

IT'S ABOUT THE POWER OF YOU

# HEALTH U



Hackensack  
Meridian Health

Spring 2024

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STROKE RISK**

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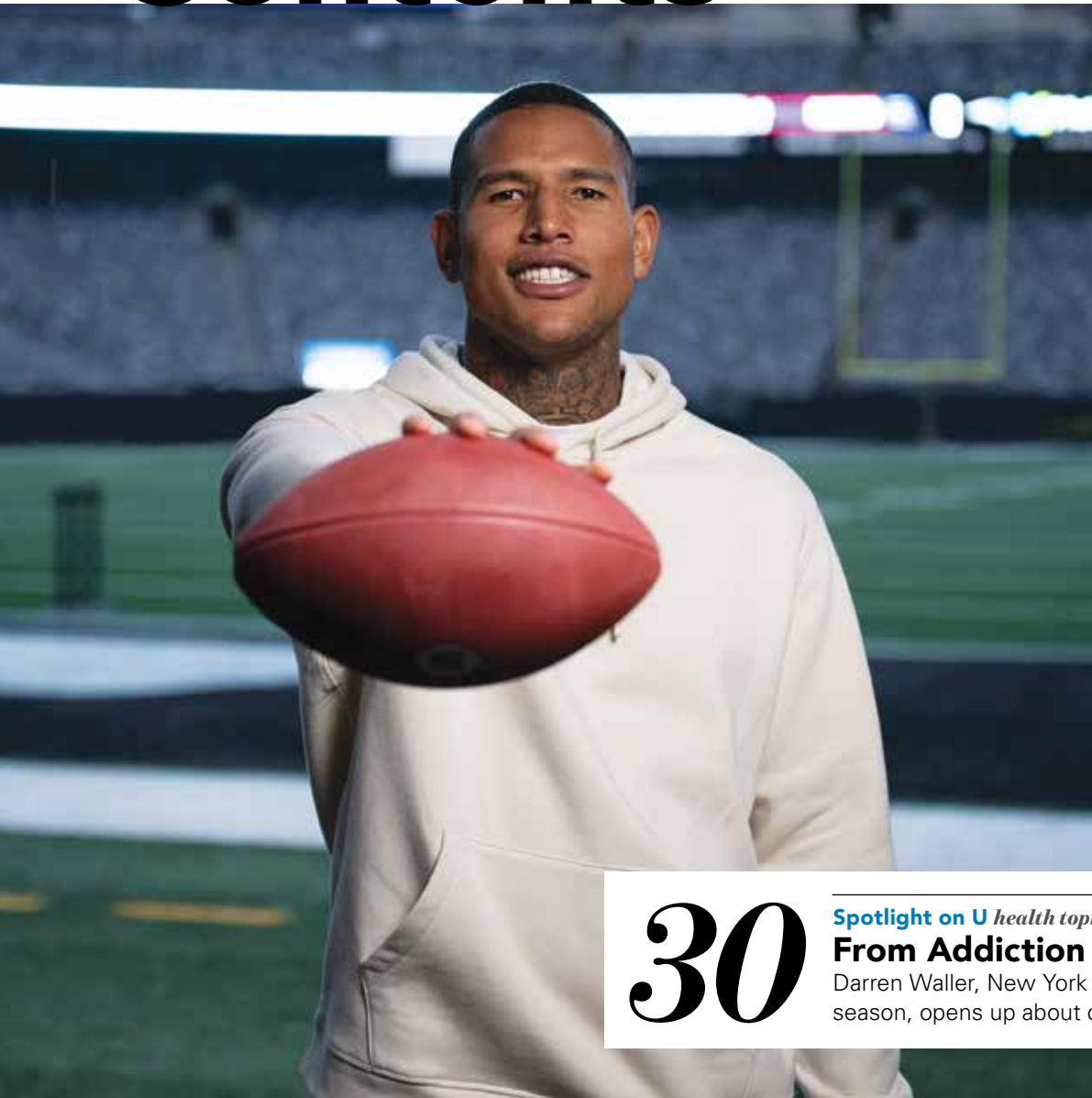
NEW YORK  
**ny**  
GIANTS

## *From Addiction to Ambassador*

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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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HealthU is the winner of the 2023 Content Marketing Award for Best Content Marketing Program in Healthcare, as well as a 2023 Hermes Creative Awards Platinum winner and a 2022 APEX Award winner.



## 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



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**  
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# BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

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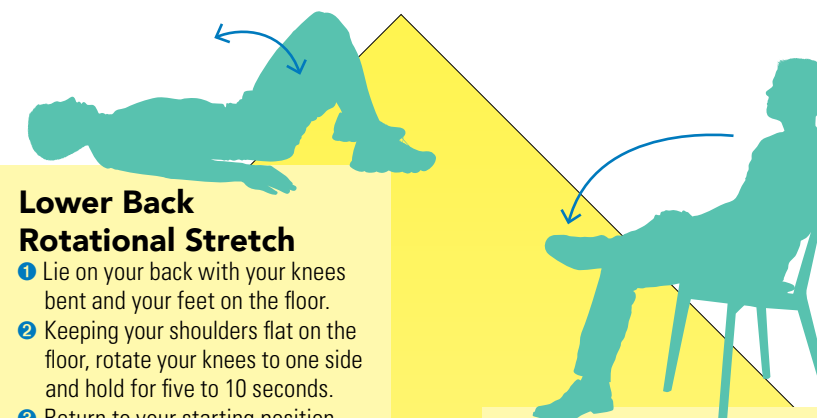
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## Stretch It Out

Our expert provides three helpful stretches to alleviate back pain.

Lower back pain can be one of the most frustrating ailments to have. **Alexander Shustorovich, D.O.**, a physical medicine and rehabilitation and pain medicine specialist at **JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute**, recommends trying hot or cold compresses or over-the-counter anti-inflammatory pain medicine for immediate relief. "In addition, strengthening your core can help, and there are easy ways to do that at home daily," Dr. Shustorovich says.

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 and 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.



iStock.com/4x6/Paper Trident



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Brick

## 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?

Sorah Miller, RD, registered dietitian at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**, explains how ultra-processed foods may affect the brain and your overall health.

"When we eat ultra-processed foods—things like cookies, cakes, chips and frozen meals—it can trigger a response in our brains that can be compared to how our brains react to other addictive substances, such as alcohol and drugs," Sorah says. "Dopamine levels in the brain are affected, telling our brains to repeat that action because it feels good."

A diet high in unhealthy fats, sodium and sugar can lead to a number of health concerns, including increased risk for diabetes, heart disease, obesity, stroke and cancer. "In addition, ultra-processed foods are low in fiber," Sorah says. "Fiber provides health benefits including improving elimination, stabilizing blood sugar, lowering cholesterol, improving satiety, assisting with weight management and feeding our gut microbiome."

## How to Know if You're 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?

## What to Do If You Think You're Addicted to Processed Foods

"Consumption of these foods in moderation and when part of a balanced meal plan can be OK, but try to incorporate additional fiber-containing foods, which are less processed and more nutrient rich," Sorah says.

If you think you might be addicted to processed foods, work with a registered dietitian, therapist or primary care doctor who can better evaluate your intake and help you make positive changes. Healthy eating support groups such as Overeaters Anonymous can be another helpful step.

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?

Tony M. Issac, M.D., weighs in:

Addiction medicine specialists usually recommend medically supervised inpatient care, not at-home detoxification.

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



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Even if you have good intentions, detoxing at home without medical supervision can be risky because nobody will be there to manage severe withdrawal symptoms or a medical emergency, if you have one. Medically supervised and assisted detox provides a safe environment for the critical first step in recovery.

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.

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



# How can I relieve my allergies this spring?

Eric L. Winarsky, M.D., weighs in:

If you've never been tested but suspect that you have a pollen allergy, see an allergist for a definitive diagnosis before pollen season begins. Once they determine which allergens cause a reaction, they can help you formulate a plan to combat the spring allergy season.

Here are my top 10 tips for managing allergies in the spring:

- 1 Monitor pollen counts and stay indoors on high-count 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, using air-conditioning or fans to cool off.
- 4 Place a HEPA filter in your air-conditioning unit to further reduce your exposure to pollen while you're indoors.
- 5 Shower and change your clothes after being outside, especially before going to bed.
- 6 Hang dry your clothes indoors rather than outdoors, or use a clothes dryer.
- 7 Minimize physical contact with pets that spend significant amounts 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.



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

# Why do my ears feel clogged?

Howard Landsman, D.O., FAOCO, weighs in:

Getting relief depends on identifying what is causing that clogged sensation.

## Impacted Earwax

Earwax buildup can be tough to remove. If over-the-counter drops don't help, talk to your doctor. Never attempt to remove earwax with a cotton swab.



## Hearing Loss

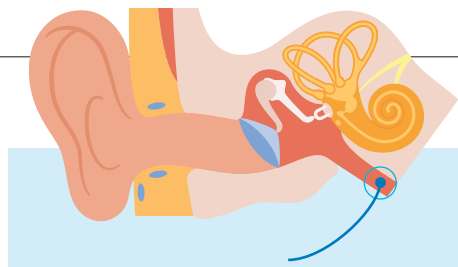
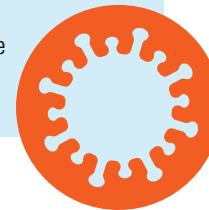
Hearing loss can sometimes be perceived as a clogged feeling. If your ears feel clogged without an obvious cause, talk to your primary care doctor about getting a hearing test. Sometimes, it can be age- or noise-related hearing loss, but it could also be due to another condition.

A condition called sudden sensorineural hearing loss involves sudden nerve loss and is caused by inflammation, a virus or vascular issues. This condition can be treated, but it is important to make the diagnosis quickly because the sooner it is treated, the better the chance of the hearing coming back.



## COVID-19

Although there aren't many studies on COVID-19 and hearing loss, any upper respiratory infection, including COVID-19, can lead to a clogged-up feeling in the ears due to swelling and fluid buildup.



## 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. When the Eustachian tube doesn't open and close properly, it can cause that clogged-up feeling.

Sinus or ear infections, allergies and other respiratory viruses 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 even after home treatment, talk to your primary care provider about your symptoms.



Howard Landsman, D.O., FAOCO  
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Brick and Jackson

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

# Should I be concerned if my urine is pink?

Scott Wheeler, M.D., weighs in:

Your urine can tell you many things about your body, including your hydration level, what you've eaten recently and what medications you're taking. If your urine is pink or red, it could signal a few different things:

- ▶ A woman may have red/pink pee while on her period
- ▶ Foods with red or pink pigmentation (beets, blueberries) can turn urine pink or red
- ▶ Certain medications can give your urine a pink or red hue
- ▶ Blood could be present in your urine, resulting from a health condition such as:
  - ▶ Kidney stones
  - ▶ Tumors in the kidney or bladder
  - ▶ An enlarged prostate

If this color change in your urine lasts for longer than two days, talk to your doctor to determine the cause.



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

# Doctor Spotlight

**HANNAH ABUMUSA, M.D.,  
M.S. ED.**

**Primary care doctor**  
Hackensack Meridian Medical Group  
Primary Care—Toms River

Raised in a hardworking family that immigrated to the United States for better opportunities, Hannah Abumusa, M.D., M.S. Ed., credits her strong work ethic to her upbringing. But as a child—despite her father’s dreams of a future medical career for her—she never really thought about being a doctor. Her heart was in teaching, and she would pretend to be a teacher with her siblings.

“The love of reading was instilled in me at a very young age, and I grew up with a passion for books. I dreamed of being a librarian,” Dr. Abumusa says.

Today, Dr. Abumusa, who is affiliated with Hackensack Meridian Medical Group, practices adult primary care and women’s health. As the associate program director of the Transitional Year Residency for **Ocean University Medical Center**, she combines her passions for medicine and education to support new residents embarking on their journey as career physicians.

#### **How do you spend time with residents?**

I work with and mentor residents who spend a year with our department, and I walk with them from day one. They train in multiple specialties, like dermatology and radiology. Having been where they are, I want to respect their voices and be their advocate. I share a connection with them and let them know we are all here in a safe space where they can speak up.



For Hannah Abumusa, M.D., M.S. Ed., a love of reading was instilled in her at a young age.

#### **What is your philosophy of life and work?**

I learned so much from my beloved sister, who battled cancer. It was a life-changing experience for me. Patients are much more than their cases and their charts. I’ve learned how tough, resilient and powerful we all are—and that we can do more than we think we can. I’ve learned that when life gets tough, we can get stronger.

#### **What do you enjoy away from work?**

I enjoy reading and playing board games with my family. My husband—also a physician—and I are passionate travelers. We even joke at

times that I can work as a part-time travel agent, always jumping at any opportunity to plan unique and diverse trips.

Currently, we’re curating a map of bucket-list countries to explore together. I firmly believe that having an open mind and immersing ourselves in diverse cultures enriches our personal lives and contributes to our growth as doctors. It broadens our perspectives, fostering a deeper understanding of the human experience and ultimately enhancing our ability to provide more compassionate and culturally sensitive care to our patients. 🌱

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

# 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.

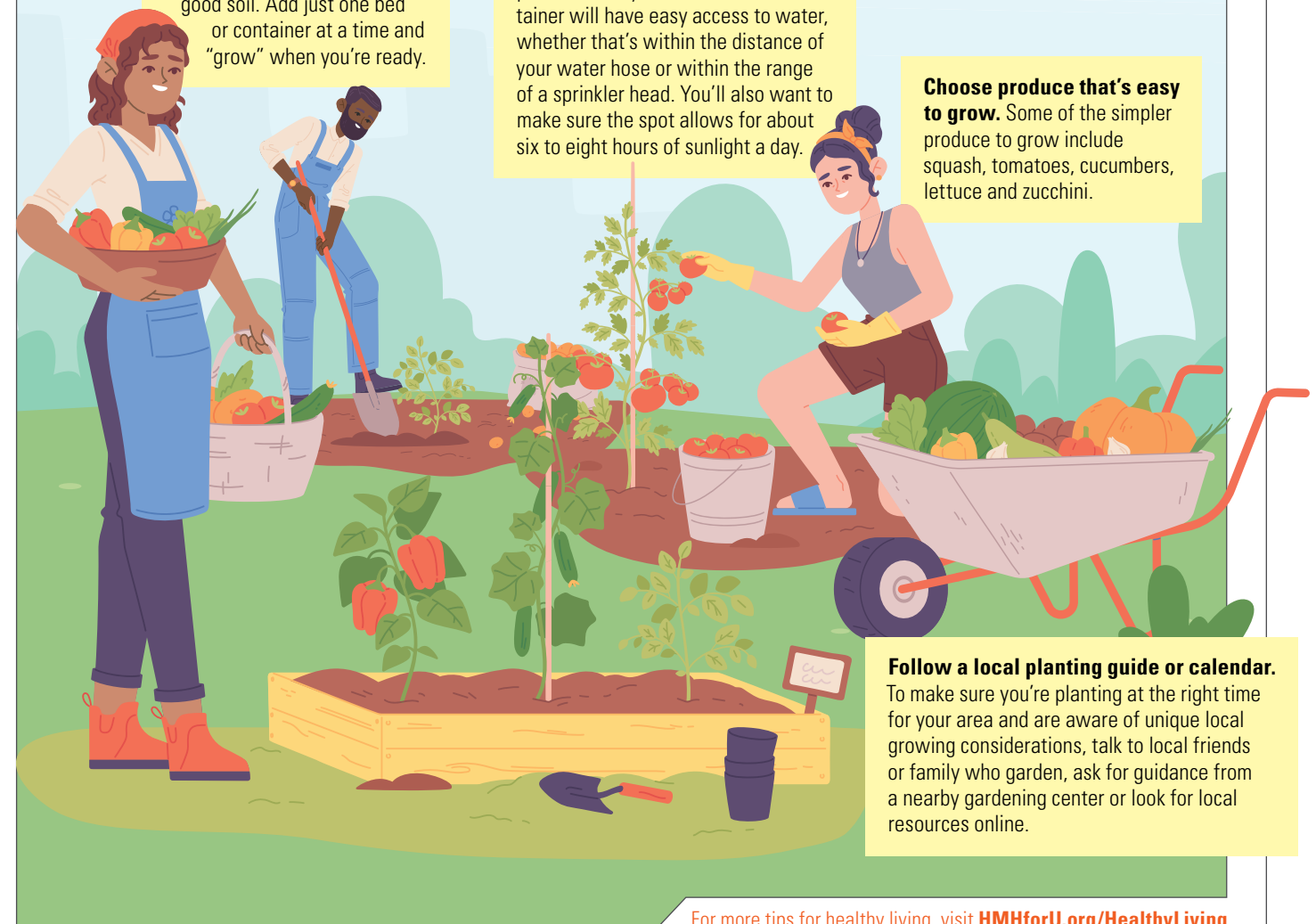
**Start small.** Consider using a small raised bed or container that can be easily filled with good soil. Add just one bed or container at a time and “grow” when you’re ready.

**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.



lemonys/S-S/Getty Images

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

NEUROLOGY

# How Diet Impacts Stroke Risk

Learn which foods may increase your stroke risk and which ones can help lower it.



### 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 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

“Diet can be an important, powerful tool to reduce your risk of stroke,” says **Madhav Upadhyaya, M.D.**, interventional cardiologist at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center** and **Bayshore Medical Center**. “What you eat impacts your overall health and stroke risk.”



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### Go Online

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

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## Stroke of Luck

Quick action—and possibly a little luck—allowed Doug O’Connell to fully recover after a massive stroke on St. Patrick’s Day.

*Doug O’Connell was getting ready to take his white lab, Ned, for a run on the beach when he suddenly started experiencing symptoms of a stroke.*

St. Patrick’s Day in 2023 was shaping up to be a typical active day for 73-year-old Doug O’Connell of Manasquan, New Jersey, who is a retired coach and educator. He had already been to his acupuncture appointment, and by 10:45 a.m., he was home getting ready to take his white lab, Ned, for a run on the beach.

“I am often away teaching meditation, but fortunately, not that day,” Doug’s wife, Cindy, says. “I went into the kitchen and found Doug on the floor. He couldn’t get up or move his right arm, and he was in a light sweat. I called 911, and the ambulance was there within minutes.”

By the time Cindy got to the hospital, Doug had already been evaluated and diagnosed with ischemic stroke. Because it was still within the three-hour window of effectiveness, he was given tPA, a medication to dissolve clots.

However, a CT scan showed his stroke had been caused by a massive, hyperdense clot that was blocking arteries in his brain, and the tPA was not enough. Doug needed more aggressive treatment.

at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**, was called to treat Doug, who by that time had a score of 23 on the National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (a score of 21 is considered severe).

Dr. Jethwa performed an endovascular thrombectomy, which involved using X-rays to thread a catheter from Doug’s groin up to his carotid artery. By then, the original mass had broken into three clots, all of which were still quite large. Using a stent retriever and suction, Dr. Jethwa removed all of them, allowing normal blood flow through the arteries.

Following the procedure, Doug’s score dramatically lowered to a much safer 7 and returned to normal within a day. “Doug made a remarkable recovery,” says Dr. Jethwa. “Within hours, his weakness was nearly resolved and his speech returned. His prognosis is excellent.”

### Back to Baseline

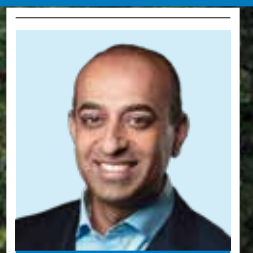
Doug was released from the hospital after six days. Soon after, he began outpatient rehabilitation at the Secondary Stroke Prevention Clinic at Jersey Shore, where he met **Sanskriti Mishra, M.D.**, director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at Jersey Shore.

“Doug had made significant improvements while he was hospitalized. He still had mild speech deficits at our first clinic visit,” Dr. Mishra says. “My goal for him was to have a complete recovery to his functional status before his stroke, and he has been able to achieve that.”

While Doug’s family roots are in Ireland, it was much more than the luck of the Irish that St. Patrick’s Day that led to his excellent outcome. When he started experiencing symptoms, Cindy knew Jersey Shore was where he should go. She had heard about it being a Center of Excellence in treating stroke.

Jersey Shore, one of three comprehensive stroke centers at Hackensack Meridian Health, has the specialized equipment and extensively trained stroke team that work together to get patients from the arrival of the ambulance through treatment, rehabilitation and recovery. That quick action made the difference for Doug, who credits his doctors and medical team with giving him his life back after a stroke that could have been debilitating or fatal.

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



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# 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 then connected to a generator implanted underneath the skin of the chest near the collarbone.

"We can remotely manipulate the electrodes in the brain to reduce symptoms of Parkinson's, including stiffness, slow movements and shaking," says **Shabbar Danish, M.D.**, chair, Department of Neurosurgery at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**.

### Who Should Consider DBS?

Certain Parkinson's patients can benefit from DBS when:

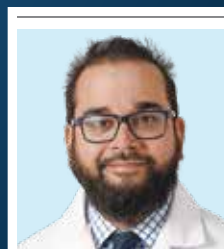
- ▶ Medication is not effective at controlling their motor symptoms (tremor, rigidity, bradykinesia, freezing)
- ▶ Medication wears off well in advance of the next dose
- ▶ Medication is causing disruptive side effects

Dr. Danish notes that DBS can't help with all Parkinson's symptoms, particularly issues that aren't motor-related, such as memory or speech problems.

### Does DBS Work?

"Parkinson's is a progressive disorder, and DBS is not a cure," says Dr. Danish. "DBS greatly improves quality of life and allows patients to gain control over the disease."

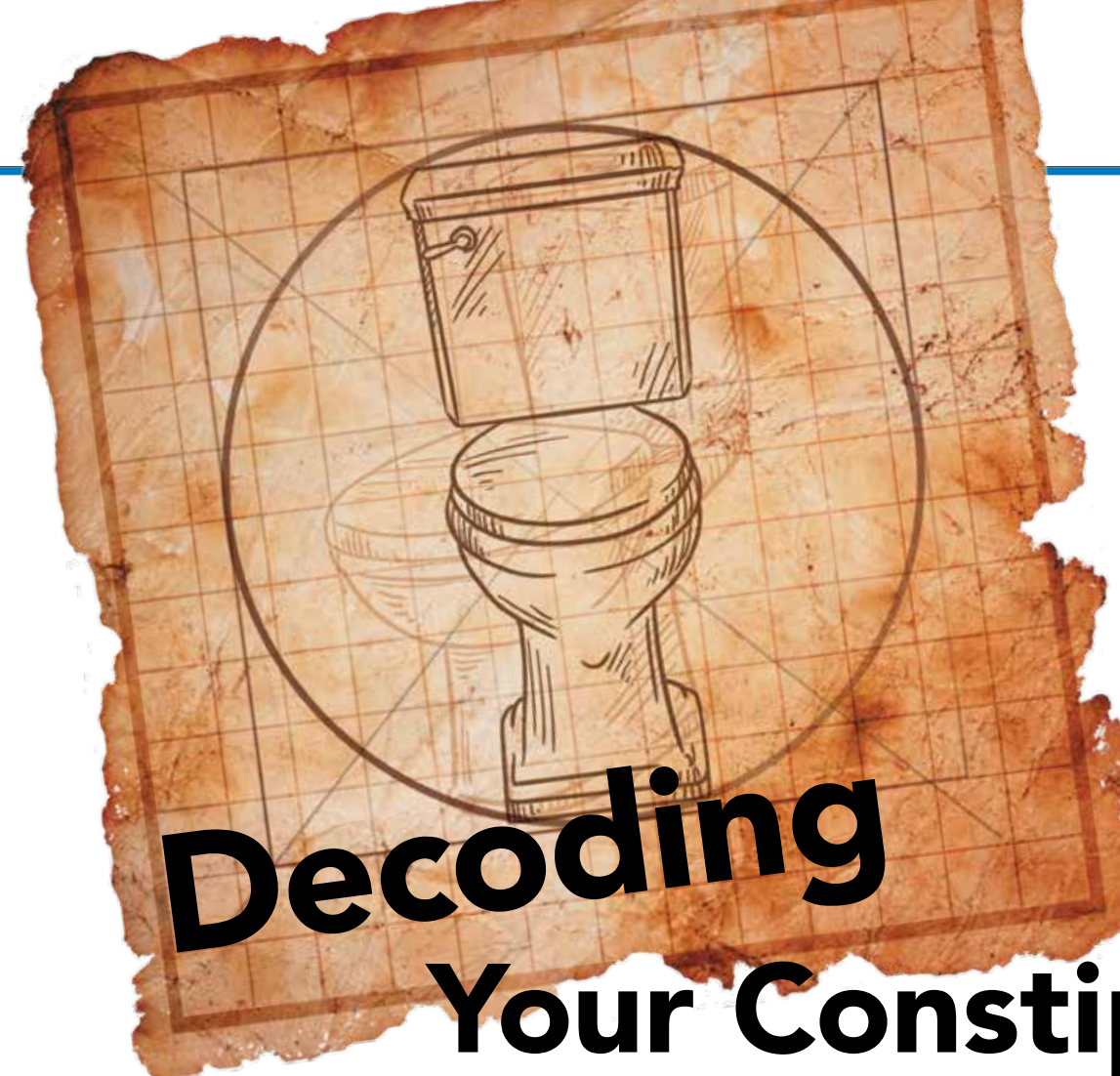
Many people also see a reduction in the medication they need to manage their Parkinson's. ⚙️



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# Decoding Your Constipation

*Learn how constipation can be connected with Parkinson's.*

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

### How Does Parkinson's Cause Constipation?

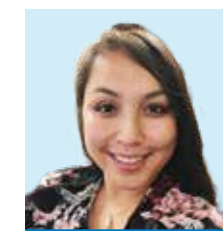
**Yeva Fernandez, M.D.**, movement disorders neurologist at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**, says nerve cells in the gut affected by Parkinson's can slow down the muscles that push food through the body. This causes reduction in the transit of food and waste, resulting in constipation.

Additionally, constipation 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:

- ▶ Straining and difficulty passing stool
- ▶ Pain when passing stool
- ▶ Dry and hard stool
- ▶ Infrequent bowel movements, less than three times a week



Yeva Fernandez, M.D.  
Movement disorders neurologist  
800-822-8905  
Eatontown

### Get Relief

There are a variety of options available to treat and prevent constipation related to Parkinson's. Dr. Fernandez suggests:

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

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

**Exercise.** Getting exercise decreases the amount of time it takes for food to move through your digestive system, which helps avoid constipation. Rigorous exercise isn't needed; even light activity can aid digestion. But exercise does not replace the need for hydration and a high-fiber diet. ⚙️

### Go Online

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

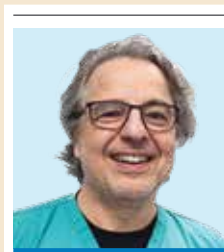
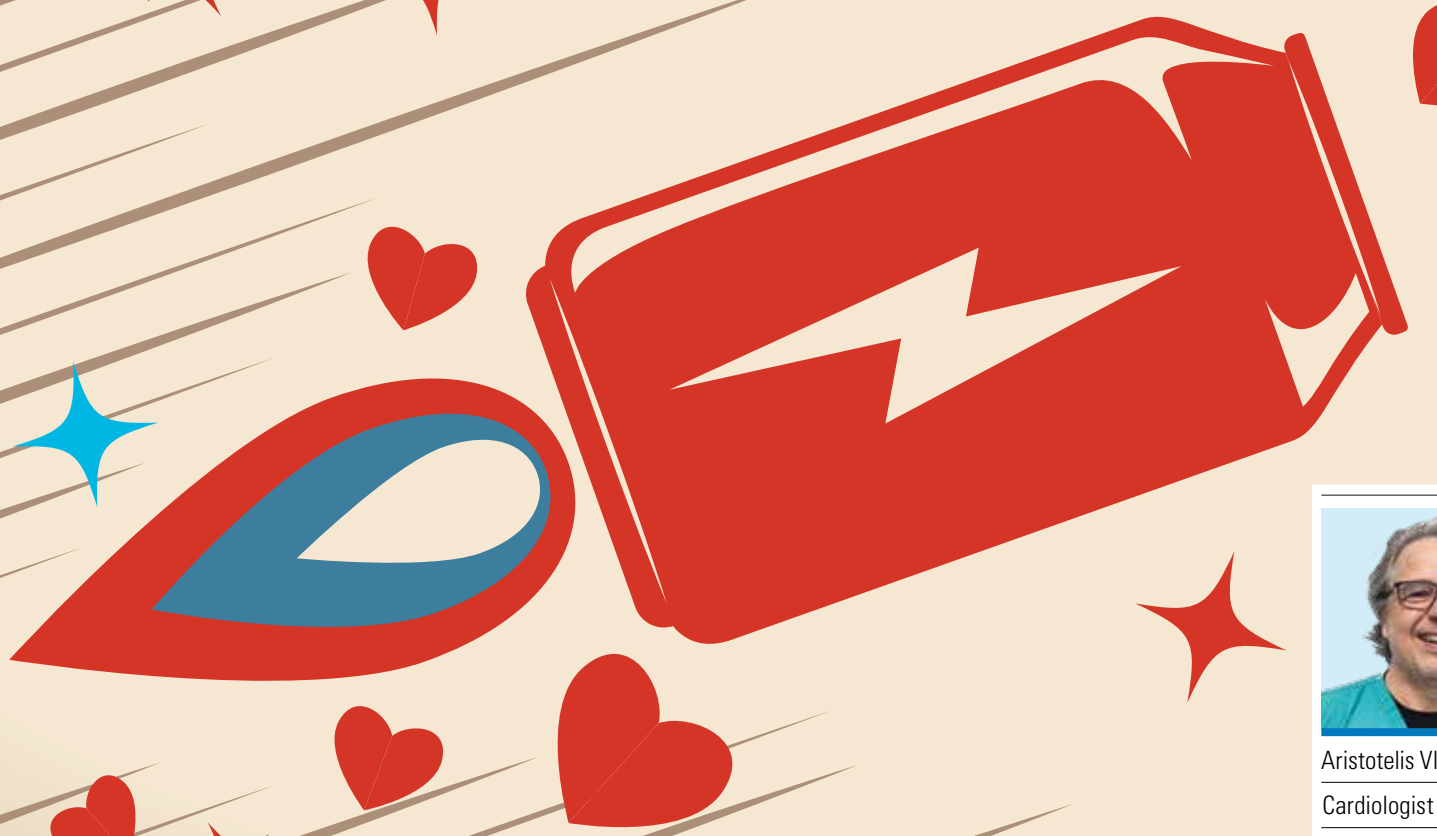


Find a Parkinson's disease specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/ParkinsonsDoc](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/ParkinsonsDoc).



# Get Energized!

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



Aristotelis Vlahos, M.D.  
 Cardiologist  
 800-822-8905  
 Shrewsbury, Freehold and Keyport

Energy drinks have become increasingly popular over the years because they promise to boost energy and focus, but do you have to sacrifice heart health to reap the benefits?

### How Energy Drinks Affect Your Heart

Many energy drinks contain excessive sugar and stimulants that can strain your heart. These beverages can be especially problematic for those with preexisting conditions.

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



### 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 forces the heart 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

“Just remember, energy drinks don’t cause heart disease, but they can exacerbate issues if you have a preexisting heart condition, so just be cautious,” adds **Aristotelis Vlahos, M.D.**, cardiologist at **Bayshore Medical Center, Riverview Medical Center and Jersey Shore University Medical Center.**

- ▶ **Moderation is key.** When energy drinks are consumed in moderation, you can obtain the benefits while minimizing the 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.

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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.

# Home and Away

## Colonoscopy vs. at-home screening: Which one is right for you? Our expert sheds light on the subject.

Colon cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in the United States. Here's what you should know about available screening options.

### Screening Options

A traditional colonoscopy is an outpatient exam, typically performed every 10 years, used to discover potential digestive disease. Your doctor will use a long flexible tube with a small camera to visually examine the colon and rectum. Images are taken, sometimes along with tissue samples for biopsy.

**Michael L. Caparelli, M.D.**, says that while colonoscopies may not be "fun," they are extremely important. Colonoscopy is the best screening test available for detecting colorectal cancer and polyps in high- and average-risk individuals. It is also the only screening test that is both diagnostic and therapeutic.

### High-risk factors for colon cancer include:

- ▶ Family history of colon cancer (any first-degree relative who has been diagnosed with colon cancer)
- ▶ Personal history of precancerous polyps or predisposing diseases, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)



Michael L. Caparelli, M.D.

Colorectal surgeon

800-822-8905

Manahawkin

- ▶ Family history of advanced polyps (any first-degree relative under age 60 or two first-degree relatives at any age diagnosed with an advanced polyp)

### At-home Screening

Although colonoscopy is the gold standard, for average-risk patients, at-home colorectal screening may be an option. Two at-home tests are available:

- ▶ Fecal immunochemical testing, which should be performed annually
- ▶ Multitarget stool DNA testing, such as Cologuard®, which should be performed every three years

An at-home exam must be prescribed by your primary care doctor or gastroenterologist. Using a lab-provided kit, you will collect a stool sample at home, then mail it to the testing company for analysis. Your doctor will receive test results from your laboratory sample within a few weeks. If there is any abnormality in your results, a follow-up colonoscopy is recommended. 🌀

### Go Online

To schedule a colon cancer screening, visit [HMHforU.org/CancerScreening](https://www.hmhforu.org/CancerScreening).

Dmitry Kovalchuk/Getty Images



After successful treatment for colon cancer, Carin Givens encourages others to get screened.

## Fortunate Find

After passing out at an outdoor summer event, Carin Givens, 50, underwent a battery of tests and screenings that led to his life-saving colon cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Carin Givens, 50, of Ocean Township, New Jersey, was enjoying an outdoor summer event with friends when he suddenly passed out, resulting in an overnight hospital stay, a battery of tests and, eventually, a colon cancer diagnosis.

"It was a hot day, and we went to a food truck to get something to eat," Carin says. "I was just saying how good the food looked, and I started feeling woozy and dizzy."

At the hospital, Carin's inpatient care team ran numerous tests and couldn't find any problems that would explain his fainting episode. After an overnight stay for observation, they discharged him with instructions to visit his primary care doctor for follow-up.

"My primary care doctor suggested that I get screened for colorectal cancer due to my age and ordered a stool test," Carin says. "I got a call that my test showed microscopic blood, so my primary care doctor ordered a colonoscopy."

### Shocking Diagnosis

Carin scheduled his colonoscopy appointment with gastroenterologist **Howard N. Guss, D.O.**, on November 17, 2022, and was shocked to

learn that a tumor was the cause of his abnormal bleeding. Dr. Guss referred Carin to colorectal surgeon **Glenn Parker, M.D.**, at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**.

"When I first met Carin, I could tell right away that he was a great guy," Dr. Parker says. "I told him we were going to take great care of him, and he was going to be OK."

Carin's treatment plan included surgery to remove the tumor and nearby lymph nodes, followed by chemotherapy under the care of hematologist-oncologist **Kenneth Nahum, D.O.**

On December 23, 2022, Dr. Parker performed the robot-assisted surgery through several small incisions. "I've never had surgery before, so I really didn't know what to expect," Carin says. "On the day of my procedure, everything was so efficient that there was no time for me to freak out. When I woke up, I was in my hospital room."

Carin spent several days in the hospital and was relieved to learn that he didn't need an ostomy, a surgical opening created in the abdomen to allow stool to empty into a bag worn outside the body.

"Carin really took charge of his health and followed all instructions for pre-surgical optimization and post-surgical care, so he did very well," Dr. Parker says. "After the biopsy results came back, he was diagnosed with stage 3 colon cancer, and he recovered from surgery with no complications."

### Regaining His Strength

About four weeks after surgery, Carin could feel his strength and energy start to return, and he was able to begin chemotherapy. Although his journey has been challenging, Carin says he's glad he found out about his tumor when he did.

"It's definitely better to know before it's too late, so you can make a plan to help yourself," he says.

Carin will continue to receive long-term follow-up care from Dr. Nahum, who will perform routine blood tests to look for early signs of cancer recurrence. "Dr. Parker, Dr. Nahum and their team made me feel at ease and treated me like a friend. Their reassurance helped me to maintain a positive attitude," Carin says. "My diagnosis just happened, but anyone who is eligible for screening or who is having colorectal cancer symptoms should definitely find out what's going on."

Find out if you're at risk for colon cancer. Take a Colon Cancer Risk Assessment.



Glenn Parker, M.D.

Colorectal surgeon

800-822-8905

Brick and Oakhurst



# Make a Plan

*After you have a baby, the last thing on your mind might be your birth control plans. Here's why you should give it some thought.*

After giving birth, it's possible to become pregnant again sooner than you'd think. To avoid an unplanned pregnancy, think about postpartum birth control while you're still pregnant. "Expectant couples plan for their baby by buying clothing and decorating the nursery," says **Erin Conway, M.D., FACOG**, obstetrician-gynecologist at **Riverview Medical Center**. "It's just as important to create a post-pregnancy birth control plan."

## How Soon Can You Get Pregnant After Having a Baby?

Once ovulation resumes after pregnancy, it's possible to become pregnant again. Ovulation resumes within the first four to 12 weeks after childbirth, although breastfeeding can sometimes delay it for up to six months. You may not realize you're ovulating because it happens two weeks before menstruation.

It is possible to become pregnant before having your period again after a pregnancy. You should wait at least six months between pregnancies, but 18-plus months is optimal to reduce pre-term birth risk.



Erin Conway, M.D., FACOG  
Obstetrician-gynecologist  
800-822-8905  
Little Silver and Hazlet

istock.com/Paper Trident/Anna Bova

## Missed Period?

For many women, a missed period can be an unsettling experience. After all, your menstrual cycle is a good indicator of your overall health and well-being.

It's not uncommon to miss a period from time to time, and there several reasons why this may happen.

- 1 Pregnancy.** If you miss a period and think you could be pregnant, taking a home pregnancy test is a good first step, and your doctor can confirm a positive result. Home pregnancy tests can give accurate results as soon as you've missed a period.
- 2 Stress.** Stress affects the body in different ways, including producing the hormone cortisol, which, for some women, can lead to a missed period.
- 3 Extreme dieting and exercising.** Extreme weight loss, weight gain and malnutrition can all result in missed periods.
- 4 Chronic disease.** Certain chronic diseases can impact your periods, either because they can cause hormonal imbalances or because they affect the body's ability to absorb essential nutrients. These may include celiac disease, diabetes and thyroid gland disorder.
- 5 Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).** PCOS is known to cause irregular periods or missed periods. Women with PCOS have high levels of androgen hormones (sex hormones that play a role in reproduction), which can cause cysts to form on the ovaries and disrupt ovulation.
- 6 Certain medications.** Medications such as birth control or certain types of antidepressants can cause missed periods.

- 7 Early menopause.** Most women start menopause between 45 and 55 years of age. During the years leading up to menopause, women may experience changes to their menstrual cycle.

## When to See Your Doctor

Your OB-GYN can determine the underlying cause of your missed period and provide appropriate treatment if needed. Always speak to your doctor if:

- ▶ You have a positive home pregnancy test.
- ▶ You have missed more than one period or are experiencing other symptoms such as abdominal pain or excessive vaginal bleeding.
- ▶ You have gone through menopause but experience vaginal bleeding.

## Birth Control Options

Talk to your partner and determine the best birth control method for you.

### Long-acting options include:

- ▶ **IUD.** IUDs are inserted into the uterus immediately after childbirth or at a six-week checkup. One option contains a hormone called progesterone; another is non-hormonal. Both are effective for several years.
- ▶ **Birth control implant.** This thin hormonal stick containing progesterone is implanted under the skin of the upper arm. It can be implanted after childbirth, preventing pregnancy for three years.
- ▶ **Birth control injection.** Hormonal injections are to prevent ovulation for three months at a time. Doctors can administer the first injection right after childbirth.
- ▶ **Tubal ligation.** This is permanent birth control, intended for women who don't want more children. Doctors surgically remove or close the Fallopian tubes, which prevents sperm and eggs from meeting.
- ▶ **Vasectomy.** During this procedure, doctors cut or seal the tubes that allow sperm to enter semen.

Vasectomy is a permanent option for men who don't want more children.

### Shorter-acting options must be taken regularly or used before or during sex. They include:

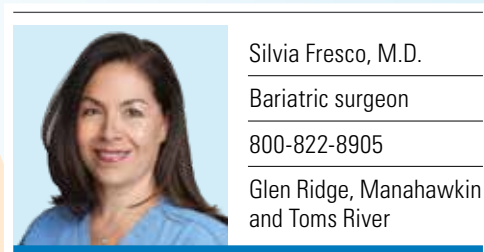
- ▶ **Combined estrogen/progestin methods.** These options use two hormones, estrogen and progestin, to prevent ovulation. They include birth control pills, vaginal rings and birth control patches.
- ▶ **Progestin-only methods.** Doctors may recommend progestin-only over combined methods for breastfeeding women to minimize the pill's effect on milk supply. The progestin-only "mini pill" and progestin injections keep sperm from fertilizing eggs.
- ▶ **Condoms and spermicide.** Male or female condoms block sperm from reaching an egg. Spermicide damages or kills sperm and may be used as a lubricant.
- ▶ **Other barrier methods.** Diaphragms and cervical caps must be refitted six weeks after childbirth. Sponges and cervical caps are less effective after a woman has given birth. 🌀

Scan the QR code to schedule an appointment with a gynecologist near you.



# Journaling to Success

*If you are looking 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.*



Silvia Fresco, M.D.  
Bariatric surgeon  
800-822-8905  
Glen Ridge, Manahawkin and Toms River

**Silvia Fresco, M.D.**, bariatric surgeon at **Bayshore Medical Center** and **Southern Ocean Medical Center**, says that keeping a journal has a variety of useful purposes, including tracking progress and showing successes.

### Benefits of a Weight-loss Journal

Dr. Fresco says monitoring your progress can:

- ▶ 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
  - ▶ Help identify emotional triggers causing 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—it's a personal choice. It can be a simple log of what you eat and what exercises you perform. Or it could be a detailed log of your eating habits and the events of the day, and how they may have influenced your choices.

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," says Dr. Fresco. "The key to success is consistency. It's also important to have regular follow-up visits with your doctor or dietitian." 🌟

### Go Online

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



## Fast Track

Intermittent fasting is an eating style that some people use to help control their weight. You follow an eating schedule every day, only consuming food during a set number of hours during a specific window of time, then fast for the remaining hours.

Some people find intermittent fasting appealing because you don't have to remember to follow specific diet rules, scrutinizing which foods are "approved" and which are not.

There isn't a single right way to practice intermittent fasting. Common interpretations of this eating style include:



Eating during a 12-hour window every day (between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., for example) and fasting for the other 12 hours



Eating during an eight-hour window every day (between 11 a.m. and 7 p.m., for example) and fasting for the other 16 hours



Eating differently every other day: On odd days, eating sensibly whenever you please, and on even days, restricting yourself to 500–600 calories for the entire day, with the bulk of calories in one meal



Eating sensibly for five days of the week, and eating no more than 500–600 calories on two other days per week, spacing out the "fasting" days



Eating sensibly for six days of the week, then fasting for the entire 24 hours on the seventh day

### How to Get Started

It can be difficult to switch from an all-day eating style to a routine that includes 16 or 24 hours of fasting, so you may want to ease into the practice. Start out by skipping breakfast for a few days to get used to fasting until noon, or stop eating late-night snacks for a few days to shorten your eating window. Gradually shrink the window until you're used to eating during the desired number of hours without feeling hunger pangs.

It's important to stay hydrated when you're outside of your eating window. Water, black coffee and unsweetened tea are all acceptable beverages that won't break your fast.

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.

When it comes to the question of whether it's better to train outdoors or in the gym, the answer isn't set in stone. "Choosing the 'right' fitness location varies person to person," says **Nicholas Jarmon, M.D.**, sports medicine, shoulder and elbow orthopedic surgeon at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**. "It all depends on what elements you're looking for and what type of activity you're doing."

### 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 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.

Dr. Jarmon says staying healthy and physically active should be the priority, not the location. Establish a routine that works best for you. 🌟



Nicholas Jarmon, M.D.  
Sports medicine, shoulder and elbow orthopedic surgeon  
800-822-8905  
Manasquan, Toms River and Freehold

iStock.com/Ruzdhan Nagiev / iemomo

# 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.*



Roman Ashmyan, D.O.  
Orthopedic surgeon  
800-822-8905  
Manahawkin

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."  
**Roman Ashmyan, D.O.**, orthopedic surgeon at **Southern Ocean 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 are having pain with certain activities, stop those and give yourself a rest," Dr. Ashmyan says.

It's true that to get stronger, you sometimes need to push yourself. But your body needs rest. "When we exercise, muscles get strained and need time to recover," Dr. Ashmyan says. "When muscles get rest, they build back stronger."

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

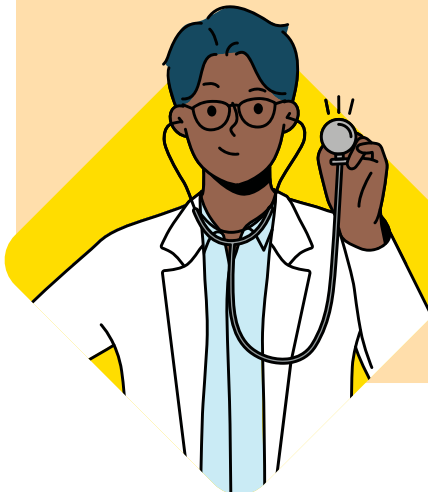
### Signs of Too Much Exercise

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 and 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.

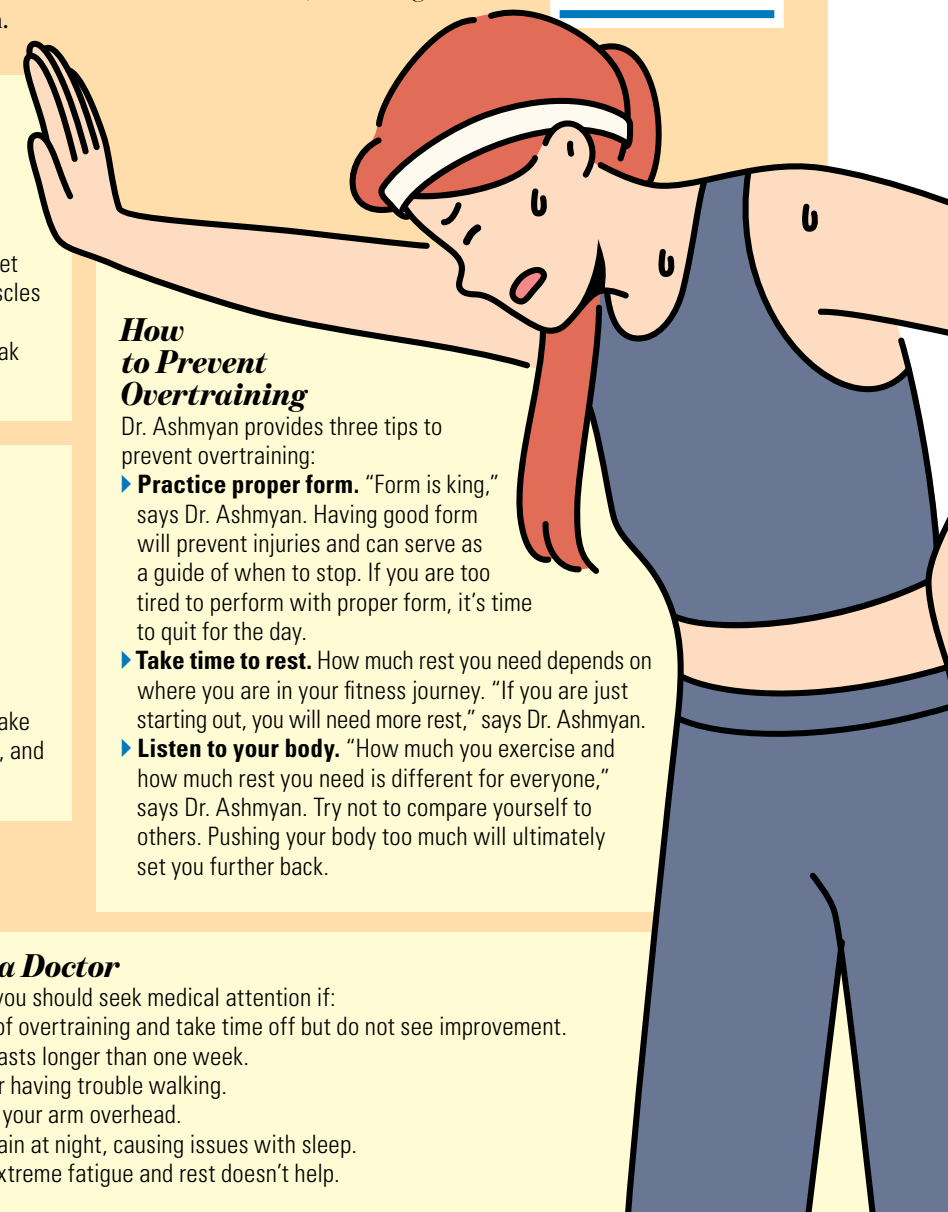


Aleksei Morozov/Getty Images

### When to See a Doctor

Dr. Ashmyan 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.



### How to Prevent Overtraining

Dr. Ashmyan provides three tips to prevent overtraining:

- ▶ **Practice proper form.** "Form is king," says Dr. Ashmyan. 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," says Dr. Ashmyan.
- ▶ **Listen to your body.** "How much you exercise and how much rest you need is different for everyone," says Dr. Ashmyan. Try not to compare yourself to others. Pushing your body too much will ultimately set you further back.

# 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 first to give yourself time to heal. "After knee replacement, each person will heal slightly differently, so it's important to listen to the cues your body gives and adopt a recovery pace that is best suited for you," says **Joseph P. Bogdan, M.D.**, hip and knee orthopedic surgeon at **Ocean University Medical Center**.

- 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 stress.
  - ▶ Stay active. This will make the recovery process easier.
  - ▶ Start participating in a pre-op exercise program.

### Immediately After Surgery

- Here's what to expect right after your surgery:
- ▶ The length of your hospital stay will depend on factors such as age, type of surgery and pre-op mobility. Some people go home the same day, while others need to stay for a day or two.
  - ▶ Your doctor will help manage pain through pre-op regional blocks, anti-inflammatory medication and pain medication.
  - ▶ Rehabilitation begins the same day of surgery. Shortly after the procedure, you may be asked to stand and take a few steps.



Joseph P. Bogdan, M.D.  
Hip and knee orthopedic surgeon  
800-822-8905  
Brick and Freehold

### 1-3 Weeks Post-surgery

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

- ▶ **Need to use assistive devices.** You will need to use a walker or cane.
- ▶ **Need to manage pain.** You'll likely experience pain in the initial weeks. Your doctor may prescribe medications to mitigate all pathways of pain. At the end of two weeks, your need for pain management should greatly decrease or cease.
- ▶ **Begin physical therapy.** You will begin physical therapy modalities soon after surgery: independent vs. therapist-guided exercise two to three days a week.
- ▶ **Possibly return to work.** 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 significant progress. You may notice:

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

### 6+ Weeks Post-surgery

"After around six to eight weeks, we hope that patients are able to return to their normal activities," says Dr. Bogdan. "Our goal is that the new knee feels much better and that quality of life is improved."

- For continued recovery success:
- ▶ Keep putting in the work at physical therapy, and be compliant with a independent exercise program.
  - ▶ Work to maintain a healthy weight and manage comorbidities, such as diabetes, by eating well, moving often and eliminating bad habits such as smoking. 🌱



Punam Jain, D.O.  
Pediatrician  
800-822-8905  
Manalapan and Jackson

# 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?

**University Medical Center**, says. "Screen time isn't necessarily 'bad.' Some programs encourage learning and interaction. Just make sure your child is showing active, not passive, participation."

### 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 about one to two hours a day.
- ▶ **Ages 6 and beyond:** There is no set amount of time, but it is recommended to limit screen time and develop healthy relationships with screens. "Crucial brain development happens early in a child's life," **Punam Jain, D.O.**, pediatrician at **Jersey Shore**

### 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.

Dr. Jain says children are constantly learning from everything around them, so nothing can replace the importance of human interaction. Learning to properly play and communicate with others will help nurture your child's development. 🌱



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

# 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.”

MariaGisina/Getty Images

### **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).

## *Dealing with “Mean Girls”*

**It’s tough to see your daughter experience relational aggression, but you can provide tools for coping, whether they are a victim or a bystander.**

“Mean girl” behavior is something many girls experience as they’re growing up, says **Stacy Doumas, M.D., MBA**, chair of Psychiatry at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center** and Behavioral Health chair, Southern Region. That behavior might include name-calling, exclusion, gossiping, intimidation or spreading rumors.

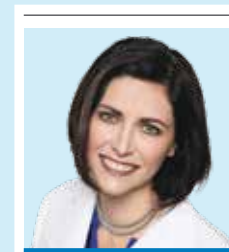
While you can’t wave a magic wand and make it all better, you can give your daughter tools for coping.

### **Teach Your Daughter How to Avoid ‘Mean Girl’ Behavior**

**Dr. Doumas shares four ways parents can support their children:**

- 1** **Foster self-esteem.** Provide reassurance by praising your children for their presence in the world, for their unique qualities and for their accomplishments. “As parents, our goal and priority should be to raise girls to accept and love themselves,” says Dr. Doumas.
- 2** **Encourage resiliency.** Teach healthy coping strategies, so when they’re in negative situations, they’re resilient and ready to handle them. These strategies might include deep breathing or mindfulness techniques.
- 3** **Build empathy.** While having empathy for the person doing the bullying is difficult to do in the moment, being able to imagine why that person is acting badly will help your child project confidence and stay in control of themselves. Modeling loving, supportive and empathetic behaviors in the home will not only build character and empathy in our children, it also will help young people understand that horrible behavior by others may be a cry for help.
- 4** **Set boundaries.** Teach your children how to set boundaries with others. “Standing up for yourself doesn’t necessarily mean physical aggression or hurling verbal insults,” Dr. Doumas says. “Rather, let that person know that you are confident and in control by ignoring the behavior and not giving them the reaction that they are looking for.”

Whether your child is the one being subjected to “mean girl” behavior or is a witness to it, the easiest thing they can do is walk away or disengage if online. “By literally walking away, they are not providing an audience for the person bullying, and if there’s no audience, they really lose a lot of their power,” Dr. Doumas says.



Stacy Doumas, M.D., MBA

Psychiatrist

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Neptune



Eric Alcera, M.D.

Psychiatrist

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Brick and Shrewsbury

# 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](https://HMHforU.org/Darren).

## **Go Online**

If you or a loved one is in need of addiction treatment services, visit [HMHforU.org/Addiction](https://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](https://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

### 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.

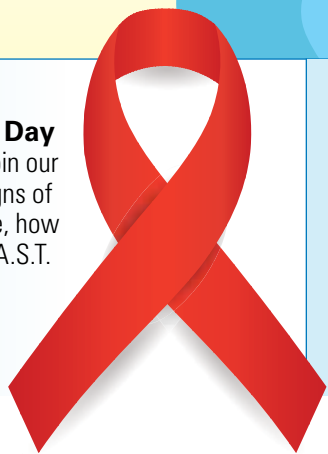
May 14, 6–7 p.m., virtual event



### Stroke Awareness Day

May is Stroke Month. Join our experts and learn the signs of someone having a stroke, how to lower your risk, B.E.F.A.S.T. and more.

May 8, noon–1 p.m., virtual event



### Brown Bag Your Medications

Join our pharmacy team as they discuss medication interactions and taking medications properly. Bring your medications and review them with one of our pharmacists.

June 4, 1:30–2:30 p.m., Senior Citizens Activities Network (SCAN), Monmouth Mall (basement level next to Mall Management), 180 Route 35 South, Eatontown

## Neuroscience

**Understanding Parkinson's Disease** Join Alan Deutsch, D.O., as he discusses signs, symptoms, and the latest treatment options.

Apr. 17, 6:30–7:30 p.m., virtual event

► **Memory Loss vs. Alzheimer's Disease** Apr. 16, 11 a.m.–noon, Stafford Library, 129 N. Main St., Manahawkin



## Diabetes

**Diabetes and You** Join our experts as they discuss signs, symptoms, complications, medications and more about diabetes.

May 30, 10–11 a.m., Stafford Library, 129 N. Main St., Manahawkin  
June 11, 2–3 p.m., Upper Shores Lavallette Library, 112 Jersey City Ave.



## Heart Health

**All About Your Heart** Learn how heart disease affects women differently than men, including risk factors, signs, symptoms, treatment options and prevention.

Apr. 30, 11 a.m.–noon, Stafford Library, 129 N. Main St., Manahawkin  
May 14, 2–3 p.m., Upper Shores Lavallette Library, 112 Jersey City Ave.

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



## Cancer Care

**Tackling Brain Tumors: the Cutting Edge** Yevgenia Shekhtman, M.D., will discuss the traditional approaches to surgical management of some of the most common brain tumors as well as the latest techniques for treatment.

May 8, noon–1 p.m., virtual event



► **Palliative Care and Advance Care Planning**, Apr. 22, 2–3 p.m., virtual event  
► **Stop Smoking with Hypnosis** May 8, 7–8 p.m., virtual event  
► **Fresh Start Smoking Cessation** Four-session program: May 7, 9, 14 & 16, 6–7 p.m., Ocean East Wing Conf. Center

## Pediatrics

### Parent/Guardian Talks

**Acting Out: From Toddler to Teen** Join pediatric psychiatrist Brett A. Biller, PsyD, and parent coaching experts to learn how to identify and respond best when a child lashes out behaviorally and verbally.  
Apr. 30, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Safe Sitter** Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://HMHforU.org/Events) for more upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email [Coeventinquiries@hmhn.org](mailto:Coeventinquiries@hmhn.org) for more information. Fee \$40.

► **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://HMHforU.org/Events) for upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email [Coeventinquiries@hmhn.org](mailto:Coeventinquiries@hmhn.org) for more information. Fee \$15.

								HOSPITAL LOCATIONS	
<b>Bayshore Medical Center</b> 727 North Beers St. Holmdel	<b>Carrier Clinic and Blake Recovery Center</b> 252 County Rd. 601 Belle Mead	<b>Jersey Shore University Medical Center and K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital</b> 1945 Route 33 Neptune	<b>JFK University Medical Center</b> 65 James St. Edison	<b>Ocean University Medical Center</b> 425 Jack Martin Blvd., Brick	<b>Old Bridge Medical Center</b> 1 Hospital Plaza Old Bridge	<b>Raritan Bay Medical Center</b> 530 New Brunswick Ave. Perth Amboy	<b>Riverview Medical Center</b> 1 Riverview Plaza Red Bank	<b>Southern Ocean Medical Center</b> 1140 Route 72 West Manahawkin	

## Women's Health

**Living a Leak-Free Life: Today's Incontinence Treatments** Join urogynecologists Kevin Gioia, M.D., Laurie Kane, M.D., and James Ross, M.D., as they discuss symptoms and diagnosis of incontinence, as well as today's nonsurgical and surgical treatment options.

May 9, noon–1 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



## General Wellness

**Balancing Act** Learn the causes of balance problems, how to prevent falls and tips to stay safe in your home.

Apr. 9, 2–3 p.m., Upper Shores Lavallette Library, 112 Jersey City Ave.

► **Free Health & Wellness Screenings** Blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, pulse, body mass index and stroke risk assessment (all non-fasting), May 18, 11 a.m.–2 p.m., The Atlantic Club, 1904 Atlantic Ave., Manasquan

► **Weight-loss Surgery** To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. Find a seminar near you at [HMHforU.org/WeightLoss](https://HMHforU.org/WeightLoss).

► **Support Groups** Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/SupportGroups](https://HMHforU.org/SupportGroups).

# Bike for a Cause

*David Tukey, Ph.D., biked 100 miles and raised \$26,170 to support the development of the Emergency Department expansion at Riverview Medical Center.*

David Tukey, Ph.D., began cycling during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. A year later, he was pedaling in 100-mile rides. But his fastest time might be when he raised \$26,170 in September 2023 in just a week. Just seven days before he was set to participate in the 100-mile Twin Lights Ride along the New Jersey coast, David decided to fundraise for the expansion of a state-of-the-art Emergency Department at **Riverview Medical Center**. "I only started fundraising seven days before the race because I didn't want people to commit to raising money and then have the weather be bad," he says. "It was sort of last minute, and my goal was \$25,000. I pushed myself to raise even more money." David moved to Rumson, New Jersey, from New York City two years ago with his wife, Stacy, and their young children, and Riverview is his local hospital. "I have a number of friends and colleagues associated with Hackensack Meridian *Health*, and they have told me about a number of opportunities to get involved in various capacities over the years," he says. As a portfolio manager for ExodusPoint Capital Management, David specializes in global biopharmaceutical companies. "My job is unrelenting, and I have three kids—Harrison, 6, Olive, 3, and Aidan, 11 months," he says.



David Tukey, Ph.D.—pictured here with his wife, Stacy, and their children—exceeded his \$25,000 fundraising goal to support the Emergency Department expansion at Riverview Medical Center.

"The only time I had to train was on Saturday mornings from 5–10 a.m. for about two months before the race, but I was able to get it done." David's dedication has immense value for his community. "David's ambition and willingness to bring others together to support this initiative is much appreciated," says Todd Shellenberger, executive director of the Riverview Medical Center Foundation. "He had a vision of what his family, friends and colleagues could accomplish together, and he succeeded by raising \$26,170 in a very short period of time. The Emergency Department Redesign and Expansion Project at Riverview, when completed, will have a huge impact on our entire community and patient population. We are all grateful for David's passion and his commitment to Riverview to make this happen." ❄️

Every gift helps. To learn more, contact Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation at [giving@hmn.org](mailto:giving@hmn.org) or 848-308-5000.



## Spot

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.

❶ 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

❷ 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

❸ 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

❹ 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.

❺ Which age group typically is at the highest risk of stroke?

- A. 20–30
- B. 40–50
- C. 50–60
- D. 70–90

Answers:

**Go Online**

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

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### Have You Scheduled Your Annual Wellness Check?

Keeping up with your health has never been easier. With online scheduling, you can make an appointment wherever you are—on the go, any day, any time.

*Online scheduling is available for:*

Primary care • Mammograms • Lab services

#### 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

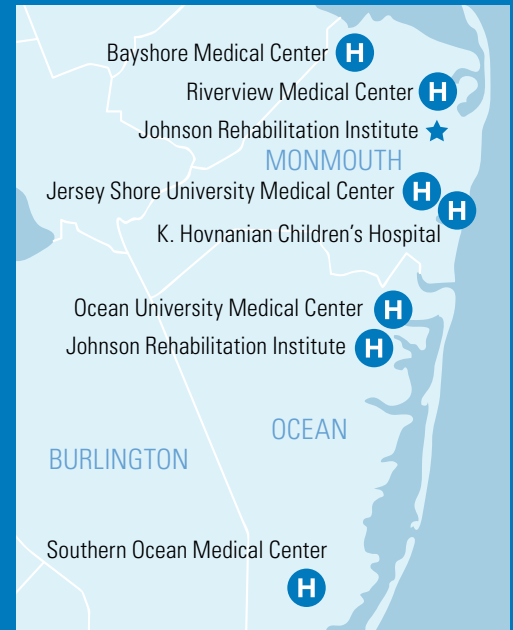
Understanding which screenings you need and when can be overwhelming and confusing. Find our guide for essential health screenings at [HMHforU.org/WomensScreenings](https://www.hmhforu.org/WomensScreenings).

#### 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:



★ An acute comprehensive inpatient rehabilitation facility at Riverview Medical Center

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