Spring Clean Your Health

Should You Take a TV Timeout?

COMMON HOUSEHOLD ITEMS AND THEIR CANCER RISK

FILL YOUR PLATE WITH THESE HEART-HEALTHY FRUITS AND VEGGIES
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

Running 101
Plus: ▪ Tips to fit meditation into a busy schedule
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Boost Your Brain Health
Take our quiz to test what you know about brain health.

Are you at risk for heart disease? Take our quiz and find out: HMHforU.org/HeartQuiz.

Learn how to prepare for your next doctor’s appointment and download a helpful checklist at HMHforU.org/Prepare.

Why do your ears feel clogged? Find four common causes and treatments at HMHforU.org/CloggedEars.

Tune in to our HealthU podcast! For more details, visit HMHforU.org/Podcast.
Let’s Hear It for the Moms

One day a year is hardly enough to celebrate the mothers with whom your family has been blessed, and I am sure many of you feel the same way. Still, this May, we’ll stop to show our immense gratitude to the moms—birth mothers, adoptive mothers, foster mothers, grandmothers, stand-in mothers and mother figures alike—who have impacted every corner of our lives.

Unfortunately, even though moms are largely the health care decision-makers for their families, we know they often put off care for themselves. We believe in the airplane adage: You’ve got to put on your own oxygen mask before you can help others. We encourage all moms to prioritize their own health through healthy eating, exercise and staying up to date on medical appointments.

In this issue, you can find simple tips for fitting meditation into your busy day. You can also find an easy five-step recipe for chicken and red rice on page 7 to make any day a bit easier. You can also find an easy five-step recipe for chicken and red rice on page 7 to make any day—a bit easier. These tips are intended to be general information only and should not replace the advice of your physician. Always consult your physician for individual care.

Let’s hear it for the moms who have impacted our lives. We are committed to providing safe, high-quality patient care.

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
Hackensack Meridian Health

At Hackensack Meridian Health, one of the ways we honor mothers is by providing high-quality maternal care that ensures the good health of the mother as well as her newborn. We believe maternal health is particularly important because of the far-reaching impact it has on all families and communities. We are committed to the work of addressing racial and ethnic disparities by using data-driven strategies, improving cultural competencies and reducing inherent bias.

Hackensack Meridian Health has reduced the percentage of C-sections by nearly 40 percent over the past few years throughout the network. Our work to deliver exceptional standards in maternal care was recently recognized by The Joint Commission. Hackensack University Medical Center is the first hospital in the nation to earn The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval® for Advanced Certification in Perinatal Care, which honors a health care organization’s commitment to providing safe, high-quality patient care.

To all moms and mother figures, whether just at the start of your parenting journey or years into it, thank you for your selfless dedication to your unrelenting care and your priceless guidance. Happy Mother’s Day!

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
Hackensack Meridian Health

Use the 10 percent rule. Beginners often start running too fast, too early in their run, which often leads to injuries like runner’s knee, shin splints or a muscle pull. Increase your weekly mileage in increments of 10 percent. If you are running 10 miles a week, you can increase your mileage by 1 mile every week.

Stay hydrated. Drinking too much water can lead to stomach distress, while drinking too little water can lead to dehydration. In general, it’s recommended to drink 84 ounces of water every day. Drink water an hour before you run, and if you are running long distances, take a small sip of water every 20 minutes to keep hydrated.

Focus on good nutrition. A good nutrition plan will help increase your energy level, prevent dehydrations and optimize your recovery time. Carbohydrates, protein and fat are important in a runner’s diet. Dr. Silver also recommends eating carbohydrate snacks an hour before your run, which will fuel your body.

Wear the right running shoes. Wearing the wrong size shoe or worn-out running shoe is one of the most common causes of running injuries. Dr. Silver recommends going to your local running shoe store and getting fitted by an expert.

Use the 10 percent rule.

Focus on good nutrition.

Wear the right running shoes.

Stay hydrated.

Don’t run through pain. When in pain or discomfort, Dr. Silver recommends rest, ice, compression and elevation (RICE). Take three days and consider substituting running with swimming or light walking for a while. If you’re not feeling better in two weeks, it’s time to see the doctor.

Running 101

Whether you are new to running or training for your first marathon, get off on the right foot by avoiding common running injuries. Here are three tips from Stephen Silver, M.D., chief of Sports Medicine at Hackensack University Medical Center.

- Go Online for more tips on working out at HMHealthU.org/Exercise.

Warming up before your run.

Warming up prepares your body for running, reducing the risk of injury. One of the best forms of warming up is dynamic stretching, which involves active movement of joints and muscles to their full range.

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Don’t Wait … Meditate

Five tips to help you fit meditation into a busy schedule.

The idea of meditating during a busy day may seem unrealistic. But the busier you are, the more you may need meditation. “Meditation can reduce stress levels, improve sleep quality, control anxiety, decrease blood pressure and more,” says Pamela Orellana, M.D., family medicine specialist at Palisades Medical Center. “Meditation is a simple practice that can be done anywhere, anytime. You don’t need special tools or a place to meditate. All you need is a few minutes from your day.”

Here are five ways to squeeze meditation into your daily schedule:

- **Get up and meditate.** The best time to meditate is as soon as you wake up—even if it’s just for five minutes. You might want to set the alarm a little earlier to squeeze this into your daily routine.
- **Schedule a meeting with yourself.** Schedule a 10-minute meditation block for your calendar, or take 10 minutes during your lunch break. You can enjoy it at and meditate at your desk or workspace.
- **Meditate while you commute.** If you take public transportation, mapping out your headphones and making use of guided meditation during your commute can be an amazing way to relax before you start your busy day or come home. If you drive to work, take extra five minutes in the parking lot or your driveway to center yourself.
- **Meditate while waiting.** Instead of grabbing your phone and scrolling through social media while waiting for the bus, wait at a (don’t steal a) coffee shop in the grocery store.
- **Meditate before bed.** If you are still struggling to find time to meditate during the day, practice meditation before sleeping at night. Right next to a quiet time to relax your mind and body. As a result, you’ll have a better sleep.

Watch a demonstration of three calming breathing exercises.

Take Your Meditation to the Next Level

Use guided meditations to help. There are several apps that offer free guided meditation for beginners.

Don’t worry about how long you should meditate. Focus on being consistent and practicing daily.

It’s OK for thoughts to enter your mind while meditating. Don’t get discouraged, just keep going.

Start with short meditations and gradually build them up over time. It’s OK to meditate for just two minutes. Once you feel comfortable, gradually increase your sessions.

Pathogens grow quickly when food is left at room temperature. Refrigerate hot food (over 90 degrees F) after one hour of being left out at room temperature. Don’t leave food out at room temperature for more than two hours. Use chafing dishes or cool plates to keep food at the right temperature for longer.

Freeze leftovers to make them last. If you’re not going to eat your leftovers within three to four days, freeze them. You’ll have much more time to enjoy the food, typically three to four months.

Freeze food in single-serve portions. You may be more likely to eat your leftovers if meals are quick and easy to defrost.

How Long Are Leftovers Good?

After a big meal or party, it’s common to snack on leftovers in the days following. However, leftovers should only be eaten for three to four days after initial preparation. Any longer and you may increase your risk of contracting a foodborne illness, such as salmonella, E. coli or listeria.

We talked to dieticians Holly Mills, MS, RN, CSO, and Heather-Anne Younker, RDN, CSO, about best practices for eating leftover food. Here’s what they had to say:

**The “sniff test” doesn’t work.** After three to four days, bacteria in food can rise to dangerous levels. Many times, the bacteria won’t alter the look, taste or smell of the leftover food, so it can be difficult to tell if it’s still safe to eat.

**Don’t worry about how long you should meditate. Focus on being consistent and practicing daily.**

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**Start with short meditations and gradually build them up over time. It’s OK to meditate for just two minutes. Once you feel comfortable, gradually increase your sessions.**

Nutritional Information

Serves 4

- **1 cup brown rice**
- **1 14-ounce can low-sodium chicken broth, divided (1 cup, 1/2 cup)**
- **1 cup water**
- **1/2 cup tomato sauce (1/2 cup an 8-ounce can)**
- **1 tablespoon olive oil**
- **1 medium onion, chopped**
- **3 garlic cloves, chopped**
- **1 large green bell pepper, cut into bite-sized pieces**
- **1 large red bell pepper, cut into bite-sized pieces**
- **1 1/2 teaspoons paprika**
- **1 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or more to taste**
- **1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- **1 cup frozen peas, thawed**
- **1 14-ounce can low-sodium chicken broth, divided (1 cup, 1/2 cup)**
- **1/2 cup tomato sauce (1/2 cup an 8-ounce can)**
- **1/2 cup chopped onion**
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**Steps**

1. Cook brown rice in 1 cup of the chicken broth, water and tomato sauce for 40–45 minutes, until tender and liquid is absorbed.
2. While the rice is cooking, heat oil in a large nonstick skillet. Sauté onions and garlic until translucent.
3. Add chicken, bell peppers, paprika, cayenne pepper and oregano to skillet. Add 1/2 cup chicken broth, cover pan and cook 15 minutes, until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender.
4. Stir in cooked rice, adding a little more of the remaining chicken broth if the mixture seems dry. Adjust seasonings to taste.

**Seasoned Cook**

**Add** 1/2 cup chicken broth, cover pan and cook 15 minutes, until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender.

**Stir** in cooked rice, adding a little more of the remaining chicken broth if the mixture seems dry. Adjust seasonings to taste.

**Find more recipes and tips for healthy eating at HMHealthU.org/HealthyEating**

**Nutritional Information**

Per serving: 379 calories, 27g protein, 52g carbohydrate (7g fiber), 6g fat (1g sat, 5g mono/poly), 408mg sodium

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**Find a healthy cooking demo or other nutrition event near you at HMHealthU.org/Events**
**Are canned foods healthy?**

Tara Mauro, M5, RDN, weighs in:

Canned foods definitely can be healthy and a great way to get key nutrients. Just be mindful to read the nutrition fact labels and look out for extra sodium and added sugars.

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**How can I manage my spring allergies?**

Tamar Weinberger, M.D., weighs in:

Tree pollen is often the perpetrator behind spring allergy symptoms. These light, dry granules easily find their way to your sinuses, lungs and eyes, making them hard to avoid. Here are some tips that can help:

- Check daily pollen counts, and stay indoors when it is high.
- Pollen counts vary throughout the day and are usually higher in the morning. So skip that morning walk and instead venture outdoors in the late afternoon.
- Take a shower immediately after working or playing outdoors. This will help reduce the spread of pollen on your sofa, on your bed and in other common areas in your home.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses outside. A hat and sunglasses will protect your face and eyes from pollen in the air.
- Keep your windows closed. Instead of opening your windows, turn on your air conditioner to circulate the air. This is also recommended in the car.

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**Does smoking weed cause cancer?**

Nabil Rizk, M.D., weighs in:

Researchers are unsure if smoking cannabis causes lung cancer; more research is needed. Some aspects of smoking weed suggest an increased risk, while others suggest the opposite.

When you inhale smoke—whether from cigarettes, joints or fireplaces—toxins enter the lungs. Many of the same toxins in cigarette smoke have been found in cannabis smoke.

When foods are canned, many use some kind of salt or sugar to act as a preservative. So when shopping, look for terms like:

- Sodium free, low sodium or no salt added for vegetables and beans
- Canned in water, canned in its own juices or no sugar added for fruits

Learn more at HMHforU.org/CannedFoods.

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**How do I know if I have a pinched nerve?**

Patrick A. Roth, M.D., weighs in:

If you have a pinched nerve, you may experience continuous or intermittent pain or numbness that can involve your neck or back and radiate down your arms or legs. Occasionally, the pinched nerve presents with weakness.

To determine whether you have a pinched nerve, or more properly, a pinched nerve root called radiculopathy, or something different that arises from outside your spine, speak with a specialist such as a neurosurgeon who can make the diagnosis and suggest the optimal treatment. The specialist will ask you questions about the location and other aspects of your pain, and do a physical examination to determine which nerve is pinched.

If your doctor suspects a pinched nerve, you will have an MRI, a type of imaging that can confirm the nerve root compression. The nerve root can be pinched for a variety of reasons, including a disc herniation or arthritis changes in the spine. Treatment typically starts with therapy and may ultimately include injection therapy or, less likely, surgical decompression of the nerve root.

Learn more at HMHforU.org/PinchedNerve.
What heart rate is considered normal?

David Landers, M.D., weighs in:

Most adults have a resting heart rate that falls within the range of 60–100 beats per minute.

However, your heart rate may rise much higher when you exert yourself while exercising or if your heart races when you feel stressed. Additionally, your heart rate may fall lower than the typical range while you’re sleeping, particularly if you’re a healthy young adult or an elite athlete.

Sometimes, a higher- or lower-than-normal resting heart rate could be a sign that someone has a medical condition that should be identified and monitored. Other times, there may be a simple explanation for the discrepancy in heart rate. For example, different medications may cause higher or lower resting heart rates as a side effect.

Doctors consider a resting heartbeat that’s higher than 100 beats per minute to be higher than normal and a resting heart rate that’s lower than 60 beats per minute to be lower than normal.

It’s healthier to have a resting heart rate that’s toward the lower end of the 60- to 100-beat range, although this varies by person. When your resting heart rate is lower, it typically means that the heart is working efficiently, and it’s associated with healthy attributes like healthy blood-pressure levels and a healthy body weight.

It’s important to see a doctor to investigate possible causes of a higher- or lower-than-normal resting heart rate to avoid possible health complications.

Learn more at HMHforU.org/HealthyHeartRate.

Spring Clean Your Health

3 habits to toss this spring to get a fresh start on your health

Spending too much time sedentary.

Sitting for more than 7–10 hours a day can lead to obesity, cardiovascular disease, and neck and back pain. At work, try a standing desk for part of the day. At home, stand up and move while watching TV.

Not drinking enough water.

Most men need about 13 cups of fluid a day, while women need about 9 cups, according to the Institute of Medicine. But you’ll need more when you lose fluid through sweat.

Screen time before bed.

Using your phone too close to bedtime can prevent you from getting a good night’s sleep. Put away your phone—or any other electronic screen— an hour or two before you turn out the lights.

For more inspiration on healthy living, visit HMHforU.org.
Words Matter

The words we speak to our children are critically important. Here are three phrases to avoid and alternatives to better develop a trusting bond with your child.

"You're OK." "Age is such a distinguishing factor in how you'll approach this, but if your child is crying or visibly upset and you try to shake it off, you are invalidating their emotions," Dr. Vieux says. "Instead of brushing past these big feelings, sit with your child and help them work through them." If your child shows signs of being upset or frustrated, try these phrases to validate their feelings:

1. I see that you're (insert emotion: feeling hurt, angry, etc.)
2. I'm here for you. How can I help?

"Give them a hug." While it can be customary in certain families or cultures to hug hello or goodbye, it's important to let children know they have body autonomy.

"We, of course, don't want our children to be disrespectful to a family member or friend, but we should not be forcing them to have physical contact with someone they may not be comfortable with," says Dr. Vieux. "Body autonomy means being in charge of your own body and what happens to it. We want kids to feel safe and confident with their bodies." Instead, ask them what they're comfortable with:

1. Would you like to give a hug to say goodbye?
2. If not, would you like to give a high-five instead?

"You're such a disappointment." Dr. Vieux recommends going into every conversation with your child with an open mind and without judgment. Be mindful not to shame your child, and approach conversations when you are calm and collected.

"If your child was doing something against your family's values, it's OK to express that and set boundaries. But you want to make sure your child feels comfortable coming to you to talk about things. If you immediately shut them down and tell them that they're a horrible person, you don't open the floor for much conversation," says Dr. Vieux. Instead, learn more by being curious about a situation: Tell me why you did that.

3 Reasons Kids Should Wear Helmets

Wearing a helmet every time your child bikes, skates or skateboards may save their life. Here's why:

1. Helmets Reduce the Risk of Serious Injury or Death. Falls from bikes and collisions with cars may cause serious injury or death. Wearing a helmet reduces this risk.
   - A study published in 2018 found that bike helmets reduced:
     - Head injuries by 48%
     - Serious head injuries by 60%
     - Traumatic brain injuries by 53%
     - Injuries to the face by 23%
     - Number of seriously injured or killed cyclists by 34%

2. Helmets Absorb Some of the Energy Produced by Impact. Helmets are designed to absorb some of the power of an impact. Whether your child’s head hits a road, tree or vehicle, they will experience less harm. Helmets have hard exteriors, but the insides are soft, to cushion heads. They can’t prevent concussion but may prevent serious brain injury.

3. Helmets Increase Visibility on the Road. A brightly colored helmet may make your child stand out more. Drivers may notice them from farther away and give them room when passing by. If your child rides or skates at night, choose a helmet with reflectors, which will help drivers spot them from a distance.

Remember to Wear a Helmet to Set Good Examples for Kids.

Kids listen to what parents say, but what they see may have greater impact. Wearing a helmet when you bike, skateboard or skate together sends the right message. Tell your kids that helmets are an essential piece of safety equipment, and remember to wear yours when you ride together.

Go Online

For more support, find a parenting event near you at HMforU.org/Events.
Spotlight on U

TV Timeout

Is binge-watching show after show bad for our brains? Here’s why you should give it a break.

When the pandemic began, many of us found ourselves locked in the house, bored and binge-watching hours upon hours of television. It was a good way to kill time, but watching too much TV too often has the potential of becoming an unhealthy habit. A lot of research has been done on television’s effects on children, adults have often been left out of these data collections. It’s no surprise that the sedentary behavior of binge-watching TV can negatively impact our physical health, but recent studies show it’s also a bad habit for long-term brain health and function.

TV’s Effect on Cognitive Impairment

“Researchers have found that moderate to high television viewing during midlife is associated with increased memory loss and decreased fine motor skills,” explains Manisha Parulekar, M.D., director, division of Geriatrics, and co-director, Center for Memory Loss and Geriatric medicine specialist at Hackensack University Medical Center. Studies also have found a link between high television consumption and the onset of depression.

As life expectancy in the United States continues to rise, experts believe the population’s risk of developing cognitive impairment or dementia will rise, too. Making a few healthy changes today can help prevent the development of dementia down the line. The neurobiology of dementia begins between the ages 45 and 64. Modifying your behaviors and lifestyle during middle-age years can help preserve cognition as you age and decrease your risk of dementia.

Four M’s of Mental Fitness

Dr. Parulekar suggests that middle-aged adults remember the four M’s of mental fitness, which offer simple ways to tend to your mental and cognitive health while minimizing sedentary behaviors.

What Matters: Focus on the healthy and beneficial things that matter to you and have a positive impact on your life, like socializing, sleeping well, eating healthy and not smoking or using other substances.

Mobility: Get up and get active. A lifestyle that incorporates plenty of exercise will lead to better health outcomes and help you preserve mobility as you age.

Mental Stimulation: Find a fun new hobby that will help fill your free time. Engage in activities that encourage creative thinking, teach you something new or help you relax.

Medication: Be careful with the use of high-risk medications, such as sedatives (including over-the-counter sleep medications) and hypnotics. They can increase your risk of dementia.

We have a lot of names for it—bowel movement, poop, stool and several that shouldn’t be mentioned. But we rarely actually talk about bowel movements. You may have questions about yours but are too embarrassed to ask. Never fear; Jonathan Weinberger, M.D., a gastroenterologist at Hackensack University Medical Center, answers all of them here.

How often should you poop?

There is no specific answer. Some people go three times a day, while others go every other day. The reasons abound. “Everybody is different in terms of what we eat, meal timing, the motility of our digestive system and the medications we may be taking,” says Dr. Weinberger.

What color is normal?

Red stool could come from bismuth preparations (like what you find in Pepto-Bismol or Kaopectate) or iron supplements. Or it could be a sign of bleeding in the upper part of the intestinal tract, such as the stomach, esophagus or duodenum.

What about size and shape?

Shape can range from loose and watery (which means your stool is going through the digestive tract so fast that it doesn’t have time to firm up to small, hard pellets which means you’re constipated and need more fiber and or more water). The “ideal” poop profile looks like a hot dog or sausage, and can be either smooth, or have lines or cracks on the surface. Size can vary, depending on your own size, but in general should be at least 5–6 inches in length and relatively easy to pass. If your stool suddenly becomes thinner or flatter than usual, it could point to some sort of blockage in the colon.

The bottom line (no pun intended): If your stool deviates from its usual for longer than a day or two, or it’s accompanied by any other symptoms, such as light-headedness, pain or fever, you should check it out with your doctor,” says Dr. Weinberger.
What’s the Risk?

Our expert weighs in on five commonly used products and the potential cancer risk they pose.

When it comes to cancer, we know that lifestyle choices, such as smoking and sun exposure, can lead to cancer. “But what many don’t know is that other lifestyle choices, such as how we sleep and what we buy, can indirectly increase our risk,” says Ami Vaidya, M.D., gynecologic oncologist at Hackensack University Medical Center.

While it’s tough to always avoid carcinogens, Dr. Vaidya says reducing exposure is key. Here are some everyday household products that may pose cancer risks.

1. Nonstick Cookware
   Nonstick cookware can be coated in potential toxins. To reduce your risk, opt for a cast-iron pan that can last a lifetime, or use nonstick pans at a low heat to lessen the ing exposure is key. Here are some everyday household products that may pose cancer risks.

2. Mattresses
   Manufacturers often add flame retardants to furnishings. While it’s tough to always avoid carcinogens, Dr. Vaidya says reducing exposure is key. Here are some everyday household products that may pose cancer risks.

3. Batteries
   Batteries of all types have toxins, such as cadmium, lead, lithium and sulfuric acid. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration classifies metals used to make batteries, such as cadmium, as highly toxic and linked to cancer when exposed in high amounts. Reduce your reliance on batteries by opting for battery-free or rechargeable items when possible for items such as electric toothbrushes, smoke detectors, remote controls and flashlights.

4. Cleaning Products
   Many household cleaning products contain endocrine disruptors, which can lead to cancer. Keep in mind that most of the cleaning products we use aren’t necessary: A simple soap-and-water method often does the trick for cleaning floors, carpets, windows and walls. Saving the harsher stuff for emergencies will reduce exposure.

5. Personal Care Products
   Cosmetics, skincare and other personal care products can contain harmful chemicals such as parabens, parfum (fragrance ingredients), formaldehyde, coal tar dyes and more. If you want to reduce your cancer risk, stick to a minimal routine with products that use simple ingredients.

Detecting cancer early is key to treating it. Schedule a cancer screening near you.

Robotic surgery reconstructed Teresa Frederico’s bladder after stage 2 muscle-invasive bladder cancer—just in time to enjoy her daughter’s wedding.

In June 2021, Teresa Frederico, 60, of Cliffside Park, New Jersey, was surprised to see blood in her urine. It could have been a urinary tract infection, but she did not have any pain or burning. Her daughter Alissa, an oncology nurse at John Theurer Cancer Center, suggested she go to a local emergency room. A CT scan confirmed what Teresa and her husband, Freddie, were shocked to hear.

After successful bladder reconstruction, Teresa Frederico was able to dance the night away at her daughter’s wedding.

In this innovative method, all of the tools of the robotic surgical system are passed through a 1-inch incision just below the patient’s belly button. Hackensack was among the first seven hospitals in the country to acquire the robotic single-port surgical system in February 2019. Today, 20 percent of the country’s single-port robotic procedures are completed at Hackensack.

“The single-port technology is transformative and enables our surgeons to perform the most complex surgeries in the hardest to reach places, through just one small incision,” Dr. Stifelman says.

Second Chance at Life
The surgeons removed Teresa’s bladder, then fashioned a neobladder from a single long segment of her small intestine, connecting it to her kidneys and urethra. “This is the most complex urologic surgery,” says Dr. Ahmed. “This is an excellent option for patients who are concerned about their appearance after the procedure and for those wishing to return to their active lives quickly.”

Teresa went home after five days with a urinary catheter that she used for six weeks, until she had healed enough to put her new bladder to the test. At the moment of truth, she was delighted to learn that it worked just fine. “I was so grateful I didn’t need the bag and that this could all be done through one little incision,” she says.

“Now when I look at myself in the mirror, I can’t even tell that my bladder is an external bag and urethra. This is the single-port technology is transformative and enables our surgeons to perform the most complex surgeries in the hardest to reach places, through just one small incision,” Dr. Stifelman says.

“Now when I look at myself in the mirror, I can’t even tell that my bladder is an external bag and urethra. This is the most complex urologic surgery,” says Dr. Ahmed. “This is an excellent option for patients who are concerned about their appearance after the procedure and for those wishing to return to their active lives quickly.”

Teresa Frederico was able to enjoy her daughter’s wedding just after the successful bladder reconstruction.

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“Now when I look at myself in the mirror, I can’t even tell that the surgery was done. I still look like me.”

She sometimes experiences occasional bladder leaks, but that should improve over time.

By April 2022, she was well enough to throw a bridal shower for her daughter Alessandra and to enjoy the wedding the following June. “I danced the whole night away,” Teresa says. “I am so grateful for the second chance at life that I got from the doctors and nurses at Hackensack.”
Vegetables in general are good for your heart and rich in vitamins and antioxidants. They’re what we should eat more of, instead of foods like cookies or crackers, but some contain more sugar than others.”

Jason Sayanlar, M.D., Cardiologist at Hackensack University Medical Center. “Any fruit is better than processed veggies, but they negate that benefit of the amount of sodium,” advises Dr. Sayanlar. “Pay attention to the sodium content on the package.”

Keep an eye on sugar content. “Particularly for fruits that are dried, look at their sugar content,” adds Dr. Sayanlar. “For example, dried apricots have much more sugar than fresh; frozen apricots are a better option.”

Don’t forget to look at portion sizes. Portion sizes can be misleading on packaging, which can lead you to overindulge and negate the benefit that food brings. “Nothing should be consumed in excess. Make those choices part of a balanced diet instead of overindulging in one type of fruit or vegetable,” Dr. Sayanlar says.

When Fresh Isn’t Possible
If you aren’t able to choose fresh fruits and vegetables, you can still make heart-healthy choices at the grocery store or market. Dr. Sayanlar offers a few tips:

Preparation matters. “Leafy greens are a great choice, but try not to drench them in oil and butter,” he says. “Protein shakes are a great option for these greens.”

Look out for sodium in prepared or canned foods. “Unfortunately, things that are convenient are typically bad for you. Frozen, canned or takeout meals are an easy way to get veggies, but they negate that cardiovascular benefit because of the amount of sodium,” advises Dr. Sayanlar. “Pay attention to the sodium content on the package.”

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Why Your Heart Rate Is High
Your heart rate rises when you exercise and drops when you’re lying in bed. But does your heart rate ever feel elevated for no apparent reason?

Having an increased heart rate isn’t a health condition in and of itself; it’s a symptom caused by any number of circumstances. It may be a reaction to something that’s happening in your life, or it may be caused by a health condition. “When you feel your heart pounding in your chest unexpectedly, if the problem continues or your heartbeat feels erratic or irregular, see a doctor to discuss your concerns,” says Jacqueline Hollywood, M.D., cardiologist at Hackensack University Medical Center.

Dr. Hollywood offers several reasons your heart rate may be high, not related to your heart:

- Physical or emotional stress. When your body responds to something stressful, frightening or upsetting, you may get a jolt of adrenaline, which increases your heart rate.

- Overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism). Having too much thyroid hormone in your system makes your heart beat faster than it should, increasing your heart rate.

- Anemia. If you have anemia, you don’t have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen to your organs. Your heart may beat more rapidly to compensate.

- Medication side effects. A number of drugs may cause your heart rate to increase, including some medications that treat colds, asthma, anxiety, depression, attention deficit disorder and high blood pressure.

- addictive substances. Caffeine, cigarettes, vaping and high levels of alcohol may cause your heart rate to rise after you use those substances. Additionally, illegal drugs like cocaine may also have this effect on your heart rate.

- a stressful physical activity. When you exert more than your body is prepared for, the heart rate increases to meet the higher demand.

- Illness or poor health habits. Illness, fatigue, poor sleep and dehydration can all lead to an increased heart rate.

Heart Conditions That Cause a High Heart Rate
Heart conditions which may cause an elevated heart rate include:

- Heart failure
- Heart rhythm problems
- Heart valve problems
- Coronary artery disease
- Scar tissue that forms after heart surgery
- Drug use
- Heart surgery

If you have been diagnosed with a heart condition and you’ve noticed that your heart rate has become higher than usual, make an appointment to talk to your doctor about the change.

When to Seek Emergency Care
Get immediate medical help if your heart rate seems too high and you have these symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Weakness
- Feeling faint or fainting
- Chest pain or discomfort

Go Online
Are you at risk of heart disease? Schedule a screening at HMHealthU.org/HeartScreen
Loosen Up

Do you have tight hips? Here are ways to test your hip mobility and tips for improvement.

Whether it’s from sitting too long during the work day, weak core muscles or not properly stretching, tight hips can cause a number of aches and pains, as well as affect your gait and posture.

“Everything in the body works together in synergy. If you experience joint pain and restriction in one area, that doesn’t mean it is the only joint involved or the source creating that problem,” says Roger Rossi, D.O., physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at St. Joseph’s Wayne Medical Center Acute Rehabilitation Institute. “For example, if you have back pain, it could be from restriction in the hip muscles.”

Is the Hip Mobility Challenge Safe?

The “Hip Mobility Challenge” is a viral TikTok and social media challenge where participants move through a variety of stretches and exercises to test their flexibility and strength.

“If you’re interested in trying it out, I’d recommend doing it with a friend nearby for safety and using a soft surface, like a yoga mat, in case you lose your balance,” says Dr. Rossi. “If you’ve had a hip replacement, I wouldn’t recommend trying it without guidance from a physician or physiatrist.”

Dr. Rossi says this challenge is a good benchmark to truly see how flexible you are: For those who can complete it, it shows that your hip joints have more extreme ranges of motion.

Movements to Test Your Hip Flexibility

Dr. Rossi shares a few stretches to test your hip mobility:

- Test your hip flexion. You should be able to bring your knee toward your chest.
- Test your quadriceps flexibility. You should be able to bring your heel to your buttocks.
- Test your hip abduction. You should be able to lay down or stand and lift your leg outward.
- Test your hip external rotation. You should be able to go on hands and knees and lift your leg outward.

If your hips are tight, performing these movements may be challenging or uncomfortable.

Best Ways to Treat Tight Hips

“Stretching is a great way to increase flexibility in your hips,” says Dr. Rossi. “Strengthening exercises are important, too. You don’t need weights; you can use your own body weight for squats, lunges and deadlifts—anything that will strengthen the hip muscles and core.”

If you’re not finding relief from stretching, a pain management specialist or physiatrist can help structure a proper treatment plan.

Signs You May Have Tight Hips

Look for these symptoms:

- Lower back pain
- Hip pain
- Knee pain
- Decreased physical performance in sports, recreational and daily activities

If any of these symptoms interfere with your daily life, contact your doctor to discuss it.

To Crack or Not to Crack?

Should you stop cracking your knuckles and back?

Cracking your knuckles or back can be relatively harmless, but it doesn’t necessarily lead to any benefits either. If you have a pre-existing joint problem, it’s recommended not to crack your joints, as it may aggravate underlying conditions. Otherwise, if you do not have any problems, it is relatively harmless.

What causes the “pop” noise?

Our joints naturally accumulate nitrogen bubbles over time, which build up in the spaces of our joints. When you crack your knuckles or back, these nitrogen bubbles escape from the built-up spaces, causing the “pop” noise.

Why do people like cracking their joints?

Cracking your joints has nothing to do with joints being put back into place; it’s more psychological. While people may enjoy the feeling, it’s actually doing nothing. Cracking your knuckles, in particular, can be linked to nervousness and anxiety in some people.

Is there a correct way to crack your joints?

There is no correct way of cracking your knuckles, but don’t force the crack.

Stop cracking your back and have pre-existing medical conditions.

Stop if you feel any pain or discomfort.

Is there a correct way to crack your joints? Cracking your back is a little different than cracking your knuckles. The best way to crack your back is by using a foam roller. It shouldn’t be a sudden jerky force to your neck or back. This can cause injuries to nearby structures or exacerbate underlying issues.

When should you stop cracking your joints? Stop cracking your joints if you feel any of the following symptoms:

- Pain or discomfort
- Numbness
- Muscle pain

If you suffer from pain and feel you need to crack your joints to relieve pain, especially in your back and neck, it’s best to see a professional. Cracking your own knuckles is relatively safe, but you could cause serious damage if you crack your neck or back and have pre-existing medical conditions.

Hackensack Meridian Health
The truth is, life with one kidney is not that different from living with two. According to the National Kidney Foundation: “Most people live normal, healthy lives with one kidney. However, staying as healthy as possible and protecting your only kidney is crucial.”

Living with one kidney isn’t uncommon. Some people are born with one kidney, while others may have a kidney removed due to a medical injury or disease, while others may have donated one to someone needing a transplant.

“The majority of people we see with one kidney typically live healthy, normal lives, with few issues related to it,” says David Serur, M.D., nephrologist at Hackensack University Medical Center. “Basically, one single healthy kidney is just about as good as two.”

But a normal lifestyle doesn’t mean taking zero precautions. It’s vital to maintain a healthy lifestyle, exercise and not smoke in order to protect the one kidney the person still has.

Are There Exercise Considerations With One Kidney? Physical exercise is healthy and good for everyone. But high-contact sports such as football, boxing, and others may have donated one to someone needing a transplant.

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Are There Exercise Considerations With One Kidney? Physical exercise is healthy and good for everyone. But high-contact sports such as football, boxing, and wrestling may pose extra risk. Though not a high risk, kidneys can be injured when someone is hit in the area of the kidney, causing a bruise to the kidney.

“If you are considering a contact sport, it’s important to understand that while extra padding and safety gear lessens the risk of injury, it still doesn’t make the risk zero,” says Dr. Serur. “Make sure you’re considering the risks involved, and talk to your health care provider to see if there are other solutions.”

Do You Have to Follow a Special Diet? It’s always recommended to follow a healthy diet and stay hydrated whether you have one or two kidneys. “Taking care of your overall health is how you can keep your kidney functioning well,” says Dr. Serur. “As with anyone trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle, people with one kidney need to stay on top of their doctor’s appointments, remember to take any medications you might be on and maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine. If you ever have questions, contact your health team right away.”

Illustrator, runner and furniture builder gives the ultimate gift: a life-saving kidney.

Several factors influenced Jorge Losch’s decision to become a living organ donor. He was inspired by his wife, Sara, who wanted to donate an organ but wasn’t able to because of health reasons, and he has two loved ones who received life-saving liver transplants.

There was also a conversation he had more than 20 years ago with his father, who questioned Jorge—an illustrator, runner and furniture builder—on his love of solitary, independent activities.

“Years later, thinking about that conversation with my father, it occurred to me that perhaps it was time to do something that was bigger than myself and that, in the process, could potentially help another human being,” says Jorge.

An Altruistic Decision In December 2021, Jorge, who lives in Wyckoff, New Jersey, started the organ donation process by discussing the idea with his wife and adult children. “They had concerns and questions, but in the end, they all gave me their full support,” he says.

Next, he contacted the Department of Organ Transplantation at Hackensack University Medical Center and spoke to the living donor coordinator. That started the evaluation process, which includes medical tests, a psychological evaluation and opportunities to ask questions and address concerns.

Jorge was accepted as a donor and entered into the National Kidney Registry as an altruistic kidney donor, someone who donates to a stranger with advanced kidney disease. “For patients on dialysis, it means being stuck in a chair three days a week for hours a day. Organ donation is life-changing for them,” says Michael Degen, M.D., urologist and member of the living donor team at Hackensack.

A Life-changing Surgery A few weeks before surgery, Jorge met with his transplant team, including his donor surgeon, to go over what to expect from the procedure and recovery. The minimally invasive surgery, a hand-assisted laparoscopic donor nephrectomy, takes two to four hours to complete. Recovery time is less than what it would be for an open procedure, generally taking a donor four to six weeks to feel back to their normal.

Jorge’s “normal” means running marathons. “Because surgery is minimally invasive, someone like Jorge who’s very active will feel great after about two weeks, but that’s the point where I’m trying to keep him from overdoing it,” says Dr. Degen. “I told Jorge, ‘No running for the first few weeks.’” Jorge’s recovery went as expected. “There was some discomfort, some pain, but nothing that was not quickly managed by an incredible team of nurses,” he says. Once home, he followed doctor’s orders and gradually increased his activity level. “After about four weeks, I could try running again. After about seven weeks, I ran a race to test how I was feeling, and I did well.”

Giving Someone a Future Donating an organ is a big decision, and one that Jorge is glad he made. His kidney donation benefited a 50-year-old Maryland resident.

“There are thousands of people waiting for an organ transplant in this country alone, facing months or years of illness and dialysis, uncertainty and fear,” Jorge says. “Two or three months of recovery for me meant nothing if perhaps one of those people could imagine having a future.”
The TV series “Call the Midwife” raised the profile of these crucial clinicians, who number more than 15,500 and attend about 10 percent of all births in the United States every year, according to the American College of Nurse Midwives (ACNM).

“Most people aren’t aware of the broad array of duties a midwife can undertake,” says Carole Shipman, RN, CMN, a certified nurse midwife at Pascack Valley Medical Center. “Midwives view prenatal care, birth and postpartum as a normal, natural process.”

**Midwives Do Far More Than Deliver Babies**

They also provide comprehensive care that spans a woman’s reproductive health, including:
- Prenatal care like ultrasounds, blood work and routine monitoring
- Post-birth checkups and physical examinations
- Assisting with emotional and physical recovery
- Screening for postpartum depression
- Caring for vaginal tears or c-section wounds
- Urination problems
- Reproductive care like birth control options, pap tests and screenings for sexually transmitted infections
- Treatment for vaginal and urinary tract infections
- Some also offer newborn care in the weeks after an infant is born, including:
  - Help finding a pediatrician
  - Lactation consulting

### Understanding the Role of Midwives

Many women first seek a midwife while pregnant because they desire a more “natural” birth experience that’s free of interventions. But choosing a midwife doesn’t mean you must have a home birth—although that’s an option—or can’t decide to induce labor or manage pain with an epidural or other form of anesthesia.

Many women, in fact, prefer a hospital or health care setting while their midwife monitors them during labor, manages any complications and helps deliver the newborn and placenta. Doctors can be on hand if needed or desired, and Carole’s practice collaborates with obstetricians to see each of her patients at least once during their pregnancies. Not all midwives, however, collaborate with obstetricians.

“When you work with a midwife in collaboration with an obstetrician, you still have the same options and treatment capabilities available for maternal care,” Carole says.

### Midwives vs. Doulas

A misconception Carole often dispels centers around the role of midwives compared to doulas. While the two have some overlapping duties, there’s one key difference.

Midwives provide medical care, and their chief responsibility is to maintain the physical health of a woman and her baby. Not all midwives are also nurses, as Carole is, but all have medical training.

Doulas, on the other hand, don’t perform clinical tasks. Doulas mainly offer support during labor and birth, helping women remain calm and comfortable by providing hands-on massage and offering suggestions on optimal positions for labor and pushing. “Midwives and doulas are both professionals, but a doula doesn’t need to have any medical education,” Carole says. “They are there to offer the woman any emotional and physical support she needs. But midwives take medical responsibility for the mother and baby.”

### Tips for Seeking Care from a Midwife

If you’re interested in seeking care from a midwife, Carole offers this guidance:
- Check with your health insurer to determine if midwife services are covered.
- Visit the ACNM website (midwife.org) to learn more about midwives and how their care aligns with your needs.
- Interview any midwives you’re considering.
- Prepare a list of questions for midwives to determine if they’re a good fit for your needs. Questions can touch on factors such as the birth experience you’d prefer or a midwife’s schedule and availability.

### What Midwives Can’t Do

Midwives can’t perform cesarean section surgery to deliver babies, but they can assist at such births. Carole, however, routinely stitches up any tearing around the vagina or perineum that occurs during a vaginal delivery, and can perform an episiotomy when needed (a small cut to allow the baby’s head to pass through more easily).

Midwives can prescribe epidurals but can’t administer them. Epidurals are performed by an anesthesiologist.

“Midwives can offer custom, personal care for pregnancy and birth. If you have any health conditions like high blood pressure or have had a high-risk pregnancy, we encourage building a team with your midwife and an obstetrician,” she says.
Is It Heartburn—or Something More?

Our gastroenterologist explains what heartburn feels like and when it might signal gastroesophageal reflux disease or something more.

For a condition so common—striking between 18 percent and 27 percent of adults in the United States at any given time—gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), commonly known as reflux, can show up in surprisingly diverse ways. The most common presentation is heartburn.

Heartburn is the reflux of stomach acid into the esophagus, the tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach. Symptoms can be unique to each person, says Elizabeth John, M.D., gastroenterologist at Mountainside Medical Group.

**What Heartburn Can Feel Like**

Dr. John says patients often describe heartburn symptoms in different ways:

- Burning sensation in the chest, commonly when lying down
- Pain right under the sternum, also called the breastbone
- Regurgitation or nausea
- Sensation radiating to the neck
- Extreme chest pain

Many people also confuse heartburn with GERD. But heartburn is actually the most common symptom or presentation of GERD, a chronic condition that can lead to several potentially serious complications if untreated.

“GERD can also show up in unusual ways, including chest pain, chronic cough, hoarseness, tooth erosions or feeling like something is stuck in the throat,” Dr. John says. “GERD is a very complex diagnosis and can have some serious implications.”

**Triggers and Risk Factors**

Many people know what triggers their bouts of heartburn, including:

- Eating fatty or spicy foods, citrus fruits, tomato products or dark chocolate
- Drinking caffeine or alcohol
- Eating large meals or late at night
- Taking certain medications

But these triggers differ from overall risk factors for developing heartburn and GERD, Dr. John notes:

- You’re at higher risk of developing GERD if you’re pregnant, over 50 or a smoker.
- Other predisposing factors include being overweight or obese; having a hiatal hernia, or bulging of the top of the stomach above the diaphragm; or certain connective tissue disorders.
- For some, the circular band of muscle around the base of the esophagus—which normally relaxes to allow foods and drinks to flow to the stomach before closing again—doesn’t work properly, allowing stomach acid to flow back into the esophagus.

“If you have heartburn once in six months, it’s probably not GERD,” Dr. John says. “But if you have it once a week, you likely have GERD.”

**Watch for Alarm Signs**

Repeated exposure to stomach acid can prove dangerous for the esophagus over the long term, Dr. John says. Complications include a narrowing of the esophagus known as peptic strictures, damage to the lining of the esophagus, a precancerous condition called Barrett’s esophagus and esophageal cancer.

Certain “alarm signs” should alert you that GERD may lead to a bigger problem, Dr. John says:

- Trouble or pain when swallowing, which might indicate a blockage or severe inflammation
- Weight loss
- Tar-like stools or vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- Anemia, which can be triggered by blood loss inside the esophagus
- Over-the-counter heartburn medications such as proton pump inhibitors or H2 blockers don’t improve symptoms

“If you have any of these signs, it’s definitely time to see a doctor,” Dr. John says.
Walk to Remember

It’s commonly known that physical activity is good for your heart and maintaining a healthy weight. But did you know that it may also lower your dementia risk?

Physical activity has an important impact on brain health, says Manisha Parulekar, M.D., director, division of Geriatrics, and co-director, Center for Memory Loss and Brain Health at Hackensack University Medical Center. “Being active doesn’t just benefit your body; it can improve your brain health and mood,” she says.

A recent study found that getting 9,800 steps daily decreased the risk of dementia in adults. The study also found that step intensity and walking pace matter: Walking purposefully (at least 40 steps per minute) was associated with lowered dementia risk.

How Does Walking Lower Dementia Risk?

Exercise helps protect your ability to remember things and think clearly. Getting a high daily step count may help:

- Improve blood flow to the brain, which benefits memory and cognition.
- Lower the impact of stress on the hippocampus, a brain region associated with storing new memories.
- Encourage the brain to enhance internal connections that allow you to retain memories.
- Reduce chronic inflammation, which is associated with dementia.

“There’s no downside to walking more to boost your step count,” Dr. Parulekar says. “You may improve your brain health, heart health, overall health and your mood.”

How to Get More Steps

Increase your step count with these ideas:

- Track your movement with a wearable activity tracker or smartphone pedometer app. Seeing how much you move may motivate you to increase your daily number.
- Don’t expect to boost your number overnight if it’s low. Make small changes to your routine, increasing by 500 or 1,000 steps weekly.
- Find small ways to be more active. Choose a far-away parking spot and take the stairs.
- Swap sedentary habits for active ones. Walk with friends instead of sitting; watch TV from a treadmill.
- Go for a walk for five minutes after every meal. It will add up.
- Schedule short walks into your day like meetings, and honor the appointments.
- If you have a dog, take a longer walk together once a day.
- Listen to music or a podcast that you love while you walk. It may inspire you to go farther, so you can keep listening.
- Buddy up with a friend or partner to make walking a social occasion.

Learn about our comprehensive treatment for dementia and memory loss disorders at HMHforU.org/MemoryLoss.

Go Online

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Innovation

transforming medical research into treatments

It Takes a Village

A wide array of support services offers Parkinson’s disease patients coping tools and a sense of community.

For the 1 million people living with Parkinson’s disease in the U.S., shaking, stiffness, and difficulty walking and talking become a daily reality. Living well with this progressive neurological condition takes a village. The following inpatient and outpatient services can help patients control symptoms and maximize their abilities.

PingPongParkinson*

What It Is: PingPongParkinson is a nonprofit organization with local chapters that host weekly ping-pong exercise groups for people living with Parkinson’s disease. It provides opportunities for physical, cognitive, and social engagement.

Why It Helps: Ping-pong (or table tennis) can help people with Parkinson’s disease maintain their coordination and fine motor skills. The idea is based on the concept of neuroplasticity, the brain’s ability to make new nerve cells and connections through challenging exercise. Although medication remains the main treatment for Parkinson’s, compelling evidence suggests regular exercise significantly helps manage the disease.

Parkinson’s Wellness Program

What It Is: The Parkinson’s Wellness Program, a unique two-week inpatient rehabilitation program at JFK Johnson
Innovation

Rehabilitation Institute helps patients actively address any decline or required medication changes to enhance as much functionality as possible. After completing the inpatient admission, patients may transition to outpatient services that include the SPEAK OUT and LOUD Crowd programs, which help patients regain voice diminished by the disease by combining education, speech therapy, daily home practice, and group sessions.

Why It Helps: Rock Steady Boxing is a nonprofit Parkinson’s wellness exercise program that uses a surprising technique—noncontact boxing—to support people with Parkinson’s disease, ParkinsonSINGS promotes accountability, camaraderie and encouragement through group sessions.

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New Hope for Parkinson’s: Learn about innovative new technologies for diagnosing and treating patients with Parkinson’s disease.

There may be no cure for Parkinson’s disease to date, but we’ve certainly entered a new era with innovative treatments and technologies for diagnosing and treating this progressive neurological condition. These tools offer Parkinson’s patients the best chance to live and function more normally, helping them thrive.

HIFU (High-intensity Focused Ultrasound or FUS) Medications for Parkinson’s disease are always the first treatments offered. But sometimes drug therapies don’t work well enough to control tremors, or they leave patients with severe side effects. These patients may find relief from HIFU, which uses sound waves to target areas in the brain responsible for tremors. Hackensack Meridian Health is the only network in New Jersey to offer HIFU.

DaTscan: An accurate diagnosis is crucial to determine the best treatment options. Since no single blood or imaging test is available that can definitively detect Parkinson’s disease, DaTscan can help. Patients who have tremors might have Parkinson’s syndrome (a group of related diseases dominated by Parkinson’s) or another movement disorder called essential tremor. DaTscan can often distinguish between the two, especially when used in combination with a patient’s physical exam and reported symptoms.

HiFU: HiFU destroys areas in the brain responsible for tremors by aiming high-intensity focused ultrasound at them, raising the temperature of the tissue and short-circuiting tremor signals. HiFU is injected into the bloodstream. It travels to the brain and attaches to the dopamine transporter.

Visualization of Dopamine Levels: A few hours later, a special camera is used to help doctors visualize brain levels of dopamine, a chemical in the brain that sends signals between neurons. Dopamine levels often decrease dramatically in people with Parkinson’s disease.

Diagnosis Confirmation: The scan can detect the drop in nerve cells and dopamine that characterize Parkinson’s and help doctors confirm a diagnosis.

Deep Brain Stimulation: Deep brain stimulation (DBS) involves implanting a device that emits electrical impulses to control a variety of Parkinson’s symptoms, including tremors, stiffness and slow movement. It can help patients with Parkinson’s whose symptoms have become difficult to manage with medication alone or who are having drug-related side effects. It can also be performed to help those with essential tremor, dystonia and epilepsy.

Here’s how it works:

1. Implantation: First, two thin metal wires are placed in the brain and an extension wire is threaded through the neck that leads to a battery implanted over the chest wall, all under the skin.

2. Blocks or Activates Nerve Signals: When the neurostimulator device, often described as a pacemaker for the brain, is switched on, it sends electrical impulses rhythmically—allowing patients time to heal—tremors and other Parkinson’s symptoms are silenced by a type of “white noise” that interrupts faulty nerve signals.

DBS is the most commonly performed surgical treatment for Parkinson’s. Because they’re moving more easily, patients often report improvements in mood and sleep, as well. Due to its success, DBS is also being researched for a variety of other conditions, including epilepsy, Tourette syndrome, Huntington’s disease, cluster headaches and chronic pain.

Learn more about these and other technologies and treatments for Parkinson’s disease at HIFUforParkinsons.org.

Smartphone Apps:

What It Is: Working with Abbott Laboratories, Hackensack Meridian Health uses a wireless app to remotely adjust electrical stimulation levels in patients who have undergone deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery, which implants a pacemaker-like device in the brain to control tremors, stiffness and other Parkinson’s symptoms.

Another partnership, with medical device company Medtronic and Rune Labs, offers Parkinson’s patients a free Apple watch if they use a Medtronic battery in their DBS device. With the Apple Watch, patients can use motion-sensing software to better manage their disease by tracking aspects such as sleep, tremor frequency and abnormal movements that persist after medication use.

Why It Helps: At the touch of a button, these smartphone apps connect Parkinson’s patients to their doctors and healthcare providers that can help monitor symptoms and tweak certain therapies.

Go Online

To learn more about any of these programs, as well as other rehabilitative services for patients with Parkinson’s disease and other movement disorders, visit HIFUforParkinsons.org.

Why It Helps: Parkinson’s disease can impact speaking and swallowing, but research shows that singing can help maintain the muscles involved in these key tasks. ParkinsonSINGS helps patients with Parkinson’s, along with their caregivers, benefit from sharing their challenges and triumphs with others going through the same experience.

What It Is: ParkinsonSINGS is a public benefit corporation that brings together Parkinson’s patients for fun and vocal fitness.

Iscar’s regimen was largely adapted from boxing drills, helping patients beat back the “opponent” with rigorous exercises. ParkinsonSINGS promotes camaraderie and social interaction.

Support Groups:

What It Is: Through a Parkinson’s Foundation community grant, JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute offers the ParkinsonSINGS choir that brings together Parkinson’s patients for fun and vocal fitness.

Why It Helps: ParkinsonSINGS helps patients actively address any decline or required medication changes to enhance as much functionality as possible. After completing the inpatient admission, patients may transition to outpatient services that include the SPEAK OUT and LOUD Crowd programs, which help patients regain voice diminished by the disease by combining education, speech therapy, daily home practice, and group sessions.

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Innovation

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Why It Helps: Rock Steady Boxing is a nonprofit Parkinson’s wellness exercise program that uses a surprising technique—noncontact boxing—to support people with Parkinson’s disease, ParkinsonSINGS promotes accountability, camaraderie and encouragement through group sessions.

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New Hope for Parkinson’s: Learn about innovative new technologies for diagnosing and treating patients with Parkinson’s disease.

There may be no cure for Parkinson’s disease to date, but we’ve certainly entered a new era with innovative treatments and technologies for diagnosing and treating this progressive neurological condition. These tools offer Parkinson’s patients the best chance to live and function more normally, helping them thrive.

HIFU (High-intensity Focused Ultrasound or FUS) Medications for Parkinson’s disease are always the first treatments offered. But sometimes drug therapies don’t work well enough to control tremors, or they leave patients with severe side effects. These patients may find relief from HIFU, which uses sound waves to target areas in the brain responsible for tremors. Hackensack Meridian Health is the only network in New Jersey to offer HIFU.

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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 800-560-9999.

#### Special Events

**Stroke: The Latest Treatments and Technologies** May is National Stroke Month. Learn how to B.E.F.A.S.T., and know the signs, symptoms and latest technologies.
- May 4, 11 a.m.—noon, virtual event
- May 18, noon–1 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

**Mental Health Month Webinar: Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)** Join Eric Alcera, M.D., and Muhammed Abbas, M.D., for a lively and enlightening presentation.
- May 11, 5–6 p.m., virtual event

**Diabetes**
- Screensings: May 8 & June 12, 9–11:30 a.m., Save Latin America, 138 29th St., Union City
- May 20 & June 17, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Divine Konaktion, 617 58th St., West New York
- June 22, 10 a.m.–noon, Holy Redeemer, 569 65th St., West New York
- July 8, 8–11 a.m., Nazareth, 5800 Palisade Ave., West New York
- Managing Diabetes: June 7, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

**Neuroscience**
- Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About falls Free eight-week fall prevention program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults.
- June 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 and July 6, 13 & 20, 10 a.m.–noon, Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
  - Memory Training: June 8, 14 & 22, 1:30–3:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

**Heart Health**
- Cooking with Heart: The Mind Diet! As we get older, we may experience moments that trigger concerns about the health of our brains. A healthy diet is one way to support brain health. Join this two-part program led by our dietitian and learn to “mind” your diet.
  - May 10 & 17, noon–1:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
  - AHA CPR Anytime May 24, 10–11 a.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
  - Angioscreen Special rate: $49.95, registration required. Call for dates, times and locations.

**Cancer Care**
- Plant-Based Eating and Cancer This program provides an overview of the health benefits of eating more plants and simple guidelines for doing so, including resources to make the journey easy and delicious.
  - May 18, 2–3 p.m., virtual event
  - Stop Smoking with Hypnosis May 10 & July 12, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
  - Obesity and Cancer Speaker: Dena G. Aromugam, M.D., May 24, noon–1 p.m., virtual event
  - Oncology: Screening and Staying Active Speaker: Karim ElSahwi, M.D., June 28, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
  - Smoking Cessation For an appointment, call 551-996-2038.

**Pediatrics**
- Parent/Guardian Talks
  - Body Image & Hot Topics Join Heather L. Appelbaum, M.D., and Jennifer L. Northridge, M.D., as they discuss your preteen’s and teen’s bodies and body image, focusing on the body as a whole. They will share tips on how to have those challenging but necessary conversations.
  - May 16, 7–9 p.m., virtual event
  - Are Your Shots Up-to-date? Apr. 26, 1–2 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
  - TOUR OF THE BIRTHING CENTER May 5 & 22 and June 12 & 26, 5:30–6:15 p.m., Mountainside
  - Infant Care & Safety Class May 8, June 12 & July 10, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
  - Breastfeeding Class May 24 & June 7, 7–10 p.m., virtual event
  - Prepared Childbirth Class May 27 & June 10, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., virtual event
  - Safe Sitter Fee: $40, virtual event. Visit HMHforU.org/Events for upcoming dates.
  - Safe at Home by Safe Sitter Fee: $15, virtual event. Visit HMHforU.org/Events for upcoming dates.

**General Wellness**
- Hearing Loss: The Hidden Risks Join our audiologist and learn the links between hearing and health as well as hearing aid myths. Screenings will be provided.
  - May 3, 12:30–1:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
  - Are Your Shots Up-to-date? Apr. 26, 1–2 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
  - Weight Loss Surgery To learn more about weight loss surgery, attend a free seminar. Visit HMHforU.org/WeightLoss to find a seminar near you.
  - Support Groups Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at HMHforU.org/SupportGroups.

**Scheduling**
Here are just a few of the events & classes this May through July 2023. For a full listing or to register, visit HMHforU.org/Events or call 800-560-9999.
In It for the Kids

Nurses and sisters Jamie DeLaura and Alyssa Dunnigan ran the New York City Marathon to raise money for Tackle Kids Cancer.

They didn’t “break the tape” as the first to run through it, but Joseph M. Sanzari Children’s Hospital nurses and sisters Jamie DeLaura and Alyssa Dunnigan were winners in the 2022 TCS New York City Marathon held November 6, 2022.

The sisters ran the race to raise much-needed funds for pediatric cancer research and patient programs for Tackle Kids Cancer, a philanthropic program part of Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation that benefits The Children’s Cancer Institute at Hackensack Meridian Children’s Health.

“Crossing the finish line was very emotional for me,” says Jamie. “The kids I work with and their families are some of the strongest people I know. We try everything we can to make sure they still get to be a kid, despite their diagnosis.”

Adds Alyssa: “Being able to do this and make a donation to the foundation affecting those kids was an incredible honor. Doing things in life to positively impact others will always make you feel good. While working in this hospital with the kids, we get to see how the support can truly change a kid’s life.”

Dedication, Commitment and Passion

“Training for a marathon takes a lot of dedication, commitment and passion for yourself and for the sport,” says Jamie, who ran approximately three days a week; Alyssa ran four. “Nursing requires the same.” Alyssa says both pursuits require mental and emotional stamina. “As a nurse, you are constantly using your brain and you’re on your feet to get the work done,” she says. “Taking pride in the things that you do is incredibly important, and there is truly nothing I have done like running this marathon.”

Their accomplishments are a source of pride for others who work with them. “We are very grateful to Jamie and Alyssa for extending themselves and raising money for Tackle Kids Cancer,” says Amy Glazer, executive director of Tackle Kids Cancer and Children’s Health for Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation. “They know better than anyone the difficult journey children and families face when given a cancer diagnosis. Giving back to their own patients by supporting Tackle Kids Cancer’s mission is a true act of kindness.”

By the Numbers

Boost Your Brain Health

Take our quiz to test what you know about improving your brain’s ability to learn and remember.

1. True or false: Learning new things improves your memory.
   A. Green, leafy vegetables
   B. Fatty fish such as salmon and canned tuna
   C. Walnuts and berries
   D. All of the above

2. What foods can help boost your brain health?
   A. Green, leafy vegetables
   B. Fatty fish such as salmon and canned tuna
   C. Walnuts and berries
   D. All of the above

3. Which of the following is NOT true?
   A. Walking every day may decrease the risk of dementia.
   B. Certain meditation can aid in memory.
   C. High cortisol levels improve memory.
   D. All of the above

4. How many hours of sleep are recommended for optimal brain health?
   A. 4
   B. 10
   C. 7
   D. There is no standard

Source: University of Cambridge research

Fundraise in your community for your community, and support a hospital or health care cause important to you. Start your virtual fundraiser today.

Sisters Jamie DeLaura (right) and Alyssa Dunnigan (left) raised funds and ran in the New York City Marathon to benefit the very kids they care for each day as nurses.
May Is Mental Health Awareness Month!

Learn about the most misunderstood treatment in the field of mental health and psychiatry: electroconvulsive therapy (ECT).

Webinar: Electroconvulsive Therapy  The not-so-scary truth about a life-changing therapy for treatment-resistant depression, mood disorders and severe forms of autism. Join Eric Alcera, M.D., and Muhammed Abbas, M.D., as they discuss ECT and neuromodulation in plain language. Hear from a young woman who found ECT to be life-saving for her severe depression, and a mom who found hope after years of misdiagnoses in discovering ECT for her son, who has a severe form of catatonic autism. To learn more or register, visit HMHforU.org/Events or call 800-560-9990.

May 11, 5–6 p.m., virtual event

Is Electroconvulsive Therapy Painful? Shailaja Shah, M.D., psychiatrist and associate medical director of ECT at Carrier Clinic, provides guidance on ECT, including whether it’s painful, if it causes side effects and when this therapy is recommended. Read more at HMHforU.org/ECT.

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

Our hospitals near you:

For a complete listing of our hospitals, services and locations, visit HMHforU.org/Locations.