

HEALTH U



Hackensack
Meridian Health



THE HUNT
FOR COVID
VARIANTS

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TRY A MINI
WORKOUT

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Turn up the Heat on Health



Are heart
attacks
hereditary?

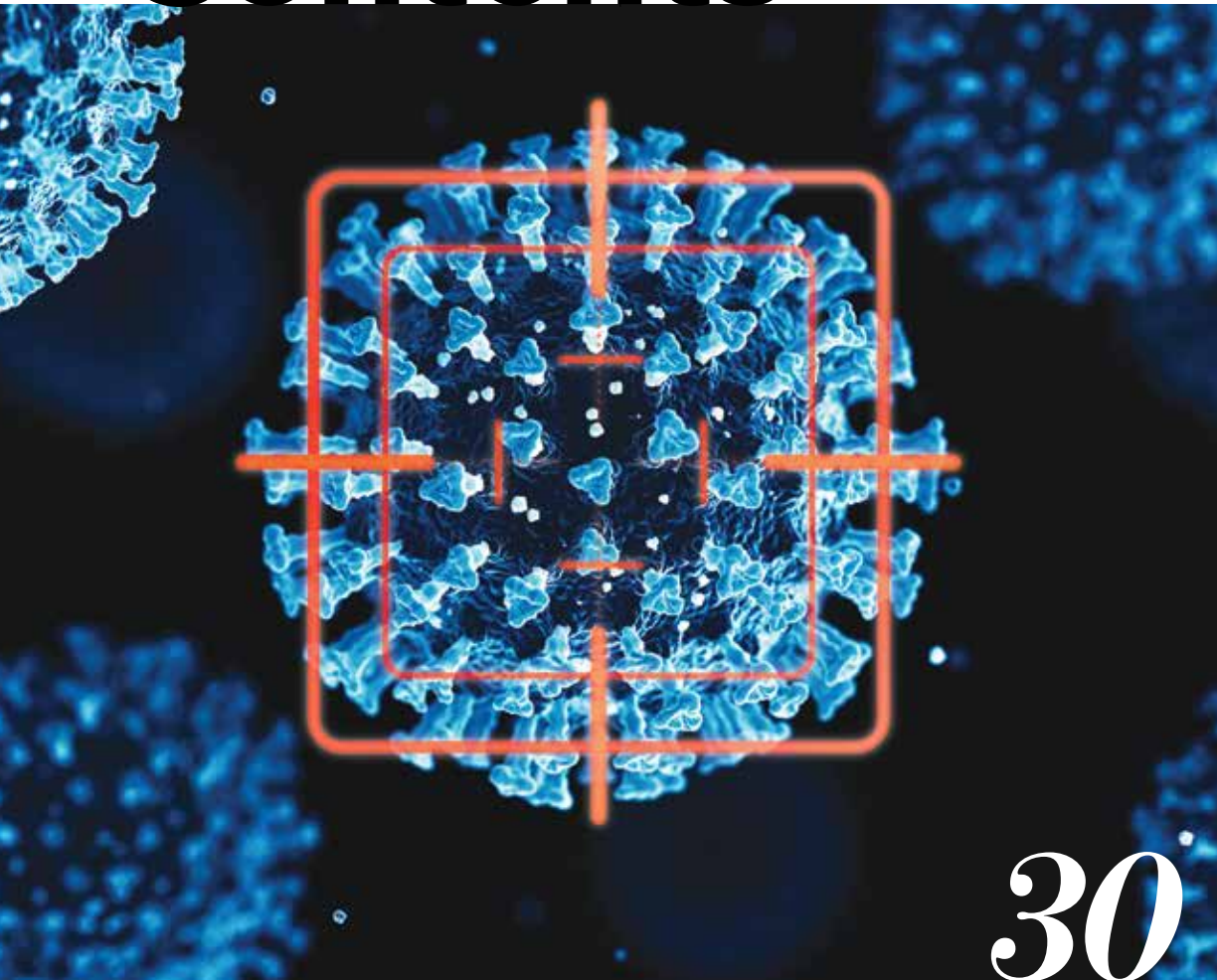
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PARA LEER ESTA REVISTA EN ESPAÑOL,
VISITE [HMHforU.org/Spanish1](https://www.HMHforU.org/Spanish1).

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Innovation transforming medical research into treatments

Variant Hunters

Get an inside look at how the Center for Discovery and Innovation tracks the twists and turns of COVID-19 and its emerging variants.



Tune in to our HealthU podcast!
For more details, visit
HMHforU.org/Podcast.



The heat is on! Find five ways to stay safe and comfortable in this extreme weather at HMHforU.org/HeatWave.

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Discover four common summer injuries in kids and how to help prevent them at HMHforU.org/KidsInjuries.



Spray sunscreens may save some time, but do they work as well as lotions? Find out at: HMHforU.org/SpraySunscreen.

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



Bob Garrett (second from the left) regularly visits the hospitals and care locations to get to know our team members better and check in with them.



First in Line

For many of us, we have to constantly remind ourselves that we can't effectively take care of someone else without first taking care of ourselves. That's as true for the mom or dad taking care of young children as it is for adults supporting aging parents.

Over the past two years, it has been especially true for our health care workers. From the initial surge that overwhelmed hospitals to the more recent omicron wave that led to a challenging health care worker shortage, the COVID-19 pandemic has physically and emotionally exhausted our team members.

We at Hackensack Meridian Health consider our health care workers to be heroes.

But even superheroes need to rest and recharge. To provide the highest-quality care for our patients, we know our team must first take care of themselves. We offer several options to help our team members care for their emotional and physical health, including a confidential helpline; employee assistance and work-life services; online resources for stress, nutrition and finance management; and group sessions to help cope with COVID.

We know, too, that the COVID-19 pandemic has been difficult on us all—mentally and physically. Between our many roles and responsibilities, it's not always easy to prioritize our own physical and mental health. In this issue of HealthU, we simplify the latest healthy-eating trends on page 7. And if you've got 10 minutes, we've got ideas for quick but effective exercises to get the most bang for your buck (page 5).

Finally, staying healthy can be easier with support. We offer a number of both in-person and virtual programs to help keep communities safe and healthy. You can find classes and events ranging from nutrition and exercise to heart health, stroke, cancer care, women's health and more. For a full listing of events, or to register, visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/events).

For patients, family members, community members and team members alike, we are here to provide the care, resources and education you need to live your very best life. 🌟

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
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Hackensack Meridian Children's Health Ranked Among the Top

Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital and K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital are ranked number one in the state and in the top 20 in the Mid-Atlantic Region in the U.S. News & World Report 2022-23 Best Children's Hospital Report. In addition, the nephrology program at both hospitals have earned a national top 50 ranking in one of the 10 specialties ranked in the annual report.

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

BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

INSIDE THIS SECTION

- 6 What to know about cyberbullying
- 7 The best diets to try
- 7 Recipe for rainbow lentil medley

Got 10 Minutes? Try a Mini Workout

We all need regular exercise, but for many of us, it's often hard to find the time. Sneak movement into your day with these helpful tips.

Getting exercise doesn't have to be a monumental task. "Even just 10 minutes here and there throughout your day can make a noticeable and positive impact on your health," says **Olufunke Olushoga, M.D.**, internal medicine doctor at Palisades Medical Center.

Be on the lookout for 10-minute pauses, and use your creativity to get the most out of them with these tips from Dr. Olushoga:

Scrolling through social media?

- Work out while you scroll with this exercise game:
- ▶ 5 calf raises for every ad you scroll past
 - ▶ 5 squats for every pet image you see
 - ▶ 5 lunges for every food photo that pops up

Waiting for your kid's soccer practice to end?

- ▶ Take a brisk walk around the block or field
- ▶ Do calf raises by the car

Have 10 minutes at work?

- ▶ Walk the stairs on a break
- ▶ Do bicep curls during a virtual training or meeting break

Waiting for water to boil or dinner to come out of the oven?

- Try a few mini circuits of:
- ▶ Counter push-ups
 - ▶ Mule kicks
 - ▶ Lunges



Watch our physical therapist demonstrate these exercises.

Ready to turn up the heat?

High-intensity interval training (commonly known as HIIT) can give you the most bang for your buck because it usually works the whole body and increases your heart rate.

istock.com/painimom/irina Griskova



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Go Online

Find more tips for living a healthier life through exercise at [HMHforU.org/Exercise](https://www.hmhforu.org/Exercise).



Cyber Attack

What are the effects of cyberbullying?

When you were a kid, you may have seen or experienced bullying in school or on the playground. Today, a digital form of bullying, known as cyberbullying, has allowed bullying behavior to extend beyond these traditional venues.

Because most children, tweens and teens have smartphones and access to computers, they're more susceptible to bullying, or being bullied, through virtual means.

"In some ways, cyberbullying can be worse than in-person bullying because there's no break from it when you go home from school. People will say hurtful things online that they would never say in person," says **Tenzing Yangchen, M.D.**, child and adolescent psychiatrist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "Also, rumors and embarrassing photos on social media can go viral, hitting the radar of many more kids within minutes."

Signs Your Child Is Being Cyberbullied

- ▶ Avoids talking to friends or socializing
- ▶ Seems especially quiet or withdrawn at home, or isolates in their room
- ▶ Loses interest in activities that previously gave them joy
- ▶ Is unable to concentrate on schoolwork or homework
- ▶ Has falling grades
- ▶ Has trouble sleeping
- ▶ Desires to skip school or avoid school activities
- ▶ Seems angry or upset when they look at their phone
- ▶ Exhibits secretive behavior about what they've seen or done on their phone
- ▶ Abruptly stops using their phone
- ▶ Uses drugs or alcohol
- ▶ Says things about life being meaningless or talks about suicide

What Parents Can Do

If you suspect a problem, have a gentle, open and honest conversation to figure out what's happening. Try these approaches:

- ▶ When your child talks about the problem, really listen and be supportive of their feelings.
- ▶ Validate their worth, and help them understand that bullying is not about them; it is about issues the person bullying them is having in their life.
- ▶ Figure out together what to do to help your child feel safe.
- ▶ Change the privacy controls on your child's social media accounts, limiting who can contact them and blocking cyberbullies.
- ▶ Gather evidence of cyberbullying incidents, including screenshots and timestamps of attacks.
- ▶ If the cyberbully goes to your child's school, contact school administrators to discuss their cyberbullying policies.
- ▶ If cyberbullying takes place through an app or platform, report the content to the provider, which will be in violation of its terms of service.
- ▶ If cyberbullying includes threats of physical violence, contact your local police department.
- ▶ Help your child heal emotionally, with the support of a mental health professional if needed.
- ▶ Consider using a parental control app that screens texts, apps and social media platforms for signs of cyberbullying. "Listening and being supportive can help your child begin to heal, and other measures should help stem the cyberbullying incidents," Dr. Yangchen says. "Helping your child understand that being the target of bullying does not reflect on them is a challenge, but supporting them in building a strong sense of self is important."



Tenzing Yangchen, M.D.

Child and adolescent psychiatrist

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Hackensack

Learn about behavioral health services at [Hackensack Meridian Health at HMHforU.org/MentalHealth](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HMHforU.org/MentalHealth).

istock.com/SvetaZi

The Best Diets to Try

Strict diets can be tough to stick to. You may be more likely to reach your goal if you incorporate lifestyle changes that you can sustain for the long term, rather than adopting a hard-to-follow diet for a few weeks or months.

"Instead of finding a restrictive diet to latch onto for a brief period, rethink your relationship with food, and make small changes that you can follow for life. Diets are temporary, but a lifestyle change is long term," says Katlyn Cusack, MS, RDN, LDN, registered dietitian at Hackensack Meridian Health. "Eat smaller portions, and only eat when you're hungry. Consume more fruits and vegetables, and choose whole foods over highly processed foods."

If you're hoping to follow a new diet, consider one of these choices. They're among the healthiest available, and they're simple and flexible enough to fit your lifestyle and stick with for years to come.

Mediterranean Diet: Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans make up a substantial portion of the diet. This diet also includes fish, nuts, low-fat dairy products, chicken and preparing food with olive oil. Olive oil is the primary source of added fat in the Mediterranean diet. Red meat is eaten infrequently or avoided, as are sugar, white flour, salt and highly processed foods.

Flexitarian Diet: The flexitarian—which means "flexible vegetarian"—diet is a great way to incorporate more fruits and vegetables in your diet as well as branch out with different foods. This lifestyle focuses on eating whole foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains and plant-based, protein-rich foods like nuts, seeds, beans and tofu. You can go meat-free for the bulk of your meals but can eat some meat, poultry or fish without "cheating." Sugar, white flour and other highly processed foods are eaten sparingly.

DASH Diet: Doctors may recommend the DASH (dietary approaches to stop hypertension) diet to people with high blood pressure. This diet is low in sodium and saturated fat, and high in potassium, calcium and magnesium, which helps reduce blood-pressure levels. This diet includes whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds. You can consume small servings of low-fat dairy products, fish and poultry. Red meat, highly processed food and sugar are rarely consumed.

Learn about nutritional counseling at Hackensack Meridian Health at [HMHforU.org/NutritionHelp](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/HMHforU.org/NutritionHelp).



Rainbow Lentil Medley

Serves 4

Ingredients

Salad:

- 2 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 cup water
- 1 cup lentils, rinsed and picked over
- 3–4 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ teaspoon each, black pepper and oregano
- 6 cups mixed vegetables, thinly sliced or diced (broccoli, squash, onion, red bell pepper, carrots)
- 2 ounces goat or blue cheese, crumbled

Dressing:

- 2 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Steps

- 1 In a medium pot, bring broth and water to a boil. Add lentils, garlic, black pepper and oregano. Reduce to a simmer, and cover and cook for 20 minutes. Drain any remaining liquid.
- 2 Meanwhile, in a steamer, cook vegetables until just tender.
- 3 In a small jar, combine all dressing ingredients and shake vigorously to blend.
- 4 In a large bowl, combine lentils and vegetables, and toss with dressing. Sprinkle cheese on top.

Seasoned Cook

Try this recipe using red lentils, which give the dish a wonderful color, or French lentils, which are smaller, cook faster and hold their shape better.

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 375 calories, 22g protein, 47g carbohydrate (19g fiber), 13g fat (4g sat, 9g mono/poly), 212mg sodium

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

Is it safe to travel this summer?

Ullanda Fyffe, M.D., weighs in:

Any amount of travel during a pandemic comes with a certain level of risk, especially as new variants continue to emerge. But if you plan well, remain up-to-date with recommended COVID-19 vaccines and take appropriate precautions, you can enjoy that summer trip and reduce your risk of getting infected with COVID-19.

Consider these tips:

If you are taking transportation other than a personal car, **keep tabs on public transportation safety measures**, including face covering requirements. If you are traveling internationally, **stay up-to-date on entry and exit requirements** to your destination country, as well as COVID vaccination and testing requirements.

Look for **lodging that has taken measures to improve indoor air ventilation**, including improved central air filtration, increased introduction of outdoor air and use of portable HEPA fan/filtration systems for air cleaning.

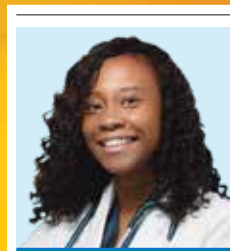
Choose **outdoor activities with minimal crowds** instead of crowded indoor places, particularly if you are traveling with a child too young to be vaccinated or someone who is at higher risk of serious illness. If you're not fully vaccinated or you're at higher risk, try to maintain 6 feet of distance between yourself and others when indoors.

Consider **wearing a high-quality mask** when traveling if you are at high risk for serious illness from COVID-19 or live with someone who is, if you are unvaccinated, if infection rates are high where you are traveling or if you are in a small, crowded space with poor ventilation.

Don't forget to **pack properly fitting masks, hand sanitizer** that contains at least 60 percent alcohol, **alcohol wipes** and **proof of your COVID vaccination status**.

Discuss with your doctor if there are other precautions you should take.

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



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Why does my arm hurt after a shot?

Cristina Cicogna, M.D., weighs in:

Pain in the arm is caused by your immune system responding to the vaccine you have received. The pain is usually soreness of the muscle where the injection is given.

It is normal for some vaccine shots to cause more pain than others, such as the COVID-19 vaccine and shingles vaccine. Overall, symptoms usually last only a few days and are mild.

Reduce the pain after vaccination by:

- ▶ Keeping your injected arm moving after the shot to get blood flowing to the injection site
- ▶ Sticking to lighter exercise and avoiding strenuous effort after your shot
- ▶ Taking over-the-counter pain relievers if needed after the shot (but only consider this after you get the vaccine, not before)
- ▶ Applying a clean, cool compress or ice pack to reduce swelling and redness at the injection site



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

Why is my heart rate high?

Ryan Kaple, M.D., FACC, FSCAI, weighs in:

It is normal for a person to have an increased heart rate during periods of exercise. However, some people may notice a high heart rate even at rest, which can be a sign of an underlying health condition. Common causes of a high heart rate include:

- ▶ Stress or anxiety
- ▶ Dehydration
- ▶ Overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism)
- ▶ Low red blood cell count (anemia)
- ▶ Medication side effects or withdrawal
- ▶ Stimulants such as caffeine, cigarettes and alcohol
- ▶ Infection

However, in some circumstances, a high heart rate can be the first sign of heart disease. It is recommended that you seek immediate medical help if your heart rate seems too high and you experience symptoms of shortness of breath, dizziness, lightheadedness, weakness, feeling faint, fainting, chest pain or tightness in the chest.



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

Should I worry about my snoring?

Pakkay Ngai, M.D., weighs in:

It's estimated that half the people who regularly snore would be diagnosed with obstructive sleep apnea if they underwent testing. Snoring that happens because the airway is blocked may signify sleep apnea. How loud someone snores can't determine whether they have sleep apnea; pauses in regular breathing or gasping for breath may be better indicators. If your partner says that you stop breathing in the middle of the night, see a doctor for evaluation.

Symptoms of sleep apnea

If you frequently wake up tired and have these symptoms, tell your doctor:

- ▶ Morning headaches
- ▶ Difficulty concentrating during the day
- ▶ A change in your ability to recall information
- ▶ Irritability or depression
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ Sexual dysfunction
- ▶ Dry mouth and/or extreme thirst upon awakening



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

HEART HEALTH

Are Heart Attacks Hereditary?



Cardiovascular risk can be inherited from one generation to the next. Here's what you should know about screening and lowering your risk.

Anyone can be affected by heart disease, but your age, habits and family history can be key indicators when it comes to assessing individual risks.

Is it safe to say heart attacks can be hereditary? “Cardiovascular risk can certainly be inherited from one generation to the next,” says **Justin Lee, M.D.**, a cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “If you have a parent or a sibling affected by heart attack or coronary artery disease, your risk of those conditions is increased. In addition, in some patients, rare genetic factors can lead to heart failure.”



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A number of conditions that can affect the heart are often seen in multiple generations:

- ▶ Arrhythmias
- ▶ Congenital heart disease
- ▶ Cardiomyopathy
- ▶ High cholesterol
- ▶ Heart failure
- ▶ Coronary artery disease
- ▶ Type 2 diabetes

Know Your Risk

Proactive screening is especially important if a family member has been diagnosed with heart disease or another heart disorder. “Proactivity and awareness are the best precautionary actions in preventing heart attack and stroke, which often occur without symptoms or warning signs,” says Dr. Lee. “The first sign of either can often be fatal.”

Through screening, you can detect an issue before it is beyond control. Screening options include:

AngioScreen is a comprehensive heart and vascular screening. This simple, noninvasive, 15-minute evaluation helps you understand your risk for heart disease and stroke.

CT calcium scoring scans assess risk for heart disease and stroke by detecting calcium-containing plaque in your arteries—one of the leading causes of heart attack.

Lower Your Risk

Heart disease is often viewed as a genetic inheritance because families tend to share lifestyle habits, such as diet. High intake of sugar, fat and sodium leads to common conditions that can increase the likelihood of heart disease. “Our daily habits are not hereditary but are typically learned, shared and passed between generations,” says Dr. Lee.

If you are at high risk for heart disease, consider lifestyle choices to lower your risk:

Get moving: Physical inactivity can lead to heart disease as well as high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes. Light to moderate exercise is just as valuable for your health as intensive workouts. Ultimately, maintaining positive cardiovascular health is the goal.

Limit alcohol intake: Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure and the risk for heart disease. Overconsumption of alcohol can also increase triglyceride levels, which is a fatty substance that thickens the blood and heightens risk.

Avoid tobacco products: Tobacco use increases the risk for heart disease and heart attack because nicotine raises blood pressure. In addition, carbon monoxide from cigarette smoke reduces the amount of oxygen that can move through the bloodstream. 🚭

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Although Bonit Sharma will need life-long monitoring, he continues to make strides in his recovery and is enjoying spending time with his two children.

Close Call

Bonit Sharma is grateful to be healthy again for his family after care for a life-threatening aortic dissection.

When Bonit Sharma, a 43-year-old father of two from Denville, New Jersey, started experiencing back pain in August 2021, he wasn't totally surprised. About 15 years ago, he had back pain issues, so he assumed the same problem was reappearing.

Instead, he was in for a shock that sent him on a harrowing journey in and out of hospitals for about a week until he finally landed at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. There, he received emergency surgery to correct a life-threatening heart condition.

Diagnosis at Long Last

When Bonit went to a local emergency room, doctors ruled out heart attack but confirmed elevated blood pressure. Tests and a chest X-ray seemed to show he was fine, so Bonit was sent home.

His primary care provider prescribed muscle relaxers, and over the next few days, things seemed to return to normal—until the pain came back without warning. “It felt like someone stabbed me through the back and chest with a molten hot blade,” Bonit says. Fortunately, he went to **Palisades Medical Center**, where family medicine specialist **Samir Amin, M.D.**, diagnosed him with an aortic dissection.

“Dissection occurs when there is an injury or defect in the inner lining of the aorta and blood passes through that injury, pushing the layers of the walls of the aorta apart,” says **Arthur Ng, M.D.**, a cardiac surgeon at Hackensack, who successfully treated Bonit for the aortic dissection. “When that happens, there can be a number of complications. In Bonit's case, the risk of dying was about 80 percent within two weeks of presentation; Bonit had been experiencing the pain for about a week when diagnosed.”

Immediately after diagnosis at Palisades, Bonit was rushed to Hackensack where Dr. Ng and **Michael Wilderman, M.D.**, chief of Endovascular Surgery at Hackensack, performed a series of procedures to fix his dissection, which extended from his aortic root through his abdomen.



Multidisciplinary, Compassionate Care

Bonit appreciates the care he received from his doctors and nurses and recalls a touching experience with a night nurse who cared for him.

“My wife and dad could be with me during the day, but the nights were when I came to terms with what was happening,” Bonit says. “I needed help with the most basic things, which really got to me. On the second or third night, I broke down and cried. My night nurse stepped in and talked me through it. He said: ‘I know this is scary and you're in pain. I'm not going to lie: It's not going to be easy, but you have to keep at it and we'll help you get better.’ That interaction—kind of like a dose of truth—really stood out because my outlook and attitude changed.”

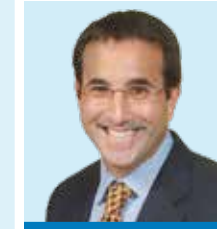
Dr. Wilderman attributes Bonit's positive experience to the outstanding collaboration among doctors and team members at Hackensack and their dedication to providing excellent care.

“We have an unbelievable multidisciplinary team,” says Dr. Wilderman. “Between our vascular and endovascular surgeons, cardiac surgeons and support teams, whenever there is a complicated case, we work together.”

Although Bonit is still recovering from the aortic dissection and the following surgeries and will need lifelong monitoring, he continues to make strides in his recovery. “It's a miracle I'm still alive, and I feel extremely blessed that I'm surrounded by an amazing family,” he says.



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Learn more about heart screenings to understand your risk of heart disease at [HMHforU.org/HeartScreen](https://www.hmhforu.org/HeartScreen).

Know Your Number

How much do you have to weigh to get weight-loss surgery?

If you're considering bariatric surgery as an option to lose weight, you might be asking, "How much do I have to weigh to be a candidate for the procedure?" The number that really matters is your body mass index (BMI), a measure of body fat based on height and weight—not your actual weight.

"BMI is a more accurate measure of how overweight you are for your height," says **Hans J. Schmidt, M.D.**, division chief of bariatric surgery at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

The number most bariatric surgeons are looking for is a BMI over 35 with at least one comorbidity, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. That's when the surgery discussion can usually begin.

"That's the general criteria," Dr. Schmidt says. "But every patient is unique, so the exact indications for surgery might be a little different for everyone."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- ▶ BMI between 18.5 and 25 is considered normal.
- ▶ BMI between 25 and 30 is considered overweight.
- ▶ BMI over 30 is considered obese.

- ▶ BMI over 40 is considered morbidly obese (BMI of 40 is generally about 100 pounds over your ideal body weight).

By the time most patients come to a bariatric surgeon, they've already tried multiple ways to lose weight for many years but haven't been able to keep the weight off long term. "It's not their fault. It's a disease," Dr. Schmidt says. "Obesity itself is classified as a disease, which it wasn't even 30 years ago. Once you have the disease, we recommend you seek help."

How to Prepare Your Body and Mind for Weight-loss Surgery

Other than reading about the surgery and the outcomes, there are other ways to prepare your body and mind for bariatric surgery:

- ▶ Quitting smoking
- ▶ Tracking your food and water intake
- ▶ Drinking more water, and limiting other beverages
- ▶ Beginning an exercise routine, however small
- ▶ Committing to not gaining any additional weight
- ▶ Focusing on your mental health 🧠



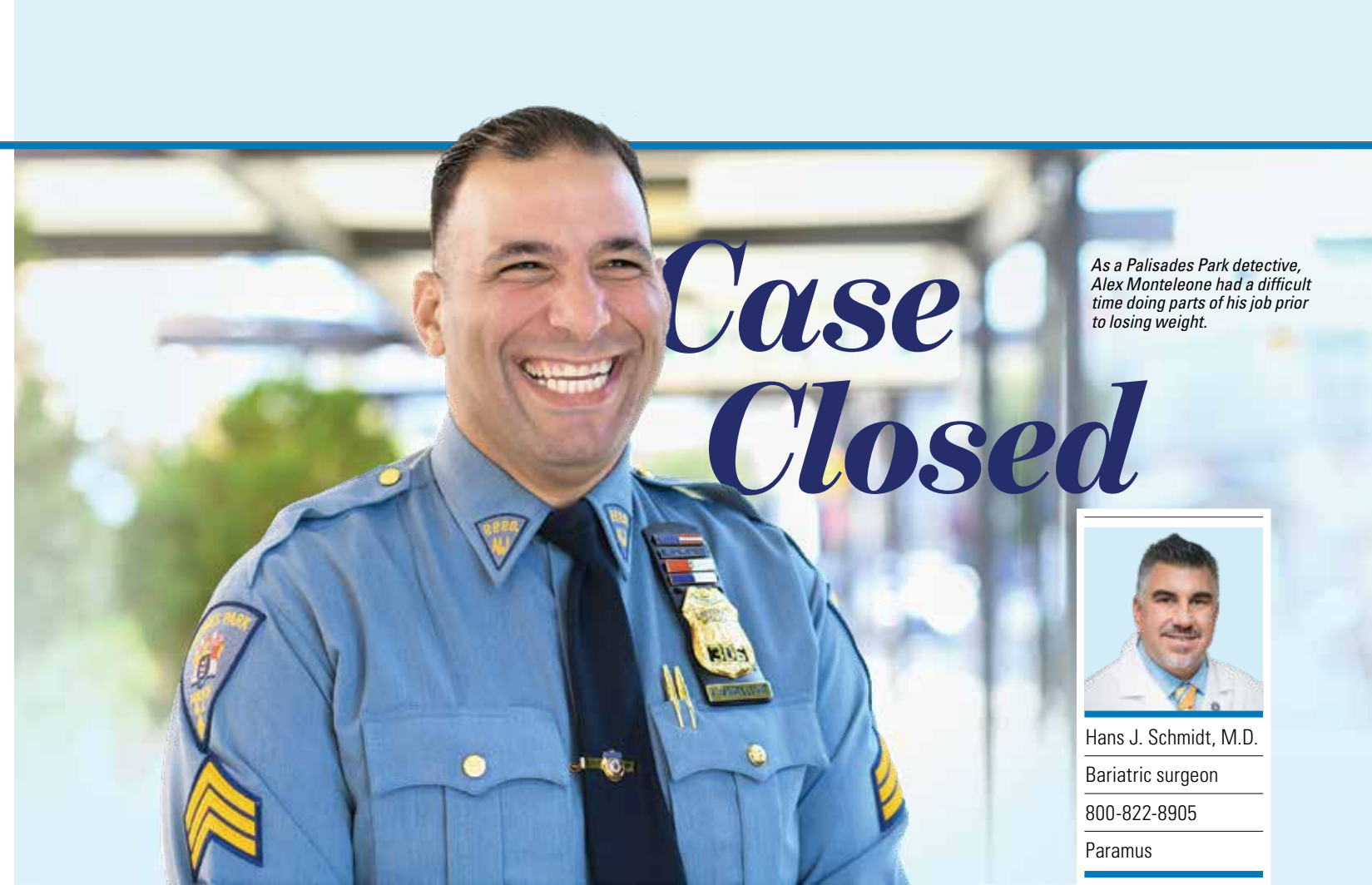
Take our health risk assessment to find out if you're a candidate for weight-loss surgery.



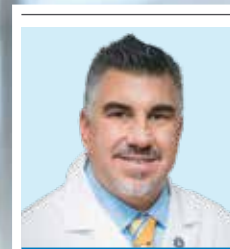
Go Online

Attend a weight-loss surgery seminar near you. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/WeightLossSeminar](https://www.hmhforu.org/WeightLossSeminar).

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As a Palisades Park detective, Alex Monteleone had a difficult time doing parts of his job prior to losing weight.



Hans J. Schmidt, M.D.
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Alex Monteleone's weight made it difficult to do his job as a police officer. Weight-loss surgery helped him gain confidence in his job and all areas of his life.

Throughout his life, Alex Monteleone, 37, battled with his weight. As a college football player, his weight made him a fierce opponent, but as a Palisades Park detective, the extra weight made it hard to do his job.

"Even though I was dieting and exercising all the time, I could never really lose the weight," he says. "It made it really hard to run carrying all my gear."

Physically, weighing 320 pounds was difficult, but the toll was emotional, too.

"Even though I landed my dream job, I was unhappy because of my weight," he says. "I didn't feel comfortable."

Checking Out All Options

Even though he was convinced he wanted to lose weight on his own without bariatric surgery, he met with **Hans Schmidt, M.D.**, chief of Bariatrics at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, to survey his options.

"Some of my patients are hesitant about weight-loss surgery at first," Dr. Schmidt says. "But surgery is often the best solution. Losing the weight is what matters, no matter how you get there."

Alex says Dr. Schmidt made him feel at ease. He calmed his fears about surgery and reassured him that his inability to lose weight was not his fault.

"I connected with Dr. Schmidt right away," Alex says. "He acknowledged that I was someone who tried really hard to lose weight but just couldn't get past this plateau. I knew I'd be in good hands."

'The Best Decision'

Ultimately, Alex concluded that he could not lose weight on his own. On May 24, 2018, Dr. Schmidt performed a surgery called a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy on him. During the one-hour procedure, a large portion of the stomach was removed, leaving a narrow

gastric "tube" or "sleeve." The surgery also reduced the levels of ghrelin, the so-called "hunger hormone," which decreases a person's desire for food.

To say Alex's surgery was a success is an understatement. To him: "It was the best decision I've ever made in my whole life."

In the first month alone after surgery, he lost 35 pounds. He has steadily lost more and kept most of it off for more than three years. He's no longer on the verge of diabetes or high blood pressure. Today, he weighs 250 pounds and feels amazing. He was down to 230, but he says the COVID-19 pandemic didn't do his waistline any favors.

"I feel great, I've gained confidence, I no longer snore in my sleep so I'm sleeping better, and I have energy all the time," he says. "I'm no longer afraid to take pictures or speak in public. I never wanted to do that before. But I know I look good in my uniform."

Because Alex has been able to keep the weight off for this long, Dr. Schmidt says his prognosis is excellent. "Because Alex was willing to change his whole lifestyle and commit to this journey, he has virtually a new life now," he says. "He can do anything he wants."

CANCER CARE



Keep an Eye Out

Don't ignore these potential symptoms of cancer.

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in the United States, so it's crucial to recognize the possible signs of the disease. "Screening is one of the most effective ways to prevent cancer or catch it as early as possible," says **Lori Leslie, M.D.**, hematologist and oncologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "While the list of possible cancer symptoms is varied, there are a few common early warning signs that many people diagnosed with cancer experience."

Don't ignore these symptoms. If you experience them, make an appointment with your doctor to investigate them further.



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Skin changes. Be on the lookout for changes on your skin, including a new growth or a change in an existing growth or mole.

Breast lumps. Women at average risk of breast cancer should begin screening at age 40. In addition, women should keep an eye out for hard lumps near the armpit, bulges or dimples in the skin, swelling, pain, redness or bloody nipple discharge.

Unusual bleeding or bruising. If you notice blood in your stool or urine, or easy bruising, this can be cause for concern. Talk to your doctor about your symptoms.

Mouth changes. Be wary of pain, sores, numbness and bleeding in your mouth.

Difficulty swallowing. If you have a sore throat that won't heal, in combination with other symptoms like an earache, talk to your doctor.

Unexplained weight changes. Cancer symptoms may change your eating habits or hinder your ability to eat at all. A weight loss or gain of 10 or more pounds without explanation should be alarming.

Extreme fatigue. Constant extreme fatigue and exhaustion that is not relieved by getting rest should give cause for concern.

Changes in bowel movements. Changes in bowel habits, including more frequent, loose stools and abdominal pain, can be symptoms of bowel cancer.

Fever or night sweats. If you have a fever that persists for more than three days, or you experience excessive night sweats, get checked out. Some blood cancers, such as lymphoma, can cause someone to experience these symptoms. 🦋

Go Online

Learn about comprehensive care for cancers of all types at [HMHforU.org/Cancer](https://www.hmhforu.org/Cancer).

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Retired teacher Peter Kahan benefited from cutting-edge bladder cancer treatment, thanks to his former student Ravi Munver, M.D.

Retired high school physics teacher Peter Kahan, 76, has impacted the lives of hundreds of students during his decades of teaching. Now one of his former students, urologic oncologist **Ravi Munver, M.D.**, vice chair of the Department of Urology at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, is returning the favor, leading the team treating Peter for bladder cancer.

In 2019, Peter noticed blood in his urine. He went to his urologist near his home in Holmes, New York, and was diagnosed with high-grade non-muscle invasive bladder cancer. He was treated intravesically—where the medication is inserted directly into the bladder through a catheter—with immunotherapy and chemotherapy.

Unfortunately, the cancer recurred. His doctors recommended a cystectomy, which removes the whole bladder and prostate. Hoping to avoid such extensive surgery, Peter decided to look for other options. That's when he got in touch with Dr. Munver, who he'd reconnected with at a memorial service for a colleague a few years ago.

Dr. Munver fondly remembers his teacher and his alma mater. "As a senior in Peter's honors physics class, I was so impressed by how passionate and meticulous he was in teaching us. It must have been destiny that brought us back together after so many years," he says. "It was humbling when he

reached out to me, and I informed him that there were potential options other than immediately removing the bladder."

Dr. Munver surgically removed Peter's tumor, then treated him with intravesical BCG combined with immunotherapy medication to get the best possible results.

Right Time and Place

A few months later, the tumor returned again. "Bladder removal was one treatment option, but understandably, Peter wanted to try another option before that," Dr. Munver says. "I was confident that we could offer him an alternative."

Around this same time, **Nitin Yerram, M.D.**, director of urologic research at Hackensack, was working on introducing a new intravesical therapy using two chemotherapy drugs to the hospital. "It's a massive undertaking to bring a new therapy to our patients, and we'd been working on it for months," Dr. Yerram says. "Right when we were about to go live, Peter was looking for options."

The new therapy, called intravesical chemotherapy, is specifically for patients with recurrent non-muscle bladder cancers that aren't responding to BCG. Studies show up to 50 percent of patients respond to this therapy, helping them avoid major surgery. For Peter, it was worth a try.

Peter's treatment is weekly for six weeks. Both drugs are put directly into the bladder

Urologic oncologist Ravi Munver, M.D., is a former student of his patient Peter Kahan, who is a retired high school physics teacher.



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through a catheter, one at a time. He holds the first drug in for 90 minutes at the clinic. He is then sent home with the second drug, which he holds in for two hours.

"No anesthesia is needed. He's able to work around his schedule to make sure he gets these innovative treatments," says Dr. Yerram. "Patients don't have systemic side effects like nausea and hair loss that we see with other chemotherapy."

A couple of months after the end of his treatment, Peter will undergo tests with Dr. Munver to see if the tumor has disappeared. If it has, he'll either be monitored or started on a maintenance therapy every 3–6 months for up to three years.

"We've created a comprehensive bladder cancer program at Hackensack. Part of that is providing standard-of-care treatments that we have so much experience in. But it's also providing these new innovative therapies and new clinical trials," says Dr. Yerram. "We have all these options that can really benefit patients."

Learn more about treatment for bladder cancer at [HMHforU.org/BladderCancer](https://www.hmhforu.org/BladderCancer).

The 411 on H₂O

Here's how much water you need to consume to stay healthy and tips for avoiding dehydration.



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Staying hydrated is vital to your health and wellness. It moves oxygen throughout the body, helps you maintain blood pressure and digestive health, and increases energy levels, among other benefits.

Are You Getting Enough Water?

The most commonly suggested average water intake is about 8 glasses a day—2 liters or 64 ounces. “But there is no one-size-fits-all amount,” says **Betsy Varghese, M.D.**, internal and obesity medicine doctor at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “Your need for hydration will vary based on your weight, how frequently you exercise and sweat, your location and the temperature, your health status and more.”

Your doctor can help you understand exactly how much water you personally need, but the goal is to consistently take in water.

Be aware of signs of dehydration:

- ▶ Confusion
- ▶ Dark urine
- ▶ Body weakness
- ▶ Headaches
- ▶ Lightheadedness
- ▶ Dry mouth
- ▶ Low blood pressure

6 Tips to Stay Hydrated

- 1 Set a daily goal.** It is easy to overlook drinking water when you are busy managing other details of your day-to-day life. Setting a daily goal will make you mindful of how much water you need to consume.
- 2 Keep a reusable water bottle handy.** Often when we get thirsty, we don't have direct access to water. It helps to keep a reusable water bottle on hand. Look for a water bottle with hydration markers or milestones to keep you motivated. Using a straw also helps you drink water more readily.
- 3 Set reminders.** Reminders and timers are excellent tools to stay on target with your hydration goals. Do this with your phone, your watch or sticky notes strategically placed at home or work.
- 4 Flavor your water.** Add flavoring and fruit to your water, or buy fruit-infused water bottles.
- 5 Consume foods with high water content.** Water also can be consumed through foods with high water content, such as cabbage, cantaloupe, celery, melon, lettuce and zucchini.
- 6 Hydrate instead of overeat.** Some people may eat because they feel hungry when they actually may just be thirsty. If you're reaching into the snack cabinet too frequently, use this as a signal to grab your water instead. “Your brain can confuse thirst for hunger, and this often manifests as a craving for refined carbohydrates and sugar-rich snacks,” Dr. Varghese says. “Have a glass of water first, then reevaluate your true hunger.”

Go Online

For additional tips on healthy eating, visit [HMHforU.org/Nutrition](https://www.hmhforu.org/nutrition).

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Family Affair

When 12-year-old Jordan Vasquez needed a kidney transplant, his dad wasn't a match, but his half-sister's grandmother was a willing donor.

At age 12, Jordan Vasquez was significantly smaller than many kids his age. But it wasn't until a routine checkup that his family learned the reason: kidney damage so severe the sixth-grader needed a transplant.

Jordan was born with posterior urethral valves (PUV), blockages in the tube near the bladder carrying urine from the body. But the condition hadn't seemed to seriously affect the Paterson, New Jersey, resident until blood tests in 2020 showed his kidneys were failing after years of slow and silent damage from backed-up urine. “Pressure was building in his kidneys all that time,” Jordan's father, Andrew, says. “He was always active and playful. I saw no signs that something was wrong.”

PUV is a congenital anomaly of the kidneys and urinary tract, says **Namrata Jain, M.D.**, medical director of Pediatric Kidney Transplant at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

After turning to the Children's Hospital for his son's care, Andrew could breathe with relief. Jordan was able to get to his kidney transplant without needing dialysis. Pediatric kidney specialists performed a living donor transplant in August 2021 and meticulously laid out plans to keep the video game-loving boy's new organ healthy for decades.

Successful Surgery

“From the beginning, I could tell Jordan's family surrounded him with love,” Dr. Jain says. That's especially evident in Jordan's donor: Andrew had a different blood type and couldn't be the donor, but Jordan's half-sister's grandmother was a match and stepped up to the plate.

“Living donor transplants have the best long-term potential for patients and are really the best treatment option for everyone, especially children,” says

Michael Goldstein, M.D., director of Organ Transplantation at Hackensack. “With a living donor, you can avoid getting sicker from kidney failure and receive a better-functioning kidney that will last longer than deceased-donor kidneys.”

The three-hour surgery went perfectly, with Jordan's new kidney working immediately afterward. While sore, the boy was able to go home within several days. “I felt the weight of all my worries come off my chest,” Andrew recalls. “I'm grateful to the doctors for the love, support and attention they gave my son.”

On Track for a Full Recovery

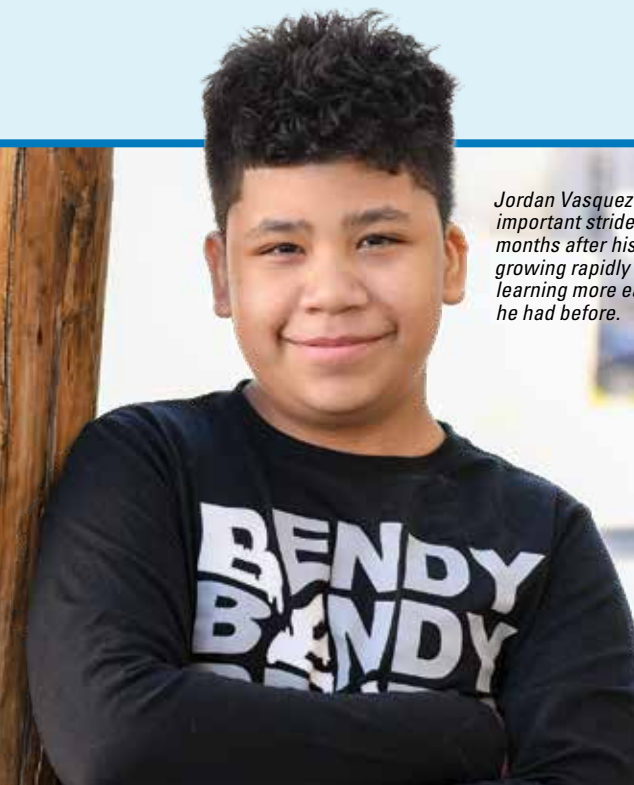
While he quickly bounced back, the health crisis was rough on not only Jordan, but his entire family. Andrew needed to take extended time off from his truck driver job, and Jordan had to adjust to daily medications to prevent rejection of his new kidney. Regular checkups of Jordan's kidney function reassure his family that he's on track for a full recovery.

Home-schooling until the 2022/23 academic year, the young sports enthusiast has made important strides in the months after his transplant, growing rapidly and learning more easily than he had before. “Little by little, he's catching up,” Andrew says. “Hopefully in another year or so, he'll also be able to play any sport he would like.”

Because transplanted organs have a limited lifespan, Jordan will likely require another kidney, perhaps decades from now. “A transplant is a treatment, not a cure,” Dr. Jain says. “But taking care of your transplanted organ can increase its longevity.”

Learn more about organ transplantation at Hackensack University Medical Center at [HMHforU.org/Transplant](https://www.hmhforu.org/transplant).

Jordan Vasquez has made important strides in the months after his transplant, growing rapidly and learning more easily than he had before.



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Can COVID-19 Cause Hair Loss?

Doctors at Hackensack Meridian Health are seeing an influx of patients experiencing the distressing symptom of hair loss after COVID-19.

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On the growing list of lingering effects from COVID-19 comes a jarring one: excessive hair loss.

The phenomenon is especially common among patients who had long COVID and continue experiencing symptoms such as fatigue, brain fog and shortness of breath weeks or months after recovering from the initial infection. But these patients are often surprised by the hair loss symptom.

“It’s extremely distressing, and it might catch people by surprise,” says **Jonathan Shammash, M.D.**, an internist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, which treats hundreds of post-COVID patients through the COVID Recovery Center. “These patients may have thought they were recovered and done. But hair loss might be associated with other symptoms of post-COVID syndrome.”

Hackensack Meridian *Health* doctors are seeing “a slew of patients” experiencing hair loss after COVID infection, reflecting larger trends, says dermatologist **Alexis Young, M.D.**

About 22 percent of patients hospitalized for COVID-19 deal with excessive hair loss within six months after discharge, according to 2021 research. “At the beginning of the pandemic, no one was expecting to see this,” Dr. Young says. “Most people are surprised when I tell them they can get hair loss after stress on the body.”

The Root of the Problem

Healthy people shed about 50 to 100 hairs every day, often without noticing. It’s part of a normal cycle in which hair follicles alternate between resting and active growth phases.

But excessive hair loss can occur after a major physical or emotional stressor such as fever,

illness, pregnancy, surgery or grief, disrupting the normal hair growth cycle and forcing more hairs into the shedding phase. “It’s not specific to COVID, but it’s very common with it,” Dr. Young explains.

Drs. Young and Shammash also believe an overload of inflammation in the body from COVID is part of the equation. Even the psychological stress of having the virus and enduring the pandemic may contribute. “Patients with long COVID can have persistent inflammation that causes a number of symptoms, and one can be this type of hair loss,” Dr. Shammash says.

Prescription for Patience

It can take time for the body to recover from the blow of a severe COVID infection and for hair to grow back.

“It’s a very long process,” Dr. Young says. “I tell patients, ‘You’re not going bald. It will grow back.’ It’s important not to stress about it because that can actually make it worse.”

She notes that post-COVID hair loss typically shows up two to three months after infection and can continue for several months. Regrowth happens slowly, taking up to 18 months for hair to look normal again.

After seeing a doctor to rule out other causes, including anemia or thyroid problems, those concerned about significant hair loss should go back to basics:

- ▶ Eat a healthy diet.
- ▶ Get plenty of sleep.
- ▶ Take supplements if your doctor recommends them.
- ▶ Avoid unnecessary stress. 🌀



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Go Online

If you or a loved one need medical support after recovering from COVID-19, Hackensack Meridian *Health*’s COVID Recovery Center can help. Check out our services and find the program that’s right for you at [HMforU.org/COVIDRecovery](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/COVIDRecovery).

Why am I Not Getting Pregnant?

If you and your partner know that each of your reproductive systems is healthy, here are some possible reasons why you haven't been successful just yet.

Another negative pregnancy test? If you and your partner are young and healthy, it can be confusing and disappointing trying to conceive with no success.

If you and your partner know that each of your reproductive systems is healthy, **Antonia Francis Kim, M.D.**, maternal and fetal medicine specialist at **Hackensack University Medical Center** and **Palisades Medical Center**, provides some possible reasons why you haven't been successful yet.



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Timing Just Hasn't Been Right

Doctors recommend that couples who are trying to conceive have sex every day or every other day during a woman's most fertile window, as this is the only time a woman can get pregnant. "However, more than once a day can start to deplete sperm count," says Dr. Kim. "Tracking your cycle or using ovulation tests can help you know when the time may be right."

Unhealthy Lifestyle Choices

When you and your partner are trying to conceive, it's important that you both make healthy lifestyle choices. This includes eating a well-balanced diet, exercising daily and managing stress. You may also want to consider taking a break from drinking and smoking.

High Stress and Anxiety Levels

Stress, anxiety and depression impact menstrual cycles and fertility. Try implementing relaxing activities into your routine, like yoga, meditation and breathing exercises. Try to avoid putting too much pressure on yourself to get pregnant right away.

Lubricants Getting in the Way

Lubricants are not a spermicide, but sperm's motility and quality can be negatively impacted by the kind you're using. Instead, try sperm-friendly lubricants that are hydroxyethyl cellulose-based, as this ingredient is most similar to natural vaginal mucus and will not impact sperm's motility.

Just Stopped Taking Hormonal Birth Control

For some women, it can take up to six months for their cycle to become regular again after taking hormonal birth control. You aren't likely to ovulate until you start having regular cycles. If your cycles aren't regular after six months, schedule an appointment with your doctor.

"It can be difficult—and seemingly impossible on some days—but try to maintain your stress level and be as patient as you can," Dr. Kim says. "Conceiving can take a long time, so don't get frustrated with yourself. For healthy women under the age of 35, it's normal for it to take up to a year to get pregnant." ❄️

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Go Online

Learn more about women's health services at [HMHforU.org/WomensHealth](https://www.hmhforu.org/WomensHealth).



Family Ties

Adam and Cindy Elkordy are overwhelmed with gratitude for their family of five.

After only a 3 percent chance of success, Adam and Cindy Elkordy now have a healthy daughter, thanks to coordinated care and an innovative procedure.

When Adam and Cindy Elkordy got married, they knew they likely wouldn't be able to conceive a child. In his early 20s, Adam was diagnosed with non-obstructive azoospermia, which occurs when a man's body does not produce enough sperm to have a detectable amount in his semen.

"Although Adam was initially devastated, he eventually came to accept that having biological children would probably never happen for him," Cindy says.

But Cindy, who has two children from her previous marriage, always hoped and knew that she and Adam would try.

Exploring Options

As the couple began researching options for second opinions and male infertility treatments, Cindy came across an article on a procedure called microdissection-testicular sperm extraction (m-TESE). Adam's urologist had spoken to him about the procedure years before.

M-TESE is a procedure performed by a urologist who uses a high-powered surgical microscope and small surgical tools to extract sperm-containing tissue from the testes through an incision in the scrotum. After surgery, the tissue sample is taken to a lab and analyzed to determine whether it contains

sperm. If sperm are found, they can be used for in vitro fertilization (IVF).

After an appointment with Cindy's fertility specialist, Adam was referred to **David Shin, M.D.**, chief of the Center for Sexual Health and Fertility at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, to discuss treatment options.

"[My fertility specialist] said if there were any urologists that could find anything, it would be Dr. Shin," Cindy says.

Dr. Shin was honest about the couple's chances of success, which only amounted to about 3 percent.

"Adam wanted to try any and all options possible to be able to live the rest of our beautiful life together knowing he tried everything he could," Cindy says. "We decided we were all in and wanted to go for it."

'Overwhelmed With Gratitude'

Cindy began taking IVF medication. The day before her procedure to retrieve her eggs, Adam went in for his m-TESE procedure with Dr. Shin. After his tissue samples were retrieved and placed in special collection tubes, they were taken to a lab.

Because it would take hours to examine the sample for the presence of sperm, the couple did not expect to receive results until the next day. However, that same evening, their phone rang.

"I was told they found four mature motile sperm," Cindy says. "My fertility specialist said we were off to a good start, and he would see us the following morning for my retrieval."

During Cindy's procedure, her doctor retrieved five mature eggs and found five viable sperm from Adam's tissue. Of the five eggs that were fertilized, one survived for implantation.

After a successful implantation procedure, Cindy and Adam were officially pregnant. And today, Adam and Cindy have a 10-month-old daughter.

Cindy says their family has been extremely blessed, and they are overwhelmed with gratitude.

"Dr. Shin's honesty, professionalism and reputation preceded him, and we can't thank him enough," she says.

Learn more about women's health services at [Hackensack Meridian Health at HMHforU.org/Health](https://www.hmhforu.org/Health).

Boost Your Brain Health

Train your brain to function better with these five tips.

We've all felt foggy from time to time. "But you can actually train your brain to function better," says **Georges Ghacibeh, M.D.**, cognitive neurologist at the Center for Memory Loss & Brain Health at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.

1

Devote Quality Time to Friends and Family

"Having a strong network of family and friends is proven to be good for your overall health, including lowering blood pressure and reducing risk for depression. Having strong social ties is also beneficial for brain health," says **Olga Nikelshpur, Ph.D.**, neuropsychologist at Hackensack. "Spending time with others has been associated with slowing down memory decline and may delay the onset of dementia."

2

Break New Ground

"Over the course of a lifetime, when you continue to challenge your brain by learning new skills or continuously increasing the difficulty level of the skills you already have, you build something called cognitive reserve—your brain's insurance against possible onset of degenerative processes," says Dr. Nikelshpur.

Try engaging in activities that you find challenging to increase the strength of your brain and avoid repeating easy tasks. "One of the most powerful ways to build your cognitive reserve is to learn a new language or learn to play a musical instrument," Dr. Nikelshpur says. "You don't have to become an expert; what counts is trying."

3

Protect Your Head

Traumatic brain injury—which can be caused by a bump or blow to the head or repeated minor head trauma—disrupts normal brain function and can cause cognitive issues like difficulty concentrating or comprehending, as well as impaired memory function. "Particularly if you engage in physical activities that make you more prone to injury, like road cycling or rock climbing, it's imperative to wear the appropriate protective headgear," says Dr. Ghacibeh.

As we get older, the risk of falls increases. Research shows that older adults who talk as they walk are at higher risk of falls. "Do one thing at a time," Dr. Nikelshpur suggests.

4

Eat Right and Exercise

"High blood pressure, diabetes and obesity are a threat to keeping your brain well," Dr. Ghacibeh says. Eat meals with fruits and vegetables, and include healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocados and certain types of fish like salmon or tuna.

Physical activity can promote the growth and connectivity of nerve cells, which results in better brain function and memory. Exercise also can help with achieving and maintaining a healthy weight and lowering blood pressure.

5

Get a Good Night's Rest

Poor sleep can result in reduced attention, slowed thinking and reaction time, memory decline and overall brain fog. To sleep better, maintain a consistent sleep schedule, turn off electronics at least an hour before bedtime and make sure your bedroom is dark, quiet and at a comfortable temperature. Before bedtime, opt for a quiet activity such as reading, knitting or journaling. "If all else fails, consult with a sleep specialist," Dr. Nikelshpur says. 🧠



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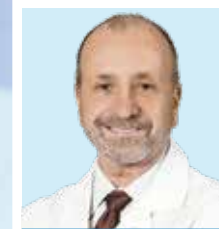
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Go Online

Learn more about brain health and the services provided by Hackensack Meridian Health at [HMHforU.org/Neuro](https://www.HMHforU.org/Neuro).



The spring following her stroke, Karelina Ortiz was cleared to return to her weight-lifting training program.



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Learn more about life-saving stroke care at Hackensack Meridian Health at [HMHforU.org/Stroke](https://www.HMHforU.org/Stroke).

Heavy Lift

When a rare complication led to a stroke for 40-year-old Karelina Ortiz, her doctors performed surgery to drastically lower her risk.

In August 2021, busy property manager Karelina Ortiz of Bayonne, New Jersey, was a day away from a relaxing beach vacation. Seated in her office, she was chatting with a tenant when she felt a ticklish, tingling sensation flutter in the fingertips of her right hand, travel up into her shoulder, "grab" her tongue and make her right eyelid droop.

The tenant noticed something was wrong. "When she asked me if I was OK, I couldn't respond to her," Karelina says. "It was a very scary moment." The episode lasted for about 15 seconds, then she could speak again.

Karelina was only 40 years old and in perfect health—she recently had a physical to clear her to begin a weight-lifting program. Still, she wondered if she'd experienced a stroke. Her aunt had a stroke a few months before, so she was familiar with the symptoms. She walked across the street to her doctor's office. Her physician agreed that she may have had a stroke and recommended she go to nearby **Hackensack University Medical Center** for appropriate testing.

When Time Is of the Essence

Karelina didn't head to the hospital right away. She was feeling fine and didn't want to jeopardize her vacation plans. But after one of her coworkers urged her to go to the emergency room, she listened and headed over. The speed at which the emergency department team responded to her description of her symptoms surprised her. As she was wheeled in for diagnostic scans, she realized she was in a serious situation—and her beach vacation was definitely off.

Scans confirmed she had a stroke. Since she did not have any risk factors for stroke, neurologist **Martin Gizzi, M.D.**, ordered a transeosophageal echocardiogram, a type of probe placed in the esophagus that uses ultrasound to check the structures of the heart to see if they are producing blood clots.

This test found a patent foramen ovale (PFO), a small opening between the two upper chambers of the heart. "Everybody has a PFO in the womb," says Dr. Gizzi. For 75 percent of people, that opening closes at birth, but for about 20–25 percent of people, it doesn't.

There are no known risk factors, and most people who have them don't know it. "They don't cause a problem in the majority of people who have them," Dr. Gizzi says.

The issue with PFOs, he says, is that a blood clot can cross through that opening and get pumped into the brain where it can cause a stroke. These are rare situations, though, so for most people, nothing is done with their PFOs. For a small number of people—those who have a clotting abnormality or have had a stroke—surgery to close the PFO may be an option.

Life Is Short

Six weeks after her stroke and the discovery of her PFO, Karelina had surgery to close the opening and now is considered to be at low risk of a stroke, Dr. Gizzi says. The spring following her stroke, she was cleared to return to her weight-lifting training program.


While life has returned to normal for Karelina, having a stroke changed her. "I'm enjoying life more with my family and close friends," she says. "I'm making things happen in the now instead of later. Life is short."

Pain in the Back

If you are living with chronic back pain, there are plenty of non-surgical options that can help you alleviate the discomfort.

About 20 percent of people live with back pain, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and it's one of the most common reasons people see a doctor. But seeking medical attention for chronic back pain doesn't necessarily lead to surgery. There are many non-surgical options that can help you successfully resolve the issue.

"When dealing with spine pain, we always try to go through the tiers of treatment, from more conservative to the most invasive approach, which is surgery," says **Danielle B. Groves, M.D.**, a physiatrist with **Pascack Valley Medical Group**. "As a physiatrist, my job is to try and help avoid surgery when possible."



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 Emerson

What's Causing Your Back Pain?

Whether it's your primary care physician or a specialist, your doctor will usually first figure out the cause of your back pain, then try to help you get well using the least invasive options first.

For people with back pain, several things could be causing it:

- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Muscle weakness
- ▶ Bad posture
- ▶ Repetitive motion
- ▶ Excessive exercise
- ▶ Arthritis
- ▶ Hip problems leading to back pain
- ▶ Herniated disc
- ▶ Pinched nerve

Non-surgical Approaches for Back Pain

- 1 Heat and ice.** Using an ice pack on your back helps reduce pain and swelling, while a heating pad, hot shower or bath can relax the muscles and reduce swelling.
- 2 Sleep repositioning.** Depending on what position you sleep in at night, a doctor may encourage you to sleep with a pillow between your knees or use a body pillow to keep your spine aligned throughout the night.
- 3 Anti-inflammatory medicines.** Over-the-counter medications such as Aleve, Advil, Motrin and Tylenol can be helpful.
- 4 Physical therapy.** Core strength is key to a healthy back. A doctor might recommend physical therapy that involves different stretches and exercises to strengthen the abdominal muscles.
- 5 Weight loss.** "People who carry weight in their belly area often feel a lot of stress on the low back," says Dr. Groves. Sometimes a doctor will refer a patient to a nutritionist to review the protein/carbohydrate balance and discuss a general reduction in caloric intake, if needed.

- 6 Meditation, acupuncture and behavioral therapy.** There is a mind/body connection when dealing with back pain. If you are experiencing a stressful situation that is causing the pain or stopping the pain from getting better, a doctor may recommend trying meditation, acupuncture, behavioral therapy sessions or other stress relief methods.
- 7 Injections.** The next line of defense against chronic back pain is minimally invasive injections:
 - ▶ With epidural steroid injections, an x-ray is used to insert a needle into the epidural section of the spine.
 - ▶ With trigger point injections, an injection into the muscle relieves spasms.
 - ▶ A facet injection involves putting medication such as cortisone into the joint where there is arthritis.
 - ▶ For people with osteoarthritis, a special technique called radiofrequency ablation may be used, which burns the nerve to the joint.
- 8 Nerve stimulation.** Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) is a procedure where electrodes are attached to the skin, and the patient can turn it on through the day to help control their back pain. "The idea is that if you send a stimulus that can beat the pain stimulus to the spinal cord, then you'll only feel the buzzing, tingling sensation from the machine and not the pain," says Dr. Groves.



When Surgery Is Needed

If other methods have been tried and you still have chronic back pain, your doctor may suggest surgical options. "It's important to know that not all back pain has a surgical option," says Dr. Groves. If you experience fever, bowel or bladder incontinence or retention, or weakness in the legs, get evaluated right away, since these are signs of a more serious issue. 🌀

Go Online
 Learn more about physical medicine and rehabilitation to treat back pain at Pascack Valley Medical Center: [HMHforU.org/PVBackPain](https://www.HMHforU.org/PVBackPain).

Can You Prevent Osteoarthritis?



Learn if you are at risk of osteoarthritis—and what you can do about it.

More than 32 million American adults live with osteoarthritis, the most common type of arthritis. This degenerative condition can cause pain and stiffness in joints, limiting mobility and making daily activities like going up and down stairs more difficult.

While there is no known way to prevent osteoarthritis, there are things you can do to reduce your risk and slow its progression.

“Osteoarthritis may not be preventable, but we can help decrease its symptoms and maybe even decrease some of the progression, so patients are able to lead a somewhat normal life with osteoarthritis,” says **Randolph Sanchez, M.D.**, a rheumatologist at **Mountainside Medical Center**.

Are You at Risk of Osteoarthritis?

Some factors that increase your risk of developing osteoarthritis are difficult or impossible to change, but others you have more control over:

Age. Osteoarthritis can affect younger people but is most often seen in people over 50.

Sex. Women are more likely to develop osteoarthritis, especially after age 45.

Obesity. Extra body weight adds to the stress and pressure on joints, especially weight-bearing ones like the hips and knees, which increases the risk of osteoarthritis. In addition, fat tissues can increase inflammation and may have metabolic impacts, adding to the risk.

Joint injury or overuse. A previous injury or repetitive stress on a joint can damage it and increase your risk.

Genetics. Osteoarthritis tends to run in families.

Osteoarthritis and Diet

What you eat won't cure or prevent osteoarthritis, but it can reduce the severity of the disease and may slow its progression. Research suggests that eating a Mediterranean diet can help reduce inflammation in people with osteoarthritis and help with weight loss.

The Mediterranean diet is full of whole foods, plants, fiber and healthy fats. Fill your plate with foods such as:



Oily fish, such as salmon and mackerel, or other sources of omega-3 fatty acids



Fruit and vegetables



Whole grains



Healthy fats, such as olive oil and nuts



Garlic and onions



Beans

How to Manage Your Risk and Your Condition

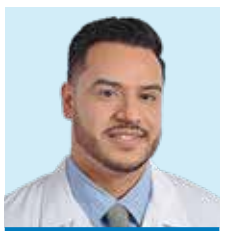
“When it comes to osteoarthritis, there are steps you can take to prevent problems and make things as optimal for yourself as possible,” Dr. Sanchez says.

Maintain a healthy weight. Not only does carrying extra weight increase your risk of developing osteoarthritis, it can also speed up its progression and increase its severity. For example, each extra pound adds close to 4 pounds of stress on your knees. Maintaining a healthy weight helps reduce your risk of developing osteoarthritis, but if you already have it, losing even just a few pounds can slow its progression and improve your symptoms.

Strengthen your muscles. Increasing muscle strength, especially in your quadriceps, back muscles and hip flexors, supports and protects your joints. “Research has shown that patients who have participated in strength and conditioning routines tend to have fewer symptoms, be more mobile and have less disability in the long term,” Dr. Sanchez says.

Exercise. Exercising is another way to keep your joints healthy. Low-impact exercises like walking, swimming and biking are great options to stay physically active while going easy on your joints.

Protect your joints. Not all injuries can be avoided, but protecting your joints can help reduce your risk or stop your osteoarthritis from getting worse. Warm up and cool down when exercising, and change up your routine so you don't overwork any one group of muscles and joints. Use exercise and safety equipment as instructed to reduce risk of injury. ⚙️



Randolph Sanchez, M.D.

Rheumatologist

888-973-4MSH (4674)

Glen Ridge

Go Online

Learn more about rheumatology services at Mountainside Medical Center at [HMHforU.org](https://www.hmhforu.org) / [MMCRheumatology](https://www.mmcrrheumatology.org).



Ditch the Flops?



Justin Tsai, M.D.
Orthopedic surgeon
800-822-8905
Paramus and
Tarrytown

Find out if you should leave the flip-flops in your closet this summer.

Flip-flops go with summer like beaches and boardwalks. But did you know that wearing them too often can cause painful injuries and potentially long-term damage to your feet?

Flip-flops may protect you from everyday dangers at pools and beaches, like super-hot sand or broken glass. But many of these sandals consist of very lightweight materials that offer little to no support when you're walking long distances or running. Over time, this can lead to stress fractures—a small crack or severe bruising within a bone—due to overuse and repetitive activity. People who suffer from osteoporosis or other diseases that weaken the bones are at greater risk for getting an injury.

“During the summer months, we typically see an increase in foot injuries because people are either wearing flip-flops way too often or they're wearing them for activities that really require a protective shoe,” says **Justin Tsai, M.D.**, orthopedic surgeon at **Hackensack University Medical Center**.



Ready to learn about your knee and hip health? Take our health risk assessment.

When to Avoid Flip-flops

Many people during the summer months wear flip-flops when they should opt for a sneaker or other more protective shoe. Dr. Tsai says people should think twice about wearing flip-flops while:

- ▶ Riding a bicycle, skateboard, scooter or other non-motorized vehicle
- ▶ Hiking or climbing
- ▶ Playing sports of any kind
- ▶ Driving a car
- ▶ Moving across wet or loose surfaces

Are Flats or Ballet Shoes OK?

Flats and ballet shoes also do a poor job of supporting and protecting your feet, but don't throw out your favorite pair just yet. Many orthotics companies make a clear gel insole that fits perfectly inside of your flats and provides just the right amount of cushioning. Look for a pair that has a good amount of padding on the ball of the foot.

What to Do if You Have Foot Pain

If you feel pain in the ball or heel of your foot while wearing flip-flops, flats or ballet shoes, stop wearing them immediately and switch to a more supportive sneaker or shoe, says Dr. Tsai.

“See your doctor as soon as possible if the pain continues for more than a couple weeks or prevents you from doing normal activities,” says Dr. Tsai. “Ignoring the pain can have serious consequences and could lead to a more severe injury, longer recovery times and even surgery.” ❄️

Go Online

Learn about orthopedic care at Hackensack Meridian Health at [HMHforU.org/Ortho](https://www.hmhforu.org/Ortho).

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Doctor Spotlight

JASON MENDELSON, M.D.

Family medicine

Hackensack University Medical Center

Exercise is a big part of daily life for Jason Mendelsohn, M.D., but don't ask him to hit the treadmill. While he's a proponent of any type of exercise, the family medicine physician at Hackensack University Medical Center would much rather “throw myself into a new hobby,” opting for an eclectic mix of activities that include rock climbing, tumbling, dancing, hiking and snowboarding.

“I've always been a bit of an adrenaline junkie. Anything that gets the heart going is fun,” says Dr. Mendelsohn, who treats patients ages 10 and up at Hackensack Meridian Health Medical Group in Lodi, New Jersey. “It's good to keep yourself fulfilled and entertained outside of work. I'm definitely open to new experiences.”

Helping a broad mix of patients with various health needs also fuels the New Jersey native, who relishes the long-term relationships he's able to build by interacting with the same people year in and out. “The best part of the job is when you feel you've made a difference for someone or influenced them in a positive way,” says the 33-year-old.

What attracted you to a career in medicine?

Wanting to do good in the world. I did well in the sciences in school, and this seemed like a good match between something I wanted to do and something I'm able to do well.

What insights do you share with patients about exercise and eating habits?

The best exercise is the one you enjoy. A lot of recreational activities have similar effects as exercise. The more you enjoy doing something,



Jason Mendelsohn, M.D., gets exercise through an eclectic mix of activities, including rock climbing.

the less you'll think of it as a chore. If you hate hitting the treadmill like I do, the good news about healthy eating is that it's actually 90 percent of the battle. I try to help people get on board with eating and exercise habits in ways they feel are sustainable for them.

If you could have dinner with a celebrity, past or present, who would it be and why?

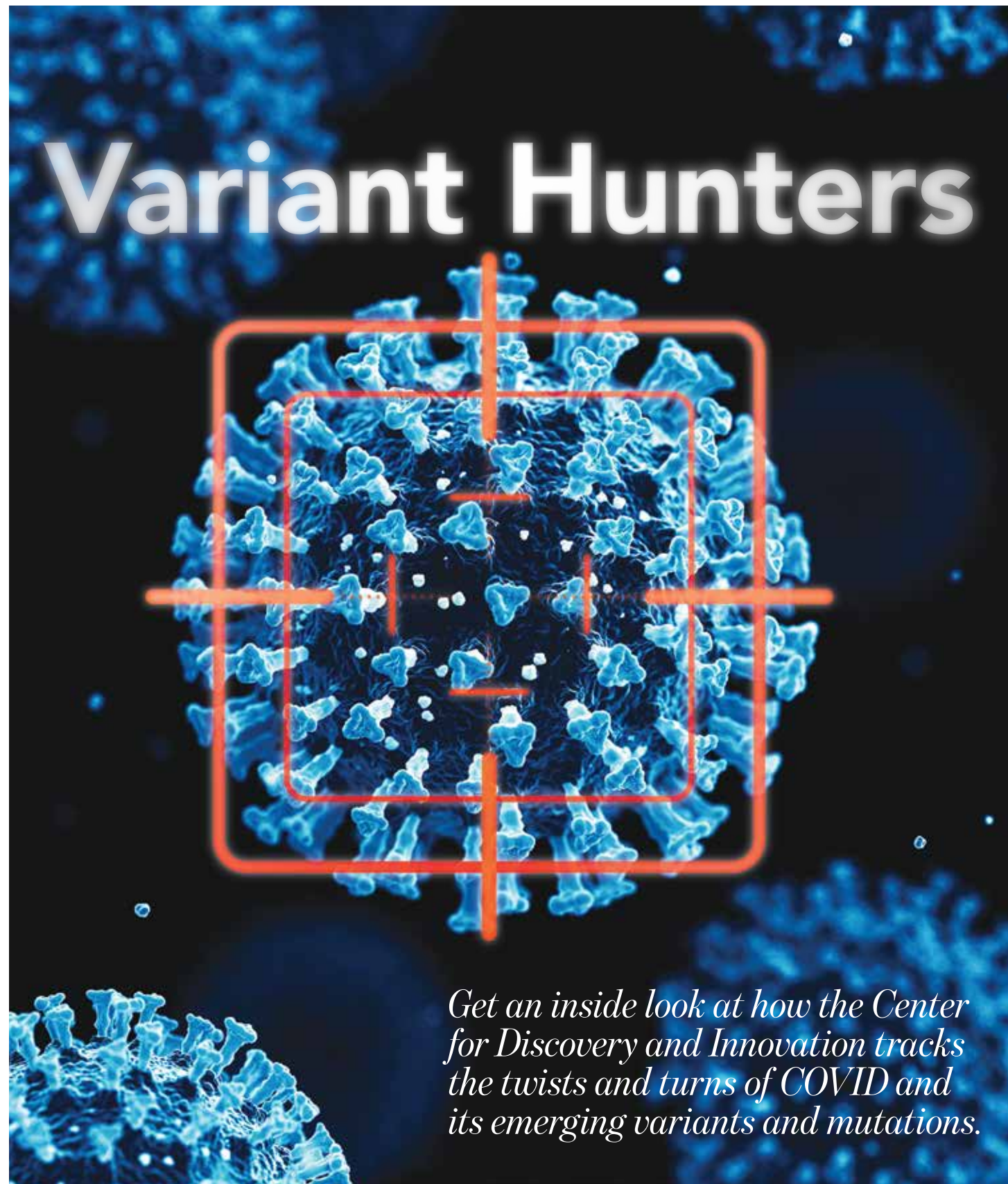
Jon Stewart, with special shout-outs to Terry Crews, Dave Grohl and Danny DeVito. They all

seem like incredibly high-spirited, down-to-earth people. Jon Stewart happens to highlight a lot of issues I'm partial to, including his efforts championing health care benefits for 9/11 first responders. Talk about changing the world for the better!

If you could travel anywhere, where would you go and why?

The moon, but I'm limited to Earth, then New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Iceland and Costa Rica are solid backups. ❄️

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



Variant Hunters

Get an inside look at how the Center for Discovery and Innovation tracks the twists and turns of COVID and its emerging variants and mutations.

The Hunt for Variants

CDI first identified the delta variant in its patient population in May 2021.

Delta was the dominant variant from June 2021 to November 2021.

CDI first identified the omicron variant in December 2021.

Omicron BA.1 was the dominant variant from December 2021 to March 2022.

CDI first identified the BA.2 omicron subvariant in February 2022.

CDI first identified the BA.2.12.1 subvariant in April 2022.

Understanding the various COVID-19 variants is critical to treating patients with COVID. It is also a public health issue: Knowing how variants are evolving in the community can better inform health professionals about the potential effectiveness of therapies and vaccines.

That's why Hackensack Meridian Health Center for Discovery and Innovation (CDI) runs a proactive virus variant surveillance team in partnership with Quest Diagnostics, which performs network-wide testing for the COVID-19 virus.

How COVID Surveillance Works

- ▶ Quest Diagnostics performs network-wide testing for the COVID-19 virus.
- ▶ Positive nasal swabs are sent to CDI for rapid molecular profiling of virus variants.
- ▶ The data is reported internally to our clinical community and to the New Jersey Department of Health.
- ▶ RNA sequencing is performed on about 10 percent of the viruses for quality control and evolution studies.

Over the past two years, the CDI COVID-19 virus response team has analyzed many thousands of viruses and is evaluating new virus-positive swabs collected on a weekly basis.

"The proactive stance allows Hackensack Meridian Health to quickly identify virus variants of concern and take a proactive

clinical approach as needed," says **David Perlin, Ph.D.**, chief scientific officer at CDI.

For example, when an outbreak of a unique variant that was linked to immune escape (when the immune system cannot respond to an infectious agent) appeared at one of Hackensack Meridian Health's psychiatric facilities in 2020, the network quickly identified it and, through proper infection control, was able to squelch it before it could spread into the community.

"Ultimately, it's easier to put out a small fire before it becomes a raging inferno," Dr. Perlin says.

This proactive evaluation of infectious, circulating viruses is important to identify whether a variant is resistant to treatments, such as our frontline antibody cocktails.

"This process isn't just important on the research end, but also on the clinical side," Dr. Perlin says. "When a new variant is emerging, our hospitals need to know in order to prepare for it and the possible surge of patients that may follow."

In addition, when the immune-escape Delta variant was first emerging in our region, virus variant analysis was instrumental in a clinical decision to change the first-line antibody cocktail to a more effective therapy. "Rapid clinical decision-making of this type requires a real-time interplay of scientists and

clinicians to drive more effective patient management solutions," Dr. Perlin says.

Identifying Future Variants

Hackensack Meridian Health continues to track COVID-19 variants in our hospitals in real time. "From the beginning, this virus has evolved, and it continues to evolve on a daily basis," Dr. Perlin says. "In terms of mutations, we can track the evolution, and what we're concerned about are mutations that lead to higher transmissibility and higher infections, which then lead to more hospitalizations, morbidity and mortality."

Most recently, the BA.2 omicron subvariant of COVID appeared at Hackensack Meridian Health on February 25, 2022 in a single sample. By the end of March 2022, this subvariant accounted for about 75 percent of new cases at our hospitals.

The hunt continues.

"The rate of change of COVID has been astonishing over the past two years. It's hard to say if it will continue to evolve month to month during the endemic phase," Dr. Perlin says. "We don't know if that has been happening because there is so much of the virus out there, or it just reflects the nature of this particular virus." ❄️

Go Online

Learn more about the Center for Discovery and Innovation at [HMHforU.org/CDI](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/CDI).



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 HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events or call 800-560-9990.

SchedUle

Here are just a few of the events & classes this July through November 2022

Special Events

Oh Baby! A baby expo at Mountainside Medical Center. Aug. 20, 10 a.m.–noon



Unrecognized Trauma Post-pandemic impact on mental health. Aug. 17, 6–7 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event



North Bergen Library and HMH Palisades Medical Center Health and Wellness Fair Free health and wellness screenings with physicians on site. Oct. 1, 11 a.m.–2 p.m., North Bergen Public Library, 8411 Bergenline Ave., North Bergen

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

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

HOSPITAL LOCATIONS

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

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

Cancer Care

Skin Cancer Sun safety all year round. Speaker: Shuja Shafqat, M.D.

July 27, 7–8 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **The Cancer Conversation: Screening, Prevention and What You Need to Know** Speakers: John Conti, M.D., Donna McNamara, M.D., Ann Chuang, M.D., and Lori Leslie, M.D., Sept. 15, 4:30–5:30 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **My Dad & The Dragon: A Community Book Reading and Conversation** Oct. 15, 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **Men's Health: Focus on Prostate Cancer** Speaker: Nitin Yerram, M.D., Sept. 22, noon–1 p.m., Wyckoff YMCA, 691 Wyckoff Ave., Wyckoff



Childbirth/ Maternity

Infant Care and Safety Class Expectant parents learn about the care, safety, growth and development of infants.

Aug. 8 & Sept. 12, 7–8:30 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **Breastfeeding Class** Aug. 24, 7–10 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **Breastfeeding Class** Aug. 17, Sept. 21 & Oct. 19, 6:30–9 p.m., Palisades Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **Prepared Childbirth Class** Aug. 27, 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **Prepared Childbirth Class** July 30 and Sept. 10 & 17, 10 a.m.–1 p.m., Palisades Medical Center & virtual event

▶ **Tummy Time** Tummy time is a fun and supportive class that helps improve your baby's comfort by spending time on their belly. Tummy time is vital for proper strengthening of neck and back muscles and for your baby's normal development toward achieving future milestones. Aug. 23, Sept. 27 & Oct. 25, noon–1 p.m., Palisades Medical Office Building, 7650 River Rd., Ste. 320, North Bergen

▶ **New Mothers Support Group** Every Monday, 2–3 p.m., Palisades Medical Center

▶ **Tour of the Birthing Center** For virtual tours, visit MountainsideHosp.com/OhBaby.

Heart Health

Understanding Heart Failure and Advanced Treatments Join us for a lecture on understanding cardiac functions and the different types of heart failure. In addition, we will review current medication and therapies for treatment and share advanced options for patients who do not respond to traditional management. Oct. 13, noon–1 p.m., Wyckoff YMCA, 691 Wyckoff Ave., Wyckoff

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General Wellness

North Bergen Nutrition Senior Center Blood pressure, pulse, pulse ox, arthritis education and physical therapy department.

Aug. 2, Sept. 6 & Oct. 4, 9–11 a.m., 1441 45th St., North Bergen

▶ **Blood Pressure, Pulse, Pulse Ox and CEED Program—Cancer Education and Early Detection** Aug. 16, Sept. 20 & Oct. 18, 10 a.m.–noon, Holy Redeemer Community Church, 569 65th St., West New York

▶ **Are Your Shots Up to Date?** Aug. 9, 10–11 a.m., Hackensack Meridian Health Fitness & Wellness, 87 Route 17, North Maywood



Neuroscience

Memory Training Join this four-week course to gain strategies to learn memory-enhancing techniques. Aug. 4, 11, 18 & 25, 1–3 p.m., Hackensack Meridian Health Fitness & Wellness, 87 Route 17, North Maywood

▶ **Stand Tall to Prevent Falls** Sept. 22, 10 a.m.–noon, Hackensack Meridian Health Fitness & Wellness, 87 Route 17, North Maywood



Nutrition

Celiac Disease Life can be sweet without wheat.

July 27, 2–3 p.m., Mountainside Medical Center & virtual event

Weight Loss

Weight-loss Surgery To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. Visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org/WeightLoss to find a seminar near you.



A Giant Impact

Erik Viscito and his family benefit from generous donations to Tackle Kids Cancer, a philanthropic initiative of Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation.



Erik Viscito with #TeamTKC captain Eli Manning

It had been a rough couple of years. Raymond Viscito lost his wife, Kara, to kidney failure and a rare cancer in 2017. Then in July 2021, his 17-year-old son, Erik, got sick.

"It happened so quickly," says Raymond, who lives in Lacey, New Jersey. Erik was feeling dizzy and weak; he'd thrown up all night and his eyes were bloodshot. Blood work showed that his white blood cell count was over 600,000, indicating that his body was fighting something serious.

Erik's primary care doctor told Raymond to immediately take him to **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center**. There, pediatric oncologists gave the unfortunate news: Erik had an aggressive form of leukemia.

Treatment began immediately, and Erik was admitted to the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, where he and his dad lived for a month. "Erik was treated with chemotherapy, spinal taps, blood transfusions and platelet transfusions,"

Raymond says. Eight months of outpatient chemotherapy and radiation therapy followed.

One day during their stay at the Children's Hospital, Raymond and Erik noticed food trucks parked outside. Erik was hungry, so his dad went to get him a sandwich. As Raymond waited in line, he met Hackensack President and Chief Hospital Executive Mark D. Sparta, FACHE. Raymond seized the opportunity to gush about his family's positive experience. "The doctors, the nurses, everyone became family," he says. "They fought for my kid."

Later that evening, Mark stopped by Erik's room to bring Raymond dinner from the food truck and continue their chat. "Hearing his story as a dad trying to take care of his son during a most challenging time, I was a bit taken aback," Mark says.

Erik was chosen to appear in a commercial featuring football legend Eli Manning to promote Toyota for Tackle Kids Cancer, which raises

money for pediatric cancer research and patient care programs at Hackensack Meridian Health's two children's hospitals. Eli passionately serves as the program's team captain and regularly visits children who are receiving care.

"Tackle Kids Cancer and Eli's impact have been tremendous," Mark says. "He's touched many people's lives and has helped us raise more than \$20 million through his involvement."

Adds Alfred Gillio, M.D., director, Children's Cancer Institute: "Tackle Kids Cancer has changed the game here in very important ways. It has allowed us to grow the research program exponentially over the last seven years."

Today, Erik is in remission. This summer, he looks forward to traveling, riding his bike and going to camp. The family is planning a trip to Walt Disney World. "We all need it," says Raymond, who took an early retirement from his career as a corrections officer to care for his children full-time after Kara died. 🌟

Start your virtual fundraiser today at Give.HackensackMeridianHealth.org/HostYourOwn

Select your fundraiser type and sign up

Customize your page: Tell your story and add a personal photo

Start fundraising: Email and share your page with family and friends

Feel good about making a difference



Need help getting started? Email giving@hmhn.org.

Use your smartphone or tablet camera to scan me

By the Numbers *a snapshot view of an important health issue*

Along with the sunshine and warm weather come mosquitos, bees, ticks and more. Bugs can carry germs and spread diseases, so it's best to avoid getting bit as much as possible.

BUG DEAL

Increasing Risk

There are over **200** types of mosquitoes in the United States, about **12** of which can spread germs and disease.

The number of disease cases stemming from mosquito, tick and flea bites

TRIPLED FROM 2004 TO 2016.

SINCE 2004, **9** new germs spread by mosquitoes and ticks have been introduced or discovered.

Tips to Prevent Bug Bites

Avoid scented soaps or lotions and perfumes; some insects are attracted to sweet scents.

Sleep under a mosquito net if snoozing outdoors.

Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.

When using a stroller for your kids outdoors, cover it with mosquito netting.

Stay away from water and the woods, where bugs and insects are most likely to be.

Use an Environmental Protection Agency-registered bug repellent with DEET, Picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol or 2-undecanone as active ingredients.

Go Online

For more tips on staying healthy this summer, visit HMHforU.org.



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Make an Appointment Today

Scheduling an appointment has never been simpler or faster. You can now make an appointment on the go, any time of day, through online scheduling.

Scan the
QR code to
get started.



Get Screened for Heart Disease and Stroke

Cardiovascular disease—including heart attack and stroke—is the number one cause of death for men and women in the U.S. It's more deadly than all cancers combined. Knowing your risk now can go a long way toward prevention.

Start with a 15-minute **AngioScreen®**, a non-invasive heart and vascular screening. Learn more at **HMHforU.org/AngioScreening**.

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We Are Hiring!

We are looking for individuals who are passionate about health care to join our growing team, where great benefits, robust learning and development programs, and more perks are offered. Both clinical and non-clinical positions are open in our health care facilities throughout New Jersey.

See open positions at **jobs.hackensackmeridianhealth.org**.



Hackensack
Meridian Health
KEEP GETTING BETTER

As the state's largest, most comprehensive health network, Hackensack Meridian Health is made up of 7,000 physicians, 17 hospitals and more than 500 locations. For a complete listing of our hospitals, services and locations, visit **HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Locations**.