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

Ice, Ice, Baby
Plus: • Mental health benefits of being outdoors
• Is plant protein better than meat?
• Recipe for edamame and black bean salad
• What’s trending?

Doctor Spotlight
Getting to Know Hany M. Gendy, M.D.
Internal medicine doctor at Hackensack Meridian Medical Group Primary Care—Manalapan.

Spotlight on U health topics that matter the most to you

Are You at Risk for Heart Disease?
Take our quiz to find out.

A Leg Up on Knee Health
Tips to postpone or prevent knee replacement surgery. Plus: Partial vs. full replacements.

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Is it Time?
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To Remove or Not to Remove?
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In the Know
New medications help those who can’t lose weight through diet and exercise alone. Plus: Surgery helps a man exceed his weight-loss goals.

TikTok Health Myths—Gutted
Got health myths abound on TikTok. Our doctor puts five to rest. Plus: The latest TikTok trends you should avoid.

Schedule event and class listings

Your Calendar for Summer 2023
Live and virtual events and classes you won’t want to miss.

Foundation meaningful gifts from U

Family Affair
Twin brothers generously donate to the hospital that cared for their father.

By the Numbers a snapshot view of an important health issue

Sleep Easy
The numbers to know to get a good night’s sleep.

New Hope
Children undergoing cancer therapy or facing other fertility-threatening conditions or treatments now have promising options for the future.

Visit HMHforU.org for these stories and other great health care content.

HealthU is a 2023 Hermes Creative Awards Platinum winner, 2022 APEX Award winner and a 2021 Content Marketing Awards finalist.
Dose of Vitamin D

I can’t help but celebrate every year when summer arrives. There’s just something about the longer days, the warmer temperatures and the green grass, isn’t there? But there’s some science behind the summertime euphoria: Research shows that sunlight exposure positively impacts our serotonin levels, the hormone that makes us feel happy. Regular exposure to daylight can help us raise our spirits and improve our focus. Turn to page 6 to find even more mental health benefits that come from being outdoors.

Of course, the summer sun also poses a risk to our skin. As we spend more time outdoors, we have to protect our skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) light. On page 18, you can find helpful tips for reducing your skin cancer risk along with good advice on how to apply spray sunscreens effectively.

I personally look forward to moving my workouts outdoors and soaking up the fresh air each summer. In fact, I always kick off the summer by running in the Spring Lake Five Mile Run, alongside my fellow Hackensack Meridian Health team members. This unofficial start to the summer is less about exercise than it is about camaraderie. It’s another wonderful summertime tradition at Hackensack Meridian Health. Our team members maintain community gardens at several of our hospital sites. Each year, our team members harvest produce to benefit our local communities. We grow a variety of different produce, including beets, asparagus, kale, potatoes, turnips, cabbage, lettuce, basil, tomatoes and more. It’s not just about giving back to our communities. It’s also a fun activity that our team members enjoy year-round.

Another wonderful summertime tradition at Hackensack Meridian Health is the top hospital/health care system in the country for diversity, equity and inclusion. “As a health network, we believe we are uniquely qualified to take up the fight against health inequity. We are so grateful to have these efforts recognized by Diversity Inc., and we celebrate all of our team members who have contributed to these efforts,” says CEO Bob Garrett.

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
Hackensack Meridian Health

This free magazine is prepared by the Marketing and Communications Team of Hackensack Meridian Health. Inquiries or ideas can be addressed to HealthU@hmhn.org.

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BetterU
EMOTIONAL HARMONY supporting your emotional and mental health

The Great Outdoors
Going outside can positively impact your mental health. Here’s how.

Has anyone ever told you to “get some fresh air” when you weren’t feeling great? Spending time outdoors and reconnecting with nature is a great way to improve your physical and mental health.

Here are five reasons why going outside can boost your mood.

1. It’s a great source of vitamin D.
   - Being out in the sun exposes you to sunlight, which your skin uses to make vitamin D as a nutrient for your body. Vitamin D can help improve your immune system, make your bones stronger and lower your risk of developing diseases and various types of cancer.

2. It can be the calm after the storm.
   - “Moving your body and being outside in nature can help your body recover after stressful events in your life,” says psychiatrist Patrick Kane, M.D. Being in nature can reduce cortisol levels and muscle tension.

3. It’s a great way to foster connection with other people.
   - Whether you join a running club, play a game of ultimate frisbee or take a walk with your family after work, exploring outdoors can be a great opportunity to bond and experience nature together.

4. You will sleep like a baby.
   - Ever notice after spending a day outside, as our internal clock, regulates how our body functions. Research supports that our internal clock is directly affected by how much sunlight we are exposed to. Bright light will help you feel more alert and awake during the day, and fall asleep easier and feel more tired at night.

5. Sunlight can help with feelings of depression.
   - Research suggests that exposure to sunlight impacts your body’s level of serotonin, a chemical that plays a vital role in your mood. Getting regular exposure to daylight can help raise your spirits and improve your focus.

Outdoor Health Boosters to Try

Connecting your body with the natural environment can play a significant role in your health. Here are three ways to foster this connection:

Gardening: Spending time outdoors and growing your own plants, flowers or produce can boost your feelings of happiness, success and productivity.

Forest bathing: This refers to “taking in the medicine or atmosphere of the forest.” You can practice forest bathing by walking, biking or relaxing in a forest setting, such as an area with many trees.

Earthing: Earthing, or grounding, refers to the activities in which you immerse yourself in an “earthly” experience. These activities include walking barefoot, laying on the ground or swimming in a natural body of water. Going to your local beach or park can be a great setting to practice earthing.

Is Plant Protein Better Than Meat?
Plant-based diets seem to be growing in popularity, from the Mediterranean diet to the vegan diet to the plant-based diet. Plant proteins are often incomplete protein sources, meaning they don’t have all nine essential amino acids needed for muscle growth and repair. “Not eating a variety of different plant proteins can lead to you not getting all the essential amino acids,” Adedayo says. “This can result in decreased immunity, digestive problems, depression, fertility issues, lower mental alertness, slowed growth in children and other health issues.”

To ensure you don’t become amino acid-deficient, eat a variety of plant products, especially from these nearly complete protein sources:

- Quinoa
- Buckwheat
- Peanut
- Tofu
- Chia seeds
- Edamame
- Hummus

If you rely mostly on plant sources for protein, make sure you get enough vitamin B12. “If you’re on a plant-based diet, look for foods fortified with vitamin B12 or consider taking a supplement,” Adedayo says.

Risks Associated With Eating Plant Proteins
Plant protein diets can be a great substitute for animal protein. They may have fewer calories, less unhealthy fat and less cholesterol than animal protein.

- They provide nutrients like zinc, tryptophan, B6, B7, and vitamins A and K.
- Plant proteins provide fiber, which helps digestion and can reduce the risk of cancer and heart problems.
- Studies have found that eating multiple servings of plants per day can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke and heart attack.

Health Benefits of Plant Proteins
Plant proteins are an important source of nutrition and provide lots of health benefits:

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Enjoy the Great Outdoors

Find a healthy cooking demo or other nutrition event near you at HMHforU.org/Events.

Find more recipes and tips for healthy eating at HMHforU.org/HealthyEating.
How do I know if I have a blood clot in my leg?

Vikalp Jain, M.D., weighs in:

When a blood clot—also called deep vein thrombosis—forms, it can obstruct blood flow, leading to uncomfortable symptoms, including:

- Swelling in the affected leg
- Leg pain or discomfort that feels like a pulled muscle, tightness, cramping or soreness
- Redness or discoloration of the skin over the affected area
- Throbbing sensation in the affected leg
- Affected area feels warm to the touch

If a clot breaks free from the spot where it formed, it may cause a potentially life-threatening condition known as pulmonary embolism, which obstructs blood flow to the lungs. Symptoms of pulmonary embolism may include:

- Sudden cough, especially if you produce bloody mucus
- Chest pain that worsens when you try breathing deeply
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Chest pain that worsens when you try breathing deeply
- Sudden difficulty breathing or shortness of breath

Speak to your doctor to see if you are a candidate or if you experience these symptoms over a prolonged period of time:

- Fatigue
- Change in your bowel movements
- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
- Unexplained abdominal pain
- Unexplained weight loss

Even if you haven’t noticed symptoms of deep vein thrombosis—forms, it can obstruct blood flow, leading to uncomfortable symptoms, including:

- If a clot breaks free from the spot where it formed, it may cause a potentially life-threatening condition known as pulmonary embolism, which is when the clot travels through blood vessels and enters the lungs. So if you think you may have a blood clot in your leg, see your doctor or visit an urgent care center or emergency room as soon as possible to help avoid complications.

What does colon cancer feel like?

Michael P. Del Rosario, M.D., weighs in:

Unfortunately, many people with colorectal cancer may not feel anything. The first signs of colorectal cancer are often subtle. There’s a misconception that if you don’t feel anything amiss in your abdomen, there’s no reason to consider the possibility of colorectal cancer. Being asymptomatic is common, which makes proactive screening so important.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force suggests screening for colorectal cancer at age 45 for people of average risk. Speak to your doctor to see if you are a candidate or if you experience these symptoms:

- Sudden difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain that worsens when you try breathing deeply
- Sudden shortness of breath
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Speak to your doctor to see if you are a candidate or if you experience these symptoms over a prolonged period of time:

- Fatigue
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- Unexplained abdominal pain
- Unexplained weight loss

The most common early sign of cervical, uterine, vaginal and ovarian cancers is abnormal bleeding.

- Vigorous sex can cause ovarian cysts to rupture. Rupturing isn’t necessarily an indication something is wrong, but serious ruptures can cause abdominal pain, heavy bleeding and infection, and need medical attention.

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What does bleeding after sex mean?

Blair Gumnic, D.O., weighs in:

There are many reasons why a woman may experience bleeding after vaginal intercourse. The issue may need to be evaluated, but it could be something that’s easily fixed.

- Vigorous sex can cause ovarian cysts to rupture. Rupturing isn’t necessarily an indication something is wrong, but serious ruptures can cause abdominal pain, heavy bleeding and infection, and need medical attention.

- Pregnancy

- Gynecological cancer

- Ovarian cyst rupture

- Surgery
The “American way” of life appealed so much to internal medicine specialist Hany M. Gendy, M.D., that he made the U.S. his permanent home after growing up in Egypt and becoming a doctor there. “For a decade, I came here for summer vacations. Then in 1998, I decided to stay and study for my U.S. medical licensing examination so I could practice here,” he says. Dr. Gendy, who speaks Arabic in addition to English, finished his exams and began his residency in 2001. “Here in America, everyone is so free to make their own decisions and to take advantage of educational and career opportunities,” he says. “I want to take care of people, and in my mind, this is the best place to achieve that.”

Why did you choose primary care? I find it aligns so well with my goals in medicine and in life. No one is better equipped to help others improve their quality of life than primary care physicians. I have had some patients for almost 20 years and am looking ahead to the next 20.

What is a passion of yours outside of medicine? Soccer is my passion. I used to be on my high school team and then my medical school’s team. I was a good player. Soccer not only helps us be physically active, but also mentally and socially active. It really causes us to be team players and learn how to get along. I’m a big fan of the English football—or soccer—league system, especially the highest level, the Premier League. Its members include my favorite team, Liverpool.

What is your most favorite memory from when you played soccer? I played soccer while in school and am a huge fan of the sport today.

What do you do for yourself, mind and body? I meditate. I’ve learned that sometimes patients’ physical symptoms reflect what’s going on in the mind. If bloodwork and imaging come back normal, and the patient still complains, we should look further. I also run 2½ miles a day on workdays and 3 miles other days, and I have to start my day this way. I go to the beach, and on vacation, I go boating, snorkeling and swimming—my favorite spot is the Mediterranean.

Passport to Health

Three hacks for staying healthy when you travel this summer.

1. **Take the No-elevator Pledge**
   - Skip the elevator and opt for the stairs every chance you get. In addition to helping you get your daily steps in, this will help you avoid the germs in a crowded elevator.

2. **Eat a Nutritious Meal After Every Indulgent One**
   - Some of us tend to overindulge on snacks and fast food while traveling, but don’t let this derail your whole trip. For every treat you enjoy, plan a healthy meal to follow, with a focus on lean protein and vegetables.

3. **Conquer Jet Lag**
   - Adjust to your new time zone before you leave for vacation. For example, for a few days before your trip, go to bed an hour later and wake up an hour later than usual if you are headed west.

To make an appointment with Dr. Gendy or a doctor near you, call 800-822-8905 or visit our website.
Are You at Risk for Heart Disease?  
Take our quiz to find out.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<td>Are you a man over the age of 45?</td>
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<td>Are you a woman over age 55, or are you postmenopausal?</td>
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<td>Do you smoke?</td>
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<td>Do you exercise less than three times a week?</td>
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<td>Do you have diabetes?</td>
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<td>Are you 30 or more pounds over your recommended weight?</td>
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<td>Are you Black American or Latino American?</td>
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<td>Is your blood pressure 140/90 or higher?</td>
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<td>Is your total cholesterol over 200?</td>
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If you answered “yes” to three or more of these questions, you may be at higher risk for heart disease. Scan the QR code to schedule a wellness appointment online, or call 800-822-8905 to find a doctor.
A Leg Up on Knee Health

Sometimes, a knee replacement is necessary. But there are things you can do to extend the health of your knee joints and postpone or prevent surgery.

Partial vs. Full Knee Replacements

If you are planning knee replacement surgery, here’s how to better understand if you’re a candidate for a partial replacement or a full one.

Knee replacement surgery is a common procedure designed to relieve pain and stiffness of the knee joint. After arthritis or injury damages the joint, knee replacement helps recover and improve daily functionality, and restore the integrity of the knee.

When there is damage to the cartilage of your knee, your primary care doctor will typically refer you to an orthopedic specialist, who will help you understand the best treatment option for you. Surgical treatment may be appropriate if pain can no longer be alleviated by nonsurgical treatments, such as medication and physical therapy.

Differences Between Partial and Full Knee Replacements

The knee consists of three major compartments, whose independent operating conditions determine whether you require a partial or full knee replacement.

- **Lateral**: The outside of the knee, opposite the medial
- **Posterior Femoral**: The part of the knee that maintains the patella (kneecap) and connects the thigh to the leg bone
- **Medial**: The part of the knee that runs along the inside of the joint

Partial knee replacements replace the damaged compartments of the knee joint, using metal or plastic components to resurface the damaged areas. In some cases, just one compartment is affected in the knee. In this case, a person may be a candidate for partial knee replacement.

An orthopedic surgeon will help you understand which procedure is best for you by assessing your medical history, range of motion, strength and stability. If surgery is necessary, your surgeon will plan to implant a prosthetic joint made of medical-grade plastic, metal or ceramic materials that mimic the function of a natural, healthy knee joint.

- **Avoiding smoking**, which can increase oxidative stress and weaken bones
- **Staying active**
- **Improve flexibility with routine stretching**
- **There is a wide range of ways to help support and maintain weak knees.** Sometimes these options preserve knees for a lifetime, but for other people, they are more of a delaying tactic,” Dr. Roehrig says. Examples include:
  - Over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
  - Topical creams and pain patches
  - Injectable medications, such as cortisone and hyaluronic acid, for pain relief
  - Staying active

Dr. Roehrig adds that patients who are living with knee pain often ask about whether nutritional supplements will help. “Unfortunately, the data is sparse on this topic, but there is mixed evidence and a lot of work being done looking at the use of glucosamine, chondroitin, collagen and turmeric, among other antioxidants, and how they might pre - serve cartilage. My nonsurgical colleagues also offer regenerative medicine options such as platelet-rich plasma, stem cells and others.”

**Five Signs Your Knees May Need Surgical Replacement**

1. Pain in your knees that slows you down regardless of remedies you’ve tried
2. Instability or weakness that causes your knee to buckle, possibly causing you to fall
3. Limping from the pain that causes you to strain other body parts like the back or hip
4. Stiffness that does not get better as the day goes on
5. Needing to take multiple medications, like NSAIDs or even narcotics, for pain

For those who eventually need knee replacement to relieve pain and allow good function, newer surgical techniques have significantly reduced surgical risks and improved outcomes.

**Take our health risk assessment to learn about your knee or hip health.**
Perfect Attendance

Our expert shares five reasons to avoid skipping physical therapy appointments.

If your doctor prescribes physical therapy for injury, illness or even the physical changes that occur by simply aging, it’s important to consistently attend your appointments, says Suann Chen, M.D., physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at Ocean University Medical Center.

“There may be days when you’re tired, it’s inconvenient, you’re busy, or progress is slow and you want to skip your appointment,” Dr. Chen says. “But consistently receiving physical therapy is the key to getting your best results.”

Here are five important reasons to make the effort—even if it’s challenging—to get to your scheduled physical therapy appointment.

1. You Can Delay Your Healing
Each appointment is key to improving your strength and agility, and skipping appointments will delay recovery. Whether you are going to physical therapy to heal injuries or to rehabilitate cardiac or neurological conditions, you cannot achieve the benefits without working with your physical therapist. Skipped appointments will ultimately postpone or negate the results and goals you want to achieve.

2. The Pain May Not Go Away on Its Own
If your condition worsens because you missed therapy, you may end up needing an extended length of stay or additional medical procedures. As a result, there may be increased utilization of insurance benefits and additional out-of-pocket costs.

3. You Miss Out on Being Supported in Your Recovery
Your physical therapist works with you and your medical team to ensure that you get the best care possible. Going to physical therapy allows you to be actively involved in setting your goals and developing an exercise program. In addition, your physical therapist can provide you with community resources to address your concerns.

At times, practical considerations can make it difficult to attend your appointments. If you have issues with transportation, preferences for the time of day you come in or other factors that are problems for you, discuss them with your physical therapist, who can work with you on scheduling or refer you to professionals who can help with other issues.

4. It Can Be Costly
For patients with insurance, missed therapy may delay recovery. Whether you are going to physical therapy to heal injuries or to rehabilitate cardiac or neurological conditions, you cannot achieve the benefits without working with your physical therapist. Skipped appointments will ultimately postpone or negate the results and goals you want to achieve.

5. You May Put Yourself at Risk for Future Injuries
Physical therapy can help you develop strength and learn proper body mechanics that are key to preventing future injuries.

"Urinary symptoms don't mean you have prostate cancer, but it's important to be aware of these signs and talk to your doctor about any of them," says Dr. Rizkala.

Symptoms may include:
1. Difficulty urinating
2. Frequent need to urinate
3. Weak or interrupted flow of urine
4. Pain in the back, hips or pelvis
5. Pain or burning sensation during urination or ejaculation
6. Sudden erectile dysfunction

Prostate cancer is a serious condition that affects millions of men around the world. But if detected early enough, it can be treated fairly easily. “Prostate cancer is one of the more treatable forms of cancer if it’s caught early. But it’s important for men to be aware of potential warning signs, so they can seek medical attention if needed,” says Emad Rizkala, M.D., urologist at Baysshore Medical Center.

First Signs of Prostate Cancer
Early stage prostate cancer is often asymptomatic, but here are six signs to be mindful of and what to know about screening.

Screening for Prostate Cancer
Men should begin discussing the pros and cons of annual prostate cancer screening with their doctor at age 50. Because prostate cancer usually affects men in their 60s, it’s important to begin discussions ahead of time.

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Screening is a combination of a blood test to measure the level of the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) and a digital rectal exam:

1. A PSN blood test measures the level of PSA in the blood. A high level of PSA indicates a potential issue with the prostate, and may be an abnormal growth or other noncancerous issues of the prostate.

2. A digital rectal exam is a procedure to assess the size, shape and general condition of the prostate. During the examination, a doctor inserts a gloved, lubricated finger into the rectum to feel the back wall of the prostate gland for any changes such as enlargement, tenderness or lumps.

"Don’t wait for symptoms to get screened. If you are 50 or older, or you are at an increased risk of prostate cancer; talk to your doctor about screening options,” says Dr. Rizkala.

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Safe in the Sun
Take these steps to lower your risk of skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. The good news is that this disease is extremely treatable if caught early. The main cause of skin cancer is too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays, which is why it’s very important to protect your skin.

“Rat exercise, you can reduce your risk of any cancer by making healthy choices like eating a diet rich in antioxidants, staying hydrated with water, avoiding drinks with added sugar and exercising regularly. “Most people think only sun exposure is a risk for skin cancer, but very few know that smoking equally increases your risk of future skin cancer, so don’t smoke,” Dr. Desai says.

Be mindful of skin changes
Signs to look for include:
- Discolored patches on the skin
- Changes to freckles or moles
- A sore that doesn’t heal by itself
- An ulcer that doesn’t heal by itself

Consider regular skin screening
“Just like you go for an annual physical exam, you should have your skin checked once a year by a doctor,” says Dr. Desai. Regular skin checks are especially important for people who have already had skin cancer. You should also self-examine your body and check for any abnormal signs. Skin cancers are usually treatable if detected early.

Here are a few ways to protect your skin from skin cancer.

Wear sunscreen year-round
Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Dr. Desai recommends applying sunscreen 30 minutes before you go out and, when outdoors, reapply sunscreen every two hours.

Avoid sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
The UV rays are the highest between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., so avoid going out during that time period.

Avoid tanning salons or deliberate sun baths
UV rays from tanning beds can cause skin cancer. “There is no such thing as a base tan or a safe tan. If your skin is changing colors, some people who use spray-on sunscreen just go through the motions without checking to see if they’re actually covering their skin properly. They may not protect themselves from the sun effectively,” says Patrick Correa, D.O., family medicine doctor at Riverview Medical Center. “However, if you pay close attention to the application process, it is possible to protect yourself from the sun’s rays with spray-on sunscreen.”

How to Apply Spray Sunscreen
To use sunscreen effectively, you need to put enough product on your skin to provide sun protection, then spread it evenly, so all areas are well-covered.

To make sure you apply spray sunscreen well:
- Pay attention to your skin where you’ve sprayed sunscreen. Notice whether your skin appears wet and shiny where you’ve just sprayed. If your skin looks dry, you haven’t sprayed enough of the product.
- Once each section of your skin is moist and glistening from wet sunscreen, rub in the sunscreen before it dries to make sure it’s spread evenly. This helps ensure you don’t miss any spots.
- If someone else sprays sunscreen on your back, ask them to notice whether your skin appears wet before they stop spraying. Have them rub the sprayed-on product around on your back, so it covers your skin evenly.
- Don’t spray sunscreen onto your face because you might accidentally get the product in your eyes or mouth, or you may inhale it. Instead, spray sunscreen into your hand so you have a small pool of liquid in your palm. Then rub your hands together and apply the liquid sunscreen to your face.
- Most importantly, remember to reapply. “Putting sunscreen on once and going to the beach for eight hours won’t give you enough sun protection,” says Dr. Correa. “You should reapply sunscreen every 1½ to 2 hours. If you spend a lot of time swimming, reapply even more frequently, because being in the water will remove a good portion of the applied sunscreen. Sweating and toweling will also remove sunscreen.” Look for Zinc-based sunscreens, which are available as sprays. Zinc is known to be a safe element. As for SPF goes, look for at least SPF 30 for any sunscreen you choose.

Spray-on sunscreen can be effective at protecting the skin, as long as you apply it properly and often enough.

“Some people who use spray-on sunscreen just go through the motions without checking to see if they’re actually covering their skin properly. They may not protect themselves from the sun effectively,” says Patrick Correa, D.O., family medicine doctor at Riverview Medical Center. “However, if you pay close attention to the application process, it is possible to protect yourself from the sun’s rays with spray-on sunscreen.”
I encourage parents of young kids to do these five things regularly to avoid constipation for their kids or even help relieve minor distress. Jennifer Jimenez, M.D., pediatric gastroenterologist at K. Hovnanian Children’s Hospital, tells parents to look for these signs of constipation:

- Passing hard, small stools
- Infrequent bowel movements (fewer than two or three a week)
- Stomach pain or cramping
- Unusual appetite changes

When to Talk to Your Pediatrician About Constipation

Usually constipation in kids is temporary and not serious. But sometimes it can lead to complications or be a sign of an underlying condition. Talk to your doctor if the constipation lasts more than two weeks, or sooner if you notice any of these symptoms:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blood in the stool
- Bleeding from the rectum
- Bloating

Tips to Avoid Constipation in Kids

“Telling you it hurts to go to the bathroom when to go the bathroom

Possible prevention strategies for constipation include:

1. Make sure your child gets plenty of fluids, preferably water, at least 7–8 cups a day (including water and milk)
2. Children ages 1–3
3. Children ages 4–8
4. Children ages 1–3
5. Children ages 4–8

Avoid giving your child too many foods that can cause constipation, such as excessive dairy products, processed meats, some grains like rice and pasta, and sugary snacks.

Make sure your child is getting enough restful sleep each night. Not sleeping enough can cause constipation because it disrupts the body’s natural rhythms and negatively affects digestion, leading to decreased motility in our bowels.

When to Call Your Doctor

Don’t hesitate to contact your doctor if you have concerns about any symptoms or changes in your body. Contact or visit your doctor right away if you observe:

- Consistent contractions: Braxton Hicks contractions usually are not consistent and get better with fluids and rest. If you experience a repetitive, persistent pattern of contractions, contact your doctor.
- Decreased fetal movement: Be aware of how much your baby normally moves throughout the day, and if you notice they have stopped moving, contact your doctor.
- Leaking fluid or vaginal bleeding: “You shouldn’t be too concerned about Braxton Hicks contractions, but it’s important to be open with your OB-GYN about what you’re feeling and when, and identify a pattern if there is one,” says Dr. Bouganim.

How to Spot the Difference

“Called Braxton Hicks contractions, false alarms or ‘practice contractions’ happen to more than 90 percent of pregnant women,” says Joseph Bouganim, M.D., obstetrician and gynecologist at Jersey Shore University Medical Center.

Braxton Hicks contractions:

- Uncomfortable, irregular contractions that don’t have any defined pattern
- Usually not more frequent than once or twice per hour
- May last from 15 seconds to a couple of minutes
- May be felt at the front or top of the uterus, and only briefly
- Usually relieved with rest and/or hydration

Labor contractions:

- More intense, painful and frequent over time
- Last longer, from 30 to 70 seconds, and have a defined start, middle and end
- Involve a pain that may stop you in your tracks
- May persist despite rest and/or hydration

Is It Time?

Here’s how you can distinguish between Braxton Hicks contractions and labor contractions late in pregnancy.

You’re pregnant, you experience some cramming, and you immediately wonder, “Is this it? Could I be having labor contractions?”

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How to Spot the Difference

“The uterus has a thick muscle layer, and like any other muscle in the body, it has the ability to contract, which you might feel as the uterus tightening,” Dr. Bouganim says. “Both Braxton Hicks and true contractions can be felt in the lower back or lower abdomen, but only true contractions lead to labor.”

“The only way to truly differentiate between labor and Braxton Hicks contractions is to check the cervix for dilation (which can be done by your provider). However, there are some key differences that can help you determine which type of contraction you are experiencing.

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In today’s busy world, headaches have become increasingly common, often triggered by stress, lack of sleep, dehydration or a combination of all three. While some headaches may be a mere annoyance, others can be debilitating or a sign of a more serious condition. Monte Pellmar, M.D., FAAN, director of Headache Medicine at the Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at Jersey Shore University Medical Center, shares ways to find relief from headaches.

**Pain reliever medications**
Over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription pain medication can help minimize headache pain. Medication should not be used more than 14 days a month since it can lead to more headaches. “If you don’t find relief from OTC pain relievers, your doctor can find a treatment that works better. There are many different medications and treatment options available, depending on the cause,” Dr. Pellmar says.

**Sitting in a dark room**
“Light can often exacerbate headache pain, so find a comfortable, dark, quiet room to rest in. Sitting for 20 to 30 minutes can be beneficial,” says Dr. Pellmar.

**Acupuncture**
Acupuncture has become increasingly popular for pain relief. This technique involves applying thin needles to naturally stimulate the body’s pain-relieving compounds.

**Breathing meditation**
Another easy, nonmedical solution that anyone can try is breathing exercises. Slow rhythmic breaths can help relieve muscle tension.

**Aromatherapy**
Aromatherapy is a natural option that’s easy to do at home. Certain scents, such as peppermint, eucalyptus and lavender, have shown to trigger positive and even healing responses in the brain.

**Hot and cold compresses**
Sometimes the intermittent use of hot and/or cold compresses on the head can help alleviate headaches. An ice pack covered by a washcloth can be applied for no more than 10 minutes to the forehead or cheeks—or alternatively, a heat pack. This may improve some types of headache pain.

**Massage**
Massages may seem like a luxuriously chosen option, but they are often a therapeutic option for pain. Some headaches can be triggered by muscle tension in the upper body or neck due to poor posture or a rigorous exercise routine. Massage therapy can reduce muscle tension and aid with chronic pain. “Ask your doctor if massage therapy is appropriate, and they can direct you to a practitioner that targets specific points of pain in the body, including in the head and neck,” says Dr. Pellmar.

**Tips to Reduce Risk for Headache**
Key tips for overall health, and headache relief specifically, are getting enough sleep each night, eating regular healthy meals and drinking enough water.

The quality of sleep achieved is just as important as the quantity. This can be improved by removing stimuliants, such as screens, sugar, alcohol, and caffeine, before bedtime, and instead trying a relaxing activity before bedtime.

If you cannot get rid of your headache pain, or if the headache is severe or associated with other symptoms or conditions, consult a doctor. This may be a sign of a more serious problem.

**Go Online**
Find a headache medicine specialist near you at HMHforU.org/HeadacheDoc.

**Vitamins and Supplements for Migraine Relief**
Migraine headaches can be debilitating, but some vitamins and supplements may bring you the relief you need.

Migraines are severe headaches often accompanied by throbbing pain or a pulsing sensation, typically on one side of the head. The good news is, there are steps you can take to lessen the pain associated with migraine attacks, as well as the frequency of such episodes. Studies have shown that some vitamins and supplements can alleviate some of these symptoms, but the long-term effects of this therapy are not known.

**What vitamins and supplements can help?**

- **Vitamin B2 (riboflavin):** Some studies have shown that taking Vitamin B2 could be helpful in the treatment and prevention of migraines.

- **Vitamin D:** Having a Vitamin D deficiency may contribute to increased migraine attacks.

- **Magnesium:** Especially effective during premenstrual migraine attacks, magnesium is vital to maintaining nerve function, blood pressure and controlling migraines.

- **CoQ10:** May reduce the frequency of migraines.

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Some of these supplements are not suitable for pregnant women, for those breastfeeding, those with underlying conditions or those who are taking other medications. Always consult your doctor before adding new supplements to your diet.

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**Go Online**
Find a headache medicine specialist near you at HMHforU.org/HeadacheDoc.
To Remove or Not to Remove?

Not all tumors are cancerous. Here’s what you should know about benign tumors and how they may be treated.

Any tumor discovery is scary. “Often patients are afraid of a cancer diagnosis when they hear the word ‘tumor,’” says Nitesh V. Patel, M.D., co-director of the Neurosurgical Oncology Program at the Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at Jersey Shore University Medical Center. “But not all tumors are cancerous.”

Tumors can be categorized as benign or malignant (cancerous) and can be found in nearly any part of the body. Here’s what you should know about benign tumors and how they may be treated.

**What’s the Difference Between a Benign Tumor and a Cancerous One?**

**A benign tumor:**
- Grows in one part of the body
- Has a distinct border and has not invaded or destroyed nearby tissue
- Usually does not grow as fast as a malignant tumor
- Typically does not have significant genetic mutations or abnormalities

**On the other hand, cancerous tumors:**
- Are more likely to infiltrate surrounding tissue and even potentially break off and spread to other sites in the body
- Have cell nucleus abnormalities and genetic mutations

“The usual mantra is that we can pin down the diagnosis of a tumor based on a patient’s history and imaging features,” says Dr. Patel. However, a true diagnosis most often requires a biopsy of a tumor sample to be examined by our expert neuropathologists.”

**Does a Benign Tumor Need to Be Removed?**

That depends, Dr. Patel says. If the benign tumor is small, not growing and not causing any harm to the patient, it can be left alone. Even benign tumors in or around the brain only need to be removed if they are causing, or are likely to cause, neurological problems.

However, if the tumor shows signs of growth, a doctor may decide it is best to remove it as long as the patient can tolerate surgery. For example, surgery may be recommended for a 60-year-old patient whose tumor is showing some small growth because he or she is likely to tolerate the surgery better now than when they are older. It may also be removed if it is interfering with the patient’s ability to function or for aesthetic reasons.

On the other hand, if a patient has a tumor that is growing very slowly, but is 85 years old with other health complications, they might be advised that the risks of surgery are more significant than leaving the tumor in place.

**What Happens When a Tumor Is Discerned?**

Not all lumps and bumps in or on a body are tumors. Some other causes are cysts, infections or abscesses. If you are concerned about a growth on your body, make an appointment with your doctor.

If a cancerous tumor is found, your doctor will discuss treatment options. By catching it early, the chances of successful treatment are increased. If the tumor is benignt, Dr. Patel says it is common to simply observe it at six- or 12-month intervals to ensure it has not grown or changed.

**Eliano Mesquita returned to his wife, three daughters and construction career after surgery, chemotherapy and radiation to treat an aggressive, fast-growing brain tumor.**

When 42-year-old construction worker Eliano Mesquita was leaving a job site in October 2022, he noticed he was starting to develop a headache. By the time he got on a nearby highway, he was in so much pain that he had to pull over.

“It called my name, told her I wasn’t feeling well, skipped my second job that day and drove straight home,” says Eliano. “When my wife saw how much pain I was in, she took me to the emergency room.”

Heading to Jersey Shore University Medical Center proved to be a life-saving decision for Eliano, who was diagnosed with a right frontal brain tumor and underwent brain surgery just three days later.

**Staying Positive After a Serious Diagnosis**

When he arrived at the hospital, Eliano told his doctors that he was previously diagnosed with a low-grade glioma after sustaining a head injury during an indoor soccer game. Images taken at that time showed a low-grade glioma (LGG), a slow-growing malignant tumor. Eliano had several imaging scans to monitor the tumor over the years.

Eliano’s doctors immediately ordered a CT scan and an MRI, which revealed that the tumor had changed to a high-grade glioma, an aggressive, fast-growing tumor that required surgical treatment.

**Back on the Job**

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In the Spotlight on U

Nine things you need to know about

We can't simply take a pill and watch the pounds quickly "fall off," but newer prescription medications can help people who are obese. Karl Strom, M.D., bariatric surgeon at Southern Ocean Medical Center and Bayshore Medical Center, shares nine things you need to know about weight-loss medication.

1. Weight-loss Medications Are Not Suitable for Everyone

Weight-loss medications are best suited for people:
- With a body mass index (BMI) over 27
- Who can't lose weight with diet and exercise, special programs or structured meetings
- Who can lose weight with diet and exercise, but have a family history of obesity

2. Most Medications Work by Making You Feel Fuller

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved six medications for long-term use to treat obesity. Most of these work by making you feel less hungry or fuller. "They mimic the gastrointestinal hormone your body produces after eating a full meal," Dr. Strom says. "They reduce hunger, and change your insulin response, which causes you to stop eating."

3. Some Weight-loss Medications Are Diabetes Medications

One type of FDA-approved medication, an injectable drug called semaglutide, first received approval in 2017 for treatment of type 2 diabetes. In 2021, the FDA approved a different type of semaglutide to treat over-weight patients with other health issues. "These two medications are the same but given in different doses," says Dr. Strom.

4. Weight-loss Medication Isn't a "Quick Fix"

When prescribed, they work in conjunction with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity.

5. Weight-loss Drugs Can Be Expensive

Many insurance companies don't cover them and claim their use is "cosmetic" and not medically necessary, Dr. Strom says. One month's supply may cost approximately $8,000.

6. Weight-loss Medication May Be an Alternative to Surgery

Sometimes, weight-loss surgery is the best obesity treatment for patients with high BMIs and certain comorbidities. But in some cases, weight-loss medication, when combined with diet and exercise, can be an alternative to surgery.

7. Medication May Be Needed for the Long Term

Obesity is a chronic disease, and some people may need to stay on medication to prevent gaining weight back.

8. Certain People Should Not Take Weight-loss Medication

Weight-loss medication should not be prescribed to people who have had, or have a family history of, medullary thyroid cancer. Anyone with a rare condition called multiple endocrine neoplasia type 2, which affects the body's hormone-producing glands, also is not a candidate.

9. Be Aware of Potential Side Effects

The FDA warns patients to be aware of more common side effects:
- Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea or vomiting, diarrhea and constipation
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Dizziness

Dr. Strom hopes anyone considering weight-loss medications will consult a doctor for diagnosis and appropriate treatment, and not go it alone. "For many patients, we can prescribe weight-loss medication instead of surgery," he says. "In the future, we expect even more advances and development of these drugs, including effective combination medications that might need to be injected less frequently."

We can't simply take a pill and watch the pounds quickly "fall off," but newer prescription medications can help people who are obese. Karl Strom, M.D., bariatric surgeon at Southern Ocean Medical Center and Bayshore Medical Center, shares nine things you need to know about weight-loss medication.

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Gut health-themed TikTok posts abound. But what is good advice, and what is a harmful myth?

Kunal Gupta, M.D., gastroenterologist at Bayshore Medical Center, puts five common gut health myths to rest.

1. Grains Are Bad for the Gut
   - Why You Should Skip: Some people have a wheat intolerance or celiac disease. But for people without an intolerance or allergy, grains—particularly whole grains—are not harmful to your gut. "Whole grains are good for the gut because fiber helps with beneficial bacteria growth," says Dr. Gupta.

2. Avoid Water While Eating
   - Why You Should Skip: According to some TikTok videos, you should avoid drinking water while or after eating because it will dilute your stomach acid and slow down digestion. "There’s no scientific evidence that water interferes with digestion in any way," says Dr. Gupta. "Water is necessary for good health and survival. It helps break down foods and absorb nutrients, and it’s important to keep your stools soft and prevent constipation."

3. Eat Fruit Only on an Empty Stomach
   - Why You Should Skip: This is an unsubstantiated belief. While for people with certain conditions, eating fruit on an empty stomach may help avoid a reaction, this isn’t true for everyone. "Fruit should be eaten with other foods and will rot in your stomach," says Dr. Gupta.

4. Colon Cleanses Promote Wellness
   - Why You Should Skip: There is no supported scientific evidence that colon cleansing—through colonics, coffee enemas or any other method—promotes or improves general health. "Colon cleanses could lead to harmful effects such as dehydration or electrolyte imbalances," says Dr. Gupta.

5. Parasites Are Responsible for Most Gut Issues
   - Why You Should Skip: While parasitic infections are widespread on a global scale, they aren’t common in places with good sanitation and close monitoring of water and food supplies. If you live in the U.S. and are having gut issues, this isn’t the most likely candidate. "But even if you do have a parasite, you should seek treatment with a doctor because home cleanses have no merit," says Dr. Gupta.

Mouth Taping
- The Hack: Taping the mouth closed while you sleep to improve snoring and decrease bad breath.
- Why You Should Skip: While there are numerous good sanitation and sleep techniques that do not use this method to treat sleep disorders or other ailments. "Mouth taping could lead to obstructed breathing, sleep disruption or skin irritation," says family medicine physician Timothy Wuu, M.D. "It could also lead to other problems such as a rash in your nose or an infection if a tiny piece were to get lodged in your nose," says Dr. Wuu.

Vabbing
- The Hack: Using vaginal fluids as perfume so your body’s natural pheromones can more easily attract possible partners.
- Why You Should Skip: While there are numerous benefits to nose breathing, doctors do not use this method to treat sleep disorders or other ailments. "Mouth taping could lead to obstructed breathing, sleep disruption or skin irritation," says family medicine physician Timothy Wuu, M.D. "It could also lead to other problems such as a rash in your nose or an infection if a tiny piece were to get lodged in your nose," says Dr. Wuu.

Garlic up Your Nose
- The Hack: Putting a clove of raw garlic up your nose to clear up your congestion.
- Why You Should Skip: It can make the issue worse. The smell of garlic is an irritant to your nose, so it will cause your nose to produce more mucus than you already had. "It could also lead to other problems such as a rash in your nose or an infection if a tiny piece were to get lodged in your nose," says Dr. Wuu.

Mucus Fishing
- The Hack: Big out mucus from your eyes with your finger or cotton swabs.
- Why You Should Skip: Removing the mucus in your eyes causes mucus to return in higher amounts. "Mucus is meant to protect the eye, and constant removal can expose your eyes to infections and trauma due to the fishing process with your finger or other instrument," says Dr. Wuu.

Dry Scooping Before a Workout
- The Hack: Contains a scoop of dry pre-workout protein powder without liquid before a workout to allow your body to absorb the powder faster and give you a better workout.
- Why You Should Skip: This is extremely dangerous. It can lead to breathing problems and even heart attacks. "These powders are designed to be consumed at a slower rate through liquid," Dr. Wuu says. "Attempting to accelerate this process can have dire effects."

Lemon Coffee for Weight Loss
- The Hack: Add lemon to your coffee to burn fat.
- Why You Should Skip: This health trend isn’t necessarily dangerous, but it tastes terrible and doesn’t work. There is no evidence that lemon in your coffee will burn fat.

Sunscreen Contouring
- The Hack: Strategically place sunscreen on the face to create contouring tan lines. This allows you to skip your contouring makeup routine.
- Why You Should Skip: This poses a risk to your skin. "Any tan means your skin has been damaged," says Dr. Wuu. "In addition, the contouring effect isn’t really achieved with this technique because it’s impossible to control how the sun will hit your face."

Boiling Chicken in Cold Medication
- The Hack: Cooking chicken in a cold medication like NyQuil.
- Why You Should Skip: Boiling a medication can make it much more concentrated and change its properties in other ways. Even if you don’t eat the chicken, inhaling the medication’s vapors while cooking could cause high levels of the drugs to enter your body which can damage your lungs.

Your expert guide to healthy living.

Subscribe to the Hackensack Meridian Health U e-newsletter for more tips on the latest health trends.
Children in New Jersey undergoing cancer therapy or facing other fertility-threatening conditions or treatments now have more promising options for the future.

Lifesaving treatments are helping children fight serious diseases and disorders like never before. Thanks to these treatments, survival rates are improving, and many children are able to live longer and achieve a high quality of life.

Still, certain treatments can lead to side effects years later, called late effects, including decreased or permanently impaired fertility in both boys and girls. Chemotherapy and radiation therapy can harm the reproductive organs and damage the tissue responsible for producing eggs or sperm, making it harder or impossible for these children to conceive later in life.

“In years past, doctors were solely focused on helping patients beat cancer and didn’t consider the late effects until after the fact,” says pediatric hematologist-oncologist Burton Eliot Appel, M.D., associate director of the Children’s Cancer Institute at Joseph M. Sanzari Children’s Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center. “But as survival rates for cancer and other diseases have improved, we can now emphasize reducing long-term risks, including infertility.”

Today, fertility preservation techniques, such as egg or sperm freezing or even preserving ovarian or testicular tissue, may be an option for some pediatric patients. The fertility preservation program at Hackensack Meridian Children’s Health—the only program of its kind in New Jersey—offers plenty of heartfelt support and education along with promising options to greatly enhance these patients’ quality of life.

Making Families Feel Comfortable

When children need treatments that may affect their future fertility, it’s important for parents to talk to their care team about this risk—and bring their children into the conversation when they are old enough to understand.

Presenting such a complex subject requires sensitivity, intuition and depth of experience when introducing the information either alone with the child or with parent and child, says advanced practice nurse Rachel Fleaney, APN, who works in the Children’s Hospital’s fertility preservation program.

“We make it clear that this is not the easiest conversation, discussing what happens and things that are ‘weird’ or that the child may not have discussed with an adult yet,” she says. “We explain that we’re looking to their future, and that just like a family puts money aside for the future, we’re doing something similar by planning for the future. I want parents and children to have confidence that no question is silly, and it’s important that they feel comfortable.”

The Children’s Hospital recently added the role of a fertility preservation nurse navigator to better enhance communication with families. “The addition of this position has had a major impact,” Dr. Appel says. “It means an expert can sit down with patients and families and do the detailed work that’s involved—sometimes in a very short period of time that’s not weeks or months to think about fertility preservation.”

Nurse navigator Laurie Donnelly, RN, becomes a family’s ongoing resource for information and coordination, including helping with financial assistance paperwork, as this service is often not covered by insurance. “My role is helpful when the patient and family must absorb so much confusing and complicated information so quickly while understandably experiencing stress,” Laurie says.

Instilling Optimism

Dr. Appel says the fertility preservation program can provide optimism and clarity for families who are in a challenging situation. “We want families to know that we hope and expect their child to survive this, and we want them to have as many opportunities as their peers,” he says.

But the team also reinforces to parents and children that the decision is theirs. “We explain that we want to have the discussion about fertility preservation and what it entails, but the decision is the family’s own,” Dr. Appel says.

What Is Involved in Fertility Preservation?

Dr. Appel, who directs the fertility preservation program at the Children’s Hospital, points out that not all chemotherapy or radiation treatment will lead to infertility. The drugs used and the total dosage are important factors in determining infertility risk.

Not all infertility loss is permanent, either. Some children and teenagers lose their fertility for a short time because of treatment, and sometimes treatment can cause complete and irreversible infertility.

At the Children’s Hospital, the program includes:

- Sperm banking for male patients
- Testicular tissue cryopreservation (freezing) for male patients of all ages, done under the auspices of a clinical trial
- Ovarian tissue cryopreservation (freezing of ovarian tissue) for female patients
- Egg freezing for some post-pubertal female patients

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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 800-560-9990.

### Special Events

**Prevention, Screening and Surveillance of Colon and Rectal Cancer**
Join Steven C. Tizio, M.D., and learn risk factors, prevention and treatment options for colon cancer and how early detection can save your life. Free at-home colorectal screening kits are available during registration.

- **Sept. 18, 11 a.m.–noon**
- **Sept. 18, 6–7 p.m., virtual event**

**Heart Health**

**Hypertension and Cholesterol! What You Need to Know**
Learn how to manage your blood pressure and control your cholesterol, the difference between good and bad cholesterol, treatment options and risk factors for heart disease and stroke.

- **July 25, 2–3 p.m., Upper Shores Lavallette Library, 112 Jersey City Ave., Lavallette**

**Diabetes**

**Take Control of Your Health: Diabetes**
This six-week evidence-based program developed by Stanford University will show you ways to manage diabetes and live your best life.

- **Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 and Oct. 6, 10 a.m.–noon, Stafford Library, 129 N. Main St., Manahawkin**
- **Diabetes and You-Aug. 15, 2–3 p.m., Upper Shores Lavallette Library, 112 Jersey City Ave., Lavallette**

**Brain Health**

**Memory Loss vs. Alzheimer’s Disease**
Mina M. Fam, M.D., will review the basics of prostate cancer risk groups, treatment options and diagnosis.

- **Sept. 28, 10–11 a.m., Stafford Library, 129 N. Main St., Manahawkin**

**Cancer Care**

**An Overview of Prostate Cancer**
Mina M. Fam, M.D., will review the basics of prostate cancer risk groups, treatment options and diagnosis.

- **Sept. 13, 2–3 p.m., virtual event**
- **Fresh Start Smoking Cessation Aug. 7, 11, 14 & 16; Sept. 11, 15, 18 & 22; Oct. 16, 20, 23 & 27, 10–11 a.m., Riverview, Rechitz Center Conference Center**
- **Fresh Start Smoking Cessation Sept. 26 & 28, Oct. 3 & 5, 6–7 p.m., Ocean University Medical Center, East Wing Conf. Center**
- **Thriving and Surviving Cancer Survivor Workshop Sept. 6, 12, 20 & 27 and Oct. 4 & 11, noon–2 p.m., virtual event**
- **Stop Smoking With Hypnosis Sept. 13, 7–8 p.m., virtual event**
- **Obesity and Cancer: Speaker: Dena G. Anumugam, M.D., Sept. 29, noon–1 p.m., virtual event**
- **Game Changers: Advances in Early Detection and Diagnosis of Breast Cancer Speaker: Hawai’i Breast Oncology, M.D., Oct. 30, noon–1 p.m., virtual event**

**Behavioral Health**

**September Is National Recovery Month**
Every Person. Every Family. Every Community. This webinar will discuss the stigma and improve how one and community can celebrate recovery from addiction.

- **Sept. 12, 6–7 p.m., virtual event**
- **The Holidays Are Coming! How Do I Cope? Oct. 25, 7–8 p.m., virtual event**

**General Wellness**

**The Importance of Dental Hygiene**
Join residents from the dental clinic at Jersey Shore and learn why keeping your oral hygiene is important for the rest of your health.

- **Sept. 28, noon–1 p.m., Senior Citizens Activities Network (SCAN), Monmouth Mall (baseball tent next to Mall Management), 180 Route 35 South, Eatontown**

**Pediatrics**

**Parent/Guardian Talks**
Back-to-School Anxiety & Reminders For parents of children from preschool to college, join our pediatric experts Ulrick Vieux, M.D., and Alyssa Rios, M.D., as they discuss how to prepare for back-to-school, including responding to anxiety.

- **Aug. 24, 7–8 p.m., virtual event**

**Women’s Health**

**Perimenopause and Menopause Speaker: Lawrence VanHorn, M.D., Sept. 27, 7–8 p.m., virtual event**

**Eating Healthy Around the Holidays**
Speaker: Lisa M. Sussman, PsyD, Nov. 16, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

**Weight Loss with Hypnosis Oct. 11, 7–8 p.m., virtual event**

**Weight-loss Surgery**
To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. To find a seminar near you, visit HMHforU.org/WeightLoss.

**Support Groups**
Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at HMHforU.org/SupportGroups.

**Neuroscience**

**Memory Loss vs. Alzheimer’s Disease**
Learn the difference between normal and abnormal memory loss vs. Alzheimer’s disease and tips to help keep your mind sharp.

- **June 23, 2–3 p.m., Upper Shores Lavallette Library, 112 Jersey City Ave., Lavallette**
- **Are You Getting a Good Night’s Sleep? Sept. 28, 10–11 a.m., Stafford Library, 129 N. Main St., Manahawkin**

**Schedules**

**Here are just a few of the events & classes this August through November 2023**

- **Bayshore Medical Center**
  - 727 North Beers St., Holmdel

- **Carrier Clinic and Blake Recovery Center**
  - 262 County Rd. 601 Belle Mead

- **Jersey Shore University Medical Center and K. Hovnanian Children’s Hospital**
  - 1945 Route 33 Neptune

- **JFK University Medical Center**
  - 65 James St. Edison

- **Ocean University Medical Center**
  - 425 Jack Martin Blvd., Brick

- **Old Bridge Medical Center**
  - 1 Hospital Plaza Old Bridge

- **Raritan Bay Medical Center**
  - 120 New Brunswick Ave. Perth Amboy

- **Riverview Medical Center**
  - 1 Riverview Plaza Red Bank

- **Southern Ocean Medical Center**
  - 1140 Route 72 West Manahawkin

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Twin brothers Lambros and Dimitrios Lambrou made a generous donation to Ocean University Medical Center after their father received expert cardiac care.

For many, like Lambros R. Lambrou, a chiropractor based in Monmouth County, timing proves to be everything. In June 2022, Lambros spent time with Jereme Kokes, a good friend and Ocean University Medical Center Foundation trustee, to tour their local hospital and learn about all of its offerings. During their time together, they also discussed plans for the new Dr. Robert H. and Mary Ellen Harris Heart & Vascular Center, which was nearing completion. That discussion would soon prove fateful.

Just four days later, Lambros called his mother to wish her a happy birthday. Unable to reach her, he called his father. His father answered and shared, in a sick, slow-tempered voice, that he was getting into an ambulance after suffering chest pain. He knew just where to direct his father: Ocean’s emergency department. Lambros, his mother and his identical twin brother and business partner, Dimitrios Lambrou, all rushed to the hospital, where they were notified that their father and husband was having a heart attack. In the cardiac catheterization lab, within 30 minutes of their arrival at Ocean, Arthur Okere, M.D., restored blood flow to the heart muscle through an angioplasty, inserting a stent to keep the arteries surrounding the heart open.

“The first stent did not take, but Dr. Okere was persistent,” says Lambros. “To go from door to balloon in that short of a time is unprecedented. We were shocked. Dr. Okere and his team saved our father’s life in that short of a time.”

Lambros shared with Dimitrios that he had toured the hospital just four days before. Together, grateful for the incredible care their father received, the brothers donated $100,000 to the foundation. “My parents immigrated to the United States from Greece, and we grew up in a loving, hard working, value-centered home. Not only are we so thankful for the care our father received, but this is also a testament to other families like ours. Everyone can make a huge difference through subtle acts of philanthropy in their local communities,” Lambros says.

The generous gift also acknowledges all of the administrators and office team members who handled their father’s follow-up calls. “From scheduling appointments to helping our father get the prescriptions he needed, every single team member at Ocean is a hero and deserves to be recognized,” says Lambros, who recently joined the foundation’s board of trustees.

Lambros and Dimitrios’ father recently celebrated his 78th birthday. Although their father’s summer was challenging—with recuperation being the priority and the inability to make his annual trip to Greece with his wife—he is doing much better today.

“We sincerely appreciate the generosity that Lambros and Dimitrios have shown,” says Matthew Lang, executive director of the foundation. “These gifts help ensure that the hospital is best prepared to care for the community and are a wonderful tribute to the team.”

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

Even just one hour spent once a year at an annual wellness check can yield benefits for years to come. Here are the top five reasons you should schedule an annual wellness check:

- **Learn healthy behaviors**

As we get older, our health needs change. During an annual wellness check, your doctor can make suggestions for making healthy improvements to your lifestyle.

- **Identify disease risk factors**

Your doctor can help spot any potential disease risk factors and recommend screening or lifestyle changes to reduce that risk.

- **Keep health care costs low**

It’s much less expensive to prevent an illness or chronic condition compared to treating one, so annual well checks can help keep health care costs down.

- **Diagnose diseases in their earliest stages**

Often, diseases are most treatable when they are discovered in their earliest stages. Preventive care can help spot those early on.

- **Get preventive care**

You can use your annual wellness check to get caught up on any needed vaccines as well as understand what screenings you may need based on your age or other factors.

Schedule an annual wellness check with a doctor near you.

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:**

- Bayshore Medical Center
- Riverview Medical Center
- Jersey Shore University Medical Center
- K. Hovnanian Children’s Hospital
- Ocean University Medical Center
- Johnson Rehabilitation Institute
- Southern Ocean Medical Center

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

Hackensack Meridian Children’s Health Nationally Ranked

For the third year in a row, Joseph M. Sanzari Children’s Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center and K. Hovnanian Children’s Hospital at Jersey Shore University Medical Center are ranked #1 in New Jersey for Best Children’s Hospitals by U.S. News & World Report. They are ranked in four pediatric specialties, more than any children’s hospital network has ever achieved in New Jersey.

Learn more at HMHforU.org/BestChildrens.