

# HEALTH U

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Hackensack  
Meridian Health

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# *Your Health*



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[HMHforU.org/Spanish3](http://HMHforU.org/Spanish3)

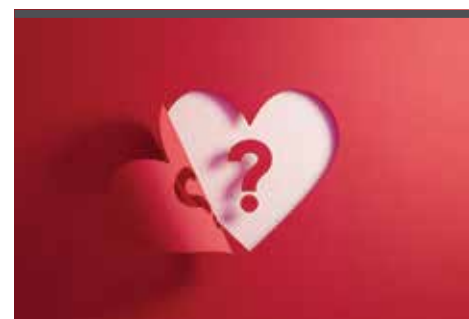
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Tune in to our HealthU podcast!  
 For more details, visit  
[HMHforU.org/Podcast](https://HMHforU.org/Podcast).



Are you at risk for heart disease?  
 Take our quiz and find out:  
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Learn how to prepare for your next doctor's appointment and download a helpful checklist at [HMHforU.org/Prepare](https://HMHforU.org/Prepare).



Why do your ears feel clogged? Find four common causes and treatments at [HMHforU.org/CloggedEars](https://HMHforU.org/CloggedEars).

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.



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# BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

## Let's Hear It for the Moms

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

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

In this issue, you can find simple tips for fitting meditation into a busy schedule (see page 6). You can also find an easy five-step recipe for chicken and red rice on page 7 to make any night of the week. Visit [HMHforU.org](https://www.hmhforu.org) for even more health tips and inspiration.

We've also made it easier than ever to get caught up on screenings and appointments. Schedule an appointment online—on the go, any day, any time—at [HMHforU.org/Appointment](https://www.hmhforu.org/Appointment).



New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy, an advocate for maternal and infant health, joined Bob Garrett at an event honoring Hackensack University Medical Center's Gold Seal of Approval® for Advanced Certification in Perinatal Care.

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

using data-driven strategies, improving cultural competencies and reducing inherent bias.

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

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

**Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO**  
Hackensack Meridian Health



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## Running 101

Whether you are new to running or training for your first marathon, get off on the right foot by avoiding common running injuries.

Heed these six tips from **Mitchell Stroh, D.O., FAAOS**, orthopedic surgeon fellowship-trained in sports medicine at **JFK University Medical Center, Old Bridge Medical Center** and **Raritan Bay Medical Center**.

#### Focus on good nutrition.

A good nutrition plan will help increase your energy level, prevent dehydration and optimize your recovery time. Carbohydrates, protein and fat are important in a runner's diet. Dr. Stroh also recommends eating carb snacks an hour before your run, which will fuel your body.

#### Use the 10 percent rule.

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

#### Wear the right running shoes.

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

#### Warm up before your run.

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

#### Don't run through pain.

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

#### Stay hydrated.

Drinking too much water can lead to stomach slosh, while drinking too little water can lead to dehydration. In general, it is recommended to drink 64 ounces of water every day. Drink water an hour before you run, and if you are running long distances, take a small sip of water every 20 minutes to keep hydrated.



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istock.com/Overearth/grivina

### Go Online

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

# Don't Wait ... Meditate

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

The idea of meditating during a busy day may seem unrealistic. But the busier you are, the more you may need meditation.

"Meditation can reduce stress levels, improve sleep quality, control anxiety, decrease blood pressure and more," says Paula O'Neill, MS, RN, HNB-BC, clinical program manager of Integrative Health & Medicine at **Raritan Bay Medical Center**. "Meditation is a simple practice that can be done anywhere, anytime. You don't need special tools or a place to meditate. All you need is a few minutes from your day."

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

**Get up and meditate.**

The best time to meditate is as soon as you wake up—even if it's just for five minutes. You might want to set the alarm a little earlier to squeeze this into your daily routine.

**Schedule a meeting with yourself.**

Schedule a 10-minute meditation break on your calendar or take 10 minutes during your lunch break. You can simply sit and meditate at your desk or workspace.

**Meditate while waiting.**

Instead of grabbing your phone and scrolling through social media feeds, meditate while waiting at a doctor's office or in line at the grocery store.

**Meditate while you commute.**

If you take public transportation, popping on your headphones and making use of guided meditation during your commute can be an amazing way to relax before you start your busy day or come home. If you drive to work, take an extra five minutes in the parking lot or your drive-way to center yourself.

**Meditate before bed.**

If you are still struggling to find time to meditate during the day, practice meditation before sleeping at night. Night can be a good time to relax your mind and body. As a result, you'll have a better sleep.

Watch a demonstration of three calming breathing exercises.



## Take Your Meditation to the Next Level

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

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

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

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

## How Long Are Leftovers Good?

After a big meal or party, it's common to snack on leftovers in the days following. However, leftovers should be eaten within a week of being prepared. Any longer and you may increase your risk of contracting a foodborne illness, such as salmonella, E. coli or listeria.

We talked to Lauren Catangay, RD, food service and nutrition manager at **JFK University Medical Center**, about best practices for eating leftover food. Here's what she had to say:

**The "sniff test" doesn't work.** Many times harmful bacteria will not alter the look, taste or smell of food. Refrigeration slows the growth of bacteria but does not stop it entirely. When food is refrigerated for long periods of time, these bacteria can grow enough to cause illness. Leftovers can be stored for only seven days if they are held at 41° or lower. Food must be discarded after that date. Label and date your leftovers in order to know when you need to get rid of them.

**Pathogens grow quickly** when food is left at room temperature. Bacteria grow rapidly between 41° and 135°, a range known as the temperature danger zone. You should limit how long you keep food at this temperature. Unless you are consuming the food immediately, it is best to use chafing dishes or cool plates to keep food at the right temperature. If you don't have these items, make sure food is served, stored or thrown away within four hours.

**Freeze leftovers to make them last.** If you are not going to eat your leftovers within a week, freeze them. Freezing food further slows the growth of bacteria, so you have much more time to enjoy the food. Frozen food typically lasts three to four months.

**Freeze food in single-serve portions.** You may be more likely to eat your leftovers if meals are quick and easy to defrost. You can use an ice cube tray to freeze liquids or soups for later.



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



## Chicken with Red Rice and Spice

Serves 4

### Ingredients

- 1 cup brown rice
- 1 14-ounce can low-sodium chicken broth, divided (1 cup, 1/3 cup)
- 1 cup water
- 1/2 cup tomato sauce (1/2 of an 8-ounce can)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 large green bell pepper, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 large red bell pepper, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 1/2 teaspoons paprika
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or more to taste
- 1 1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1 cup frozen peas, thawed
- 12 oz. skinless, boneless chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- Black pepper to taste

### Steps

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

### Nutritional Information

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

### Seasoned Cook

Make extra servings to have leftovers the next day. Serve with fruit salad, which is a refreshing contrast to the spicy chicken.

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



# Are canned foods healthy?

Geanella Vera-Avellan weighs in:

Canned foods definitely can be healthy and a great way to get key nutrients. Just be mindful to read the nutrition fact labels. When foods are canned, many use some kind of salt or sugar to act as a preservative. So when shopping, look for these terms:



- ▶ Sodium free, low sodium or no salt added for vegetables and beans
  - ▶ Canned in water, canned in its own juices or no sugar added for fruits
- Keep in mind that while some canned goods can last for years, others like canned ham and seafood are not safe at room temperature. Check labels for "keep refrigerated" as well as use-by dates.

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

# How can I manage my spring allergies?

Nripen Dontineni, M.D., weighs in:

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

**Check daily pollen counts, and stay indoors when they are high.**

Pollen count varies throughout the day and is usually higher in the morning. So skip that morning walk and instead venture outdoors in the late afternoon.

**Take a shower immediately after working or playing outdoors.**

This will help reduce the spread of pollen on your sofa, on your bed and in other common areas in your home.

**Wear a hat and sunglasses outside.**

A hat and sunglasses will protect your face and eyes from pollen in the air.

**Keep your windows closed.**

Instead of opening your windows, turn on your air conditioner to circulate the air. This is also recommended in the car.



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

istock.com/Aamulya/Alekssei Marozov

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# Does smoking weed cause cancer?

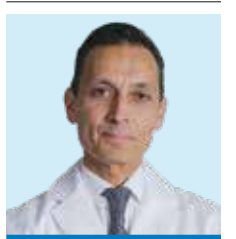
Faiz Bhora, M.D., weighs in:

Researchers are unsure if smoking cannabis causes lung cancer; more research is needed. Some studies suggest a possible increased risk, while others do not.

We know that inhaling any kind of smoke irritates the lungs. Smoking weed may increase the risk of developing upper-respiratory infections, bronchitis or pneumonia.

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

Weed has been shown to contain tar, similar to what's found in cigarettes. In fact, one study suggests that weed may introduce four times more tar to the lungs than cigarettes.



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

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

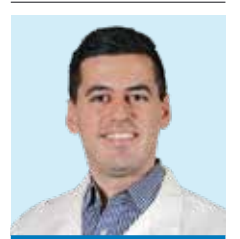
Anthony G. Conte, M.D., weighs in:

If you have a pinched nerve, you may experience sudden or progressive pain that can involve your back and radiate down your arms or legs, as well as weakness or numbness.

To determine whether you have a pinched nerve or something else, speak with a primary care doctor, neurologist or neurosurgeon. The doctor will ask you questions about your pain and medical history, and do a physical examination to determine if you have a pinched nerve or another issue.

If your doctor suspects a pinched nerve, you will have an MRI, a type of imaging that can highlight where the nerve might be compressed.

The pain could be happening for a variety of reasons including peripheral neuropathy, disc herniation or arthritic changes in the spine. Your doctor will look for focused areas of weakness and correlate these areas with the associated nerves, as well as rule out other conditions before diagnosing a pinched nerve.



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



# Doctor Spotlight

*Khadija Farooq, D.O., relocated to New Jersey to be close to family and loves that her daughter gets to grow up around cousins.*



## **KHADIJA FAROOQ, D.O.**

### **Family medicine**

Hackensack Meridian Medical Group—Old Bridge

Because she gets so much joy from her own extended family, Khadija Farooq, D.O., family medicine is a perfect match for her medical specialty. Having relocated from Chicago to New Jersey in 2022, Dr. Farooq, a new mother herself, practices at Hackensack Meridian Medical Group—Old Bridge.

Dr. Farooq speaks English as well as Urdu and Hindi, which is fortunate, she says, because New Jersey is such a diverse state. “Getting the opportunity to use languages I know with my patients has been so helpful,” she says.

### **What drew you to New Jersey?**

I’m from Crown Point, Indiana, but my husband is from the East Coast, and we have a 3-month-old daughter. With a lot of our family living here, and everyone having kids, it means lots of cousins. It’s so fun to see our little one interact with the others.

### **Did you always want to be a family medicine doctor?**

I worked as an emergency room scribe my last year of undergraduate school, and I became fascinated with medicine then. I feel we get to help people in their time of need and that we can help them find the most joy in their lives. I can see an entire family, from the very youngest member to the oldest. Knowing that family as a whole, and following up with the same people, means I develop good relationships

and rapport with them. That inspires me to keep moving forward in a job I love.

### **You’re a connoisseur of great coffee shops in the area. What’s brewing around here now?**

My husband and I try new coffee shops on Sundays, and my favorite drink is a cold brew with dark coffee and pistachio-flavored sweet foam. We discovered Penstock Coffee Roasters in Highland Park and Maman in Princeton.

### **What else do you do for fun?**

We like to play board games like Codenames, Sequence and Scrabble. We enjoy hiking, especially in Sedona, Arizona. My husband cooks, and we like to try something new when he does. I also do photography and like to read.

Before I had my daughter, I rode my Peloton bike a lot and loved listening to music when riding. You can ride to specific artists, with tracks from Beyoncé, or holiday music. I want to get back to that soon. 🎧

# Spotlight on U

health topics that matter the most to you

## **Spring Clean Your Health**

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

### **Spending too much time sedentary.**

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

### **Not drinking enough water.**

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

### **Screen time before bed.**

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



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

istock.com/DGM007

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



# Myth-busters: Kids and Concussion



*Our pediatric neurology expert breaks down five common myths you might have about kids and concussion.*

Before our young ones take the field, it is important to understand concussion risks for kids. **Savitra Bandari, M.D.**, pediatric neurologist at **JFK University Medical Center**, shared her expertise to debunk a few common misconceptions.



Savitra Bandari, M.D.  
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**Myth 3: Most concussions are the same and will heal in a similar time frame.**

“Concussions are like snowflakes: No two are alike,” Dr. Bandari notes. “Even if one child has two concussions, they may be totally different. And each child can have a different combination of symptoms.” Symptoms can last for

days, weeks or even longer. Some post-concussion syndrome symptoms are pressure in the head, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, blurry or double vision, sensitivity to light or noise, feeling tired or sluggish, difficulty paying attention, memory problems, confusion, sleep problems, mood changes and sometimes depression.

**Myth 4: Wearing a helmet offers total protection from concussions.**

“Even if someone is wearing a helmet, it does not fully protect them from getting a concussion. Wearing a helmet will protect the exterior of your head, but it does not protect the inside—your brain is still free to move about,” Dr. Bandari says. “That being said, you should still always wear a helmet, as it will absorb any impact energy.”

**Myth 1: It is not a concussion unless consciousness is lost.**

“While concussion can result in a loss of consciousness, loss of consciousness is seen in less than 10 percent of cases,” notes Dr. Bandari. “Even if the child looks fine and has not lost consciousness, you should not ignore the subtle signs of injury.”

**Myth 2: Children who suffer a traumatic brain injury heal faster than adults.**

“Children actually take longer to heal from a concussion, and the younger the age of the child, the more vulnerable the brain is,” advises Dr. Bandari. “Children go through significant developments from birth until 18 years of age. Most people don’t realize that a child’s risk is even greater than adults—a child’s brain is smaller, and there is more space to move freely about the skull, which causes more damage.”

## 3 Reasons Kids Should Wear Helmets

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

**1 Helmets Reduce the Risk of Serious Injury or Death.**

Falls from bikes and collisions with cars may cause serious injury or death. Wearing a helmet reduces this risk.

**A study published in 2018 found that bike helmets reduced:**

- Head injuries by **48%**
- Serious head injuries by **60%**
- Traumatic brain injuries by **53%**
- Injuries to the face by **23%**
- Number of seriously injured or killed cyclists by **34%**

**2 Helmets Absorb Some of the Energy Produced by Impact.**

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

**3 Helmets Increase Visibility on the Road.**

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



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

**Myth 5: If my child has a concussion, they should be kept out of school and sports for one to two weeks.**

“The amount of recovery time needed will be unique to the patient and unique to each injury. Older guidelines used to recommend keeping a child out of school and sports for one to two weeks, but that time frame does not consider the severity of the concussion, or the child,” shares Dr. Bandari.

If your child has experienced a head injury, Dr. Bandari offers a rule of thumb for allowing them to return to sports: “If in doubt, sit them out. If a child gets a second concussion before recovering from a first, there is a severe risk for permanent brain damage.”

**Go Online**  
Learn more about our pediatric concussion team at [HMHforU.org/KidsConcussion](http://HMHforU.org/KidsConcussion).



# TV Timeout

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

Streaming services make it easy to binge-watch hours upon hours of television. It's a good way to kill time, but watching too much TV often has the potential of becoming an unhealthy habit.

While much research has been done on television's effects on children, adults have often been left out of these data collections. It's no surprise that the sedentary behavior of binge-watching TV can negatively impact our physical health, but recent studies show it's also a bad habit for long-term brain health and function.

## TV's Effect on Cognitive Impairment

"Researchers have found that moderate to high television viewing during midlife is associated with increased memory loss and decreased fine motor skills," explains Vanessa C. Milano, M.D., neurosurgeon at JFK University Medical Center. Studies also have found a link between high television consumption and the onset of depression.

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

"Being more active and avoiding sedentary behaviors, such as binge-watching television, is a necessary lifestyle change for adults to make to maintain their brain health," says Dr. Milano.

## Four M's of Mental Fitness

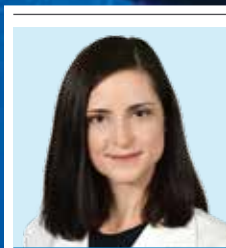
Dr. Milano suggests that middle-aged adults remember the four M's of mental fitness: what matters, mobility, mental stimulation and medication. These serve as reminders of simple ways to tend to your mental and cognitive health while minimizing sedentary behaviors.

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

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

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

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



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# What's the Risk?



*Learn about five commonly used products and the potential cancer risk they pose.*

When it comes to cancer, we know that lifestyle choices, such as smoking and sun exposure, can lead to cancer.

But what many don't know is that other lifestyle choices, such as how we sleep and what we buy, can indirectly increase our risk.

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



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

**1 Nonstick Cookware**  
Nonstick cookware can be coated in potential toxins. To reduce your risk, opt for a cast-iron pan that can last a lifetime, or use nonstick pans at a low heat to lessen the release of these chemicals.

**2 Mattresses**  
Manufacturers often add flame retardants to furnishings to slow the spread of household fires, meaning many mattresses are coated in those chemicals that we breathe in while sleeping.

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences states that prolonged exposure to flame retardants can lead to different types of cancer and reproductive issues, and can impact child development. Before panicking and purchasing a new mattress, note that your current one has likely been off-gassed (when the gas that was contained in the material is released) since you bought it.

When it's time to replace it, look for mattresses made without flame retardants, or increase ventilation in the room for your new mattress to off-gas. One way to increase ventilation is to open the windows and put on a fan.

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

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

**5 Personal Care Products**  
Cosmetics, skincare and other personal care products can contain harmful chemicals such as:

- ▶ Parabens
- ▶ Parfum (fragrance ingredients)
- ▶ Formaldehyde
- ▶ Coal tar dyes
- ▶ Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) or butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT)
- ▶ Diethanolamine (DEA)
- ▶ Polyethylene glycols
- ▶ Petroleum jelly
- ▶ Silicones
- ▶ Sodium laureth sulfate (SLS)
- ▶ Triclosan

If you want to reduce your cancer risk, stick to a minimal routine with products that use simple ingredients. ⚙️

## Go Online

Learn how geriatric medicine addresses the unique needs of older adults at [HMHforU.org/MemoryHelp](https://www.hmhforu.org/MemoryHelp).



# Loosen Up



## Is the Hip Mobility Challenge Safe?

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

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

Dr. Shustorovich says this challenge is a good benchmark to see truly how flexible you are. For those who can complete it, it shows that your hip joints can move in the more extreme ranges of motion, which not everyone can do.

iStock.com/Egoitz Bengoetxea Iguaran

How healthy are your hips and knees? Take our health risk assessment.



### Signs You May Have Tight Hips

Look for these symptoms:

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

If any of these symptoms interfere with your daily life, reach out to your doctor to talk about it.

### Movements to Test Hip Flexibility

Dr. Shustorovich shared a few stretches to test your hip mobility:

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

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

### Best Ways to Treat Tight Hips

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

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

iStock.com/AndreyPopov



Alexander Shustorovich, D.O.

Interventional pain medicine doctor

800-822-8905

Edison

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

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

“Everything in the body works together and is connected. If you have joint pain in one area, that doesn’t mean it is the only joint involved or causing that issue,” says interventional pain medicine doctor **Alexander Shustorovich, D.O.** “For example, if you have back pain, it could be from tightness in the hip muscles.”

## Weight off Her Shoulder



Joshua Zimmerman, M.D.

Orthopedic surgeon

800-822-8905

Old Bridge

**Thanks to successful shoulder surgery, Janya Bhava can return to her favorite pastimes of Indian dancing and cooking.**

Indian dancing has always been a soul-nourishing piece of Janya Bhava’s life. So giving it up—even temporarily—was nearly as painful for the East Brunswick, New Jersey, woman as the reason: a torn rotator cuff in her right shoulder.

Injured about a decade ago when the now 62-year-old pulled a mattress across the floor, Janya’s shoulder continued to throb for years, also thwarting the avid cook’s ability to lift heavy pans and roll out dough. Several rounds of physical and massage therapy didn’t provide lasting relief, and Janya became increasingly distressed. She turned to **Joshua Zimmerman, M.D.**, orthopedic surgeon at Hackensack Meridian Medical Group—Old Bridge.

“Janya had a lot of daily problems with her shoulder, but one of the biggest things bothering her was she couldn’t sleep because of the pain,” Dr. Zimmerman explains. “That’s often the line in the sand drawn by people with shoulder problems, who decide to address it after they can’t sleep through the night.”

### Treating Dueling Conditions

Pain from a torn rotator cuff can be intense, arriving suddenly after an injury—as in Janya’s case—or building over time if the condition develops from normal wear-and-tear.

Janya’s situation was complicated by a dueling condition called adhesive capsulitis, better known as frozen shoulder. In addition to her rotator cuff tear, bands of tissue had formed in her shoulder that left it stiff and useless. Dr. Zimmerman treated both conditions with the surgery.

“Dr. Zimmerman explained everything he would do during the surgery and put me at ease,” says the grandmother of two. During the same-day procedure, Dr. Zimmerman vaporized the tight tissue in Janya’s shoulder using a heated electrode. Next, he repaired the rotator cuff tear by anchoring the structure to the head of the humerus (upper arm) bone with surgical screws.

### Happily Raising Her Hands

Janya began physical therapy consisting of heat and ice packs and range-of-motion exercises four weeks after surgery. As Dr. Zimmerman anticipated, she needed a follow-up procedure about four months later to manipulate her frozen shoulder to maximize its ability to move in all directions.

“Even though her rotator cuff repair was successful, Janya was still stiff,” Dr. Zimmerman. “She had a tricky combination of problems, but most people like her get to a point where they can return to their normal daily activities. As we always discuss with patients, this is not an overnight success.”

Within months of both procedures, Janya was back to cooking in her kitchen and dancing in traditional Indian dress. Nearly three years later, she’s thrilled to play with her active toddler grandson and spar in table tennis with her daughter. “Thanks to Dr. Zimmerman, this is all possible,” she says. “He’s an incredible doctor. I felt desperate before my surgery because I suffered for a long time. Now I can do many things I wasn’t able to before, just because I can raise my hands.”



HEART HEALTH



# A Hearty Plate

*Our expert shares the top fruits and vegetables to choose for heart health this spring.*

“We should fill our plates with vegetables, which are good for your heart and rich in vitamins and antioxidants,” says **Emad Barsoum, M.D., FACC**, interventional cardiologist at **JFK University Medical Center**. “Excess carbohydrate intake increases the risk of diabetes, obesity and ischemic heart disease. Any fruit is better than processed foods, but some do contain more sugar than others.”

**Dr. Barsoum recommends these fruits and vegetables during the springtime:**

**Leafy green vegetables**

These include broccoli, swiss chard, kale, Brussels sprouts, lettuce, spinach, bok choy and asparagus. “It’s always a good idea to ‘go green’ when it comes to your



Emad Barsoum, M.D., FACC  
Interventional cardiologist  
800-822-8905  
Plainfield

vegetables,” Dr. Barsoum says. “Keep in mind that some leafy green vegetables are high in vitamin K, which can counteract the effects of blood thinners. So consult with your cardiologist before making any big food shifts.”

**Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries**

“Berries are our go-to for heart-healthy fruits. Apples are also a good option and are lower in sugar than fruits like pineapples or bananas,” Dr. Barsoum says. “But if it comes down to it, and you’re choosing between a banana and a granola bar, go with the banana.”

**Bell peppers, tomatoes, summer squash, carrots**

“Red, yellow and orange vegetables are full of carotenoids, fiber and vitamins that can improve your heart health,” Dr. Barsoum says.

**When Fresh Isn’t Possible**

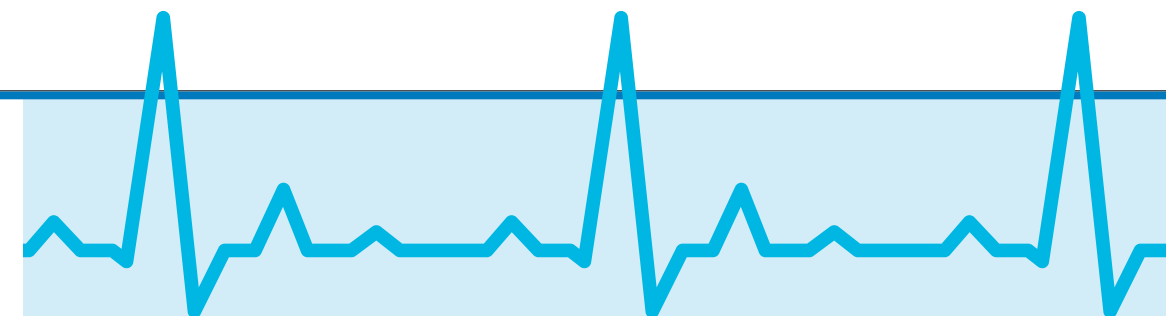
If you aren’t able to choose fresh fruits and vegetables, you can still make heart-healthy choices at the grocery store or market. Dr. Barsoum offers a few tips:

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

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

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

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



## Why Your Heart Rate Is High

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

Having an increased heart rate isn’t a health condition in and of itself. It’s a symptom caused by any number of circumstances. It may be a reaction to something that’s happening in your life, or it may be caused by a health condition. “When you feel your heart pounding in your chest unexpectedly, don’t jump to conclusions that there’s something wrong with your heart. But if the problem continues without an explainable and simple cause, see a doctor to discuss your concerns,” says **Sheila Sahni, M.D.**, cardiologist at **JFK University Medical Center**.

- Dr. Sahni offers six reasons your heart rate might be high, not related to your heart:
- ▶ **Stress.** When your body responds to something stressful, frightening or upsetting, you may get a jolt of adrenaline, which increases your heart rate.
  - ▶ **Overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism).** Having too much thyroid hormone in your system makes your heart beat faster than it should, increasing your heart rate.
  - ▶ **Anemia.** If you have anemia, you don’t have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen to your organs. Your heart may beat more rapidly to compensate.
  - ▶ **Medication side effects.** A number of drugs may cause your heart rate to increase, including some medications that treat colds, asthma, anxiety, depression and high blood pressure.

- ▶ **Addictive substances.** Caffeine, cigarettes and high levels of alcohol may cause your heart rate to rise after you use those substances. Additionally, illegal drugs like cocaine may also have this effect on your heart rate.
- ▶ **Strenuous physical activity.** When you exert more than your body is prepared for, the heart rate increases to meet the higher demand.

**Heart Conditions That Cause a High Heart Rate**

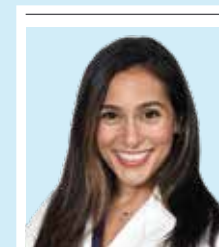
Heart conditions that may cause an elevated heart rate include:

- ▶ Heart failure
  - ▶ Heart rhythm problems
  - ▶ Heart valve problems
  - ▶ Coronary artery disease
  - ▶ Scar tissue that forms after heart surgery
- If you have been diagnosed with a heart condition and you’ve noticed that your heart rate has become higher than usual, make an appointment to talk to your doctor about the change.

**When to Seek Emergency Care**

Get immediate medical help if your heart rate seems too high and you have these symptoms:

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



Sheila Sahni, M.D.  
Cardiologist  
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Clark, Fords and Orange

**Go Online**

Are you at risk of heart disease? Schedule a screening at **HMHforU.org/HeartScreen**.



# Walk to Remember

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



Physical activity has an important impact on brain health, says **Martin Herman, M.D.**, neurologist at **JFK University Medical Center**. “Being active doesn’t just benefit your body. It also can improve your brain health and mood,” he says.

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

## How Does Walking Lower Dementia Risk?

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

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

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



Martin Herman, M.D.  
Neurologist  
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Edison

## How to Get More Steps

Try these ideas to increase your step count:

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

iStock.com/Hanna Siemashka

## Innovation *transforming medical research into treatments*



# It Takes a Village

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

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

## PingPongParkinson®

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

iStock.com/Ponomarova\_Maria

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

## Parkinson’s Wellness Program

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

## Go Online

Learn about our comprehensive treatment for dementia and memory loss disorders at [HMHforU.org/MemoryLoss](http://HMHforU.org/MemoryLoss).



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

**Why It Helps:** The program empowers patients to develop and meet their own individual goals, which can range from scaling back medication dosages to avoiding falls, improving voice quality or just functioning better during daily activities. SPEAK OUT! combines both education and one-on-one speech therapy, while LOUD Crowd promotes accountability, camaraderie and encouragement through group sessions.

### Rock Steady Boxing

**What It Is:** Rock Steady Boxing is a nonprofit Parkinson's wellness exercise program that uses a surprising technique—noncontact boxing—to support people with Parkinson's disease.



Rock Steady Boxing helps patients with Parkinson's improve speed, agility, hand-eye coordination and more.

Its regimen was largely adapted from boxing drills, helping patients beat back the “opponent” with rigorous exercises. **Why It Helps:** The exercises focus on improving speed, agility, hand-eye coordination, footwork and overall strength to empower people with Parkinson's and instill a renewed sense of hope.

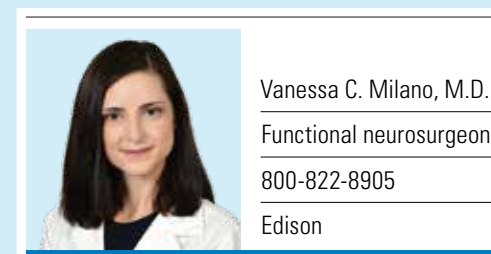
### ParkinSINGS

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

## New Hope for Parkinson's

Learn about innovative new technologies for diagnosing and treating patients with Parkinson's disease.

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



Vanessa C. Milano, M.D.  
Functional neurosurgeon  
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Edison

### DaTscan

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

#### Here's how it works:

► **DaTscan Injection:** A dose of DaTscan is injected into the bloodstream. It travels to the brain and attaches to the dopamine transporter.

#### ► Visualization of Dopamine Levels:

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

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

### HiFU (High-intensity Focused Ultrasound or FUS)

Medications for Parkinson's disease are always the first treatments offered. But sometimes drug therapies don't work well enough to control tremors, or they leave patients with severe side effects. These patients may find relief from HiFU, which uses sound waves to target areas in the brain responsible for tremors. Hackensack Meridian Health is the only network in New Jersey to offer HiFU: **Hackensack University Medical Center** offers it, **Jersey Shore University Medical Center** will begin offering it in summer 2023, and patients may be evaluated at **JFK University Medical Center** to see if they are a candidate.

#### Here's how it works:

► **MRI Imaging:** While patients lie on an MRI table, doctors use MRI images to guide the therapy.

► **Sound Waves:** HiFU destroys areas in the brain responsible for tremors by aiming about 1,000 sources of ultrasound at them, raising the temperature of the tissue and short-circuiting tremor signals.

► **Instant Tremor Reduction:** This incision-free form of surgery can instantly and dramatically reduce or stop tremors for patients with Parkinson's disease as well as essential tremor.

When HiFU was first approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), patients could only have the procedure performed on one side of their brain, leaving them with tremors on the untreated side. But the FDA recently approved HiFU for use on the second side of the brain nine months after the first procedure, so Parkinson's patients will have the chance to eventually become tremor-free.

### Deep Brain Stimulation

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

#### Here's how it works:

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

► **Blocks Out Faulty Nerve Signals:** When the neurostimulator device, often described as a pacemaker for the brain, is switched on several weeks after surgery—allowing patients time to heal—tremors and other Parkinson's symptoms are silenced by a type of “white noise” that interrupts faulty nerve signals.

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

Learn more about these and other technologies and treatments for Parkinson's disease at [HMHforU.org/Parkinsons](https://www.hmhforu.org/Parkinsons).

### Smartphone Apps

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

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

tremor frequency and abnormal movements that persist after medication use.

**Why It Helps:** At the touch of a button, these smartphone apps connect Parkinson's patients with information and resources that can help monitor symptoms and tweak certain therapies. 📱

### Go Online

To learn more about any of these programs, as well as other rehabilitative services for patients with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders, visit [HMHforU.org/ParkinsonsRehab](https://www.hmhforu.org/ParkinsonsRehab).





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://HMHforU.org/Events) or call 800-560-9990.

# SchedUle

Here are just a few of the events & classes this May through July 2023

## Special Events



**Stroke: The Latest Treatments and Technologies** May is National Stroke Month. Learn how to B.E.F.A.S.T., and know the signs, symptoms and latest technologies. Speaker: Siddhart Mehta, M.D.  
May 4, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event



**Grillin' and Chillin' Cooking Demo** Join our registered dietitian and chef, and learn heart-healthy tips for summer grilling.  
June 20, 11 a.m.–1 p.m., Bayshore Conf. Rm. A & B

**Mental Health Month Webinar: Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)** Join Eric Alcera, M.D., and Muhammed Abbas, M.D., for a lively and enlightening presentation about the most misunderstood treatment in the field of mental health and psychiatry.  
May 11, 5–6 p.m., virtual event



**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 and K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital**  
1945 Route 33  
Neptune

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

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

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

**Raritan Bay Medical Center**  
530 New Brunswick Ave.  
Perth Amboy

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

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

## HOSPITAL LOCATIONS



## Behavioral Health

**Strengthen the Mind Body Connection** Learn about the connections between our mental and physical health and how we can improve our overall well-being.  
May 24, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Stress Management** June 5, 7–8 p.m., virtual event



## Diabetes

**Managing Diabetes** Our certified diabetes educator will provide tips on how to manage your diabetes.  
June 7, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

► **Take Control of Your Health, Diabetes** Six-week evidence-based workshop. June 14–July 19, 1–3 p.m., Cullen Recreation Center, 1776 Union Ave., Hazlet

## Neuroscience

**Pain and Parkinson's Disease** Join Vanessa C. Milano, M.D., as she discusses the top causes of pain in people with Parkinson's and ways to manage it.  
May 11, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

► **10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease** June 15, 4–5 p.m., Cullen Recreation Center, 1776 Union Ave., Hazlet

## Cancer Care

**Plant-Based Eating and Cancer** This program provides an overview of the health benefits of eating more plants and simple guidelines for doing so, including resources to make the journey easy and delicious.  
May 18, 2–3 p.m., virtual event

► **Stop Smoking with Hypnosis** May 10 & July 12, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Obesity and Cancer** Speaker: Dena G. Arumugam, M.D., May 24, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

► **Oncology: Screening and Staying Active** Speaker: Karim ElSahwi, M.D., June 28, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

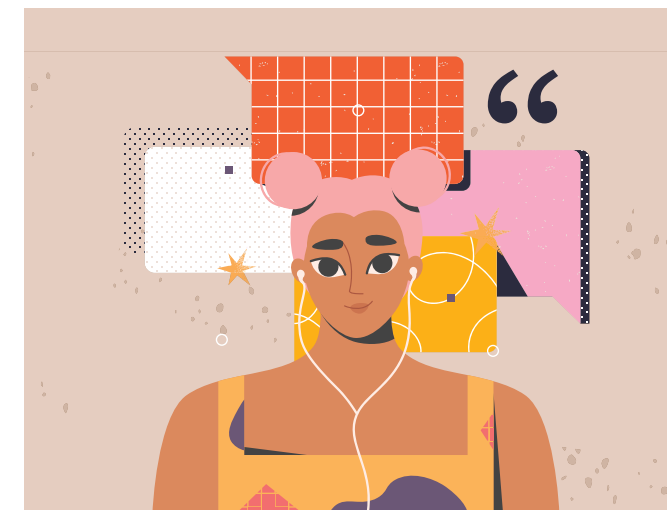


## Heart Health

**Living with Heart Failure** Learn how to maximize your quality of life while living with heart failure.  
May 10, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

► **Angioscreen** Special rate: \$49.95. Registration required. Call for dates, times and locations.

► **Chest Pain and Risk Factors** June 8, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event



## Pediatrics

**Parent/Guardian Talks**  
**Body Image & Hot Topics** Join Heather L. Appelbaum, M.D., and Jennifer L. Northridge, M.D., as they discuss your preteens' and teens' bodies and body image, focusing on the body as a whole. They will share tips on how to have those challenging but necessary conversations.  
May 18, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Safe Sitter** Fee: \$40, virtual event. Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://HMHforU.org/Events) for upcoming dates.

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

## General Wellness

**Health Fair** Free health screenings, education, information and more.  
May 17, 10 a.m.–1 p.m., Cullen Recreation Center, 1776 Union Ave., Hazlet

► **National Senior Health & Fitness Day Wellness Screening** May 31, 8:30–10:30 a.m., YMCA, 1 Mannino Park, Old Bridge

► **Weight Loss with Hypnosis** June 14, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Weight-loss Surgery** To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. To find a seminar near you, visit [HMHforU.org/WeightLoss](https://HMHforU.org/WeightLoss).

► **Support Groups** Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/SupportGroups](https://HMHforU.org/SupportGroups).





Students and staff from Old Bridge High School presented their pajama donations to team members at Old Bridge Medical Center.

## A Gift of Comfort

*Old Bridge High School students donate new pajamas to children undergoing emergency care as a service-learning project.*

There's just something warm and wonderful—and comforting—about a new pair of pajamas when you're a child in the hospital. That's what students at Old Bridge High School in Matawan, New Jersey, thought. So in November 2022, they delivered 60 pairs of pajamas to children at **Old Bridge Medical Center**.

Students Priya Rana and Darriyah Jackson spearheaded the effort to collect pajamas for kids receiving emergency care at the hospital. Students posted flyers throughout school buildings and made announcements to promote the project, and it paid off handsomely.

"Students and staff collected the pajamas at Old Bridge High School, with our Transportation Department donating many of them," says school Principal Dr. Vincent Sasso. "When we delivered them, the number of doctors, nurses and administrators that greeted us to say 'thank you' was overwhelming. We were so honored to be a small part of a bigger picture."

The high school's enthusiastic and proud pajama delivery team included not only Dr. Sasso, but also his assistant Patricia Olsen. They were greeted with open arms—ready to accept the new pajamas—by team members and leaders from Old Bridge.

"We were honored to meet the students who were behind this generous effort, as well as the educators who inspire them," says Winston Ramkissoon, director of Emergency Services at Old Bridge. "When kids visit our emergency department, they may be worried, anxious and feeling unwell. A new pair of pajamas to wear may seem like a simple act, but it goes a long way in making them feel comfortable and cared for."

### A Chance to 'Do the Right Thing'

This kind of thoughtful giving is not new to the school. "Our school community prides itself on helping others. Students and staff are remarkably generous, and they constantly demonstrate a daily commitment to supporting each other with kindness and compassion," Dr. Sasso says.

Patricia adds: "Our students are always looking for opportunities to 'do the right thing,' a phrase Dr. Sasso has made part of our everyday language here at the school. This project inspired us to start a Women Supporting Women Club, and we plan to do more service-learning projects for those in need."

All at the hospital are grateful for the gift. "The Old Bridge High School student leaders Priya Rana and Darriyah Jackson displayed model leadership, fostered by Principal Sasso," says Stephen Maher, executive director of the Old Bridge Medical Center Foundation. "The kindness of the entire student body to support this effort was overwhelming. We're thrilled to continue the partnership as the support broadens and new opportunities present themselves for Old Bridge High School and the hospital." 🌟

Learn more about volunteering at [HMHforU.org/Volunteer](https://HMHforU.org/Volunteer). Or fundraise in your community for your community, and support a hospital or health care cause important to you. Start your virtual fundraiser today.

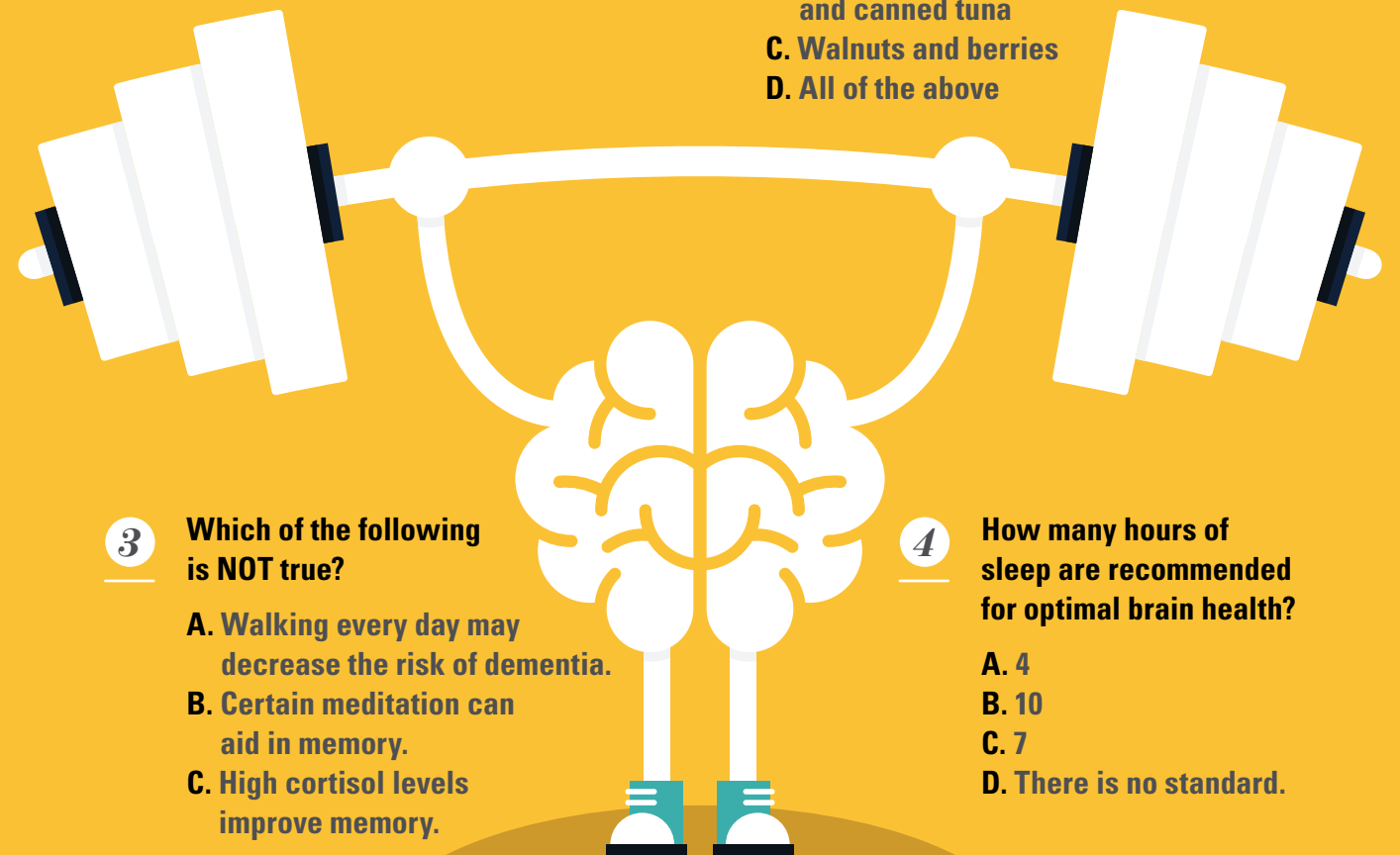


# Boost Your Brain Health

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

**1** True or false: Learning new things improves your memory.

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



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

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

**Answers:**  
**1.** True: Taking a class or trying a new hobby has been shown to keep brain cells stimulated, improving overall function.  
**2.** D: All of the above.  
**3.** C: Overproduction of the stress hormone cortisol has been linked to memory loss.  
**4.** C: Researchers at Cambridge found that seven hours of sleep is best for cognition and memory.

istock.com/thenatchid

Source: University of Cambridge research





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# May Is Mental Health Awareness Month!

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

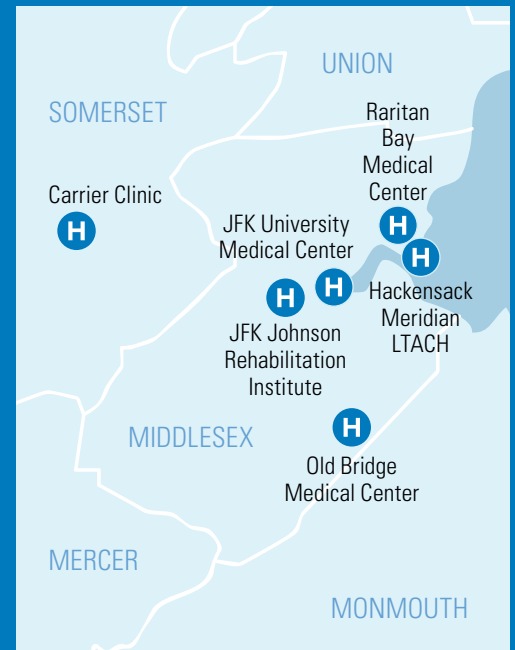
**Webinar: Electroconvulsive Therapy** The not-so-scary truth about a life-changing therapy for treatment-resistant depression, mood disorders and severe forms of autism. Join **Eric Alcera, M.D.**, and **Muhammed Abbas, M.D.**, as they discuss ECT and neuromodulation in plain language. Hear from a young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

*May 11, 5–6 p.m., virtual event*

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

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