

HEALTH U



Hackensack
Meridian Health

FIVE REASONS TO GET OUTSIDE THIS SUMMER

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Steps to lower your risk of skin cancer

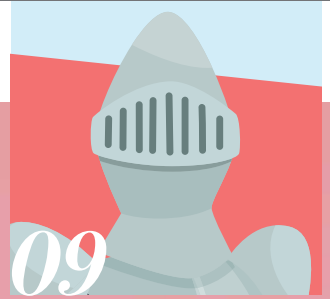
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LET THE SUN BEGIN!

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New Hope

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HEALTH **U**

**ONLINE
EXCLUSIVES**



Discover 10 tips to help your baby sleep through the night at [HMHforU.org/BabySleep](https://www.HMHforU.org/BabySleep).



Are strokes and heart attacks the same? Our experts weigh in at [HMHforU.org/HeartAttackStroke](https://www.HMHforU.org/HeartAttackStroke).

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Dealing with incontinence? Learn how to stop
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BladderLeak](https://www.hmhforu.org/bladderleak).

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Award winner and a 2021 Content
Marketing Awards finalist.





Bob Garrett and team members from Hackensack Meridian Health kicked off summer at the Spring Lake Five Mile Run held May 27, 2023.

Dose of Vitamin D

I can't help but celebrate every year when summer arrives. There's just something about the longer days, the warmer temperatures and the green grass, isn't there?

But there's some science behind the summertime euphoria: Research shows that sunlight exposure positively impacts our serotonin levels, the hormone that makes us feel happy. Regular exposure to daylight can help raise our spirits and improve our focus. Turn to page 6 to find even more mental health benefits that come from being outdoors.

Of course, the summer sun also poses a risk. As we spend more time outdoors, we have to protect our skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) light. On page 12, you can find helpful tips for reducing your skin cancer risk as well as advice on how to apply spray sunscreens effectively.

I personally look forward to moving my workouts outdoors and soaking up the fresh air each summer. In fact, I always kick off the summer by running in the Spring Lake Five Mile Run alongside my fellow Hackensack Meridian *Health* team members. This unofficial start to the summer is less about clocking the time and more about community and camaraderie.

Another wonderful summertime tradition at Hackensack Meridian *Health*: Our team members maintain community gardens at several of our hospital sites. Each year, our team members harvest produce to benefit our local communities. We grow a variety of different foods, including beets, asparagus, kale, potatoes, turnips, cabbage, lettuce, basil, tomatoes and more. It's not just a way to give back to our communities. It's also a fun activity that our team members enjoy year after year.

We hope you're enjoying your own favorite summertime traditions with your loved ones and that you're doing so in good health. 🌻

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



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Hackensack Meridian Health #1 in DEI

Diversity Inc. has named Hackensack Meridian *Health* as the top hospital/health care system in the U.S. in diversity, equity and inclusion. "As a health network, we believe we are uniquely qualified to take up the fight against health inequity. We are so grateful to have these efforts recognized by Diversity Inc., and we celebrate all of our team members who have contributed to these efforts," says CEO Bob Garrett.

Learn more at fair360.com/top-50-list/2023.

Better **U**

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

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- 6 How the outdoors impacts your health
- 7 Is plant protein better than meat?
- 7 Recipe for edamame and black bean salad

Ice, Ice, Baby

Can ice baths really improve your health?

Ice baths—also known as cold water immersion—typically operate as a recovery method for athletes to relieve and prevent muscle pain. But as interest in ice baths grows within the general population, many people are curious about their benefits outside of physical recovery. **Gary Panagiotakis, D.O.**, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, weighs in.

Potential Benefits of Ice Baths

- ▶ Stress management
- ▶ Depression support
- ▶ Strengthened immune function
- ▶ Decreased fatigue
- ▶ Decreased inflammation
- ▶ Increased libido
- ▶ Improved glycemic control for those with diabetes

Potential Risks of Ice Baths

- ▶ Hypothermia
- ▶ Drowning
- ▶ Cold shock
- ▶ Cognitive impairment
- ▶ Loss of muscular control in extremities
- ▶ Cardiovascular risks for those with pre-existing heart conditions

Before You Try an Ice Bath

Never take an ice bath alone, especially for your first time. *You don't know how your body will react to the cold temperature of the water, and as we have seen from the risks listed above, it puts you at risk for severe impairment of your physical and cognitive abilities.*

Know your medical history and conditions before taking an ice bath to determine how it could impact your preexisting conditions. *If you are unsure whether you can safely take an ice bath, talk to your doctor to weigh the potential benefits and risks for you.*

Take an ice bath with a well-informed mindset and an open mind. *Make sure you learn everything you can before taking the plunge and follow the suggestions your doctor gives you. Ice baths can be an exciting experience, but your safety regarding your health comes first.*

"It's important to note that the research around ice baths is highly inconclusive," says Dr. Panagiotakis. "Although it's common among professional athletes to participate in cold therapy, there is currently no sound research pointing toward general health benefits."



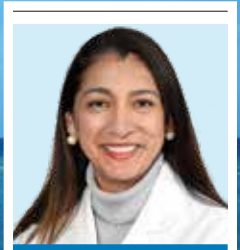
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Go Online

Find tips for staying active and exercising safely at HMHforU.org/Exercise.

The Great Outdoors

Going outside can positively impact your mental health. Here's how.



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Hackensack and
Maywood

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

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

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

2 It can be the calm after the storm. “Moving your body and being outside in nature can help your body recover after stressful events in your life,” says **Adriana Phan, M.D.**, psychiatrist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. Being in nature can reduce cortisol levels and muscle tension.

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

4 You will sleep like a baby. Ever notice after spending a day outside, at the beach or in your backyard, that you sleep more soundly? Our circadian rhythm, also known as our internal clock, regulates how our body functions, and research supports that it is directly affected by how much sunlight you are exposed to. Bright light will help you feel more alert and awake during the day, and fall asleep easier and feel more tired at night.

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

If you need professional support for your mental health, find a doctor near you at [HMForU.org/MentalHealthDoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/MentalHealthDoc).

Outdoor Health Boosters to Try

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

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

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

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

Is Plant Protein Better Than Meat?

Plant-based diets seem to be growing in popularity—from the Mediterranean diet to the vegan diet to the raw food diet. Our expert, Nancy Cooper, RDN, CDCES, registered dietitian nutritionist and certified diabetes educator at the MOLLY Diabetes Education Center at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, lays out what you need to know.

Health Benefits of Plant Proteins

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

- ▶ They may have fewer calories, less unhealthy fat and no cholesterol compared with animal protein.
- ▶ They provide nutrients like niacin, thiamine, B5, B6, B7, and vitamins A and K.
- ▶ Plant proteins provide fiber, which helps digestion and can reduce the risk of cancer and heart problems. Fiber also helps keep blood sugar stable.
- ▶ Studies have found that eating multiple servings of plant proteins per day can lower the risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and heart attack.

Risks Associated With Eating Plant Proteins

Plant proteins are often incomplete protein sources, which means that they don't have all nine essential amino acids needed for muscle growth and repair. Soy products such as tofu and edamame are an exception and are complete proteins.

"If you are on a vegan diet, eat a variety of different plant proteins over three meals throughout the day to get all the essential amino acids," Nancy says. "Amino acid deficiency can result in decreased immunity, digestive problems, depression, fertility issues, lower mental alertness, slowed growth in children and other health issues."

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

- ▶ Quinoa
- ▶ Buckwheat
- ▶ Hummus
- ▶ Farro
- ▶ Chia seeds
- ▶ Peanut butter
- ▶ Black beans

If you rely mostly on plant sources for protein, make sure you're getting enough vitamin B12. "If you're on a plant-based diet, look for foods fortified with vitamin B12 or consider taking a supplement," Nancy says.

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



Edamame and Black Bean Salad

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 1 10-ounce package frozen shelled edamame, thawed
- 1 15-ounce can low-sodium black beans, drained and rinsed (or 1½ cups cooked)
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- 2 cups celery (about 3 medium stalks), thinly sliced
- ½ cup cilantro, finely chopped (optional)
- 2 cups cabbage, chopped, or coleslaw mix

Dressing

- 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon minced ginger
- 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt (optional)

Preparation

- ❶ In a large bowl, mix together all the vegetables.
- ❷ In a small bowl, whisk together the dressing ingredients, then add to the vegetable mixture.
- ❸ Chill until cold, about 1 hour, then serve.

Nutritional Information

Per serving with dressing: 383 calories, 22g protein, 56g carbohydrate (21g fiber), 8g fat (1g sat, 7g mono/poly), 49mg sodium (with optional salt: 323mg sodium)

Seasoned Cook

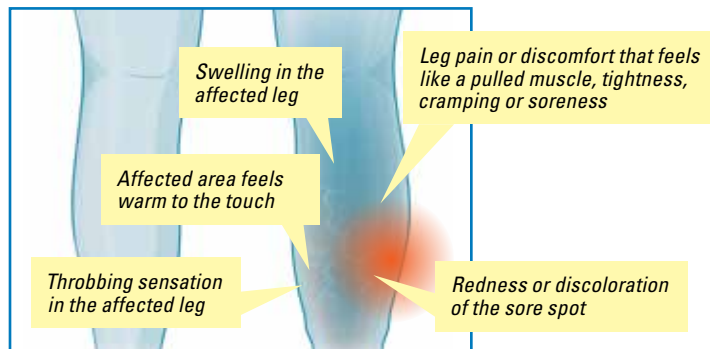
This is a great "make-ahead" dish because it gets better as it marinates.

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

How do I know if I have a blood clot in my leg?

David J. O'Connor, M.D., weighs in:

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



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

Whether or not you've noticed symptoms of deep vein thrombosis, seek emergency care if you have symptoms of a pulmonary embolism, including:

- ▶ Sudden difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- ▶ Chest pain that worsens when you try breathing deeply
- ▶ Sudden cough, especially if you produce bloody mucus
- ▶ Fast heartbeat
- ▶ Dizziness or losing consciousness

Anticoagulation, known as a blood thinner, is the most common treatment for deep vein thrombosis and pulmonary embolism. This helps prevent further travel of the clots through the body, as well as any new clots from forming. For patients with severe symptoms, minimally invasive catheterization procedures can dissolve or aspirate the clots more rapidly than anticoagulation alone. For patients with pulmonary embolism who develop strain in the right side of their heart, this can prevent long-term heart failure. For patients with deep vein thrombosis who develop severe leg pain and swelling, it can dramatically reduce symptoms and the likelihood of developing venous insufficiency (improper functioning of the vein valves).



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

What does colon cancer feel like?

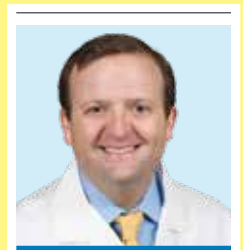
Ryan Moore, M.D., weighs in:

In its earliest stages, many people with colorectal cancer may not feel any symptoms, usually what we call being asymptomatic. The very first signs of colorectal cancer are often subtle and unfortunately can appear when the cancer becomes more advanced in stage. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force now suggests screening for colorectal cancer at age 45 for people of average risk, a shift from earlier guidelines that suggested patients be screened at age 50. The reason for this change was the observation that more younger people are being diagnosed with colorectal cancers, with a Western diet being one of the risk factors.

Colonoscopy remains the mainstay in colorectal cancer screening. During a colonoscopy, the gastroenterologist can remove polyps that may be precancerous, reducing the risk of developing colorectal cancer later in life.

Speak to your doctor to see if you are a candidate for colorectal cancer screening. Also seek help from a doctor if you develop any of the following symptoms:

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



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

What does bleeding after sex mean?

Regina Kaplan, M.D., weighs in:

There are many reasons why women may experience bleeding after vaginal intercourse. Mild trauma from sexual activity can cause bleeding that should quickly resolve. If bleeding persists or reoccurs, see your provider. It's often something easily fixed.

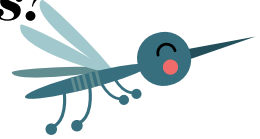


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How do I stop getting bitten by mosquitoes?

Alexis Livingston Young, M.D., weighs in:



Avoid being outdoors during mosquito “prime time”—stay indoors at dawn and dusk.

Get rid of any standing water around your home. Check pool covers, trash cans, gutters and bird baths, for example.

Apply mosquito repellent that contains DEET. If you prefer to avoid DEET, look for a natural repellent, such as oil of lemon eucalyptus.

Use screens on windows and doors, and repair any holes in them to keep mosquitoes out of your home.

Keep your grass low. Give mosquitoes fewer places to hide.

Place an oscillating fan in your yard. This can help deter mosquitoes.



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

The most common reasons include:

Infection or inflammation of the cervix	Sexually transmitted infections such as gonorrhea and chlamydia, as well as non-sexually transmitted infections such as yeast infections and bacterial vaginosis, may cause bleeding. Even a reaction to latex condoms, spermicides or douches can cause inflammation.
Cervical polyps	These small growths are usually noncancerous but can cause intermittent bleeding. If cervical polyps cause regular bleeding or discharge, or result in infections, they may be removed.
Vaginal dryness	The friction during vaginal intercourse can cause bleeding if the vagina is dry. Vaginal dryness happens most often for those past menopause but can happen at any age.
Pregnancy	It’s common for pregnant patients to bleed with intercourse. Still, anytime a pregnant woman has bleeding, they should call their doctor.
Gynecological cancer	The most common early sign of cervical, uterine, vaginal and ovarian cancers is abnormal bleeding.
Ovarian cysts	Ovarian cysts can cause irregular menstrual bleeding that may lead to some vaginal bleeding after intercourse.
Surgery	If you’ve had a hysterectomy, hysteroscopy or other cervical or vaginal procedure, and you have sex before the healing process is complete, you may experience bleeding as well as other serious complications.

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

Doctor Spotlight

MAGNA PASTRANO, M.D.

Internal medicine doctor

Hackensack Meridian Medical Group
Primary Care—Rochelle Park

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, Magna Pastrano, M.D., got to spend time in a place that most kids don't get to venture: in a laboratory. Her mother worked as a microbiologist and would often take Dr. Pastrano to her lab. That experience drove Dr. Pastrano's interest in a career in medicine.

Dr. Pastrano attended medical school in the Dominican Republic and came to the United States for her residency in 2013. She travels back home once or twice a year, and her family visits her in New Jersey just as often.

Her favorite thing about her current home—aside from her New Jerseyan husband and 2-year old son? “Growing up on an island, you're a little limited. Here, I see so many different cultures on a daily basis,” she says. “I've learned about so many different cultures, from Jewish customs to Korean traditions to Indian food and diets. I'm also able to use my Spanish with a lot of my patients, which is helpful because the connection is just stronger when you can speak to a patient in their language.”

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of my job is the interaction I get to have with so many different people, but it's also one of the hardest parts. I love getting to know my patients and the context of their lives. Having that connection and knowing all of that about a person can help me give the best advice and treatment.



Magna Pastrano, M.D., stays active through strength training and walking outdoors to maintain good health and keep up with her young son.

What hobbies do you have outside of work?

My son, John, is 2 years old, so that's my other full-time job. I love spending time with him. I'm also big into the gym right now. I recently discovered strength training, and I highly recommend it to my patients. When you think of strength training, it doesn't have to involve really heavy weights. You can get started at any level.

What is your favorite place to travel?

I recently went with my husband to South Africa while my mom watched our son back home. It was one of his bucket list items. We spent time in Cape Town, and it was incredible to get to

know the culture there and hear stories about them living through apartheid. We also went on a safari, which was unbelievable. You just can't shake off a lion roaring right next to you. While we were there, a few monkeys broke into our room and stole my protein bars!

If you could meet one celebrity, who would it be?

I have been reading a lot about Michelle Obama—how she grew up, being in the White House and the work she is doing to empower women. I think it would be fun to get to know her and maybe meet one of her daughters. 🌟

To make an appointment with Dr. Pastrano or a primary care doctor near you, call **800-822-8905** or visit our website.

Spotlight on **U**

health topics that matter the most to you

Passport to Health

Three hacks for staying healthy when you travel this summer.

1 Take the No-elevator Pledge

Skip the elevator and opt for the stairs every chance you get. In addition to helping you get your daily steps in, this will help you avoid the germs in a crowded elevator.

2 Eat a Nutritious Meal After Every Indulgent One

Some of us tend to overindulge on snacks and fast food while traveling, but don't let this derail your whole trip. For every treat you enjoy, plan a healthy meal to follow, with a focus on lean protein and vegetables.

3 Conquer Jet Lag

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



For more health tips and inspiration, visit [HMHforU.org](https://www.HMHforU.org).

Safe in the Sun

Take these steps to lower your risk of skin cancer.

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

"You can take a few steps to lower your risk of skin cancer, such as wearing sunscreen and avoiding tanning beds, to name a few," says **Robin Ashinoff, M.D.**, chief of dermatology and dermatologic and Mohs surgery at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

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

Wear sunscreen year-round

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

Avoid sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

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

Avoid tanning salons or deliberate sun baths

UV rays from tanning beds can cause skin cancer. "There is no such thing as a base tan or a safe tan. If your skin changes colors, you damage your DNA and greatly increase your risk for future skin cancer," says Dr. Ashinoff. A tan achieved from a self-tanner is much safer than a UV tan and does not cause skin cancer.

Wear sun-protective clothing

Sun-protective clothing offers extra protection against UV rays and can be cooling on a hot sunny day. Being bald or having thin hair can significantly increase your chance of getting skin cancer, so wear a hat to cover your face, neck and ears.

Stay healthy overall

You can reduce your risk of any cancer by making healthy choices like eating a diet rich in antioxidants, staying hydrated with water, avoiding drinks with added sugar and exercising regularly. "Most people think only sun exposure is a risk for skin cancer, but very few know that smoking and going into the sun both equally increase your risk of future skin cancer, so don't smoke," Dr. Ashinoff says.

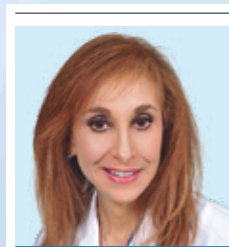
Be mindful of skin changes

Signs to look out for include:

- ▶ Discolored patches on the skin
- ▶ Changes to freckles or moles
- ▶ A sore that doesn't heal by itself
- ▶ An ulcer that doesn't heal by itself

Consider regular skin screening

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



Robin Ashinoff, M.D.

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Does Spray Sunscreen Work?

Spray sunscreens may save some time during the application process, but do they offer the same sun protection as lotions?

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

“Some people who use spray-on sunscreen just go through the motions, without checking to see if they’re actually covering their skin properly. Those people may not effectively protect themselves from the sun,” says dermatologist **Rachel Rosenstein, M.D., Ph.D.** “However, if you pay close attention to the application process, it is possible to protect yourself from the sun’s rays with spray-on sunscreen.”

How to Apply Spray Sunscreen

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

To apply spray sunscreen well:

- ▶ **Pay attention to your skin where you’ve sprayed sunscreen.** Notice whether the skin appears wet and shiny where you’ve just sprayed. If your skin looks dry, you haven’t sprayed on enough of the product.
- ▶ **Once each section of your skin is moist and glistening from wet sunscreen,** rub it in before it dries to make sure that it’s spread evenly. This helps ensure you don’t miss any spots.
- ▶ **If someone else sprays sunscreen on your back,** ask them to notice whether your skin appears wet before they stop spraying. Have them rub the sprayed-on product around on your back, so that it covers your skin evenly.
- ▶ **Don’t spray sunscreen onto your face,** because you might accidentally get the product in your eyes or mouth, or you may inhale it. Instead, spray sunscreen into your hand so that you have a small pool of liquid in your palm, then rub your hands together and apply the liquid sunscreen to your face.
- ▶ **Remember to reapply**—the most important tip.

“Putting sunscreen on once and going to the beach for eight hours won’t give you enough sun protection,” says Dr. Rosenstein. “You should reapply sunscreen every 1½ to 2 hours, depending on the specific product that you’re using. If you spend a lot of time swimming, you may want to reapply even more frequently, because being in the water may remove sunscreen. Sweating and toweling off may also remove sunscreen.”



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

Off the Cuff



What happens when your rotator cuff is torn or strained? Will it heal on its own? Our expert weighs in.



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If you have pain in your shoulder or you can't move your arm very well, a rotator cuff tear or strain might be the culprit.

The shoulder is made up of a ball and socket that moves around, allowing a wide range of motion. In order to keep that joint from sliding out of place, a group of four muscles and tendons form a cuff around the ball to help initiate range of motion and provide dynamic stabilization.

But what happens when these muscles are strained or torn? Will they heal on their own?

How Does a Tear Occur?

"A rotator cuff tear occurs when one or more of these small muscles tear off of their attachment sites," says **Rocco Bassora, M.D.**, orthopedic surgeon at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. A tear can happen in one of two ways:

- ▶ **Acute sudden tear:** This may occur when you fall or from sudden expected motion when trying to lift something heavy.
- ▶ **Chronic tear:** This occurs slowly over time, especially if you have chronic tendinitis or a partial tear.

How Do Tears Heal?

"From my experience, rotator cuff tears don't tend to heal on their own," Dr. Bassora says. "However, most patients can live with a partial tear."

Just because you have a torn rotator cuff doesn't mean surgery is the only solution. Dr. Bassora says there are several steps to try to reduce pain and inflammation, including:

- ▶ **Activity modification:** Allowing the shoulder to rest and recover can help reduce pain.
- ▶ **Over-the-counter anti-inflammatories:** While Dr. Bassora isn't a big proponent of taking pills, pain management is important particularly at night in order to sleep.
- ▶ **Home exercise program:** This can help stretch and strengthen surrounding muscles.
- ▶ **Physical therapy:** If home exercises don't seem to be helping, time with a physical therapist can help safely strengthen the muscles around the shoulder to relieve the burden on your rotator cuff muscles.
- ▶ **Cortisone injections:** This helps diminish the inflammatory response and provide pain relief.
- ▶ **Surgery:** Surgery is usually a last resort if people do not see improvement with other methods.

Who Needs Surgery?

"If other measures are unsuccessful and you continue to have pain and weakness, surgery may be needed," Dr. Bassora says. "Additionally, people with full thickness tears—when the tendon is completely detached from bone—need surgery. These only get worse with time and need more aggressive treatment."

The surgery to repair a rotator cuff tear takes only about an hour and can be done minimally invasively. While the surgery is quick, the recovery process is not.

"The rehab process will be a minimum of four and half months if everything goes well, but generally takes a bit longer," Dr. Bassora says.

The healing process is broken into three six-week stages:

- ▶ **Stage 1:** The patient is in a sling with no shoulder movement.
- ▶ **Stage 2:** Physical therapy will begin with a focus on range of motion.
- ▶ **Stage 3:** Physical therapy will continue but with a focus on regaining strength.

While a tear doesn't automatically mean surgery, it should be addressed medically, so it doesn't get worse, which could make the recovery process longer and harder. ⚙️



Find an orthopedic surgeon near you at [HMHforU.org/OrthopedicSurgeon](https://www.HMHforU.org/OrthopedicSurgeon).



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After successful surgery for a rotator-cuff tear, Chitra Sethi, M.D., is back to her favorite activities, including cooking Indian dishes for her family.

Role Reversal

When pediatrician Chitra Sethi, M.D., needed shoulder surgery, serendipity brought her to an orthopedic surgeon who was her former patient.

In her 47 years as a pediatrician, Chitra Sethi, M.D., 79, had seen hundreds of children. But in late 2020, it was her turn to be the patient when she woke up one morning with shoulder pain.

While she'd been fairly active—exercising on the elliptical trainer and stationary bike for years—the ache kept her from almost all activity. It stopped her from doing so many things she loved. “I cook with a passion, and I make everything from scratch,” she says. But all the chopping and stirring proved too painful.

Despite 10 months of physical therapy, the pain refused to relent, so Dr. Sethi made an appointment with **Siddhant Mehta, M.D., Ph.D.**, an orthopedic surgeon at **Hackensack University Medical Center** and chairman of Orthopedic Surgery at **Palisades Medical Center**.

When Dr. Sethi walked into Dr. Mehta's office, both doctors were in for a shock. “I'd seen her name in the chart and thought it could be her,” says Dr. Mehta. When he saw her face, it confirmed his hunch was right. “I introduced myself,

then I said, ‘You probably don't remember me, but I remember you. You were my pediatrician when I was growing up,’” says Dr. Mehta.

Full-circle Surgery

After some initial catching up, Dr. Mehta examined Dr. Sethi's shoulder. The diagnosis: a massive irreparable rotator-cuff tear. While two steroid injections initially helped with pain for a few months, in May 2022, Dr. Sethi was no longer able to raise her arm and decided it was time for surgery.

The rotator cuff is a group of muscles that helps stabilize the shoulder as the arm moves through all planes of motion. In Dr. Sethi's case, the rotator cuff was torn and not amenable to an arthroscopic repair. In older patients with massive irreparable rotator-cuff tears, reverse shoulder replacement is a surgery that can restore shoulder function by allowing the deltoid muscle to recreate the function of the torn rotator cuff.

“She's not only a doctor, but my former doctor,” he says. “But I took care of her like I take care of all of my patients—like my own mother, father, brother or sister.”

Back to What She Loves

Dr. Sethi was thrilled with Dr. Mehta. “It's quite amazing to think about: My kids who I took care of are doctors now. Maybe I had something to do with it,” she says. “There was a time that he looked up to me, and now I look up to him.”

After a few months of physical therapy, Dr. Sethi is back in the kitchen, to the delight of her three grandchildren, who regularly gobble up her creations.

Her signature dish is stuffed paratha, an Indian flatbread stuffed with potatoes, cauliflower, onion, tomatoes and plenty of spices. “Not too many people make stuffed paratha because all that chopping can be very tedious. But my grandchildren love it, so I'm so happy I can finally make it again,” she says.

Perfect Attendance

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

If your doctor prescribes physical therapy for injury, illness or even the physical and postural changes that occur by simply aging, it's important to be consistent and compliant with attending your appointments, says **Roger Rossi, D.O.**, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at St. Joseph's.

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

Here are five important reasons to make the effort—even if it's challenging—to get to that physical therapy appointment you have scheduled.



1 *You Can Delay Your Healing by Missing Therapy*

Each appointment is key to improving your strength and agility, and skipping appointments will delay recovery.

Whether you are going to physical therapy to heal injuries or to rehabilitate cardiac or neurological conditions, you cannot achieve the benefits without working closely and regularly with your physical therapist. Skipped appointments will ultimately postpone or negate the results and goals you are working toward achieving. You must remain engaged in your recovery.

2 *The Pain May Not Go Away on Its Own*

Dr. Rossi explains: "Physical therapy can help to improve postural and spinal alignment and range of motion for various joints—this can help decrease pain, as well as improve your overall movement ability for daily tasks. It has been

suggested that proper posture not only positively affects morbidity, but can even prolong life."

3 *You May Put Yourself at Risk for Future Injury*

As we grow older, we develop sarcopenia, or loss of muscle. Physical therapy can help you develop strength and learn proper body mechanics that are key to preventing future injuries.

4 *It Can Be Costly*

If your condition worsens because you missed therapy, you may end up needing an extended length of stay or additional medical procedures. As a result, there may be increased utilization of insurance benefits and additional out of pocket costs.

5 *You Miss Out on Being Supported in Your Recovery*

Your physical therapist works with you and your medical

team to ensure that you get the best care possible. Going to physical therapy allows you to be actively involved in setting your goals and developing an exercise program. In addition, your physical therapist and your physiatrist can provide you with community resources to address your concerns.

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

"For the best results, you must understand what you are trying to treat and the goals of your rehabilitation program," Dr. Rossi says. "You must remain motivated and disciplined, and incorporate sustainable patterns for your therapy and exercise. You must be empowered to achieve your best path to wellness and quality of life." 🌟



Roger Rossi, D.O.

Physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist

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Edison and Wayne

Go Online

Find a physical therapist near you: [HMHforU.org/PhysicalTherapist](https://www.HMHforU.org/PhysicalTherapist).

Cardiac Arrest or Heart Attack?



Cardiac arrest and heart attack are not the same conditions. Here are the key differences you should know and the signs of each.

It's a misconception that heart attack and cardiac arrest are the same condition. While they have similarities—they're both related to heart health and considered emergency situations—it is important to understand the differences.

"Knowing the differences is key to quick action in the event of either condition," says **Ankitkumar Kirankumar Patel, M.D.**, interventional cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "Quick action is vital to a positive outcome. It often can mean the difference between life and death."



Ankitkumar
Kirankumar Patel, M.D.

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cardiologist

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Glen Ridge

What Is Cardiac Arrest?

Cardiac arrest is a sudden loss of heart function in a person with or without heart disease. "With cardiac arrest, your heart comes to a functional stop due to electrical disorganization and no longer pumps blood," says Dr. Patel. "This quickly puts your organs at risk of failure and you at risk of death."

Signs of cardiac arrest:

- ▶ Fainting or loss of consciousness
- ▶ Dizziness or lightheadedness prior to loss of consciousness
- ▶ Shortness of breath prior to loss of consciousness
- ▶ Quick heartbeat prior to loss of consciousness
- ▶ Chest pain prior to loss of consciousness

If you suspect cardiac arrest, call 911 immediately. If possible, CPR and/or defibrillation should be administered right away.

What Is a Heart Attack?

A heart attack is caused by a blockage that stops blood flow to the heart. It can sometimes lead to cardiac arrest, but the two conditions are not the same.

Signs of a heart attack:

- ▶ Chest pain, tightness and pressure
- ▶ Pain or discomfort radiating to the arm, neck, jaw or teeth
- ▶ Pain in the back or belly
- ▶ Sweating
- ▶ Nausea or vomiting
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Lightheadedness

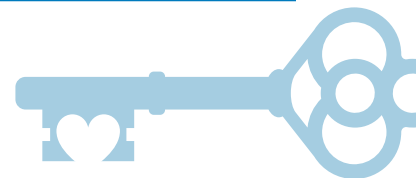
If you suspect a heart attack, call 911 right away.

Why CPR Is Key

In the case of cardiac arrest, CPR—or cardiopulmonary resuscitation—which uses chest compressions to keep blood flowing throughout the body, is vital to survival.

"Without oxygen delivery by a pumping heart, cardiac arrest can lead to death in minutes. But with CPR, compressions can keep the blood flowing throughout the body until the person can get more advanced care," says Dr. Patel.

If a trained bystander administers CPR within the first few minutes of cardiac arrest, they can double or triple the victim's chance of survival. "Everyone should know basic life support because it can be needed at any time," Dr. Patel says. "You'll be ready to jump into action anytime you're around someone who collapses." 🌀



Go Online

Find a CPR class near you:
HMHforU.org/Events.

Are You at Risk for Heart Disease?

Take our quiz to find out.



Are you a man over the age of 45?

Yes No

Do you have diabetes?

Yes No

Are you a woman over age 55, or are you postmenopausal?

Yes No

Do you smoke?

Yes No

Does anyone in your immediate family have a history of heart disease or diabetes?

Yes No

Is your blood pressure 140/90 or higher?

Yes No

Are you a Black American or Latino American?

Yes No

Is your total cholesterol over 200?

Yes No



Time to Get Screened?

Heart screenings, prevention tools and diagnostic tests can help you understand your heart condition or risk of heart disease, as well as what prevention or treatment options may be needed.

Most screenings can start as early as 20 years old, and the frequency will depend on your medical history. Contributing factors for more frequent screenings include:

- ▶ Sex
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Family history of heart disease
- ▶ Race
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Being a smoker
- ▶ Poor diet
- ▶ Stress

Here's a snapshot of some of the heart screening options and imaging capabilities available at Hackensack Meridian Health.

AngioScreen

Within 15 minutes, AngioScreen screens for heart and blood vessel disease by blending several distinct screenings and measurements, including blood pressure, pulse, ultrasound and EKG. Anyone can receive an AngioScreen, even those who are not at high risk or experiencing symptoms.

CT Calcium Scoring

A CT Calcium Scoring scan is a 10-minute scan performed at an imaging center that can help identify signs of heart disease. The test looks for calcium-containing, hardened plaque in the arteries around the heart.

HeartFlow

HeartFlow builds on results from cardiac CT scans that yield concerning results—generating personalized, color-coded 3D 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.

To learn more about screening options, or to schedule a screening near you, visit [HMHforU.org/HeartScreen](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HeartScreen).

Are you 30 or more pounds over your recommended weight?

Yes No

Do you exercise less than three times a week?

Yes No



If you answered "yes" to three or more of these questions, you may be at higher risk for heart disease. Scan the QR code to schedule a wellness appointment online, or call 800-822-8905 to find a doctor.

PEDIATRICS

Constipation Conundrum

Parents often ask Shamila B. Zawahir, M.D., for advice about constipation in kids. Here's what she tells them.



Constipation is a common problem among children and can cause discomfort and distress. **Shamila B. Zawahir, M.D.**, pediatric gastroenterologist at **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital**, tells parents to look for these signs of constipation:

- ▶ Passing hard, small stools
- ▶ Infrequent bowel movements (fewer than two or three a week)
- ▶ Telling you it hurts to go to the bathroom
- ▶ Stomach pain or cramping
- ▶ Unusual appetite changes



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Tips to Avoid Constipation in Kids

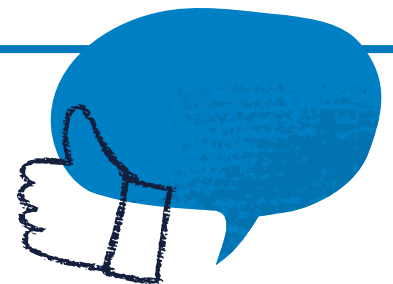
"I encourage parents of young kids to do these five things regularly to avoid constipation for their kids or even help relieve minor constipation," Dr. Zawahir says.

- 1** Make sure your child gets plenty of fluids, preferably water:
 - ▶ Children ages 1–3: 4 cups a day (including water and milk)
 - ▶ Children ages 4–8: 5 cups a day
 - ▶ Children 7+: 7–8 cups a day
- 2** Ensure that your child eats a healthy diet that includes plenty of fiber-rich foods, such as beans, lentils, oats, bran, whole grains like brown rice and quinoa, fruits like apples and pears, vegetables like broccoli and spinach, and nuts like almonds.
- 3** Make sure your child gets enough physical activity, whether it be running around in the backyard or going for a family walk.
- 4** Avoid giving your child too many foods that can cause constipation, such as excessive dairy products, processed meats, some grains like rice and pasta, and sugary snacks.
- 5** Make sure your child is getting enough restful sleep each night. Not sleeping enough can cause constipation because it disrupts the body's natural rhythms and negatively affects digestion, leading to decreased motility in our bowels.

When to Talk to Your Pediatrician About Constipation

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

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



Go Online

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

The entire McCabe family has adopted a gluten-free lifestyle to help support Aiden and Lia in their celiac disease diagnoses.

Sibling Bond



Wendy Jeshion, M.D.

Pediatric gastroenterologist

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After years of undiagnosed stomach issues, 11-year-old Aiden was diagnosed with celiac disease—and surprisingly, his non-symptomatic sister was, too.

In spring 2022, all six members of the McCabe family were miserable with a stomach virus. But 11-year-old Aiden was hit particularly hard. Weeks after the rest of his family recovered, he was still not getting better.

Aiden had suffered from gastrointestinal issues since he was a baby, but no doctor he saw could determine the cause. He became adept at managing his symptoms but had to deal physically and emotionally with frequent bathroom visits.

This post-stomach bug discomfort was a new level of misery. The family's pediatrician referred them to **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center**, where he met **Wendy Jeshion, M.D.**, co-division chief of Pediatric Gastroenterology.

Dual Celiac Disease Diagnoses

After asking Aiden some questions and examining him, Dr. Jeshion ordered blood tests, which were off the charts suggestive of celiac disease. An endoscopy to biopsy his intestines confirmed the diagnosis.

"Without testing, it can be difficult to diagnose celiac disease, especially in very young children because there is a vast array of symptoms which can often be subtle—even nonexistent—and may not necessarily be a gastrointestinal symptom," Dr. Jeshion says.

Typical GI symptoms are:

- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Significant weight loss
- ▶ Abdominal pain and distension
- ▶ Vomiting

Less-obvious symptoms in children:

- ▶ Slowed growth/short height
- ▶ Anemia
- ▶ Constipation
- ▶ Dental enamel issues
- ▶ Joint symptoms
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating, mood swings, irritability, anxiety and depression

Because celiac disease is a genetic disease, Dr. Jeshion recommended that all the McCabes get screened for celiac. Surprisingly, Aiden's younger sister, Lia, tested positive. Lia had no symptoms, but her endoscopy showed the same level of intestinal damage as Aiden.

"A genetic predisposition for celiac disease does not mean the patient will definitely develop celiac disease," says Dr. Jeshion. People are not born with the disease; the immune system has to be triggered through an infection or change in the gut microbiome in conjunction with gluten in the diet.

Even if someone with celiac disease has no symptoms, like Lia, it's important to eliminate gluten in their diet. If untreated, celiac disease can lead to the development of other health problems, including other autoimmune disorders, osteoporosis and anemia.

"If we hadn't found out that Aiden had celiac disease, I don't know if he would've gotten worse or developed some other secondary problem because of not addressing celiac disease," says Aiden and Lia's mom, Tina. "And never in a million years even would we have thought to test Lia."

'Believe It Will Get Better'

Since Aiden's and Lia's diagnoses, the McCabe family has transitioned to a gluten-free diet. They have worked with Dr. Jeshion's nutritionist to learn about non-food items that also contain gluten and create an eating plan that does not aggravate their intestines.

Now that they're on a gluten-free diet, both siblings' gastrointestinal systems have recovered. Despite occasional intestinal pain, Aiden is feeling remarkably better.

Both Aiden and Lia have to deal with the psychosocial impacts of a strict gluten-free diet, especially at school, birthday parties and family gatherings. "As a social worker, I know the importance of acknowledging the social and emotional needs of children," Tina says. "Feeling different and left out is difficult for all children, especially when you can't indulge in what everyone else is eating."

While it can be hard to manage the gluten-free diet, Aiden wants other kids who have suffered because of celiac disease to "believe it will get better."

Peace of Mind

In today's busy world, headaches have become increasingly common, often triggered by stress, lack of sleep, dehydration or other factors.

While some headaches may be a mere annoyance, others can be debilitating or the sign of a more serious condition. Our experts share seven ways to find relief from headaches.



Our experts share the best and quickest ways to relieve headache pain.

Pain reliever medications

Standard over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription pain medication can often be used to minimize headaches.

"OTC medications are typically tried first to manage headaches. When OTC medications fail, it may be necessary to discuss alternative treatment options that are more specific to your headache diagnosis," says **Regina Krel, M.D.**, neurologist and director of the Headache Center at the Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

Sitting in a dark room

"Headache pain can often be exacerbated by light, so find a comfortable, dark, quiet room to rest in. Sitting for 20–30 minutes can be beneficial," says **Hao Huang, M.D.**, neurologist at the Headache Center.

Acupuncture

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

Psychological counseling

Often, chronic headaches can be triggered by stress, depression or anxiety. In these cases, psychological counseling can help patients deal with the emotional impact of recurring and chronic pain.

Breathing meditation

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

Massage

Massages may seem like a luxurious choice, but they are often a therapeutic option for pain. Headaches can be triggered by muscle tension in the upper body or neck due to poor posture or a rigorous exercise routine. Massage therapy can reduce muscle tension and aid with chronic pain.

“Ask your doctor if a referral to physical therapy or craniosacral therapy is appropriate, and they can direct you to a practitioner that targets specific points of pain in the body, including in the head and neck,” says Dr. Krel.

Hot and cold compresses

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

Tips to Reduce Risk for Headache

Key tips for overall health—specifically for headache relief—are regular exercise, getting enough sleep each night, eating healthy meals and drinking enough water.

The quality of sleep achieved is just as important as the quantity. This can be improved by removing stimulants before bedtime, such as screens, sugar, alcohol and caffeine, and instead trying a relaxing activity before bedtime. This can also be improved by addressing sleep disorders with help from a sleep medicine specialist.

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



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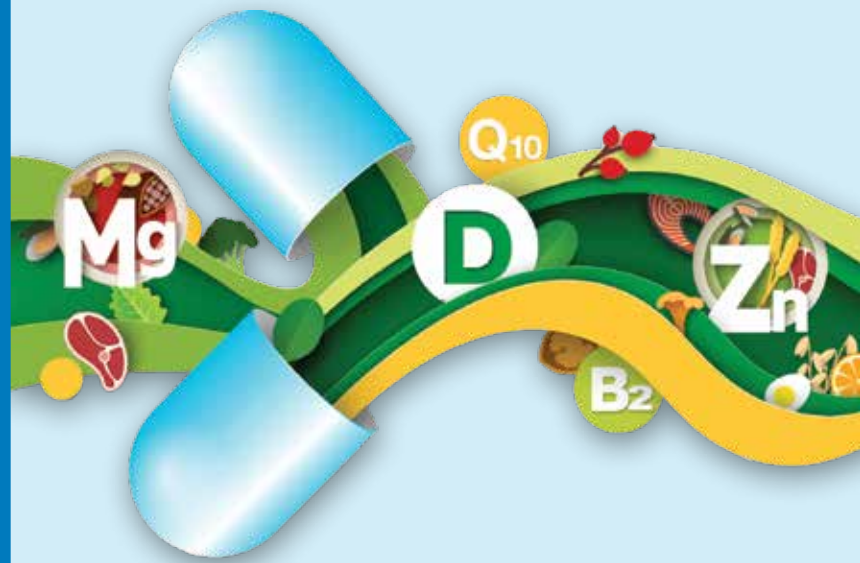


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Vitamins and Supplements for Migraine Relief

Migraine headaches can be debilitating, but some vitamins and supplements may bring you the relief you need.

Migraines are severe headaches often accompanied by throbbing pain or a pulsing sensation, typically on one side of the head. The good news is, there are steps you can take to lessen the pain associated with migraine attacks, as well as the frequency of such episodes.

Studies have shown that some vitamins and supplements can alleviate some of these symptoms, but the long-term effects of this therapy are not known.

What vitamins and supplements can help?

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

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

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

Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10): CoQ10 may reduce the frequency of migraine headaches.

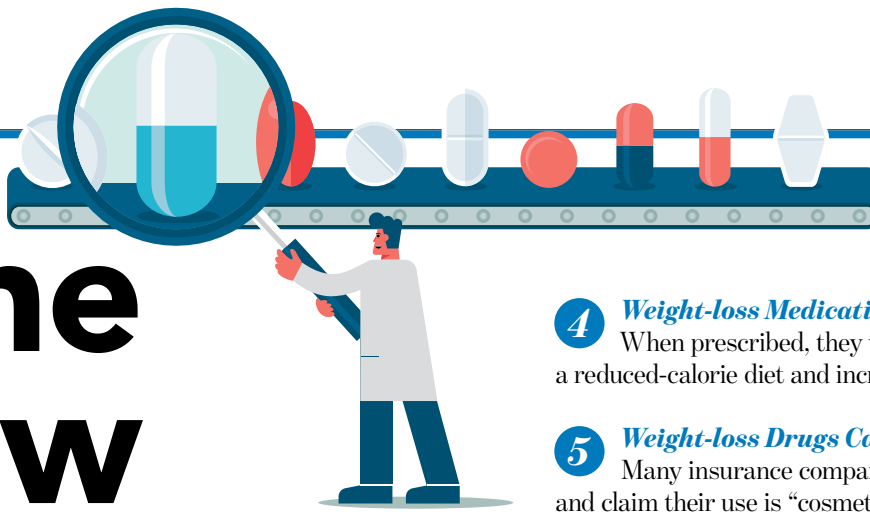
Zinc and Omega 3: Zinc and omega 3 may also be beneficial for migraines.

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

Go Online

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

In the Know



Nine things you should know about new medications for those who can't lose weight with traditional diet and exercise alone.



Hans J. Schmidt, M.D.

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We can't simply take a pill or get a shot and watch the pounds quickly "fall off," but newer prescription medications can help those who are obese. **Hans J. Schmidt, M.D.**, chief of Bariatric Surgery at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, shares what you need to know about weight-loss medications.

1 *Weight-loss Medications Are Not for Everyone*

They are best suited for people:

- ▶ With a body mass index (BMI) over 27
- ▶ Who can't lose weight with diet and exercise, special programs or structured meetings

2 *Most Medications Work by Making You Feel Full*

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

3 *Some Weight-loss Medications Are Diabetes Medications*

One type of medication, an injectable drug called semaglutide (Ozempic), first received FDA approval for treatment of type 2 diabetes. In 2021, the FDA approved a different type of semaglutide (Wegovy) to treat overweight patients for their weight alone. "These two medications are the same drug but given in different doses," says Dr. Schmidt.

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

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

5 *Weight-loss Drugs Can Be Expensive*

Many insurance companies don't cover them and claim their use is "cosmetic" and not medically necessary, Dr. Schmidt says. One month's supply may cost more than \$1,000.

6 *Weight-loss Medication May Help Prevent Surgery*

Sometimes, weight-loss medication, when combined with diet and exercise, can help a patient avoid bariatric surgery.

7 *Medication May Be Needed for the Long Term*

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

8 *Certain People Should Not Take Weight-loss Medication*

Weight-loss medication should not be prescribed to people who have had, or have a family history of, medullary thyroid cancer. It's also not for those allergic to the medications or those with the rare condition multiple endocrine neoplasia, which affects the body's hormone producing glands.

9 *Be Aware of Potential Side Effects*

The FDA cautions patients to be aware of some common side effects:

- ▶ Gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea or vomiting, diarrhea and constipation
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Dizziness

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

Scan the QR code to take our weight-loss health risk assessment.



Are Weight-loss Drugs Safe for Kids?

Our expert reveals when parents might consider weight-loss medication for their children.

Historically, doctors relied on lifestyle modifications to treat obesity in adults and children. While these still are an important aspect, in children and adolescents in particular, alone they may be insufficient to result in meaningful changes in body mass index (BMI). Today, there are more options for obesity treatment, including weight-loss medications for adolescents.

But are these drugs safe for kids? Yes, says **Michelle Marie Maresca, M.D.**, who oversees the Healthy Futures weight management program at **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital** at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. FDA-approved anti-obesity drugs are safe when used appropriately. However, each medication has different side effects and benefits to consider on an individual basis.

Reasons to Consider Medication

In kids, obesity is defined as a BMI that reaches or exceeds the 95th percentile. Once thought to stem mostly from lifestyle factors, we now know that obesity is a chronic medical condition with numerous contributing factors, including genetics and environment, and that childhood obesity in particular can lead to serious short-term and long-term problems.

“Delaying treatment for obesity can lead to an increased risk of lifelong health problems, including diabetes, high blood pressure and depression, as well as a higher likelihood of obesity in adulthood,” Dr. Maresca says.

“We now have safe, effective tools that can significantly improve quality of life and reduce risk of complications related to obesity.”

While weight-loss medications don't replace fundamental efforts to combat obesity such as changes in lifestyle or behavior,

they can facilitate these changes by decreasing hunger, in particular. These medications could be considered if:

- ▶ Consistent measures, such as diet and exercise, haven't worked
- ▶ A child is predisposed to obesity because of family history
- ▶ A child already has type 2 diabetes, insulin resistance or other conditions that may be due to obesity, such as high blood pressure or high cholesterol

In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines state that weight-loss medications can be offered as a treatment option to all adolescents with obesity.

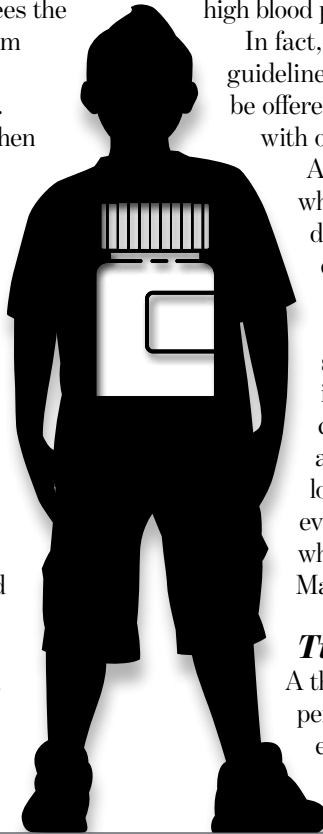
All children with obesity—regardless of whether they're prescribed weight-loss drugs—should also receive regular health exams and nutrition counseling. “Healthy lifestyles, including eating more fruit and vegetables, avoiding sugary drinks and snacks, and getting 60 minutes of activity daily, are extremely important for all children. Sometimes, medication can help achieve these goals more easily. Weight-loss medication isn't the right answer for everyone, but I want my patients and anyone who has obesity to know it is an option,” Dr. Maresca says.

Tips for Parents

A thorough evaluation, including a complete personal and family history and physical examination, are essential to decide which treatment option is best for your child,

and if there are any treatments that should be avoided or conditions that need to be monitored while on treatment.

“Like all medications, there are potential side effects that need to be reviewed prior to starting treatment,” says Dr. Maresca. ❄️



Michelle Marie Maresca, M.D.
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Pain in the

Most of us will experience lower-back pain in our lifetime. Here's how to determine the source and what you can do to help relieve it.



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Orthopedic surgeon
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Franklin Lakes and
Paramus

At some point in life, most of us will experience some type of back pain, particularly lower-back pain. In fact, the National Institutes of Health reports that more than 80 percent of us will experience an episode of lower-back pain at some point in our lifetime.

But how do you know the source of your back pain, and what you can do to help it?

Preetpaul Bagi, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon at **Pascack Valley Medical Center**, says most back pain is classified in two categories:

1 Mechanical: This is the most common type of back pain that occurs when the bones or joints in the lower back are injured or strained from trauma or overuse.

2 Inflammatory: This is less common and happens when “the body creates inflammation in response to itself rather than an injury,” says Dr. Bagi. In other words, the immune system attacks the body, resulting in inflammatory pain.

Mechanical Back Pain

There are a variety of causes for mechanical back pain including:

- ▶ Muscle strain as a result of injury or prolonged poor posture
- ▶ Back spasms
- ▶ Disc bulges (also known as herniated discs)
- ▶ Disc degeneration (more common with aging)

Dr. Bagi notes that people who have had prior back issues can easily inflame their previously damaged tissue.

Treatment: “Treatment will depend on the exact cause of the inflammation, but most people will experience a reduction of inflammation on their own at home if they rest and modify their activities,” says **Rafael Levin, M.D.**, spine and orthopedic surgeon at Pascack Valley.

Over-the-counter pain medication, ice and heating pads can also help.

“After the first week, the pain should start to decrease,” Dr. Bagi says. “As you continue to heal, stretching the lower back, hips and hamstrings can help the process. Core exercises can keep the back supported and help prevent future injury or strain.”

Back



The Future of Spine Surgery

Pascack Valley Medical Center recently introduced Excelsius GPS, a new robotic spinal surgery tool, that allows for minimally invasive spinal procedures. Robotic spinal surgery provides a number of benefits compared to traditional surgery including:

- ▶ Less tissue damage
- ▶ Faster recovery time
- ▶ Smaller scars
- ▶ Less blood loss
- ▶ Less postoperative pain

“While long-term outcomes between traditional surgery and robotic surgery are similar, the robotic tool improves the initial recovery experience,” Dr. Bagi says. “It’s also beneficial to surgeons, helping with better alignment and less exposure to radiation, since x-rays don’t need to be used as a guide during surgery.”

Adds Dr. Levin: “Use of robotic navigation in spine surgery significantly reduces the margin of error for placement of hardware. This means we can more reliably implement our preoperative planning in a way that we maximize the strength of the biomechanical construct. By doing this, we reduce the risk of the surgery in a significant way and improve overall short-term and long-term benefits for the patient.”

Learn more at HMHforU.org/Excelsius.

If your pain does not improve with rest, several options are available including:

- ▶ Physical therapy to strengthen muscles and improve posture
- ▶ Imaging to better understand the cause of your pain
- ▶ Injections to decrease inflammation
- ▶ Surgery, usually a last resort if other measures are unsuccessful and the pain is debilitating

Inflammatory Back Pain

This type of chronic pain is associated with inflammatory arthritis that causes inflammation in the spine:

- ▶ **Ankylosing spondylitis:** Ankylosing spondylitis is a chronic inflammatory form of arthritis that generally affects the spine. Symptoms usually begin during young adulthood and gradually worsen as the vertebrae in the spine fuse together.
- ▶ **Rheumatoid arthritis:** Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic condition that usually targets smaller joints such as fingers, wrists, knees and toes. It also can affect the back. Onset can be gradual or sudden and usually appears between the ages of 25 and 50.

Treatment: Rest may not help with inflammatory back pain. Diagnosis for these chronic conditions is usually done through blood work instead of imaging. These conditions are long-lasting, but treatment can be tailored to a person’s circumstances and allow most people to live normal, full lives. Often, patients may be prescribed a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). But staying active, stretching and modifying movements can help manage symptoms.

When to See a Doctor for Back Pain

Regardless of the source of your back pain, talk to your doctor if you are in severe pain or if the pain doesn’t improve after a week or two with rest and activity modification.

You should see a doctor right away if you experience any pain, weakness or odd sensations in your lower extremities at any time. These are concerning symptoms that could indicate a nerve issue and may need urgent attention.

“You know your body best, so if you are concerned at all, it’s better to talk to your doctor earlier rather than later,” Dr. Levin says. ⚙️

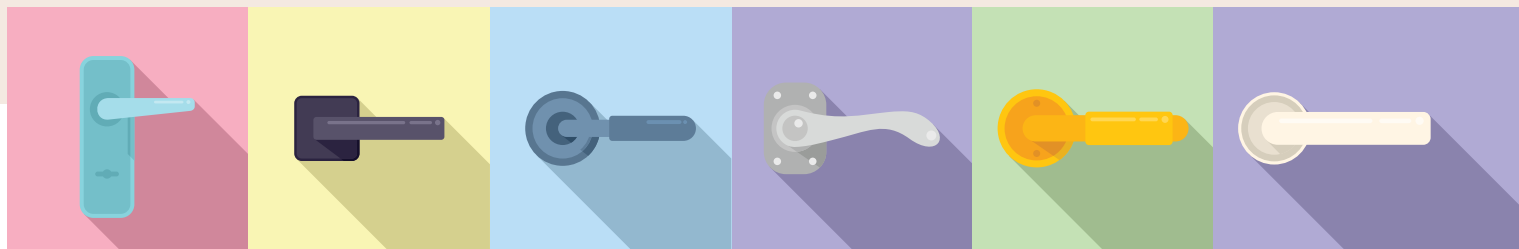


Rafael Levin, M.D.

Spine and orthopedic surgeon

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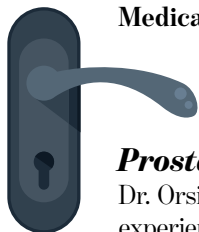


A Handle on Prostate Health

Our expert offers six signs of a prostate problem and what they might mean.

Bodies naturally change as people age, but when are those changes, such as those in the prostate, warning signs of possible issues?

The prostate is a small gland in men located in the groin that is about the size of a ping-pong ball. As men age, it tends to grow larger, which can lead to a variety of health issues, says **James Michael Orsini, Jr., M.D.**, oncologist and hematologist at **Mountainside Medical Center**.



Prostate Problem Warning Signs

Dr. Orsini encourages men to see their doctor if they experience any of the following symptoms:

1. Difficulty emptying the bladder
2. Increased frequency in urination
3. Burning or fullness sensation
4. Problems with ejaculation
5. Blood in urine
6. Change in urine stream (for example, a weak stream or a stream that starts and stops)

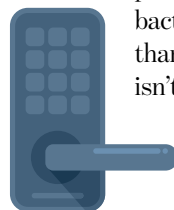


Common Prostate Problems

These warning signs of prostate issues don't necessarily mean you have prostate cancer. Several other possible prostate problems might be responsible, Dr. Orsini says.

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH): BPH, a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate, is very common in older men. About 50 percent of men ages 51–60 have BPH; that number jumps to 70 percent among men ages 60–69 and 80 percent among men over 70. Treatments for BPH include medications to shrink the prostate or relax the muscles, surgery to reduce the size of the prostate and ablative techniques. More recently, minimally invasive water vapor techniques have proven successful.

Prostatitis: Prostatitis is a condition where the prostate is swollen and tender. It can be caused by a bacterial infection and is common in males younger than 50, but it can occur at any age. While prostatitis isn't always curable, it is treatable with antibiotics.



What to Know About Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in American men. Those at greatest risk are men 50 or older and who have a family history. The prevalence of prostate cancer is higher in African American men as well as Hispanic and Native American men.

“Know your family history and consider genetic testing,” Dr. Orsini says. “These factors will help you and your doctor know when you should start screenings. The more risk factors you have, the sooner you should start regular screenings. If you are experiencing any symptoms, see your doctor immediately, because we always want to catch these things early.”



Targeting Prostate Cancer

Mountainside Medical Center uses innovative tools to detect and treat prostate cancer. In July 2022, Mountainside became one of the first hospitals in New Jersey to offer prostate-specific membrane antigen (PSMA) PET imaging, which allows doctors to localize prostate cancer cells.

This technology became even more useful in November 2022 when Mountainside was approved to use Pluvicto, a targeted radioligand therapy treatment for PSMA+ mCRPC (metastatic prostate-specific membrane antigen-positive, castration-resistant prostate cancer). This therapy delivers radiation to specifically targeted cancer cells, with minimal effect on healthy cells.

“In conjunction, these tools significantly improve survival for patients who have already been treated with other anticancer treatments,” Dr. Orsini says.



James Michael Orsini, Jr., M.D.
Oncologist and hematologist
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West Orange, Bloomfield
and Belleville

Treatment for Prostate Cancer

Early detection of low-risk tumors in men can allow them to opt for active surveillance, a strategy for non-aggressive forms of cancer where people are closely monitored and not started on any treatments including upfront surgery or radiation.

Because low-risk prostate cancer isn't likely to decrease life expectancy, monitoring is a good option for certain patients.

For those with more aggressive forms of prostate cancer, several options are available. “There has been a tremendous amount of new research into treatment within the last five years,” says Dr. Orsini.

Treatment options include:

Radiation treatments

- ▶ IMRT
- ▶ SBRT
- ▶ ERBT
- ▶ Brachytherapy
- ▶ Proton therapy

Surgery

- ▶ Robotic surgery is becoming the standard of care

Chemotherapy

- ▶ Taxotere
- ▶ Cabazitaxol
- ▶ Carboplatin

Hormonal oncolytics

- ▶ Androgen receptor blockers
 - Bicalutamide (1st generation)
 - Enzalutamide (2nd generation)
 - Apalutamide
 - Darolutamide
- ▶ Androgen biosynthesis inhibitors
 - Abiraterone acetate

Hormone therapy

- ▶ Androgen deprivation therapy

Immunotherapy

- ▶ IOs (Keytruda, Nivoilumab, etc.), only effective today in about 10 percent of patients
- ▶ Provenge, which uses patients' own blood that is modified and given back in three doses

Bone targeting therapies

- ▶ Radium 223
 - Xofigo
- ▶ Lutetium (177Lu) vipivotide tetraxetan
 - Pluvicto (Mountainside is the first in the state to offer this treatment)

The current five-year survival rate for those diagnosed with early stage prostate cancer is more than 99 percent, but early detection is key, Dr. Orsini says. 🌟



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

New Hope

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



Burton Eliot Appel, M.D.
Pediatric hematologist-oncologist
800-822-8905
Hackensack

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

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

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

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



What Is Involved in Fertility Preservation?

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

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

At the Children’s Hospital, the program includes:

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

Making Families Feel Comfortable

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

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

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

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

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

Instilling Optimism

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

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



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 August through November 2023

Special Events

Health Fair
Join us for free health screenings.
Aug. 27, 10 a.m.–3 p.m., St. Joseph Palisades, 6401 Palisade Ave., West New York

Ovarian Cancer: Subtle Signs Women Should Look out For
Join Merieme Klobocista, M.D., and learn all you need to know about ovarian cancer.
Sept. 13, 3–3:30 p.m., virtual event

September Is National Recovery Month
Every Person. Every Family. Every Community. This webinar will discuss the stigma and improve how one can access available resources, so every person, family and community can celebrate recovery from addiction.
Sept. 12, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

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

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

Cancer Care

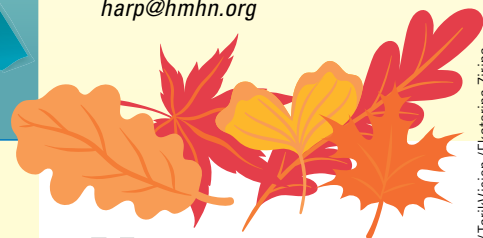
Prevention, Screening and Surveillance of Colon and Rectal Cancer

Learn the risk factors, prevention and treatment options for colon cancer and how early detection can save your life. Free at-home colorectal screening kits are available during registration.

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



- ▶ **Thriving and Surviving Cancer Survivor Workshop** Sept. 6, 13, 20 & 27 and Oct. 4 & 11, noon–2 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Stop Smoking With Hypnosis** Sept. 13, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **An Overview of Prostate Cancer** Sept. 13, 2–3 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Obesity and Cancer** Sept. 20, noon–1 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Game Changers: Advances in Early Detection and Diagnosis of Breast Cancer** Oct. 10, noon–1 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Smoking Cessation By appointment**; 551-996-2038, harp@hmhn.org



Neuroscience

Fall Prevention Celebrate the fall by attending our fall-prevention seminar and complete a fall risk assessment.

Sept. 26, 11 a.m.–1 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

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



Diabetes

Screenings Free health screenings: HgA1c, blood pressure, pulse and pulse oximetry.

Aug. 14 & Sept. 11, 9–11 a.m., *Save Latin America*, 138 39th St., Union City

Sept. 16 & Oct. 21, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m., *Dvine Konektion*, 611 56th St., West New York

Oct. 14, 8–10:30 a.m., Nazareth, 5800 Palisade Ave., West New York



Heart Health

AHA CPR Anytime Be a heart saver, learn hands-only CPR and learn about early heart attack and stroke care. This program does not provide a course completion card.

Aug. 2, noon–1 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center*, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

- ▶ **Living With Heart Failure** Sept. 27, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event
- ▶ **Heart-healthy Eating: Hispanic Style!** Oct. 4, noon–1 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **AngioScreen** Special rate: \$49.95. Registration required. Call for dates, times and locations.



General Wellness

Portion Distortion: Creating a Healthy Plate Learn how to serve a healthful meal using MyPlate.

Aug. 10, 2–3 p.m., *Mountainside Medical Center*

- ▶ **All About Honey** July 12, noon–1:30 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center*, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
- ▶ **Mind, Body, Spirit Seminar** July 13, 20 & 27, 1–3 p.m., *Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center*, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
- ▶ **Paleo Diet: What Is It and Why Is It?** Oct. 3, noon–1 p.m., *Wyckoff Family YMCA*, 891 Wyckoff Ave., Wyckoff
- ▶ **Weight Loss with Hypnosis** Oct. 11, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Weight-loss Surgery** To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. To find a seminar near you, visit HMHforU.org/WeightLoss.
- ▶ **Support Groups** *Hackensack Meridian Health* offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at HMHforU.org/SupportGroups.

Pediatrics

Parent/Guardian Talks

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

Aug. 24, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

- ▶ **The Partner Plan** Sept. 19, 6:30–7:30 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Positive Parenting 101** Speakers: Brett A. Biller, PsyD, and Steven Kairys, M.D., Sept. 28, noon–1 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Tour of the Birthing Center** July 25, Aug. 8 & 22 and Sept. 12 & 26, 5:30–6:15 p.m., *Mountainside Medical Center*
- ▶ **Infant Care & Safety Class** Aug. 14 and Sept. 11, 7–9:30 p.m., *Mountainside Medical Center*
- ▶ **Breastfeeding Class** July 19, Aug. 23 and Sept. 20, 7–10 p.m., *Mountainside Medical Center*
- ▶ **Prepared Childbirth Class** July 22, Aug. 26 and Sept. 23, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., *Mountainside Medical Center*





Nicolas and Kelly Boscia vowed to give back to the hospital that supported their family through a health scare with their daughter when she was a toddler.



All About the Kids

Nicolas and Kelly Boscia have supported children and families at Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital in every possible way that they've needed.

When Nicolas and Kelly Boscia's first child was embarking on toddlerhood, the family found themselves at **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital** at **Hackensack University Medical Center** facing the terrifying prospect that their little girl might have a life-threatening condition.

Thankfully she didn't, but the experience made a profound impression on the Boscias. "We sat in the waiting room with parents who had children with serious medical conditions and/or cancer," Nic says. "Knowing some children had the possibility of not making it out of the hospital was a heart-wrenching experience for us."

Nic made a promise to himself—and to sick children and their families—that he would find a way to give back. In the decade since he and his wife faced a potentially terrible diagnosis, Nic joined the board of the Children's Hospital and the couple has been making donations and raising funds for the Children's Hospital, sometimes modestly and sometimes with spectacular results.

"Many people don't realize the support and funds needed to sustain these programs, which make a world of difference to the sick children and their families," Nic says. "I will continue to support anything and everything that benefits the children while they battle through some of the most horrific times of their lives."

Nic and Kelly's earliest donations supported the purchase of multiple iPads and musical instruments for the children to use while getting treatment at the hospital. The couple helped the foundation create multiple fundraising events, including a holiday bash that Nic emceed, which raised a quarter of a million dollars in 45 minutes. When the Thumbies program, which provides fingerprint memorial necklaces to parents who lose children, was in danger of being discontinued due to lack of funds, they stepped in to save the program with multiple donations. They also recently helped sustain a counseling support program for individuals and families

following the death of a child. Most recently, Nic's company has made an impactful grant that will support bereavement programs and services at the Children's Hospital.

The Boscias are also thinking ahead, putting in place a means to support sick children and their families long-term by creating an insurance policy that will grow in value over time.

"We are extremely grateful to the Boscias for their many years of generous support of Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital," says Jacqueline Bartley, J.D., Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation's vice president of gift planning. "Their recent gift of contributing an insurance policy naming the Children's Hospital the owner and beneficiary will positively impact our work and mission for many years to come, and we are honored to celebrate this wonderful gift with them."

Hackensack Meridian Health recently thanked Nic and Kelly for their generosity by dedicating a plaque to them at the hospital. "It's an honor that is humbling," Nic says. "I support the Children's Hospital because it comes from my heart, not because I want something from it. It's about our children. I don't think any child should ever have to suffer, but unfortunately sometimes they do. My passion is to do everything I can to make their lives easier during their hospital stay. That's what our children deserve—love." 🌟

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



Sleep Easy

The numbers you need to know to get a good night's sleep.

How Much Sleep Is Enough?

Adults	7–9 hours
Teens	8–10 hours
Children	9–12 hours



Stages of Sleep

Light Sleep

Stage 1:

You transition between drowsiness and wakefulness. You will relax and perhaps twitch as you slowly drift into stage two.

1–5 minutes

Stage 2:

Your body and muscles relax. Heartbeat, breathing and brain waves all slow down.

10–60 minutes

Deep Sleep

Stage 3:

The deepest sleep stage tends to happen earlier in the night. It is the stage in which the body does essential tissue growth and repair.

20–60 minutes

REM Sleep

Stage 4:

This is the stage where dreaming is most likely.

90 minutes after you fall asleep and every 90 minutes during sleep

Go Online

If you are experiencing chronic or excessive tiredness, talk with a doctor about your symptoms. They might recommend a sleep study to understand what's causing your fatigue. Make an appointment with a sleep specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/SleepDoctor](https://www.hmhforu.org/SleepDoctor).



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Edison, NJ 08837-2206

HMH-057_NMP

Get Checked

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



Learn healthy behaviors

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



Identify disease risk factors

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



Keep health care costs low

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



Diagnose diseases in their earliest stages

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



Get preventive care

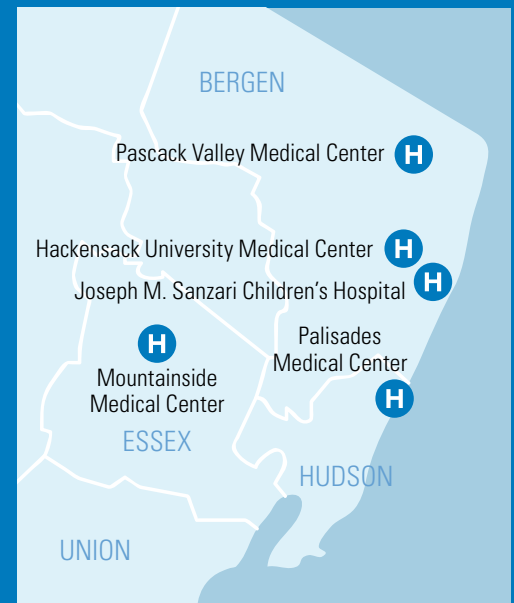
You can use your annual wellness check to get caught up on any needed vaccines as well as understand what screenings you may need based on your age or other factors.



Schedule
an annual
wellness
check with
a doctor
near you.

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

Our hospitals near you:



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



Hackensack Meridian Children's Health Nationally Ranked

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

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



Hackensack
Meridian Health

KEEP GETTING BETTER