Put Your Health First in 2022

HACKENSACK MERIDIAN HEALTH

HOW TO AVOID HEART DISEASE

SHOULD YOU DRINK APPLE CIDER VINEGAR?

WHEN TO GET SCREENED FOR BREAST CANCER

Before you fast...

PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR ARTHRITIS

PARA LEER ESTA REVISTA EN ESPAÑOL, VISITE HMHforU.org/Spanish3.
“We are grateful for our valued partnership with the Count Basie Center for the Arts,” says Robert C. Garrett, CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health. “Research suggests that experiencing music and the arts can reduce stress, relieve pain, create energy and boost moods.”

Innovation transforming medical research into treatments

New Wave

Doctors at Hackensack University Medical Center and Jersey Shore University Medical Center have a new tool in their arsenal to prevent heart disease.

Better U quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

5 Tips for a Great Workout

Plus: • How gut health is linked to mental health • What to know about intermittent fasting • Recipe for stormy weather chowder • What’s trending?

Who Should Get Screened for Breast Cancer?

Find the latest screening guidelines. Plus: Learn about surgery to reduce the risk of breast cancer.

Do Broken Bones Heal Stronger?

This often-repeated notion about broken bones is just not true. Plus: Thanks to a new shoulder surgery method, Eugene Fioravanti lives pain-free.

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Can Physical Therapy Help Your Arthritis?

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Doctor Spotlight

Getting to Know Michelle Lomotan, M.D.

Internal medicine doctor at JFK University Medical Center.

Schedule event and class listings

Your Calendar for Winter 2022

Live and virtual events and classes you won’t want to miss.

Foundation meaningful gifts from U

Funding Education

Barry and Carol Anne Cawley Weshnak’s generous gift will fund a nursing position dedicated to substance use disorder services for patients and families.

By the Numbers a snapshot view of an important health issue

New Year, New U

Set goals to achieve a healthier, happier life in 2022.

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

Hackensack Meridian Health is a 2021 APEX Award winner and a 2021 Content Marketing Awards finalist.
What’s Your Resolution?

This time of year, many of us make promises to ourselves to live healthier lifestyles in the coming months, whether through exercise or diet. There is no denying the tremendous impact of a healthy diet and regular exercise on our overall health. If you need a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas. Or, a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas. Or, a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas. Or, a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas. Or, a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas. Or, a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas. Or, a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas. Or, a little inspiration for setting some unique goals for the new year, turn to the back of this magazine for our ideas.
How Gut Health Is Linked to Mental Health

How to Keep Your GI Tract in Top Shape

Is Your GI Tract Unhealthy?

Some signs that your GI tract is unhealthy are:
- Rectal bleeding
- Chronic abdominal pain
- Weight fluctuation
- Persistent fatigue
- Food intolerance

5 Things to Know About Intermittent Fasting

Is intermittent fasting a healthy, effective and natural way to shed some pounds?

“Intermittent fasting is a pattern of eating where you withheld food for a certain amount of time, so you allow your body to use energy more efficiently,” says Nippen Dontineni, M.D., internal medicine specialist at JFK University Medical Center. “Research is still being conducted on how effective fasting is for weight loss, but the idea is that instead of using energy from intake, such as carbs, you can potentially break down fats.”

Here are five things you should know about intermittent fasting:

1. You can drink during periods of fasting, as long as it’s a zero-calorie beverage and nothing is added, such as creamers or sweeteners. “A lot of people forget to drink water during the day and can become dehydrated,” Dr. Dontineni says.

2. Before fasting, eat foods high in fiber, such as nuts, beans, fruits and vegetables, as well as foods high in protein, such as meats, fish and tofu.

3. Certain people should avoid fasting, including those who are over the age of 65, those under the age of 18, people with diabetes, women who are pregnant or lactating, anyone with a body mass index below 19, cancer patients, anyone with an immunodeficiency and anyone with a history of an eating disorder.

4. There are potential side effects of fasting. “Some studies have shown that people tend to overeat and binge,” Dr. Dontineni says. “You can’t fast for two days and then eat 3,000 calories a day on the other five days. You have to eat healthy foods and meals within your caloric limit.”

5. Intermittent fasting may not be sustainable in the long run. “There is a higher drop-out rate among intermittent fasting versus those on a calorie-restrictive diet, which suggests that fasting may not be a sustainable approach,” Dr. Dontineni says. “It’s a quick way to lose weight, but you can’t really do this for more than a few weeks.” If hunger is a concern, don’t be afraid to break the fast. “Listen to your body,” Dr. Dontineni says. “If you find yourself getting light-headed, shaky or low-energy from not eating enough, grab some healthy food.”

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 245 calories, 12g protein, 42g carbohydrate, 5g fiber, 5g fat (1g sat, 4g monolpoly), 252mg sodium
**WHAT’S TRENDING? health topics we’re all talking about**

**Does IV hydration cure hangovers?**

**Jasmine Baez, M.D., weighs in:**
Getting IV fluids to make your headache, fatigue and nausea disappear may sound more appealing than lying in bed until the unpleasant symptoms pass, but there’s no medical evidence to this type of treatment. There’s no cure for a hangover, but there are remedies that offer relief:

1. Drinking lots of water and other fluids to replace electrolytes
2. Getting extra rest if possible
3. Using over-the-counter anti-nausea medication as needed
4. Avoiding acetaminophen because it’s broken down by your liver, which is focused on clearing the alcohol from your system
5. If you are experiencing long-lasting symptoms of dehydration such as vomiting, diarrhea, headache, lethargy, muscle cramps and increased thirst, seek treatment from a medical professional rather than an “IV lounge” or “drip bar.”

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**How can I stay regular?**

**Chintan Modi, M.D., weighs in:**
Normal bowel movement frequency depends on the person, their diet and their upbringing. For some people, being “regular” means having a bowel movement once a week; for others, it’s twice a day. Color and consistency are also unique to the individual. What you should be concerned about isn’t so much regularity, but a dramatic change in what has been normal for you. When most people ask about staying regular, they really want to know how to avoid constipation.

How to avoid constipation:

1. Exercise
2. Probiotics
3. Consuming soluble fiber found in oats, peas, beans, apples, citrus fruits, carrots, and barley
4. Taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs like ibuprofen for a headache (do not use these if you are experiencing severe gastrointestinal symptoms)
5. Avoiding acetaminophen because it’s broken down by your liver, which is focused on clearing the alcohol from your system

If you are experiencing long-lasting symptoms of dehydration such as vomiting, diarrhea, headache, lethargy, muscle cramps and increased thirst, seek treatment from a medical professional rather than an “IV lounge” or “drip bar.”

**Should I be concerned about secondhand vaping?**

**Kishore Ratkalkar, M.D., weighs in:**
Vaping and secondhand vaping are just as dangerous as smoking and secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoking is the process whereby a bystander inhales both the smoke that comes from burning either a cigarette or a pipe and the smoke that is exhaled by the smoker into the air. Vaping is a little different given that it doesn’t burn and there is no smoke, but the process of inhaling secondhand fumes is essentially the same. Allowing vapor to enter your body—even as a bystander—puts you at risk for health concerns similar to those associated with secondhand smoking.

Vape juices can contain the following ingredients:
- Nicotine
- Ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs
- Flavor additives such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to serious lung disease
- Heavy metals, such as nickel, tin and lead
- Formaldehyde (embalming fluids)
- Benzene (found in car exhausts)

**Should I drink apple cider vinegar?**

**Elliot Rudnitzky, M.D., weighs in:**
Apple cider vinegar hasn’t been shown to aid with weight loss, despite what you may have read on social media, and it may be harmful if you ingest it the wrong way or at the wrong time of day. You may know someone who swears that apple cider vinegar has helped them curb their appetite or lose weight, but that information is not research-proven. Because apple cider vinegar is highly acidic, some people experience acid reflux after consuming it. People who are prone to heartburn, acid reflux or gastroesophageal reflux disease should not consume anything acidic 30–60 minutes before bedtime to minimize the chances of experiencing burning and discomfort.

Read more at HMHforU.org/AppleVinegar.
Who Should Get Screened?

Breast cancer screening with a mammogram is one of the most effective ways to find breast cancer in a person before they experience any symptoms. “Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in women in America,” says Harriet Borofsky, M.D., breast imaging specialist and medical director of the women’s centers at Bayshore Medical Center and Riverview Medical Center. “An early breast cancer diagnosis is your best hope for a cure. Plus, treatment options can be less aggressive and better tolerated when cancer is detected early, so having regular mammograms is crucial.”

While there is no concrete way to prevent breast cancer, annual mammograms have reduced the mortality rate by 40 percent. Routine breast cancer screening is important for all women because most women who get breast cancer have no family history of breast cancer or significant risk factors.

In addition to these general guidelines, women of color have the highest breast cancer mortality rate and are more likely to receive an advanced-stage diagnosis. Dr. Borofsky says, “All women should have a risk assessment before age 30, as those at higher risk can be identified—especially women of color and of Ashkenazi Jewish descent.”

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<th>Who</th>
<th>When to Start</th>
<th>How Often to Repeat</th>
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<tr>
<td>Women at average risk of breast cancer</td>
<td>Age 40</td>
<td>Annual mammogram as long as you are in good health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women at higher risk of breast cancer because of a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation</td>
<td>Age 25</td>
<td>Annual MRI, ages 25–30; annual mammogram alternating with MRI at six-month intervals, age 30 and above</td>
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<td>Women with history of chest radiation therapy</td>
<td>8 years after the radiation, but not before age 25</td>
<td>Annual MRI, ages 25–30; annual mammogram alternating with MRI at six-month intervals, age 30 and above</td>
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<td>Women at higher risk of breast cancer because of a strong family history</td>
<td>10 years prior to the first-degree relative’s diagnosis</td>
<td>Annual mammogram (supplemental screening with ultrasound or MRI might be indicated; risk assessment should be performed)</td>
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What to Know About Surgery to Reduce Risk

One in eight American women will develop invasive breast cancer during her lifetime. Certain factors can make someone at higher risk of developing breast cancer—notably, carrying a BRCA gene mutation in one’s DNA.

Is Genetic Testing Right for You?

Genetic testing is encouraged for anyone who is at an increased risk of having inherited a gene mutation. You are more likely to have a BRCA gene mutation and should seek out genetic counseling and testing if you:

- Have a relative with breast cancer who is at a young age when the cancer was diagnosed. (Mom or sister), but no sooner than 30 and no later than 40
- Have a personal history of breast cancer and Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry
- Have or had breast cancer that was diagnosed before age 45
- Have a personal history of two or more types of cancer
- Have one or more family members with breast cancer
- Have a male relative with breast cancer
- Have triple-negative breast cancer diagnosed before age 60

“Genetic counseling is often recommended for those seeking genetic testing to help people better understand what their results mean in regard to their health,” explains Renee Armour, M.D., breast surgeon at JFK University Medical Center. “A positive test result means you carry the BRCA gene mutation, while a negative result means that no mutation was found.”

When to Consider Surgery

If you test positive for a BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 gene mutation, you may want to consider the ways you can reduce the risk of developing cancer in the future. According to the National Cancer Institute, a prophylactic (preventive) mastectomy in women who carry a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation can reduce the risk of developing breast cancer by 90–95 percent.

During a prophylactic mastectomy, surgeons remove one or both breasts before any breast cancer diagnoses reduce the risk of breast cancer developing in the future. “The BRCA gene mutations are rare, affecting only 0.2 percent of the U.S. population, but it is always best to identify and reduce any potential risk of cancer as early as possible,” says Dr. Armour. “Undergoing a prophylactic mastectomy is a tremendous thing to consider, but it could potentially save a life.”

If you are at high risk of breast cancer, talk with your medical team about all of your options, and lean on the support and guidance of a breast surgeon, medical social worker and even mental health professionals to help you find the right path for you. “The decision to have any surgery to reduce the risk of breast cancer is a major one,” says Dr. Armour.
Once the bone reconnects, the callus breaks down and the bone retains its original shape.

At the same time, the fracture site is being fortified with calcium deposits and bone becomes weaker. (If you’ve ever seen someone’s arms side by side after one arm was removed from a cast, you know the unused arm temporarily atrophies and another bone.

After you break a bone, your body begins the healing process:

- A blood clot forms at the site, which protects the injured spot.
- At first, a blood clot forms at the site, which protects the injured spot.
- Hard calcium creates a hard calcium deposit that targets the bone.
- Calcium-fortified region due to lack of use.
- New cells form at the fracture site, connecting the broken pieces together again.
- The bone heals fully, it should be just as strong as the rest of your bones, so you won’t be more or less likely to break it than another bone.

What Happens When Your Bone Breaks

- You might have heard the often-repeated notion about broken bones healing stronger than before, but it’s simply not true.
- Have you ever heard someone say that when you break a bone, the healing process makes it stronger than it was in the first place? This often-repeated notion may give you the idea that after your broken bone heals, it will be tougher than ever and won’t break again. But this isn’t actually true.
- “Having had a previous break won’t protect you from breaking the same bone again if you happen to experience trauma to the same body part,” says Michael T. Lu, M.D., orthopedic surgeon at JFK University Medical Center and Raritan Bay Medical Center. “Once your broken bone heals fully, it should be just as strong as the rest of your bones, so you won’t be more or less likely to break it than another bone.”

Why the Break Site Is Briefly Stronger Than Surrounding Bone

- A doctor should put you in a cast to keep you immobilized while your bone is healing. Because you aren’t using the injured body part while it’s in a cast, the bone becomes weaker. (If you’ve ever seen someone’s arm side by side after one arm was removed from a cast, you know the unused arm temporarily atrophies due to lack of use.)
- At the same time, the fracture site is being fortified with calcium deposits and building itself back up. For this brief period of time, the calcium-fortified region of bone may be stronger than the surrounding healthy bone, which has weakened due to lack of use.

Go Online

Learn how our orthopedic experts are committed to helping you maintain optimal health, getting you moving and live life to the fullest at HMHealth.org/Ortho.

Strengthen Your Bones

There are more reliable ways to strengthen your bones than waiting for a broken bone to heal. Try adopting these six healthy habits to help keep your bones healthy:

1. Calcium-rich foods. Include cheese and other dairy products; green vegetables, such as kale and broccoli; and fortified foods and beverages. The recommended dietary allowance for calcium (RDA) for calcium is 1,200 mg for adults up to age 50.

2. Eat foods rich in vitamin D, which helps your body absorb calcium. Fish, such as salmon and trout, is an excellent source of vitamin D, and some foods and beverages are fortified with the vitamin. The RDA is 15 mcg (600 IU) for adults up to age 70, then the RDA increases to 20 mcg (800 IU).

3. Exercise regularly. Weight-bearing exercise is best if you’re able, such as running, walking, stair climbing, dancing, hiking and lifting weights.

4. Quit smoking. Smoking has been associated with weaker bones, and quitting will improve your health in immeasurable ways.

5. Limit your alcohol intake. When women have more than one drink per day or men have more than two drinks per day, it increases the risk of osteoporosis.

6. Ask your doctor if you need supplements. If your diet isn’t rich in calcium, your doctor may suggest you take daily supplements to boost your intake of these nutrients.

For years, Eugene Fioravanti suffered from increasing shoulder pain. Thanks to a new surgery method, he now lives pain-free.

Eugene Fioravanti, a 57-year-old teacher from Colonia, New Jersey, lives an active life. He loves to golf, body surf and powerlift. But all of that activity throughout his life took a toll. Over the years, he experienced shoulder pain that eventually became almost unbearable. He was unable to do simple things like household chores or tying his shoes.

“It wasn’t one thing,” says Eugene. “It was cumulative wear and tear over the years. I used to throw newspapers every day for 23 years. I was diagnosed with a rotator cuff tear back in the early 2000s, and I just never wanted to take the time off to get surgery. So basically I’‘grinned and bear it’ for 20 years.”

Unexpected Opportunity

When COVID-19 hit, Eugene saw it as an opportunity to get surgery he needed all those years. Eugene’s teaching went virtual, and working from home made the recovery process much easier. Eugene connected with Michael T. Lu, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon at Raritan Bay Medical Center, who offered a relatively new type of surgery to fix Eugene’s shoulder.

For Eugene, we did what’s called superior capsular reconstruction, or SCR,” says Dr. Lu. “Instead of repairing his rotator cuff tendon to the bone, like we traditionally would do, we arthroscopically implant a piece of tissue into his shoulder to substitute for his rotator cuff tissue.”

Dr. Lu explains the surgery: “When you patch a pair of jeans with a hole in the knee, if the hole is small, you can sew it back together, and it will work fine. However, with a larger hole, you need a patch to fill the space. In the case of surgery, a tissue graft plays the role of the patch and fills in the damaged rotator cuff, essentially replicating the missing tissue.

“SCR can be a good option for managing massive rotator cuff tears that cannot be repaired with more traditional techniques,” Dr. Lu says. “Studies have shown reliable improvements in pain, function and satisfaction for these difficult problems.”

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HEART HEALTH

Ways to Avoid Heart Disease

If You Smoke, Stop
People who smoke have a greater risk for heart attacks compared to those who don't. Nicotine causes blood vessels to tighten and narrow, making it hard for blood to reach your heart muscle, and it temporarily raises blood pressure," explains Aaron Van Hise, D.O., cardiologist at Old Bridge Medical Center. Plus, the carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke lessens the amount of oxygen that gets to the heart. If you smoke, talk with your health care provider about ways to quit. Medicines and nicotine replacements can help.

Make Your Diet Heart-healthy
Eating fatty foods plays a part in the buildup of fat in your arteries, which can lead to blockages and increase your risk for a heart attack. "Limit red meats, salt, fried foods, sweets and added sugars," suggests Dr. Van Hise. "Instead, opt for dairy products with 'good fats,' such as feta cheese, as well as other sheep and goat milk cheeses. TASTE PROFESSIONAL TASTE PROFESS

Watch Your Weight
Being overweight and obese are major risk factors for heart disease. If you are overweight, losing weight can decrease your risk. Reaching or maintaining an ideal weight also helps lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Set Exercise Goals
Exercise gets your heart pumping, helping your body use oxygen better and strengthening your heart. It can also decrease your blood pressure and the amount of fat in your blood. "Talk with your health care provider before starting an exercise program, and begin slowly, especially if you haven't been active for a while," Dr. Van Hise recommends. Start with short sessions, such as 10-minute walks, and gradually increase the length of your workouts to at least 30 minutes, five days a week.

Track Your Blood Pressure
Blood pressure is the force against the walls of your blood vessels as blood flows through them. The harder your heart works, the greater your risk of having a heart attack. "Make sure your blood pressure is in the healthy range or under control," New guidelines suggest keeping systolic pressure (the first number) less than 130 and diastolic pressure (the second number) less than 80. Making smart choices, like eating a diet low in sodium, exercising regularly, avoiding tobacco, reducing stress and limiting alcohol, will decrease your risk of developing high blood pressure," says Dr. Van Hise.

You know how important your heart is. Are you treating it with the care it deserves?

Many people don’t realize that their daily habits and lifestyles can overwork and damage their hearts. If you are not leading a heart-friendly lifestyle, it’s time to take better care of your heart and yourself. Start with these changes.

Aaron Van Hise, D.O. Cardiologist 800-822-8905 Manalapan, Old Bridge and Jackson

At 54 years old, TJ Bellissimo of Manahawkin, New Jersey, felt pretty good. Once in a while he’d get a little discomfort in his chest, but he shrugged it off as a little indigestion. But one day while at work, the discomfort became something he couldn’t ignore. "I felt a lot of discomfort in my chest and started holding my breath," he says.

TJ visited a nearby walk in clinic, where the medical team told him he needed to get to a hospital right away. He drove himself to the emergency room at Southern Ocean Medical Center, where he was seen immediately. "If TJ’s blockage hadn’t been found when it was, he could have had a significant heart attack," Dr. Orlando says.

An Excellent Prognosis
His blockage required two stents. But he didn’t have any damage to his heart, which gave him an excellent prognosis following the stenting procedure. TJ will be on blood thinners for about a year, and he is taking part in cardiac rehab three days a week.

Go Online
Learn more about living your heart with our informative classes: HMHforU.org/Events, or learn more about cardiovascular services at Hackensack Meridian Health at HMHforU.org/Heart.

Spotlight on U
How Does Guillain-Barré Syndrome Happen?

Learn more about this rare neurological disorder, including common symptoms and treatment options.

Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare neurological disorder in which a person’s immune system attacks their own peripheral nervous system. According to the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, GBS is estimated to affect about one in 100,000 people each year.

What causes GBS is not known, says Emad Noor, M.D., neurologist at JFK University Medical Center. “It’s random,” he says.

How It Happens?

GBS is not genetic or contagious. Typically, GBS will start within a few days or weeks of a respiratory or gastrointestinal infection, he says. What appears to happen is the immune response to a bacterial or viral infection—or very rarely vaccination—triggers a more aggressive response that causes the immune system to attack the body.

One theory is that part of a person’s immune system mistakenly perceives the sheathing around nerves—a fatty covering called myelin—as a threat. To counter this “threat,” the immune system produces antibodies that attack the myelin, which leads to nerve damage that causes muscle weakness, paralysis and, in some cases, nerve pain, Dr. Noor says.

What Are the Signs?

“GBS affects all age groups,” says Dr. Noor, “and typically presents as weakness and loss of reflexes in the legs.” Mild cases may resolve on their own, but severe cases can lead to paralysis of the respiratory muscles, which can be a life-threatening situation.

Common symptoms of GBS include:

- Weakness on both sides of the body (frequently noticed as having trouble climbing stairs or, especially in children, difficulty walking)
- Unsteadiness or coordination problems
- Difficulty swallowing, speaking, or chewing
- Digestive and/or bladder control problems

How Is It Diagnosed?

In addition to a physical assessment, which includes testing reflexes in the limbs that are experiencing weakness, key diagnostics are an MRI and a spinal tap (also called a lumbar puncture) to get a sample of spinal fluid. Those with GBS tend to have more protein than usual in their spinal fluid and fewer than usual white blood cells.

How Is It Treated?

Generally, if diagnosed early, GBS is treatable with therapies such as immunoglobulin (IVlg) infusions or plasma exchange, and physical therapy, Dr. Noor says. There is no known cure for GBS.

“The goal of treatment is to prevent things from getting worse,” he says. “IVlg has been shown to shorten the length of a period of disability and also may avoid the need for a ventilator.”

Once treatment is started, Dr. Noor says, patients typically get better in a matter of a few weeks to a couple of months and make a full recovery, especially if GBS is diagnosed early. More severe cases of GBS can take longer to heal, with some patients still experiencing varying degrees of weakness years later.

When Layla Maloney was born in June 2020, the back of her head was a little flat, a common condition called plagiocephaly. Her mom, Stephanie Maloney, had worked in childcare so she had seen children with what is sometimes called “flat head syndrome.” She knew she’d have to watch it for a few months.

When Layla was 4 months old, her pediatrician recommended she be fitted for a helmet to help eliminate the flatness and shape her head. But after reviewing Layla’s brain scans taken in advance of a helmet fitting, the helmet technician thought Layla may have craniosynostosis and recommended seeing a specialist. Her pediatrician recommended neurosurgeon Thomas Steineke, M.D., chief of the Division of Neurosurgery and chairman of the Neuroscience Institute at JFK University Medical Center.

What Is Craniosynostosis?

Craniosynostosis is a congenital anomaly in which the bones of a baby’s skull fuse together too early and can lead to major neurological complications, Dr. Steineke says. When the skull bones join together too early, the skull can become misshapen as the soft skull bones shape to the baby’s growing brain. The brain can also become compressed by the fused bones, which can restrict brain growth and lead to a build-up of pressure in the skull. The increased pressure results in a risk for blindness, seizures or brain damage.

A Rare Diagnosis

X-rays showed that Layla had lambdoid synostosis, a form of craniosynostosis in which the suture at the back of the skull closes too early, flattening the back side of the head. It is one of the rarest types of craniosynostosis and requires surgery—a surgery in which Dr. Steineke and oral and maxillofacial surgeon Kayvon Haghighi, M.D., DDS, would need to remove the large plate at the back of Layla’s skull, reshape it and replace it. It’s a six-hour surgery with a risk of life-threatening bleeding.

The doctors took the time to explain the procedure, answer questions and build connections with Stephanie and her husband, Shaun, so they felt as comfortable as possible about the care their daughter would receive. Dr. Haghighi even shared a story about his own child’s major surgery.

Following the successful surgery, Layla stayed at the hospital for three nights. Stephanie says the nurses were “wonderful,” taking care not just of Layla, but of her, too. They brought her food and coffee, rubbed her back when she needed comforting and stayed with Layla, so she could grab a quick shower or use the restroom.

’Loving Her Little Life’

Layla didn’t need a medical helmet or therapy, although she will continue to see Dr. Steineke for follow-ups to monitor her brain and skull growth. A toddler now, Layla is completely on schedule about the care their daughter would receive. Dr. Steineke even shared a story about his own child’s major surgery.

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’Loving Her Little Life’

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‘Layla is totally wonderful,’ Stephanie says. ‘She’s happy and crazy and just loving her little life. It’s amazing.’

Learn more about care for pediatric neurological conditions at HMHealthU.org/KidsNeuro.
While there’s no cure for arthritis, physical therapy may help you manage your symptoms related to mobility and activity, depending on your diagnosis and individualized care plan.

Though there are more than 100 different types of arthritis with their own causes, symptoms and treatments, the most common types of arthritis include:

- Osteoarthritis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Psoriatic arthritis

If physical therapy is prescribed for you to better manage your arthritic condition, some benefits may include:

- Increased range of motion
- Strengthened muscles
- Safe and effective use of assistive devices
- Pain management

What to Expect From Physical Therapy
Your physical therapist will work with you to develop a treatment plan based on your history and goals. This is likely to include:

- Program of customized exercises
- Pain relief, using heat or ice packs, electrical stimulation and ultrasound
- Hands-on joint and soft tissue massage and mobilization
- Assistive devices

“A critical element of physical therapy is education,” Dr. Luke says. “Your physical therapist will help you understand, for example, how to reduce stress on your joints, how to do the exercises in your treatment plan and how to manage pain on your own.”

You may need to see your physical therapist weekly to start, or even multiple times a week during a period of acute pain. But as you learn to manage your arthritis, you’ll likely see your physical therapist less often, checking in with them every few months to set new goals and update your treatment plan as needed.

“Patients will achieve a better and more sustained outcome when they commit to performing their exercises daily and consistently, as part of a home exercise program,” says Dr. Luke. “Living with arthritis is not always easy, but certainly incorporating the learned benefits of physical and occupational therapy into one’s life is an important part of management.”

Physical and occupational therapy may not always be prescribed for treatment of arthritis, depending on the nature and course of the disease. Always seek guidance from your doctor about the best timing and precautions when receiving a therapy program.

If you experience chronic joint pain from arthritis, different lifestyle habits, like maintaining a healthy weight and exercising regularly, can help improve your discomfort.

“Patients often ask why they continue to have some joint pain after completing a new exercise program,” says Anthony Costa, M.D., hip and knee orthopedic surgeon at Riverview Medical Center. “I tell them exercise is only half the battle. As someone who specializes in treating joint pain, I’ve certainly come to recognize how patients can help themselves by changing their diet.”

Your diet can help minimize joint pain in part because a healthy diet can contribute to pain relief, using heat or ice packs, electrical stimulation and ultrasound.

Certain foods can help fight inflammation, which can exacerbate joint pain. Here’s what you should know.

If you have joint pain, try an elimination diet with your doctor’s assistance to see if dairy products are linked to your discomfort. If they aren’t, you can continue to enjoy them.

Consider limiting these protein-rich foods:

- Red meat. Foods that are high in saturated fat, such as beef, may cause inflammation in the body, which can lead to joint pain. Consider other options when you’re choosing what to eat with your joint pain in mind—especially if you cook your steak with butter, another food that’s high in saturated fat.

- Dairy products (for some people). Because dairy products may cause inflammation and joint pain in some people, it’s best to limit or avoid them if you’ve confirmed that they’re triggering your discomfort. Don’t avoid low-fat dairy products without asking your doctor for help. Try an elimination diet first.

- Gluten. The term “gluten” may make you think of bread, but it’s actually a protein found in wheat, rye and barley. There isn’t a direct link between gluten consumption and arthritis, but many people feel better on a gluten-free diet. Ask your doctor if you should try a gluten-elimination diet.

To help support overall health, consider these protein-rich foods:

- Fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Omega 3 has been research-proven to reduce inflammation, so including omega-3-rich fish in your diet may lead to less inflammation-related joint pain over time. Try eating salmon, tuna, sardines, trout or mackerel at least twice a week.

- Nuts. Almonds, walnuts and other nuts are high in protein, fiber and healthy fats, and they’ve been shown to fight inflammation in the body. Choose unsalted, unsweetened varieties rather than smoked, honey-roasted or chocolate-covered options.

- Beans. They’re rich in antioxidants, which may help lower inflammation. Beans are also high in fiber, which is helpful if you’re trying to lose weight. Fiber helps you feel full for longer periods, encouraging you to eat less often.

- Dairy products (for some people). There are advantages to consuming low-fat dairy products, which are rich in protein, calcium, vitamin D and other nutrients. Some people experience inflammation and joint pain when they eat dairy, while others don’t. If you have joint pain, try an elimination diet with your doctor’s assistance to see if dairy products are linked to your discomfort. If they aren’t, you can continue to enjoy them.

Go Online

Learn more about physical therapy and rehabilitative services at Hackensack Meridian Joint Pain and Orthopedic Health at HMHforU.org/Ortho

Go Online

Learn how our musculoskeletal and orthopedic experts are committed to helping you maintain optimal health, get moving and live life to the fullest at HMHforU.org/Ortho

If physical therapy is prescribed for you to better manage your arthritic condition, some benefits may include:

- Increased range of motion

  Stiff joints are a common complaint with arthritis and can make it difficult to bend and straighten. Gentle stretching and range of motion exercises can help maintain the flexibility necessary for daily tasks, such as getting in and out of chairs or reaching overhead,” says Ofure Luke, M.D., physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at JFK University Medical Center and Raritan Bay Medical Center.

- Strengthened muscles

  If the muscles around your joints are weak, they will be under extra stress and pain. “Strong muscles can help stabilize a weakened joint and decrease pain,” Dr. Luke adds.

- Safe and effective use of assistive devices

  Assistive devices, such as canes, walkers, crutches, braces and splints, take stress off your joints and muscles, and make it easier to perform certain activities.

- Pain management

  Physical therapists can teach you the best ways to relieve acute and chronic pain, as well as how to adjust your activities to prevent pain.
The Facts on ALS

Here are answers to some of the most common questions about ALS, otherwise known as Lou Gehrig’s disease.

ALS, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, is a debilitating disease that affects motor nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. This causes a wide variety of symptoms, but most commonly and universally, people with ALS experience progressive muscle weakening and paralysis. As many as 30,000 people in the United States have ALS, and about 5,000 new cases are diagnosed every year. You may have heard of ALS due to the Ice Bucket Challenge, or even as its previously common name, Lou Gehrig’s disease. Here are answers to some of the most common questions asked about ALS.

Who Is at Risk of ALS?

“For many people with ALS, there is not a clear cause of the disease.” Researchers have studied numerous potential causes, such as diet, lifestyle and environment, but no clear reason has been identified.

For other patients with ALS, the cause is genetic. For about 5-10 percent of people with ALS, there is a clear genetic link to a family member with ALS. This is called familial ALS. Genetic testing can be done for ALS, says Dr. Sedarous. “I recommend discussing your options with a genetic counselor before undergoing the testing process.”

Will ALS Ever Be Cured?

“It’s hard to say. Currently there is no cure for ALS, but that is not due to lack of effort from doctors and researchers.” Research is ongoing, and treatments and medications that help slow the effects of ALS are continually being discovered,” says Dr. Thomas. “Today, ALS treatment is an interprofessional undertaking that includes respiratory support, medication, physical therapy, speech therapy, assistive devices and other forms of treatment and support. And at Hackensack, we are pursuing a small phase 1 study that seeks to show that re-educating the bone marrow to produce new motor neurons in patients with ALS may be helpful in treating ALS.”

Can You Prevent ALS?

“Unfortunately there is no way to prevent ALS,” says Mary Sedarous, M.D., neuromuscular medicine specialist and co-director of the ALS Center at Jersey Shore University Medical Center. “For many people with ALS, there is not a clear cause of the disease.” Researchers have studied numerous potential causes, such as diet, lifestyle and environment, but no clear reason has been identified.

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For Michelle Lomotan, M.D., health care is a family business. Her mom, a nurse, inspired her to become a doctor.

“I’ve always wanted to be as caring and wonderful as my mom. She’s my hero,” says Dr. Lomotan, an internal medicine doctor at JFK University Medical Center. “Watching her take care of people and put smiles on their faces made me want to be in a profession where I can help people and make their lives better.”

But medicine isn’t just about giving care. It’s also about finding solutions. “The investigative side of medicine really appeals to me,” Dr. Lomotan says. “When somebody comes to see you, they have a problem. I like putting the pieces together to figure out what’s wrong. It’s like being a detective. You don’t always get answers, but you can solve a lot of problems, which is really rewarding.”

When she isn’t solving problems as a doctor, Dr. Lomotan is solving them in board games, one of her favorite pastimes along with cooking.

You’re passionate about healthy eating. What’s your best diet advice?

For a well-balanced diet, people should use the healthy plate method, which divides your plate into one big section and two little sections. The big section should be fruits and vegetables. Starches should go in one of the small sections, and protein should go in the other.

You’re an avid cook. Who’s your favorite chef?

“I got into cooking in college because I didn’t have my mom around to cook for me. I wanted to learn how to cook, and Julia Child came up a lot in returns on the Food Network. I like her style, which is very homey. She’s kind of like a grandmother figure. You feel like you’ve known her for a long time. I really like her beef bourguignon because it’s easy to make and it’s always delicious.”

Why did you choose to specialize in treating geriatric patients and patients with type 2 diabetes?

“Diabetes affects so many people in the U.S. because of our diet and lifestyle. My father was diagnosed with it when I was in college, so that got me interested in helping people live healthier lives. As for geriatrics, I just really like interacting with older people. They have so much history to share and so many lessons to teach us.”

Als.org

To make an appointment with Dr. Lomotan or a doctor near you, call 888-822-8905 or visit HMforU.org/FindADoc.
Heart disease kills more than 600,000 people in the U.S. every year. Now, doctors at Hackensack University Medical Center and Jersey Shore University Medical Center can offer a new procedure to help prevent this disease.

Previous Options for Heart Disease
Until now, doctors had two ways to open up narrow, hardened arteries supplying blood to the heart:

- **Angioplasty**, where a balloon is inflated to help open a blocked artery
- **Atherectomy**, in which tiny rotating blades open the artery through scraping and drilling

After one or both of these procedures are done, a stent—a metal tube that helps keep the vessel open—is usually inserted.

Unfortunately for some patients, neither of these methods is ideal. “Sometimes fatty plaque that has been there for so long goes from being soft and squishy to being hard as a rock,” says Daniel Kiss, M.D., a cardiologist at Jersey Shore. “Because the calcium is hard, plaque can’t move back against the arterial wall, the balloon can’t expand properly and the blockage remains.”

Atherectomy comes with its own difficulties. “When you scrape the wall of the artery, the debris that falls out goes downstream into the microcirculation,” says Haroon Faraz, M.D., an interventional cardiologist at Hackensack. “Because the calcium is hard, plaque can’t move back against the arterial wall, the balloon can’t expand properly and the blockage remains.”

A New Option Emerges
“[Before], there really wasn’t a great treatment to clear the way for the stent in patients whose calcium had gotten hard and built-up,” Dr. Kiss says.

Doctors at Hackensack and Jersey Shore now have intravascular lithotripsy (IVL) as a new tool in their arsenal. IVL uses sonic pressure waves, also known as shockwaves, which create a series of microfractures to break up the calcium without affecting the healthy vessel. “The beauty of this technology is that it attacks the calcium but leaves the healthy vessel wall alone,” Dr. Faraz says.

It’s based on the same technology that has been used for decades to safely break up kidney stones.

The minimally invasive procedure, which is done under local anesthesia, is performed in conjunction with angioplasty and stenting.

1. The doctor introduces the catheter to the heart through a small incision in the patient’s arm or leg.
2. IVL emits pressure waves to break up the calcium deposits.
3. Then, IVL emits pressure waves to break up the calcium deposits.
4. Finally, the doctor introduces the catheter to the heart through a small incision in the patient’s arm or leg.

“A one big advantage of the shockwave is that you’re not throwing the debris anywhere,” says Dr. Faraz.

After the IVL creates fractures in the calcium, the artery can successfully be expanded at low pressure with the angioplasty balloon. Then the stent can be implanted. “This procedure allows us to use the highest stent we can the first time. And that should prevent patients from having to come back to the catheterization lab in the future. It’s really about getting the right result in the right patient the first time,” says Dr. Kiss.

What’s Your Risk for Heart Disease?
A coronary calcium scan is a specialized test that uses a computed tomography (CT) scan to get a detailed picture of your heart and measure any calcium buildup in the coronary arteries. Make an appointment to get your scan at HMHforU.org/CalciumScan.

Learn more about comprehensive cardiac care, close to home, at HMHforU.org/Heart.
Here are just a few of the events & classes this February through April 2022

## Health U Winter 2022

### Cancer Care
- **Fresh Start Smoking Cessation**
  This four-session program is available to help you quit smoking. Attendance is required at all four sessions.
  - Feb. 4, 11, 18 & 25, 6-7:30 p.m., Ocean Conference Room B, East Wing Conference Center
  - Feb. 15, 22 & 29, 6-7:30 p.m., Ocean Conference Room B, East Wing Conference Center

### Behavioral Health
- **Letting Go of Stress: How to Adapt, Cope & Thrive**
  - Join Kelly Briggs, MBA, RN, NE-BC, and learn about types of stress, effective coping skills and relaxation techniques you can do to reduce stress.
  - Mar. 10, 6 p.m., virtual event

### Diabetes
- **Complications of Diabetes**
  - Join our certified diabetes educator and learn how to manage your diabetes to prevent complications.
  - Feb. 16, 2 p.m., Riverview-Booker Cancer Building, Community Room

### Heart Health
- **Joyful Heart Tea**
  - Join us for a cup of tea as we discuss ways women can keep their heart healthy.
  - Feb. 15, 6–7:30 p.m., Ocean Conference Room B, East Wing Conference Center

### General Wellness
- **Weight-loss Surgery**
  - To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar.
  - Visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events for upcoming dates

### Pediatrics
- **Safe Sitter Virtual Program**
  - Babysitter training for boys and girls ages 11–14. The class includes handling emergencies, childcare skills and first aid. Must attend both sessions. Fee: $25.
  - Virtual event. Visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events for upcoming dates

### Neuroscience
- **Stroke: How Do I Know if I am at Risk?**
  - Join Tayla K. Fleming, M.D., FAAPMR, to learn what to do if someone is having a stroke, the signs/symptoms and treatment options of different neurological diseases.
  - Feb. 10, 12:30 p.m., virtual event

### HOSPITAL LOCATIONS

- **Bayshore Medical Center** 727 North Beers St., Holmdel
- **Carrier Clinic and Blake Recovery Center** 252 County Rd. 601 Belle Mead
- **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**
  - 1945 Route 33 Neptune
  - JFK University Medical Center
  - K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital
  - 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** 520 New Brunswick Ave., Perth Amboy
- **Riverview Medical Center** 1 Riverview Plaza Red Bank
- **Southern Ocean Medical Center** 1140 Route 72 West Manahawkin

### More Events
- **Fresh Start Smoking Cessation**
  - Join our four-session program to help you quit smoking. Attendance is required at all four sessions.
  - Feb. 4, 11, 18 & 25, 6-7:30 p.m., Ocean Conference Room B, East Wing Conference Center

- **Angiography**
  - Learn your risk for heart attack and stroke. Includes carotid artery ultrasound, heart rhythm, blood pressure and screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm and peripheral artery disease (PAD).
  - Receive a custom report of your findings, educational material and a consultation with a registered nurse.
  - Special rate: $245. Registration required.

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

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# Schedule

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 HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events or call 800-560-9990.
Funding Education

Barry and Carol Anne Cawley Weshnak’s generous gift will fund a nursing position dedicated to substance use disorder services, as well as education for team members on behavioral health and addiction care.

For Point Pleasant, New Jersey, residents Barry and Carol Anne Cawley Weshnak, a casual post-checkup chat with their primary care doctor spurred a generous gift to boost behavioral health and addiction services at Raritan Bay Medical Center.

The grandparents of three and trustees of the Morris and Clara Weshnak Family Foundation—named for Barry’s late parents—decided their latest pledge should recognize the stellar care they’ve received from Mayer Ezer, M.D., the internal medicine program director at Raritan Bay and a steadfast behavioral health advocate.

Over three years, the couple’s $300,000 donation will fund a nursing position dedicated to substance use disorder services for patients and their families, as well as continuing education for staff on behavioral health and addiction care. “Like many, our family has had some addiction issues,” says Barry, a real estate developer whose many charitable and civic affiliations include serving on the K. Hovnanian Children’s Hospital Foundation Board. “Dr. Ezer is a part of these clinical efforts for Raritan Bay, and for that reason, we very much wanted to be part of it.”

The Weshnaks’ prior gifts to Hackensack Meridian Health have focused on services for youth, including $300,000 toward the Pediatric Palliative Care Program at the Children’s Hospital. They also fund an annual pediatric nursing scholarship award, a nod to Carol’s longtime profession as a registered nurse.

“Because so many addiction issues affect younger people, we feel this gift is in line with our family foundation’s core mission: the health and education of children,” Barry says. “There’s a drug epidemic that’s not going away, and it’s adversely affecting the lives of numerous people, including many young people.”

This awareness aligns with Dr. Ezer’s passion for behavioral and addiction health. He hopes the newly created substance use disorder nursing position can educate staff members, including new doctors, “so they are more comfortable treating behavioral health and addiction issues,” says Dr. Ezer, who is also associate professor and vice chair of medicine at Hackensack Meridian School of Medicine. “By educating providers, it multiplies the Weshnaks’ gift.”

Melissa Magyar, executive director of the Raritan Bay Medical Center Foundation, says donors like the Weshnaks allow Hackensack Meridian Health to invest in different priorities across the network. “This gift will help us provide additional resources for patients as they’re on the road to finding additional support for treatment and recovery,” she says. “Having this community support certainly helps us make a difference.”

New Year, New U

It’s the time of year when many of us make promises to ourselves for the coming year. Here’s how you can set goals for the new year to achieve a healthier, happier life.

Most Popular Resolutions

Getting healthy tops the charts when it comes to New Year’s resolutions.

Try Something New

Here are five goals for a healthier you that you might not have considered before.

1. **MAKE YOUR BED EVERY MORNING**
   - Kicking off your days with a freshly made bed is a good way to transform your space and start your days off on the right foot. Accomplishing small tasks in the morning can also help you to be more productive throughout your day.

2. **SANITIZE YOUR PHONE WEEKLY**
   - Your cell phone is one of the most germ-infested items that you own. Disinfect your device by dipping cleaning pads in a disinfecting wipe or a cloth that’s slightly damp with soap and water. Avoid using cleaning solutions that contain bleach and aerosol sprays on your touchscreen surfaces.

3. **BE A MORE ADVENTUROUS EATER**
   - Instead of cutting out certain foods from your diet, broaden your horizons and expand your palate this year. Tying a new cooking area or recipe can be a fun way to introduce yourself to different flavors and cultures.

4. **MAKE FLEXIBILITY EXERCISES A PART OF YOUR WEEK**
   - Incorporating flexibility exercises for all major muscle-tendon groups at least two to three times a week try stretching, yoga or tai chi. Spend a total of 10 seconds on each stretch, varying your repetitions down into 15- or 20-second intervals.

5. **FIND SOMEONE TO MENTOR**
   - Consider finding a young person to mentor. You can guide them through personal and professional experiences and reinforce the lessons you’ve learned in life while feeling good about having a positive impact on a youth’s life.

By the Numbers

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More Tools for a Better U!

Subscribe to the HealthU e-newsletter to receive health and wellness tips and resources, patient stories and the latest information on the COVID-19 pandemic right in your inbox.

Sign up today at HMHforU.org/Subscribe.

What to Know About Kids and COVID Vaccines
Our experts answer six of the most common questions parents are asking about COVID-19 vaccines for kids. Learn more at HMHforU.org/KidsVaccine.

Which Booster Should You Get?
As more Americans become eligible to receive the COVID-19 booster, you will be faced with a choice: Which booster should you receive? Understand when you should consider the mix-and-match approach and when it doesn’t make sense at HMHforU.org/BoosterMix.

As the state’s largest, most comprehensive health network, Hackensack Meridian Health is made up of 7,000 physicians, 17 hospitals and more than 500 locations. For a complete listing of our hospitals, services and locations, visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Locations.