

HEALTH U



Hackensack
Meridian Health

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Spring Into Better Health

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 Hackensack
Meridian Health Theatre
at the Count Basie Center for the Arts

“We are grateful for our partnership with the Count Basie Center for the Arts,” says Robert C. Garrett, CEO of Hackensack Meridian Health. “After two years of COVID-19 restrictions, there are so many health benefits associated with getting out, socializing, and enjoying arts and entertainment again.”



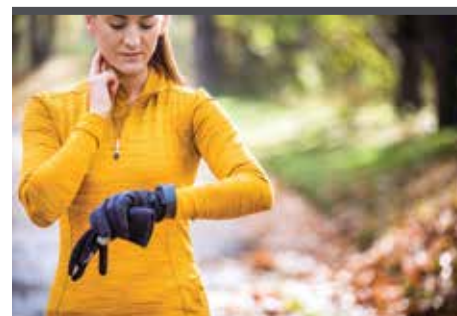
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The warning signs of ovarian cancer. Plus: Seven tips for supporting someone with cancer.



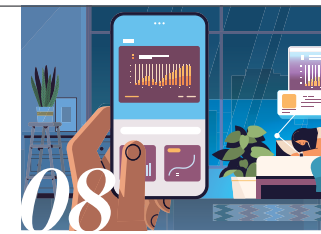
Moving soon? Download the ultimate moving checklist to help you transition your health care at [HMHforU.org/MovingChecklist](https://www.hmhforu.org/MovingChecklist).



Find six reasons your heart rate is high—and what to do about it—at [HMHforU.org/HeartRate](https://www.hmhforu.org/HeartRate).



Pregnancy comes with a lot of decisions. Here's why the COVID vaccine is an important one: [HMHforU.org/PregnancyVax](https://www.hmhforu.org/PregnancyVax).



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



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

BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

Health for Generations

They say everything changes when you become a parent. Our day-to-day looks different, our priorities shift, and it seems like our hearts expand to new sizes. I've long known that to be true, but I recently learned the same applies when becoming a grandparent.

Earlier this year, I became a first-time grandfather with the birth of my granddaughter. It's been a joyous time and a great reminder to prioritize my health. If we want to be active participants in our children's and grandchildren's lives—and take part in all of their milestones—our health has to come first.

Part of putting our health first means eating well and staying active through regular exercise. That's not always easy when we are on the go. In this issue, you'll find three helpful tips for making time for physical activity amidst a busy schedule (page 5). On page 7, you'll find a four-step recipe for grilled Greek salad using delicious and nutritious heart-healthy ingredients. You can always find additional tips for healthy eating and exercise at [HMHforU.org](https://www.hmhforu.org).



Bob Garrett became a first-time grandparent this year with the birth of his granddaughter.

I also encourage you to stay on top of preventive screenings. If you haven't seen your primary care doctor in a while, schedule an annual wellness visit to check in and get recommended care. If you don't have a doctor, you can search for one near you at [HMHforU.org](https://www.hmhforu.org).

FindADoc. You can also find an easy-to-reference guide for when to get which screenings at [HMHforU.org/GetScreened](https://www.hmhforu.org/GetScreened).

Lastly, I encourage everyone—including my fellow grandparents—to get vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19, and to continue following appropriate protocols. The past few years have taught us a lot about resilience, and I often think about what I'll tell my granddaughter someday about living through these challenging times.

I know part of the story will be how fortunate I was to work with people who are committed to giving their all regardless of the challenge. The other part will be how so many of us in our community came together in a time of great need to care for those around us. 🌟

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
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Rise and Shine!

Easy morning exercises for busy people

Many of us plan to work out every day but often go to bed each night without having found the time for any meaningful physical activity.

Making time for exercise is beneficial in many ways: It helps lift your mood, boost your energy levels, control your weight, lower your risk of chronic health diseases and improve your sleep quality. Although it may seem daunting to find additional time in your schedule for physical activity, it's worth it. Many people feel that they're better parents, partners, friends and employees when they exercise regularly.

Try these three tips for getting in exercise while maintaining a busy schedule.

istock.com/grivina

1

Break It Up

Adults should get 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity every day, or 150 minutes per week. If you don't always have an entire half hour to devote to exercise, you can break the time into two or three chunks over the course of the day.

2

Put It on the Schedule

Block off exercise time on your calendar, and follow through on it the same way that you would honor a work meeting or a doctor's appointment.

3

Conquer It Early

Consider exercising in the morning before unexpected work or family plans can derail your efforts to get some physical activity. You'll start off your day feeling accomplished with one notable task from your to-do list already checked off. It may help if you set out your workout clothing the night before—you'll have one less thing to think about in the morning.

Go Online

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



Bright Side

Can light therapy lamps help with depression symptoms?

Bright light therapy—also known as phototherapy—is safely used to treat a number of illnesses, but the most common use is for a type of depression called major depressive disorder with a seasonal pattern. People who have this disorder experience symptoms of depression during certain times of the year, especially months when there are fewer daylight hours.

“Light therapy is not a cure, but it has been shown to help reduce symptoms that come with depression, such as lack of energy, trouble sleeping, anxiety, and feelings of sadness, hopelessness and irritability,” says Mindy Altschul, LCSW, assistant vice president, Clinical Quality, **Carrier Clinic**.

How Sunlight Affects the Brain

People with major depressive disorder with a seasonal pattern may want to sleep more and be less active. Scientists believe that it’s because of how sunlight affects the brain. “Light may stimulate the parts of the brain that control mood, appetite and sleep, which can contribute to how a person feels,” Mindy says. “When there is less sunlight, some people may not produce enough melatonin, a hormone in the brain that is involved with sleep, or serotonin, another hormone that manages mood, appetite and sleep.”

Researchers also suspect that a person’s circadian rhythm is thrown off when there is a lack of sunlight. “The brain has a biological clock known as circadian rhythm, typically a 24-hour period, that regulates the body’s functions,” Mindy says.

“Therefore, during times of the year when there is less sunlight, some people get depressed.”

How Light Therapy Lamps Work

During light therapy, a person sits in front of a lamp and is exposed to very bright white light for a certain period of time. The light may be set to a lower lux level, which is how illuminance is measured, then gradually increased. Depending on the individual, treatment might last from 20 minutes up to three hours, and a person might have light therapy once or more per day for consecutive days until symptoms improve. A doctor can provide guidance on how long to use light therapy.

It usually takes a few days for symptoms to improve, but it could take up to a couple of weeks. Once symptoms improve, you can stop or

reduce light therapy. “It’s important to keep track of how you are feeling and how long you use light therapy each day, and communicate with your doctor so that treatment can be adjusted as needed,” Mindy says.

If you experience any bothersome side effects such as headaches, eyestrain, nausea or agitation, adjust your treatment by spending less time exposed to light, and be sure to ask your doctor for advice.

Where to Get a Light Therapy Lamp

You can buy a light therapy lamp or box online or at a home goods store. Medical device companies also sell them. They cost anywhere from \$20–\$500. Talk with your doctor about which light therapy device is right for you.

“If symptoms of depression, decreased energy and poor sleep persist despite using light therapy, reach out to your physician or a mental health expert to determine if additional interventions may be necessary,” Mindy says.

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

istock.com/Visual Generation

4 Ways to Lower Your Cholesterol

About one-third of Americans have higher-than-normal cholesterol levels, and almost 10 percent have total cholesterol levels that are 240 mg/dL or higher, which puts them at greater risk of developing heart disease. “We no longer focus on total cholesterol, but we look at the good [HDL], bad [LDL] and ugly [triglycerides] components of cholesterol to guide a better understanding of risk for a heart attack or stroke, as well as guide ways to improve upon them,” says **Parneet Grewal, M.D.**, family medicine specialist at **JFK University Medical Center**.



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Piscataway

Lifestyle changes may help lower your cholesterol levels to an acceptable range. Eating nutritious foods, exercising regularly, losing weight and quitting smoking all may help decrease your LDL cholesterol levels and/or increase your HDL cholesterol levels.

Consider these options:

1 Eat more fiber. Fruits, vegetables, beans and whole-grain foods like oats or barley may help lower your LDL cholesterol levels.



2 Decrease animal fat (saturated fat). Saturated fats—typically found in beef, pork, cheese, butter, chicken skin and coconut oil—can increase your LDL and total cholesterol levels.



3 Avoid trans fats. To help lower your LDL cholesterol levels, reach for heart-healthy oils like olive oil or avocado oil instead of cooking with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils like margarine.



4 Go Mediterranean. Increasing nuts, avocados, olive oil, fish (think salmon or tuna), flaxseeds and leafy green vegetables in your diet may help lower LDL cholesterol levels.



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



Grilled Greek Salad

Serves 2

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 heads romaine lettuce, halved lengthwise, ends trimmed
- 2 tablespoons feta cheese, crumbled

Steps

- Mix topping ingredients with vinegar and oil, then set aside.
- In a heavy pan, heat olive oil and pepper to medium-high.
- Before the oil starts to smoke, add the romaine, cut side down. Weigh the lettuce down with a heavy lid. There should be a nice sear within 2–4 minutes. Turn over and cover for another minute or two, then plate.
- Spoon the mixture generously over the lettuce, sprinkle feta on top and serve.

Toppings

- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1 cup cucumbers, cubed
- ¼ cup red onion, diced and/or pickled
- ¼ cup Kalamata olives, pitted and halved (optional)
- 2 tablespoons herbs, such as oregano and dill
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 202 calories, 7g protein, 20g carbohydrates, 7g fiber, 12g fat (3g sat fat, 8g mono/poly), 295mg sodium

Seasoned Cook

If you’re having this as a meal, add more protein with lentils, beans, chicken or canned fish. To make a Nicoise version of this dish, add tuna, an egg and potatoes. The lettuce makes a great base for other leftovers, too.

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



Can wearables help you sleep?

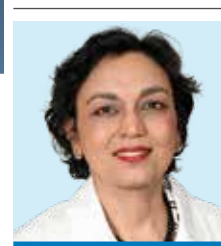
Divya Gupta, M.D., weighs in:

Wearable sleep trackers are relatively new, and the information they provide about sleep is indirectly derived from heart rate, body movements, etc. This information is not as reliable as the data that doctors can get during an overnight sleep study in a sleep lab with sensors monitoring brain waves and nasal airflow. Wearable sleep trackers can't reliably determine whether you're falling asleep or if you're already asleep. Since they can't accurately assess how deep your sleep is, they aren't good indicators of overall sleep quality—at least for now. They also aren't adept at detecting short naps as periods of sleep.

But wearable sleep trackers can encourage you to get more rest and establish good sleep habits. They can track the

time you spend in bed, even if they don't show exactly how long you've been asleep. If you're serious about improving your sleep quality, and the data shows you aren't getting 7–9 hours of rest, a wearable device may encourage you to consistently go to bed on time to ensure you clock enough time in bed.

If you track your sleep for a few weeks and notice problematic patterns, such as insufficient time in bed or middle-of-the-night tossing and turning, it may be helpful to discuss the data with your doctor to determine if you may have insomnia, sleep apnea, restless legs or another problem affecting your sleep.



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Sleep medicine specialist

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

What causes brain freeze?

Padmarekha Rao, M.D., weighs in:

On a warm day, there is nothing like taking a big gulp of ice-cold water or a mouthful of ice cream, right? But then brain freeze hits you, and a sharp, intense pain occurs in the forehead or nose. This is often referred to as an ice cream headache and is medically known as a sphenopalatine ganglioneuralgia. It happens when the cold hits the roof of your mouth or back of your throat, changing the temperature.

It is thought that the pain of brain freeze is caused by the triggering of the trigeminal nerve, which carries sensory information from your face and around your head to your brain.

Once activated, the blood vessels constrict from the cooling. To adjust to the drastic temperature change, your body sends more blood to warm the affected area, causing the blood vessels to swell. It's believed that brain freeze pain is caused by the constriction and then rush of blood.

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



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Old Bridge



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Can you develop allergies as an adult?

Usha Sharma, M.D., weighs in:

While most allergies present themselves during childhood, it is certainly easy to develop them as an adult.

In fact, it's becoming increasingly common for people to develop allergies in adulthood. That may be due to several factors:

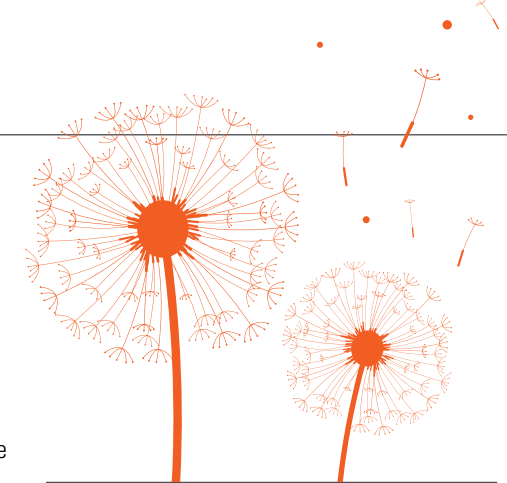
An aging population. As we age, our immune system becomes weaker over time, and we are more susceptible to illness, including allergies.

A changing environment. There are higher amounts of pollen and mold in our atmosphere, which may cause people who never had allergies to develop symptoms.

Hypervigilant focus on cleanliness. In the last few decades, we have become increasingly preoccupied with using antibacterial soaps, alcohol-based hand sanitizers and bleach for wiping down surfaces. As a result, our immune

systems aren't used to fighting off minor invaders, so our bodies can overreact with more concerning allergy symptoms.

If you notice allergy symptoms coming on shortly after an activity, such as eating a certain food, taking a new medicine, petting a cat or mowing the lawn, make an appointment to see your doctor. Your doctor may recommend that you see an allergy specialist and get tested to find out what you're allergic to.



Usha Sharma, M.D.

Family medicine specialist

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

How often should you wash your clothes?

Andrew Habib, M.D., weighs in:

It depends on a few factors. You can follow this guide.

▶ Wash new clothing before wearing

Wash these items after every use:

- ▶ Socks
- ▶ Underwear
- ▶ Bathing suits
- ▶ T-shirts
- ▶ Shirts that fit snugly and are worn directly against the skin
- ▶ Workout clothing you've sweated in
- ▶ Stained clothing
- ▶ Clothing worn while sick

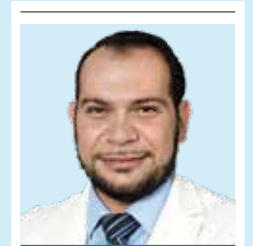
Wash these items after two or three wears:

- ▶ Bras
- ▶ Pajamas
- ▶ Loungewear that you relax in around the house after you come home from work

Wash these items after four or five uses:

- ▶ Jeans
- ▶ Pants
- ▶ Sweaters
- ▶ Sweatshirts
- ▶ Dress clothing

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



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Below the Surface

Do you know the warning signs of ovarian cancer?

More than 21,000 American women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer every year, according to the American Cancer Society. But only about 20 percent of ovarian cancers are found early, a dismaying statistic stemming from several key factors, says **Gara Sommers, M.D.**, gynecologic oncologist at **JFK University Medical Center**.

“The problem with ovarian cancer is that it doesn’t present with a lot of symptoms,” she explains. “There’s also no standardized screening test because, unfortunately, scientists haven’t yet discovered any that detect this cancer at an earlier stage.”

Dr. Sommers notes that Pap smears—screening tests for cervical cancer—do not look at the ovaries, so they do not screen for ovarian cancer.

Hallmark Signs of Ovarian Cancer

Another obstacle to ovarian cancer detection is the fact that early symptoms are often vague and resemble those of other ailments.

These signs can include:

- ▶ Bloating
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Abdominal pain or pressure
- ▶ Nausea
- ▶ Gassiness
- ▶ Feeling unusually full after eating
- ▶ Changes in bowel habits
- ▶ Bladder changes
- ▶ Lower back pain
- ▶ Menstrual changes
- ▶ Painful intercourse

If any of these symptoms are persistent or you experience them more than 12 times per month, Dr. Sommers urges you to make an appointment with your doctor.

Risk factors for ovarian cancer can include:

- ▶ Strong family history of breast cancer and/or ovarian cancer
- ▶ Mutation in BRCA1 or BRCA2 genes, as detected by genetic testing
- ▶ Family or personal history of breast cancer occurring in both breasts
- ▶ Ashkenazi Jewish heritage

Options for Treatment

Traditional treatment for ovarian cancer includes surgery followed by chemotherapy. But another strategy being used now is giving chemotherapy to patients prior to surgery, a technique called neo-adjuvant chemotherapy. “We do neoadjuvant chemotherapy in patients who we feel we cannot offer optimal surgery upfront,” Dr. Sommers says.

Other recent advances include using three oral chemotherapy drugs, known as PARP inhibitors, as follow-up maintenance therapy for all women with ovarian cancer, regardless of gene mutations.

“Using this regimen, we’re seeing women experience longer periods without the disease recurring,” Dr. Sommers says. 🌟

Go Online

Learn more about comprehensive care and treatments for gynecological cancers at [HMHforU.org/OvarianCancer](https://www.HMHforU.org/OvarianCancer).



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Clark

Lending a Hand

Does someone you love have cancer, and you aren’t sure what you can do?

You just found out a friend or family member has been diagnosed with cancer. You’re sad and worried, but most of all, you want to help. When someone you love is impacted by a cancer diagnosis, it’s not uncommon to feel confused, uncomfortable or unsure of how to proceed.

So how can you help?

Really Be There for Them

The best way to help a friend who is going through cancer is to be a friend. Reach out often to ask if they need anything. “Can I pick up the kids?” “Can I drive you to treatment?”

Organize Meal-giving

Several popular sites allow you to schedule meals for your friend throughout the week. This way, they know dinner is covered, and it’s one less thing they have to worry about. Through these websites, you’ll also avoid multiple trays of lasagna arriving on the same day.

Host a Fundraiser

There are plenty of creative ways to raise funds for friends, but digital fundraisers make it easier than ever. Consider asking your friend if you can set up a page on their behalf and share the link through e-mail and social media. Start your own fundraiser at [Give.HackensackMeridianHealth.org/HostYourOwn](https://www.Give.HackensackMeridianHealth.org/HostYourOwn).

Tackle Yard Work

Spending a few hours pulling weeds, raking leaves or cutting the grass can make a huge difference for someone going through cancer treatment.

Hire a Cleaning Service

Consider offering to hire a cleaning service for a friend. It could be a huge relief for them to walk into a clean home at the end of the day.

Grab Some Groceries

Grocery shopping can be difficult to do when trying to coordinate appointments and get rest. Ask your friend if they need any items from the grocery store to get through the week.

Encourage Support Groups

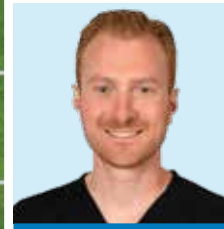
If you think your friend or family member is shutting down, encourage them to check out support groups in their area. Having a place to connect openly with other people sharing similar challenges can be helpful for someone with cancer.

Home Field Advantage

Learn the most common sports injuries in kids—and five tips to help prevent them.



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There are many advantages to your kids participating in group sports and athletic activities. They get a chance to learn about physical fitness, improve their concentration skills and boost self-esteem.

While there are many valuable benefits, playing sports can potentially be a risky activity. According to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, injuries caused by youth sports account for nearly 3 million emergency room visits each year.

Most Common Sports Injuries in Kids

Some of the most common sports injuries for kids are overuse injuries, concussions and sprains.

Overuse Injuries: About half of kids' sports injuries are the result of overuse. "An overuse injury can happen after focusing on one sport for an extended period or when taking on too much physical activity too quickly," says **Lawrence Stankovits, M.D.**, pediatric orthopedic surgeon at **JFK University Medical Center**. "These injuries can vary from stress fractures to tendinitis."

Concussions: A concussion is caused by a mild blow or bump to the head. When the head gets hit, the sudden movement can cause the brain to bounce against or twist in the skull. "Concussions involve a temporary loss of normal brain function," says **Evan Curatolo, M.D.**, pediatric orthopedic surgeon at JFK. "They usually are not life-threatening but should be taken seriously."

Sprains: When you have a sprain, you have stretched or torn the ligaments that connect your bones to joints. Sprains—more specifically ankle sprains—are some of the most common sports injuries in kids. A mild sprain can be cared for at home, while a more severe case may require surgery.

5 Ways to Prevent Injury

It's important to encourage your children to play sports safely and properly. Drs. Stankovits and Curatolo provide tips for preventing sports injuries in kids.

Warm up and cool down. Your child should be doing a warmup and cool-down before and after they participate in sports. A light warmup will improve mobility, increase blood flow and improve posture. Cooling down should focus on the gradual decrease of heart rate and sweating.

Use proper form. Every sport has proper and improper ways to play. Your child should be shown the correct techniques and form by their coaches and trainers. If you are able, help them practice polishing their skills during off-seasons.

Wear proper protective gear. Depending on the sport your child plays, they may need a helmet, padding, mouthguard, eye protection, cleats and protective cups.

Encourage nutrition and hydration. Your child should drink fluids—whether that be water or a sports drink—before, every 20 minutes during, and after playing. This is even more crucial in hot and humid weather. Also be sure your young athlete is eating a well-balanced diet and maintains a regular eating schedule.

Don't let your child participate while they're injured. When an injury is sustained, get help as soon as possible. Don't let your child push themselves while they are in pain. Make sure they are fully healed before they return to play. 🔄



Learn more about family-centered care for kids at Hackensack Meridian Health at [HMHforU.org/Kids](https://www.hmhforu.org/kids).

HEART HEALTH



An Aspirin a Day?

Should you take a daily aspirin to help prevent a heart attack?

In October 2021, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force released updated recommendations for preventive aspirin use: Adults over age 60 should no longer consider taking a daily aspirin to prevent a first heart attack or stroke. For adults ages 40–59 who are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease and who do not have a history of cardiovascular disease, the task force now recommends they decide with their doctor if they should take a daily low-dose aspirin as a preventive measure.

“It’s important to know that someone should not start taking aspirin daily simply because they’ve reached a certain age,” says **Aaron Feingold, M.D.**, division director of Cardiology at **JFK University Medical Center**. “The task force’s recommendations apply to people who are not currently taking a daily aspirin. If your doctor has recommended a daily low-dose aspirin to you because you’ve had a heart attack or stroke, this new guidance doesn’t apply to you.”

Why the Change?

While aspirin has been shown to lower the chance of a first heart attack or stroke, it also could potentially cause internal bleeding in the stomach, intestines and brain. The chances of this occurring increase with age and can be life-threatening. Because of this, people age 60 and older are advised

not to start taking aspirin daily if they have not been doing so already.

If you are already taking aspirin daily, talk to your doctor about what’s right for you based on your specific health condition.

How to Keep Your Heart Healthy

“Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States,” says Dr. Feingold. “As you get older, it becomes even more important to remain vigilant about your heart health.”

Maintaining heart health is a lifelong responsibility. Here are some things you can do to help your heart stay strong as you age:

- ▶ **Reduce your sodium intake** by cooking more meals at home. Be sure to read the labels on your food, as the recommended daily salt intake is just 1,500 mg.
- ▶ **Take time to rest and de-stress.** Make sure you are getting adequate sleep each night.
- ▶ **Lessen your alcohol intake.**
- ▶ **If you smoke, quit.** Smoking is very unhealthy and does a great deal of damage to the heart. Get the help you need to stop for good.
- ▶ **Commit yourself to exercising daily** for a minimum of 30 minutes.
- ▶ **Have open conversations with your doctors** and work with them to maintain your overall health. 🌐



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Edison, Old Bridge and Monroe Township

Go Online

Learn about comprehensive heart care close to home at [HMHforU.org/Heart](https://www.HMHforU.org/Heart).

Sam Persad credits the strength he gained from the cardiac rehabilitation process for helping him get through his battle with COVID-19.



Heart and Soul

Cardiac rehabilitation is essential to every step of Sam Persad’s recovery from a heart transplant and COVID-19.

Sam Persad was 56 years old when a heart attack changed his life. One day while he was working with his company’s owner tidying up the shop, he felt sudden pain in his chest. He ignored it—until the tightness persisted and he called his wife. Then, he called 911.

Surgeons placed stents in three severely blocked arteries. But his heart was too damaged for repair. A few days later, he was placed on a left ventricular assist device (LVAD) and began cardiac rehabilitation at the Center for Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation at **JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute**.

“The first thing they asked me was, ‘What is your goal?’” Sam says. “I said, ‘I want to be able to walk up and down the stairs and get to the bathroom.’ By the end of two weeks, I was walking with a cane and getting around, even up the stairs.”

Yet his heart was still failing, and it was determined that he needed a heart transplant. Sam was hospitalized during the six weeks it took for him to receive a donor’s heart, which took place October 3, 2020.

Not Wasting This Gift

Sam returned to the Center for Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation for in-patient rehab. He knew he could not survive at home and needed continued care as he moved forward with rehabilitation.

“I told the physical therapists and nurses to kick my butt. I want to walk again. I want to be where I was before my heart attack,” he recalls. “They worked with me. They pushed me. You don’t realize how much of your strength you lose when you are waiting for a heart transplant.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued, Sam completed his rehabilitation exercises in his room. He was fearful of harming his new heart, but he trusted the nurses and therapists to monitor him. Once, they intervened when his blood pressure was off, for instance. They helped him with his fear that he would push himself too hard and damage his new heart.

“It is amazing to me how strong I have gotten,” he says. “You need rehabilitation to connect your new heart with your body. You must get in shape. You can’t waste this gift you have been given.”

Eventually, Sam went home with the plan to continue outpatient rehabilitation at the Center for Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation. Several months after his transplant, he contracted COVID-19, which lingered for several weeks. He credits the strength he gained from the rehabilitation process for helping him get through his battle with COVID-19.

Recently he returned from a trip to Missouri to see his first grandson, and he and his son went out for target practice.

Sam considers rehabilitation an essential part of his journey toward recovery. “The rehabilitation process totally changes your mind and heart,” he says. “You learn you can push through this, you can get moving and you can get through this challenge.”

Learn more about cardiac rehabilitation at Hackensack Meridian Health: [HMHforU.org/CardiacRehab](https://www.HMHforU.org/CardiacRehab).

Under Pressure

Why do your joints hurt during rainy weather?

Some people swear they can predict when rain is in the forecast because their joints start to ache. Other people notice similar discomfort during other weather events or when seasons change.

Experts believe that joints may ache among affected people because of changes in barometric pressure, which occur during weather system changes. Before it rains, barometric pressure tends to decrease.

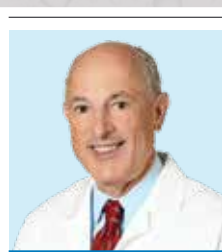
When this happens, there is less air pressure exerting itself on your body, which may allow muscles, tendons and other tissue surrounding the joints to expand. The expansion may crowd the joints, putting extra pressure on them, which may lead to pain.

“People with arthritis or those who experience chronic joint pain may be more sensitive to this type of discomfort, which is caused by tissue taking up more space than usual and overburdening the joints,” says **Jeffrey Charen, M.D.**, orthopedic surgeon at **JFK University Medical Center**.

Other Reasons for Weather-related Joint Pain

You may do things differently on rainy or cold days, which may contribute to joint pain. For example:

- ▶ You may be less physically active, and sitting idly may make your muscles and joints stiffen up, causing pain.
- ▶ The gloomy weather may sour your mood, causing you to focus on negatives, including joint pain.
- ▶ You may have come to expect joint pain during rainy or cold weather, so you may be on the lookout for any twinges and discomfort that might not otherwise cause concern.



Jeffrey Charen, M.D.

Orthopedic surgeon

800-822-8905

Edison and Old Bridge

How to Minimize Pain

Try these strategies to ward off or reduce weather-related joint pain:

- ▶ **Exercise regularly.** Being physically active helps strengthen your muscles and bones, which takes pressure off your joints.
- ▶ **Keep moving.** Find ways to get in your usual activity, even if you can't walk around the block. Consider walking at the mall or using a treadmill.
- ▶ **Stretch before moving.** Do a few stretches before you do any physical activity. You'll warm up your muscles and improve your flexibility, which are good for your joints.
- ▶ **Keep your weight in a healthy range.** Lose weight if you're overweight, or maintain your current weight if it's in the healthy range. Carrying around extra weight puts additional strain on your joints, including the knees and hips, which may intensify weather-related joint pain.
- ▶ **Use heat before activity and cold after.** A heating pad may help relax your muscles and loosen you up before activity, while cold afterward can help with swelling and inflammation.
- ▶ **Take over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication.** Medications like ibuprofen help reduce pain and lower inflammation, which should help you feel better.
- ▶ **Try to maintain a positive outlook.** Don't let a gray, miserable day bring down your mood. When you feel better emotionally, you may also feel better physically. 🌀

Striking the Right Chord

Chronic back pain was impacting Jonathan Munoz's life at work and on stage as a musician. Physical therapy changed all of that.

When Jonathan Munoz of Metuchen, New Jersey, was 18, he started a job that required lifting heavy crates and boxes. By the time he turned 21, the repetitive physical demands of his work had taken a toll.

“I was lifting so much weight at work that it messed up my back,” says Jonathan, who also moonlights as a guitar player and singer.

Over several years, Jonathan's back pain became so severe that even standing hurt. His pain also affected his ability to give his best when performing during off-work hours. He had to stop moving around on stage and sometimes avoided playing shows altogether.

“I was afraid the pain would get worse as I got older if I didn't do something,” Jonathan says.

Seeking Relief

Jonathan scheduled an appointment with **Craig Van Dien, M.D.**, a sports medicine specialist at the Center for Sports and Spine Medicine at **JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute**.

“Jonathan had chronic back pain that wasn't getting better,” Dr. Van Dien says. “After listening to Jonathan's story, I was able to tailor his treatment plan to focus on improving body mechanics, as well as exercises to build core and extremity strength.”

Dr. Van Dien also suggested that Jonathan work with a physical therapist at JFK Johnson to personalize exercises and stretches to target specific muscles.

Starting Slow to Get Strong

Jonathan was nervous about starting physical therapy at first.



Jonathan Munoz attributes his recovery and return to an active lifestyle to his physical therapy.

“It was scary because I didn't want to exercise and make the pain worse,” he says. “But after about a month, I started to notice improvement.”

Adds Dr. Van Dien: “Exercise avoidance is common with patients with chronic back pain. We serve an important role in helping patients overcome their fear and boost exercise confidence.”

As Jonathan became stronger through one-on-one physical therapy sessions, he slowly increased the intensity of the exercises. His physical therapist even worked with him to improve his body mechanics while playing guitar, so he could play for more extended periods without pain.

Gaining Self-care Tools

After three months of physical therapy, Jonathan experienced significant improvement in his pain. Today, he continues to do physical therapy exercises at home. He is back on stage and able to work at his day job without pain.

According to Jonathan, getting professional medical treatment was key to his recovery and ability to return to an active lifestyle.

“Now, I can walk around while I perform and have the tools to take care of myself,” he says. “Going to see Dr. Van Dien was the best decision I could have made.”

Adds Dr. Van Dien: “When you work with a therapist, you receive education and lifelong skills you can use to manage chronic back pain the right way and reduce the risk of further injury.”



Craig Van Dien, M.D.

Sports medicine specialist

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Edison

How to Prevent Stroke

The best way to prevent a stroke is to reduce your risk. Here's how.

Stroke is the fifth-leading cause of death in the United States, according to the American Heart Association, and the number one cause of disability. Eighty percent of strokes are preventable.

The best way to prevent a stroke is to reduce your risk, says neurologist **Eric Uhrik, D.O., FAAN**, medical director of the **Raritan Bay Medical Center** Stroke Center and fellow of the American Academy of Neurology.

Risk Factors for Stroke

Risk factors for stroke include:

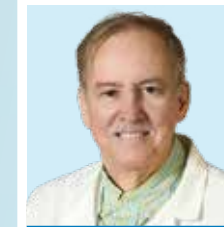
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ Smoking
- ▶ Heart diseases such as cardiomyopathy and atrial fibrillation
- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ Age (your risk increases as you get older)
- ▶ Gender (men are more likely to have strokes)
- ▶ Taking hormonal birth control
- ▶ Race/ethnicity (strokes occur more often in African American, Alaska Native and American Indian adults)
- ▶ Personal or family history of stroke or heart disease
- ▶ Brain aneurysms or blood vessel malformations
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Poor diet
- ▶ Alcohol/illegal drug use
- ▶ COVID-19

10 Tips to Reduce Your Risk

Dr. Uhrik offers these tips to reduce your risk of stroke:

- 1 **Check your blood pressure regularly.** If you have elevated blood pressure consistently, talk to your doctor about treatment to control it.
- 2 **Get tested for diabetes,** especially if you have a family history of it.
- 3 **Get a heart health check.** Heart disease, heart weakness or cardiac arrhythmias such as atrial fibrillation can cause blood clots to shoot to the brain, causing a stroke.
- 4 **Be vigilant about your cholesterol.** Many vessel-clogging problems that occur in the heart from high blood fats (cholesterol) also occur in the blood vessels in the brain and in the vessels leading to the brain. So it's important to regularly check your cholesterol and make necessary dietary or medication changes to lower it.
- 5 **Maintain a healthy weight.** Obesity on its own is a risk factor for stroke. But it also can lead to other health issues such as high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes, which are additional stroke risk factors.
- 6 **Eat foods low in cholesterol and fats,** especially saturated fats and trans fats, such as lean meats, nonfat dairy and whole-grain breads.
- 7 **Exercise regularly.** Aim for 30 minutes a day, five days a week. But even 10 minutes of exercise a day offers health benefits.
- 8 **If you smoke, stop.** Smoking can damage blood vessels as well as the heart. It also can increase blood pressure and lead to decreased oxygen supply from the lungs.
- 9 **Drink less alcohol.** Even one or two drinks a day can increase the risk of high blood pressure and stroke.
- 10 **Reduce stress.** Stress can alter blood sugar and raise blood pressure as well as cause cardiac rhythm irregularities.

"The best treatment for stroke is preventing one from happening in the first place, which means making lifestyle choices that keep your blood vessels and heart strong and healthy," Dr. Uhrik says. 🌟



Eric Uhrik, D.O., FAAN
Neurologist
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East Brunswick

How to Beat Brain Fog

What is brain fog? While it's not a medical term, brain fog describes a feeling that you don't have full mental clarity—maybe you're having trouble remembering something or difficulty focusing on a thought or idea. This can happen to anyone and can be caused by lack of sleep, increased stress, certain foods in your diet or, in some cases, a medication or medical condition.

Regardless of the source of brain fog, you can help combat it with these steps:

Improve your sleep

Aim to get 7–9 hours of sleep each night. Keep a regular sleep routine, and go to bed at the same time every night. In addition, avoid screens before you go to bed.

Challenge yourself

Treat your brain like a muscle and make sure it gets its exercise. This can take the form of traditional mind-sharpening puzzles and games, but it can also extend to your daily life. Read and learn about a topic you are interested in, whether it's something that will help you in your work or a hobby.

Repeat, repeat, repeat

If you are having trouble with memory in particular, repetition can be a useful strategy. Repeating something will strengthen your memory of it. For example, when you're having a conversation with a new person, repeat their name back to them. Or after you make an appointment, write it down.

Get plenty of exercise

Studies have shown that getting regular exercise and eating a diet high in vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains can reduce cognitive decline. These behaviors not only have cognitive benefits, but they can also improve your sleep, benefitting your mind even more.

Go Online

Learn about lifesaving stroke care close to home at [HMHforU.org/Stroke](https://www.HMHforU.org/Stroke).

Heads Up

What type of headache might you be experiencing, and what can you do about it? Our neurologist weighs in.

Headaches are incredibly common. There are many types, all of which have different causes, characteristics and treatment options. **Brian L. Gerhardstein, M.D., Ph.D.**, director of headache medicine at **JFK University Medical Center**, offers insight on the three most common types of primary headaches.

Migraines

Symptoms: A person with a migraine typically reports moderate to severe throbbing pain often located on one side of the head. The headache may last for hours or days. Migraines are commonly associated with nausea and vomiting as well as sensitivity to light or sound.

Causes: The underlying cause of migraines is under investigation, although there is probably a genetic component since they often run in families. Migraine triggers include:

- ▶ Stress
- ▶ Dehydration or hunger
- ▶ Certain foods
- ▶ Medications
- ▶ Bright lights
- ▶ Loud noise
- ▶ Menstruation
- ▶ Menopause
- ▶ Disruption in sleep patterns

Treatments: Options for treating migraines include simple tasks, such as lying down in a quiet, dark room or putting an ice pack or cold compress on the head. There are also many different migraine medications that can stop headaches when they occur, as well as treatment options that may prevent migraines, such as anti-seizure medicine, antidepressants, blood pressure medicine, Botox, peptide inhibitors or electrical stimulation.

Tension Headaches

Symptoms: Tension headaches are due to muscle tension and are characterized by a dull pain and tightness or pressure in the head or neck. They can last less than an hour or up to a few days.

Causes: Triggers of tension headaches include:

- ▶ Physical or emotional stress
- ▶ Not getting enough sleep
- ▶ Anxiety and depression
- ▶ Fatigue
- ▶ Hunger and dehydration
- ▶ Teeth/jaw clenching
- ▶ Overexertion
- ▶ Neck or back problems

Treatments: Tension headaches are usually managed with over-the-counter pain medication. “If you experience frequent or prolonged headaches, or if they don’t improve with self-care, it may be time to see a doctor,” Dr. Gerhardstein says. “If your doctor diagnoses tension headaches, they may recommend lifestyle changes, therapy or medications to treat pain.”

Cluster Headaches

Symptoms: Cluster headaches generally occur behind or around the eye on one side and can be very painful. These headaches often occur for a few weeks or months, typically at night. They may go away for a period of time but can spontaneously start again. Symptoms include:

- ▶ Extreme pain in or around the eye on one side of the head
- ▶ Restlessness
- ▶ Feeling flushed
- ▶ Tearing up
- ▶ Sniffing with a runny nose
- ▶ Swelling, droopiness and redness around an eye

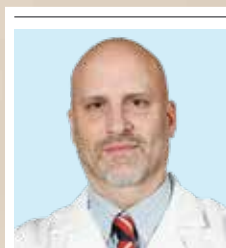
Causes: The cause of cluster headaches is under investigation. This type of headache usually isn’t associated with triggers such as food or stress, like other headache types.

Treatments: If you are experiencing cluster headaches, Dr. Gerhardstein recommends seeing a doctor. “It’s important to find a doctor who can diagnose cluster headaches and work with you to find an effective treatment.”

Make an appointment to discuss your headaches with your doctor if they are becoming more severe, more frequent, unresponsive to treatments or are associated with any new or worsening symptoms. ⚙️

Go Online

Learn about headache and migraine treatments at **Hackensack Meridian Health** at [HMHforU.org/Headache](https://www.hmhforu.org/Headache).



Brian L. Gerhardstein, M.D., Ph.D.

Neurologist

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Edison

iStock.com/HbrH

Doctor Spotlight

When Nripen Dantinani, M.D., isn't working as an internal medicine specialist, he likes to play tennis with his kids.



NRIPEN DANTINANI, M.D.

Internal medicine

JFK University Medical Center

If listening to Beyoncé and playing tennis aren't two things you associate with a doctor of internal medicine, you probably haven't met Nripen Dantinani, M.D. The internist has been with Hackensack Meridian Health since April 2020, and he has been using his preventive approach to medicine to help patients live longer, healthier lives.

Born in India, Dr. Dantinani came to the U.S. for the first time to start his residency in New York. He has earned the distinction of Civil Surgeon from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, which allows him to perform the medical exams required for Green Card applicants. Having gone through the immigration process himself, he chose to pursue the Civil Surgeon certification to help other immigrants on their own journeys.

As an internist, Dr. Dantinani treats a wide range of medical conditions. Internal medicine involves diagnosing, treating and preventing disease in adults, and an internist is a type of primary care provider for patients 18 years and older. Dr. Dantinani prefers, however, to prioritize prevention.

Why did you choose a career in medicine?

My father was a physician in India. I grew up seeing him and the satisfaction he got from treating patients. Internal medicine is broad, so I can treat multiple problems. I had some interest in cardiology, but I think my heart has always been in internal medicine.

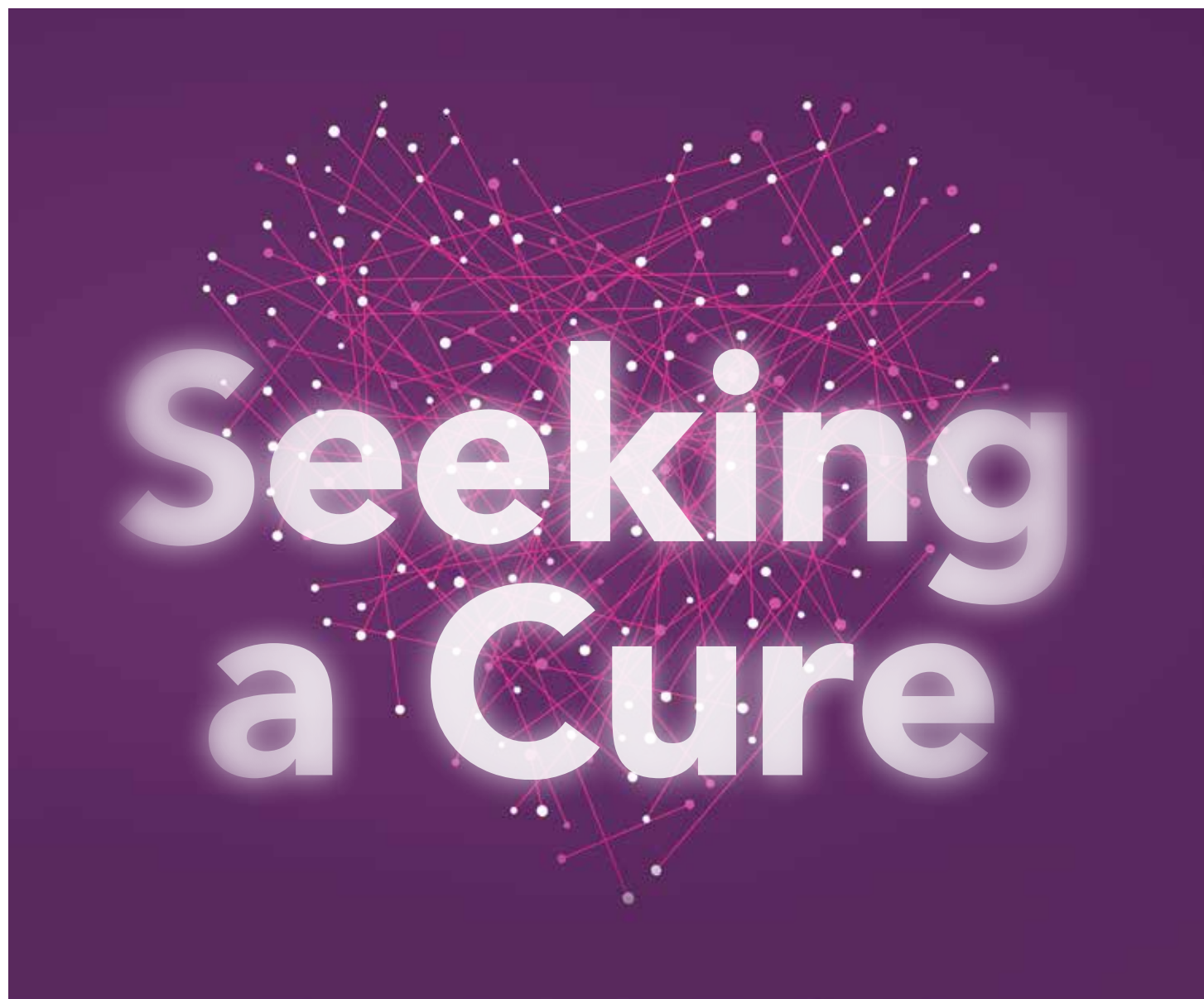
What is your best advice to patients to live a healthy life?

I tell my patients that prevention is better than a cure. I encourage them to practice prevention with healthy lifestyles. Calorie control is the first thing I advise for patients. Boiled vegetables with some dipping sauce for flavor are my go-to healthy snacks. I also believe we should keep aside 30–40 minutes per day for exercise. Brisk walking is my favorite exercise.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

I love spending time with my wife and two children, especially traveling. My favorite family vacation was in Hawaii on a “road trip to Hana” on the Island of Maui. I also like to play badminton, tennis and table tennis with my kids. Winning is easy with them! I also like to listen to podcasts. As an internal medicine specialist, my favorite is “Harrison’s PodClass.” ⚙️

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



Hackensack Meridian Children's Health is at the heart of a new potentially curative treatment for sickle cell disease.

Sickle cell disease affects 100,000 Americans, including 1 in every 365 African American births and 1 in every 16,000 Hispanic American births.

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder wherein misshapen blood cells impede the vascular distribution of oxygen throughout the body, causing pain, organ damage and even stroke.

"When you have sickle cell disease, you have a mutation in your beta-globin gene that causes your red blood cells to sickle—to be crescent-shaped instead of round," says pediatric hematologist/oncologist **Alfred Gillio, M.D.**, director of the Children's Cancer Institute at **Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital** at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. "These moon-shaped red blood cells get stuck in small blood

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5 Things to Know About Sickle Cell Disease

You can carry the sickle trait even if you don't have sickle cell disease.



Sickle cell disease can occur in people of any ethnicity.



Pain "crises" are sickle cell disease's signature symptom.



Sickle cell disease can cause organ damage, stroke and even death.



There are potential cures for sickle cell disease.



Alfred Gillio, M.D.

Pediatric hematologist/
oncologist

800-822-8905

Hackensack



Stacey Rifkin-Zeneng, D.O.

Pediatric hematologist/
oncologist

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Hackensack



Jessica Scerbo, M.D.

Pediatric hematologist/
oncologist

800-822-8905

Neptune

vessels, which disrupts the flow of oxygen to tissue. It's very painful."

Historically, the only response to sickle cell disease was managing it with pain medication. "But recently, new potentially curative treatments have emerged—giving new hope to those who experience excruciating, debilitating pain resulting from sickle cell disease," says pediatric hematologist/oncologist **Stacey Rifkin-Zeneng, D.O.**, section chief, Pediatric Pain and Palliative Care, Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital.

A Disease Affecting Entire Families

"Sickle cell disease affects every organ in a patient's body," says Dr. Rifkin-Zeneng. "This disease really has a tremendous effect not only on the patient, but also the family."

Sickle cell disease runs in families, but the inherited trait that causes it is recessive. "Sickle cell disease is inherited in an autosomal recessive manner, so children can carry the trait and not have the disease," says **Jessica Scerbo, M.D.**, section chief, pediatric hematology oncology at **K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital**. "Babies only develop the disease if they inherit the trait from both of their parents."

The trait is widely known to exist in African bloodlines, but it's also present in Hispanic, Mediterranean and even Arab-Indian lineages.

New Treatments Emerge

Today, there are two curative treatments for sickle cell disease. The first is a bone marrow transplant, which replaces a patient's unhealthy blood-forming cells with healthy ones provided by a donor. This requires finding a well-matched (HLA-matched) bone marrow donor.

"Siblings only have a 25 percent chance of being tissue-matched. A volunteer-matched donor or a half-matched donor can often be identified, although these alternative donor transplants can be associated with more complications," says Dr. Rifkin-Zeneng.

A second therapy is currently undergoing clinical trials at sites across the country, including Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital. "The new therapy, called LentiGlobin, is a gene-based therapy where doctors harvest the patient's own stem cells and add to them a corrected gene that makes non-sickle hemoglobin," says Dr. Rifkin-Zeneng, the principal investigator of the gene therapy study.

Here's how it works:

- ▶ The patient undergoes chemotherapy to kill off existing stem cells.
- ▶ After that, the patient is transfused with their own genetically modified stem cells.
- ▶ Then the patient's body can produce normal red blood cells that neutralize the effects of sickled red blood cells.

"With this treatment, the patient is their own donor, and we are modifying their own cells to add copies of a functional beta-globin gene," Dr. Gillio says.

Hope When There Are No Options

If its curative effects hold, gene therapy could prove to be even more attractive than bone marrow transplants.

Gene therapy also surmounts graft-versus-host disease, a common transplant complication wherein immune cells in the donor's marrow recognize that they're in a foreign body and begin attacking the marrow recipient. "Graft-versus-host disease can be significant and life-threatening, and when we use the patient's own cells, we don't have to worry about it," Dr. Rifkin-Zeneng says.

This investigational treatment, which is a one-time therapy, may be an option for patients who have no other treatment options. "This therapy may be a major advance for sickle cell patients. The results from early clinical studies are encouraging," Dr. Gillio says. 🌟

Go Online

To learn more about the sickle cell clinical trial, contact the study research staff at pedsresearch@hmn.org or call 551-996-5600.



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 April through June 2022

HOSPITAL LOCATIONS										
Bayshore Medical Center 727 North Beers St., Holmdel	Carrier Clinic and Blake Recovery Center 252 County Rd. 601 Belle Mead	Jersey Shore University Medical Center and K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital 1945 Route 33 Neptune	JFK University Medical Center 65 James St. Edison	Ocean University Medical Center 425 Jack Martin Blvd., Brick	Old Bridge Medical Center 1 Hospital Plaza Old Bridge	Raritan Bay Medical Center 530 New Brunswick Ave. Perth Amboy	Riverview Medical Center 1 Riverview Plaza Red Bank	Southern Ocean Medical Center 1140 Route 72 West Manahawkin		



Diabetes

Eat Well: Living With Diabetes Join our certified diabetes educator and learn how nutrition affects diabetes, meal planning and more.
May 4, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

Heart Health

Mediterranean Diet: How Does it Affect Your Cholesterol? Join Monica Bais, M.D., and learn all about the Mediterranean diet and how it can affect your cholesterol levels for the better.
June 2, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

► **Can You Feel the Beat?: Heart Rhythm Disorders** Speaker: Matthew Saybolt, M.D., June 22, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

Angioscreen

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

Neuroscience

Are You Getting a Good Night's Sleep? Join Rana Y. Ali, M.D., and learn tips on getting a good night's sleep, as well as sleep apnea and treatment options.
May 11, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

► **Advances in Multiple Sclerosis** Speaker: Krupa Pandey, M.D., June 10, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

► **Headaches vs. Migraines** Speaker: Monte Pellmar, M.D., June 15, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event



Special Events

Stroke: How Do I Know if I am at Risk? May is National Stroke Awareness Month. Join Spozhmy Panezai, M.D., and learn what to do if someone is having a stroke, the signs/symptoms and risk factors.
May 19, noon–1 p.m., virtual event



Men's Health Month Join our men's health experts, and learn important health topics just for men, including the top 10 health and wellness considerations, the importance of strength training and why mental health should not be taboo for men!
June 1, 1–2 p.m., virtual event

Behavioral Health



Anger, Aggression, Anxiety and High-intensity Interval Training Learn the signs, symptoms and effective coping strategies for anger, aggression and anxiety, and participate in a HIIT demo session.
May 25, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Mindfulness Meditation** June 29, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **We've Got the Beat! Drum circles bring rhythm to our lives**, May 19, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

► **Dealing With Depression** Speaker: Zain Memon, M.D., June 2, 11 a.m.–noon, Community Outreach Conf. Center, Brick

Cancer Care



Fresh Start Smoking Cessation This four-session program is available to help you quit smoking. Attendance is required at all four sessions.
May 6, 9, 13 & 16, June 3, 6, 10, & 13 and July 1, 11, 18 & 25, 10–11 a.m., Riverview Rechnitz Conference Center
May 17, 19, 24 & 26, 6–7:30 p.m., Ocean, East Wing Conference Center

► **Thriving and Surviving Cancer Survivor Workshop** May 4, 11, 18 & 25 and June 1 & 8, 4:30–6:30 p.m., virtual event

► **Stop Smoking With Hypnosis** May 11 & July 13, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Leukemia: What You Need to Know** Speaker: Kelly Fitzpatrick, M.D., May 5, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

► **Surgical Decision-making for Breast Cancer** Speaker: Debra Camal, M.D., June 7, 2–3 p.m., virtual event

► **The Psychological Impact of Cancer** Speaker: Patrick Kane, M.D., July 7, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

General Wellness

Living With Arthritis Join Sundeep Saini, D.O., and learn about different types of arthritis, as well as diagnosis and treatment options.
June 2, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

► **Healthy Vision** Speaker: Ralph DelNegro, D.O., May 18, 4–5 p.m., virtual event

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

► **Support Groups** Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at HackensackMeridianHealth.org/SupportGroups.

Pediatrics

Safe Sitter Babysitter training for boys and girls ages 11–14. The class includes handling emergencies, childcare skills, CPR and first aid. Fee: \$40.
Visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events for upcoming dates.

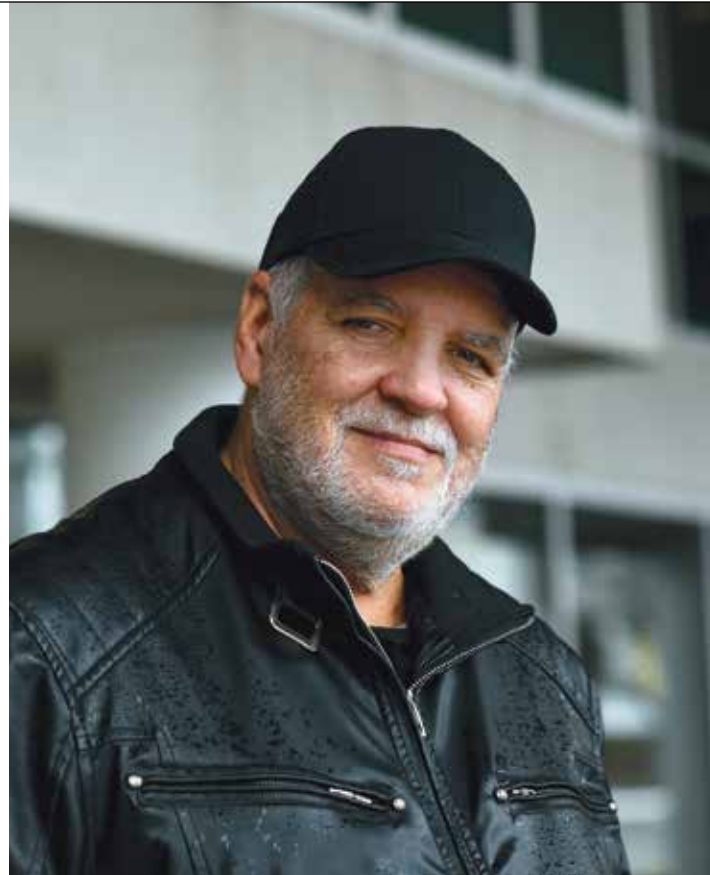
► **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Fee: \$15. Visit HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events for upcoming dates.

Parent/Guardian Talks:
► **Is Your Child Complaining of Pain?** Speakers: Amit Merchant, M.D., and Paul Haynes, M.D., May 19, 6:30–7:30 p.m., virtual event



Home Away From Home

Former team member Eugene Mercado gives back to Raritan Bay Medical Center after experiencing compassionate care while his mother was in hospice.



Raritan Bay Medical Center has always held a special place in Eugenio "Eugene" Mercado, Jr.'s heart. Not only was he born there, but for 34 years, it provided him a fruitful and rewarding career.

In his most recent role, Eugene was a mental health aide, assisting behavioral health patients. He practiced compassion, empathy and care, always tending to his patients' needs.

But when his mother, Carmen Delia Mercado, got sick with dementia, Eugene opted to leave the job he loved in order to care for her. Later, when Carmen was admitted into hospice, Eugene got to witness Raritan Bay care from the other side. "Not only did they look after my mother, they also took care of me and my sister," he says. "They even got us two recliners and allowed us to stay with my mom until the day she passed away. That meant so much to us."

Eugene was so grateful that he decided to give back to Hackensack Meridian Raritan Bay Medical Center Foundation. "I wanted to do something so people could continue to work and live their lives, knowing that their loved ones with dementia were taken care of," he says. What started as a possible

planned gift, led to a gift of \$25,000 to create the Eugenio "Eugene" Mercado, Jr. Patient Care Fund at Raritan Bay. The fund will provide support for patients dealing with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and cancer.

"It only makes sense to give back to the hospital that has given my family and me so much—life, a career and such great care," Eugene says.

Raritan Bay is thrilled with his gift. "Mr. Mercado's generosity will provide funding for program support and other essentials that will ensure the comfort of our patients, which is of the utmost importance," says Melissa L. Magyar, executive director of the Foundation. "We are grateful for Mr. Mercado's commitment throughout his career and now as a retired employee and donor."

Adds William DiStanislaio, interim president and chief hospital executive, at Raritan Bay: "The fact that Mr. Mercado chose to give back after a long career with us speaks volumes about the kind, generous person he is. The Eugenio 'Eugene' Mercado, Jr. Patient Care Fund he created will provide essential support and comfort for patients. It is gifts like this that allow us to continue to meet the needs of our patients each and every day, and for that, we are grateful." 🌟

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@hmn.org.

Use your smartphone or tablet camera to scan me

Take a Mental Break

Each May, Mental Health Awareness Month is recognized across the globe. This year, take time to remember that mental health is essential to overall health.

The term mental illness refers to all mental disorders. This includes a variety of conditions, such as anxiety, depression, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders and more. Mental illness can impact your emotional state, thought process and behaviors.

The Numbers on Mental Health

1 in 5 ADULTS in the U.S. experience mental illness

1 in 20 ADULTS in the U.S. experience serious mental illness

1 in 6 YOUTH between the ages of 6 and 17 experience a mental health disorder each year

46.4% of people in the U.S. will experience a mental illness during their lifetime

57% have experienced COVID-19-related mental health adversity or trauma

The ABCs of 4-7-8

Breathing exercises are simple ways to relax and clear your mental space. One breathing exercise to try is the 4-7-8 technique.

Close your mouth and inhale through your nose for a **COUNT OF 4**

Hold your breath for a **COUNT OF 7**

Exhale through your mouth, making a whoosh sound for a **COUNT OF 8**

Make Time for You

Engaging in puzzles and games of all kinds can support mental health by:

Producing dopamine, responsible for improving concentration, motivation and optimism

Promoting relaxation and reducing stress

Practicing mindfulness

Building social bonds, when games are played with others

Go Online

Learn about behavioral health services at Hackensack Meridian Health at HMforU.org/MentalHealth.

istock.com/STL_Aurora72/sesame

Sources: National Alliance on Mental Illness, Sapien Labs



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Behind the Scenes of COVID-19

See firsthand, honest accounts from Hackensack Meridian Health team members on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic in our new video series, UNMASKED.

Watch team members from across the network open up about the struggles, moments of frustration and intense bonds that have formed while working in these unprecedented times.

Learn more or watch the latest episodes at HMHforU.org/Unmasked.



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 or scan the QR code.



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.