

HEALTH U

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Hackensack
Meridian Health

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Heart Happy



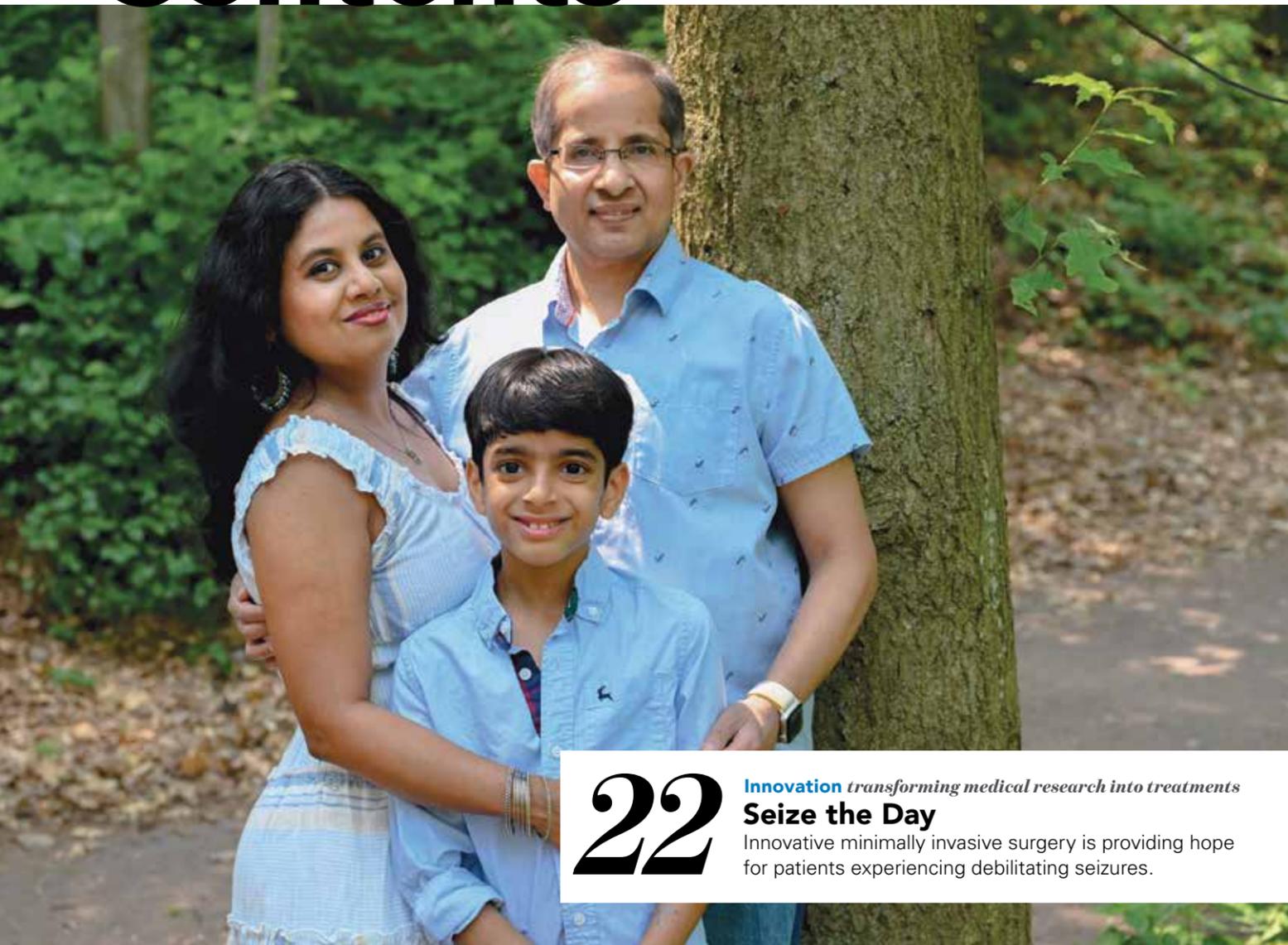
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Desprenda una lista de verificación para su visita anual y una receta adicional.

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On the cover: iStock.com/myjillo



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HEALTH U
ONLINE EXCLUSIVES



What does the color of your pee mean? Our urology expert weighs in at [HMHforU.org/PeeColor](https://www.hmhforu.org/PeeColor).



Can constipation be an early sign of Parkinson's disease? Find out at [HMHforU.org/Constipation](https://www.hmhforu.org/Constipation).



Our nutritionist reveals six foods that can help you achieve healthy, glowing skin: [HMHforU.org/HealthySkin](https://www.hmhforu.org/HealthySkin).



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

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

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Heart Strong

At Hackensack Meridian Health, we're committed to your health—not just in healing you when you're sick but also in helping you lead a healthy life and stay out of our hospitals.

Key to good health is good nutrition. But just one in 10 Americans are eating the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, with even lower rates among low-income Americans, according to the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention. Cost is a primary barrier to consuming healthy foods.

We are dedicated to being part of the solution and to building healthier communities. We've launched the Fresh Match program that will make fresh produce more accessible to families in need. With support from a \$3 million grant from New Jersey, a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and a \$500,000 match from donors to the Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation, we are partnering with grocery retailers in seven counties to launch a nutrition incentive program.

Under the Fresh Match program, families receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits can visit a participating grocery store and receive a dollar-for-dollar match to buy fresh produce. That means if you use your SNAP card to buy \$10 worth of fruits or vegetables at a participating store, you'll receive a match for \$10 toward buying more fresh produce on



Bob Garrett with New Jersey Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez (left) and Nicole Harris-Hollingsworth, Ed.D., MCHES, vice president of Social Determinants of Health at Hackensack Meridian Health (right)



your next visit. Learn more at [HMHforU.org/FreshMatch](https://www.hmhforu.org/freshmatch).

Proper nutrition affects so many areas of health—not in the least, heart health. This February, we will again celebrate Heart Month and raise awareness of heart disease. A diet high in fruits and vegetables, as well as lean protein and whole grains, can improve your heart health by lowering “bad” cholesterol, raising “good” cholesterol and maintaining a healthy weight.

Check out the inside back cover of this issue to test your knowledge of heart-friendly food choices. We also offer free nutrition classes online and in person at locations across the state.

Visit [HMHforU.org/Events](https://www.hmhforu.org/events) to find one near you.

Another key component of heart health is understanding your personal risk factors for heart disease. Heart screenings, like AngioScreen and CT Calcium Scoring Scan, can reveal a person's risk level for heart disease or stroke, which helps your doctor determine what prevention or treatment options should be used. Schedule a screening at [HMHforU.org/HeartScreening](https://www.hmhforu.org/heartscreening).

This Heart Month, make a pledge to be heart strong. Try a new form of exercise, add more fresh produce into your diet or schedule a heart screening. By making a commitment to your heart health today, you can prevent being forced to make time for it later. 🧠

Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO
Hackensack Meridian Health



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INSIDE THIS SECTION

- 6 Tips to decrease anxiety
- 6 TikTok workout trends
- 7 Recipe for white bean and shrimp stew

The Colorectal Cancer and Meat Link

As much as many of us love a good hamburger or steak, research has shown a connection between colorectal cancer and a high intake of red meat and processed meat.

The American Institute of Cancer Research has listed red meat as “probably carcinogenic” and suggests limiting your intake to 12–18 ounces weekly. Heme iron, which is present in red meat and processed meat, may lead to the production of free radicals that damage DNA and promote the formation of nitroso compounds, which can create damage within the gut that leads to cancer.

Dietary Risk Factors for Colorectal Cancer

A number of dietary factors can increase your risk of colorectal cancer:

- ▶ Red meat
- ▶ Processed meat
- ▶ Fatty and fried foods
- ▶ Added sugars and simple carbohydrates
- ▶ Cooking meat at high temperatures
- ▶ Low-fiber diet
- ▶ Low vitamin B6 intake
- ▶ Low calcium intake

What to Eat to Decrease Your Risk of Colorectal Cancer

“The best way to decrease your risk of colorectal cancer is by consuming nutrient-rich foods such as non-starchy vegetables, beans, fruits, nuts, whole grains, tofu and fish such as salmon,” says Geanella Vera-Avellan, registered dietitian at Hackensack Meridian Health & Wellness Center in Eatontown.



Learn when you should be screened for colorectal cancer. Scan the QR code to take our health risk assessment.



How to Worry Less



Our expert offers three practical habits to help you decrease anxiety.

Anxiety is one of the most common mental health disorders in the United States. Fortunately, several effective strategies may help make your anxiety more manageable.

Some people who experience anxiety may benefit from these habits, with or without therapy. To decrease the effects of anxiety, **Nanditha Krishnamsetty, M.D.**, psychiatrist at **JFK University Medical Center, Old Bridge Medical Center** and **Raritan Bay Medical Center**, suggests adopting these habits:

1 Adopt Healthy Lifestyle Habits

When you take care of yourself, you can cope better with stress and anxiety. These good-for-you habits should help you manage anxiety:

- ▶ **Maintaining a healthy diet and limiting caffeine.** Healthy whole foods provide the nutrients needed to function optimally.
- ▶ **Staying well hydrated.** Drink water throughout the day to avoid dehydration, which can lower your mood.
- ▶ **Exercising regularly.** Physical activity helps boost your mood, clear your mind and reduce anxiety.
- ▶ **Limiting your alcohol intake.** Some people drink to feel calmer, but they feel anxious when it wears off.
- ▶ **Getting ample sleep.** You'll feel more positive and less anxious when you are well rested.



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Now Trending on TikTok

When it comes to health and wellness information on TikTok, bad advice abounds. We've found the trends worth your time.

Cristobal Beiro, M.D., orthopedic surgeon at **JFK University Medical Center, Old Bridge Medical Center** and **Raritan Bay Medical Center**, offers workout trends on TikTok that might be worth a try.



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12-3-30 Treadmill Workout

The 12-3-30 treadmill workout first debuted in 2019, but it has grown in popularity ever since. It's pretty simple: You walk on a treadmill at an incline of 12 and a speed of 3 miles per hour for 30 minutes.

Generally, walking is an effective low-impact exercise, Dr. Beiro notes. But with the the 12-3-30 workout, you walk briskly at a steep incline, which can be a more intense activity and can work the muscles in your buttocks and legs even more.

Functional Fitness Training

Functional fitness training encompasses exercises that mimic movements you make in your everyday life. These exercises may incorporate bending, twisting, squatting, stair-climbing, pushing and pulling—all similar movements you use when carrying a heavy item, hauling in groceries from the car or bending over to pick up a dropped item.

"Functional fitness exercises aren't just effective for strength training, they can also improve your ability to do everyday tasks safely," says Dr. Beiro.



2 Stay in the Present

Being "in the moment" helps reduce anxiety by limiting unhelpful thoughts. Try these strategies to stay focused on the present moment:

- ▶ **Count backwards from 10 to one.** When you need to calm down, count down slowly, focusing on your breath. This simple exercise should help distract you from worrisome thoughts.
- ▶ **Interact with your pet.** Cuddling or petting a furry family member helps you relax and focus on the moment. Spending time grooming, playing with or talking to your pet should boost your mood.
- ▶ **Play a musical instrument.** If you play the piano, guitar, flute or drums, play something from your repertoire. You'll focus on the pace and flow of the music instead of anxious thoughts.

3 Challenge Your Thoughts and Feelings

It's important to recognize that your feelings about yourself or your circumstances aren't necessarily facts. To challenge the thoughts and feelings that make you feel anxious:

- ▶ **Think about whether your perceptions are accurate** based on what others see and say.
- ▶ **Replace negative thinking with positive thoughts.**
- ▶ **Keep a gratitude journal,** jotting down three positive thoughts per day.
- ▶ **Read your gratitude journal** when you need reminders about the positives in your life.
- ▶ **Focus on your breathing.** If worrisome thoughts enter your mind, focus on deep breathing instead. If you still need help decreasing anxiety, make an appointment with a therapist or psychiatrist. Talk therapy and medication can help manage an anxiety disorder. Dr. Krishnamsetty notes that it can be difficult to challenge internal thoughts alone. But a therapist can help challenge any long-standing negative beliefs that you may have.

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

Plank Dance Challenge

The plank dance challenge involves holding the high plank position—face down with your legs extended, toes curled to the floor and arms parallel and extended—while you do a series of movements to the beat of a song. Those movements might include lifting your arms up and down and jumping your legs in and out.

The plank dance challenge targets core muscle groups while it engages your arm, leg and back muscles. It's an effective high-intensity exercise, but the music can make it fun to do, as well.

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

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White Bean and Shrimp Stew

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 15-ounce can low-sodium cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 14-ounce can low-sodium diced tomatoes, drained
- 1 teaspoon each oregano, basil and rosemary
- 3 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 pound small frozen shrimp, thawed and peeled
- ½ cup parsley, chopped

- ➊ Add chicken broth and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and simmer until stew is slightly thickened, about 15 minutes.
- ➋ Add shrimp and simmer just until cooked through, about 2 minutes.
- ➌ Add parsley and serve.

Nutritional Information

Per serving: 377 calories, 37g protein, 35g carbohydrate (8g fiber), 11g fat (2g sat, 9g mono/poly), 234mg sodium

Preparation

- ➊ Heat olive oil in a soup pot. Add onion and garlic and cook, stirring frequently until onion softens, about 3 minutes.
- ➋ Stir in cannellini beans, tomatoes, oregano, basil and rosemary.

Seasoned Cook

Most white fish, like cod, can be substituted for the shrimp. Cooking time would need to be adjusted.

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

Is an irregular heartbeat dangerous?

Mariam Wassef, D.O., weighs in:

Palpitations or irregular heartbeat can be due to too much caffeine or stress but sometimes have no clear triggers. However, if the irregular heartbeat persists or is associated with other symptoms, you should seek medical care.

An irregular heartbeat, also known as a heart arrhythmia, can range from harmless to life-threatening. It is triggered when electrical signals that direct heartbeats do not function correctly, causing beats that are too fast (tachycardia), too slow (bradycardia) or irregular.

If you experience any of these symptoms, call your doctor or seek medical help:

- ▶ Chest pain
- ▶ Fluttering in the chest or palpitations
- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Racing heartbeat
- ▶ Slow heartbeat
- ▶ Lightheadedness
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Fainting, near-fainting or dizziness
- ▶ Chest pounding



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

Are edibles safe?

Eric Alcera, M.D., weighs in:

The truth is, there are many unknowns about marijuana edibles. There is no way to know the potency of edibles, so I recommend extreme caution when considering ingesting them. **Before you consume an edible, keep in mind these points:**

Edibles are not federally regulated, so manufacturers are not required to provide ingredients, warnings or nutritional information. While New Jersey requires marijuana edible labels to list ingredients, the potency can vary greatly.

Edibles have a delayed effect, so people often consume multiple edibles. By the time they feel the effect, they may have consumed too much.

Like vaping, edibles—especially gummies—are attractive to kids because of their color, fun shapes and sweet smell.

Edibles must be stored securely to protect kids and pets from accidentally ingesting them and getting sick.

Emergency department visits from edibles are on the rise. These visits are often a result of psychiatric symptoms and cardiovascular issues.

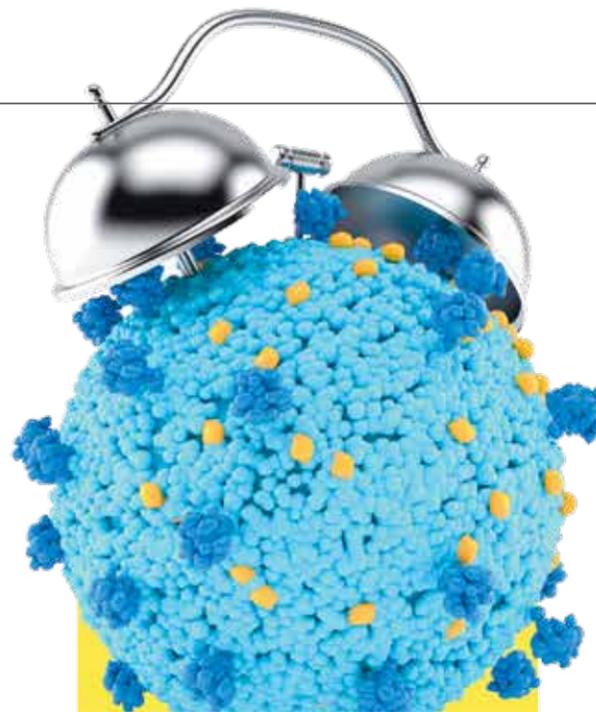


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Learn more at [HMHforU.org/Edibles](https://www.HMHforU.org/Edibles).

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How quickly can you get COVID-19 after exposure?

Pooja Shah, M.D., weighs in:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 has a long incubation period of up to 10 days. However, with newer strains, research has shown that the window of exposure time is getting increasingly smaller.

Even with shorter incubation periods, the CDC still recommends you wear a mask for a full 10 days, starting from as soon as you discover you were exposed, even if you don't have symptoms. Start counting from day one, which is defined as the first full day after your last exposure.

- ▶ **If you develop symptoms at any time:** Isolate yourself immediately and get tested.
- ▶ **If you have been exposed but experience no symptoms:** Test at least five days after your last exposure, because testing too early can lead to a false-negative result.



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

Who should get an RSV vaccine?

Nazar Raof, M.D., weighs in:

Older adults are more likely to develop severe respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and need hospitalization. For that reason, **adults over age 60 should talk with their doctor about getting an RSV vaccine.** This single-dose shot is most effective when given at the beginning of RSV season, usually in the fall or early winter.

Expectant mothers should talk with their doctor about getting this vaccine, as well, to help protect their babies from severe RSV disease.



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Mild symptoms of RSV include:

- ▶ Congested or runny nose
- ▶ Dry cough
- ▶ Low-grade fever
- ▶ Sore throat
- ▶ Sneezing
- ▶ Headache

Signs of severe RSV disease include:

- ▶ Fever
- ▶ Severe cough
- ▶ Wheezing
- ▶ Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- ▶ Bluish color due to lack of oxygen



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

Doctor Spotlight

ASAD AHMED, D.O.

Primary care doctor

Hackensack Meridian Medical Group
Primary Care—North Brunswick

Being a newer doctor has lots of appeal for Asad Ahmed, D.O., who says his career is all that he expected, and more.

"I believe patients come to a primary care doctor like me to get all their issues summarized in one place," says Dr. Ahmed. "I want to be that resource because I feel it's very important for patients. I believe preventive care can play an even larger role in people's overall health."

Dr. Ahmed gets the most satisfaction from seeing his patients' lives improve because of the advice or treatments he's provided. And if patients choose not to follow his suggestions, he's going to take great care of them anyway.

"I respect that it's their life and they may choose to live it in a certain way, but I'm here to help them now," he says.

Dr. Ahmed was born in Pakistan and moved with his family to the United States at age 2. He speaks Urdu, Hindi and English.

"I decided in high school that I wanted to be a doctor, and I became even more convinced in college while taking pre-med courses—and yes, they can be stressful and challenging so we are very well prepared," he says.

What sports do you enjoy?

During summer, I play a lot more volleyball, since the weather is more cooperative then. I play basketball once or twice a week—usually Tuesday



In his spare time, Asad Ahmed, D.O., loves to stay active and plays basketball twice a week.

night and Saturday morning—and I do like to play tennis occasionally. And I usually play with other people who work in health care.

You also fly drones. Tell us about that.

When I first went to medical school, I bought a camera drone—a drone with a camera mounted on it—and started recording some videos of family events. I do some recreational drone racing, too, where I control the camera drone while

I'm wearing goggles that show a live stream camera feed. I like to "fly" between trees and "do" some flips and spins in the local park.

Talk about your life as a new father.

We have a 2-year-old now and a hopefully healthy baby due in January. It's a lot of change—a new job and a new baby—all at once. Each comes with its own separate challenges, but I definitely can't complain. 🧠

Spotlight on U

health topics that matter the most to you

Cut Through the Clutter

Why does it feel good after cleaning out a closet or decluttering a junk drawer in your home? Decluttering your living space or organizing your home can provide a number of mental health benefits.

Decrease stress and anxiety.

Clutter can cause stress and anxiety. By decluttering your space, you create a more calming environment that can improve your overall mood.



Increase focus. It can be difficult to focus when clutter is all around you. By decluttering and organizing your space, you create a more peaceful environment that helps you stay focused and productive.

Boost creativity. When you have too much stuff, it can be overwhelming and stifle your creativity. By decluttering, you can open up space for new ideas and creative expression.



Improve sleep quality.

A bedroom that is cluttered with clothes and objects can be disorienting and negatively impact your ability to relax and get quality sleep.

Enhance self-esteem. When you declutter your living space, you can gain a sense of accomplishment and control over your environment, which can positively impact your self-esteem.

istock.com/AnnikaMcFarlane/kojale

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

Is My Chest Pain Serious?

Chest pain can be associated with a myriad of medical conditions other than a heart attack, so how do you know when it is serious?

The experience of chest pain is alarming—but it is common. Chest pain is responsible for more than 8 million emergency department (ED) visits every year in the United States, according to the National Institutes of Health, making it the second most common reason people go to the ED.

Chest pain can be associated with many other conditions besides a heart attack, says **Aaron Van Hise, D.O.**, cardiologist at **Raritan Bay Medical Center** and **Old Bridge Medical Center**. So how do you know when chest pain is serious?



Aaron Van Hise, D.O.
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Causes of Chest Pain

While chest pain can be a tell-tale sign of a heart attack, it can also be a symptom of various other issues, including:

- ▶ Acid reflux
- ▶ Gallstones
- ▶ Muscle strain
- ▶ Panic attack
- ▶ Asthma
- ▶ COVID-19
- ▶ Peptic ulcers
- ▶ Pulmonary embolism

Chest pain can also be a sign of serious heart conditions other than heart attack, including:

- ▶ Myocarditis
- ▶ Aortic dissection

Noncardiac Chest Pain

Chest pain is different from person to person, so it can be difficult for an untrained person to determine if the situation is serious based on chest pain alone.

However, you are most likely NOT experiencing chest pain due to a heart problem if:

- ▶ The pain recedes after a few moments
- ▶ The pain occurs when you make particular movements
- ▶ The pain is localized to one spot
- ▶ The pain happens during deep breaths or coughing

If you commonly experience chest pain, even in passing, Dr. Van Hise suggests following up with your doctor. You may need medical attention even if it isn't life-threatening.

When to Go to the Emergency Department or Call 911

You should seek immediate medical attention if you experience prolonged or intense chest pain. You should also receive emergency care if you have any of the following in conjunction with chest pain:

- ▶ Shortness of breath
- ▶ Pain in the arms, shoulders, neck, back or jaw
- ▶ Irregular heartbeat
- ▶ Feelings of squeezing, tightness or crushing
- ▶ Sweating
- ▶ Lightheadedness, dizziness or confusion
- ▶ Nausea or vomiting
- ▶ Weakness

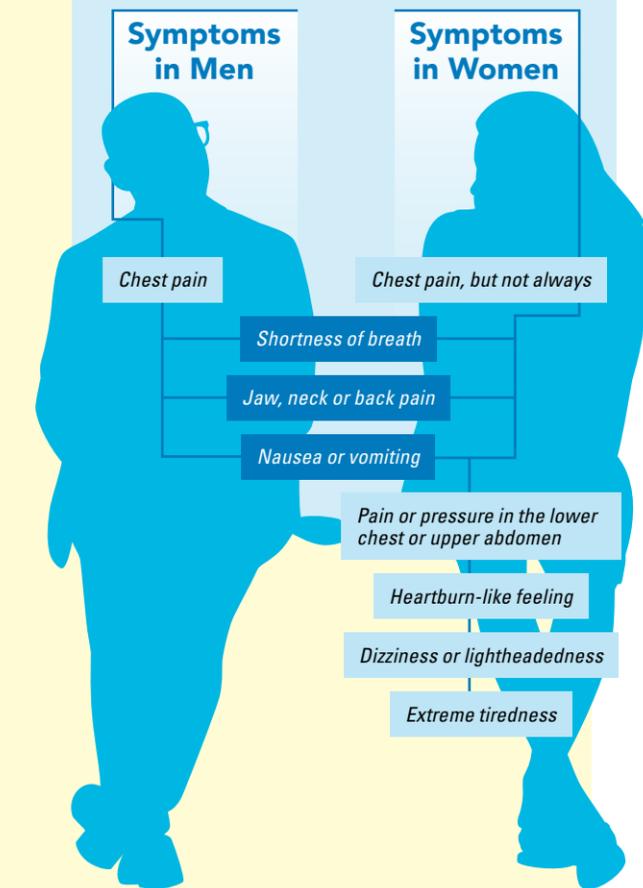
While chest pain may not mean a heart attack, it could be another serious condition that could have severe consequences. If the chest pain is acute or presenting with any other symptoms, seek help.

Also, people experience heart attacks differently. Just because you don't experience all of these symptoms, or your symptoms are different than what someone else who had a heart attack felt, that doesn't mean you aren't having a cardiac event.

Spot the Difference

Learn the distinct differences between how men and women may experience heart attacks.

When it comes to heart attacks, there is a common misconception that symptoms are the same for everyone. While many of the most common heart attack symptoms are the same in men and women, women often experience additional and less obvious warning signs.



When in Doubt

If you experience chest pain and are unsure of its cause, do not ignore it. Even if it turns out to not be serious, it's always better to be cautious. Even noncardiac chest pain causes may need to be addressed before they turn into more serious problems. ❄️



Scan the QR code to schedule a heart screening near you.

HEART HEALTH

Pumping the Brakes on Heart Failure

Heart failure can actually be reversed if treated properly. Our expert shares warning signs and how to help.

While many people think heart failure means the heart stops beating, it actually means the heart is unable to pump blood and oxygen effectively throughout the body.

The disease can begin suddenly after an injury or illness or due to a medical condition that damages the heart. Most often it develops over time, and it can be a debilitating disease if not properly treated.

Kanika Mody, M.D., advanced heart failure cardiologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center** and **JFK University Medical Center**, shares what heart failure looks like and how it can be treated.

What Heart Failure Looks Like

There are many symptoms of heart failure, including:

- ▶ Shortness of breath at rest or during an activity
- ▶ Fatigue or inability to exert energy
- ▶ Coughing or wheezing
- ▶ Swelling and weight gain from fluid buildup in the ankles, lower legs or abdomen
- ▶ Nausea or loss of appetite
- ▶ Difficulty sleeping while on your back
- ▶ Swelling in the veins of the neck
- ▶ Frequent need to urinate

If you or a loved one are experiencing any of these symptoms, consult your doctor immediately.

Do not hesitate to call 911 if you or a loved one is experiencing:

- ▶ Difficulty breathing
- ▶ Chest pain
- ▶ Fainting, sudden dizziness or loss of consciousness

These can be symptoms of heart attack and require immediate emergency care.

Heart Failure Treatment and Tips

The good news is heart failure doesn't always get worse and can even be reversed.

Your doctor may prescribe several medicines to treat heart failure, but you can also take several steps to help fight the disease, including:

- ▶ Quit smoking
- ▶ Reduce sodium (salt) intake
- ▶ Increase physical activity (especially aerobic exercise)
- ▶ Manage your stress
- ▶ Lose weight

Throughout your treatment, keep your doctor informed of your progress and how you are feeling. Together you can develop a plan to ensure you have the best protocol in place to fight heart disease. ⚙️

Go Online
Find a heart specialist near you at [HMHforU.org/HeartDoc](https://www.hmhforu.org/HeartDoc).



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PEDIATRICS

Listen Up

Learn when ear infections may warrant ear tube surgery and what to expect from it.



Michael Chee, M.D.
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Ear infections are one of the most common infections in kids. They are painful, can cause sleepless days and nights, and are all-around no fun for kids or parents.

“When ear infections are a chronic occurrence, they become especially difficult to manage,” says **Michael Chee, M.D.**, pediatric otolaryngologist from the Pediatric Multi-Specialty Practice at **JFK University Medical Center**. “One option to consider in these cases is ear tube surgery.”

Dr. Chee weighs in on what ear tube surgery achieves and when it is recommended.

What Are Ear Tubes?

Ear tubes, also known as tympanostomy tubes, are small, hollow, cylindrical devices that are surgically placed in the eardrum to help drain fluid that has built up behind the eardrum. The tube stays in place for a few months to a few years, depending on the individual and the reason for the tube placement.

While ear tubes reduce the risk of ear infections, they don't fully prevent them from occurring. “But when tubes are placed, an ear infection can be treated with antibiotic ear drops rather than oral antibiotics,” Dr. Chee says. “The drops have fewer possible side effects, which is a benefit.”

Signs Your Child Might Need Ear Tubes

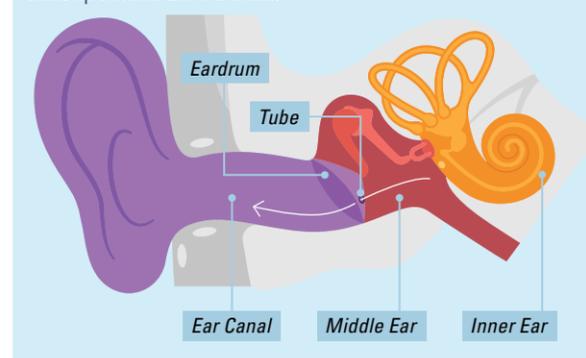
Ear tubes are recommended when a child has recurrent middle ear infections, when there is a persistent fluid build-up behind the eardrum or if a child has a complication from a middle ear infection.

Your doctor might recommend ear tube surgery if your child has:

- ▶ Three or more ear infections within six months
- ▶ Four or more infections within a year
- ▶ Hearing loss due to fluid buildup
- ▶ Speech problems due to fluid buildup

Ear tubes are not usually a medical emergency, so some parents may choose not to get them. “If a child doesn't have additional risk factors, parents might

Ear tubes are small, hollow, cylindrical devices that are surgically placed in the eardrum to help drain fluid that has built up behind the eardrum.



opt to wait and allow their child to grow out of the ear infection stage,” Dr. Chee says. “But we strongly recommend them for children experiencing hearing loss or speech concerns, or who have an increased risk of developmental difficulties.”

What to Expect With Ear Tube Surgery

Ear tube surgery is usually an outpatient procedure that takes about 10–15 minutes. General anesthesia is used, and the child will not be awake during the procedure. A small incision is made in the eardrum, and the ear tube is inserted.

“After the procedure, the child will need to rest and take it easy for the rest of the day,” Dr. Chee says. “Most kids can return to normal activities the next day.”

After the surgery, your child may experience some discomfort or mild pain. Over-the-counter pain medication can relieve any discomfort. Your child will also need to keep their ears dry for a few days after the surgery to prevent infection.

“Ear tubes usually stay in place for six to 18 months before falling out on their own,” Dr. Chee says. “Some kids might require a second set to be placed at some point if the same ear issues persist.” ⚙️



Scan the QR code to schedule an appointment with a pediatric specialist near you.

Get Screened

Early detection is key when it comes to cervical cancer. Learn about cervical cancer screening options, including Pap smears and HPV tests, and when you should get screened.

Cervical cancer is a cancer of the cervix, which connects the vagina to the uterus. Although it is most commonly found in people ages 35–60, anyone can get cervical cancer. One of the main causes for cervical cancer is a long-term case of certain types of human papilloma-virus (HPV).

“Early screening and detection is good for any cancer, particularly in the case of cervical cancer, as the high-grade precancerous cells are easier to treat and need minor surgery when detected early,” says **Neeti Misra, M.D.**, gynecologist at **Old Bridge Medical Center** and **Raritan Bay Medical Center**. “Not all precancerous cells need surgical treatment. Some can be followed up with regular Pap smear screening to check for progression of the disease, which most



To schedule a cervical cancer screening, scan the QR code.

of the time can be between every five and 15 years. It is dependent on the age of the patient, the kind of HPV infection and the pathology grade of the lesion.”

Types of Screenings

There are two main types of cervical cancer screenings that provide an early diagnosis and lead to better treatment outcomes:

HPV test: Checks for infection of high-risk HPV types that are associated with cervical cancer.

- ▶ HPV virus can cause changes in the cervix

Pap smear: Also known as a Pap test, used to check cervical cells for changes caused by HPV that can lead to the development of cervical cancer if left untreated.

- ▶ Can find precancerous cells and cervical cancer cells
- ▶ Can be helpful in discovering noncancerous conditions such as infections or inflammation

When Should I Get Screened?

The frequency of your screenings can depend on many factors, including your age and health history.

These are the screening recommendations by age group:

21–29 years old: You should get your first Pap smear at age 21. If your results are normal, your doctor may recommend you wait three years before your next Pap smear.

- ▶ Even if you are sexually active, you do not need a Pap smear before age 21.
- ▶ For this age group, it is normal to get tested approximately every three years.

30–64 years old: Talk to your health care provider to determine which method of testing is best for you, as there are multiple recommended methods for this age group:

- ▶ HPV test every five years
- ▶ HPV/Pap smear co-test every five years
- ▶ Pap smear every three years

65 years old and older: Discuss your options with your doctor and see if cervical cancer screenings are still necessary for you.

- ▶ For those who have screened regularly and gotten normal test results, your doctor may tell you that you no longer need to have regular screenings.
- ▶ If you have not been screened regularly or you have received abnormal test results, your doctor may recommend continued screening.

Many women may recall having a Pap smear done every year, but newer research has shown that yearly screening is no longer recommended. Studies have shown that since cervical cancer develops over time, oftentimes years of development, there can be expanded time in between screenings.

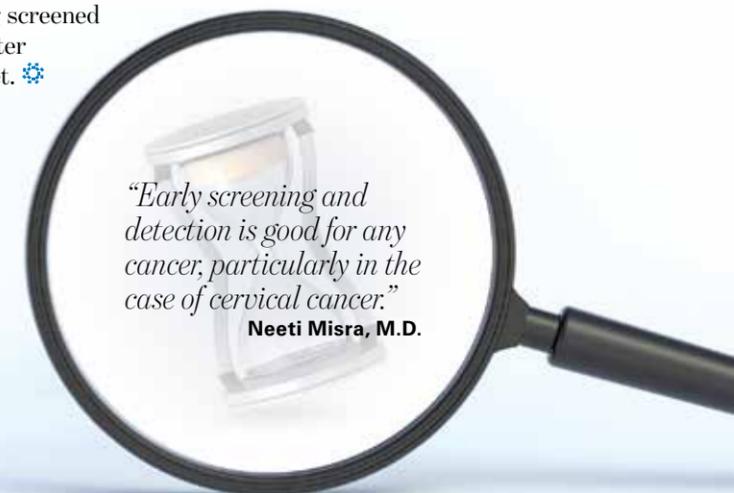
How Do These Tests Work?

Both the HPV test and the Pap smear can be conducted in a doctor’s office or clinic, often during a pelvic exam. They can be done at the same time (known as a co-test) or alone depending on your doctor’s recommendations, availability or preference. Each test is effective in finding cancer and pre-cancer.

The most important thing to remember about cervical cancer testing is that you should be getting screened regularly no matter which test you get. ⚙️



Neeti Misra, M.D.
Gynecologist
800-822-8905
Perth Amboy



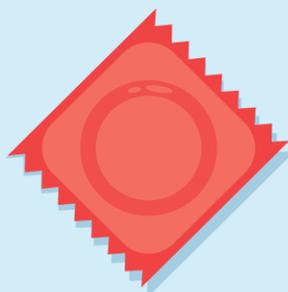
5 Ways to Prevent Cervical Cancer

Cervical cancer is preventable, but this is only true if you remain proactive. Here are five key prevention tips.



1 Get vaccinated: Since HPV is the most common cause of cervical cancer, getting vaccinated against it is a main way to help prevent the disease. It’s recommended that women and men (both of whom can have HPV) get the HPV vaccination before their teenage years. Specifically, it is common to administer the HPV vaccination to adolescents between the ages of 11 and 12. If you’re a woman who has never been vaccinated against HPV and are 45 years old or younger, you should speak to your doctor about getting the vaccine in order to help prevent cervical cancer.

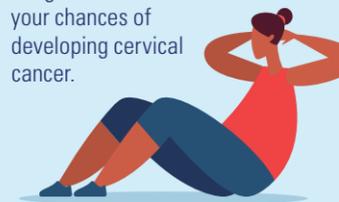
2 Use condoms: HPV is contracted through unprotected sex, so it’s important to use protection when having sex, especially if you have not been vaccinated against HPV.



3 Don’t smoke cigarettes: Studies have shown that smokers have an increased rate of developing cervical cancer when compared to their nonsmoking counterparts. What’s more, this risk increases when the number of cigarettes smoked per day increases.



4 Maintain a healthy diet and exercise routine: Studies have shown a connection between a diet that’s low in fruits and vegetables and an increased likelihood of getting cervical cancer. Keeping active and maintaining a healthy weight can decrease your chances of developing cervical cancer.



5 Don’t skip your regular screenings: Women 21 and older should visit their gynecologist annually to get the appropriate exams and screenings.



Ease on Down the Road



Our expert shares tips for safely easing into exercise after a joint replacement.



Craig Van Dien, M.D.

Physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist

800-822-8905

Edison



Are your hips and knees healthy? Take our health risk assessment to find out.

Joint replacements, where damaged joints are replaced with artificial ones, can sometimes require lengthy recovery times. Physical therapy and exercise are the key components to a successful recovery.

“Surgery can be exhausting and affect balance and strength, both of which may hinder the desire to begin a post-op exercise regimen. This is especially true if exercise has been previously limited by joint pain,” says **Craig Van Dien, M.D.**, physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist at **JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute**. “However, these are all the more reason to begin exercising, because joint rebuilding and overall health can only improve from here.”

Exercises to Try After Joint Replacement

Regular exercise can aid in recovery by increasing mobility and restoring strength. Building muscles around the new joint is essential to recovery, and this can be done with a combination of physical therapy and exercise.

“The proper exercise regimen should include activity for balance, strength and flexibility, and these activities must be targeted to affect the joint,” Dr. Van Dien says.

In the first few weeks, any type of cardiovascular activity may be difficult, and assistance likely will be needed. After about six weeks, however, slightly more intense activity can begin.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activities increase heart rate. Some good exercise options include:

- ▶ Walking
- ▶ Using an elliptical machine
- ▶ Swimming
- ▶ Biking

If balance and stability are issues, trekking poles can be used to assist with cardio activity.

Strength Training

Following a joint replacement, strength activities can target specific areas of the body:

- ▶ Quadriceps (the four muscles in the front of the thigh)
- ▶ Gluteals (three muscles in the buttocks)
- ▶ Hip abductors (muscles that allow the thigh to move to the side)

These exercises include straight leg raises, ankle pumps, knee straightening and knee bends. Hamstring and heel cord stretches are useful exercises to do to improve flexibility and balance.

Combination Exercises

Some exercises encompass aerobic, flexibility, strength and balance activities, such as swimming, dance and yoga. These exercises can be fun and may be a good choice for people who don't love traditional exercise.

Safety Considerations After Joint Replacement

Running is not recommended until a person is fully recovered from joint replacement. Generally, a doctor or physical therapist should be consulted before attempting high-impact activity. Modifications may be possible based on a health professional's judgment and expertise.

If there is any pain or swelling after exercise, such as in the knee or hip, the affected body part should be iced and elevated.

Physical therapy and exercise are vital pieces of recovery. If you're unsure of what activities are appropriate for you, your physical therapist and physician can help guide an appropriate exercise plan for your body. 🌀

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Avenel

Like Father, Like Daughter

Ann Kushmick visited Ireland a few months after her hip replacement, and her dad, Eugene McAnuff, no longer relies on his walker or cane to get around after his surgery.

Ann Kushmick and her father, Eugene McAnuff, had anterior hip replacements the same day and went on to good outcomes and surprisingly quick recoveries.

The term “all in the family” has special meaning to Ann Kushmick, who is in her early 50s, and her father, Eugene McAnuff, 82. Both underwent successful hip replacements performed by orthopedic surgeon **William A. Baione, M.D.**, on the same day at **Old Bridge Medical Center** and **Raritan Bay Medical Center**.

A Long Road to Hip Replacement

Ann's orthopedic journey started in 2020. Thanks to weight-loss surgery in August 2020 and her own determination, she had lost more than 100 pounds.

She worked from home during the COVID-19 pandemic. “I just wasn't as mobile and wasn't commuting to work, so I didn't walk as much,” she says.

Ann, who lives in Matawan, New Jersey, sought out a fitness trainer at her gym in October 2020. Low-impact swimming worked well, but Ann wanted to be a more active mom for her teenage daughter.

Eugene, too, was having mobility issues and had to use a cane or walker much of the time. So in 2021, they started physical therapy together to improve hip strength and mobility.

“I had thought about hip replacement before, but I thought I was too young,” Ann says. “I managed my chronic pain through stretching, breathing and other techniques.”

Good Candidates for Surgery

By January 2023, Ann's hip pain was severe enough that she was ready to consider hip replacement. Her physical therapist recommended that she and her dad see Dr. Baione. After meeting him, Ann and Eugene both scheduled for surgery for March 2023.

“Both of Ann's hips were severely arthritic—bone on bone—and her father had one severely arthritic hip,” says Dr. Baione. “They both had developed osteoarthritis.”

Dr. Baione determined that both father and daughter would be excellent candidates for

direct anterior hip replacement, which is a muscle-sparing approach that is performed through the front of the hip.

“The traditional posterior and lateral approach requires surgeons to cut some of the muscles that stabilize the hip, and sometimes patients are told not to move—twist or bend—a certain way during recovery,” Dr. Baione says. “The anterior approach is less invasive, causing less damage and resulting in less pain in the initial postoperative period with a lower risk of dislocation.”

Amazing Results After Hip Replacement

Ann, who had both hips replaced during the same surgery, happily surprised herself when she could climb the stairs six weeks post-surgery. She visited Ireland three months later and walked for hours while there—and she's lost another 15 pounds.

Her dad, Eugene, no longer relies on his walker or cane and is able to do much more on his own.

“At first, my brain told me to ‘be careful,’” Ann says. “Sometimes, as in this instance, the brain has to catch up to the body, and that was wonderful.”

Before You Test

As the population ages, more people are considering genetic testing for Alzheimer's disease. But how do you know if it's right for you?



Alzheimer's disease affects more than 10 percent of Americans 65 and older, according to the Alzheimer's Association. As the population ages, more people are considering genetic testing for Alzheimer's disease.

While this test can provide insight into a person's risk factors, it may come with positives and negatives. How do you know if genetic testing for Alzheimer's is right for you? **Martin Herman, M.D.**, neurologist at the Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **JFK University Medical Center**, weighs in.

Who Might Consider Genetic Testing?

While a person can develop Alzheimer's without any family history, people who have a parent or sibling with Alzheimer's are more likely to develop the disease. "But far and away, early onset—onset before age 60—is the most important red flag to consider genetic testing, particularly if there is more than one family member with Alzheimer's," Dr. Herman says.

When Alzheimer's runs in families, genetics may play a role. If a patient has a high incidence of Alzheimer's in their family, Dr. Herman says, they may be referred to a genetic counselor. A person might have a cousin or father who had the disease, or a grandfather who was diagnosed in his 80s or 90s. This occasional instance is not likely a case of genetic mutations, but rather genetic risk.

Here's what that means:

- ▶ **Genetic risk:** A person may have a form of a gene that is relatively common and may contribute to the presence of the disease but is not enough to cause the disease on its own. Unlike in the case of mutation, those who carry the genetic risk factor may not necessarily develop the disease.
- ▶ **Genetic mutation:** Genetic mutations are rare and occur when there is an error in the DNA. These mutations occur in situations where about 50 percent of the family is affected. The presence of the gene is enough to diagnose the presence or risk of the disease.

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istock.com/Rutzhana Nagiev

8 Ways to Help a Loved One With Alzheimer's

When a loved one has Alzheimer's disease, you may not know what to do. While there's no cure and few treatments, you can still help improve their life.

- 1 Educate yourself.** Read about Alzheimer's so you know what to expect as the disease progresses. Join support groups to learn about local resources you may need.
- 2 Make their home a safe living space.** Walk around the house to look for potential dangers. Throw rugs can be trip hazards, and alcohol or guns should be locked away.
- 3 Expect things to take longer.** Your loved one with Alzheimer's may move more slowly while going about their activities. When you must be somewhere, build in buffer time so you'll be less stressed.
- 4 Be compassionate instead of angry.** You may feel frustrated when your relative forgets things, misunderstands you or imagines things. Remember, Alzheimer's caused these changes, so you should be patient and kind, not annoyed.
- 5 Maintain conversations.** Your loved one may not remember everything, but they still need emotional connections. Focus on their feelings, not facts they've forgotten, to be a reassuring presence.
- 6 Keep things simple.** Do effortless activities together, like folding laundry or listening to music. Try not to argue, and use humor to diffuse situations when you can.
- 7 Prioritize your basic needs.** Make sure you sleep enough, eat healthily and exercise on a daily basis. This should help you be at your best to support your loved one.
- 8 Take breaks from caregiving.** Read books or engage in hobbies when you have free moments. Find ways to keep being you while you're managing your loved one's health.

Caring for someone with Alzheimer's can be challenging, but kindness and patience help. Remember, your loved one is the same person you've always known and loved, so treat them accordingly.



Risks of Genetic Testing for Alzheimer's Disease

Before undergoing any kind of genetic test, it is important to understand the possible risks involved.

Dr. Herman does not always recommend genetic screening: In the absence of early onset or more than one generation affected, he rarely orders genetic testing or refers to a geneticist. He says the testing doesn't provide conclusive information for most people.

Some people experience psychological distress associated with learning about their own personal health risks as well as potential risks for family members. For this reason, counseling services should always be considered with any sort of genetic testing. A genetics counselor can help you understand the potential emotional impact of test results as well as possible implications of the test.

If you believe you may be at risk for Alzheimer's disease, share your concerns with your doctor, who can advise you on how to proceed. ⚙️



Martin Herman, M.D.
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Edison

Go Online
To learn more, visit HMHforU.org/MemoryCare.



After successful minimally invasive brain surgery, Srinivas Rao is able to enjoy every day with his wife, Sushma, and their 8-year-old son.

Seize the Day

Innovative minimally invasive brain surgery is providing hope for patients experiencing debilitating seizures.



Vanessa C. Milano, M.D.

Functional neurosurgeon

800-822-8905

Edison and Holmdel

For people who experience daily epileptic seizures, life is constantly disrupted. But an innovative minimally invasive epilepsy treatment at the Hackensack Meridian Neuroscience Institute at **JFK University Medical Center** is changing all of that.

That was the case for Srinivas Rao, 52, who, for the past decade, had been having daily epileptic seizures—preventing him from working, driving, showering, using the stove or being left alone. After his surgery in February 2023, he has so far remained seizure-free while taking two anti-seizure medications.

“I tried all types of medications to control my seizures, but none helped,” says Srinivas, who was on three anti-seizure medications at the time of his procedure. “Even when I wasn’t having seizures, I never felt completely normal. It was so hard on me and my family—especially my wife, an angel who has been by my side since the seizures started in 2013, and my son.”

Srinivas’ wife, Chitra, whom most people know as Sushma, says his seizures were so frequent and severe that the family lived with near-constant anxiety about when another seizure would occur.

“We literally had no idea what would happen in the next 30 minutes, so we couldn’t plan anything. We had to keep an eye on [Srinivas] all the time,” says Sushma. “Once, Srinivas fell during a seizure and needed to get nine stitches in his head.”

Minimally Invasive Option for Epilepsy Treatment

With medications unable to control Srinivas’ seizures, his neurology team sent him to see functional neurosurgeon **Vanessa C. Milano, M.D.**, who specializes in minimally invasive neurosurgical treatments for epilepsy, movement disorders and brain tumors. “Srinivas was having a specific type of seizure called a mesial temporal lobe seizure, and he was having multiple seizures every day despite taking three medications,” says Dr. Milano. “We know from research that adding a fourth seizure medication would have a minimal chance of causing any significant reduction in Srinivas’ seizures and could result in additional side effects. So our next step was to discuss surgical treatment.”

One of Srinivas’ surgical treatment options was a procedure called a temporal lobectomy, a surgery to remove the temporal lobe where the seizures were originating. “This is a big operation that results in a large scar and a longer recovery time,” says Dr. Milano.

However, Dr. Milano was able to offer Srinivas a minimally invasive alternative to temporal lobectomy: a procedure called Laser Interstitial Thermal Therapy (LITT). “LITT involves inserting a thin laser-tipped probe into the brain through a small incision and using it to heat up and destroy tissue in the part of the brain that is causing seizures,” says Dr. Milano, who noted that LITT can also be used to treat tumors deep within the brain that would previously be considered inoperable. “Patients who undergo LITT have a 55 percent chance of

being seizure-free after the procedure, but some still require anti-seizure medication.”

Precision and Accuracy

Before Srinivas could proceed with LITT, he needed to have a procedure called a Wada test to make sure the LITT procedure would not affect the language and memory centers in his brain.

After Srinivas received the “all-clear” from his Wada test, Dr. Milano scheduled his LITT procedure—the first one to be performed at JFK—for February 7, 2023.

On the day of surgery, Dr. Milano followed a detailed plan to target the precise area of Srinivas’ brain that was causing seizures while avoiding critical blood vessels. She performed the procedure using intraoperative MRI and real-time thermography technology, allowing her to constantly monitor the temperature inside Srinivas’ brain—ensuring that the laser was hot enough to destroy brain tissue, but not so hot that it damaged surrounding areas.

During Srinivas’ procedure, the team called Sushma—who was unable to be with Srinivas because she had COVID-19—every 45 minutes to provide updates on his condition.

“When I woke up after surgery, I wasn’t in any pain,” says Srinivas. “I had to spend one night in the hospital as a precaution, but I felt well enough to go home.”

Improved Quality of Life

At his two-month follow-up appointment with Dr. Milano, Srinivas was seizure-free—although he is still unable to drive, work or travel on airplanes due to the risk of experiencing another seizure. He has been able to stop one of his three anti-seizure medications, but he continues to experience medication side effects that include double vision and difficulty focusing his vision, balance issues and fatigue.

After watching everything that Srinivas has gone through during the past 10 years, Sushma and the couple’s 8-year-old son are thrilled that the procedure has improved his quality of life. “Srinivas is always so concerned about caring for us. He deserves to be happy,” says Sushma. “Dr. Milano didn’t just save Srinivas, she saved all three of us.”

Having access to LITT is a tremendous benefit to the community. “When people hear ‘brain surgery,’ they tend to get scared,” says Dr. Milano. “Our goal is to make brain surgery—whether for epilepsy, brain tumors, movement disorders or other conditions—as minimally disruptive as possible, and we have the collaborative team and innovative technology in place to make that happen.”

Adds Srinivas: “Dr. Milano came into my life and changed everything. I got my quality of life back, and I’d do anything for Dr. Milano if she asked.” 🌟

Go Online

If you or a loved one is affected by epileptic seizures, learn about the Movement Disorders Program at JFK: [HMHforU.org/MovementDisorders](https://www.hmhforu.org/MovementDisorders).



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

For a full listing or to register, visit HMHforU.org/Events or call 800-560-9990.

SchedUle

Here are just a few of the events & classes this January through April 2024

Special Events

Celebrate Heart Month February Is Heart Month

Join us for webinars that focus on heart and vascular health!

Can You Live a Normal Life With Congestive Heart Failure?

Kanika Mody, M.D., will discuss how to live well while living with heart failure.

Feb. 8, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

Debunking 6 Women's Heart Health Myths

Join Sheila Sahni, M.D., as she debunks common myths about women's heart health and provides strategies for proactive heart health management.

Feb. 22, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

Stress, Diet and Your Heart

Brett Sealove, M.D., will discuss how stress and diet can affect your heart and what you can do to make sure you are living a heart-healthy lifestyle.

Feb. 20, 6:30–7:30 p.m., virtual event

When to Worry About Varicose Veins and Leg Pain

Join Scott Cluley, M.D., as he discusses varicose veins and learn whether they are a cosmetic issue, need medical treatment or could be related to another condition.

Feb. 21, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

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

▶ For a full list of Heart Month events, HMHforU.org/HeartEvents.

Behavioral Health

Depression: Better Days to Come

Join us for an overview of depression, including signs, symptoms, treatment options and the different types of depression.

Speaker: Vedavani Tiruveedhula, M.D., Feb. 7, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

Speaker: Stacy Doumas, M.D., April 11, 1–2 p.m., virtual event

▶ Relieving Stress and Anxiety

Feb. 12, 2–3 p.m., Cullen Recreation Center, 1776 Union Ave., Hazlet

Heart Health

Heart Attack and Stroke: When Should I Call 911?

Learn the signs and symptoms of heart attack and stroke and why you should not wait to call 911.

Feb. 29, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event



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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

HOSPITAL LOCATIONS



Cancer Care

The Power of Your Fork Learn evidence-based strategies to choose foods that maximize your health. Our integrative nutritionists will guide you through label reading and meal planning, and offer practical, time-efficient ways to increase your intake of plant-forward foods without compromising taste.

Feb. 29, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

▶ **What's the Deal With Colorectal Cancer?** Speaker: Michael L. Caparelli, M.D., March 13, 1–2 p.m., virtual event

▶ **Stop Smoking With Hypnosis** March 13, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

Neuroscience

Living Your Best Life With Parkinson's Disease Join Tasneem Peeraully, M.D., and Vanessa C. Milano, M.D., as they discuss management and treatment options for living with Parkinson's disease.

Jan. 25, 1–2 p.m., Woodbridge Library, 1 George Frederick Plaza



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Pediatrics

Parent/Guardian Talks

Coping With Loss Children may experience different losses in life: divorce, friendships, moving, sports injuries, death of a family member or friend. Join Heather Grossman, M.D., and Sonali Tatapudy, M.D., as they discuss the different types of loss, the impact it may have and how to support the child.

Feb. 29, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

▶ **My Child Can't Concentrate** Speakers: Harshasu Barot, D.O., and Natalie Riggio, Ed.M, BCBA, Jan. 25, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

▶ **Safe Sitter** Feb. 16, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m., James J. Cullen Community Center, 1776 Union Ave., Hazlet. Visit HMHforU.org/Events for more upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email COeventinquiries@hmhn.org for more information. Fee \$40.

▶ **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Visit HMHforU.org/Events for upcoming dates, or for groups of six or more, email COeventinquiries@hmhn.org for more information. Fee \$15, virtual event

General Wellness

Eat Well to Be Well Join our registered dietitian and learn how to live your best life with good nutrition.

Feb. 21, noon–1 p.m., Old Bridge Family YMCA, 1 Mannino Park Dr.

▶ **Wellness Screenings** Free, March 8, 10 a.m.–1 p.m., East Brunswick Public Library, 2 Jean Walling, Civic Center Dr., East Brunswick. Call 732-390-6953 to register.

▶ **Weight-loss Surgery** To learn more about weight-loss surgery, attend a free seminar. Find a seminar near you at HMHforU.org/WeightLoss.

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



By spreading the word by social media, flyers and events, the team at Blake Recovery Center has raised \$1,000 to buy books to support its patients.

Gift That Keeps on Giving

A fundraiser organized by the team at Blake Recovery Center provides life-changing books for patients recovering from addiction.

As well-known American author Garrison Keillor once said: "A book is a gift you can open again and again." Such a gift is seldom more life-changing than when it points toward recovery from a substance use disorder.

That's the aim of a unique, ongoing fundraiser spearheaded by Michele Scasserra, director of substance use counseling services at Blake Recovery Center. Part of **Carrier Clinic**, which specializes in mental health and substance use disorders, Blake Recovery Center treats about 1,400 people each year in its inpatient program and has been recognized among the best addiction treatment centers in New Jersey for the third time in four years.

Michele and her colleagues noticed that patients often ask for recovery materials and books they can use while in treatment and potentially take home with them afterward. The Blake Recovery Center team decided to take action during National Recovery Month in September 2023.

"Most patients will access at least one of these books while they're with us, and if someone is invested in a recovery book they're reading, you never want to say they can't take that book when they leave," Michele says. "But it's hard to keep up with the demand. This prompted me to think about what

we could do to raise funds not only for books for Blake Recovery Center but for other units at the Carrier Clinic, as well."

With the help of Michael Loch, director of development for Behavioral Health at Hackensack Meridian Health Foundation, whose team set up a website to facilitate online donations, Michele and her colleagues spread the word on social media, with flyers and at patient alumni events. So far, the effort has raised about \$1,000, a small but mighty amount that has enabled the purchase of at least 55 recovery books.

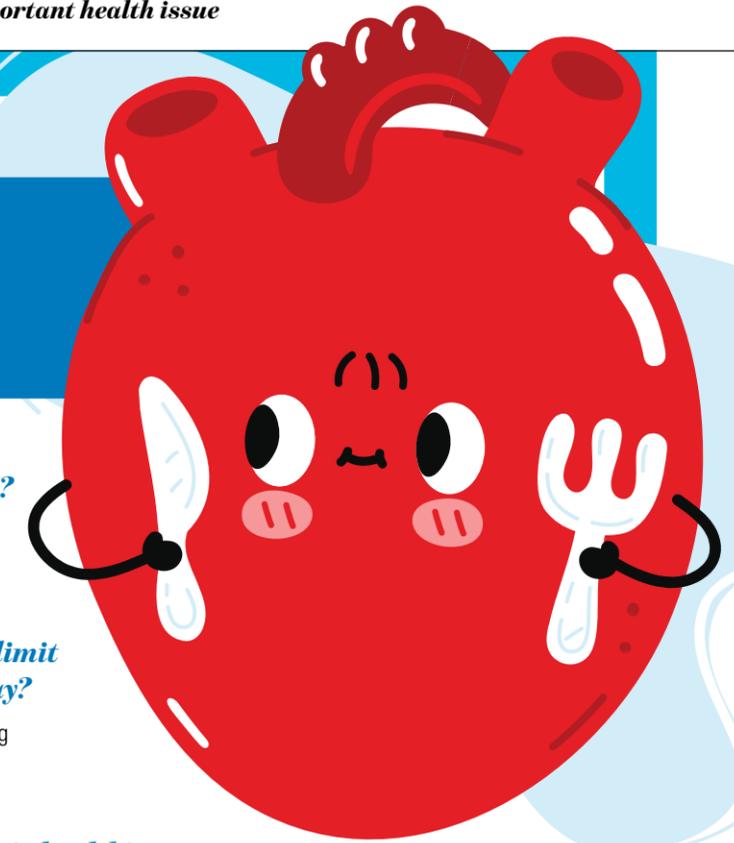
"With only hundreds of dollars, this fundraiser could have an immediate impact. It's 55 people who we hope to give a resource that helps them stay in recovery," Michael says.

Addiction's broad impact on society means many people understand its devastating effects on individuals and families. "We hope the fundraising effort will continue to gain steam in coming months, because the need for something like this is never over," Michele says. 🌟

Donate to the book fundraiser at Blake Recovery Center at HMHforU.org/GiveBooks/

Heart Smart

Are you making the most heart-friendly food choices? Take our quiz to find out.



1 Which type of fat is considered heart-healthy?

- Saturated fat
- Trans fat
- Monounsaturated fat

2 What is the recommended daily limit of sodium you should get each day?

- 1,500 mg
- 2,500 mg
- 3,000 mg

3 Which type of protein is healthiest for your heart?

- Red meat
- Chicken with skin
- Fish

4 How many servings of fruits and vegetables should you consume each day for heart health?

- 1–2 servings
- 4–5 servings
- 7–8 servings

5 Which cooking method is healthier for your heart?

- Frying
- Baking
- Deep-frying



Answers—hey, no peeking!

- 1. Monounsaturated fat**
Saturated and trans fats raise levels of the "bad" cholesterol, while monounsaturated fats are good for your heart.
- 2. 1,500 mg**
The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 mg a day but ideally a limit of 1,500 mg of sodium daily.
- 3. Fish**
Fish—especially tuna and salmon—is one of the best proteins to help prevent heart disease.
- 4. 4–5 servings**
The American Heart Association recommends getting four to five servings of fruits and vegetables a day to increase heart health.
- 5. Baking**
Frying usually involves flour, salt and fat, which aren't good for your heart. Instead, try baking, broiling or steaming.

Scan the QR code to schedule a heart screening near you.





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The Hackensack Meridian Health & Wellness Center at Clark is a convenient, easy-to-access location for health services that are centered around you. Primary care, urgent care, lab testing and specialists for everything from cardiology to neurology to rehabilitation are all under one roof, ready when you are.

Conveniently located at 1180 Raritan Road in Clark

Learn more and meet our doctors at HMHforU.org/Clark.



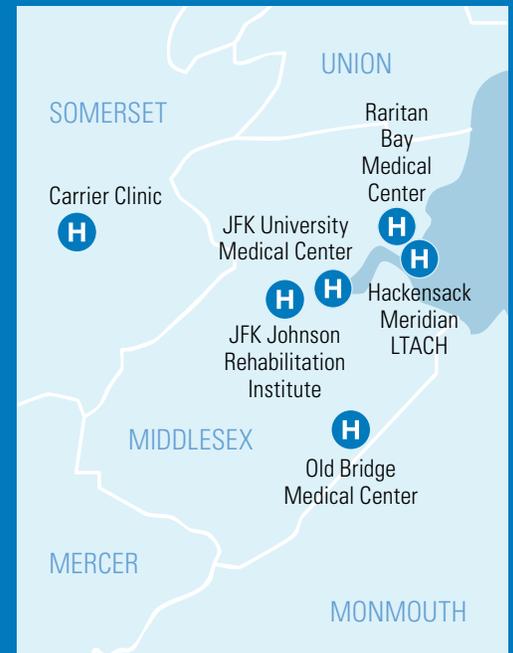
How Well Do You Know Heart Health? Take our interactive quiz to test your knowledge of all things heart health: HMHforU.org/HeartQuiz.



5 Easy Steps to Remember CPR Be ready to respond in an emergency with these five steps to remember CPR: HMHforU.org/CPR.

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

Our hospitals near you:



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