From Addiction to Ambassador

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

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Hi. Welcome to this issue of HealthU

A message from Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health.

Better U quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

Stretch It Out Plus: The healing power of music | Are you addicted to processed foods? | Recipe for zucchini ribbon salad | What’s trending?

Doctor Spotlight Getting to Know Amelia Pawaroo-Balram, M.D. Family medicine doctor at Hackensack Meridian Medical Group Primary Care—From Road in Paramus.

Spotlight on U health topics that matter the most to you

The Diet and Stroke Connection Learn which foods may increase your stroke risk and which ones can help lower it. Plus: Young radio host becomes unlikely stroke patient.

Deep Dive Deep brain stimulation gives new hope for patients with Parkinson’s. Plus: Learn how constipation can be connected to Parkinson’s.

Get Energized! Are energy drinks bad for your heart? Plus: Nine ways to keep your heart healthy as you age.

Be a Quitter Five tips to help you quit vaping. Plus: Father enjoys daughter’s wedding after successful cancer trial.

The Gym vs. the Great Outdoors There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to choosing where to train. Plus: Signs you may be over-exercising.

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

Journaling to Success Keeping a journal of your eating habits, exercise and weight can be a great way to stay on track.

Safety First Tips for using weight-loss medications safely.

Teen Talk How to speak about drugs with your teens. Plus: Managing toddler screen time.

Fighting Pain Our expert offers tips to manage chronic pain without surgery.

Schedule event and class listings

Your Calendar for Spring 2024 Live and virtual events and classes you won’t want to miss.

Foundation meaningful gifts from U

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.

By the Numbers a snapshot view of an important health issue

Spot the Signs Do you know the signs of stroke? Take our quiz to find out.

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Shifting the Narrative

We’ve 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. Our expert provides three helpful stretches to alleviate back pain.

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Lower Back Pain

Lower back pain can be one of the most frustrating ailments to have. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicine and hot or cold compresses often do the trick for immediate back pain relief. But for potentially long term results, Lauren 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. 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 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 hold for five to 10 seconds.
3. Return to your starting position and repeat three to five times, twice a day.

### Stretch It Out

Stretching can be one of the most frustrating challenges to have. Over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medicine and hot or cold compresses often do the trick for immediate back pain relief. But for potentially long term results, Lauren 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.
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.

How Music Therapy Can Be Healing

Here are four 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 stereotypical 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 boosts 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.

In-cost-effective and efficient

As a therapeutic practice, music has been an integral part of human history. Music therapy doesn’t require expensive equipment and can be adapted to various environments.

Not everyone needs music therapy, but nearly anyone who 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.

Music therapy may be beneficial for people who have:
- Chronic pain
- Learning disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Substance use disorder

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
- Improvise musically
- Talk about the music that they listen to

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.

Here’s how music can heal.

Music Used for Therapeutic Purposes

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

- Chronic pain
- Learning disabilities
- Physical disabilities
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Substance use disorder

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Music therapists at 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.”

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.

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 snacks?” 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 fats (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.

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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.

5 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.

4 Improves communication and expression

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Zucchini Ribbon Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 large zucchini
- ½ cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cup fresh basil, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon each, salt and pepper

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 90 calories, 5 gm fat, 14 gm carbohydrate, 1 gm protein, 1 gm fiber, 0 mg cholesterol, 59 mg sodium

Preparation

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

2. Using a vegetable peeler, shave the zucchini into ribbons. 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.

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 HMIForU.org/HealthyEating

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

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Justin Kei, M.D., weighs in:
Is it safe to detox from alcohol at home?

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
- Distress
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Insomnia
- Muscle pain, weakness or tremor
- Nausea
- Sweating
- Seizures
- Visual or auditory hallucinations
- Tactile hallucinations (such as bugs crawling on skin)
- Frightening, vivid dreams or nightmares

Better care rather than at-home detoxing.

Health Hackensack Meridian Health

Juan Ravell, M.D., weighs in:
How can I relieve my allergies this spring?

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, use 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.
5. Go outside after a steady rainfall, when the pollen has been washed out of the air.
6. If you have to spend time outdoors on a day with a high pollen count, wear an N95 mask, KN95 mask or surgical mask, especially if you’re doing yard work or going for a hike in the woods.
7. Shower and change your clothes after being outside, especially before going to bed.

Juan Ravell, M.D.
Allergist
800-822-8905
Hackensack

Nitin K. Yerram, M.D., weighs in:
Why is my urine cloudy?

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.

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.

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.

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.

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Brian Benson, M.D.
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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.

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North Bergen

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Hackensack Meridian Health
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!

To make an appointment with Dr. Pawaroo-Balram or a doctor near you, call 800-822-8905 or visit HMHforU.org/FindADoc.
The Diet and Stroke Connection


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)

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

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.

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 cleanshaven. He said no, they turned on the siren.”

In the ambulance, one of the EMTs said no, they turned on the siren.”

Marisol Vargas, 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.”

New Baby, New Perspective
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.

“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.”

For more healthy eating tips, visit HMforU.org/HealthyEating
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.

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
- 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.
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.

- **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.

**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. If you smoke, get help to quit. Smoking is bad for your heart and encourages snacking on high-sodium foods.
5. Limit your alcohol intake.
6. Focus on maintaining a healthy weight.
7. Team up with a buddy to achieve your heart-healthy goals: Share recipes, plan meals and exercise together.
8. 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.
Be a Quitter

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

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 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. “Initially 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.

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.

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.

6 Go Online

Do you need help quitting smoking or vaping? Find resources to quit at HMHealth.org/QuitSmoking.

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

“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
- 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.

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
- Fatigue or declines
- Performance plateaus or declines
- Limited movement

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.

When to See a Doctor
Dr. Mehta says you should seek medical attention if:
- You notice signs of overtraining and take time off.
- You experience extreme fatigue and rest doesn’t help.
- You experience pain at night, causing issues with sleep.
- You are limping or having trouble walking.
- You can’t elevate your arm overhead.
- New onset pain lasts longer than one week.
- You are experiencing pain in your joints.

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.
- 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.
- Practice proper form. Having good form will prevent injuries and can serve as a guide of when to stop.
- 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.
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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.

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.

How to Prevent Overtraining
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Knee Deep

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

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:
- Your pain will be significantly reduced.
- Your mobility will have noticeably increased.
- Your pain will be significantly reduced.

How to Keep a Weight-loss Journal

“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.

Benefits of a Weight-loss Journal

- 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

Go Online
To download a sample weight-loss journal template, visit HMHforU.org/WeightLossTracker.
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, 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 25 or higher if they have weight-linked medical issues such as high blood pressure.
   - People with a personal or family history of type-2 diabetes, pancreatic disease (including inflamed pancreas) or gallbladder disease are at greater risk for serious complications and should not take weight-loss medication.

4. **Maintain Proper Nutrition**
   - 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.

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. **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 any other way may endanger your health, especially if you don’t know what it takes to help you reach your goal weight, and that can change your life, physically and mentally, for the better.”

7. **Develop Good Habits for Long-term Success**
   - “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.”

**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.**

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.

- **Potential side effects can include:**
  - Nausea
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Cramps
  - Constipation
  - Fatigue

0. **How to Use Weight-loss Medication Safely**

- **Take Drugs at the Proper Pace**
- **Choose a Qualified Doctor**
- **Recognize that a Shot Is Not a Fix-all**
- **Avoid Buying Injectables Online or from Compound Pharmacies**
- **Develop Good Habits for Long-term Success**

**Karl W. Strom, M.D.**

Bariatric surgeon

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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 control all the time," 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."

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 and safely exploring their identities and 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. Alcera 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
Fighting Pain

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.

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

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 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 ibuprofen 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 painkillers or sleep aids. Doctors should supervise all over-the-counter and prescribed painkillers or sleep aids.

Dr. Groves says. They can direct your care to avoid overlaps or unneeded tests:
- Physiatrists—rehabilitation medicine doctors—treat the whole body, not just specific symptoms.
- Chiropractors
- Acupuncturists

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.

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. Physiatrists—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 spasms. 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.

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 measures you’ve taken and how they impacted your discomfort.
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.
Bring copies of X-rays, medical reports and studies related to the pain.

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

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.

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.

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.

### Special Events

#### Tips for a Healthy Year
This lecture series will touch on immunizations, stroke and healthy eating.

- **April 10 & May 8, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.**, Franciscan Community Dev. Center, 329 Anderson Ave., Fairview
- **April 8, May 13 & June 10, 10 a.m.–noon**, Save Latin America, 128 36th St., Union City
- **April 20 & May 18, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.**, Divine Koinonia, 817 58th St., West New York

#### 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 foods we nourish ourselves with. Food samples will be provided.

- **April 24, 1–2 p.m.**, Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood
- **May 7, 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.**, Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood
- **June 5, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.**, Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood

#### Heart Health

- **AHA CPR Anytime**
- **May 22, 2–3 p.m. or 6–7:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood**

#### Neuroscience

- **Stroke Prevention and Detection**
- **May 14, noon–1 p.m., Montclair Public Library, 50 South Fullerton Ave.**

#### General Wellness

- **Stop the Bleed**
- **May 22, 2–3 p.m. or 6–7:30 p.m., Wyckoff Family YMCA, 819 Wyckoff Ave.**

### SCHEDULE

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

#### 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 care for cancer. Wellness screenings provided.

- **May 21, 4–6 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood**

#### Women to Woman
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 South Street Hackensack**

#### Heart Health

- **AngioScreen**
- **May 7, 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m., Wyckoff Family YMCA, 819 Wyckoff Ave.**

#### Neuroscience

- **Tour of the Birthing Center**
- **May 18 & June 8, 3:30–4:15 p.m.**

#### Pediatrics

- **Parent/Guardian Talks: Acting Out From Toddler to Teen**
- **April 20, 7–9 p.m., virtual event**

#### General Wellness

- **The Teaching Kitchen Series: the Art of Plant-based Cooking**
- **April 10, May 8 and June 12, noon–1 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Center, 87 Route 17 North, Maywood**

### HOSPITAL LOCATIONS

- **Hammonton, Hammonton Medical Center, 30 Prospect Avenue**
- **Hackensack, Hackensack University Medical Center, 30 Prospect Avenue**
- **Mountainside, Mountainside Medical Center, 1 Bay Avenue**
- **Newark, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital, 600 Bergen St.**
- **Nutley, Saint Barnabas Medical Center, 600 Bergen St.**
- **Palisades, Palisades Medical Center, 7600 River Road North Bergen**
- **Wyckoff, Wyckoff Family YMCA, 819 Wyckoff Ave.**

#### PEDIATRIC LOCATIONS

- **Hackensack Children’s Medical Center, 750 Old Hook Road Westwood**

### SPECIFIC LOCATIONS

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### TO LEARN MORE

- **Visit HMHforU.org/Events for more upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email Coeventinquiries@hmhn.org for more information.**
- **Free $40.**

- **Safe Sitter Visit HMHforU.org/Events for more upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email Coeventinquiries@hmhn.org for more information. Fee $315.**

### HACKENSACK MERIDIAN HEALTH

32 Prospect Avenue
Hackensack, NJ 07601
800-560-9990

30 Prospect Avenue
Hackensack, NJ 07601
800-560-9990

Mountainside Medical Center
1 Bay Avenue
Mountainside, NJ 07092
908-973-4674

Palisades Medical Center
7600 River Road North Bergen, NJ 07047
800-560-9990

Pascack Valley Medical Center
250 Old Hook Road Westwood, NJ 07675
201-844-9355

30 Prospect Avenue
Hackensack, NJ 07601
800-560-9990

Mountainside Medical Center
1 Bay Avenue
Mountainside, NJ 07092
908-973-4674

Palisades Medical Center
7600 River Road North Bergen, NJ 07047
800-560-9990

Pascack Valley Medical Center
250 Old Hook Road Westwood, NJ 07675
201-844-9355
Foundation meaningful gifts from University of HealthU

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 at Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine, which was created in her memory.

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 McAllister, 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.”

“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 infectious diseases or weakness in the face or arm. “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.

By the Numbers a snapshot view of an important health issue

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

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

What does B.E.F.A.S.T. stand for?

☐ A. Brain, energy, forward, away, slow, tired
☐ B. Balance, energy, forward, away, slow, tired
☐ C. Brain, energy, face, arms, slow, tired
☐ D. Brain, eyesight, face, arms, slow, tired

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

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

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.

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

Which of the following is a reliable indicator?

☐ A. Changes in facial expression
☐ B. Changes in vision
☐ C. Changes in speech
☐ D. Changes in ambulation

Go Online

Are you at risk of stroke or heart attack? Schedule an AngioScreen® near you.

HMHealthForU.org/AngioScreenEvent

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Go Online

Are you at risk of stroke or heart attack? Schedule an AngioScreen® near you.

HMHealthForU.org/AngioScreenEvent
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:**
- Pascack Valley Medical Center
- Palisades Medical Center
- Mountainside Medical Center
- Hackensack University Medical Center
- Joseph M. Sanzari Children’s Hospital
- Bergen
- Hudson
- Union
- Essex

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