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Hackensack  
Meridian Health

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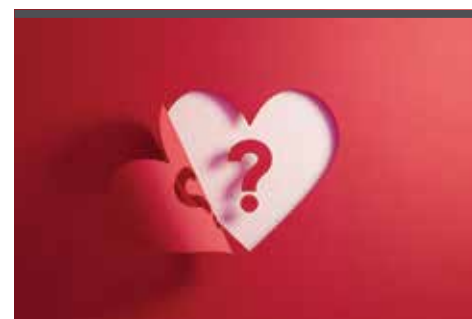
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Tune in to our HealthU podcast!  
For more details, visit [HMHforU.org/Podcast](https://HMHforU.org/Podcast).



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



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

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

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





# BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

## Let's Hear It for the Moms

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

**Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO**  
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## Running 101

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

Heed these six tips from **Stephen Silver, M.D.**, chief of Sports Medicine at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

#### Focus on good nutrition.

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

#### Use the 10 percent rule.

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

#### Wear the right running shoes.

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

#### Warm up before your run.

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

#### Don't run through pain.

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

#### Stay hydrated.

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



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### Go Online

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



# Don't Wait ... Meditate

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

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

"Meditation can reduce stress levels, improve sleep quality, control anxiety, decrease blood pressure and more," says **Pamela Orellana, M.D.**, family medicine specialist at **Palisades Medical Center**. "Meditation is a simple practice that can be done anywhere, anytime. You don't need special tools or a place to meditate. All you need is a few minutes from your day."

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

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

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

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

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

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



Watch a demonstration of three calming breathing exercises.

## Take Your Meditation to the Next Level

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

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

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

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



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## How Long Are Leftovers Good?

After a big meal or party, it's common to snack on leftovers in the days following. However, leftovers should only be eaten for three to four days after initial preparation. Any longer and you may increase your risk of contracting a foodborne illness, such as salmonella, E. coli or listeria.

We talked to dietitians Holly Mills, MS, RN, CSO, and Heather-Ann Younker, RDN, CSO, about best practices for eating leftover food. Here's what they had to say:

**The "sniff test" doesn't work.** After three to four days, bacteria in food can rise to dangerous levels. Many times, the bacteria won't alter the look, taste or smell of the leftover food, so it can be difficult to tell if it's still safe to eat.

**Pathogens grow quickly** when food is left at room temperature. Refrigerate hot food (over 90 degrees F) after one hour of being left out at room temperature. Don't leave food out at room-temperature for more than two hours. Use chafing dishes or cool plates to keep food at the right temperature for longer.

**Freeze leftovers to make them last.** If you're not going to eat your leftovers within three to four days, freeze them. You'll have much more time to enjoy the food, typically three to four months.

**Freeze food in single-serve portions.** You may be more likely to eat your leftovers if meals are quick and easy to defrost.



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



## Chicken with Red Rice and Spice

Serves 4

### Ingredients

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

### Nutritional Information

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

### Seasoned Cook

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

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

### Steps

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



# Are canned foods healthy?

Tara Mauro, MS, RDN, weighs in:

Canned foods definitely can be healthy and a great way to get key nutrients. Just be mindful to read the nutrition fact labels and look out for extra sodium and added sugars.



**When foods are canned, many use some kind of salt or sugar to act as a preservative. So when shopping, look for terms like:**

- ▶ Sodium free, low sodium or no salt added for vegetables and beans
- ▶ Canned in water, canned in its own juices or no sugar added for fruits

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

# How can I manage my spring allergies?

Tamar Weinberger, M.D., weighs in:

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

**Check daily pollen counts, and stay indoors when it is high.**

Pollen counts vary throughout the day and are usually higher in the morning. So skip that morning walk and instead venture outdoors in the late afternoon.

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

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

**Wear a hat and sunglasses outside.**

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

**Keep your windows closed.**

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



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

# Does smoking weed cause cancer?

Nabil Rizk, M.D., weighs in:

Researchers are unsure if smoking cannabis causes lung cancer; more research is needed. Some aspects of smoking weed suggest an increased risk, while others suggest the opposite.

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

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

Weed has been shown to contain tar, similar to what's found in cigarettes. Deeply inhaled weed may introduce four times more tar to the lungs than cigarettes.



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

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

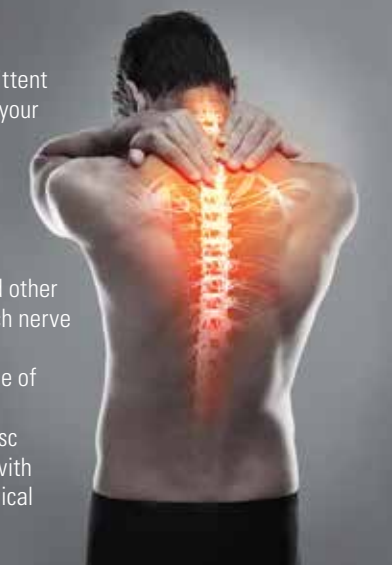
Patrick A. Roth, M.D., weighs in:

If you have a pinched nerve, you may experience continuous or intermittent pain or numbness that can involve your neck or back and radiate down your arms or legs. Occasionally, the pinched nerve presents with weakness.

To determine whether you have a pinched nerve, or more properly, a pinched nerve root called radiculopathy, or something different that arises from outside your spine, speak with a specialist such as a neurosurgeon who can make the diagnosis and suggest the optimal treatment. The specialist will ask you questions about the location and other aspects of your pain, and do a physical examination to determine which nerve is pinched.

If your doctor suspects a pinched nerve, you will have an MRI, a type of imaging that can confirm the nerve root compression.

The nerve root can be pinched for a variety of reasons, including a disc herniation or arthritic changes in the spine. Treatment typically starts with therapy and may ultimately include injection therapy or, less likely, surgical decompression of the nerve root.



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



# What heart rate is considered normal?

David Landers, M.D., weighs in:

Most adults have a resting heart rate that falls within the range of 60–100 beats per minute.

However, your heart rate may rise much higher when you exert yourself while exercising or if your heart races when you feel stressed. Additionally, your heart rate may fall lower than the typical range while you're sleeping, particularly if you're a healthy young adult or an elite athlete.

Sometimes, a higher- or lower-than-normal resting heart rate could be a sign that someone has a medical condition that should be identified and monitored. Other times, there may be a simple explanation for the discrepancy in heart rate. For example, different medications may cause higher or lower resting heart rates as a side effect.



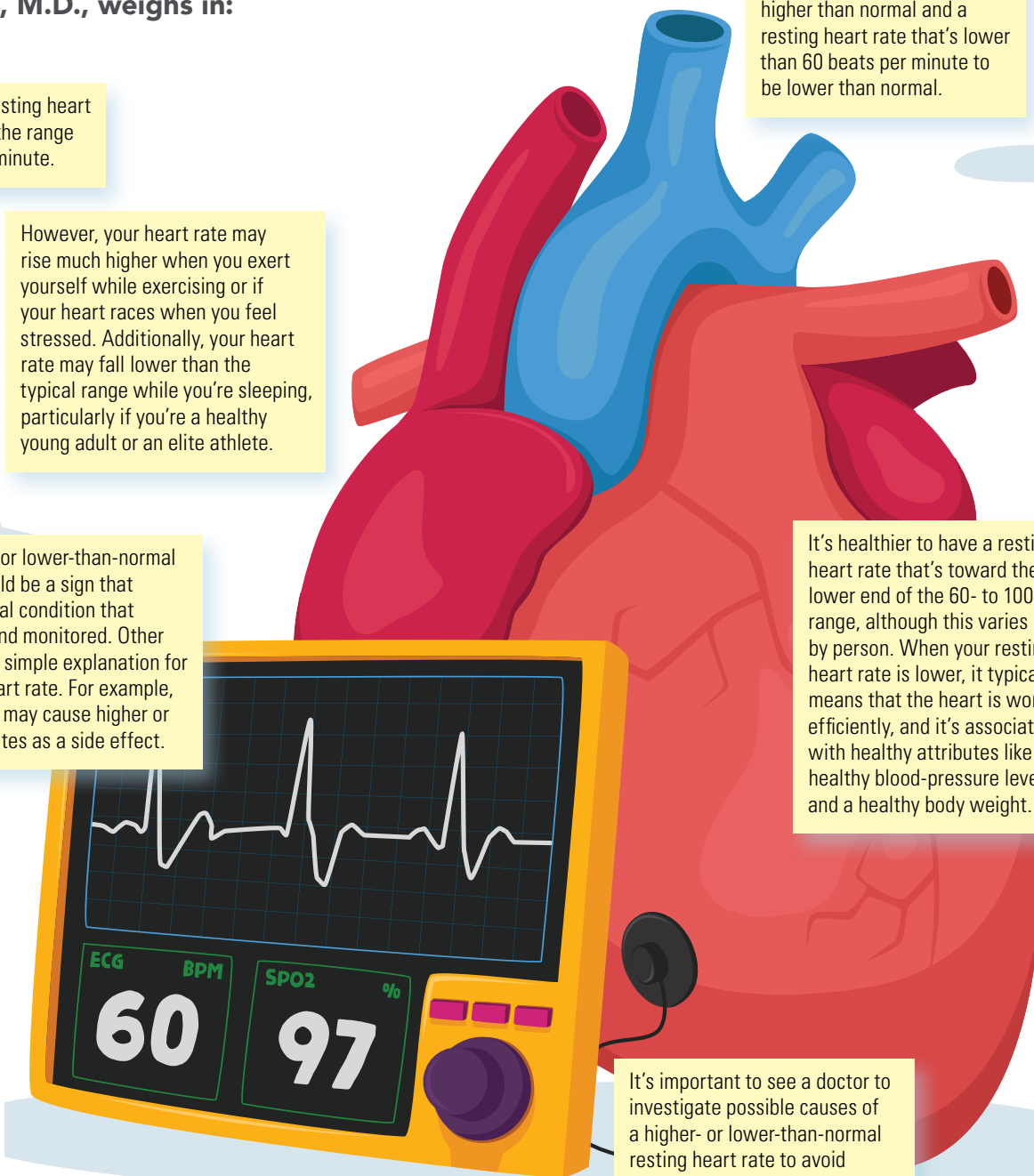
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Doctors consider a resting heartbeat that's higher than 100 beats per minute to be higher than normal and a resting heart rate that's lower than 60 beats per minute to be lower than normal.

It's healthier to have a resting heart rate that's toward the lower end of the 60- to 100-beat range, although this varies by person. When your resting heart rate is lower, it typically means that the heart is working efficiently, and it's associated with healthy attributes like healthy blood-pressure levels and a healthy body weight.

It's important to see a doctor to investigate possible causes of a higher- or lower-than-normal resting heart rate to avoid possible health complications.

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



# Spotlight on U

*health topics that matter the most to you*

## Spring Clean Your Health

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

### Spending too much time sedentary.

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

### Not drinking enough water.

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

### Screen time before bed.

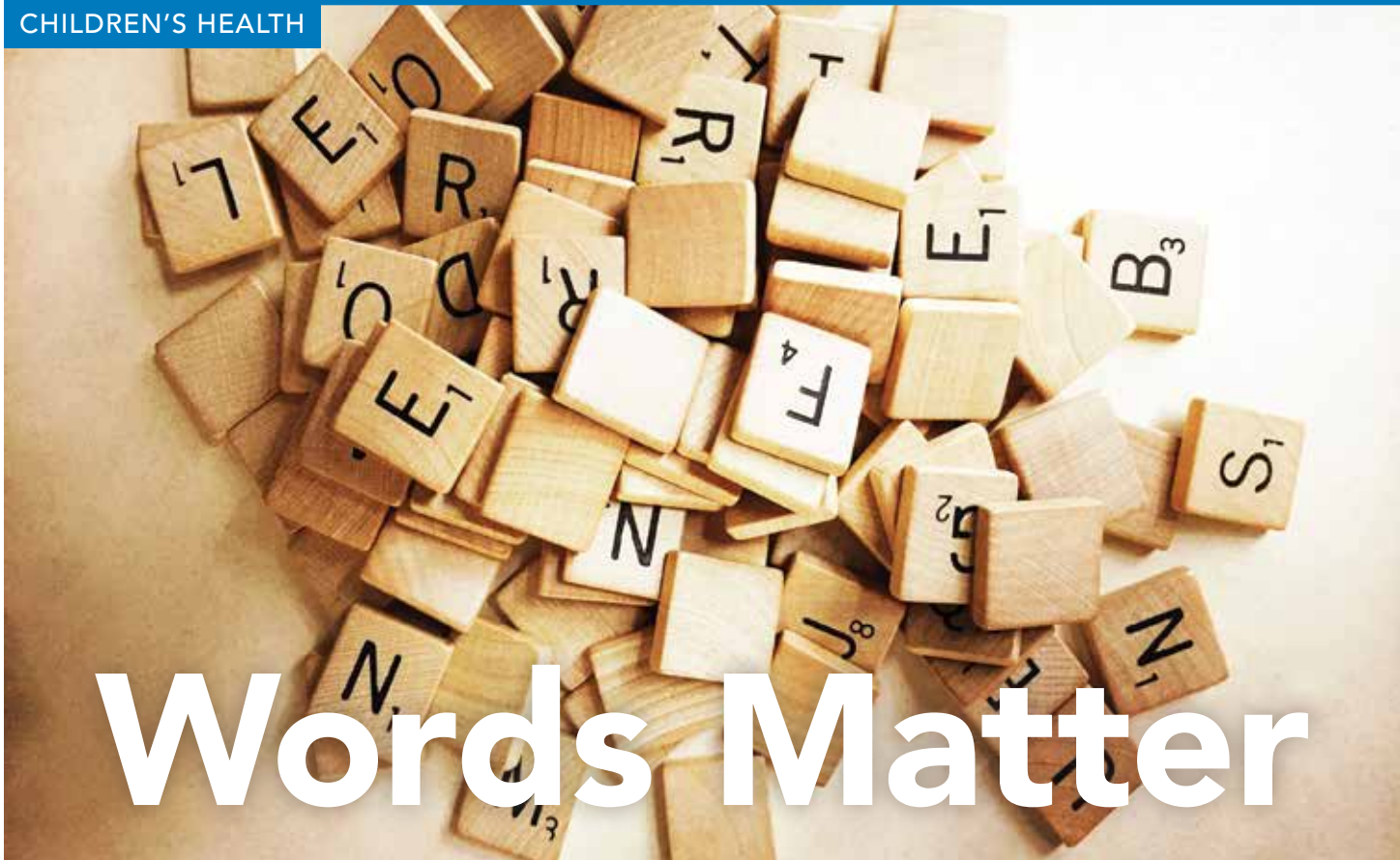
Using your phone too close to bedtime can prevent you from getting a good night's sleep. Put away your phone—or any other electronic screen—an hour or two before you turn out the lights.



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



CHILDREN'S HEALTH



# Words Matter

*The words we speak to our children are critically important. Here are three phrases to avoid and alternatives to better develop a trusting bond with your child.*

Children learn the world watching their parents, and the words parents speak to them are critically important. **Ulrick Vieux, D.O., MS, DFAPA**, child and adolescent psychiatrist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, shares three phrases parents should avoid and what to say instead.



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**“Give them a hug.”**

While it can be customary in certain families or cultures to hug hello or good-bye, it's important to let children know they have body autonomy.

“We, of course, don't want our children to be disrespectful to a family member or friend, but we should not be forcing them to have physical contact with someone

they may not be comfortable with,” says Dr. Vieux. “Body autonomy means being in charge of your own body and what happens to it. We want kids to feel safe and confident with their bodies.”

Instead, ask them what they're comfortable with:

- ▶ Would you like to give a hug to say goodbye?
- ▶ If not, would you like to give a high-five instead?

**“You're such a disappointment.”**

Dr. Vieux recommends going into every conversation with your child with an open mind and without judgment. Be mindful not

**“You're OK.”**

“Age is such a distinguishing factor in how you'll approach this, but if your child is crying or visibly upset and you try to shake it off, you are invalidating their emotions,” Dr. Vieux says. “Instead of brushing past these big feelings, sit with your child and help them work through them.”

If your child shows signs of being upset or frustrated, try these phrases to validate their feelings:

- ▶ I see that you're (insert emotion: feeling hurt, angry, etc.)
- ▶ I'm here for you. How can I help?

## 3 Reasons Kids Should Wear Helmets

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

to shame your child, and approach conversations when you are calm and collected.

“If your child was doing something against your family's values, it's OK to express that and set boundaries. But you want to make sure your child feels comfortable coming to you to talk about things. If you immediately shut them down and tell them that they're a horrible person, you don't open the floor for much conversation,” says Dr. Vieux.

Instead, learn more by being curious about a situation: Tell me why you did that.

“Remember that every child is different, and your conversations with your children will vary based on their age. While there are ways to better communicate with children, the most important thing is building an open relationship with your child and that they feel safe coming to you about anything and everything,” Dr. Vieux says. ⚙️

**Go Online**  
For more support, find a parenting event near you at [HMHforU.org/Events](http://HMHforU.org/Events).



# TV Timeout

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

When the pandemic began, many of us found ourselves locked in the house, bored and binge-watching hours upon hours of television. It was a good way to kill time, but watching too much TV too often has the potential of becoming an unhealthy habit.

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

## TV's Effect on Cognitive Impairment

"Researchers have found that moderate to high television viewing during midlife is associated with increased memory loss and decreased fine motor skills," explains Manisha Parulekar, M.D., director, division of Geriatrics, and co-director, Center for Memory Loss and Brain Health at Hackensack University Medical Center. Studies also have found a link between high television consumption and the onset of depression.

As life expectancy in the United States continues to rise, experts believe the population's risk of developing cognitive impairment or dementia will rise, too. Making a few healthy changes today can help prevent the development of dementia down the line. The



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neurobiology of dementia begins between the ages 45 and 64. Modifying your behaviors and lifestyle during middle-age years can help preserve cognition as you age and decrease your risk of dementia.

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

## Four M's of Mental Fitness

Dr. Parulekar suggests that middle-aged adults remember the four M's of mental fitness, which offer simple ways to tend to your mental and cognitive health while minimizing sedentary behaviors.

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

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

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

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



# What Does Your Poop Mean?

Here's the 411 on everything excrement.

We have a lot of names for it—bowel movement, poop, stool and several that shouldn't be mentioned. But we rarely actually talk about bowel movements.

You may have questions about yours but are too embarrassed to ask. Never fear, **Jonathan Weinberger, M.D.**, a gastroenterologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, answers all of them here.

## How often should you poop?

There is no specific answer. Some people go three times a day, while others go every other day. The reasons abound. "Everybody is different in terms of what we eat, meal timing, the motility of our digestive system and the medications we may be taking," says Dr. Weinberger.

## What color is normal?

A healthy bowel movement is usually a medium to dark brown color. Other shades could signal an issue. Some include:

**Black** stool can come from bismuth preparations (like what you find in Pepto-Bismol and Kaopectate) or iron supplements. Or it could be a sign of bleeding in the upper part of the intestinal tract, such as the stomach, esophagus or duodenum.

**Red** stool could come from eating or drinking something with strong red coloring (like gelatin, cherries, beets or a sports drink), or it could signal bleeding from something like a hemorrhoid or a fissure in the lower part of the intestine, or from something higher up like diverticulosis, colitis or possibly cancer.

**Light or colorless** stool usually means your stool lacks bile, which could be blamed on a bile duct obstruction or some sort of infection in the liver, gallbladder or pancreas.

**Yellow, greasy, foul-smelling** stool could be a sign of a surplus of fat. This could mean your body isn't absorbing nutrients properly due to something like celiac disease or something in the liver or pancreas.

**Green** stool could mean you overdid it on the green smoothies, or it could be a sign that things are moving rapidly through the intestines due to an infection or a medication you've taken.

## What about size and shape?

Shape can range from loose and watery (which means your stool is going through the digestive tract so fast that it doesn't have time to firm up) to small, hard pellets (which means you're constipated and need more fiber and/or more water). The "ideal" poop profile looks like a hot dog or sausage, and can be either smooth, or have lines or cracks on the surface.

Size can vary, depending on your own size, but in general should be at least 5–6 inches in length and relatively easy to pass. If your stool suddenly becomes thinner or flatter than usual, it could point to some sort of blockage in the colon.

The bottom line (no pun intended): "If your stool deviates from its usual for longer than a day or two, or it's accompanied by any other symptoms, such as light-headedness, pain or fever, you should check it out with your doctor," says Dr. Weinberger. 🧠



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## Go Online

Make an appointment with a gastroenterologist near you at [HMHforU.org/GI](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/GI).

## Go Online

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



# What's the Risk?

*Our expert weighs in on five commonly used products and the potential cancer risk they pose.*

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

“But what many don’t know is that other lifestyle choices, such as how we sleep and what we buy, can indirectly increase our risk,” says **Ami Vaidya, M.D.**, gynecologic oncologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

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



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

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

**2 Mattresses**  
Manufacturers often add flame retardants to furnishings to slow the spread of household fires, meaning many mattresses are coated in chemicals that we breathe in while sleeping. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences states that prolonged exposure to flame retardants can lead to different types of cancer and reproductive issues, and can impact child development. But before panicking and purchasing a new mattress,

note that your current one has likely been off-gassed (when the gas that was contained in the material is released) since you bought it. When it’s time to replace it, look for mattresses made without flame retardants, or increase ventilation in the room by opening a window or using a fan so your new mattress can off-gas.

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

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

**5 Personal Care Products**  
Cosmetics, skincare and other personal care products can contain harmful chemicals such as parabens, parfum (fragrance ingredients), formaldehyde, coal tar dyes and more. If you want to reduce your cancer risk, stick to a minimal routine with products that use simple ingredients. 🌿

istock.com/AlexSereet

## Second Dance

**Robotic surgery reconstructed Teresa Frederico’s bladder after stage 2 muscle-invasive bladder cancer—just in time to enjoy her daughter’s wedding.**

In June 2021, Teresa Frederico, 60, of Cliffside Park, New Jersey, was surprised to see blood in her urine. It could have been a urinary tract infection, but she did not have any pain or burning. Her daughter Alissa, an oncology nurse at John Theurer Cancer Center, suggested she go to a local emergency room. A CT scan confirmed what Teresa and her husband, Freddie, were shocked to hear: She had a tumor in her bladder.

Teresa saw **Michael Stifelman, M.D.**, chairman of the Urology Department at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, and urologist **Michelle Kim, M.D.**, who performed a cystoscopy (a procedure to look inside the bladder using a thin camera called a cystoscope) to examine the bladder and look at the tumor.

A week later, Dr. Kim performed removal and biopsy of the tumor cystoscopically. The diagnosis was not good: stage 2 muscle-invasive bladder cancer. Teresa’s bladder would need to be taken out. But there was also hope: Teresa was a candidate for a “neobladder,” a reconstructed bladder made of her intestinal tissue, which would spare her from needing to wear an external bag to collect urine.

### Innovation and a Minimally Invasive Approach

Teresa needed chemotherapy first to kill residual cancer cells, which she received at John Theurer Cancer Center. She regained her strength to prepare for bladder removal surgery (cystectomy), which Dr. Stifelman and urologist **Mutahar Ahmed, M.D.**, performed in November 2021 using a single-port robotic approach.

In this innovative method, all of the tools of the robotic surgical system are passed through a 1-inch

incision just below the patient’s belly button. Hackensack was among the first seven hospitals in the country to acquire the robotic single-port surgical system in February 2019. Today, 20 percent of the country’s single-port robotic procedures are completed at Hackensack.

“The single-port technology is transformative and enables our surgeons to perform the most complex surgeries in the hardest to reach places, through just one small incision,” Dr. Stifelman says.

### Second Chance at Life

The surgeons removed Teresa’s bladder, then fashioned a neobladder from a single long segment of her small intestine, connecting it to her kidneys and urethra. “This is the most complex urologic surgery,” says Dr. Ahmed. “This is an excellent option for patients who are concerned about their appearance after the procedure and for those wishing to return to their active lives quickly.”

Teresa went home after five days with a urinary catheter that she used for six weeks, until she had healed enough to put her new bladder to the test. At the moment of truth, she was delighted to learn that it worked just fine. “I was so grateful I didn’t need the bag and that this could all be done through one little incision,” she says. “Now when I look at myself in the mirror, I can’t even tell that the surgery was done. I still look like me.”

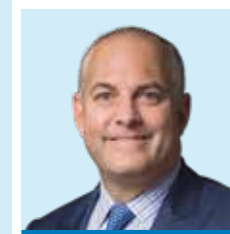
She sometimes experiences occasional bladder leaks, but that should improve over time.

By April 2022, she was well enough to throw a bridal shower for her daughter Alessandra and to enjoy the wedding the following June. “I danced the whole night away,” Teresa says. “I am so grateful for the second chance at life that I got from the doctors and nurses at Hackensack.”

After successful bladder reconstruction, Teresa Frederico was able to dance the night away at her daughter’s wedding.



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HEART HEALTH



# A Hearty Plate

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

“Vegetables in general are good for your heart and rich in vitamins and antioxidants. They’re what we should be filling our plates with,” says **Jason Sayanlar, M.D., FACC**, a cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “Any fruit is better than processed foods like cookies or crackers, but some contain more sugar than others.”

**Here are the top fruits and vegetables he recommends during the springtime:**

**Leafy green vegetables**

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



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

**Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries**

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

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

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

**When Fresh Isn’t Possible**

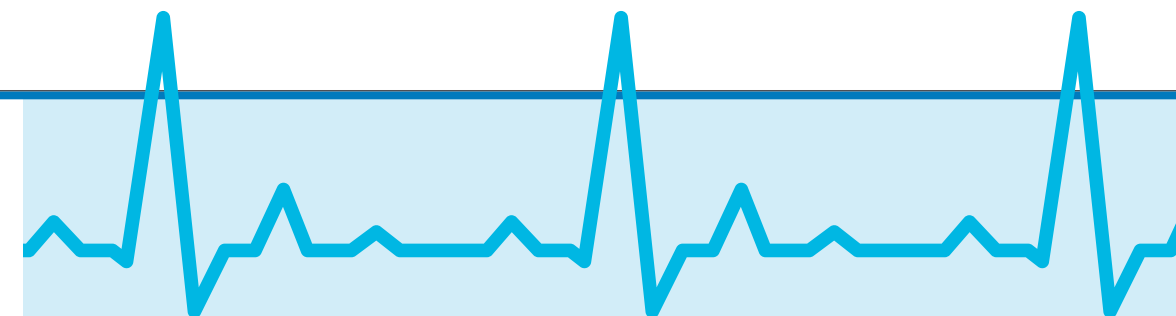
If you aren’t able to choose fresh fruits and vegetables, you can still make heart-healthy choices at the grocery store or market. Dr. Sayanlar offers a few tips:

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

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

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

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



## Why Your Heart Rate Is High

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

Having an increased heart rate isn’t a health condition in and of itself; it’s a symptom caused by any number of circumstances. It may be a reaction to something that’s happening in your life, or it may be caused by a health condition.

“When you feel your heart pounding in your chest unexpectedly, if the problem continues or your heartbeat feels erratic or irregular, see a doctor to discuss your concerns,” says **Jacqueline Hollywood, M.D.**, cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

Dr. Hollywood offers several reasons your heart rate may be high, not related to your heart:

- ▶ **Physical or emotional stress.** When your body responds to something stressful, frightening or upsetting, you may get a jolt of adrenaline, which increases your heart rate.
- ▶ **Overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism).** Having too much thyroid hormone in your system makes your heart beat faster than it should, increasing your heart rate.
- ▶ **Anemia.** If you have anemia, you don’t have enough red blood cells to carry oxygen to your organs. Your heart may beat more rapidly to compensate.
- ▶ **Medication side effects.** A number of drugs may cause your heart rate to increase, including some medications that treat colds, asthma, anxiety, depression, attention deficit disorder and high blood pressure.
- ▶ **Addictive substances.** Caffeine, cigarettes, vaping and high levels of alcohol may

cause your heart rate to rise after you use those substances. Additionally, illegal drugs like cocaine may also have this effect on your heart rate.

- ▶ **Strenuous physical activity.** When you exert more than your body is prepared for, the heart rate increases to meet the higher demand.
- ▶ **Illness or poor health habits.** Illness, fatigue, poor sleep and dehydration can all lead to an increased heart rate.

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

Heart conditions which may cause an elevated heart rate include:

- ▶ Heart failure
- ▶ Heart rhythm problems
- ▶ Heart valve problems
- ▶ Coronary artery disease
- ▶ Scar tissue that forms after heart surgery

If you have been diagnosed with a heart condition and you’ve noticed that your heart rate has become higher than usual, make an appointment to talk to your doctor about the change.

**When to Seek Emergency Care**

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

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



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**Go Online**

Are you at risk of heart disease?  
Schedule a screening at  
[HMHforU.org/HeartScreen](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HeartScreen).



# Loosen Up



Roger Rossi, D.O.  
Physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist  
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## Do you have tight hips? Here are ways to test your hip mobility and tips for improvement.

Whether it's from sitting too long during the work day, weak core muscles or not properly stretching, tight hips can cause a number of aches and pains, as well as affect your gait and posture. "Everything in the body works together in synergy. If you experience joint pain and restriction in one area, that doesn't mean it is the only joint involved or the source creating that problem," says **Roger Rossi, D.O.**, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at St. Joseph's Wayne Medical Center Acute Rehabilitation Unit, affiliated with **Hackensack Meridian Johnson Rehabilitation Institute**. "For example, if you have back pain, it could be from restriction in the hip muscles."

## Is the Hip Mobility Challenge Safe?

The "Hip Mobility Challenge" is a viral TikTok and social media challenge where participants move through a variety of stretches and exercises to test their flexibility and strength. "If you're interested in trying it out, I'd recommend doing it with a friend nearby for safety and using a soft surface, like a yoga mat, in case you lose your balance," says Dr. Rossi. "If you've had a hip replacement, I wouldn't recommend trying it without guidance from a physician or your surgeon, as you have an increased risk of dislocating your hip." Dr. Rossi says this challenge is a good benchmark to truly see how flexible you are: For those who can complete it, it shows that your hip joints have more extreme ranges of motion.

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



### Signs You May Have Tight Hips

#### Look for these symptoms:

- ▶ Lower back pain
  - ▶ Hip pain
  - ▶ Knee pain
  - ▶ Decreased physical performance in sports, recreational and daily activities
- If any of these symptoms interfere with your daily life, contact your doctor to discuss it.

### Movements to Test Your Hip Flexibility

#### Dr. Rossi shares a few stretches to test your hip mobility:

- ▶ **Test your hip flexion.** You should be able to bring your knee toward your chest.
- ▶ **Test your quadricep flexibility.** You should be able to bring your heel to your buttocks.
- ▶ **Test your hip abduction.** You should be able to lay down or stand and lift your leg outward.
- ▶ **Test your hip external rotation.** You should be able to go on hands and knees and lift your leg outward. If your hips are tight, performing these movements may be challenging or uncomfortable.

### Best Ways to Treat Tight Hips

"Stretching is a great way to increase flexibility in your hips," says Dr. Rossi. "Strengthening exercises are important, too. You don't need weights; you can use your own body weight for squats, lunges and deadlifts—anything that would strengthen the hip muscles and core." If you're not finding relief from stretching, a pain management specialist or physiatrist can help structure a proper treatment plan. 🧠



## To Crack or Not to Crack?

### Should you stop cracking your knuckles and back?

Cracking your knuckles or back can be relatively harmless, but it doesn't necessarily lead to any benefits either. If you have a pre-existing joint problem, it's recommended not to crack your joints, as it may aggravate underlying conditions. Otherwise, if you do not have any problems, it's relatively harmless.

### What causes the "pop" noise?

Our joints naturally accumulate nitrogen bubbles over time, which build up in the spaces of our joints. So when you crack your knuckles or back, these nitrogen bubbles escape from the built-up spaces, causing the "pop" noise.

### Why do people like cracking their joints?

Cracking your joints has nothing to do with joints being put back into place; it's more psychological. While people may enjoy the feeling, it's actually doing nothing. Cracking your knuckles, in particular, can be linked to nervousness and anxiety in some people.

### Is there a correct way to crack your joints?

There is no correct way of cracking your knuckles, but don't force the crack. Stop if you feel any pain or discomfort. Cracking your back is a little different than cracking your knuckles. The best way to crack your back is by using a foam roller. It shouldn't be a sudden jerky force to your neck or back. This can cause injuries to nearby structures or exacerbate underlying issues.

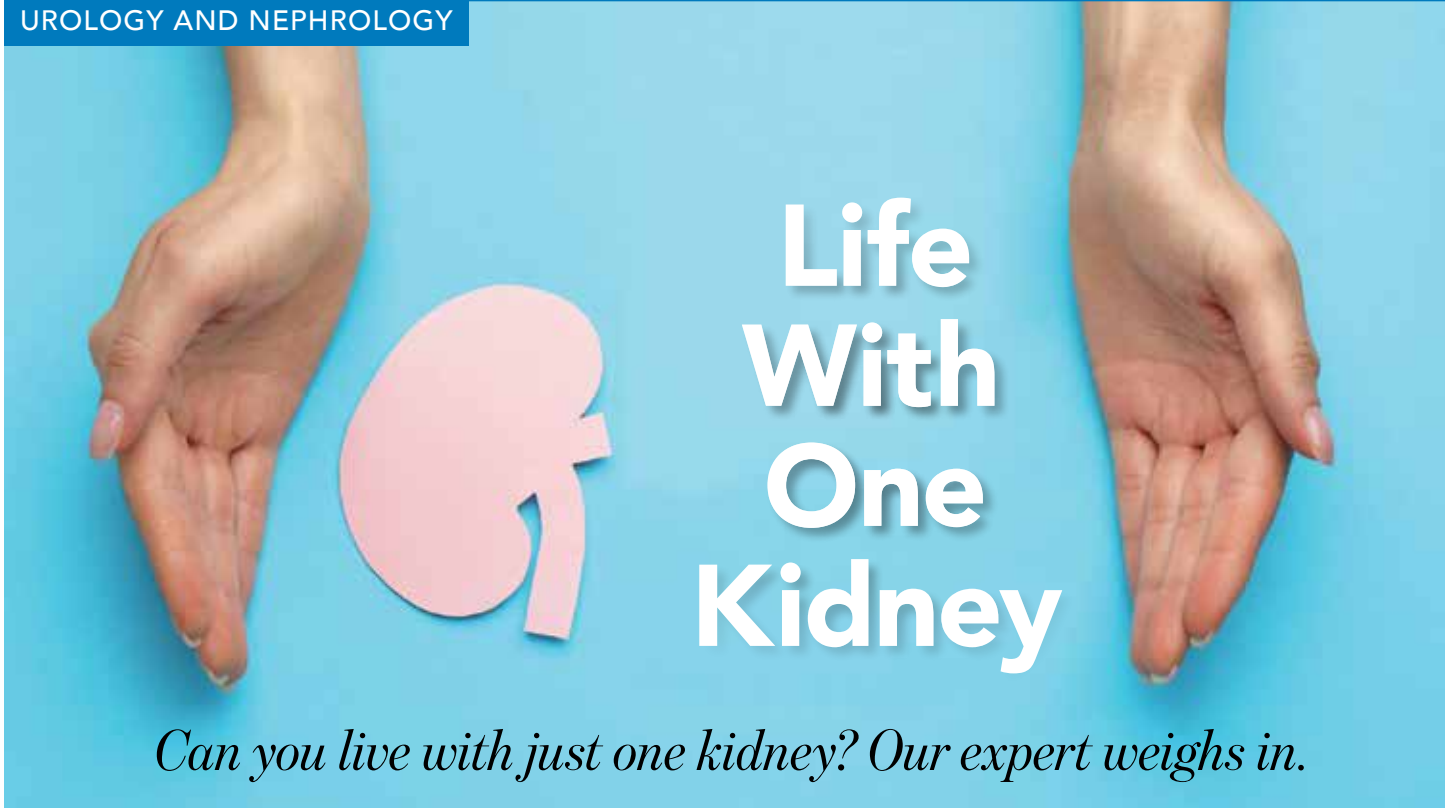
### When should you stop cracking your joints?

- Stop cracking your joints if you feel any of the following symptoms:
- ▶ Pain or discomfort
  - ▶ Numbness
  - ▶ Muscle pain

If you suffer from pain and feel you need to crack your joints to relieve pain, especially in your back and neck, it's best to see a professional. Cracking your own knuckles is relatively safe, but you could cause serious damage if you crack your neck or back and have pre-existing medical conditions.



UROLOGY AND NEPHROLOGY



# Life With One Kidney

*Can you live with just one kidney? Our expert weighs in.*



David Serur, M.D.  
Nephrologist  
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The truth is, life with one kidney is not that different from living with two. According to the National Kidney Foundation: “Most people live normal, healthy lives with one kidney. However, staying as healthy as possible and protecting your only kidney is crucial.”

Living with one kidney isn’t uncommon. Some people are born with one kidney, while others may be born with just a single working one. Others may have a kidney removed due to a medical injury or disease, while others may have donated one to someone needing a transplant.

“The majority of people we see with one kidney typically live healthy, normal lives, with few issues related to it,” says **David Serur, M.D.**, nephrologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “Basically, one single healthy kidney is just about as good as having two.”

But a normal lifestyle doesn’t mean taking zero precautions. It’s vital to maintain a healthy lifestyle, exercise and not smoke in order to protect the one kidney the person still has.

### Are There Exercise Considerations With One Kidney?

Physical exercise is healthy and good for everyone. But high-contact sports such as football, boxing, hockey and wrestling may pose extra risk. Though

not a high risk, kidneys can be injured when someone is hit in the area of the kidney, causing a bruise to the kidney.

“If you are considering a contact sport, it’s important to understand that while extra padding and safety gear lessen the risk of injury, it still doesn’t make the risk zero,” says Dr. Serur. “Make sure you’re considering the risks involved, and talk to your health care provider to see if there are other solutions.”

### Do You Have to Follow a Special Diet?

It’s always recommended to follow a healthy diet and stay hydrated whether you have one or two kidneys.

“Taking care of your overall health is how you can keep your kidney functioning well,” says Dr. Serur.

As with anyone trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle, people with one kidney need to stay on top of their doctor’s appointments, remember to take any medications you might be on and maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine. If you ever have questions, contact your health team right away. 🧠

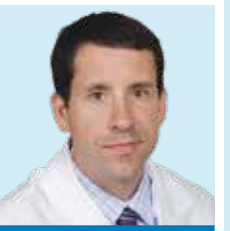
### Go Online

Hackensack Meridian Health’s Kidney Transplant Program is among the fastest-growing in the nation. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/KidneyTransplant](https://www.HMHforU.org/KidneyTransplant).

*In his free time, Jorge Losch enjoys building furniture from reclaimed wood.*



# Paying It Forward



Michael Degen, M.D.  
Urologist  
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Hackensack

### Illustrator, runner and furniture builder gives the ultimate gift: a life-saving kidney.

Several factors influenced Jorge Losch’s decision to become a living organ donor. He was inspired by his wife, Sara, who wanted to donate an organ but wasn’t able to because of health reasons, and he has two loved ones who received life-saving liver transplants.

There was also a conversation he had more than 20 years ago with his father, who questioned Jorge—an illustrator, runner and furniture builder—on his love of solitary, independent activities.

“Years later, thinking about that conversation with my father, it occurred to me that perhaps it was time to do something that was bigger than myself and that, in the process, could potentially help another human being,” says Jorge.

### An Altruistic Decision

In December 2021, Jorge, who lives in Wyckoff, New Jersey, started the organ donation process by discussing the idea with his wife and adult children. “They had concerns and questions, but in the end, they all gave me their full support,” he says.

Next, he contacted the Department of Organ Transplantation at **Hackensack University Medical Center** and spoke to the living donor

coordinator. That started the evaluation process, which includes medical tests, a psychological evaluation and opportunities to ask questions and address concerns.

Jorge was accepted as a donor and entered into the National Kidney Registry as an altruistic kidney donor, someone who donates to a stranger with advanced kidney disease. “For patients on dialysis, it means being stuck in a chair three days a week for hours a day. Organ donation is life-changing for them,” says **Michael Degen, M.D.**, urologist and member of the living donor team at Hackensack.

### A Life-changing Surgery

A few weeks before surgery, Jorge met with his transplant team, including his donor surgeon, to go over what to expect from the procedure and recovery. The minimally invasive surgery, a hand-assisted laparoscopic donor nephrectomy, takes two to four hours to complete. Recovery time is less than what it would be for an open procedure, generally taking a donor four to six weeks to feel back to their normal.

Jorge’s “normal” means running marathons. “Because surgery is minimally invasive, someone

like Jorge who’s very active will feel great after about two weeks, but that’s the point where I’m trying to keep him from overdoing it,” says Dr. Degen. “I told Jorge, ‘No running for the first few weeks.’”

Jorge’s recovery went as expected. “There was some discomfort, some pain, but nothing that was not quickly managed by an incredible team of nurses,” he says. Once home, he followed doctor’s orders and gradually increased his activity level. “After about four weeks, I could try running again. After about seven weeks, I ran a race to test how I was feeling, and I did well.”

### Giving Someone a Future

Donating an organ is a big decision, and one that Jorge is glad he made. His kidney donation benefited a 50-year-old Maryland resident.

“There are thousands of people waiting for an organ transplant in this country alone, facing months or years of illness and dialysis, uncertainty and fear,” Jorge says. “Two or three months of recovery for me meant nothing if perhaps one of those people could imagine having a future.”





# When to Call the Midwife

*Midwives aren't just for home births, and they do much more than deliver babies. Here's what you should know.*

The TV series “Call the Midwife” raised the profile of these crucial clinicians, who number more than 13,500 and attend about 10 percent of all births in the United States every year, according to the American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM).

“Most people aren’t aware of the broad array of duties a midwife can undertake,” says Carole Shipman, RN, CMN, a certified nurse-midwife at **Pascack Valley Medical Center**. “Midwives view prenatal care, birth and postpartum as a normal, natural process.”

### **Midwives Do Far More Than Deliver Babies** They also provide comprehensive care that spans a woman’s reproductive health, including:

- ▶ Prenatal care like ultrasounds, blood work and routine monitoring
- ▶ Post-birth checkups and physical examinations,
- ▶ Assisting with emotional and physical recovery
- ▶ Screening for postpartum depression
- ▶ Caring for vaginal tears or c-section wounds
- ▶ Urination problems
- ▶ Reproductive care like birth control options, pap tests and screenings for sexually transmitted infections
- ▶ Treatment for vaginal and urinary tract infections

### **Some also offer newborn care in the weeks after an infant is born, including:**

- ▶ Help finding a pediatrician
- ▶ Lactation consulting

### **Understanding the Role of Midwives**

Many women first seek a midwife while pregnant because they desire a more “natural” birth experience that’s free of interventions. But choosing a midwife doesn’t mean you must have a home birth—although that’s an option—or can’t decide to induce labor or manage pain with an epidural or other form of anesthesia.

Many women, in fact, prefer a hospital or health care setting while their midwife monitors them during labor, manages any complications and helps deliver the newborn and placenta. Doctors can be on hand if needed or desired, and Carole’s practice collaborates with obstetricians to see each of her patients at least once during their pregnancies. Not all midwives, however, collaborate with obstetricians.

“When you work with a midwife in collaboration with an obstetrician, you still have the same options and treatment capabilities available for maternal care,” Carole says.

### **What Midwives Can’t Do**

Midwives can’t perform cesarean section surgery to deliver babies, but they can assist at such births. Carole, however, routinely stitches up any tearing around the vagina or perineum that occurs during a vaginal delivery, and can perform an episiotomy when needed (a small cut to allow the baby’s head to pass through more easily).

Midwives can prescribe epidurals but can’t administer them. Epidurals are performed by an anesthesiologist.

“Midwives can offer custom, personal care for pregnancy and birth. If you have any health conditions like high blood pressure or have had a high-risk pregnancy, we encourage building a team with your midwife and an obstetrician,” she says.

### **Midwives vs. Doulas**

A misconception Carole often dispels centers around the role of midwives compared to doulas. While the two have some overlapping duties, there’s one key difference.

Midwives provide medical care, and their chief responsibility is to maintain the physical health of a woman and her baby. Not all midwives are also nurses, as Carole is, but all have medical training.

Doulas, on the other hand, don’t perform clinical tasks. Doulas mainly offer support during labor and birth, helping women remain calm and comfortable by providing hands-on massage and offering suggestions on optimal positions for labor and pushing.

“Midwives and doulas are both professionals, but a doula doesn’t need to have any medical education,” Carole says. “They are there to offer the woman any emotional and physical support she needs. But midwives take medical responsibility for the mother and baby.”

### **Tips for Seeking Care from a Midwife**

**If you’re interested in seeking care from a midwife, Carole offers this guidance:**

- ▶ Check with your health insurer to determine if midwife services are covered.
- ▶ Visit the ACNM website ([midwife.org](http://midwife.org)) to learn more about midwives and how their care aligns with your needs.
- ▶ Interview any midwives you’re considering.
- ▶ Prepare a list of questions for midwives to determine if they’re a good fit for your needs. Questions can touch on factors such as the birth experience you’d prefer or a midwife’s schedule and availability. 🌟



Learn more about maternity services available at Pascack Valley Medical Center at [HMHforU.org/PVMaternity](http://HMHforU.org/PVMaternity).



# Is It Heartburn—or Something More?

*Our gastroenterologist explains what heartburn feels like and when it might signal gastroesophageal reflux disease or something more.*

For a condition so common—striking between 18 percent and 27 percent of adults in the United States at any given time—gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), commonly known as reflux, can show up in surprisingly diverse ways. The most common presentation is heartburn.

Heartburn is the reflux of stomach acid into the esophagus, the tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach. Symptoms can be unique to each person, says **Elizabeth John, M.D.**, gastroenterologist at **Mountainside Medical Group**.

## What Heartburn Can Feel Like

Dr. John says patients often describe heartburn symptoms in different ways:

- ▶ Burning sensation in the chest, commonly when lying down
- ▶ Pain right under the sternum, also called the breastbone
- ▶ Regurgitation or nausea
- ▶ Sensation radiating to the neck
- ▶ Extreme chest pain

Many people also confuse heartburn with GERD. But heartburn is actually the most common symptom or presentation of GERD, a chronic condition that can lead to several potentially serious complications if untreated.

“GERD can also show up in unusual ways, including chest pain, chronic cough, hoarseness, tooth erosions or feeling like something is stuck in the throat,” Dr. John says. “GERD is a very complex diagnosis and can have some serious implications.”



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## Triggers and Risk Factors

Many people know what triggers their bouts of heartburn, including:

- ▶ Eating fatty or spicy foods, citrus fruits, tomato products or dark chocolate
- ▶ Drinking caffeine or alcohol
- ▶ Eating large meals or late at night
- ▶ Taking certain medications

But these triggers differ from overall risk factors for developing heartburn and GERD, Dr. John notes:

- ▶ You're at higher risk of developing GERD if you're pregnant, over 50 or a smoker.
- ▶ Other predisposing factors include being overweight or obese; having a hiatal hernia, or bulging of the top of the stomach above the diaphragm; or certain connective tissue disorders.
- ▶ For some, the circular band of muscle around the base of the esophagus—which normally relaxes to allow foods and drinks to flow to the stomach before closing again—doesn't work properly, allowing stomach acid to flow back into the esophagus.

“If you have heartburn once in six months, it's probably not GERD,” Dr. John says. “But if you have it once a week, you likely have GERD.”

## Watch for Alarm Signs

Repeated exposure to stomach acid can prove dangerous for the esophagus over the long term, Dr. John says. Complications include a narrowing of the esophagus known as peptic strictures, damage to the lining of the esophagus, a precancerous condition called Barrett's esophagus and esophageal cancer.

Certain “alarm signs” should alert you that GERD may lead to a bigger problem, Dr. John says:

- ▶ Trouble or pain when swallowing, which might indicate a blockage or severe inflammation
  - ▶ Weight loss
  - ▶ Tar-like stools or vomit that looks like coffee grounds
  - ▶ Anemia, which can be triggered by blood loss inside the esophagus
  - ▶ Over-the-counter heartburn medications such as proton pump inhibitors or H2 blockers don't improve symptoms
- “If you have any of these signs, it's definitely time to see a doctor,” Dr. John says. ⚙️

## Go Online

Learn how gastroenterology specialists at Mountainside Medical Center can help address your heartburn or signs of GERD: [HMHforU.org/MountainsideGI](https://www.HMHforU.org/MountainsideGI).



# Walk to Remember

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



Physical activity has an important impact on brain health, says **Manisha Parulekar, M.D.**, director, division of Geriatrics, and co-director, Center for Memory Loss and Brain Health at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “Being active doesn’t just benefit your body, it can improve your brain health and mood,” she says.

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

## How Does Walking Lower Dementia Risk?

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

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

“There’s no downside to walking more to boost your step count,” Dr. Parulekar says. “You may



Manisha Parulekar, M.D.

Geriatric medicine specialist

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Hackensack

improve your brain health, heart health, overall health and your mood.”

## How to Get More Steps

Increase your step count with these ideas:

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

iStock.com/Hanna Siemashka

## Innovation *transforming medical research into treatments*



# It Takes a Village

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

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

## PingPongParkinson®

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

iStock.com/Ponomarova\_Maria

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

## Parkinson’s Wellness Program

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

## Go Online

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



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

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

### Rock Steady Boxing

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



Its regimen was largely adapted from boxing drills, helping patients beat back the “opponent” with rigorous exercises.

**Why It Helps:** The exercises focus on improving speed, agility, hand-eye coordination, footwork and overall strength to empower people with Parkinson's and instill a renewed sense of hope.

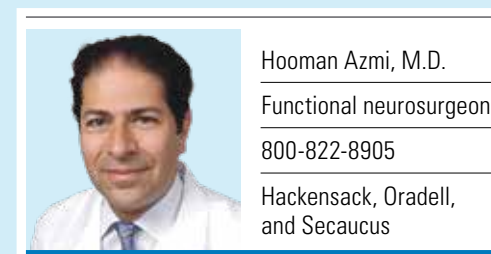
### ParkinSINGS

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

## New Hope for Parkinson's

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

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



Hooman Azmi, M.D.  
Functional neurosurgeon  
800-822-8905  
Hackensack, Oradell, and Secaucus

### DaTscan

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

#### Here's how it works:

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

#### ► Visualization of Dopamine Levels:

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

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

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

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

#### Here's how it works:

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

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

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

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

### Deep Brain Stimulation

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

#### Here's how it works:

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

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

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

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

### Smartphone Apps

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

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

tremor frequency and abnormal movements that persist after medication use.

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

### Go Online

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





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

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

# SchedUle

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

## Special Events



**Stroke: The Latest Treatments and Technologies** May is National Stroke Month. Learn how to B.E.F.A.S.T., and know the signs, symptoms and latest technologies.  
 May 4, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event  
 May 18, noon–1 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

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



## Neuroscience

**Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns About Falls** Free eight-week fall prevention program designed to reduce the fear of falling and increase the activity levels of older adults.  
 June 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 and July 6, 13 & 20, 10 a.m.–noon, Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

▶ **Memory Training** June 6, 8, 14 & 22, 1:30–3:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

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

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

## HOSPITAL LOCATIONS

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

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



## Cancer Care

**Plant-Based Eating and Cancer** This program provides an overview of the health benefits of eating more plants and simple guidelines for doing so, including resources to make the journey easy and delicious.

May 18, 2–3 p.m., virtual event

- ▶ **Stop Smoking with Hypnosis** May 10 & July 12, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Obesity and Cancer** Speaker: Dena G. Arumugam, M.D., May 24, noon–1 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Oncology: Screening and Staying Active** Speaker: Karim ElSahwi, M.D., June 28, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Smoking Cessation** For an appointment, call 551-996-2038.

## Diabetes

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

- May 8 & June 12, 9–11:30 a.m., Save Latin America, 138 39th St., Union City
- May 20 & June 17, 10 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Dvine Konektion, 611 56th St., West New York
- May 23 & June 20, 10 a.m.–noon, Holy Redeemer, 569 65th St., West New York
- July 8, 8–11 a.m., Nazareth, 5800 Palisade Ave., West New York

▶ **Managing Diabetes** June 7, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event



## Heart Health

**Cooking with Heart: The Mind Diet!** As we get older, we may experience moments that trigger concerns about the health of our brains. A healthy diet is one way to support brain health. Join this two-part program led by our dietitian and learn to “mind” your diet.

May 10 & 17, noon–1:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

- ▶ **AHA CPR Anytime** May 24, 10–11 a.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
- ▶ **Angioscreen** Special rate: \$49.95, registration required. Call for dates, times and locations.



## Pediatrics

### Parent/Guardian Talks

**Body Image & Hot Topics** Join Heather L. Appelbaum, M.D., and Jennifer L. Northridge, M.D., as they discuss your preteens’ and teens’ bodies and body image, focusing on the body as a whole. They will share tips on how to have those challenging but necessary conversations.

May 18, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

- ▶ **The Partner Plan** July 11, 6:30–7:30 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Tour of the Birthing Center** May 5 & 22 and June 12 & 26, 5:30–6:15 p.m., Mountainside
- ▶ **Infant Care & Safety Class** May 8, June 12 & July 10, 7–9:30 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Breastfeeding Class** May 24 & June 7, 7–10 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Prepared Childbirth Class** May 27 & June 10, 9 a.m.–4 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Safe Sitter** Fee: \$40, virtual event. Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://HMHforU.org/Events) for upcoming dates.
- ▶ **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Fee: \$15, virtual event. Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://HMHforU.org/Events) for upcoming dates.

## General Wellness

**Hearing Loss: The Hidden Risks** Join our audiologist and learn the links between hearing and health as well as hearing aid myths. Screenings will be provided.

May 3, 12:30–1:30 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood

- ▶ **Are Your Shots Up-to-date?** Apr. 26, 1–2 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Fitness & Wellness Community Ed. Center, 87 Rte. 17 North, Maywood
- ▶ **Weight Loss with Hypnosis** June 14, 7–8 p.m., virtual event
- ▶ **Weight-loss Surgery** To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. Visit [HMHforU.org/WeightLoss](https://HMHforU.org/WeightLoss) to find a seminar near you.
- ▶ **Support Groups** Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/SupportGroups](https://HMHforU.org/SupportGroups).



Sisters Jamie DeLaura (right) and Alyssa Dunnigan (left) raised funds and ran in the New York City Marathon to benefit the very kids they care for each day as nurses.



## In It for the Kids

Nurses and sisters Jamie DeLaura and Alyssa Dunnigan ran the New York City Marathon to raise money for Tackle Kids Cancer.

They didn't "break the tape" as the first to run through it, but **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital** nurses and sisters Jamie DeLaura and Alyssa Dunnigan were winners in the 2022 TCS New York City Marathon held November 6, 2022.

The sisters ran the race to raise much-needed funds for pediatric cancer research and patient programs for Tackle Kids Cancer, a philanthropic program part of Hackensack Meridian *Health* Foundation that benefits The Children's Cancer Institute at Hackensack Meridian Children's Health.

"Crossing the finish line was very emotional for me," says Jamie. "The kids I work with and their families are some of the strongest people I know. We try everything we can to make sure they still get to be a kid, despite their diagnosis."

Adds Alyssa: "Being able to do this and make a donation to the foundation affecting those kids was an incredible honor. Doing things in life to positively impact others will always make you feel good. While working in this hospital with the kids, we get to see how the support can truly change a kid's life."

### Dedication, Commitment and Passion

"Training for a marathon takes a lot of dedication, commitment and passion for yourself and for the sport," says Jamie, who ran approximately three days a week; Alyssa ran four. "Nursing requires the same."

Alyssa says both pursuits require mental and emotional stamina. "As a nurse, you are constantly using your brain and you're on your feet to get the work done," she says. "Taking pride in the things that you do is incredibly important, and there is truly nothing I have done like running this marathon."

Their accomplishments are a source of pride for others who work with them. "We are very grateful to Jamie and Alyssa for extending themselves and raising money for Tackle Kids Cancer," says Amy Glazer, executive director of Tackle Kids Cancer and Children's Health for Hackensack Meridian *Health* Foundation. "They know better than anyone the difficult journey children and families face when given a cancer diagnosis. Giving back to their own patients by supporting Tackle Kids Cancer's mission is a true act of kindness." 🌟



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

# Boost Your Brain Health

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

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

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

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

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

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

istock.com/thenatchd

Source: University of Cambridge research





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# May Is Mental Health Awareness Month!

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

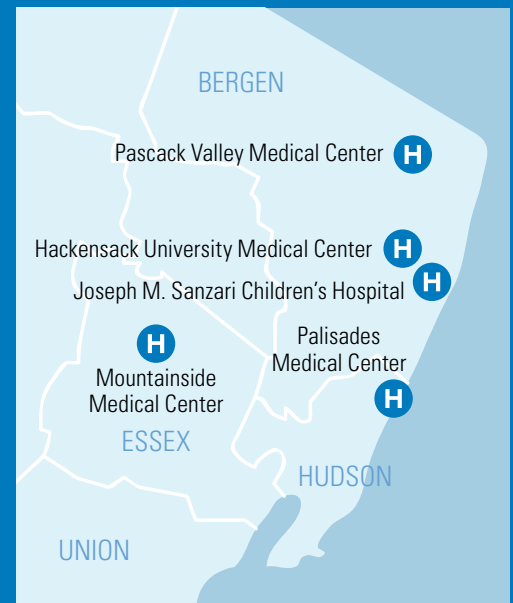
**Webinar: Electroconvulsive Therapy** The not-so-scary truth about a life-changing therapy for treatment-resistant depression, mood disorders and severe forms of autism. Join **Eric Alcera, M.D.**, and **Muhammed Abbas, M.D.**, as they discuss ECT and neuromodulation in plain language. Hear from a young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

*May 11, 5–6 p.m., virtual event*

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

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)**.



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KEEP GETTING BETTER