-filled world.

How Much Screen Time Is OK?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

- ▶ **Younger than 18 months:** Limit screen time to video chatting along with an adult.
- ▶ **Ages 2–5:** Limit noneducational screen time to one–two hours a day.
- ▶ **Ages 6 and beyond:** While there is no set amount of time, it is recommended to limit screen time and develop healthy relationships with screens.

“Most brain development happens in those early years,” says Dr. Al-Jadiri. “The biggest problem is when screen time is passive. Parents want to try and encourage reciprocal interactions, like play and communication.”

What Happens in Early Development that Screen Time Can Impact?

Face-to-face interaction teaches babies how to read faces and develop social skills, so less social interaction and increased screen time can lead to communication delays.

“Nothing can replace human interaction. Children learn from those around them, how to play, socialize and communicate,” Dr. Al-Jadiri says. “It’s found that children that are well-nurtured develop better because they are exposed to more.”

Find a pediatrician near you at [HMHforU.org/Pediatrician](https://www.hmhforu.org/Pediatrician).

Fighting Pain



Danielle Groves, M.D.
Physical medicine and rehabilitation doctor
877-848-WELL (9355)
Emerson

Long-term discomfort impacts people physically and mentally. Our expert offers tips to manage pain without surgery.

There's no gain with perpetual pain. Unrelenting pain can rob you of sleep and the ability to work or move easily. Hopelessness, depression, irritability and loneliness often accompany the pain and propel you to overeat.

"One feeds into the other, which makes chronic pain harder to help," says **Danielle Groves, M.D.**, attending physical medicine and rehabilitation physician at **Pascack Valley Medical Center**. "Managing chronic pain usually needs more than one approach. There's no single answer for a patient, and doctor and patient must work together to get from point A to point B.

Dr. Groves offers six ways you can start to find relief from chronic pain.

1 Physical Therapy

Physical therapists can help determine the cause of discomfort, which isn't always obvious. They also aid patients in stretching muscles properly and teach patients how to strengthen weak muscles that may contribute to pain. They also use heat, ice, ultrasound, electric stimulation and deep-tissue massage to ease pain.

2 Daily Exercise

While it may seem counterintuitive, moving painful body parts can soothe soreness by stretching, strengthening and stabilizing muscles and tendons that are too tight or are prone to contract. Working out not only improves mobility and strength but also burns calories, which in turn helps lose weight that can strain joints.

Dr. Groves suggests:

- ▶ Walking on a treadmill or outdoors
- ▶ Walking in the shallow end of a pool
- ▶ Yoga and pilates
- ▶ One-on-one exercise classes or working with a personal trainer for beginners

3 Medication

Over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), acetaminophen and lidocaine patches sometimes may break the cycle of pain. You also can try supplements with turmeric, glucosamine and chondroitin, which can counter arthritic joint pain.

If those are not effective, your doctor may prescribe muscle relaxers, prescription painkillers or sleep aids. Doctors should supervise all over-the-counter and prescribed supplements, pain relievers and muscle relaxers (for acute muscle spasms).

4 Alternative Medicine

Chiropractors and acupuncturists can offer alternatives to standard care:

- ▶ **Chiropractors** manipulate joints and align the spine, which can relieve pain in joints, muscles and connective tissues.
- ▶ **Acupuncture** is traditional medicine using needles to balance and restore the flow of energy, or chi, through pathways in the body and thus ease pain.

How to Describe Your Pain

It's important for your doctor to know where your pain starts, where it travels, what makes it better and what makes it worse. Also, is it constant, does it come and go, and what time is it worse?

Dr. Groves offers tips for helping your doctor understand your pain:

Tell your doctor **how long** you've been in pain.

Tell your doctor about **supplements, prescriptions** and over-the-counter **medications** you're taking for any reason.

Let your doctor know if you're weak, stiff or unable to have full range of motion or bear weight.

Tell your doctor about **measures you've taken** and how they impacted your discomfort.

Bring copies of X-rays, medical reports and **studies** related to the pain.

Label your pain using terms such as short/stabbing, dull/aching, throbbing, spasming, radiating, numbing, tingling, burning and pins and needles.

It's also helpful to **rank your pain** level, use a number from 0–10, with 0 being no pain, 1–3 tolerable, 4–6 moderate, 6–8 intense and 9–10 the worst pain possible. The last may warrant a trip to the emergency room.

5 Bliss Breaks

Find inner peace with mind/body practices, like meditation, that ease the side effects of long-term pain, anxiety, insomnia and depression.

As with exercise, there's no one-size-fits-all. Find the technique that works for you. Besides meditation, you can tune out pain with:

- ▶ **Deep breathing.** Expand your belly as you inhale, hold the breath, then deflate the belly for four seconds each phase.
- ▶ **Progressive relaxation.** Slowly tense and then relax each muscle group, from head to foot.
- ▶ **Guided imagery.** Lay or sit down and imagine a peaceful place which nurtures your senses.
- ▶ **Biofeedback.** A physical therapist may help you to train yourself to control heartbeats or release spasms.

6 Injections and Other Procedures

If other measures are insufficient, see a pain management doctor. Psychiatrists—rehabilitation medicine doctors—treat the whole body, not just specific symptoms, Dr. Groves says. They can direct your care to avoid overlaps or unneeded tests:

- ▶ **Corticosteroid shots** target inflamed joints or trigger points with injections to help calm a muscle that is in spasm. Your doctor may recommend gel injections to aid in the treatment of osteoarthritic knee joints.
- ▶ **Radiofrequency ablation (RFA)** is an outpatient procedure that uses heat to burn small pain sensing nerves surrounding the joints of the spine, tailbone or knees. "That can bring significant relief for up to a year," Dr. Groves says.
- ▶ **Spinal cord stimulation** is an advanced pain procedure that uses an implanted device to block pain signals from being communicated via the spine to the brain. ⚙️

Go Online

Learn more about pain management services at Pascack Valley Medical Center at HMHforU.org/PVPain.

From Addiction to Ambassador

Darren Waller, New York Giants tight end for the 2023 season, opens up about overcoming addiction and thriving in his recovery.

It may appear like Darren Waller has everything. He played tight end for the New York Giants and joined Hackensack Meridian Health as a Health Ambassador in 2023, but his journey was not easy. In an interview with HealthU, Darren shares details about how addiction impacted his life and how he maintains his recovery. Most of all, he wants people who are dealing with addiction to know that they are not alone and recovery is possible.

How did your substance use begin?

My journey with drugs and alcohol started when I was 15 years old, experimenting recreationally with two friends. I found painkillers in their parents' medicine cabinets. At the time, I was dealing with a lot of anxiety and self-doubt, and the pills were like the answer I was looking for. They cleared my head and gave me a sense of peace and escape from the sadness I was feeling. From there, I kept chasing that feeling and tried whatever substances I could get my hands on.

When did you realize your substance use was a problem?

I got to a place where I just wanted to withdraw from everything in my life. I was in a lot of emotional pain, and numbing that pain became a daily priority for me. I was suspended from playing professional football for the fourth or fifth time, and the only time I felt safe or relaxed was when I was high. And then, right before my 25th birthday, I overdosed on painkillers, and it almost killed me. I took something that I thought was safe, but it ended up being laced with fentanyl. All I remember was sitting in my car outside of the supermarket when it felt like someone pulled the plug on me. The pills kicked in, and things went dark really quick. By some miracle I survived, but that was the moment I finally realized I needed help.

How did you find recovery?

After I overdosed, it shook me up. It woke me up to the reality that I had an addiction and it was going to kill me. I went to an inpatient facility for detox and completed a 30-day treatment program that changed my life. It doesn't mean that all my issues have been resolved and there are no bumps in the road. But I have a better path forward, and I am moving in the right direction. It was the first time I remember just stopping and doing something for me.

During treatment, I learned that addiction is a medical condition, not a life choice. I learned that professional care and support are needed for safely detoxing, and a support network is really important

to long-term sobriety. I've been sober more than six years now, and I speak with my recovery coach regularly and attend meetings. I'd say that sticking with an aftercare program is really important.

Recovery is hard work and a lifelong commitment. I learned that my addiction was deeper than my dependence on drugs and alcohol. I focused on emotional healing and other issues in my life through therapy and relaxation skills to reduce stress, like meditation, yoga and journaling. Every day, I try to be patient with the process and use what I learned in treatment to keep moving forward.

What's life like now for you?

Early in my recovery process, I had a lot of resentment. I wasn't trying to be a bad person or destroy my life; I was just trying to have a good time like everyone else. It didn't feel fair that other people could enjoy an occasional drink, but that same drink could lead to more and tear my life apart. But every day, those feelings fade as I continue to understand myself and work through therapy and my recovery. I am moving further and further away from the cravings and desire to numb myself, and I now feel that I have a greater purpose in life to help others find their way to better times.

What advice do you have for someone in the midst of addiction?

I would start by saying that there's nothing wrong with you being where you are. None of us set out on a journey toward a substance use disorder. But with the right help, there is a path to recovery. You just have to be willing to move forward, to make a call or ask for help. Recovery may not happen on the first try, but stick with it, be grateful for small victories along the way and trust that there are better times ahead if you stay the course. 🧠



Watch Darren's full video interview at HMHforU.org/Darren.

Go Online

If you or a loved one is in need of addiction treatment services, visit HMHforU.org/Addiction, or speak to an addiction admissions expert right away at **866-266-1616**.



We offer a number of programs to help keep our communities healthy. Topics range from general wellness to heart health, stroke, cancer care, women's health and more. View some featured events below.

For a full listing or to register, visit HMHforU.org/Events or call 800-560-9990.

SchedUle

Here are just a few of the events & classes this April through June 2024

Special Events

Tips for a Healthy Year This lecture series will touch on immunizations, stroke and healthy eating.
 Apr. 10 & May 8, 10 a.m.–2 p.m., *Franciscan Community Dev. Center, 239 Anderson Ave., Fairview*
 Apr. 8, May 13 & June 10, 10 a.m.–noon, *Save Latin America, 138 39th St., Union City*
 Apr. 20 & May 18, 10 a.m.–1 p.m., *Dvine Konektion, 611 56th St., West New York*

Hope and Breakthroughs for Treatment-resistant Mental Health Conditions Join Eric Alcera, M.D., as he explores how existing treatments like ECT, TMS, Esketamine and others are effective and scientifically proven, providing hope and a better quality of life for many individuals. He will also debunk myths and discuss new treatments, including medically supervised use of psychedelics, that may provide life-changing improvements in the future.
 May 14, 6–7 p.m., *virtual event*



Woman to Woman You have memories to make and milestones to achieve. To do it all, you have to prioritize and nurture yourself and your health. Make it a girls night out!
 May 16, 6–9 p.m., *Glen Ridge Country Club, 555 Ridgewood Ave.*

Women's Health: Paint & Sip Learn important cancer prevention tips at this interactive learning and sharing session, including why early detection is the best way to prevent, treat and cure cancer. Wellness screenings provided.
 May 21, 4–6 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood*



Hackensack University Medical Center
 30 Prospect Avenue
 Hackensack
 800-560-9990

Mountainside Medical Center
 1 Bay Avenue
 Montclair
 888-973-4674



Cancer Care

Cutting-edge Kitchen: Bringing Evidence-based Nutrition Research into the Kitchen Monthly programs to educate cancer patients and caregivers on the evidence-based research behind the food we nourish ourselves with. Food samples will be provided.

- ▶ **Palliative Care and Advance Care Planning** April 22, 2–3 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Alcohol & Cancer** Apr. 24, 1–2 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Moving Forward: Eat Well, Live Well Nutrition Program for Cancer Survivors** Apr. 25; May 2, 9, 16 & 23; June 6, 13, 20 & 27, noon–1 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Oral Health** Apr. 25, noon–1 p.m., *Montclair Public Library, 50 South Fullerton Avenue*
- ▶ **Tackling Brain Tumors: The Cutting Edge** Speaker: Yevgenia Shekhtman, M.D., May 8, noon–1 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Stop Smoking with Hypnosis** May 8, 7–8 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Detoxing: Does It Work?** May 22, 1–2 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Development of Survivorship Guidelines** June 26, 1–2 p.m., *JTCC first-floor cooking studio, Hackensack*
- ▶ **Smoking & Vaping Cessation: Everybody Loves a Quitter** For appointments, call 551-996-2038 or email HARP@hmn.org. *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center 87 Route 17 North, Maywood*

Dumitru Ochieschi/evxoriari/FotografiaBasica/monticello/Getty Images

stefanamer/John Kevin/Getty Images

HOSPITAL LOCATIONS

Palisades Medical Center
 7600 River Road
 North Bergen
 800-560-9990

Pascack Valley Medical Center
 250 Old Hook Road
 Westwood
 877-848-9355



Heart Health

AHA CPR Anytime Be a heart saver. Learn hands-only CPR and about early heart attack and stroke care. These programs do not provide a course completion card.
 May 15, noon–1 p.m. or 5:30–6:30 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood*

- ▶ **AngioScreen®** Special rate: \$49.95. Registration required. Call for dates, times and locations.



Neuroscience

Stroke Prevention and Detection Learn the signs and symptoms of a stroke and the steps you can take to lower your risk.
 May 14, noon–1 p.m., *Montclair Public Library, 50 South Fullerton Ave.*

- ▶ **Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls** Eight-week program. May 9, 16, 23 & 30; June 6, 13, 20 & 27, 10 a.m.–noon, *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood*
- ▶ **Memory Training** Four-week course. May 9, 16, 23 & 30, 1–3 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood*
- ▶ **Brain Health** June 17, noon–1 p.m., *Montclair Public Library, 50 South Fullerton Ave.*

General Wellness

Stop the Bleed Gain the ability to recognize life-threatening bleeding and intervene effectively. Take the course and become empowered to make a life or death difference when a bleeding emergency occurs.

May 22, 2–3 p.m. or 6–7 p.m., *Wyckoff Family YMCA, 819 Wyckoff Ave.*
 May 23, 2–3 p.m. or 6–7 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood*

- ▶ **The Teaching Kitchen Series: the Art of Plant-based Cooking** Apr. 10, May 8 and June 12, noon–1 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood*
- ▶ **Women's Wellness Day: Charting Women's Health Trends in 2024** May 7, 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m., *Wyckoff Family YMCA, 819 Wyckoff Ave.*
- ▶ **Mental Health and Stress Relief** May 7, 5–6 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Osteoporosis Prevention and Detection** May 9, noon–1 p.m., *Bloomfield Public Library, 90 Broad St.*
- ▶ **Cooking for Strong Bones** May 15, noon–1:30 p.m. or 6–7:30 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood*
- ▶ **Aging in Place** May 14, noon–1 p.m., *Wyckoff Family YMCA, 819 Wyckoff Ave.*
- ▶ **Mind, Body, Spirit Seminar** May 16, 10 a.m.–noon, *John Theurer Cancer Center, Conference Room 1, 92 2nd Street, Hackensack*
- ▶ **Men's Health: Benefits of Exercise** June 13, 5–6 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Weight-loss Surgery** To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. Find a seminar near you at HMHforU.org/WeightLoss.

Pediatrics

Positive and Productive Parenting Coaching Group Join our FREE in-person or virtual parent groups to share and receive personalized tips and strategies on how to best react to your kids and respond to difficult behaviors.
 May 27–July 1, noon–1 p.m., *The Audrey Hepburn Children's House, 12 Second Street Hackensack*
 June 6–July 11, 9–10 a.m., *virtual event*

- ▶ **Parent/Guardian Talks: Acting Out: From Toddler to Teen** Speaker: Brett A. Biller, PsyD., Apr. 30, 7–8 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Postpartum Mind & Body** Speakers: Regina Kaplan, M.D., Nina Ross, M.D., and Stephanie Sansone, M.D., May 30, 7–8 p.m., *virtual event*
- ▶ **Breastfeeding Class** Apr. 28, 9–11:30 a.m, *Hackensack*; May 8 & Jun 5, 7–10 p.m., *Mountainside*
- ▶ **Infant Care & Safety Class** Apr. 24, 6–8 p.m., *Pascack Valley*; May 13 & June 10, 7–9:30 p.m., *Mountainside*
- ▶ **The Partner Plan** May 14, 6:30–7 p.m., *Mountainside*
- ▶ **Prepared Childbirth Class** May 18 & June 8, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., *Mountainside*
- ▶ **Tour of the Birthing Center** May 18 & June 8, 3:30–4:15 p.m.; May 14 & 28 and June 11 & 25, 5:30–6:15 p.m., *Mountainside Medical Center*
- ▶ **Tummy Time** 4th Tuesday of each month, noon–1 p.m., *Palisades*. To make an appointment, call 201-520-4773
- ▶ **Safe Sitter** Visit HMHforU.org/Events for more upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email Coeventinquiries@hmn.org for more information. Fee \$40.
- ▶ **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Visit HMHforU.org/Events for upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email Coeventinquiries@hmn.org for more information. Fee \$15.



The family of Dean Bonita Stanton, M.D., participated in the inaugural Bonita Stanton, M.D., Memorial 5K Run/Walk at Brookdale Park in Bloomfield, New Jersey, and presented a \$100,000 check to benefit the next generation of doctors through scholarships.

An Everlasting Impact

The legacy of Bonita Stanton, M.D., will live on through a generous and enduring gift to fund scholarships for future doctors.

Bonita Stanton, M.D., former dean of Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine, was passionate about her mission as founding dean and widely regarded as a visionary in designing a medical school curriculum geared toward improving outcomes for all patients. Today, her legacy endures through her impactful work, A Better World, the foundation she created, and the established Bonita Stanton, M.D., Scholarship Fund at Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine, which was created in her memory.

In October 2023, Dean Stanton's daughter, Maggie McAllister, traveled to New Jersey with other family members to participate in the inaugural Bonita Stanton, M.D., Memorial 5K Run/Walk at Brookdale Park in Bloomfield, New Jersey. Proceeds from the run will benefit the Bonita Stanton, M.D., Scholarship Fund, which provides vital scholarships to future physicians accepted into the medical school.

While at the race, Maggie and her family presented a \$100,000 check from A Better World, Dean Stanton's foundation, to benefit the next generation of doctors through scholarships.

"Even posthumously she is making the world a better place," says Maggie, an attorney in Atlanta. "Her legacy lives on, and that could not have been more apparent at the 5K."

Dean Stanton suddenly passed away in January 2022, leaving a void at the School of Medicine and Hackensack Meridian Health, where she was also president of Academic Enterprise. She led the medical school since its inception, charting a path for excellence and innovation in medical education and also serving as a professor of Pediatrics.

Dean Stanton came to New Jersey after a distinguished career in public health that included working on preventing and treating diarrheal diseases

with the World Bank in Bangladesh. She also served as a principal investigator on global HIV prevention initiatives funded by the National Institutes of Health for 25 years. She was an author, editor and expert in pediatric and maternal health and education.

Dean Stanton focused on advancing medical education and equitable health systems. She believed that health care providers need to look at patients more holistically—taking into consideration societal factors such as access to safe housing and healthy food—to improve health outcomes. She later brought this vision to Hackensack Meridian Health.

"I am very impressed by Hackensack Meridian Health's commitment to leverage technology to improve patient outcomes and the formative role played by Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine in educating our next generation of doctors to create a better world—Bonnie's mission that is shared by our family," says Duncan McCallister, Maggie's husband and Dean Stanton's son-in-law. "The impact made by the medical school and the network cannot be understated, and we are privileged to support their mission and impact."

Every gift helps. To learn more, contact Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation at giving@hmhn.org or 848-308-5000.

Spot

Answers:

1. C. While strokes may cause unusual sensory issues such as changes to taste and smell, smelling burnt toast is not a reliable indicator.
2. B. Balance, eyesight, face, arms, speech, time. Balance changes, sudden difficulty seeing, numbness or weakness in the face and arms, and slurred speech are all common signs of stroke. Time means it's time to call 911, and there's no time to waste.
3. D. All the above. Additionally, it is important to manage any chronic conditions with proper medication.
4. True, call 911 immediately. Although stroke symptoms may resolve on their own, medical attention should always be sought as quickly as possible when any stroke-like symptoms occur. Available medical treatment to minimize the damage being done by a stroke must be given within hours of symptom onset, so getting medical attention as soon as possible is the top priority.
5. D. 70–90. While strokes may occur more frequently in this age group, younger people can still experience strokes. Immediate medical attention is crucial regardless of age.

the Signs

Strokes often come on suddenly and are serious medical conditions. Do you know what signs to look for? Take our quiz.

1. Which of the following is NOT a sign of stroke?
 - A. Moderate to severe numbness or weakness on one side
 - B. Sudden speech impairment
 - C. Smelling of burnt toast
 - D. Sudden vision impairment
2. What does B.E.F.A.S.T. stand for?
 - A. Brain, energy, forward, away, slow, tired
 - B. Balance, eyesight, face, arms, speech, time
 - C. Balance, energy, face, arms, slow, tired
 - D. Brain, eyesight, feeling, arms, speech, time
3. Which of the following should you do to minimize stroke risk?
 - A. Quit smoking
 - B. Manage diet and weight
 - C. Increase cardiovascular activity
 - D. All the above
4. True or false: If you suspect someone is having a stroke, call 911 immediately.
 - True: Get medical attention as quickly as possible.
 - False: If it doesn't resolve in a few hours, then seek medical attention.
5. Which age group typically is at the highest risk of stroke?
 - A. 20–30
 - B. 40–50
 - C. 50–60
 - D. 70–90

Go Online

Are you at risk of stroke or heart attack? Schedule an AngioScreen® near you: [HMHforU.org/AngioScreenEvent](https://www.hmhforu.org/AngioScreenEvent).



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Signs You Need to See Your Doctor

As much as we try to tough it out, there are times when our bodies need extra care. Our expert shares seven signs it's time to schedule a doctor's visit at [HMHforU.org/DocVisit](https://www.hmhforu.org/DocVisit).

Screenings for Women at Every Age

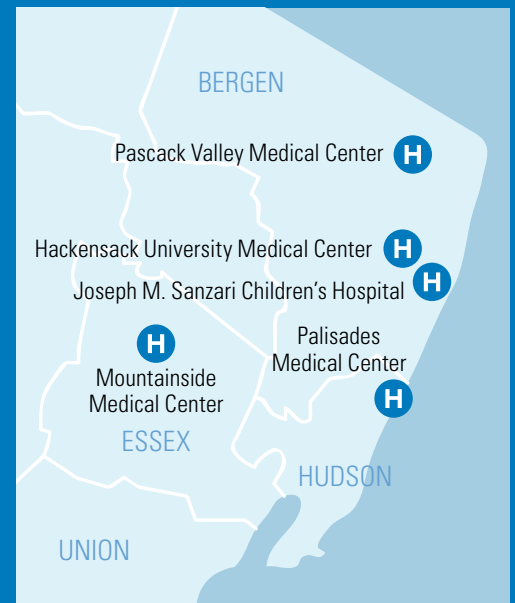
Understanding which screenings you need and when can be overwhelming and confusing. Find our guide for essential health screenings at [HMHforU.org/WomensScreenings](https://www.hmhforu.org/WomensScreenings).

Prep for Your Next Appointment

Preparing for a primary care appointment ahead of time can ease any anxiety and give your doctor a clearer picture of your health. Visit [HMHforU.org/Checklist](https://www.hmhforu.org/Checklist) to download a pre-appointment checklist.

As the state's largest, most comprehensive health network, Hackensack Meridian Health is made up of 7,000 physicians, 18 hospitals and more than 500 locations.

Our hospitals near you:



For a complete list of our hospitals, services and locations, visit [HMHforU.org/Locations](https://www.hmhforu.org/Locations).



Hackensack
Meridian Health

KEEP GETTING BETTER