

IT'S ABOUT THE POWER OF YOU

HEALTH U



Hackensack
Meridian Health

Spring 2024

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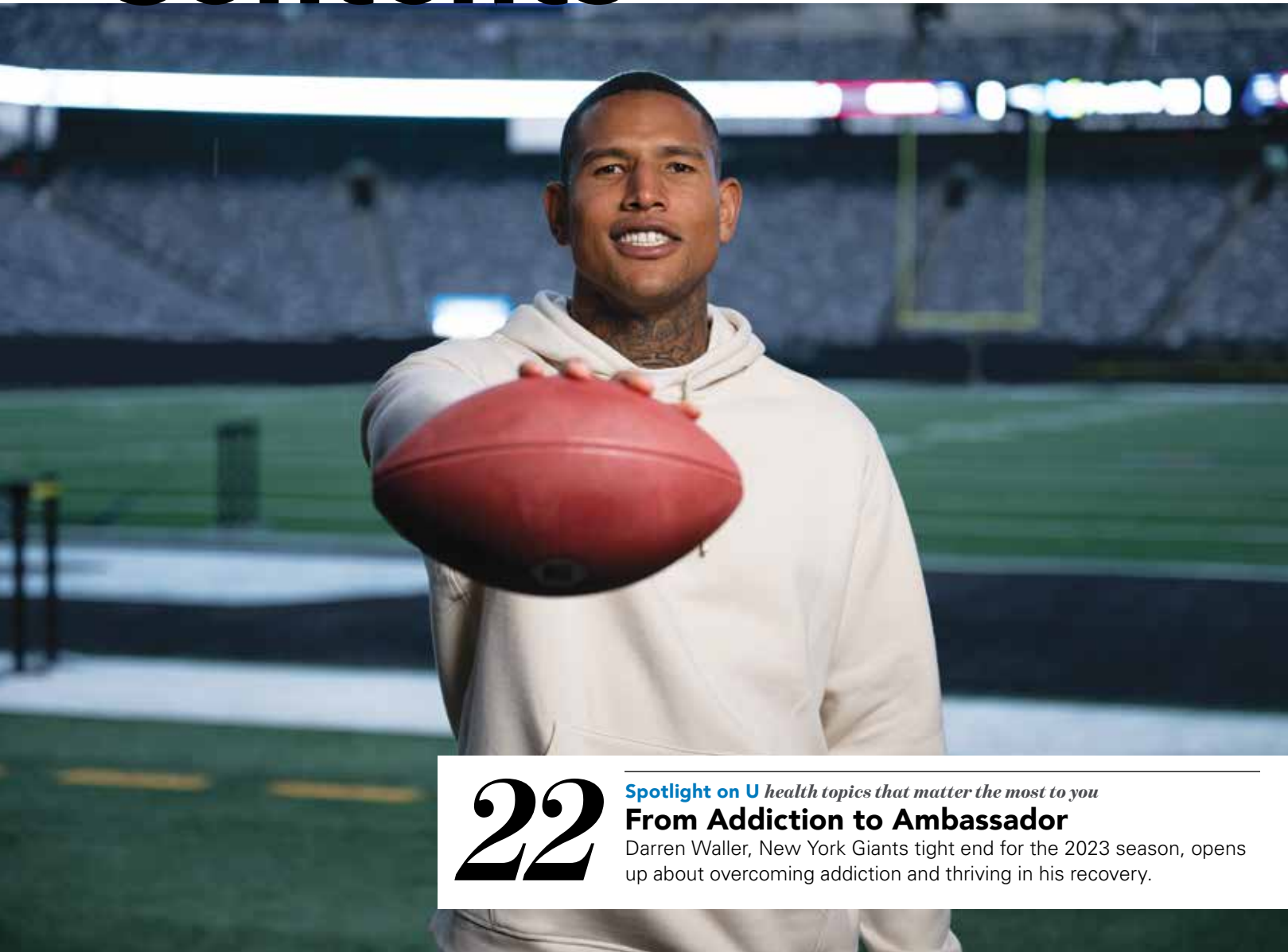
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GIANTS

From Addiction to Ambassador

**New York Giants tight end Darren Waller
opens up about his journey to good health.**

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HEALTH U
ONLINE EXCLUSIVES



Could a fast heartbeat be a sign of a serious concern? Learn what you need to know at [HMHforU.org/FastHeartbeat](https://www.hmhforu.org/FastHeartbeat).



Do loud toys and earbuds lead to hearing loss in young kids? Find out at [HMHforU.org/KidsHearingLoss](https://www.hmhforu.org/KidsHearingLoss).



Back pain? Find out if epidural steroid injections could help you find relief: [HMHforU.org/BackInjection](https://www.hmhforu.org/BackInjection).



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

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

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Shifting the Narrative

We're just a few short months away from the 2024 Summer Olympics when all will marvel at the strength, skill and endurance of the world's greatest athletes. What we don't always recognize or see on our screens are the mental health difficulties that these athletes who compete at the highest level sometimes face.

It's not just Olympic athletes who are at higher risk for mental health or addiction challenges. Professional athletes from all sports—football, baseball, basketball, soccer and everything in between—are shifting the narrative when it comes to their mental health.

One of these incredible athletes is Darren Waller, a tight end with the New York Giants, who has been impacted by addiction and had a near-fatal overdose before turning his life around. We are proud to partner with Darren in his efforts to help others who are affected by substance use or mental health issues.

Darren has joined our team as our newest Health Ambassador and is bravely sharing his journey as the cover story of this issue. If you are facing mental health or addiction challenges, we hope his story will help you realize that you are not alone and resources are available.

At Hackensack Meridian Health, we provide a comprehensive range of services for behavioral health, from inpatient and out-patient mental health and addiction treatment to walk-in urgent



To relax and manage stress, Bob enjoys walks with his beloved family dog, Mallomar.

care for mental health needs. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/BehavioralHealth](https://www.hmhforu.org/BehavioralHealth).

In this issue, we also provide resources you can use to support your mental health, help manage stress and cope with life's difficulties. On page 6, our music therapist Zach Fischer explains how music therapy can enhance moods, improve communication and reduce anxiety.

Gardening is another activity that can bring positive changes to our mental health. With the weather turning, now is the perfect time to dig in. Never gardened before? On page 11, you can find some tips for getting started as a beginner.

Whether you take advantage of professional behavioral health resources, join a support network, engage in calming, therapeutic activities or simply talk about how you are feeling with people you trust, we hope you will put your mental health first this spring. 🌸

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
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BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

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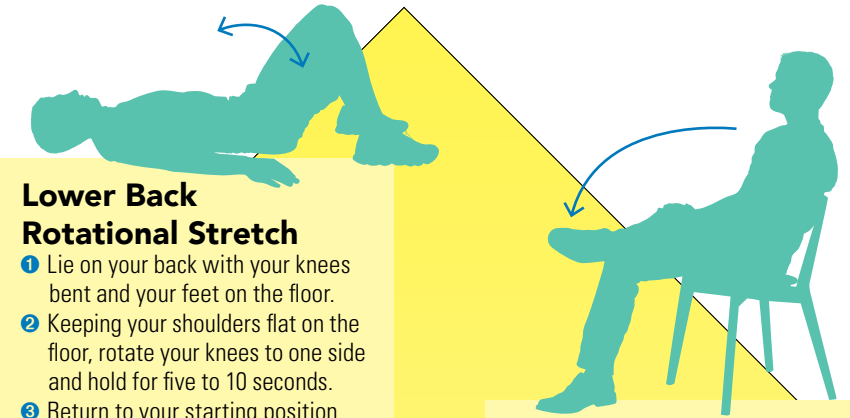
Stretch It Out

Our expert provides three helpful stretches to alleviate your back pain.

Lower back pain can be one of the most frustrating ailments to have. **Craig Van Dien, M.D.**, a physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at **JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute at JFK University Medical Center**, shares three stretches to help you find some relief.

For immediate pain relief, try hot or cold compresses or over-the-counter anti-inflammatory pain medication. "Strengthening and stretching of your core also helps reduce pain. There are many exercises you can do at home for that," says Dr. Van Dien.

Always remember to breathe while exercising and don't rush. These exercises are designed to relax your body.



Lower Back Rotational Stretch

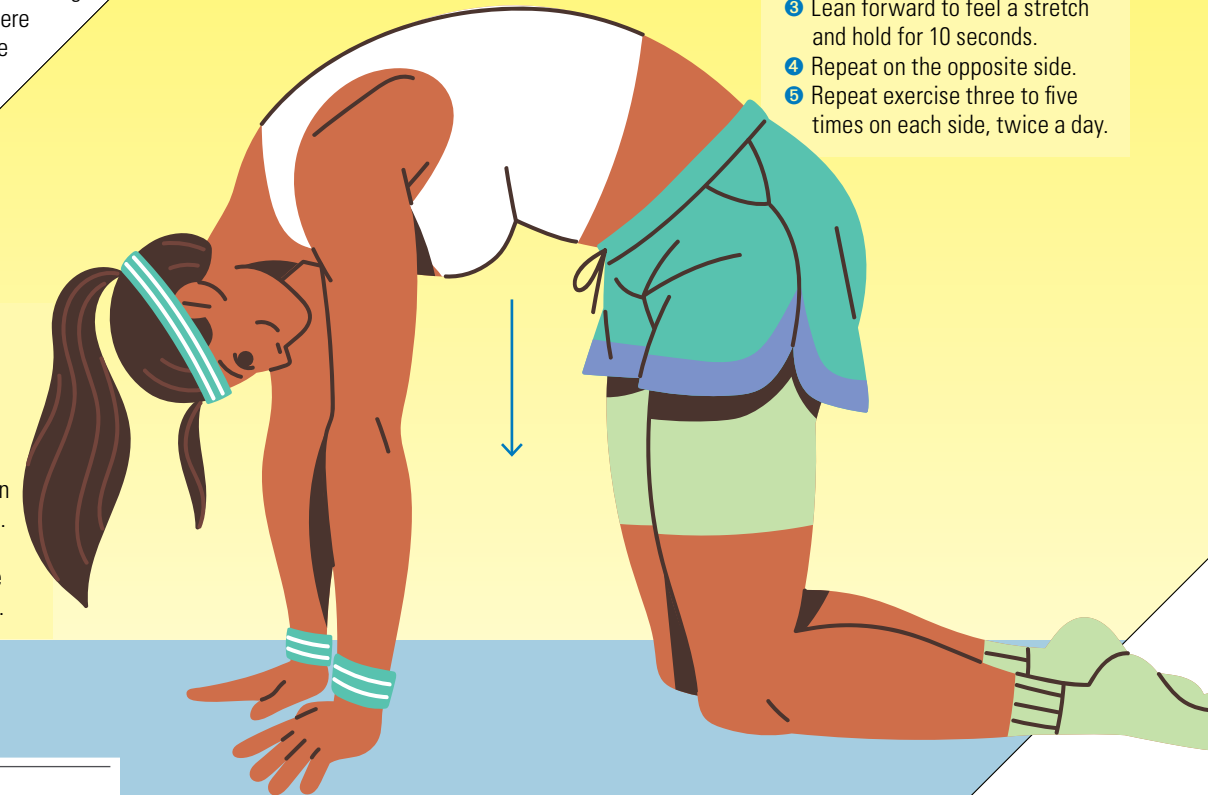
- 1 Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet on the floor.
- 2 Keeping your shoulders flat on the floor, rotate your knees to one side and hold for five to 10 seconds.
- 3 Return to your starting position and repeat on the other side.
- 4 Repeat these stretches two to three times a day.

Seated 4 Stretch

- 1 Sitting on a stool or chair, cross your right leg over your left leg.
- 2 Brace your left ankle against the outside of your right knee.
- 3 Lean forward to feel a stretch and hold for 10 seconds.
- 4 Repeat on the opposite side.
- 5 Repeat exercise three to five times on each side, twice a day.

Cat Stretch

- 1 With your hands and knees on the floor, slowly arch your back and lift your abdomen.
- 2 Slowly let your back down and let the abdomen sink.
- 3 Return to your starting position and repeat three to five times, twice a day.



iStock.com/4x6/Paper Trident



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Go Online

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



The Healing Power of Music

Research shows that music therapy can have a positive influence over mental and physical health. Here's how music can heal.

Have you ever felt lousy but your favorite song helped lift your mood? Music therapists recognize the power of music to help patients improve their health.

Music therapy, an evidence-based field of study, uses music to improve patient outcomes. Research shows that music therapy can influence mental and physical health. "Music is a companion for people on that journey to find themselves," says **Carrier Clinic** music therapist **Zachary D. Fischer, Ph.D., MT-BC**. "It is a cost-effective and efficient way to help people. It has the ability to transform our mental, emotional and even physical health."

Music Used for Therapeutic Purposes

Doctors refer certain patients for music therapy if they may benefit from the treatment.

Music therapy may be beneficial for people who have:

- ▶ Chronic pain
- ▶ Learning disabilities
- ▶ Physical disabilities
- ▶ Autism spectrum disorder
- ▶ Substance use disorder
- ▶ Stroke
- ▶ Traumatic brain injury
- ▶ Parkinson's disease
- ▶ Dementia
- ▶ Anxiety

When you meet with a music therapist, they may ask about your music preferences. They will determine what treatment you require based on your diagnosis and your musical taste.

During music therapy sessions, patients may:

- ▶ Listen to music
- ▶ Move to music
- ▶ Play musical instruments
- ▶ Sing
- ▶ Compose songs with the help of the music therapist
- ▶ Improvise musically
- ▶ Talk about the music that they listen to

How Music Therapy Can Be Healing

Here are five benefits to using music as a healing tool.

1 Connects us to our emotions
Music has a profound impact on our emotional state. "When individuals are hospitalized or diagnosed with mental illness, they often internalize stereotypes and negative messages associated with their conditions. Music therapy provides a safe space where patients can work together to reveal their authentic experiences, thereby challenging and dismantling these harmful stigmas," Dr. Fischer says.

2 Enhances mood and boost positivity
Listening to uplifting, cheerful tunes has been linked to an increase in dopamine levels in the brain, leading to improved mood and a sense of joy. "Incorporating music with a positive tone can create an uplifting environment and foster a sense of hope and optimism in people facing difficult circumstances," Dr. Fischer says.

3 Improves communication and expression
For some patients, verbal communication can be challenging, but music provides an alternative means of expression. "Engaging in music-making activities can improve communication and social skills, especially in individuals with autism or social anxiety disorders," Dr. Fischer says.

4 Reduces anxiety and creates a soothing environment
Studies have shown that music therapy is a powerful tool for reducing anxiety and temporal distortion. Environmental music therapy involves creating a soundscape to soften the harsh edges of clinical spaces.

5 Is cost-effective and efficient
As a therapeutic practice, music has been an integral part of human history. Music therapy is a cost-effective and efficient way to help people on their healing journeys. Unlike conventional therapies, music therapy doesn't require expensive equipment and can be adapted to various environments.

Not everyone needs music therapy, but nearly anyone may benefit from interacting with music. "Music has the innate ability to touch our souls and facilitate healing. All we need to do is open our hearts to its melody," Dr. Fischer says.

Find a behavioral health specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/BehavioralHealthDoc](https://www.HMHforU.org/BehavioralHealthDoc).

Am I Addicted to Processed Foods?

If you've found yourself digging at the bottom of an empty bag of chips or clutching the remnants of a package of cookies, you may have asked yourself, "Am I addicted to snack foods?"

Brian Fertig, M.D., endocrinologist at **JFK University Medical Center**, explains how ultra-processed foods—things like cookies, cakes, chips and frozen meals—may affect the brain and your overall health.

"It's possible that certain foods can have a brain response that is similar to the response people have to other addictive substances," Dr. Fertig says. "When you eat ultra-processed foods that are sugary, fatty or salty, the dopamine in your brain can shift. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that tells the brain, 'This is good—let's do it again.'"

A diet high in fat, sodium and sugar can lead to a number of health concerns, including increased risk of diabetes, heart disease, obesity, stroke and cancer.

How Do You Know if You Might Be Addicted to Processed Foods?

If you're having difficulty finding moderation in the foods you eat, consider these questions:

- ▶ Are you eating more than you intend to?
- ▶ Are you eating even when you're not hungry?
- ▶ Does overeating cause you to feel ill?
- ▶ Have your eating habits impacted your relationships or responsibilities?

If You Think You're Addicted to Processed Foods

If you think you might be addicted to processed foods, Dr. Fertig suggests working with a registered dietitian who can better evaluate your intake and help you make positive changes. Healthy-eating support groups such as Overeaters Anonymous can be another helpful step.



Brian Fertig, M.D.

Endocrinologist

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Piscataway

Gain tips for healthy eating at [HMHforU.org/HealthyEating](https://www.HMHforU.org/HealthyEating).



Zucchini Ribbon Salad

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 large zucchini
- 1½ cups cherry tomatoes, halved
- ¼ cup fresh basil, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon each, salt and pepper

① In a small bowl, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper. Just before serving, pour over ribbons and toss.

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 90 calories, 2g protein, 7g carbohydrate (2g fiber), 7g fat (1g sat, 6g mono/poly), 161mg sodium

Preparation

- ① Using a vegetable peeler, shave the zucchini lengthwise to get lasagna-like ribbons. Continue until you get to the seeds in the center, for approximately 3 cups of ribbons.
- ② Place ribbons in large bowl. Add tomatoes and basil.

Seasoned Cook

Shave and discard the tougher skin on larger zucchini. Smaller, more tender zucchini can be prepared with the skin on. Double the recipe and bring to your next potluck. To add more color, use yellow summer squash, too.

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

Is it safe to detox from alcohol at home?

Ram Mahato, M.D., weighs in:

Instead of detoxing at home, most addiction medicine specialists recommend medically supervised inpatient care.

During detox, the body is cleared of alcohol or drugs. If you are addicted to alcohol, you may experience withdrawal symptoms that can last from a few days to a few weeks. Those symptoms may include:

- ▶ Irritability or agitation
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Headache
- ▶ Dizziness
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Muscle pain, weakness or tremor
- ▶ Nausea
- ▶ Sweating
- ▶ Insomnia
- ▶ Seizures
- ▶ Visual or auditory hallucinations, such as threatening voices
- ▶ Tactile hallucinations (such as bugs crawling on skin)
- ▶ Frightening, vivid dreams or nightmares

Detoxing at home without medical supervision can be risky because, if you have severe withdrawal symptoms or a medical emergency, nobody will be there to manage them. It's best to be in a safe, supervised environment as you begin your recovery journey.

If you or someone you love is in need of detox treatment, don't hesitate to reach out for support. Clinical professionals are here to help you detox safely and successfully.



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



How can I relieve my allergies this spring?

Robert Lebovics, M.D., weighs in:

If you think you have a pollen allergy, see an allergist before pollen season begins. Once they determine which allergens cause a reaction, they can help you formulate a plan to combat the spring allergy season.

Follow these guidelines for managing allergies this spring:

- 1 Monitor pollen counts and stay indoors on high-count days.
- 2 Wear sunglasses or a wide-brimmed hat when you're outdoors to prevent pollen from coming into contact with your eyes.
- 3 Keep your house and car windows closed during pollen season, using air-conditioning or fans as needed to cool off.
- 4 Place a HEPA filter in your air-conditioning unit to further reduce exposure to pollen while you're indoors.
- 5 Shower and change your clothes after being outside, especially before going to bed.
- 6 Hang dry your clothes indoors rather than outdoors, or use a clothes dryer.
- 7 Minimize physical contact with pets that spend a significant amount of time outdoors during pollen season.
- 8 Use a neti pot to rinse pollen out of your nose.
- 9 Go outside after a steady rainfall, when the pollen has been washed out of the air.
- 10 If you have to spend time outdoors on a day with a high pollen count, wear an N95 mask, KN95 mask, KF94 mask or surgical mask, especially if you'll be doing yard work or going for a hike in the woods.



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

Why do my ears feel clogged?

Virginia Gural-Toth, AuD, CCC-A, weighs in:

There are several common causes of clogged ears, and getting relief depends on identifying what is causing that clogged sensation.

Impacted Earwax

If your ears are full of wax, they can often feel clogged—and sometimes, earwax buildup can be tough to remove. Over-the-counter drops can help, but if the wax doesn't come out in a day or two, talk to your doctor. Never attempt to remove earwax with a cotton swab.



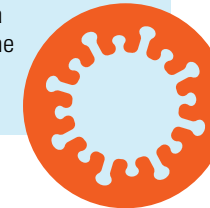
Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can sometimes be perceived as a clogged feeling. If your ears feel clogged without an obvious cause, talk to your primary care doctor about getting a hearing test. Sometimes, it can be age- or noise-related hearing loss, but it could also be due to another condition.



COVID-19

Although there aren't many studies on COVID-19 and hearing loss, any upper respiratory infection, including COVID-19, can lead to a clogged-up feeling in the ears due to swelling and fluid buildup.



Eustachian Tube Dysfunction

Eustachian tube dysfunction occurs when the Eustachian tube, which connects the middle ear to the back of the throat, doesn't open and close properly. When the Eustachian tube doesn't open and close properly, it can cause that clogged-up feeling.

Sinus or ear infections, allergies and other respiratory viruses—all of which can cause swelling and fluid in the ear—are common causes of Eustachian tube dysfunction. If you think your clogged ears are caused by a respiratory illness, over-the-counter medications recommended by your doctor can decrease fluid accumulation and swelling.

If your clogged ears persist even after home treatment, talk to your primary care provider about your symptoms.

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

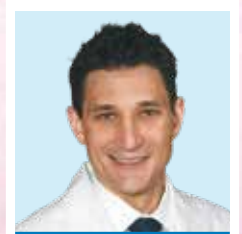
Why is my urine cloudy?

Michael Lasser, M.D., FACS, weighs in:

Urine color and consistency can tell you a surprising number of things about your body including your hydration level, what you've eaten recently and even what medications you're taking. In general, cloudy urine is usually harmless. But if it is recurrent, it could be indicative of a medical condition:

- ▶ **Preeclampsia in pregnant people.** If you are pregnant, cloudy urine can be a symptom of vaginal discharge, infection or even preeclampsia. Preeclampsia is a condition that can cause high blood pressure or lead to organs not functioning properly, causing danger to both the parent and fetus.
- ▶ **Certain kidney conditions and chronic diseases.** Cloudy urine can be a sign of several conditions such as diabetes, urinary tract infection, sexually transmitted diseases, kidney disease or kidney stones.

If you have any of these symptoms, talk with your doctor as soon as possible. For any change in your urine that lasts for more than two days, speak to your doctor to determine the cause.



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

Doctor Spotlight

MICHAEL KUO, M.D.

Primary care doctor

Hackensack Meridian Medical Group
Primary Care—Clark

When Michael Kuo, M.D., was young, it wasn't hard for him to envision his future career in medicine and primary care. His father and several other family members were all doctors in Taiwan.

"That gave me such a strong background in medicine already," says Dr. Kuo, who speaks Mandarin, Chinese and English. "Biology was my main interest, and I used to have many pets at home that I learned so much about. I'm very good at taking care of others, so it felt like medicine should be my choice."

He says it's so important to try to prevent illness from happening to patients in the first place and puts a special focus on prevention and treatment of chronic conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol and diabetes.

"Today, much of the U.S. population is affected by cardiovascular concerns mainly due to those three diseases described above," Dr. Kuo says. "I try to get my patients to be more proactive about their health. If they don't take it seriously, they may face more complications further down the line. When I advise my patients on their health, I really hope they will listen and make the right informed decisions for their own health based on the information I have given them. One of my greatest joys is seeing my patients make good progress on their health based on the decisions we arrive at together."

Dr. Kuo uses the same gentle, persuasive approach with his two daughters. "I don't want to be a parent who tells their kids, 'You must be this when you grow up.' I want them to decide what they like and do what makes them happy," he says.

Do you have a special talent or hobby?

I love music. I used to play the piano more. I started piano when I was in first grade and



Michael Kuo, M.D., has a record collection of more than 1,000 albums and says he has listened to every single one of them.

practiced for two hours a day. My teacher was from Julliard, so my parents had dreams of me becoming a concert pianist. I have a huge vinyl record collection—everything from jazz to classical to pop and rock. I've been collecting records for 20 years—more than 1,000 albums—and yes, I listen to all of them. My favorite is Chopin's *Nocturnes*.

What do you do to unplug?

I enjoy lots of things. I love sports and photography. I garden and grow a lot of peonies, a flowering plant, because they're quite easy

and come in different varieties. I try to grow vegetables, but I'm not always that successful. I also like to read. I read a lot of things online, including multiple medical journals and *The New York Times*.

If someone told you two airline tickets are waiting at Newark International Airport right now, where would you go?

It would have to be Rwanda to see the gorillas in the lowland forest. I would track into the forest and see them up close because I am fascinated by them. They are so majestic. 🌿

To make an appointment with Dr. Kuo or a doctor near you, call 800-822-8905 or visit [HMHforU.org/FindADoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/FindADoc).

Spotlight on U

health topics that matter the most to you

Dig In

Gardening has many positive effects on mental health, from reducing stress and anxiety to promoting relaxation and enhancing confidence. These four tips can help you get started if you've never gardened before.

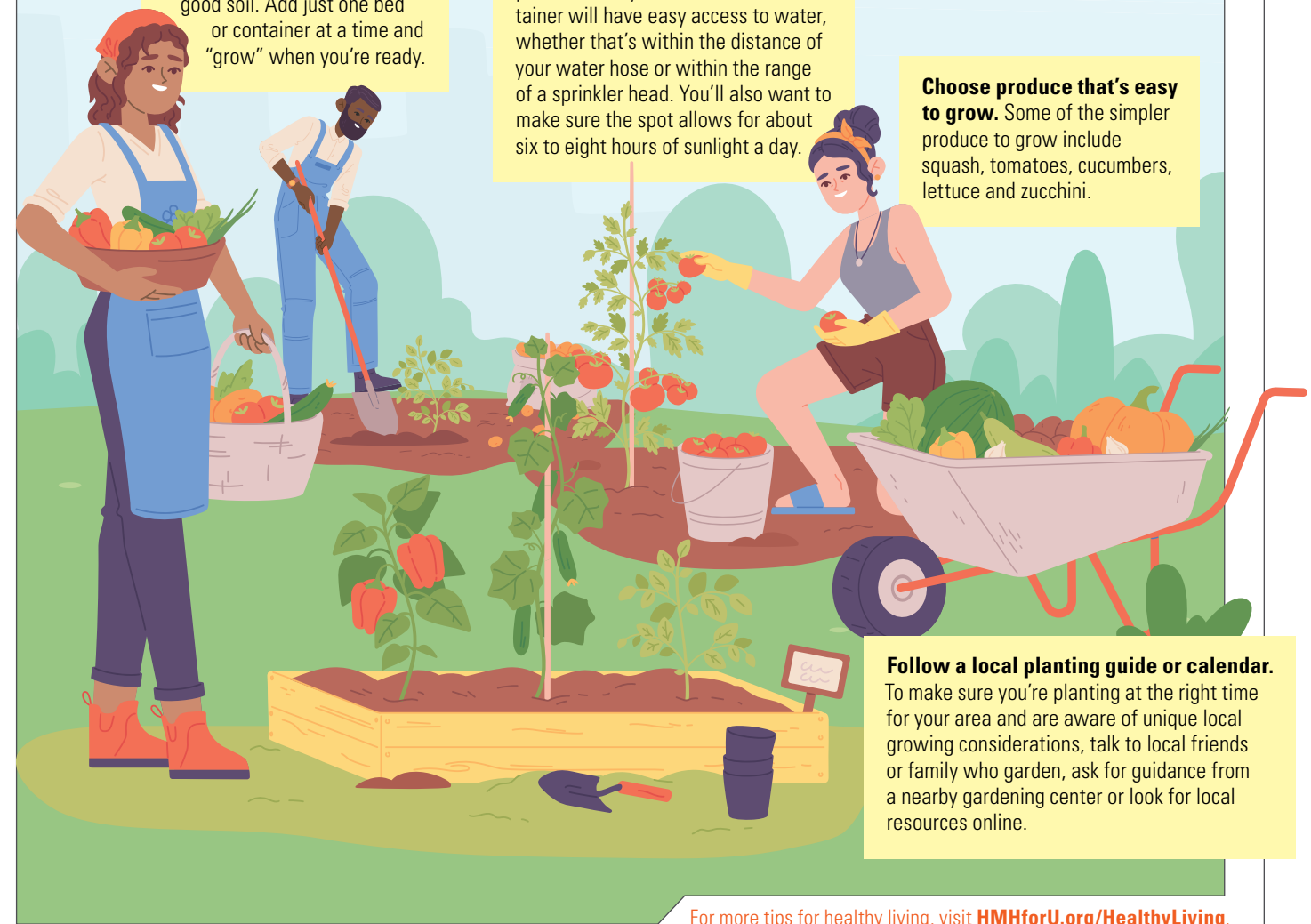
Start small. Consider using a small raised bed or container that can be easily filled with good soil. Add just one bed or container at a time and "grow" when you're ready.

Find the right spot. Make sure the placement of your raised bed or container will have easy access to water, whether that's within the distance of your water hose or within the range of a sprinkler head. You'll also want to make sure the spot allows for about six to eight hours of sunlight a day.

Choose produce that's easy to grow. Some of the simpler produce to grow include squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce and zucchini.

Follow a local planting guide or calendar.

To make sure you're planting at the right time for your area and are aware of unique local growing considerations, talk to local friends or family who garden, ask for guidance from a nearby gardening center or look for local resources online.

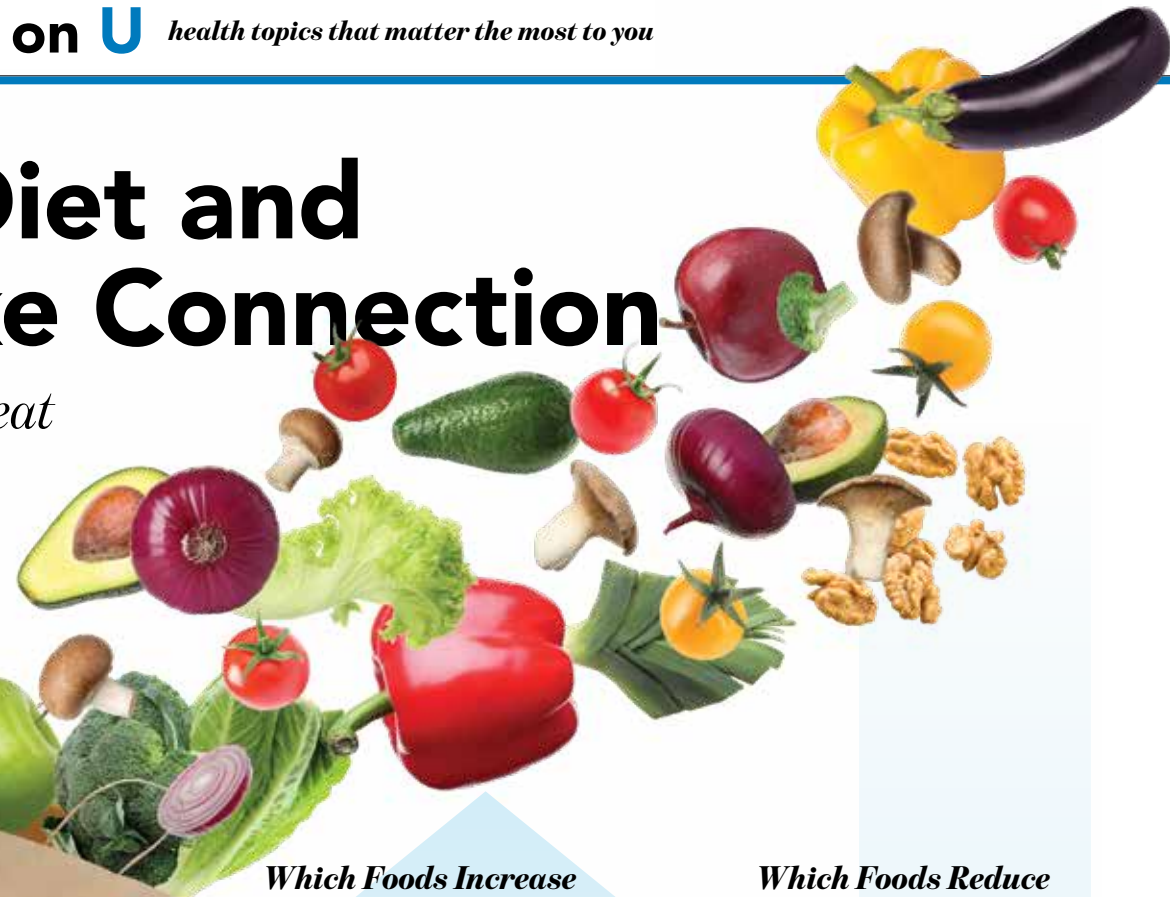


For more tips for healthy living, visit [HMHforU.org/HealthyLiving](https://www.hmhforu.org/HealthyLiving).

NEUROLOGY

The Diet and Stroke Connection

Is what you eat impacting your risk of stroke? Our expert weighs in.



Which Foods Increase Stroke Risk?

Certain staples of the standard American diet are high in fat or nutrient-poor. When eaten regularly, they may increase your risk of stroke.

These foods include:

- ▶ **Meat**, including red meat and processed meat, which are high in saturated fat (they may raise cholesterol levels and increase heart disease risk, raising stroke risk)
- ▶ **Full-fat dairy products**, including butter and cheese, which are high in saturated fat
- ▶ **Sugary sweets**, including soda, energy drinks, cookies, cakes and candy (they affect blood sugar levels and may lead to diabetes, which increases stroke risk)
- ▶ **Foods high in salt**, including chips, pretzels and many processed foods (salt may raise your blood pressure levels, increasing your risk of stroke)

Which Foods Reduce Stroke Risk?

Following a nutrient-dense, plant-based diet may help to lower stroke risk. Fruits, vegetables, nuts and other foods contain important vitamins, minerals, fiber and healthy fats.

To reduce your risk of stroke, incorporate these foods into your diet:

- ▶ Fiber-rich fruits and vegetables in a variety of colors
- ▶ Beans, which are low-fat, fiber-rich and nutrient-dense
- ▶ Whole grains rather than foods made with white flour
- ▶ Nuts and seeds, which contain healthy fats and fiber
- ▶ Low-fat or fat-free dairy products
- ▶ Fish or shellfish
- ▶ Olive oil and other healthy monounsaturated fats
- ▶ Water instead of soda or sweetened beverages ☼

“Diet plays an important part in our overall health. The foods and drinks we consume can increase or decrease our risk of stroke,” says **Spozhmy Panezai, M.D.**, director of the Comprehensive Stroke Center at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **JFK University Medical Center**. “It is important to pay attention to the foods we eat, along with other lifestyle habits, to reduce stroke and cardiovascular disease risk.”

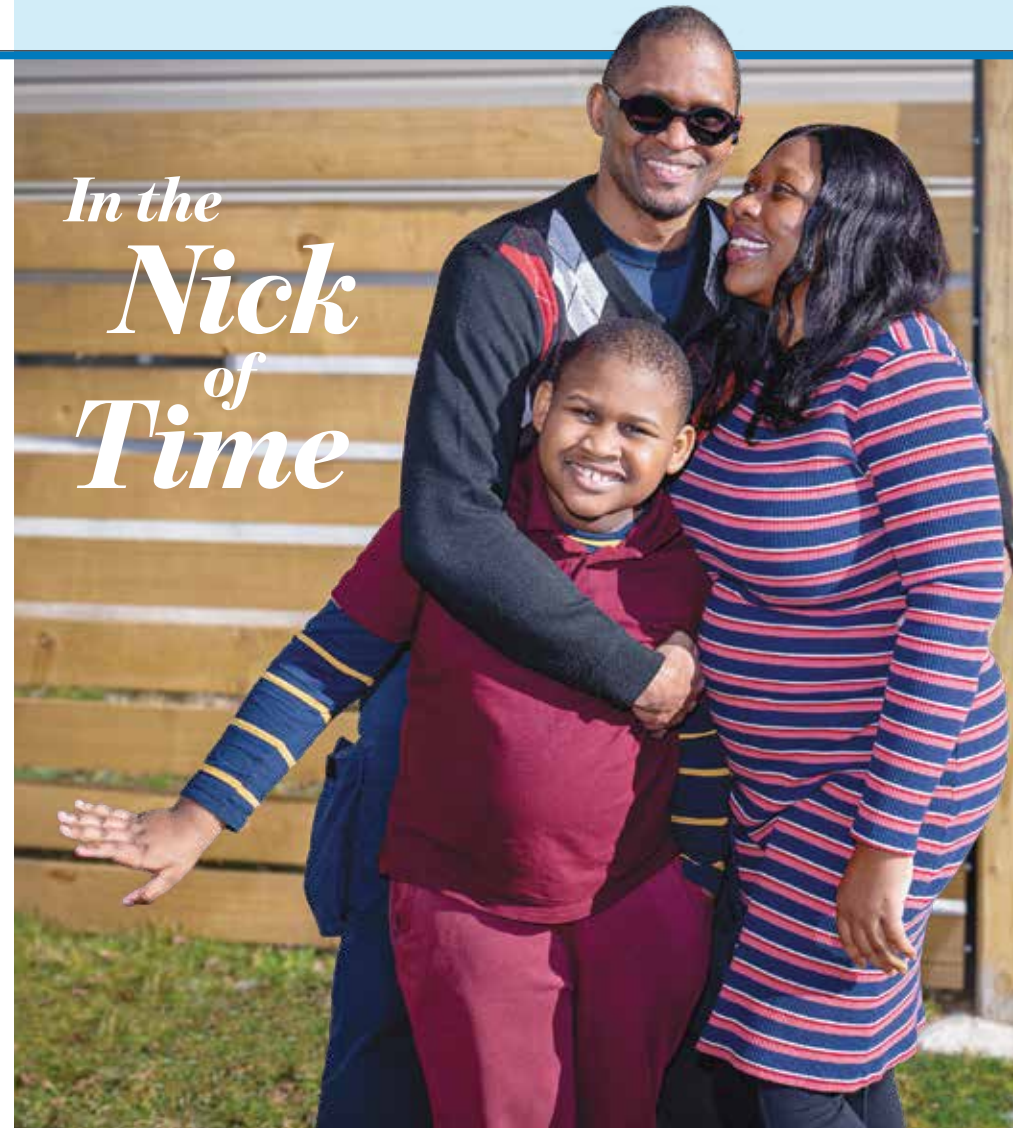


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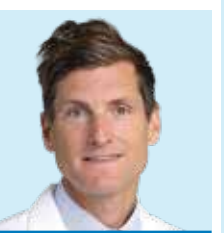
Go Online

For more healthy eating tips, visit [HMHforU.org/HealthyEating](https://www.HMHforU.org/HealthyEating).

In the Nick of Time



Glenn Williams is grateful that he can spend quality time with his wife, Shellon, and son, Gabriel, after successful treatment for stroke.



Brian Jankowitz, M.D.
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55 minutes, Dr. Jankowitz says, which exceeds national standards for performing endovascular treatments. This quick action was crucial. “His life was saved because his wife was by his side, quickly recognized the symptoms and called 911,” Dr. Jankowitz says.

Back to 100 Percent After Treatment

Emergency medical services gave Glenn the choice between JFK and another hospital nearby. He chose JFK because it was closer to his home, and he couldn’t be happier with his decision. JFK is a Joint Commission Accredited Comprehensive Stroke Center, which means the hospital has specific abilities to receive and treat the most complex stroke cases.

At this point, Glenn can proudly say he is experiencing no long-term side effects. “If someone told me I had a stroke, I wouldn’t believe it because I didn’t lose any of my senses or abilities—nothing,” he says.

Adds Dr. Jankowitz: “Today, Glenn can do everything he wants to do, which is a very rare outcome after a thrombectomy. This only happens in around one in 100 patients.”

Glenn can still work (which often includes walking six miles a day), play guitar, exercise, do yardwork and spend time with his 9-year-old son, Gabriel. “I was fortunate that I survived, and everything was taken care of in time,” Glenn says. “My outlook on life is a little bit different now.”

Learn your risk for heart attack or stroke. Schedule an AngioScreen® near you: [HMHforU.org/AngioScreenEvent/](https://www.HMHforU.org/AngioScreenEvent/)

Quick stroke treatment at JFK University Medical Center allowed Glenn Williams to not only survive, but thrive.

On the morning of October 26, 2023, Glenn Williams, 48, woke up and reached over to hit the snooze button on his phone. He fell off the bed and couldn’t get up. His wife, Shellon, came over to help him and immediately knew something was wrong.

“Normally, I can do push-ups. But I couldn’t even push myself up off the floor,” says Glenn, who lives in Plainfield, New Jersey.

He had a weak face, arm and leg on one side of his body. Luckily, Shellon knew these were classic stroke symptoms and called 911. Glenn was taken to **JFK University Medical Center**, where he was diagnosed with an ischemic stroke caused by a large vessel occlusion (blockage) of the middle cerebral artery. He had an endovascular thrombectomy, a minimally invasive surgery to remove the blood clot in his brain.

When Time Is of the Essence

Glenn’s case was unique because he was a young, healthy man outside the typical age range for a stroke, says **Brian Jankowitz, M.D.**, a cerebrovascular neurosurgeon at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at JFK. “Many people don’t think of a debilitating stroke happening to a 48-year-old,” Dr. Jankowitz says. “But stroke does not discriminate.”

“Time is brain” is a common phrase used in reference to strokes, meant to emphasize the importance of fast action: A person loses 1.9 million neurons, or brain cells, every minute they’re having a stroke, according to the National Institutes of Health.

The time between Glenn arriving at the hospital and completing the thrombectomy was just

iStock.com/Liudmila Chernetzka/Andrey Elkin

NEUROLOGY

Deep Dive

Deep brain stimulation is providing new hope for patients with Parkinson's. Here's what you should know.

People living with Parkinson's commonly experience tremors, stiffness and involuntary movements, and medications don't always help. But a treatment called deep brain stimulation (DBS) offers hope.

What Is DBS?

"DBS is a therapy for selected patients in which a surgeon implants electrodes into specific parts of the brain," says **Tasneem Peeraully, M.D.**, a movement disorders neurologist at Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **JFK University Medical Center**.

These electrodes are connected to a generator implanted underneath the skin of the chest near the collarbone. A movement disorders neurologist can then remotely manipulate the electricity moving through the electrodes in the brain to reduce motor symptoms of Parkinson's, like stiffness, slow movements and tremors.

Who Should Consider DBS?

Certain Parkinson's patients with uncontrollable tremor can benefit from DBS when:

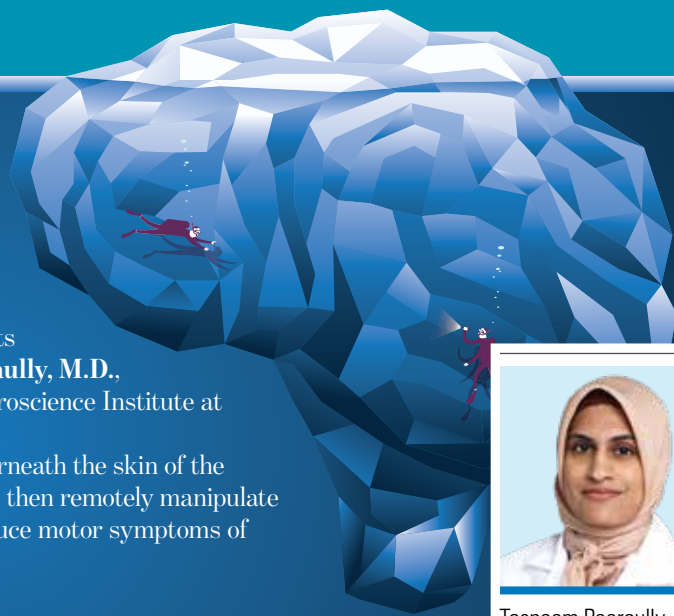
- ▶ Medication is not effective at controlling tremor
- ▶ Medication wears off well in advance of the next dose
- ▶ Medication is causing disruptive side effects

"DBS is not ideal for patients who are in cognitive decline, have untreated psychological challenges or have issues that aren't motor-related," says neurosurgeon **Vanessa C. Milano, M.D.**, adding that DBS can't help with all Parkinson's symptoms. "For some Parkinson's patients, their primary symptoms may be trouble with memory or speech. Unfortunately, DBS does not help with these symptoms. However, through research and firsthand experience, I have seen improvements in sleep, pain and mood in patients who have undergone DBS for their tremor, slow movements or stiffness."

Does DBS Work?

Parkinson's is a progressive disorder, and DBS won't halt the disease entirely. While DBS is not meant to replace medications, many people see a reduction in the medication they need to manage their Parkinson's.

"DBS is not a cure, but it does help improve quality of life by allowing patients to perform daily activities more easily and even return to some of the hobbies they enjoyed before their diagnosis," Dr. Milano says.



Tasneem Peeraully, M.D.

Movement disorders neurologist

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Vanessa C. Milano, M.D.

Neurosurgeon

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Edison and Holmdel

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Dmitry Kovalchuk/Getty Images

CANCER CARE

Home and Away

Colonoscopy vs. at-home screening: Which one is right for you? Our expert sheds some light on the subject.

Colon cancer is one of the leading causes of cancer deaths in the United States. Here's what you should know about available screening options.

Colonoscopy Screening

A colonoscopy is an outpatient exam, typically performed every five to 10 years. It allows your doctor to look at the lining of the large intestine. A fiber-optic camera system is used, which is specially designed to be safely passed through the anus. Your doctor can see problems, take samples and remove polyps (small growths that, if left, can become colon cancer). The procedure takes about 30 minutes and is done while you are comfortably sedated.

Jonathan Knowles, M.D., chief of colorectal surgery at **JFK University Medical Center**, considers colonoscopy the gold standard for colorectal cancer screening. However, it is time-consuming and requires bowel preparation and time off work (usually for 24-36 hours). People who are at high risk for colorectal cancer should be on a regular surveillance program, which can be planned with their specialist.

High-risk factors include:

- ▶ Family history of colon cancer (any first-degree relative under 60 years of age who has been diagnosed)
- ▶ Precancerous polyps or predisposing diseases, such as inflammatory bowel disease

At-home Screening

For people at average risk, an alternative to colonoscopy is an at-home colorectal screening test. Two at-home tests are available:

- ▶ Home fecal immunochemical tests performed annually
- ▶ Fecal occult blood testing or multitarget stool DNA tests, such as Cologuard®, performed every three years

An at-home exam must be prescribed by your primary care doctor or gastroenterologist. Using a lab-provided kit at home, you will collect a stool sample, then mail it back to the testing company for analysis.

Test results from your lab sample are generally received by your doctor within a few weeks. These tests look to find cells or tiny amounts of blood that polyps and cancers release into the stool.

"These are excellent screening tests, although not as thorough as a colonoscopy," Dr. Knowles says. "They are easy and convenient. If one of these tests is abnormal, your specialist will then recommend you undergo a colonoscopy."



Jonathan Knowles, M.D.

Colorectal surgeon

800-822-8905

Edison

Go Online

To schedule a colon cancer screening, visit [HMHforU.org/CancerScreening](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/CancerScreening).

Go Online

Find a Parkinson's disease specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/ParkinsonsDoc](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/ParkinsonsDoc).

Journaling to Success

If you are looking to lose weight—whether it’s a few pounds or many more—recording a journal of your eating habits, exercise and weight can keep you on target.

Weight-loss expert **Aram Jawed, M.D.**, bariatric surgeon at the Center for Weight Loss at **JFK University Medical Center**, says keeping a written record helps track progress and drive success.

Benefits of a Weight-loss Journal

Dr. Jawed says recording your journey will:

- ▶ Help you understand your eating patterns
- ▶ Hold you accountable
- ▶ Keep you on track with your goals
- ▶ Help you make more mindful choices
- ▶ Help you identify problem areas
- ▶ Allow health care providers to understand your habits, progress and continuing goals

“Journaling helps identify emotional triggers that directly cause cravings and hunger,” Dr. Jawed says. “Once you understand these triggers, you can develop healthier coping behaviors.”

How to Keep a Weight-loss Journal

There isn’t a right or wrong way to journal. It can be a simple log of what you eat and what exercises you perform. Or it could be a much more detailed log of your eating habits and the events of the day, and how they may have influenced your choices. It’s a personal choice of what you want to include.

“Obviously, a weight-loss journal is also about your weight, so regular weighing is helpful to track progress. You don’t need to weigh yourself every day, but you should do it weekly or at least monthly,” Dr. Jawed says. “The key to success is consistency.”

Remember that, with exercise and strength training, muscle weighs more than fat. As long as you are active, making healthy eating choices and losing inches, don’t worry too much about the scale. Dr. Jawed adds: “Remember that non-scale victories are important, as well. Decreasing pant sizes, more restful sleeping habits, increased energy and looser-fitting clothing are all signs of successful weight loss.”



Aram E. Jawed, M.D., FACS, FASMBS

Bariatric surgeon

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Edison

Safety First

More people are taking weight-loss medications without a doctor’s guidance, and that can cause health risks. Here’s how to use medications safely.

These days, weight-loss medication is getting a lot of attention—on TV, on social media and in everyday conversations between family members and friends.

But talking about them is one thing, and taking them without a doctor’s guidance is another. If your doctor prescribes weight-loss medication, follow these seven tips to make sure you are using the drugs safely.

1 Take Drugs at the Proper Pace

Doctors prescribe weight-loss medication in single-use syringes often injected at home. Patience is vital. The best approach is to raise weekly doses gradually to avoid after-effects. It might take four or five months to reach the right dose for you.

2 Choose a Qualified Doctor

Make sure your doctor offers a comprehensive program with a multidisciplinary team. Your medical team should help you understand how to safely reach your goal weight, how to limit side effects and how to ensure you get the proper nutrition.

3 Know that Injectables Aren’t for Everyone

Medications focused on weight loss are not intended for those hoping to shed five to 10 pounds. They’re approved for people with a body mass index of 30 or higher, and people with a BMI of 27 or higher if they have weight-linked medical issues such as hypertension. People with a personal or family history of thyroid cancer, pancreatitis (an inflamed pancreas) or gallbladder disease are at greater risk for serious complications and should not take weight-loss medication.

4 Avoid Buying Injectables Online or from Compound Pharmacies

You may save money while getting a quicker fix, but neither you nor your health care practitioner may know what the compound contains—or the complications it can cause. If you were denied a prescription for medical reasons, buying the drug anyway may endanger your health.



Scan the QR code to find out if you’re a candidate for weight-loss surgery.

5 Recognize that a Shot Is Not a Fix-all

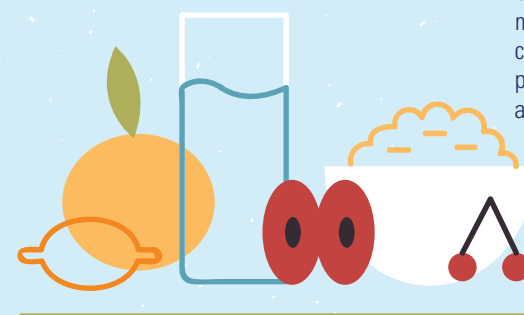
While weight-loss drugs can help you drop pounds, they won’t necessarily affect your high cholesterol, hypertension, sleep apnea, diabetes or heart disease. Bariatric surgery may be a better option if you need to lose 100 pounds or more.

6 Maintain Proper Nutrition

Without proper nutrition, you risk heart palpitations, vitamin deficiencies, nerve damage and hair loss. Your doctor can monitor your blood sugar, vitamin levels and electrolytes to ensure you get the nutrients needed to keep your heart, kidneys and other organs running smoothly.

7 Develop Good Habits for Long-term Success

When you stop taking injectables, pounds may return. Your genes, environment and behavior all play a role in gaining and losing weight. That’s why you may need support from doctors, dietitians, trainers and counselors to reduce fat, inactivity and emotional eating.

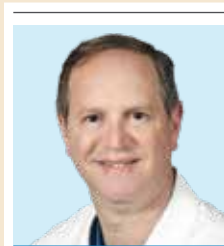
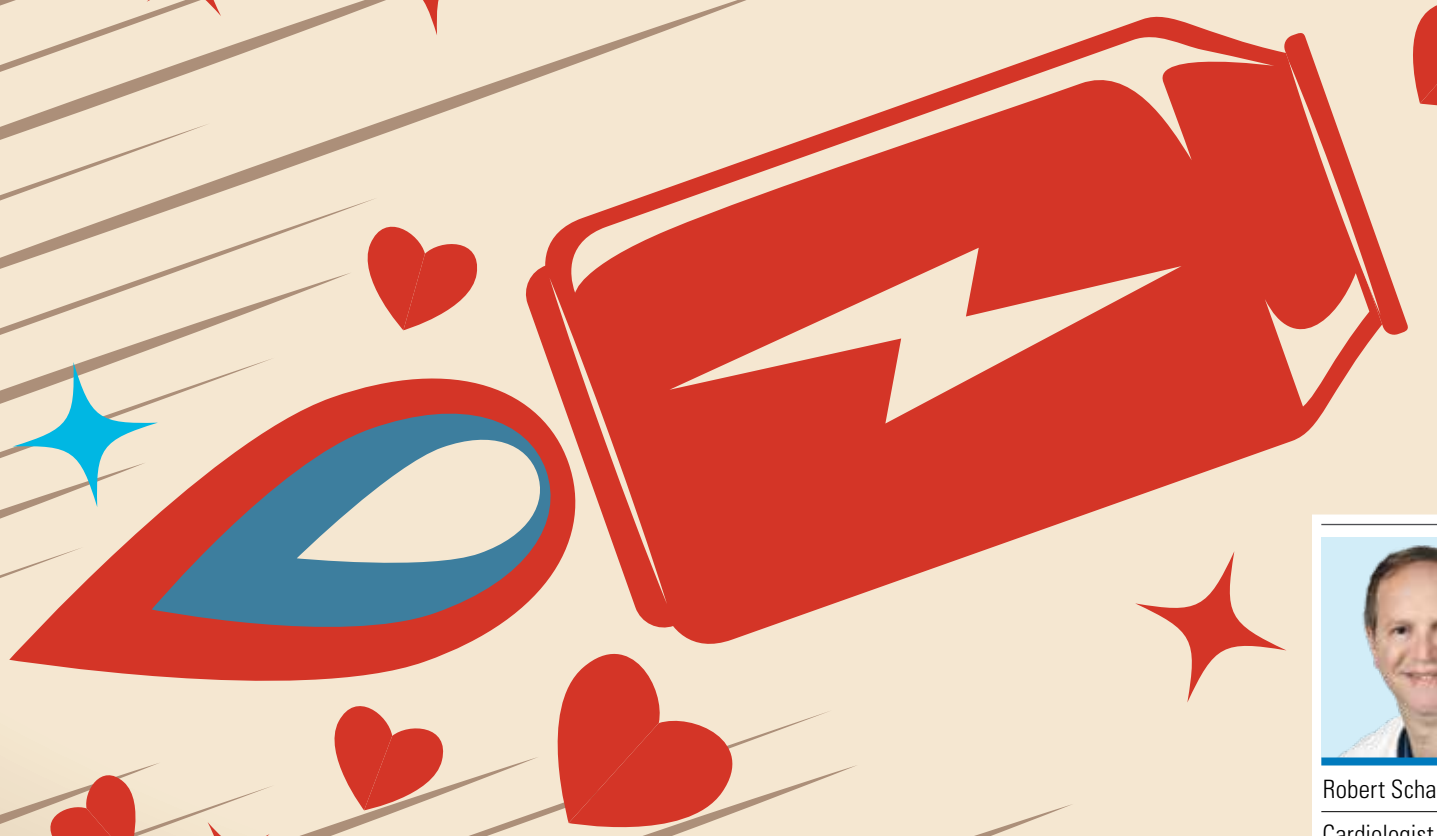


Go Online

To download a sample weight-loss journal template, visit [HMHforU.org/WeightLossTracker](https://www.hmhforu.org/WeightLossTracker).

Get Energized!

As you enjoy the flavored bubbles of your favorite energy drink, you may wonder, are energy drinks bad for your heart?



Robert Schanzer, M.D.
 Cardiologist
 800-822-8905
 Edison

Energy drinks have become increasingly popular over the years because they promise to boost energy and focus, but do you have to sacrifice your heart health to reap the benefits?

How Energy Drinks Affect Your Heart

“Some energy drinks contain a dangerous combination of excessive sugar and stimulants that can lead to strains on your heart,” says **Robert Schanzer, M.D.**, cardiologist at **JFK University Medical Center**. These beverages can be especially problematic for those with preexisting heart conditions.

Drinking energy drinks can cause the following:

- ▶ **Increased heart rate and blood pressure.** The high amount of caffeine in energy drinks acts as a stimulant, interfering with specific neurons in the brain intended for alertness, which releases a hormone that increases heart rate and blood pressure.
- ▶ **Impact on blood vessels.** Consumption of stimulants can constrict blood vessels, which leads to reduced blood flow to the heart and other organs. This puts additional stress on the heart, forcing it to work harder.
- ▶ **Arrhythmias.** With the increase in blood pressure and heart rate, energy drinks may also increase your risk of arrhythmias, which are irregular heartbeats that disturb the normal rhythm of the heart.

Safer Energy Boosters

Although energy drinks don't cause heart disease, they can affect preexisting conditions, so it's important to stay cautious.

- ▶ **Moderation is key.** When energy drinks are consumed in moderation, you can obtain the benefits while minimizing the risks. Set limits such as only one energy drink every other day.
- ▶ **Read labels.** If you want to take control of your health, read labels to look for additives, added sugar and calorie content.
- ▶ **Hydrate with water.** Many of the ingredients in energy drinks have dehydrating effects, so it's vital to balance these ingredients by staying hydrated with water.
- ▶ **Opt for coffee or tea.** If you're looking for a drink with a boost, try coffee or tea in moderation. Coffee is rich in antioxidants, which can be beneficial for your health. ☕

Are you at risk of heart disease? Take our quiz to find out.



Love Your Heart

Whether you've been diagnosed with a heart disease like congestive heart failure or atrial fibrillation, or you just want to live a more heart-healthy life, take these small steps every day for better heart health over the years.

Do these nine things every day to keep your heart healthy as you age:

- 1 Get a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate exercise every week. For example, a half-hour walk during your lunch break on weekdays would tune up your heart and leave you feeling refreshed for your afternoon work. 
- 2 Watch your sodium/salt intake. The recommended amount of salt a person should consume daily is 1,500 mg, but it's very easy to consume more. Read food labels, and opt for fresh versions of foods rather than canned ones. 
- 3 Cook at home as much as possible. Home cooking makes it easier to control sodium content and portion sizes. 
- 4 When eating at restaurants, look for heart-healthy options on the menu. 
- 5 If you smoke, get help to quit. Smoking is bad for your heart and encourages snacking on high-sodium foods. 
- 6 Limit your alcohol intake. 
- 7 Focus on maintaining a healthy weight. 
- 8 Team up with a buddy to achieve your heart-healthy goals: Share recipes, plan meals and exercise together. 
- 9 Work with your doctor to ensure that other health conditions, like diabetes, stay under control. 

By keeping your heart healthy, you dramatically increase the likelihood that you will enjoy better health for as long as you live.

ORTHOPEDICS

The Gym vs. the Great Outdoors



There is no one-size-fits-all approach when choosing where to train, but our expert explains the pros and cons of each.



How healthy are your hips and knees? Take our online joint pain assessment to find out.

When it comes to the question of whether it is better to train outdoors or in the gym, the answer isn't set in stone.

Alexander Russoniello, M.D., hip and knee orthopedic surgeon at **JFK University Medical Center**, says each option has potential risks and favors certain types of activities.

Benefits of Training Outdoors

- ▶ **Accessibility and fresh air.** Outdoor training is easily accessible and can be done in local parks, trails or neighborhoods. Enjoying the fresh air and natural surroundings adds to the overall experience.
- ▶ **Sunlight and vitamin D.** Exercising outdoors exposes you to natural sunlight, which promotes the production of vitamin D, which is essential for strong bones and a healthy immune system.
- ▶ **Stress relief in nature.** Being surrounded by nature during outdoor workouts can reduce stress levels and provide a calming effect on the mind and body.

Benefits of Training in the Gym

- ▶ **Wide range of equipment.** Indoor gyms offer a diverse selection of exercise machines, free weights and specialized equipment, allowing for targeted workouts and variety in routines.
- ▶ **Social interaction and motivation.** The gym provides opportunities for social interaction, whether it's working out with friends or joining group classes.

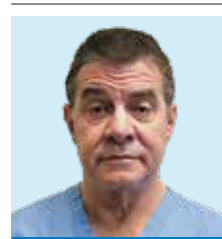
The supportive environment and camaraderie can boost motivation and enjoyment.

- ▶ **Professional guidance.** Trainers at the gym can offer expert guidance, ensuring proper form, technique and personalized workout plans to help you reach your goals safely and effectively.
- ▶ **Easier on your joints.** Gyms typically have even surfaces and cushioned flooring, reducing the impact on joints during activities like running or high-intensity workouts.

Finding the Right Balance

Outdoor environments are ideal for sporting activities like running and biking, while weightlifting is more effectively performed in a controlled gym environment with specialized equipment.

"The most important thing is to stay active and healthy, regardless of where you choose to exercise," says Dr. Russoniello. "Find a well-rounded routine that works for you." 🌀

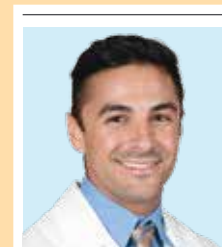


Alexander Russoniello, M.D.
Hip and knee orthopedic surgeon
800-822-8905
Edison

iStock.com/Rudzhah Nagiev / iemomo

Slow It Down

Too much exercise can have negative effects on the body. Our expert offers signs that you may be hitting the gym a little too hard.



Mitchell Stroh, D.O.
Orthopedic surgeon
800-822-8905
Edison and Old Bridge

It seems that almost every ailment can be prevented or improved with exercise. But when working out, more isn't always better. It's possible to exercise too much or do what's called "overtraining."

Mitchell Stroh, D.O., orthopedic surgeon at **JFK University Medical Center** and **Old Bridge Medical Center**, shares signs that you may need to pull back on your exercise regimen.

Why Your Muscles Need Rest

If you have pain with certain exercises or activities, take a break and give your body rest. "When it comes to understanding when you might be overtraining, let your pain be your guide," Dr. Stroh says.

To get stronger, sometimes you need to push your body. But keep in mind that your body needs rest and your muscles need time to recover.

Without rest, your muscles are continually strained and can break down, which can lead to health problems.

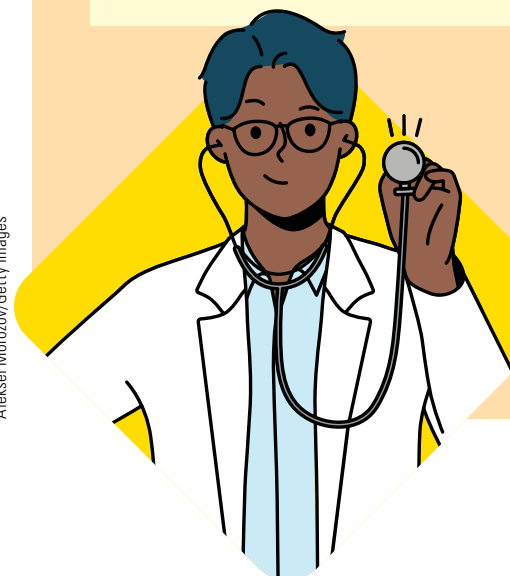
Signs of Too Much Exercise

Signs of too much exercise include:

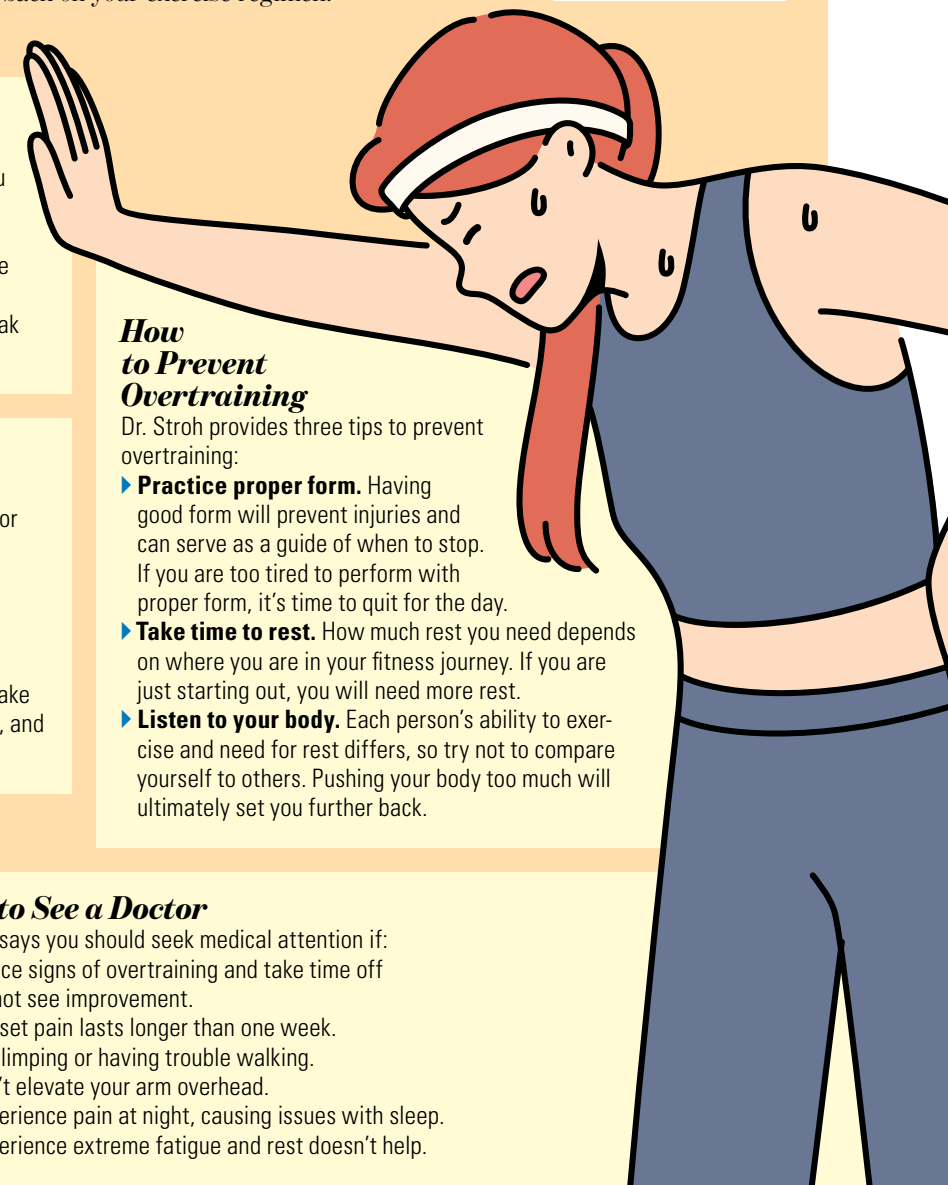
- ▶ Pain during certain activities
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Swollen or painful joints
- ▶ Limited movement
- ▶ Performance plateaus or declines
- ▶ Poor sleep quality

If you notice symptoms of overtraining, give yourself a period of rest, then see how you feel.

After a few days, you can attempt exercise again, but take it slow and easy. Gradually return to your exercise routine, and if any symptoms of overtraining return, back off again.



Aleksei Morozov/Getty Images



How to Prevent Overtraining

Dr. Stroh provides three tips to prevent overtraining:

- ▶ **Practice proper form.** Having good form will prevent injuries and can serve as a guide of when to stop. If you are too tired to perform with proper form, it's time to quit for the day.
- ▶ **Take time to rest.** How much rest you need depends on where you are in your fitness journey. If you are just starting out, you will need more rest.
- ▶ **Listen to your body.** Each person's ability to exercise and need for rest differs, so try not to compare yourself to others. Pushing your body too much will ultimately set you further back.

When to See a Doctor

Dr. Stroh says you should seek medical attention if:

- ▶ You notice signs of overtraining and take time off but do not see improvement.
- ▶ New onset pain lasts longer than one week.
- ▶ You are limping or having trouble walking.
- ▶ You can't elevate your arm overhead.
- ▶ You experience pain at night, causing issues with sleep.
- ▶ You experience extreme fatigue and rest doesn't help.

From Addiction to Ambassador

Darren Waller, New York Giants tight end for the 2023 season, opens up about overcoming addiction and thriving in his recovery.

It may appear like Darren Waller has everything. He played tight end for the New York Giants and joined Hackensack Meridian Health as a Health Ambassador in 2023, but his journey was not easy. In an interview with HealthU, Darren shares details about how addiction impacted his life and how he maintains his recovery. Most of all, he wants people who are dealing with addiction to know that they are not alone and recovery is possible.

How did your substance use begin?

My journey with drugs and alcohol started when I was 15 years old, experimenting recreationally with two friends. I found painkillers in their parents' medicine cabinets. At the time, I was dealing with a lot of anxiety and self-doubt, and the pills were like the answer I was looking for. They cleared my head and gave me a sense of peace and escape from the sadness I was feeling. From there, I kept chasing that feeling and tried whatever substances I could get my hands on.

When did you realize your substance use was a problem?

I got to a place where I just wanted to withdraw from everything in my life. I was in a lot of emotional pain, and numbing that pain became a daily priority for me. I was suspended from playing professional football for the fourth or fifth time, and the only time I felt safe or relaxed was when I was high. And then, right before my 25th birthday, I overdosed on painkillers, and it almost killed me. I took something that I thought was safe, but it ended up being laced with fentanyl. All I remember was sitting in my car outside of the supermarket when it felt like someone pulled the plug on me. The pills kicked in, and things went dark really quick. By some miracle I survived, but that was the moment I finally realized I needed help.

How did you find recovery?

After I overdosed, it shook me up. It woke me up to the reality that I had an addiction and it was going to kill me. I went to an inpatient facility for detox and completed a 30-day treatment program that changed my life. It doesn't mean that all my issues have been resolved and there are no bumps in the road. But I have a better path forward, and I am moving in the right direction. It was the first time I remember just stopping and doing something for me.

During treatment, I learned that addiction is a medical condition, not a life choice. I learned that professional care and support are needed for safely detoxing, and a support network is really important

to long-term sobriety. I've been sober more than six years now, and I speak with my recovery coach regularly and attend meetings. I'd say that sticking with an aftercare program is really important.

Recovery is hard work and a lifelong commitment. I learned that my addiction was deeper than my dependence on drugs and alcohol. I focused on emotional healing and other issues in my life through therapy and relaxation skills to reduce stress, like meditation, yoga and journaling. Every day, I try to be patient with the process and use what I learned in treatment to keep moving forward.

What's life like now for you?

Early in my recovery process, I had a lot of resentment. I wasn't trying to be a bad person or destroy my life; I was just trying to have a good time like everyone else. It didn't feel fair that other people could enjoy an occasional drink, but that same drink could lead to more and tear my life apart. But every day, those feelings fade as I continue to understand myself and work through therapy and my recovery. I am moving further and further away from the cravings and desire to numb myself, and I now feel that I have a greater purpose in life to help others find their way to better times.

What advice do you have for someone in the midst of addiction?

I would start by saying that there's nothing wrong with you being where you are. None of us set out on a journey toward a substance use disorder. But with the right help, there is a path to recovery. You just have to be willing to move forward, to make a call or ask for help. Recovery may not happen on the first try, but stick with it, be grateful for small victories along the way and trust that there are better times ahead if you stay the course. 🧠



Watch Darren's full video interview at HMforU.org/Darren.

Go Online

If you or a loved one is in need of addiction treatment services, visit HMforU.org/Addiction, or speak to an addiction admissions expert right away at **866-266-1616**.



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 April through June 2024

Special Events

National Senior Health & Fitness Day

Join us as we provide free health & wellness screenings, including blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, pulse, BMI and stroke risk assessment, in honor of National Senior Health & Fitness Day! Education materials will be available, as well.

May 31, 8:30–11:30 a.m., YMCA, 1 Mannino Park, Old Bridge



Stroke Awareness Day May is Stroke Month. Join our experts and learn the signs of someone having a stroke, how to lower your risk, B.E.F.A.S.T. and more.

May 9, 1–2 p.m., James J. Cullen Community Center, 1776 Union Ave., Hazlet. Free health and wellness screenings provided.

Speaker: Brian Jankowitz, M.D., May 16, 2–3 p.m., Woodbridge Library, 1 George Frederick Plaza



Living With Thyroid Disease

Join Reema Arpit Patel, M.D., and learn about the signs, symptoms and treatment options for thyroid disease.

June 6, 1–2 p.m., Woodbridge Library, 1 George Frederick Plaza



Cancer Care

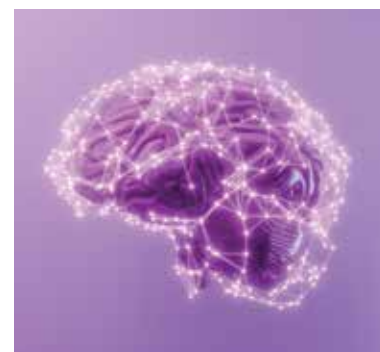
Tackling Brain Tumors: the Cutting Edge

Yevgenia Shekhtman, M.D., will discuss the traditional approaches to surgical management of some of the most common brain tumors as well as the latest techniques for treatment.

May 8, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

► **Palliative Care and Advance Care Planning** Apr. 22, 2–3 p.m., virtual event

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



Behavioral Health

Hope and Breakthroughs for Treatment-resistant Mental Health Conditions

Join Eric Alcera, M.D., as he explores how existing treatments like ECT, TMS, Esketamine and others are effective and scientifically proven, providing hope and a better quality of life for many individuals. He will also debunk myths and discuss new treatments, including medically supervised use of psychedelics, that may provide life-changing improvements in the future.

May 14, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

Heart Health

Dash and Mediterranean Diet Curious about which diet is right for you? Join our registered dietitian to learn about foods that can help your heart health and long-term healthy-eating style.

May 2, 1–2 p.m., Woodbridge Library, 1 George Frederick Plaza

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



Pediatrics

Parent/Guardian Talks

Acting Out: From Toddler to Teen Join pediatric psychiatrist Brett A. Biller, PsyD, and parent coaching experts to learn how to identify and respond best when a child lashes out behaviorally and verbally.

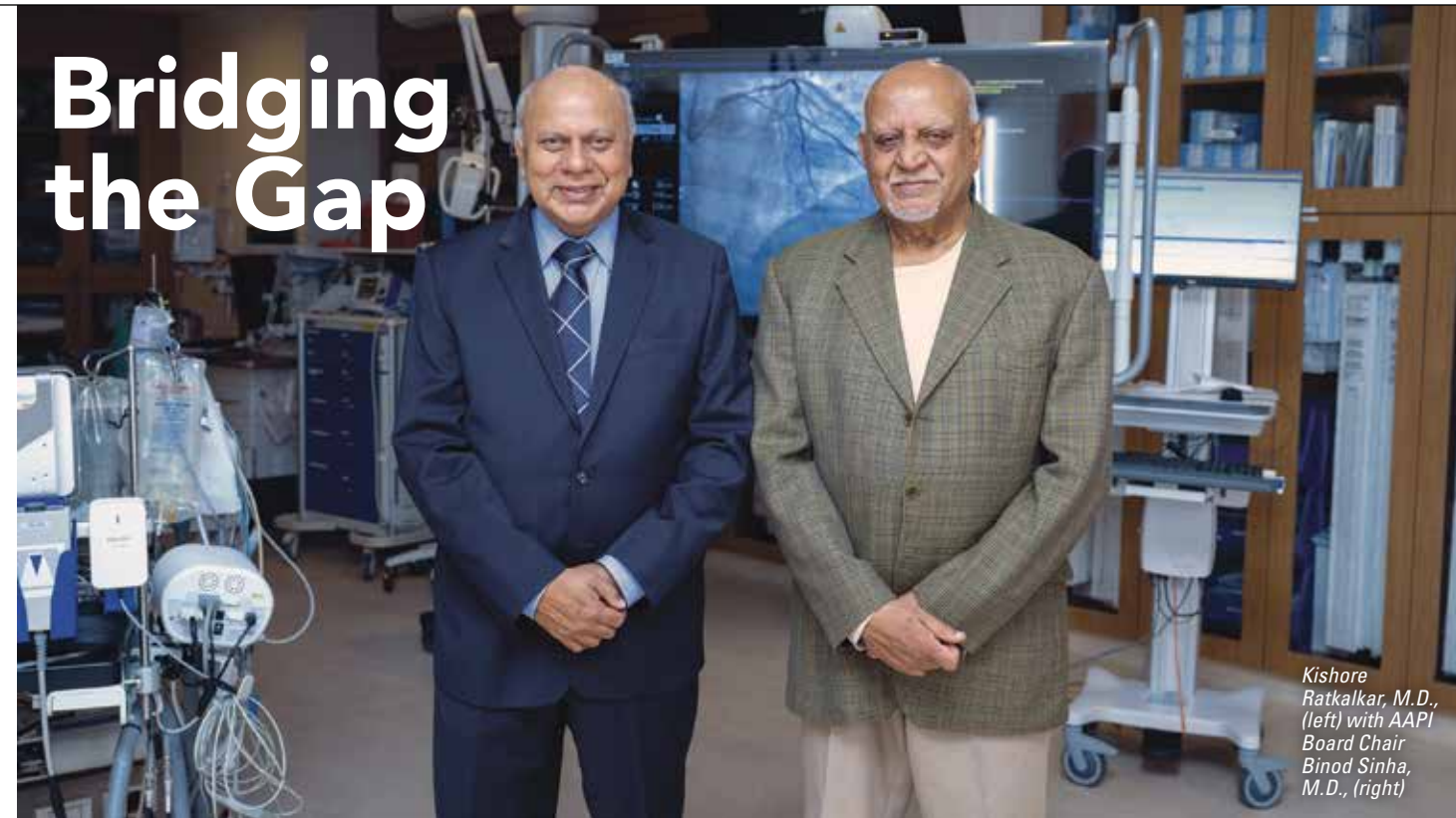
Apr. 30, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Postpartum Mind & Body** Speakers: Regina Kaplan, M.D., Nina Ross, M.D., and Stephanie Sansone, M.D., May 30, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Safe Sitter** Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/Events) for more upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email Coeventinquiries@hmn.org for more information. Fee \$40.

► **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/Events) for upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email Coeventinquiries@hmn.org for more information. Fee \$15.

HOSPITAL LOCATIONS									
Bayshore Medical Center 727 North Beers St. Holmdel	Carrier Clinic and Blake Recovery Center 252 County Rd. 601 Belle Mead	Jersey Shore University Medical Center 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	



Kishore Ratkalkar, M.D., (left) with AAPI Board Chair Binod Sinha, M.D., (right)

The South Asian Community Health Initiative at JFK University Medical Center brings health fairs, screenings and programs to the South Asian community.

Everyone has a right to health care, and that means providing effective preventative health care programs to those who have gone without. Doing so helps address smaller health issues so they are less likely to spiral into larger ones.

That's the motto behind the South Asian Community Health Initiative (SACHI) at **JFK University Medical Center**. The program—the brainchild of pulmonologist **Kishore Ratkalkar, M.D., FCCP**, president of the medical staff at **Raritan Bay Medical Center**—will enable JFK to offer health fairs, community health screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, stroke risk and other health markers, as well as other health education programs to the South Asian community.

"I felt there was a need to identify health inequities within the South Asian community and to offer culturally appropriate care by removing common barriers to health care," says Dr. Ratkalkar, who personally donated \$50,000 to the JFK University Medical Center Foundation's SACHI Fund. Other recent donations include \$100,000 from the New Jersey American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (NJAAPI).

"Early intervention and prevention is key," says **Atul Prakash, M.D., FRCP, FACC, FHRS**, president of NJ State AAPI and a cardiologist and electrophysiologist. The SACHI program will hire a consultant to identify the South Asian community's health needs as well as a dedicated patient navigator who will connect those who need medical care or

access to other resources to address social barriers to care, such as food and housing insecurity. "It is our duty to try to bridge the gap," Dr. Prakash says.

Donations to support SACHI ensure that all South Asians have equal access to health care. "Many people cannot pursue health care because of barriers such as language differences and a lack of familiarity with the health care system," says Sheri A. Marino, MA, CCC-SLP, executive director of the JFK University Medical Center Foundation. "Our goal is to remove these barriers to make health care accessible to all South Asian members of the community."

Dr. Ratkalkar is grateful to all who have helped make SACHI happen through generous donations, including those from Dr. Prakash and NJAAPI. "Together we are motivated, and we appreciate that JFK is doing this to achieve our objectives through SACHI," he says. 🌟



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

Spot

1. C. While strokes may cause unusual sensory issues such as changes to taste and smell, smelling burnt toast is not a reliable indicator.

2. B. Balance, eyesight, face, arms, speech, time. Balance changes, sudden difficulty seeing, numbness or weakness in the face and arms, and slurred speech are all common signs of stroke. Time means it's time to call 911, and there's no time to waste.

3. D. All the above. Additionally, it is important to manage any chronic conditions with proper medication.

4. True, call 911 immediately. Although stroke symptoms may resolve on their own, medical attention should always be sought as quickly as possible when any stroke-like symptoms occur. Available medical treatment to minimize the damage being done by a stroke must be given within hours of symptom onset, so getting medical attention as soon as possible is the top priority.

5. D. 70–90. While strokes may occur more frequently in this age group, younger people can still experience strokes. Immediate medical attention is crucial regardless of age.

the Signs

Strokes often come on suddenly and are serious medical conditions. Do you know what signs to look for? Take our quiz.

❶ Which of the following is NOT a sign of stroke?

- A. Moderate to severe numbness or weakness on one side
- B. Sudden speech impairment
- C. Smelling of burnt toast
- D. Sudden vision impairment

❷ What does B.E.F.A.S.T. stand for?

- A. Brain, energy, forward, away, slow, tired
- B. Balance, eyesight, face, arms, speech, time
- C. Balance, energy, face, arms, slow, tired
- D. Brain, eyesight, feeling, arms, speech, time

❸ Which of the following should you do to minimize stroke risk?

- A. Quit smoking
- B. Manage diet and weight
- C. Increase cardiovascular activity
- D. All the above

❹ True or false: If you suspect someone is having a stroke, call 911 immediately.

- True: Get medical attention as quickly as possible.
- False: If it doesn't resolve in a few hours, then seek medical attention.

❺ Which age group typically is at the highest risk of stroke?

- A. 20–30
- B. 40–50
- C. 50–60
- D. 70–90

Answers:

Go Online

Are you at risk of stroke or heart attack? Schedule an AngioScreen® near you: [HMHforU.org/AngioScreenEvent](https://www.HMHforU.org/AngioScreenEvent).



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Signs You Need to See Your Doctor

As much as we try to tough it out, there are times when our bodies need extra care. Our expert shares seven signs it's time to schedule a doctor's visit at [HMHforU.org/DocVisit](https://www.hmhforu.org/DocVisit).

Screenings for Women at Every Age

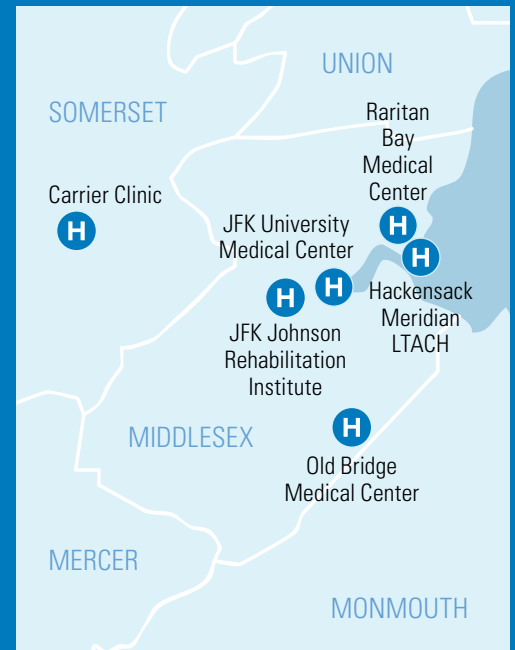
Understanding which screenings you need and when can be overwhelming and confusing. Find our guide for essential health screenings at [HMHforU.org/WomensScreenings](https://www.hmhforu.org/WomensScreenings).

Prep for Your Next Appointment

Preparing for a primary care appointment ahead of time can ease any anxiety and give your doctor a clearer picture of your health. Visit [HMHforU.org/Checklist](https://www.hmhforu.org/Checklist) to download a pre-appointment checklist.

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