

# HEALTH U



Hackensack  
Meridian Health

## *New Year, New U*

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OR HEART  
ATTACK?**

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PARA LEER ESTA REVISTA EN ESPAÑOL,  
VISITE [HMHforU.org/Spanish1](https://www.HMHforU.org/Spanish1)

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Tune in to our HealthU podcast!  
For more details, visit [HMHforU.org/Podcast](https://HMHforU.org/Podcast).



Are e-cigarettes dangerous? Our expert shares the facts you need to know at [HMHforU.org/ECigarettes](https://HMHforU.org/ECigarettes).

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Just had COVID? For guidance on when to get your next booster, visit [HMHforU.org/GetBoosted](https://HMHforU.org/GetBoosted).



Are naps bad for you? In an episode of the HealthU Podcast, cardiologist Brett Sealove, M.D., weighs in. Listen at [HMHforU.org/Naps](https://HMHforU.org/Naps).

Visit [HMHforU.org](https://HMHforU.org) for these stories and other great health care content.

HealthU is a 2022 APEX Award winner and a 2021 Content Marketing Awards finalist.





In November 2022, Bob Garrett received an AngioScreen® to provide valuable information about his heart and vascular health. He was happy to hear a positive report from nurse educator Cindy Andl, RN.

## Take Heart

Every February, we come together as a country to celebrate Heart Month and raise awareness of heart disease—and for good reason. Heart disease continues to be the leading cause of death in the United States.

The good news is we've come a long way in helping prevent heart disease through early screening. After all, the best way to prevent heart disease is to understand and manage risk factors. At Hackensack Meridian Health, we provide a number of noninvasive heart screening options, including CT calcium scoring scans and AngioScreen®, to help understand your heart condition or risk of heart disease. Read more about these advanced screening options in this issue on page 30.

I recently got a clearer picture of my heart health and vascular with an AngioScreen®. This easy, 15-minute screening quickly

helped identify my risk for heart disease and stroke by checking for blockages and plaque, and measuring my speed of blood flow, heart rhythm, blood pressure, pulse and body mass index. The screening used ultrasound to take images—no needles or radiation needed—and I got my results right away.

In this issue, we provide resources to help you live a heart-healthy life. On page 7, check out eight healthy eating habits to adopt in the new year. Then, turn to the back of the magazine for five ways to reduce your stress—your heart will thank you.

We encourage you to put your heart health first this year, whether that's through finding time each week for exercise, adopting a few new, healthy eating habits or getting a clear picture of your heart health. To learn more about screening options and see if you're a candidate, visit [HMHforU.org/HeartScreen](https://www.hmhforu.org/HeartScreen).

**Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO**  
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# BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

## INSIDE THIS SECTION

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- 7 Healthy eating habits to adopt this year
- 7 Recipe for breakfast burritos

## What's the Best Surface for Running?

While jogging on some surfaces may make your bones and joints healthier, others can have the opposite effect. Here are the best surfaces to run on, according to **David Kovacevic, M.D.**, orthopedic sports medicine specialist at Palisades Medical Center.



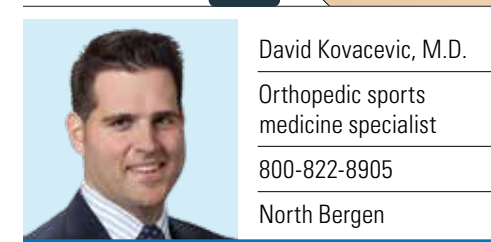
**Flat grass** is the best surface to run on because it has the least impact on your bones and joints, experts say. Its softness also causes your muscles to work harder, burning more calories and building strength.

**Dirt, gravel and woodland trails** are also good choices. Like grass, they reduce the impact on your bones and knees and help prevent injuries from overexertion. These surfaces may have holes or bumps, so pay close attention to the surface to avoid injury.

For those lucky enough to live near a beach, **flat, wet sand** can also provide a solid base for running. However, experts caution that dry, uneven sand can cause injuries and should be avoided.

If you have access to them, **synthetic track surfaces** (usually made of recycled rubber tires) are also a good choice. Be aware, though, that the track's long curves may increase stress on your ankles, knees and hips.

If you prefer to do your running indoors, **treadmills** offer the best option, especially when compared to harder surfaces.



David Kovacevic, M.D.  
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"Runners and athletes should always listen to their bodies," adds Dr. Kovacevic. "If you plan to have a really hard workout, but something feels off or uncomfortable, don't push through, as that can exacerbate the issue. Always consult your doctor if you have any concerns about an injury or ongoing pain."

**Go Online**  
Find more tips on working out at [HMHforU.org/Exercise](https://www.hmhforu.org/Exercise).

# Check on Your 'Always Happy' Friends



Why you should check in with your loved ones who seem constantly happy—and how to support them.

It's easy to think that people are happier than you or happy all the time if they constantly have a smile on their face. But those who appear to be "always happy" could be managing a mental disorder such as high-functioning anxiety or depression.

It may be time to check in with a friend who exhibits this behavior to be sure that what looks like an ideal and sublime life really is that.

The truth is, to be completely satisfied with life is not easy for anyone, no matter what it may look like.

"Being happy all the time is unrealistic and a fictitious version of the way things really are," says **Yeraz N. Markarian, Ph.D.**, psychologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "In the real world, pain, suffering, ups and downs are a natural part of life, as are joy and exhilaration."

## How to Check In

Asking someone how they are doing can provide them with an opportunity to communicate some of their sadness, since they didn't have to come to you first. Dr. Markarian recommends starting with: "How are you—really? Is everything going OK for you?" **Remember that people with depression or anxiety can:**

- ▶ Feel guilty sharing because they think they will bring others down
- ▶ Act like everything is OK because they don't want to acknowledge what they are feeling, as it is uncomfortable
- ▶ Think they'll "fake it until they make it"

Approach the conversation in a way that feels natural to your relationship. For example, if you typically take walks with this friend or meet them for dinner, check in with them in one of these comfortable spaces. Staying true to your connection can help your loved one feel safe to open up.

## When Your Help Isn't Enough

Sometimes when things don't get better on their own, a person might need counseling. That's when coffee with a friend to talk about things doesn't help as much, or the good news they got at work doesn't really make them smile. If they still feel unfulfilled, hopeless, unsatisfied or empty, that's a clear signal that professional help might be a logical next step.

When things that usually make people happy don't work anymore, it's time to seek help, especially if they're having very negative feelings about life or suicidal thoughts.

## Shutting off Images of 'Perfection'

Social media seems to be preoccupied with celebrities or influencers who create the illusion that things really are perfect. That can take us down a negative road.

"Overall, it's healthier to shut off those images of perfection and focus on ourselves—to take a break from social media, for example, and from obsessions about celebrities," Dr. Markarian says. "We should gauge our own barometer of happiness and ask ourselves: 'Am I going to follow others or focus on me, on what drives me, on what I enjoy?'"



Yeraz N. Markarian, Ph.D.

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Learn more about behavioral health services near you: [HMHforU.org/BehavioralHealth](https://www.hmhforu.org/BehavioralHealth)

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# Healthy Eating Habits to Adopt This Year

Jihade Rizk, dietician at **Palisades Medical Center**, offers eight tips to eat healthy in 2023 and beyond.

**1 Fill half your plate with veggies and fruit at every meal and snack.** The food pyramid is outdated and complicated to follow. Instead, visualize your plate and make sure at least half of it is made up of whole fruits and vegetables—with the other half made up of whole grains and lean proteins.

**2 Make a snack on the go.** Snacking can be an effective way to stay on track toward your health goals. A convenient option is Greek yogurt. Try topping it with berries, a few nuts and cinnamon for added flavor.

**3 Be mindful of the next fad diet.** With fad diets, you may lose weight initially, but after a few weeks or months, you may find the diet is too restrictive and end up where you started. Instead, invest in your long-term health.

**4 Choose whole grains.** There are plenty of delicious whole-grain options, such as whole-wheat breads, pastas and cereals. "While it can be fun to try new things like quinoa and farro, don't forget there are whole grains you're probably already familiar with and already enjoy, like popcorn, corn tortillas and polenta," says Jihade.

**5 Find alternatives to highly processed foods.** Ultra-processed foods like chips, cookies, instant soups and sugary cereals are low in nutrients and high in empty calories, salt, sugar and unhealthy fat.

**6 Gift yourself a reusable water bottle.** Carrying a personal water bottle makes it much more likely that you'll drink the recommended 64 ounces of water per day. "Choose a durable, lightweight bottle with a leak-proof lid that's easy to clean," Geanella says.

**7 Get acquainted with portion sizes.** "We think we know what 1 cup looks like, but often we overestimate, which leads to overeating," Jihade says. To become confident about the amount of food you are consuming, visualize the serving size outlined on the nutrition facts label by using measuring cups.

**8 Plan ahead.** "Maybe you've mastered healthy meals at home, but everything goes out the window when you're at work or eating out," says Jihade. If you know you'll be traveling, plan to bring healthy snacks in your bag, such as mixed nuts, a banana or a protein shake.

Find a healthy cooking demo or other nutrition event near you at [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/Events).



# Quick and Healthy Breakfast Burritos

Serves 4

## Ingredients

- 5 eggs
- 2 tablespoons 1% milk
- 1 cup black beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup salsa of your choice
- 4 whole-wheat tortillas (8-inch) at room temperature
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 2 tablespoons cilantro, chopped
- Red chili flakes to taste

- 4** Lay tortillas on a work surface and top with eggs, ¼ cup black bean mixture, 1 tablespoon sour cream, some cilantro and chili flakes to taste. Then roll to eat.

## Nutritional Information

Per serving: 215 calories, 14g protein, 34g carbohydrate (6g fiber), 6g fat (2g sat, 4g mono/poly), 677mg sodium

## Steps

- 1 In a small bowl, whisk together eggs and milk.
- 2 In a small pot, mix together black beans and salsa, and heat.
- 3 In a nonstick skillet over medium heat, cook eggs until done on one side, flip and cook on the other side. Cut into 4 equal slices.

## Seasoned Cook

These burritos make a great breakfast on the go. Wrap in foil and enjoy!

Find more recipes and tips for healthy eating at [HMHforU.org/HealthyEating](https://www.hmhforu.org/HealthyEating).

# How can I avoid seasonal depression?

Adriana Phan, M.D., weighs in:

To fend off seasonal depression this winter, try these four things.



**Stay active:** When we exercise, our bodies produce endorphins, which are mood-boosting hormones that counteract serotonin and dopamine deficiencies that can bring us down.



**Eat healthily:** A healthy diet rich in vegetables and fruits and low in highly processed foods can help curb feelings of depression by reducing inflammation in our bodies, which is a risk factor for depression.



**Stay connected:** Social connections can be a great defense against depression. Whether you talk on the phone, video chat or meet in person, keep in regular contact with friends and family.



**Get outside:** Even on a cloudy day, go outside for a walk or to eat lunch at a park. Get as much sunlight as you can: Sit or work close to a window, open your blinds or trim trees blocking sunlight.



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Read more at [HMHforU.org/SeasonalDepression](https://www.HMHforU.org/SeasonalDepression).

# Are at-home food sensitivity tests effective?

Rosario Ligresti, M.D., weighs in:

Many at-home food sensitivity tests claim to check a person's sensitivity to nearly 100 foods at once, but research has not shown that the tests are valid. The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology recommends against these tests, which aren't scientifically proven.

You should not change your diet based on the results of at-home food sensitivity results without seeking medical advice first, as you may be cutting out food groups that keep the diet balanced. Instead, talk to your doctor if you react negatively to food. Your doctor will see if it's an allergy or intolerance. They'll ask what you ate, how much and when you noticed symptoms.

**When doctors suspect a food allergy, they may offer:**

- ▶ A blood test
- ▶ A skin prick test
- ▶ An elimination diet, in some cases

Read more at [HMHforU.org/FoodTest](https://www.HMHforU.org/FoodTest).

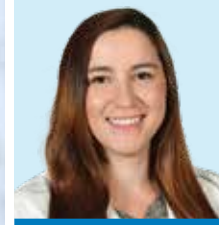


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# How can I help my dry skin in the winter?

Mariela Mitre, M.D., Ph.D., weighs in:

Here are some things you can do to take care of your skin and keep it from drying out during winter.



Mariela Mitre, M.D., Ph.D.  
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**Moisturize.** Hands especially get dried out from repeated washing, so use a moisturizing cream after you wash your skin to help restore its natural oils. Use a mild soap, and avoid alcohol-based products that tend to pull moisture away from the skin. Cut back on exfoliators during winter since they could further irritate already-dry skin.

**Focus on good nutrition.**

Your diet plays an important part in your skin health. Foods that are high in sugar and highly processed can wreak havoc on your body. Drink lots of water and eat foods high in omega-3 fatty acids like salmon, shrimp, walnuts and kidney beans, as well as foods high in antioxidants like nuts, beans, berries and dark leafy green vegetables.

**Cover up.** Winter wear protects your skin from the cold, dry air. Before heading outdoors during the cold months, keep skin from being exposed to the elements by wearing gloves or mittens, scarves and hats. Wool accessories are better than cotton during winter because they help skin retain moisture and heat.

**Exercise.** Getting the recommended amount of daily exercise not only helps build or maintain muscle, it also improves blood circulation, which helps your skin stay fit and more resilient.

**Don't forget the sunscreen.**

If you're going to be outside for more than 20 minutes, regardless of the temperature, it's important to wear SPF 30 or higher on exposed parts of your body. Don't forget to reapply every two hours. Remember, the snow can multiply your UV exposure in the winter, as it can reflect up to 90 percent of the UV radiation, so it is important to use eye protection, sunscreen and protective clothing during outdoor activities.



If you feel you've tried everything and still can't seem to get your dry skin under control, talk with your primary care provider or dermatologist about other options. If the problem is chronic or severe, a doctor can recommend a suitable prescription medication or ointment to help.

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

# How can I tell if I'm having heartburn or a heart attack?

Marian Vandyck Acquah, M.D., weighs in.

If you feel a sudden burning sensation around your chest and neck, ask these questions to distinguish between heartburn and a dangerous heart attack:

**Did you just eat?**

Heartburn often strikes after a fatty or spicy meal. Eating late can also worsen acid reflux, which can cause heartburn.

**Do you have chest pain and discomfort?**

These are the most common symptoms of a heart attack, for both men and women, young and old.

**Do you have any risk factors for a heart attack?**

If you do, a heart attack may be more likely. These factors include high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity, smoking and a family history of heart disease.

**The bottom line:**

If you think you may be having a heart attack, call 911. If you're thinking about it enough, that should answer the question.



Marian Vandyck Acquah, M.D.  
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Learn more at [HMHforU.org/Heartburn](https://www.HMHforU.org/Heartburn).

# Doctor Spotlight

**MARIA CHAVEZ SANTOS, M.D.**  
*Family Medicine*  
HMH Primary Care—Hoboken, North Bergen

When family medicine doctor Maria Chavez Santos, M.D., isn't listening intently to her patients—possibly responding in Spanish—or thinking about how to educate and empower them, you might find her practicing violin. She started playing about four years ago. Now that she is approaching intermediate level, she's intent on mastering Vivaldi's violin concerto, "The Four Seasons: Summer."

Dr. Chavez Santos has stated that moving to the United States at age 4 and becoming a naturalized citizen in March 2018 was the best gift ever. Coming from Ecuador, she always knew she wanted to be a doctor to give back to underserved communities. She returns to Ecuador each year and hosts a local medical mission with her family.

A believer in the proven power of healthy nutrition and exercise, she compassionately counsels her patients about both. She runs four to six miles four days a week, and enjoys Barre classes for a fun fitness boost.



*Maria Chavez Santos, M.D., began playing the violin four years ago and now is approaching intermediate level.*

Dr. Chavez Santos is a graduate of Columbia University, followed by medical school at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx and the Hunterdon Medical Center Residency program, where she was chief resident.

**You appreciate classical music, but who are your favorite rock artists?**  
I love disco. The Bee Gees, Donna Summer and Elton John are several of my favorite artists.

**What do you do when you're not working?**

I visit family in Manhattan, exercise, experiment with keto recipes in the kitchen, spend time with my dogs and explore restaurants with my boyfriend. I read voraciously, and I crochet.

**Where do you want to go next and why?**  
The Maldives because of its incredible beaches. ❄️

To make an appointment with Dr. Chavez Santos, call 800-822-8905 or visit [HMHforU.org/FindADoc](https://www.HMHforU.org/FindADoc).

# Spotlight on U

health topics that matter the most to you



## Fresh Start

3 things to do every morning to stay healthy this winter

**1 Drink a glass of water.**

Begin the day with a glass of water to keep healthy habits going all day long and increase your daily water intake.

**2 Meditate.**

Soon after you wake up, spend five to 10 minutes meditating. A simple but effective form of meditation is the 4-7-8 breathing technique: breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 and exhaling for 8.

**3 Practice gratitude.**

Start the morning with a little gratitude: Think of one thing you are grateful for each day—even better if you write it down in a journal—and reflect on it for a few minutes.

For more inspiration on healthy living, visit [HMHforU.org](https://www.HMHforU.org).

# Hidden Signs of Heart Disease

*While chest pain is one of the most common symptoms of heart disease, there are less common symptoms you should be aware of. Our expert shares what to look out for.*

When you think of heart disease, you may think of chest pain or an irregular heartbeat. But it's important to also recognize less commonly known symptoms.

"Heart disease is the most common cause of death in the U.S.," says **Jason Sayanlar, M.D., FACC**, cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "Getting diagnosed, taking medication and making lifestyle changes may help you avoid complications."

## Uncommon Symptoms of Heart Disease

Seek guidance from your doctor if you believe you have these symptoms:

**Shortness of breath.** If you're suddenly getting winded from your usual activities, see your doctor for advice. Feeling exhausted without exerting yourself may be a symptom of heart disease.

**Dizziness.** People with heart rhythm disorders may feel lightheaded or dizzy at times. This may happen if the heart is not pumping in a normal rhythm or rate.

**Snoring.** This may be a sign of sleep apnea, especially if you are gasping for air. Untreated sleep apnea increases the risk of heart disease, irregular heart beats, heart failure and stroke.

**Leg pain.** Do your calves ache when you walk or exercise but feel fine while sitting? This may be a sign of peripheral artery disease, which is linked to heart attack and stroke risk.

**Swollen ankles.** If your ankles used to be slender and they're now swollen, tell your doctor. It may be a sign of heart failure, a condition where the heart does not pump effectively.

"Women present differently than men. They are more likely to experience atypical symptoms, not the classic chest pain that you see on TV shows," Dr. Sayanlar says. "Women with shortness of breath, abdominal discomfort, dizziness or fatigue should talk to their doctor about heart screening." 🌱

## Heart-healthy Lifestyle Changes

Lower your risk of heart disease with these healthy habits:

Eat a diet rich in **fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains** and **lean protein**.

Walk or get other moderate physical activity for **30 minutes a day**.

Keep your **weight** in a healthy range.

Plan to **sleep for seven to nine hours** every night.

**Quit** smoking.

Know your **cholesterol levels** and manage them with your doctor's help.

Know your **blood-pressure levels** and manage high levels with diet modifications or medication.

Know and manage your **blood-sugar levels**, particularly if you have diabetes.



Jason Sayanlar, M.D., FACC

Cardiologist

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Fort Lee, Hackensack and Teaneck

## Go Online

Schedule a screening for heart disease at [HMHforU.org/HeartScreen](https://www.hmhforu.org/HeartScreen).

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Today, Sam Selvam is committed to living a healthier lifestyle, drinks much more water than soda and no longer smokes.

After several rounds of heart attack symptoms, Sam Selvam, a 50-year-old father of two, is saved by leading-edge cardiovascular technology.

# Heart-stopping Saga

Sam Selvam's family gave him a mug that crystallizes his steely calmness in a single phrase: "In case of emergency, ask Sam." When the 50-year-old Westwood, New Jersey, man realized he was having a heart attack in January 2022, he channeled this inborn composure. After taking an aspirin, Sam made two phone calls to ensure his 12-year-old would have transportation to and from sports practices. Then he called 911.

"It's what I tell my boys: Think before you do something, and make sure you're ready for any situation. Do good; be good," says Sam, a corporate real estate consultant.

When first responders met him outside his home, he collapsed, suffering more sharp, debilitating chest pain. CPR kept him alive until his ambulance reached **Pascack Valley Medical Center**, where his condition became dire when another round of severe symptoms hit. Close to death, Sam was airlifted by helicopter to **Hackensack University Medical Center**, where specialists blended expertise, the latest cardiovascular technology and medications to help him not only live, but thrive.

When Sam arrived at Hackensack, he was in cardiogenic shock. His heart was so weak, it could not pump blood to the tissues. It was an all-hands-on-deck situation to make sure he had more than a 50/50 chance of surviving.

## Heart Pump Allows Healing

Admittedly, Sam's lifestyle choices had placed his heart at risk. A pack-a-day smoker since his youth, the father of two also ate poorly. But Sam's prediabetes was in check, and he stayed active with his boys, often playing soccer and shooting baskets.

An interventional cardiologist threaded a tiny pump called an Impella device into the heart through blood vessels in his leg. The device temporarily takes over the work of the organ to keep blood circulating properly while the heart rests and heals. The cardiac catheterization team also inserted a cage-like stent to open the left anterior descending artery near Sam's heart where plaque had ruptured, creating the clot that triggered his extensive heart attack episodes.

Sam's heart was still struggling. He was upgraded to a second, stronger Impella pump that could provide even more heart support, which was implanted by cardiac surgeon **Yuriy Dudyi, M.D.** "Collaboration among multiple specialists and access to advanced devices like the Impella technologies enable us to treat life-threatening escalation in the sickest patients," said Dr. Dudyi.

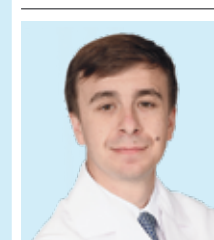
Medications to bolster his heart's pumping ability allowed doctors to remove the Impella before Sam was discharged nearly one month after his saga began.

## Vital and Strong

Committed to living a healthier lifestyle, Sam drinks much more water than soda these days and no longer smokes. Within a few months, he was back on the soccer field in an annual parents vs. kids game.

Sam takes an array of daily medications and has frequent follow-up visits with cardiologist **Kanika Mody, M.D.**, who specializes in heart failure and transplantation cardiology. His heart still pumps with less force than normal, but Dr. Mody is encouraged by how well he's doing.

"He's gotten a lot stronger and has a great attitude," Dr. Mody says. "As long as he follows the plan, he should do really well and won't need more medications."



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HEART HEALTH

# Is Broken Heart Syndrome Real?

*Our doctor shares what you should know about broken heart syndrome, including symptoms and causes.*

Shortly after the death of actress Carrie Fisher, it was reported that her mother, actress Debbie Reynolds, died from a “broken heart.”

Broken heart syndrome is generally a temporary heart condition that results from extreme emotional distress.

“Broken heart syndrome,” or takotsubo cardiomyopathy, weakens the heart due to an unusual and abrupt shape change in the left ventricle, causing the heart to weaken,” says **Mindy Markowitz, M.D.**, cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

## What Causes Broken Heart Syndrome?

Broken heart syndrome usually occurs in conjunction with an extremely stressful event such as:

- ▶ The death of a loved one
- ▶ Abuse
- ▶ Natural disasters
- ▶ Major financial loss
- ▶ Diagnosis of a serious illness

“Researchers speculate several causes, one being that during times of extreme emotional distress, stress hormones such as epinephrine are released and cause blood vessels to spasm, leading to ventricle malfunction,” Dr. Markowitz says. “When the left ventricle balloons, the heart cannot effectively pump blood to the body.”

While broken heart syndrome typically resolves with appropriate medical therapy, it can be serious. About 20 percent of people who experience broken heart syndrome develop congestive heart failure.



Mindy Markowitz, M.D.  
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## What Are the Signs of Broken Heart Syndrome?

The symptoms of broken heart syndrome tend to mimic those of a heart attack:

- ▶ Intense chest pain
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Heart palpitations

In order to properly diagnose, doctors need to perform a series of tests to rule out other heart conditions.

## What’s the Difference Between Broken Heart Syndrome and Heart Attack?

Despite the differences between broken heart syndrome and heart attack, they share some overlapping features. So making the correct diagnosis can be an emergency.

### In broken heart syndrome:

- ▶ Symptoms may occur suddenly after extreme emotional or physical stress.
- ▶ EKG can be abnormal and look similar to a heart attack.
- ▶ Blood tests can show damage to the heart, mimicking a heart attack.
- ▶ Tests show no blockages in coronary arteries.
- ▶ Imaging tests show ballooning or a misshaped left ventricle.
- ▶ Recovery time is much shorter than a heart attack.

“Stress can have huge effects on all aspects of your health and should not be ignored, especially if it’s causing physical symptoms,” Dr. Markowitz says. “Never disregard chest pain, heart palpitations or shortness of breath.”

# Healing Helpers

*Dry needling and cupping are popular among celebrity and athlete circles, but are they safe for you?*



## What Is Cupping?

Cupping is a noninvasive treatment that uses special cups made of glass or medical-grade plastic to create suction on the skin.

The suction—also referred to as negative pressure—relieves tension and pressure within the skin, fascia, muscle and connective tissue. “This process increases circulation, and promotes muscle relaxation, healing and enhanced range of motion, which can provide significant relief,” says **Roger Rossi, D.O.**, medical director of St. Joseph’s Wayne Medical Center Acute Rehabilitation Unit, affiliated with **Hackensack Meridian Johnson Rehabilitation Institute**.

### Cupping can be used to treat:

- ▶ Migraines
- ▶ Muscle pain
- ▶ Fibromyalgia
- ▶ Poor circulation
- ▶ Stagnant blood flow
- ▶ Allergies
- ▶ Fevers
- ▶ Neck pain
- ▶ Carpal tunnel syndrome
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Osteoarthritis

## Is Cupping Safe?

When done by a professional, cupping is safe, although it can cause temporary bruising. “Your health care provider will create a treatment plan based on your personal needs, desired outcome and your body’s responsiveness to the treatment,” says Dr. Rossi.

## What Is Dry Needling?

Dry needling involves inserting needles into the body’s soft tissues to stimulate muscle contraction and activation to promote healing and rejuvenation in and around an area of trauma or discomfort. The practice of dry needling is commonly used in the treatment of acute and chronic injury and is often used for athletic recovery. “This microscopic, targeted treatment is meant to jump-start the body’s reparative responses within the targeted tissue,” says Dr. Rossi.

### The purpose of dry needling is to:

- ▶ Increase blood flow
- ▶ Promote healing
- ▶ Relax muscles
- ▶ Reduce pain
- ▶ Increase range of motion and reduce muscle spasm

## Is Dry Needling Safe?

When performed by a trained medical professional, dry needling is safe. Needles are sterile and single-use.

“Although dry needling seems straightforward, and you can easily find supplies on the internet, it is best to visit a qualified professional to ensure accurate placement. Doing so will increase the likelihood of a positive therapeutic response and ensure the correct area has been stimulated,” says Dr. Rossi. “If done improperly, you can experience bleeding, pain or even organ puncture.”



Roger Rossi, D.O.  
Physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist  
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Edison

## What Is the Difference Between Dry Needling and Cupping?

While cupping breaks up and relieves tension within the connective tissues, dry needling and needle stimulation directly activates or inhibits muscle tissue. A trained professional can help you better understand which complementary method is best for you and supports your holistic approach to healing.

## Go Online

Find a rehabilitation center near you: [HMHforU.org/Rehab](http://HMHforU.org/Rehab).

## Go Online

Are you at high risk of heart disease? Make an appointment for a screening today: [HMHforU.org/HeartScreen](http://HMHforU.org/HeartScreen).



# Light at the End of the Tunnel

*Our expert shares signs that it's time to see a doctor for relief from carpal tunnel syndrome.*

If you notice discomfort in your hands or wrists, how can you tell if it's a passing problem or something that's worth mentioning to your doctor, like carpal tunnel syndrome? **Samir Sodha, M.D.**, an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in hand surgery, recommends making a judgment call based on the frequency and intensity of your symptoms.

"Someone who has a sore wrist after a single day of using power tools around the house may recover uneventfully, while another person who uses vibrating power tools every day at work may experience wrist pain and tingling in the fingers on a regular basis," Dr. Sodha says. "If your symptoms dissipate quickly and don't return, it may not be worth a doctor's visit. But continued pains that wake you up or persistent numbness should warrant a conversation with your doctor."

## Signs of Carpal Tunnel

Pain in the hand or fingers

Tingling in the wrist, hand or fingers

Weakened hands or fingers

Wrist, hand or finger numbness



Samir Sodha, M.D.  
Orthopedic surgeon  
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Paramus and Montvale

### When to Talk With Your Doctor

If ongoing pain, numbness or weakness in your wrist, hand or fingers begins to impact your quality of life, make an appointment with your doctor to see if your symptoms may be signs of carpal tunnel syndrome.

Some wrist pain may indicate tendonitis, arthritis or another condition, so you shouldn't self-diagnose any hand or wrist discomfort.

#### It may be time to see a doctor if:

- ▶ Your symptoms are keeping you from working effectively, because typing or holding power tools for extended periods has become too uncomfortable
- ▶ You're unable to continue doing some of your favorite activities, such as cooking, gardening or riding a bike, due to discomfort.
- ▶ Pain or discomfort awakens you from your sleep.
- ▶ You've begun dropping things because your grip has weakened.

### How to Relieve Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Different treatments are available for people with carpal tunnel syndrome:

- ▶ Take breaks from repetitive activities to stretch and relax the wrists.
- ▶ Wear a splint to sleep at night.
- ▶ Use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.
- ▶ Receive steroid injections to reduce inflammation within the wrist.
- ▶ Have surgery to make more room within the carpal tunnel. ⚙️

### Go Online

Find an orthopedic specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/OrthoDoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/OrthoDoc).

# Shin Splints Again?

*How to treat shin splints—and prevent them from coming back again.*

Shin splints, also known as medial tibial stress syndrome, is a common exercise issue. They are caused from inflammation of the muscles, tendons and tissue around the tibia bone. The pain is typically felt along the inner border of the tibia.

"Shin splints occur when your lower leg is overworked in a repetitive motion," says **James Cahill, M.D.**, orthopedic sports medicine surgeon at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "Shin splints most commonly happen with a sudden change in physical activity, including an increase in frequency, duration or intensity."



James Cahill, M.D.  
Orthopedic sports medicine surgeon  
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Hackensack and Paramus



### How to Treat Shin Splints

*In most cases, home remedies are sufficient:*

- ▶ Decrease activity. Take two to four weeks off, then slowly increase activity.
- ▶ Try low-impact activities such as swimming or cycling.
- ▶ Take anti-inflammatories.
- ▶ Stretch.
- ▶ Ice shins for 10–20 minutes three to four times a day.

### When to See a Doctor

"You should see a doctor if the pain doesn't improve or gets worse. Untreated shin splints can lead to stress fractures," says Dr. Cahill. "Your doctor may do an X-ray or perform other tests to rule out fractures or other shin problems."

Professional help may be needed to find proper arch support, and physical therapy could strengthen muscles groups that help maintain proper running form. Weak calf or core muscles can lead to altered running mechanics and undue strain on the tibia.

### How to Prevent Shin Splints

*Dr. Cahill says there are several ways to prevent shin splints from happening:*

- ▶ Slowly increase physical activity or training.
- ▶ Warm up and stretch before and after exercise.
- ▶ Avoid running on hard surfaces.
- ▶ Wear proper shoes and/or arch supports.
- ▶ Cross-train to strengthen all muscle groups.

"Getting active has huge health benefits, but make sure you give your body time to adjust so you can enjoy all the fun and health benefits without pain or setbacks," says Dr. Cahill. ⚙️

Feeling joint pain? Take a health risk assessment to see if you're a candidate for certain treatments.



NEURO

# Trigger Point



Regina Krel, M.D.

Headache medicine specialist

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Hao Huang, M.D.

Headache medicine specialist

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*Several triggers can bring on a migraine. Here are the common ones to understand and track—and how to avoid them.*

Migraine headache is a neurological disorder that is more than just a headache and results in a high degree of disability for many people. It is typically located on one side of the head, can be pulsing in quality and lasts several hours to three days.

### Migraine Triggers

The underlying cause of migraines is still under investigation, although there is a genetic component since they often run in families.

#### Common triggers include:

- ▶ Stress
- ▶ Dehydration or hunger
- ▶ Certain foods
- ▶ Medications
- ▶ Bright lights
- ▶ Loud noise
- ▶ Menstruation
- ▶ Menopause
- ▶ Disruption in sleep patterns

“If you regularly experience migraines, you may notice they are preceded by a pattern—the onset is usually similar. A migraine diary is a great way to track your triggers and learn to make the necessary changes to avoid migraines,” says **Regina Krel, M.D., FAHS**, director of Headache Medicine at **Hackensack University Medical Center** and **Palisades Medical Center**.

Adds headache medicine specialist **Hao Huang, M.D.**: “Medication is an excellent way to treat migraine

headaches, but that is only a portion of what can be done. Lifestyle changes that promote general good health are also excellent preventative measures.”

#### Lifestyle modifications can include:

- ▶ Getting good sleep
- ▶ Maintaining a proper diet
- ▶ Exercising
- ▶ Quitting smoking
- ▶ Staying hydrated

#### When to See a Doctor

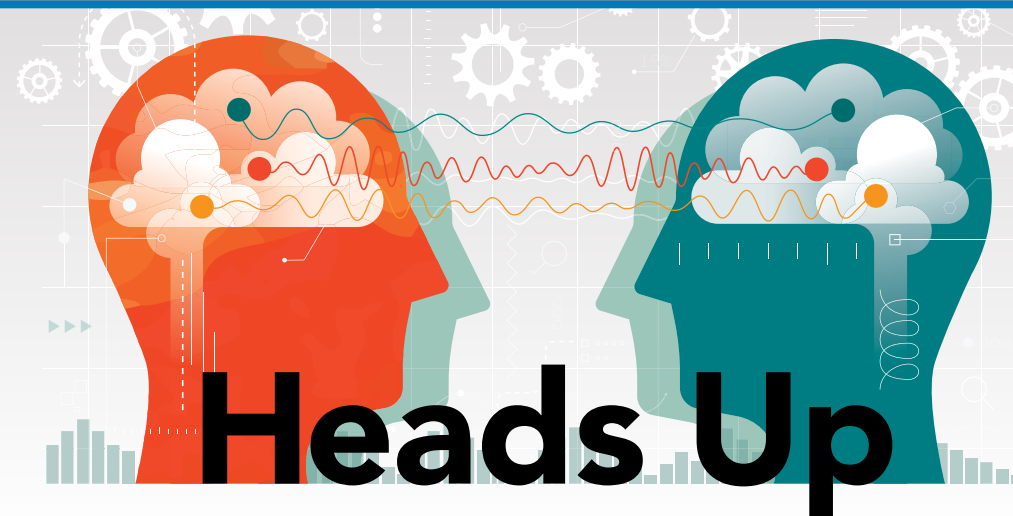
Fortunately, in most cases, migraine headaches are treatable. Your primary care doctor can help you find the best treatment plan for you if you are having difficulty finding relief from your symptoms.

#### See a doctor right away if:

- ▶ Your headache is abrupt and intolerably severe.
- ▶ Your headache is accompanied by fever, seizure, double vision or difficulty communicating.
- ▶ Your headache is the result of an injury or head trauma. ⚙️

### Go Online

Find a headache or migraine care location near you: [HMHforU.org/Migraine](https://www.hmhforu.org/migraine).



*Our expert breaks down the ins and outs of head injuries and when you should seek emergency care.*

It's common to get some bumps and bruises while moving about your day, but how do you know if a head injury is serious?

### What Is a Traumatic Brain Injury?

A traumatic brain injury is often the result of a blow to the head or jolt of the head or body. This immediately disrupts how the brain functions and can cause brain damage.

“Whether it’s a fall or a hit to the head, the sudden movement can cause the brain to shift in the skull, resulting in stretch injury to brain cells, bruising of the brain or stretching of a blood vessel resulting in a hemorrhage,” says **Kevin Crutchfield, M.D.**, neurologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “Your brain is protected by several bones, but these bones are not capable of expanding to accommodate extra pressure. That pressure is absorbed by the brain, which can cause further injury.”

### How Do I Know if My Head Injury Is Serious?

#### Seek emergency care for any of these symptoms:

- ▶ Severe headache
- ▶ Unconsciousness
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Confusion or mood changes
- ▶ Slurred speech
- ▶ Seizures, numbness or convulsions
- ▶ Balance problems or dizziness
- ▶ One pupil is dilated

“Severe brain injury and death is usually associated with more severe trauma experienced during things like a car accident or falling from a great height. While it’s important to take all head



Kevin Crutchfield, M.D.

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injuries seriously, you don’t need to panic for more minor falls,” Dr. Crutchfield says.

### Is it Safe to Sleep After a Head Injury?

It’s a common misconception that you need to keep someone awake after a head injury. It’s not dangerous to sleep. “The issue is if you go to sleep right after an injury, you

may not notice symptoms like weakness in one side of the body or a seizure, which would indicate the severity of the injury,” explains Dr. Crutchfield.

If you’re experiencing worsening symptoms of concussion or brain injury, it’s best to be evaluated by a health care provider before sleeping. For milder, stable cases, you don’t need to have a family member or friend wake you periodically through the night to check on you.

### How Do You Treat a Head Injury?

“If you suffer from a brain injury, your doctor will work with you to come up with a unique treatment plan that will help you ease back into your normal activities,” says Dr. Crutchfield.

#### Treatment for mild brain injuries include:

- ▶ Complete physical and mental rest for at least 24–72 hours
- ▶ Resuming normal activities as symptoms subside
- ▶ Gradually returning to full activity and exercise ⚙️

### Go Online

Learn more about brain injury rehabilitation at [HMHforU.org/BrainRehab](https://www.hmhforu.org/brainrehab).

# Lessen the Leak

*Dealing with incontinence? Our expert says adult underwear should be your last resort and offers a variety of other options to help.*

If you're dealing with incontinence, you may think your only solution is an uncomfortable, anything-but-discreet adult diaper. But that's far from the case. There are dozens of options to help, from lifestyle changes to procedures to surgery, says **Alexander Schwartz, M.D.**, a urologist at **Pascack Valley Medical Center**. "In fact, I would almost say that adult underwear is the last choice," says Dr. Schwartz.

So how can you treat the leak? Here is a range of options.

## Lifestyle Changes

**Monitor your liquid intake.** If you've experienced accidents, your first reaction may be to cut down fluids. But drinking too little can lead to highly concentrated urine, which can irritate your bladder and cause you to go more often. Instead, drink small amounts steadily throughout the day and stop drinking about two to three hours before bed.

**Investigate what you eat and drink.** Certain foods and beverages can irritate the bladder, making it spasm so you feel the urge more often. Common irritants include citrus fruits, spicy foods, tomato-based products, artificial sweeteners, caffeine, alcohol and carbonated drinks, says Dr. Schwartz. Try eliminating possible culprits, then gradually add items back one at a time and monitor how you feel.

**Practice pelvic floor therapy.** This can benefit both men and women. Kegels (squeezing the pelvic floor muscles) help strengthen the muscles that support the urethra. They also help rewire communication between the brain and bladder. "When you do a Kegel, it sends a message to the area to relax until you have time to get to a bathroom," says Dr. Schwartz.

**Watch your weight.** The more you weigh, the more pressure is placed on your bladder, which can prompt the urge to go before the bladder is completely full.

## Medications

**Antispasmodics.** These are the most widely used medicines for incontinence, says Dr. Schwartz. They work by blocking the nerve receptors on the muscles in the bladder. Unfortunately, they can sometimes cause side effects like dry mouth,

blurry vision and constipation. Another option is a patch, which can be worn for four days at a time and may not cause the same side effects.

**Tricyclic antidepressants.** While only used in occasional cases, these can calm nerve signals and decrease bladder contractions.

**Prostate medications.** If incontinence is caused by an enlarged prostate, medication to treat the prostate can be used.

## Devices

**A pessary.** For women, this ring-like device, which must be fitted by a doctor, can be inserted into the vagina to lift and support the vagina and bladder.

**A urethral clamp.** Men can place these temporary devices around the penis to put light pressure on the urethra and block the flow of urine.

## Procedures

**Botox®.** A doctor uses a small camera to see inside the wall of the bladder and injects the medicine, which causes the muscles in the bladder to relax. Results aren't permanent and should be redone about every six months.

**Bladder pacemaker.** This implantable device sends painless electrical impulses to the nerve fibers that regulate the muscle of the bladder. Placement is done on an outpatient basis, under local anesthesia.

**Midurethral sling.** In this procedure designed mainly for women, a surgeon places a sling made with a narrow strip of synthetic mesh under the urethra, which acts like a hammock to support the urethra and bladder neck. It's most commonly done as an outpatient procedure, using local or general anesthesia.

**Artificial urinary sphincter.** This cuff is placed around a man's urethra to help keep it closed and prevent leaks. It's most commonly done on an outpatient basis and uses local or general anesthesia. ⚙️



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Urologist  
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Westwood



Learn more about urology services at Pascack Valley Medical Center: [HMHforU.org/PVUrology](https://www.HMHforU.org/PVUrology).

# Solving the Hand and Wrist Pain Mystery

Is the pain in your fingers, hands or wrists carpal tunnel syndrome or something else? Our expert weighs in.

Do you feel burning, numbness or tingling in your fingers, particularly the thumb, index, middle and ring finger? Do your fingers feel swollen, particularly at night? Do you occasionally feel a shock-like sensation that can radiate to the first four fingers, or a pain or tingling that travels all the way up the forearm?

Several conditions can cause pain or numbness in the hands and fingers, so without seeing a doctor, it can be difficult to decipher exactly what's going on, says **Carissa L. Meyer, M.D.**, hand surgeon at **Mountainside Medical Center**. Here are a few common conditions that can cause hand, wrist or finger pain, and what to know about each.



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**Carpal Tunnel Syndrome:** With carpal tunnel syndrome, the tunnel containing the wrist nerve and tendons—called the carpal tunnel—narrows. “The area becomes thick and inflamed, leading to compression on the median nerve near the bottom of the hand, causing pain, numbness and weakness in the first four fingers of the hand. Milder symptoms of swelling or cramping may happen, as well,” Dr. Meyer says. “In more than half the cases, both hands are affected, though the dominant hand is likely more severe.”

Carpal tunnel syndrome most often affects people between the ages of 40 and 60, and women are three times more likely than men to develop the condition. “People with diabetes or other metabolic disorders that affect the nerves are also more susceptible,” says Dr. Meyer.

**Osteoarthritis:** When the cartilage that pads the bones at the joints begins to wear down, osteoarthritis (also called degenerative joint disease) can develop. Without enough cartilage, bones no longer glide easily against each other, causing pain and swelling.

The hands are one of the most common places where osteoarthritis can develop, particularly at the base of the thumb. People usually feel pain in all finger joints. “Arthritis generally doesn’t cause tingling or numbness,” says Dr. Meyer. “It causes swelling, stiffness and tenderness, particularly in the morning and around the joints.”

Osteoarthritis can also cause bony bumps around the joints, particularly the knuckles, and affects both hands equally.

**Trigger Finger:** This condition happens when one of the tendons that flexes the fingers becomes inflamed, usually from overuse. “The tendon passes through a tunnel in the palm and can start to rub or get caught in the tunnel, causing pain, swelling or the classic catching or ‘triggering’ of the finger,” Dr. Meyer says. The condition is common in patients with diabetes.

**De Quervain’s Tenosynovitis:** This condition, also called De Quervain’s tendinosis, happens when two tendons that pass through the wrist near the lower thumb become compressed and pinched, causing pain and swelling in the area. It’s usually caused by overuse of the thumb and wrist, often by playing sports like tennis, golf or racquetball; repetitive strumming of an instrument like guitar or bass; or even repeatedly lifting a baby or an infant carrier. “Even gardening can trigger it if you’re digging sideways and gripping the shovel with your thumb,” says Dr. Meyer.

While de Quervain’s tenosynovitis causes pain and swelling in the wrist, it usually doesn’t cause numbness and tingling.

**Sprained Wrist:** This can happen when the ligaments between the hand and wrist bones stretch or tear. Wrist sprains are common when you use your hand to catch yourself while falling or when you put extreme pressure on your wrist continually in certain sports like tennis, gymnastics or boxing.

The swelling and inflammation of a sprained wrist can mimic the symptoms of carpal tunnel syndrome. However, a sprain usually happens after some type of injury, and is accompanied by bruising, tenderness and loss of motion. “The symptoms of a sprain should get better with time, unlike a condition like carpal tunnel,” says Dr. Meyer.

## What to Do if You Have Hand or Wrist Pain

If you are suffering from hand, finger or wrist pain, and think you have one of these conditions or injuries, it’s important to see a doctor. “The quicker the diagnosis and treatment, the easier it will be to reverse the damage of any condition,” says Dr. Meyer. 🦄



Learn more about orthopedic care at Mountainside Medical Center at [HMHforU.org/MountainsideOrtho](https://www.HMHforU.org/MountainsideOrtho).

# When Milestones Are Missed

*What does it mean if your baby or young child misses a developmental milestone, and when should you be concerned?*



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Watching your young child learn and grow can be exciting and rewarding—their first smile, first words or first steps. But what does it mean when a milestone isn't hit on schedule?

**Eileen A. Dolan, M.D.**, interim division chief for developmental medicine at **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center**, explains what range is considered normal and what may be cause for concern.

### What Is a Milestone?

"A developmental milestone is when your baby or toddler learns a new skill," Dr. Dolan says. Doctors, teachers and others who specialize in child development measure a child's growth progress

by comparing their milestones to when most other children adopt specific skills.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) have established milestone trackers for children from 2 months to 5 years of age. Each time you take your child to the doctor for a well visit, the doctor should review these milestones with you to ensure that your child is healthy and thriving.

The CDC and AAP recently revised their developmental milestones to take a more proactive approach in identifying developmental delays and autism in children, so that these conditions are diagnosed and addressed as early as possible, and treatment and early interventions can begin.

### What Is Developmental Delay?

If a child misses a milestone, it is clinically referred to as developmental delay. Since developmental delays can't be diagnosed with a lab test, doctors use milestones to look for early signs of any conditions or problems.

"If a child is showing signs of developmental delay, the earlier it is identified, the better," says Dr. Dolan. "That way, if a delay is discovered, the child can be provided with extra help in the form of therapy or other interventions to ensure their needs are met and they reach their full potential." Services can include speech therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy and assistive technology.

### When Missing a Milestone Is Probably OK

On the other hand, perhaps due to the digital information age and our ability to search online quickly and easily for health information, parents today tend to get anxious if their child doesn't exactly nail every benchmark of progress.

"It's important to remember that milestones are averages, and every child is unique," says Dr. Dolan. With many baby and toddler milestones, there are

broad ranges for when a child learns to crawl, walk, potty train, talk, read and so on. A missed milestone may not necessarily be a red flag, so parents and other caregivers should try to take everything in stride and let their pediatrician or family doctor guide them in the right direction.

### When to Be Concerned

"As the primary caregiver, you know your child best, so if your baby or toddler misses a milestone, it's best to bring up any concerns with your pediatrician or family doctor sooner rather than later," says Dr. Dolan.

Your doctor will listen to your concerns and further assess your child to dig into what's going on. If there is a problem, your doctor will help provide a diagnosis, treatment options and other support. 🦋



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



## No Holding Him Back

Now 10 years old and in the fifth grade, Aiden Downs is an accomplished saltwater fisherman who loves catching stripers with his dad.

### A 10-year-old budding fireman is well on his way thanks to biologic treatment options and a dedicated children's hospital team.

People thought it was "cute" when Aiden Downs wobbled on his feet as a toddler. But the little boy's unsteadiness became alarming when Aiden was still using a stroller at age 5 because he could barely walk.

By then, Aiden had been diagnosed with juvenile arthritis, which affects nearly 300,000 children and teenagers in the United States. The medication he was prescribed wasn't working nearly well enough to improve his severe, debilitating symptoms.

"He couldn't run, jump or play like the other kids," says Aiden's mom, Ashley Lenger. "I wondered what his future would be like. Aiden loves firemen, making me follow fire trucks in my car. It broke my heart that becoming a fireman would not even be a possibility for him."

After years of frustration, Aiden's parents turned to **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center** after learning about the

hospital's pediatric rheumatology program. The nearly four-hour round trip from their Trenton, New Jersey, home quickly proved worthwhile after the family connected with **Suzanne Li, M.D.**, pediatric rheumatologist at Hackensack.

"When I first saw Aiden, he was so limited in walking and moving most of his joints, and he was waking up at night in pain," Dr. Li recalls.

### Pivoting Treatment Choices for Juvenile Arthritis

After reviewing Aiden's medication use since his diagnosis three years earlier, Dr. Li tried a different biologic drug. Developed and refined over the past two decades, biologics are typically used to dampen an overactive immune response in certain diseases.

"The good news is there were different biologics to try," Dr. Li says. After testing several biologics and doses, Aiden markedly improved with a biologic that's delivered intravenously, helping his body more effectively absorb the medication. The medication was combined with methotrexate, another type of immunosuppressant.

Identifying an effective treatment combination has led to a remarkable transformation in Aiden's ability to live

more like any other child. "He wasn't in pain every day and was able to go to the amusement park without needing a stroller," Dr. Li says. "He's now a normal child despite his arthritis, which is considered to be in remission on medication. We hope that someday he can stay in remission without medication."

### Daily Pain No More

Now 10 years old and in the fifth grade, Aiden is an accomplished saltwater fisherman who loves catching stripers with his dad, Brian. He can run and play with friends, no longer complaining of daily pain.

"The old me hoped he would live a normal life. With the way he is now—able to conquer anything he tries—my hope is one day that Aiden won't have to take medication anymore," Ashley says. "But the disease isn't holding him back with the medication he's on."

Ashley also praises team members from the Child Life team and Infusion Center, who have eased Aiden's path and made his regular treatment appointments "fun."

"Everyone goes above and beyond, making him feel welcome and comfortable there, and that's a big thing for children," Ashley says.

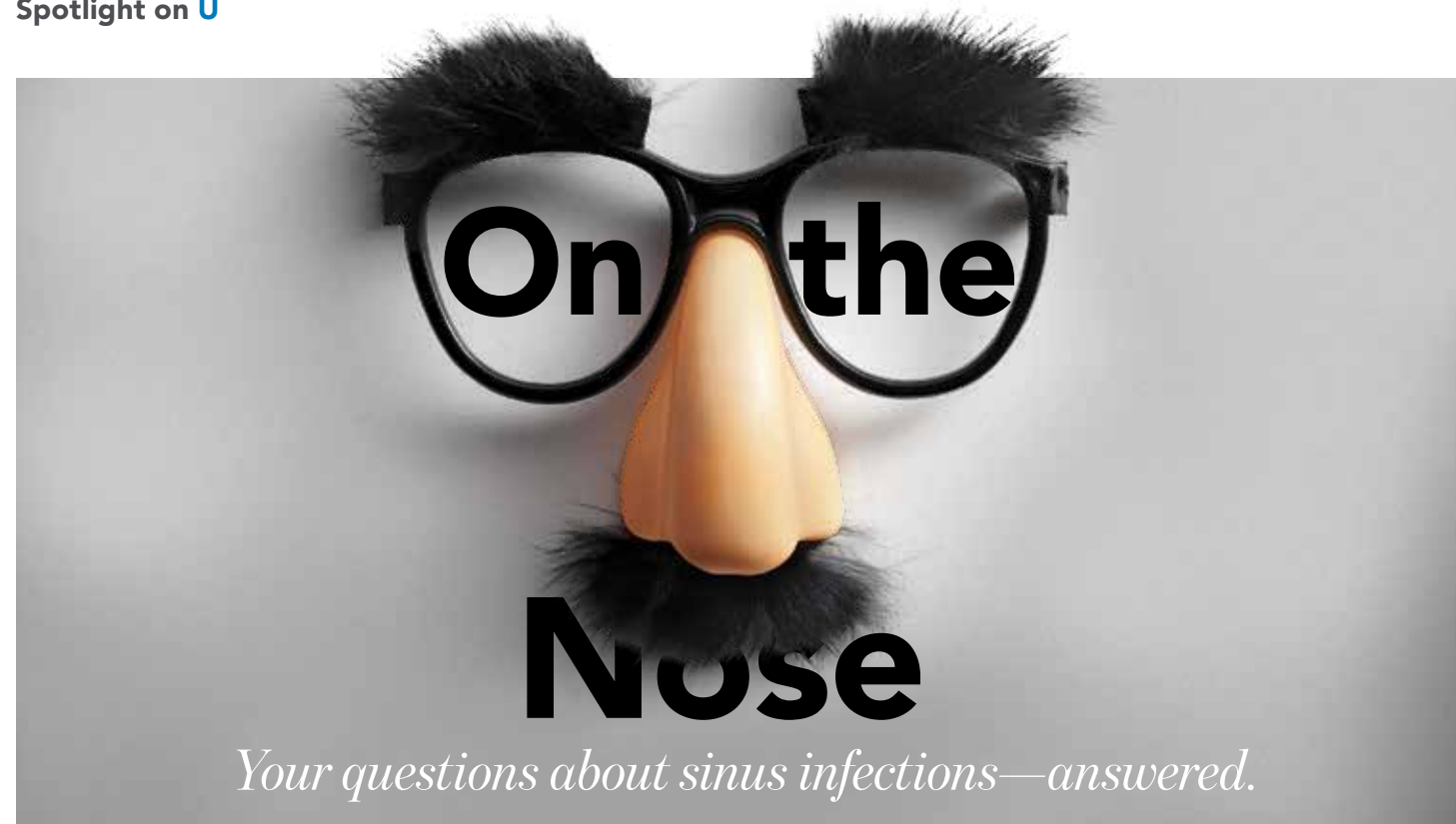


Suzanne Li, M.D.

Pediatric  
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Cold and flu season is well underway. If you have congestion that includes sinus pressure, you may have a cold—or it could be a sinus infection. How can you be sure that it's one or the other, and when is it time to make an appointment with your doctor?

**Carolyn Peart, M.D.**, a family medicine specialist with **Palisades Medical Center**, helps answer the five most Googled questions about nasal inflammation and sinus infections.



Carolyn Peart, M.D.  
Family medicine specialist  
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discharge, fever, congestion or pain that lasts more than 10 days warrants a trip to see your physician.

**Are sinus infections viral?**

Sinusitis can occur due to a viral infection. If excess mucus develops and cannot exit the body due to a blockage or nasal inflammation, it can cause a sinus infection. You may start with a viral cold that

doesn't clear up and then turns into a bacterial infection. Allergies can also lead to sinus infections, as can a deviated septum. When bacteria grows in the sinuses, it is a bacterial infection.

**Do you need antibiotics for a sinus infection?**

A viral sinus infection will likely resolve itself on its own, but it can take a few weeks to do so. If the sinus infection is caused by bacteria, it will likely require antibiotics in order to resolve. But antibiotics aren't a cure-all. They will not cure a sinus infection that was caused by a virus or an irritant in the air.

**Can sinus infections lead to ear infections?**

Yes. A sinus infection can cause fluid to be trapped in the ear behind the eardrum. Bacteria and viruses can grow and can cause an ear infection. It's especially important to get to the doctor if you're feeling pain or pressure in the ear. 🦠

**Go Online**  
Find a primary care doctor near you at [HMHforU.org/PrimaryCare](https://www.hmhforu.org/PrimaryCare).

CANCER CARE

# 5 Things an Oncologist Would Never Do

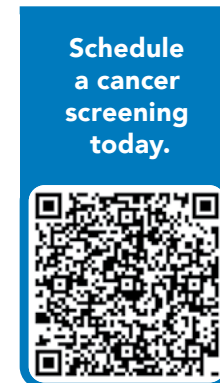
*Age and genetics are common cancer risk factors, but there are a number of ways to reduce your risk. To that end, our oncologist offers a few things he would never do.*

Two of the biggest risk factors for many types of cancers are age and genetics, but that doesn't mean it's all up to fate and time.

**Andrew Jennis, M.D.**, oncologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, says there are steps you can take to reduce your chances of a cancer diagnosis. To that end, he offers five things he would never do.



Andrew Jennis, M.D.  
Oncologist  
800-822-8905  
Hackensack



**1 I would never smoke cigarettes.**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of cancer. Nearly 9 out of 10 lung cancer deaths are caused by smoking. Smoking has also been linked to numerous other types of cancer. "Smoking can also cause head and neck cancer, bladder and esophageal cancer," Dr. Jennis says. If you need help quitting smoking, find a smoking cessation class near you: [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/Events).

**2 I would never skip using sunscreen.**

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States and is mainly caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet light, making it extremely preventable. Avoiding the sun is your best bet, but if you are going to be exposed, using a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher is recommended.

Any change in skin color means the skin has been damaged, so don't skip the sunscreen and make sure to reapply as necessary. "While it might not affect you right now, it's something that could affect you years later," Dr. Jennis says.

**3 I would never skip small opportunities for exercise.**

Exercise is vital to good health and combating obesity. But life is busy, and finding time to exercise can be challenging. Using small moments to sneak in some exercise can help.

Dr. Jennis suggests: "Take a walk during a lunch break, or bike to work if that's a possibility. Physical inactivity has been linked to colon, breast and uterine cancers, among others."

**4 I would never make red meat, processed meat or alcohol a regular part of my diet.**

Another factor in preventing obesity is having a healthy diet. Research suggests that working toward a plant-based diet and drinking less may reduce your risk for many types of cancer. In addition, according to the World Health Organization, there is evidence linking red meat consumption to colon cancer.

**5 I would never opt out of cancer screenings.**

Cancer screenings are important because they can detect cancer early, possibly before symptoms appear. Early detection increases the likelihood of effective treatment. If you have a family history of breast, prostate or colon cancer, your doctor may advise earlier screenings that could help provide you with a better outcome if you were diagnosed.

"Talk to your primary care doctor because screening recommendations can be based on your symptoms, lifestyle, age or family history," Dr. Jennis says. 🦠



Now in full remission, Tatiana Gonzalez (second from left) is enjoying every day with her family, talking walks and biking.

# Hope for Her Future

**Tatiana Gonzalez was diagnosed with stage 3 colon cancer at age 39. Comprehensive treatment at Hackensack University Medical Center is helping her achieve remission.**

As a postal carrier in Clifton, New Jersey, Tatiana Gonzalez, 42, walked 12 miles a day. However, in 2018 she found it too taxing physically and resigned from her job. “My knees hurt, and other parts of my body did, too,” she says. Not long afterward, she became severely constipated and at times couldn’t go to the bathroom without a laxative. Since she wasn’t doing as much walking, she figured her decreased activity was impacting her digestion.

In March 2019, Tatiana noticed blood in her stool and realized she should see her primary care doctor. He sent her to a gastroenterologist, who performed a colonoscopy.

The resulting diagnosis left Tatiana in shock, especially given her age—39 years old at the time. Tatiana had stage 3 colorectal cancer.

## Dealing With Cancer

Tatiana found **John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center** and **Andrew Jennis, M.D.**

Before Dr. Jennis could address the cancer, Tatiana first needed a colostomy (surgery that redirects the colon from its normal route, down toward the anus, to a new opening in the abdominal wall) to relieve a blockage. After that, she needed an ileostomy (where the small intestine is diverted through an opening in the abdomen) for the same reason and temporarily had to wear a colostomy bag to collect waste.

Tatiana then underwent several surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation therapy to treat the cancer. “Dr. Jennis explained each procedure along the way, three or four times if I needed it,

and brought in a translator because my English isn’t that great,” she says.

Her life has been totally upended. To bolster her three children’s spirits, she tells them: “We’re a team” and “I need you to be strong.”

Her diet is limited: She can no longer eat several foods she previously enjoyed, such as rice, beans and broccoli. “It’s trial and error,” she says, as she tries to find foods that won’t send her to the bathroom.

## A Hopeful Future

Dr. Jennis is hopeful: “There have been two successes with her treatment. One, her cancer was removed and she’s in remission. Hopefully she’ll stay that way. Two, we were able to save her rectum, so she didn’t need a permanent colostomy.”



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Donna McNamara, M.D.  
Breast oncologist  
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Hackensack

# Do Parabens Cause Cancer?

*A few studies have reported an association between parabens and breast cancer, but it’s too early to conclude that parabens cause breast cancer.*

While some studies have reported an association between parabens and breast cancer, the FDA has noted that the parabens used in cosmetics do not have an effect on human health, at this time.

Parabens are chemicals added to cosmetic and personal care products such as lotions, sunscreen, makeup and hair care products to increase the shelf-life of the product.

## Should you avoid using products that contain parabens?

Currently, there are no scientific studies to suggest that parabens cause breast cancer, especially at the levels to which we are exposed. “While some studies suggest that parabens may induce cancers in rat models, there are no studies, to date, that show low levels of parabens in cosmetics and hair products cause breast cancer in women,” says **Donna McNamara, M.D.**, breast oncologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

If you are concerned about your exposure to parabens or are at an elevated risk of breast cancer, there are many products on the market that are paraben-free.

## If you are worried about your exposure to parabens or your risk for breast cancer:

- ▶ Look for products labeled paraben-free.
- ▶ Get screened for breast cancer:
  - Women ages 40–44 have the option to start screening with a mammogram every year.
  - Women ages 45–54 should get mammograms every year.
  - Women age 55 and older can switch to a mammogram every other year or choose to continue annual mammograms. 🌟



Schedule a cancer screening at a location near you: [HMHforU.org/CancerScreen](https://www.HMHforU.org/CancerScreen).

# Look into

# Your Heart

*Screening saves lives. These advanced screening and imaging options give you a clear picture of your risk of heart disease or stroke.*

They say seeing is believing. That expression couldn't mean more than when doctors are able to visualize the heart, gauging its health or taking crucial next steps to save a life.

By offering a trio of screening and advanced cardiac imaging tests, Hackensack Meridian Health is empowered to do just that. The tools, AngioScreen®, CT Calcium Scoring scans and HeartFlow analysis, quickly and precisely detect narrowed or blocked arteries that can lead to a heart attack or stroke without invasive procedures. Since cardiovascular disease is the top killer of both men and women in the United States—and sometimes symptomless despite its presence—this is powerful knowledge.

“All of these technologies are part of a truly integrated program of cardiovascular care,” says **David Landers, M.D.**, interim director of the Division of Cardiology at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “We not only have this technology across the network, but our team's skill and expertise to use it in expert fashion.”



David Landers, M.D.  
Cardiologist  
800-822-8905  
Teaneck

## AngioScreen®

Anyone can receive an AngioScreen®, even those not at high risk or experiencing symptoms. “The goal is to identify people with cardiovascular disease who otherwise would not be seeking care with a cardiologist,” explains **Daniel Kiss, M.D.**, interventional cardiologist at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center** and AngioScreen medical director. “If we can do that, we can get them started on treatment early, whether that be medications or lifestyle changes, such as diet and exercise.”

### Here's how it works:

Within a 15-minute span, AngioScreen screens for heart and blood vessel disease by blending several distinct screenings and measurements. These include:

- ▶ Ultrasound of the carotid artery in the neck to scan for blockages and plaque buildup
- ▶ Peak systolic velocity (PSV) to gauge blood flow
- ▶ Ankle brachial index (ABI) to look for blockages in leg arteries
- ▶ Ultrasound to detect abdominal aortic aneurysm before it ruptures
- ▶ Modified EKG to show heart rhythm
- ▶ Blood pressure
- ▶ Pulse
- ▶ Body mass measurements

By learning about heart and blood vessel problems before a heart attack or stroke can occur, AngioScreen promotes a healthier, longer life. “The saddest thing is when you realize that someone who's otherwise relatively young, with no strong history of cardiovascular disease, had a major adverse event that could have been identified beforehand,” Dr. Kiss says.



Daniel Kiss, M.D.  
Interventional cardiologist  
800-822-8905  
Eatontown and Freehold

To find a location near you for AngioScreen, or to register, visit [HMHforU.org/FindAngioscreen](http://HMHforU.org/FindAngioscreen).

istock.com/Elena Kopusova

## CT Calcium Scoring

Even without cardiovascular disease symptoms such as chest pain or shortness of breath, some people are deemed at higher risk because of a combination of factors, including gender, age, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. A CT Calcium Scoring scan is a 10-minute scan performed at an imaging center that can help identify signs of heart disease.

### Here's how it works:

CT Calcium Scoring searches for calcium-containing, hardened plaque in the arteries surrounding the heart.

Patients with higher calcium scores have a greater risk for a heart attack, heart disease or stroke.

This score helps doctors decide if medications and lifestyle changes can minimize risk before a heart event might occur, or indicate that further diagnostic testing could be beneficial to identify blockages.

“With CT Calcium Scoring, now we have an additional risk scoring, which is considered more accurate than the calculations historically available,” Dr. Landers says. “This will help determine the value of possible preventive therapies or interventions.”

Visit [HMHforU.org/CTScore](http://HMHforU.org/CTScore) to schedule a CT Calcium Scoring scan.

## HeartFlow

Unlike other advanced cardiac imaging that screens for cardiovascular problems in people with no symptoms, HeartFlow comes to the forefront for those experiencing chest pain, shortness of breath or other signs. Crucially, HeartFlow builds on results from cardiac CT scans that yield concerning results, generating personalized, color-coded, 3-D images of a patient's coronary arteries without requiring additional hospital visits or separate tests.

Using this information, doctors can quantify a patient's individual risk of a heart attack over the next five years when a blockage has been identified, says **Saleem Husain, M.D.**, an interventional cardiologist at **JFK University Medical Center**. HeartFlow is the first and only noninvasive test that enables doctors to understand how narrowed or blocked vessels have already impacted blood flow to the heart—information otherwise available only with riskier, invasive procedures that carry complication risks such as bleeding, infection and stroke.



Saleem Husain, M.D.  
Interventional cardiologist  
800-822-8905  
Plainfield and Pistacaway

### Here's how it works:

When a doctor orders a cardiac CT scan, they may indicate an additional HeartFlow analysis if the results of the CT scan warrant it.

The patient's existing CT scan is then run through HeartFlow analysis, which provides additional information to determine the best course of treatment.

“HeartFlow is visual, so it gives a more quantitative analysis of cardiac CT images and the stenosis or blockage itself,” Dr. Husain says. “The goal is to see if the stenosis is significant enough to warrant some kind of intervention. Data shows that patients do much better over the next five years if we intervene.”

HeartFlow can also ease patient anxiety by demonstrating that some blood vessel blockages are not as serious as first suspected. “If your worry has been great, having a test that shows you a lesion isn't significant puts you at ease that you've done that further testing,” Dr. Husain says.

Visit [HMHforU.org/HeartFlow](http://HMHforU.org/HeartFlow) to learn more about HeartFlow.





We offer a number of programs to help keep our communities healthy. Topics range from general wellness to heart health, stroke, cancer care, women's health and more. View some featured events below.

For a full listing or to register, visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/Events) or call 800-560-9990.

# SchedUle

Here are just a few of the events & classes this February through April 2023

## Special Events

### Oh, Baby! Baby Expo at Mountainside

Expectant parents and those planning are invited to this in-person event! Learn how to create a birth plan and more about classes recommended for all new parents, and tour our Birthing Center. Physicians, team members and local organizations will be available to answer questions. Refreshments, prizes and giveaways will be provided. To register, visit [MountainsideHosp.com/BabyExpo](https://www.mountainsidehosp.com/BabyExpo) or call 800-560-9990.

Feb. 18, 10 a.m.–noon, Mountainside



## Childbirth/Maternity

**The Partner Plan** Learn how to support your partner during pregnancy.

Apr. 11, 6:30–7:30 p.m., virtual event

- ▶ **Infant Care and Safety Class** Feb. 13, Mar. 13 & Apr. 17, 7–9:30 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Breastfeeding Class** Feb. 22, Mar. 22 & Apr. 19, 7–10 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Prepared Childbirth Class** Feb. 25, Mar. 25 & Apr. 22, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Tour of the Birthing Center** Feb. 6 & 20, Mar. 6 & 20 and Apr. 3 & 17, 5:30–6:15 p.m., Mountainside
- ▶ **Tummy Time** Feb. 28, Mar. 28 & Apr. 25, noon–1 p.m., Palisades Medical Building Office, 7650 River Rd., Ste. 320, North Bergen, 201-520-4773 and [pmcpediatricrehab@hmhn.org](mailto:pmcpediatricrehab@hmhn.org)
- ▶ **Childbirth Preparation 2-Week Series** Jan. 21 & 28, Feb. 25 & Mar. 4 and Apr. 8 & 15, 10 a.m.–1 p.m., Palisades Medical Building Office, 7650 River Rd., Ste. 320, North Bergen
- ▶ **Basics of Breastfeeding** Feb. 22 & Mar. 22, 6:30–9 p.m., Palisades Medical Building Office, 7650 River Rd., Ste. 320, North Bergen
- ▶ **Ready, Set, Baby** Feb. 13 & Mar. 13, 6:30–8:30 p.m., Palisades Medical Building Office, 7650 River Rd., Ste. 320, North Bergen

**Hackensack University Medical Center**  
30 Prospect Avenue  
Hackensack  
800-560-9990

**Mountainside Medical Center**  
1 Bay Avenue  
Montclair  
888-973-4674

## HOSPITAL LOCATIONS

**Palisades Medical Center**  
7600 River Road  
North Bergen  
800-560-9990

**Pascack Valley Medical Center**  
250 Old Hook Road  
Westwood  
877-848-9355



## Cancer Care

### Moving Forward: Eat Well, Live Well Nutrition Program for Cancer Survivors

This program provides cancer survivors with simple tools to establish healthy eating and lifestyle habits. Learn to fall in love with fruits, vegetables and whole grains; prepare plant-based meals; and make peace with physical activity.

Feb. 2, 9, 16 & 23; Mar. 2, 9, 16 & 23; and Apr. 6, 13, 20 & 27; noon–1 p.m., virtual event

- ▶ **Nutrition and Colorectal Cancer Awareness** Mar. 22, noon–1:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Education Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

## Pediatrics

### Parent/Guardian Talks Should My Child and I Get Genetic Testing?

Learn the ins and outs of genetic testing, what is available, how to be tested and why you and/or your child should.

Feb. 23, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

- ▶ **Safe Sitter** Fee: \$40, virtual event. Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/Events) for upcoming dates
- ▶ **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Fee: \$15, virtual event. Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/Events) for upcoming dates

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## Trauma

**Stop the Bleed** This program raises awareness and teaches the community three quick actions to control serious bleeding.

Feb. 22, 1–2 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Education Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood



## Neuroscience

### Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls

Free eight-week fall prevention program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults.

Feb. 2, 9, 16 & 23 and Mar. 2, 9, 16 & 23, 10 a.m.–noon or Apr. 6, 13, 20 & 27 and May 4, 11, 18 & 25, 10 a.m.–noon, Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Education Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

- ▶ **Memory Training Four-week Course** Feb. 2, 9, 16 & 23, 1:30–3:30 p.m. or Apr. 5, 12, 19 & 26, 1:30–3:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Education Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

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## General Wellness

**Mind, Body, Spirit Seminar** Join this four-session seminar to learn tools to improve your diet and nutrition, be physically active and enhance your well-being with the goal of decreasing risk for illnesses such as cancer and promoting healthy aging.

Mar. 2, 9, 16 & 23, 1:30–3 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Education Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

- ▶ **Weight-loss Surgery** To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. To find a seminar near you, visit [HackensackMeridianHealth.org/WeightLoss](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/WeightLoss).
- ▶ **Support Groups** Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/SupportGroups](https://www.hmhforu.org/SupportGroups).

## Heart Health

**AngioScreen®** 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 color report of your findings, educational material and a consultation with a registered nurse. Special rate: \$49.95. Registration required.

Call or visit our website for dates, times and locations.

- ▶ **Hypertension and Cholesterol: What You Need to Know** Feb. 7, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event
- ▶ **Heart Healthy Eating** Feb. 8, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event
- ▶ **Cooking with Heart: the Mediterranean Diet** Feb. 8 & 15, noon–1:30 p.m. or Apr. 12 & 19, noon–1:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Education Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
- ▶ **Living with Heart Failure** Feb. 9, 6–7 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Is it Heartburn or Heart Attack?** Feb. 10, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event
- ▶ **AHA CPR Anytime** Feb. 22, noon–1 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Education Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood



# Community Cornerstone

*The impact of entrepreneur Alexander Duran's generosity is felt across the local community and Hackensack Meridian Health.*

Alexander Duran, of Franklin Lakes, New Jersey, is a staple in his local community—and at Hackensack Meridian Health.

He is an ardent and active supporter of the health care network's professionals. He has been a Palisades Medical Center Foundation Board Trustee for more than seven years and previously served on the hospital's Board of Governors.

He recently joined major donors in a notable financial campaign to upgrade the Emergency Department at Palisades Medical Center, where he receives care and also brings his mother. Now he's set his sights on expanding the reach of occupational therapy at the hospital.

"I want to honor the remarkable skills of the doctors in healing our patients, and the facilities where it happens," Mr. Duran says.

Adds Eduardo Plata, director of development for the Palisades Medical Center Foundation: "Mr. Duran has seen firsthand the benefits of medical care for the populations we serve, especially for our underserved and diverse patients and families. He provides genuine connections to the foundation so the hospital can grow its services and offerings, and continually looks for ways to support parents and families."

## A Family Affair

As CEO, Mr. Duran manages Duran Entities, which includes Ventanas Restaurant and Lounge in Fort Lee, and Son Cubano Restaurant and Bar Lounge in West New York.

When it comes to philanthropic giving, it's a family affair for the Durans. Mr. Duran's children, Travis, Tristan and Gabriella, all support their father's entrepreneurial and charitable endeavors. Duran Education Partners



Alexander Duran recently joined donors in a campaign to upgrade the Emergency Department at Palisades Medical Center, where he receives care and also brings his mother.

operates Sowing Seed School in Weehawken for early childhood development, and Mr. Duran's wife of 34 years, Marilyn, is the school's director. The Durans also maintain their Duran Scholarship Foundation at West New York's Memorial High School for students who demonstrate the most effort in educational pursuits.

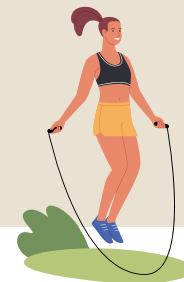
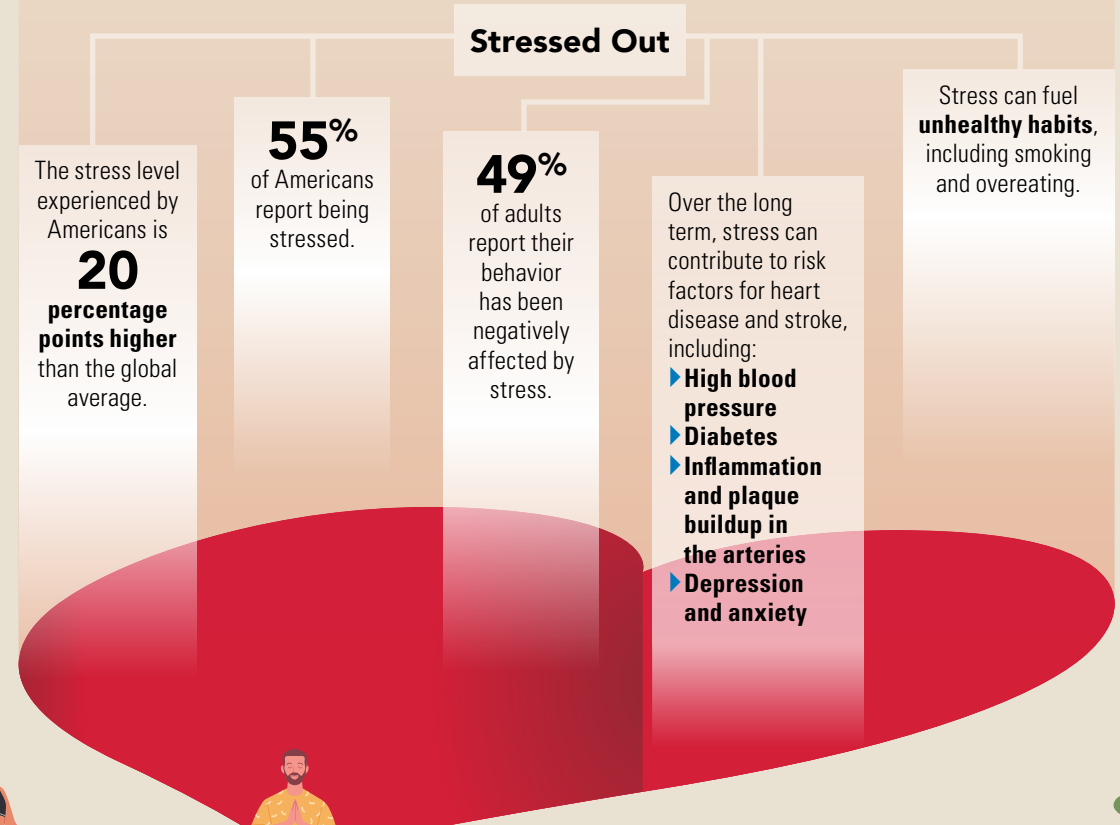
Lisa Iachetti, MBA, BSN, RN, president and chief hospital executive at Palisades, says: "The extraordinary pride Mr. Duran has for his community and its residents can be felt in all that he does. We are so proud to have him as our trustee and know we can continue to accomplish great things together to further the health of our patients, friends, families and residents of our surrounding communities." 🌟



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

# Stress Less

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. Excessive stress is one of the factors that can negatively impact heart health. Here's what you should know.



### Exercise

Physical activity reduces your body's production of the stress hormone cortisol and releases endorphins, the body's feel-good chemicals.



### Meditate

Yoga and meditation relax and strengthen your body while calming your mind.



### Take a Nap

Rest and relaxation ensure your body is physically ready to tackle the day's challenges.



### Laugh

Laughter relieves tension, relaxes your muscles and improves your mood and immune system.



### Get Outside

Turn off your devices and go on a hike. Fresh air, sunlight and nature are good for the soul.

## 5 Ways to Reduce Your Stress

**Go Online**

Should you be screened for heart disease? Find out at [HMHforU.org/HeartScreen](https://www.hmhforu.org/HeartScreen).

istock.com/dickcraft/Naazteya\_Dzivakova/lemono

Source: American Psychological Association



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## The Future of Health Care Is Here

**Hackensack University Medical Center's Helena Theurer Pavilion is now open and ready for you.**

From orthopedic and colorectal surgery to complex cardiac and neurosurgery cases, our experts are here to deliver high-quality, compassionate care in our thoughtfully designed, state-of-the-art Helena Theurer Pavilion. The nine-story surgical and critical-care tower features:

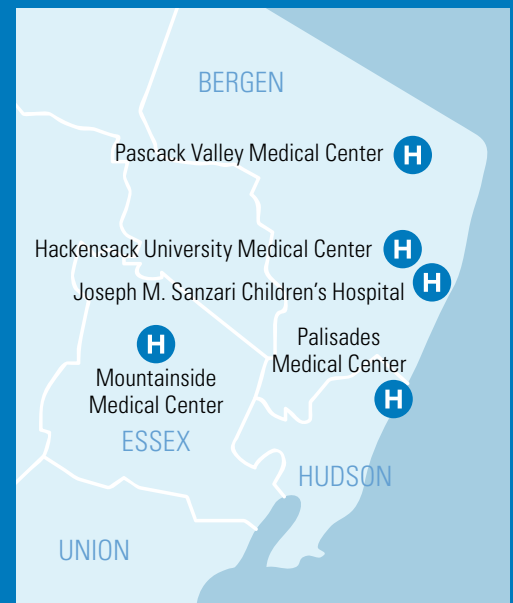
- ▶ All-private rooms with patient-friendly technology, natural light and NYC skyline views
- ▶ Leading-edge operating rooms with robotic surgical systems, advanced communications technology and intraoperative MRI
- ▶ Environmentally friendly, sustainable building materials and design
- ▶ A pandemic/health emergency-ready environment created with our community in mind

The Helena Theurer Pavilion includes the latest advancements in surgical and critical care, so you can access tomorrow's health care today.

Take a virtual tour or learn more at [HMHforU.org/HUMC](https://www.HMHforU.org/HUMC)

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

### *Our hospitals near you:*



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



Hackensack  
Meridian Health

KEEP GETTING BETTER

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### Resolve to Prioritize Your Health

Start off the new year right by getting up to date on screenings, vaccinations and annual visits. **Schedule an appointment online—on the go, any day, any time.**

Scan the QR code  
to schedule  
your annual  
wellness visit.

