

# HEALTH U



Hackensack  
Meridian Health



THE HUNT  
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VARIANTS

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# Turn up the Heat on Health



Are heart  
attacks  
hereditary?

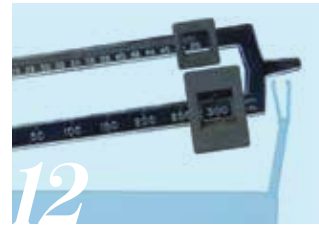
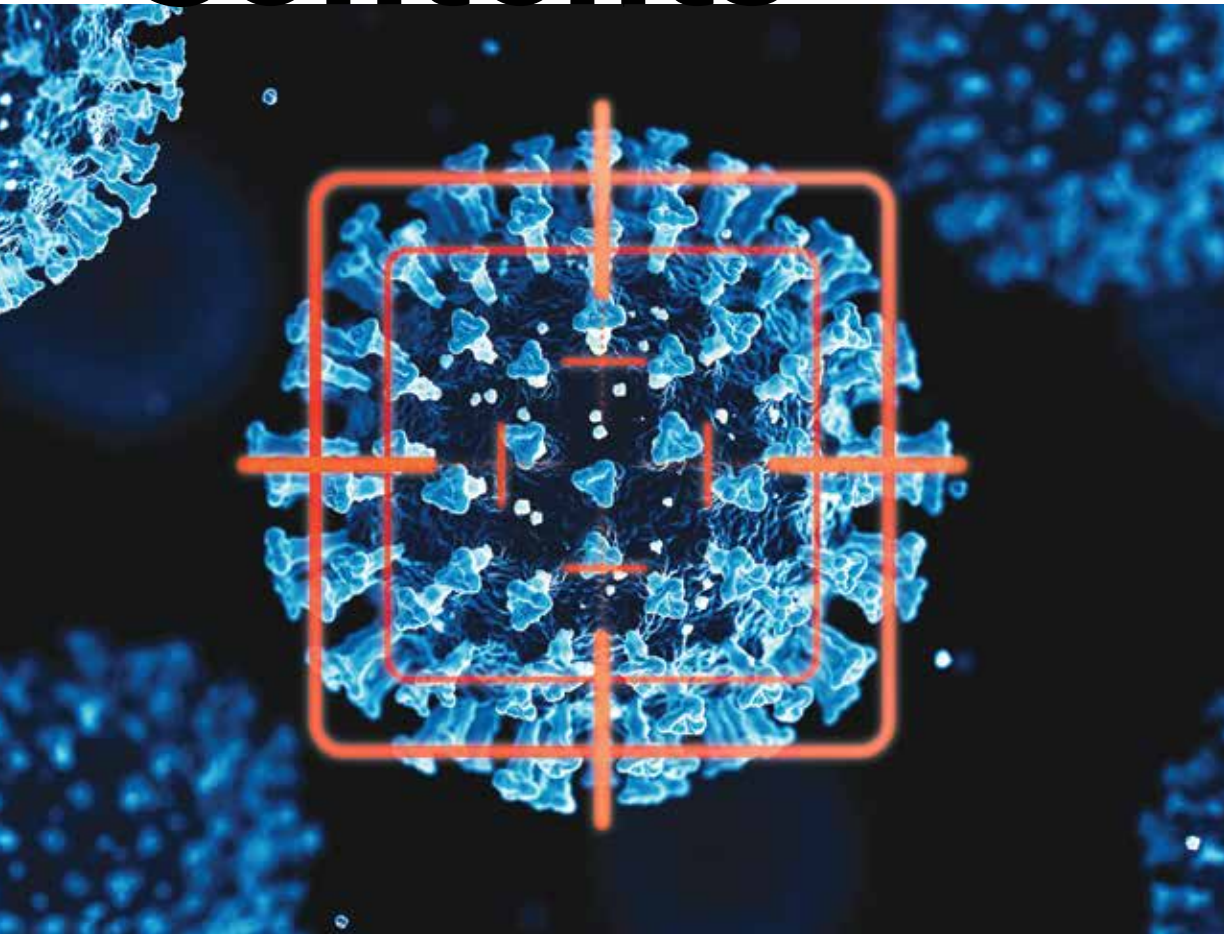
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PARA LEER ESTA REVISTA EN ESPAÑOL,  
VISITE [HMHforU.org/Spanish2](https://www.HMHforU.org/Spanish2).

# Contents Summer 2022



 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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**Innovation** transforming medical research into treatments  
**Variant Hunters**  
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The heat is on! Find five ways to stay safe and comfortable in this extreme weather at [HMHforU.org/HeatWave](https://www.HMHforU.org/HeatWave).

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Discover four common summer injuries in kids and how to help prevent them at [HMHforU.org/KidsInjuries](https://www.HMHforU.org/KidsInjuries).



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

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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.

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



### First in Line

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Robert C. Garrett, FACHE, CEO**  
Hackensack Meridian Health



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### Hackensack Meridian Children's Health Ranked Among the Top

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

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

# BetterU

quick tips to help you live your healthiest life

### INSIDE THIS SECTION

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

## Got 10 Minutes? Try a Mini Workout

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

Getting exercise doesn't have to be a monumental task. "Even just 10 minutes here and there throughout your day can make a noticeable and positive impact on your health," says **Renee Dougherty, D.O.**, internal medicine specialist at Riverview Medical Center.

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

#### Scrolling through social media?

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

#### Waiting for your kid's soccer practice to end?

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

#### Got 10 minutes at work?

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

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

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



Watch our physical therapist demonstrate these exercises.

#### Ready to turn up the heat?

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

istock.com/painimom/irina Griskova



Renee Dougherty, D.O.  
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Tinton Falls

### Go Online

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



## Cyber Attack

What are the effects of cyberbullying?

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

Because most children, tweens and teens have smartphones and access to computers, they're able to bully, or be bullied, through virtual means.

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

### Signs Your Child Is Being Cyberbullied

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

### What Parents Can Do

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

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



Philip E. Vincent, M.D.

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

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## The Best Diets to Try

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



## Rainbow Lentil Medley

Serves 4

### Ingredients

#### Salad:

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

#### Dressing:

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

### Steps

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

### Seasoned Cook

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

### Nutritional Information

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

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

# Is it safe to travel this summer?

**Mariawy Riollano Cruz, M.D., weighs in:**

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

**Consider these tips:**

**Stay up-to-date with your COVID-19 vaccines.**

**Don't travel if you are sick.**

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

Choose **outdoor activities with minimal crowds** instead of crowded indoor places, particularly if you are traveling with a child too young to be vaccinated or someone who is at higher risk.

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

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



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

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# Why does my arm hurt after a shot?

**Nicole Babushkin, M.D., weighs in:**

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

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

**Reduce the pain after vaccination by:**

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



Nicole Babushkin, M.D.

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Brick

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

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# Why is my heart rate high?

**Ali Moosvi, M.D., weighs in:**

Some people who are born with congenital heart conditions may experience an elevated heartbeat. Other people who develop heart disease over time may notice that their heart rate feels high. But there are plenty of common reasons that can cause your heart rate to be high:

- ▶ Stress
- ▶ Addictive substances such as caffeine, cigarettes and alcohol
- ▶ Overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism)
- ▶ Anemia
- ▶ Strenuous physical activity
- ▶ Medication side effects

Get immediate medical help if your heart rate seems too high and you have these symptoms: shortness of breath, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, weakness, feeling faint, fainting, or chest pain or discomfort.



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Brick and Jackson

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

# Should I worry about my snoring?

**Rana Ali, M.D., weighs in:**

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

**Symptoms of sleep apnea**

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

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



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Ocean, Rumson, Manasquan and Brick



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

# Are Heart Attacks Hereditary?



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

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

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

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

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

## Know Your Risk

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

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

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

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

## Lower Your Risk

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

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

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

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

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



## In Reverse

**Michael Riley had only months to live as a result of his advanced heart failure. Doctors found a way to reverse it.**

Despite heart medications and prior stent procedures, 63-year-old Michael Riley's heart failure had progressed due to advanced disease and several heart attacks.

“Michael had complex heart disease, and his condition was rapidly deteriorating, requiring hospitalization to treat his heart failure,” says Michael's cardiologist, **Shaddy Younan, M.D.**

Michael's severe type of heart failure meant that he had only six months or fewer to live—that is, until a team of cardiac experts at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center** joined forces to save his life and reverse his heart failure.

“I suffered from heart attacks and had a pacemaker and defibrillator, but the congestive heart failure progressed so quickly. I was so weak, I could not hold my head up straight,” says Michael, who lives in South Amboy, New Jersey, with his wife of 40 years, Susan.

## A Temporary Solution

“When he was admitted to Jersey Shore, he was in cardiogenic shock, a life-threatening condition where the heart can't pump enough blood to meet the body's needs,” says **Jesus Almendral, M.D., FACC**, medical director, Advanced Heart Failure Program at Jersey Shore.

Dr. Younan contacted **Deepak Singh, M.D.**, surgical director of the Advanced Heart Failure Program, and they devised a care plan to save Michael's life, utilizing leading-edge cardiac technology.

As part of the first step in his care, Dr. Singh placed an Impella® 5.5 temporary left ventricular assist device (LVAD) into position by inserting it through an

artery under Michael's collarbone and into his heart. Once in place, the pump supported his heart while monitoring pumping activity.

“This temporary procedure got him better from a cardiogenic shock perspective and allowed Dr. Younan to perform shockwave coronary lithotripsy and additional stenting,” Dr. Singh says. The “shockwave” intravascular lithotripsy is a new technology combining a balloon angioplasty catheter with the use of sound waves to open the arteries that supply blood to the heart.

## Permanent Heart Fix

The shockwave stenting was successful: It enabled Michael to walk again and improved his kidney function. Still, his heart function did not improve, and a permanent solution was needed.

“Implanting the permanent HeartMate III LVAD is a high-risk open-heart procedure in patients with cardiogenic shock,” Dr. Singh says. “Patients with the most severe form of heart failure have about a 20 percent survival rate, so there was a lot at stake, and Michael needed this type of intervention to survive long term.”

Fortunately, Michael did well after the surgery. He was able to leave the hospital and start cardiac rehabilitation after nine days. Eventually, his cardiovascular function normalized, allowing him to carry on all his activities without any shortness of breath.

“I am still recovering and gaining my strength, but I feel so much better,” says Michael, father to four sons and former pastor and journalist. “Everyone comments about how much healthier I seem and how my outlook and mood have improved.”

Michael Riley is happy to be healthy again and to be given more time with his wife of 40 years, Susan.



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For more information, call the Heart Failure Center at **732-776-4196**.



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

# Know Your Number

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

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

"BMI is a more accurate measure of the amount of work your heart is doing to support your body," says **Karl Strom, M.D.**, bariatric surgeon at **Bayshore Medical Center** and **Southern Ocean Medical Center**.

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

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

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- ▶ BMI between 18.5 and 25 is considered normal.
- ▶ BMI between 25 and 30 is considered overweight.
- ▶ BMI over 30 is considered obese.
- ▶ BMI over 40 is considered morbidly obese.

By the time most patients come to a bariatric surgeon, they've already tried multiple ways to lose weight for many years but haven't been able to keep the weight off long term. "It's not their fault. It's a disease," Dr. Strom says. "Fifty years ago, we didn't classify obesity as a disease, but we do now. Once you have the disease, we recommend you seek help."

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

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

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



Karl Strom, M.D.

Bariatric surgeon

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Holmdel, Iselin, Toms River, Glen Ridge and Manahawkin



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



**Go Online**

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

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# Hand in Hand

*So far, Todd Currier has lost more than 200 pounds, while Alicia Currier has shed 140 pounds.*

## Todd and Alicia Currier opted for same-day weight-loss surgery so that they could emotionally support each other in recovery.

For years, Todd Currier dreaded paying premium prices for clothing in specialty stores, checking the seating before going to a restaurant because he didn't fit into booths and having people stare at him in public. But a fear of doctors and hospitals kept him from doing anything about his weight, even with sleep apnea, high cholesterol and other health problems.

"At 464 pounds, I was tired of my life being defined by my weight," says Todd, a Staten Island, New York, resident who works as an area supervisor for the New York City Department of Transportation.

Then three of his co-workers had weight-loss surgery. Their success made him reevaluate his situation. One thing they all had in common was that their bariatric surgeon was **Richard Greco, D.O.**

### Family Affair

Todd's wife, Alicia, a school nurse, weighed 381 pounds, suffered from health problems and lacked energy. When Todd told her about his co-workers, she researched Dr. Greco and was pleased with everything she learned. The couple made an appointment with him.

Dr. Greco recalls that Todd, with a body mass index (BMI) of 70, and Alicia, at a 58 BMI, were both considered obese and at high risk for more serious health issues and the possibility of early death. They needed to lose a lot of weight, which was unlikely without bariatric surgery. In fact, Dr. Greco says people in the Curriers' weight range have only about a 12 percent chance of losing substantial weight on their own, but their odds increase to 80 percent with bariatric surgery.

Dr. Greco says otherwise-healthy patients who have a BMI of 40 or more—or those who have comorbidities like heart disease, sleep apnea and diabetes with a BMI of 35 or more—are candidates for bariatric surgery. Patients tend to do better following surgery when they're younger adults because their metabolism rates are higher, and they are more capable of exercising. At ages 44 and 41, respectively, Todd and Alicia were strong candidates for bariatric surgery.

### A Team Effort

The couple wanted to have their surgeries the same day. They were committed to supporting each other as they went through the progression of special post-surgical diets. So on June 29, 2020, Todd and Alicia each had a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy at **Bayshore Medical Center**.

During the laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy procedures, Dr. Greco created four small incisions in their abdomens, reconfigured their stomachs to a "banana" shape and removed excess stomach tissue, which included the area that produces the hormone ghrelin that stimulates hunger. The couple was able to share a hospital room while hospitalized for two nights after the procedures.

### A Future With Hope

So far, Todd has lost more than 200 pounds, and Alicia has shed 140 pounds. Their obesity-related health problems are receding or gone. "I love the new energy," Alicia states. "I'm able to clean the house without resting, and Todd's more active and helpful now." They also enjoy shopping for clothes wherever they want. They praise Dr. Greco for everything he did for them.

Dr. Greco says bariatric surgery success is a team effort over the long term. "Initially, our patients' large stomachs stack the cards against their success," he says. "Once we reduce that, we work with them to make lifestyle changes. Then we follow up with them long term to ensure the best outcome."



Richard Greco, D.O.

Bariatric surgeon

800-822-8905

Holmdel, Iselin, Toms River and Manahawkin

CANCER CARE



# Keep an Eye Out

*Don't ignore these potential symptoms of cancer.*

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

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



Roshani Patel, M.D.  
Breast surgeon  
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Neptune and Jackson

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Fever.** If you have a fever that persists for more than three days, get checked out. Some blood cancers, such as lymphoma, can cause someone to experience a prolonged fever.

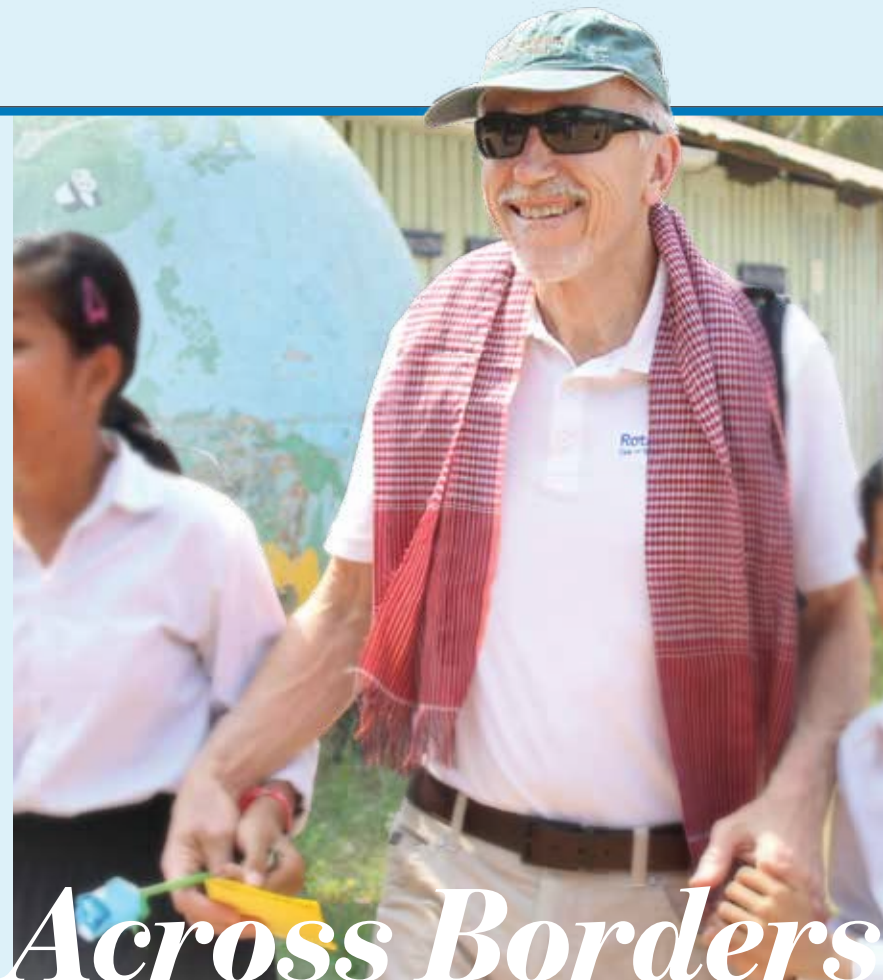
**Abnormal uterine bleeding.** Especially in postmenopausal women, abnormal bleeding can indicate endometrial cancer.

**Respiratory issues.** A persistent cough that does not resolve with cold medications or shortness of breath not related to a heart issue or infection should be checked out by a doctor. 🌀

## Go Online

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

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## Across Borders

**When Richard Allen was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, he crossed multiple state borders to find targeted radiation treatment and minimally invasive surgery.**

In March 2019, Richard Allen was eating a meal when he took a swallow that would change his life. Instead of smoothly moving down his esophagus to his stomach, the food seemed to stall. "There was this uncomfortable feeling that it just wasn't quite getting down," he says.

When the same thing happened again about a week later, Richard—a self-described "health nut"—didn't waste any time getting an appointment to see a doctor in his hometown of Gainesville, Florida. The news was a surprise: esophageal cancer. He had no family history of esophageal cancer, but, as he found out, he had two risk factors: a hiatal hernia and asymptomatic gastric reflux.

Richard, the creator of multiple medical technology companies and co-founder of a nonprofit organization that provides support to rural Cambodian villages, learned that the standard treatment—and his best option at success—was to have chemotherapy followed by radiation, then an esophagectomy,

a surgery that partially or totally removes the esophagus and pulls the stomach up to replace the removed esophagus.

He wanted to avoid surgery if at all possible, but agreed to undergo chemotherapy and proton radiation therapy and pursue other therapies such as immunotherapy. Unfortunately, after this treatment, a cancerous nodule appeared. It looked like surgery would be unavoidable.

### The Search for the Best Possible Care

Richard found **Thomas Bauer, M.D.**, a thoracic and esophageal surgeon with expertise in robotic-assisted surgery at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**, which has received The Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval® for Esophageal Cancer.

"Richard identified what he felt was the best place to come," Dr. Bauer says. "When he needed the next level of care, he came to Jersey Shore."

*Richard Allen is co-founder of a nonprofit organization that provides support to rural Cambodian villages.*

Dr. Bauer reached out to radiation oncologist **Douglas Miller, M.D.**, to find out if there might be another option that would allow Richard to avoid surgery. Dr. Miller evaluated Richard's medical records and concluded that because Richard's recurrence was small, he was a good candidate for brachytherapy, a targeted internal radiation treatment. "This brachytherapy treatment was an attempt to avoid surgery by still giving him a meaningful chance at controlling his cancer," Dr. Miller says.

Richard traveled from Florida to New Jersey for the brachytherapy, which was successful. However, nine months later, a follow-up endoscopy found new early stage cancer cells. Luckily, despite the extensive internal scarring from his many intense treatments, he was still a good candidate for a robot-assisted esophagectomy.

In October 2021, Richard returned to Jersey Shore, where Dr. Bauer performed a minimally invasive, robot-assisted surgery. He was in the hospital for a week and back home in Florida a few weeks later, adjusting to having to eat smaller, more frequent meals, but he felt upbeat about his prognosis and his experience at Jersey Shore.

"It was just an amazing experience, from the folks that check you in to the nurses and technicians that work with Dr. Miller and Dr. Bauer," he says. "Everybody cares for you like family. I've been to a lot of places, and it is not like that everywhere."



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Thoracic and esophageal surgeon  
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Radiation oncologist  
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# The 411 on H<sub>2</sub>O

*Staying hydrated is vital to your health and wellness. Here's how much water to consume and tips for avoiding dehydration.*



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

### Are You Getting Enough Water?

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

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

#### It's also important to be aware of signs of dehydration:

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

### 6 Tips to Stay Hydrated

**1 Set a daily goal.** It is easy to overlook drinking water when you are busy managing other details of your day-to-day life. Setting a daily goal will make you more mindful of how much water you need to consume.

**2 Keep a reusable water bottle handy.** Often when we get thirsty, we don't have direct access to water. It helps to keep a reusable water bottle on hand. Look for a water bottle with hydration markers or milestones to keep you motivated.

**3 Set reminders.** Reminders and timers are excellent tools to stay on target with your hydration goals. Do this with your phone, your watch or sticky notes strategically placed at home or work.

**4 Flavor your water.** Add flavoring and fruit to your water, or buy fruit-infused water bottles.

**5 Consume foods with high water content.** Water also can be consumed through foods with high water content, such as cabbage, cantaloupe, celery, melon, lettuce and zucchini.

**6 Hydrate instead of overeat.** Some people may eat out of boredom or because they feel hungry when they actually may just be thirsty. If you're reaching into the snack cabinet too frequently, use this as a signal to grab your water instead.

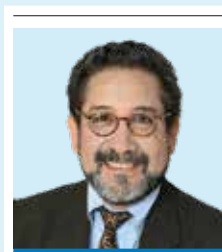
### Go Online

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

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# Game On

**A kidney transplant saved 16-year-old Dominic Lipka's life. Now, he's living it to the fullest playing video games, hanging out with friends and gearing up for baseball.**



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Michael Goldstein, M.D.  
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Hackensack and Neptune

In many ways, Dominic Lipka is like any typical 16-year-old boy who loves playing video games, hanging out with friends and watching baseball. But it wasn't long ago that the Keansburg, New Jersey, resident's life was saved by steadfast, strategic efforts from pediatric kidney specialists at Hackensack Meridian Health.

Dominic plunged into sudden organ failure in spring 2020. The autoimmune disease lupus was stealthily destroying his kidneys. Dominic's father, Joe Lipka, who adopted the boy as an infant, had no idea anything was amiss until his son grew pale, and tests showed internal bleeding.

Doctors at **K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital** at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center** scrambled to save Dominic, pinpointing his diagnosis and placing him on lifesaving dialysis to filter his blood and stop the bleeding. “He was between life and death. Our first task was to save his life, and the second was to save his kidneys,” says **Guillermo Hidalgo, M.D.**, division chief of Pediatric Nephrology who oversaw Dominic's treatment. “We managed to save his life, but he couldn't recover kidney function.”

Dominic's touch-and-go, 46-day hospital stay took a toll on father and son. “It was a nightmare,” Joe recalls. “I had to keep my composure for Dominic, but there were days I'd get in my car and cry.”

### Lifesaving Transplant

Even after he was discharged, Dominic's health remained precarious. Home dialysis proved less disruptive than hospital-based treatments, but it was clear that Dominic required a kidney transplant.

“Getting a new kidney is the gold standard of care,” says **Michael Goldstein, M.D.**, director of the Division of Organ Transplantation at **Hackensack University Medical Center**. “Once you develop renal failure, your overall lifespan can be dramatically shortened because of the damage it does to the body. A transplant is really lifesaving.”

Dominic was placed on a waitlist for a deceased-donor organ, a process that can take years. Joe got a call in January 2022 that a donor kidney became available for Dominic, and Dr. Goldstein performed the transplant during a complication-free, three-hour surgery. The teenager's new organ began working immediately, and he was able to go home within several days.

“Dominic and his father were warriors,” Dr. Hidalgo says. “They jumped all those hurdles, and we got them across.”



*Nine months after his kidney transplant, Dominic Lipka's energy levels are near normal, and he is gaining height, weight and muscle mass.*

### New Goals

Months after his transplant, Dominic's energy levels are near normal. He's gaining height, weight and muscle mass. He gets frequent checkups, and for the rest of his life, he will need anti-rejection medications, which also reduce inflammation that could fuel his lupus.

Long term, doctors say Dominic will be able to live a normal life, though another kidney transplant will eventually be required. “Kidneys don't last forever when they're not yours,” Dr. Goldstein explains. “He will likely need a second transplant about 20 years from now.”

But Dominic is laser-focused on the here and now. He recently accomplished another teenage rite of passage when he applied for a part-time job.

“I have to keep reminding myself he's OK,” Joe says. “He has color on his face, a good appetite and he's ready to play baseball. As a dad, I couldn't be happier.”

Learn more about organ transplantation at [Hackensack Meridian Health at HMHforU.org/Transplant](https://www.hmhforu.org/Transplant).

# Can COVID-19 Cause Hair Loss?

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



David J. Falco, M.D.

Internal medicine specialist

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

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

“It’s extremely distressing, and it certainly might catch people by surprise,” says **David J. Falco, M.D.**, internal medicine specialist at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**. “These patients may have thought they were recovered and done. But hair loss might also be associated with other symptoms and signs of post-COVID syndrome.”

Hackensack Meridian *Health* doctors are seeing a slew of patients experiencing hair loss after COVID infection, reflecting larger trends.

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

## The Root of the Problem

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

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

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

He also believes an overload of inflammation in the body from COVID-19 is part of the equation. Even the psychological stress of having the virus and enduring the pandemic may contribute.

“Patients with long COVID can have persistent inflammation that causes a number of symptoms, and one can be this type of hair loss,” Dr. Falco says.

## Prescription for Patience

It can take time for the body to recover from the blow of a severe COVID-19 infection and for hair to grow back.

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

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

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

- ▶ Eating a healthy diet
- ▶ Getting plenty of sleep
- ▶ Taking supplements if your doctor recommends them
- ▶ Avoiding unnecessary stress 🌀

## Go Online

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

# Winning the Race

**Triathlete Mauricio Borrero makes a complete COVID-19 recovery after more than a month on a ventilator.**

In January 2021, Mauricio Borrero, 61, of Toms River, New Jersey, felt like he was coming down with a cold. He tested positive for COVID-19, but he wasn’t feeling too bad for the first few days.

A few days later, his condition went suddenly downhill while working from home. “I was having trouble hitting the keyboard, and I felt like I was in a tunnel,” says Mauricio, director of site operations at Naval Air Warfare Center in Lakehurst, New Jersey.

His wife, Kellie, immediately took him to **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**, where he was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

“I briefly remember being wheeled into Jersey Shore before I passed out,” says Mauricio, who spent the next 39 days unconscious and intubated in the ICU, fighting for his life.

## ‘A Long Road Ahead’

Mauricio received life support from a ventilator and extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO), an advanced type of mechanical life support only available at medical centers that offer highly specialized care. He also received Remdesivir to treat COVID-19 and nutrition through a feeding tube.

COVID-19 protocols prevented Kellie and the couple’s four children from visiting in person. Kellie spoke with team members every day for updates on her husband’s condition. “It was a partnership between Mauricio’s care team and me,” Kellie says. “The team would help us video chat, so we could talk to Mauricio.”

On March 9, Mauricio’s family was relieved to hear that his condition had improved, and his care team took him off the ventilator. After waking up, Mauricio quickly realized the toll COVID-19 and his resulting hospital stay took on his body.

“I couldn’t talk, get out of bed or even move,” says Mauricio. “I knew I had a long road ahead.”

Mauricio eventually was transferred to inpatient rehabilitation at Hackensack Meridian Johnson Rehabilitation Institute at **Ocean University Medical Center**. He began working with physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist **Richard Fernicola, M.D.**



Today, Mauricio Borrero is back to cycling for 45 minutes a day.



Richard Fernicola, M.D.

Physical medicine and rehabilitation specialist

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Allenhurst

“When Mauricio came in, his muscles were deconditioned, and he had trouble swallowing,” says Dr. Fernicola. “However, Mauricio was very ambitious, upbeat and motivated. He was young and a triathlete, so he was used to physical activity.”

## Meeting Recovery Goals

Mauricio set goals for himself, including completing everyday personal care tasks and walking without help. Along with Dr. Fernicola, he worked with a physical therapist, occupational therapist and speech language pathologist to achieve those goals.

“The team told me I would be able to walk with a walker in 4–6 weeks,” says Mauricio, who did his physical and occupational therapy exercises in bed—sometimes at 3 a.m. when he couldn’t sleep. “I walked with a walker in eight days.”

Mauricio was discharged from inpatient rehabilitation after three weeks. He participated in outpatient rehabilitation for several weeks after that. Today, he is back to work, everyday activities and exercise, including cycling for 45 minutes a day, walking his dog, gardening and making home repairs.

“Mauricio used every opportunity to get stronger and met every goal in a timely fashion,” says Dr. Fernicola. “Rehab can be tough psychologically, but it was clear Mauricio wanted to bounce back. His recovery is a great achievement.”

WOMEN'S HEALTH

# Why Am I Not Getting Pregnant?

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

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

If you and your partner know that each of your reproductive systems is healthy, **Ann Pagano, M.D.**, obstetrician/gynecologist at **Ocean University Medical Center**, provides some possible reasons why you haven't been successful yet.



Ann Pagano, M.D.  
Obstetrician/gynecologist  
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Brick

### Timing Just Hasn't Been Right

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

### Unhealthy Lifestyle Choices

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

### High Stress and Anxiety Levels

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

### Lubricants Getting in the Way

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

### Just Stopped Taking Hormonal Birth Control

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

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

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### Go Online

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

# It Takes a Village

**Days after her breast cancer diagnosis, Lisa Mehler Ackermann worked with a reproductive specialist to make future plans for her family.**



Lisa Mehler Ackermann and Lauren Mozer live minutes away from each other, and Lauren is thrilled to be close to the niece she helped bring into the world.

As terrified as she was to receive a breast cancer diagnosis at age 34, Lisa Mehler Ackermann was just as disturbed that her illness might stop her from her lifelong goal—becoming a mother.

"Two things went through my head: Is this going to kill me? And am I going to be able to have a baby? They were equally important to me," recalls Lisa, now 38, who underwent months of chemotherapy and several surgeries to eradicate her cancer.

It took a village to make motherhood a reality for the Brick, New Jersey, woman, including her sister and a team of clinicians at **Ocean University Medical Center**.

Within days of Lisa's diagnosis of hormone-receptive breast cancer in late 2018, she and husband Chris met with reproductive endocrinology and infertility specialist **William Ziegler, D.O.**, who laid out a plan to quickly harvest and fertilize Lisa's eggs.

Meanwhile, Lisa's sister, Lauren Mozer of Point Pleasant, New Jersey—a mother of two—offered to become Lisa's gestational carrier to fulfill her sister's dreams of motherhood. When doctors at Ocean delivered baby Madison in July 2021, the birth was the culmination of many dreams and much effort.

"I could never have imagined this was how I'd become a mom," Lisa says. "I'm just so grateful."

### Considering Fertility During Crisis

Because of uterine problems, Lisa had already consulted Dr. Ziegler for fertility help before her cancer diagnosis. But that event pushed efforts into overdrive, with Dr. Ziegler having only two weeks to retrieve eggs from Lisa's ovaries, fertilize them with her husband's sperm and freeze the resulting embryos before Lisa's treatment began.

"The five-year survival rate for women under 40 with a breast cancer diagnosis is over 90 percent, meaning more women are surviving breast cancer and can possibly conceive," he explains. "One big decision after a cancer diagnosis is what a woman thinks about her childbearing potential, something that's often not discussed until after the fact."

Ovary-stimulating drugs taken during those two weeks wouldn't prompt Lisa's cancer to worsen, Dr. Ziegler notes. But Lisa was told she shouldn't carry a baby because the hormonal medications needed to sustain a pregnancy might fuel any remaining cancer cells.

For Lauren, who's always been close with her younger sister, that news was all she needed to galvanize her decision to be a surrogate. "It wasn't really too much of a decision for me," Lauren says. "Of course I would do this for her."

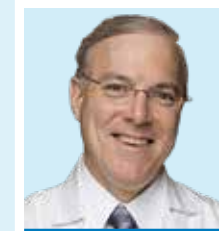
### 'Perfect Happy Ending'

Lauren consulted OB/GYN **Darlene Morgan, M.D.**, who made sure she was both physically and emotionally ready for the pregnancy. Along with partner **Ann Pagano, M.D.**, Dr. Morgan prepared the hospital's Labor and Delivery team to accommodate both sisters and their husbands during the birth, which required special considerations since it took place during the thick of the pandemic.

"Lisa, Lauren and their husbands were so appreciative that everyone was trying to go above and beyond to make sure they would all feel involved," Dr. Morgan says.

Baby Madison is thriving and happy. Lisa and Lauren live minutes away from each other, and Lauren is thrilled to be close to the niece she helped bring into the world.

"When I see Madison, I think everything's been worth it," Lauren says. "We all love her, and I couldn't be happier."



William Ziegler, D.O.

Reproductive endocrinology and infertility specialist

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Darlene Morgan, M.D.

Obstetrician/gynecologist

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Brick

# Boost Your Brain Health

*Train your brain to function better with these five tips.*

We've all felt foggy from time to time. "But you can actually train your brain to function better," says **Lana Zhovtis Ryerson, M.D.**, neurologist at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**. Take these five steps to get your brain functioning at its highest level.

1

### Devote Quality Time to Friends and Family

"Having a strong network of family and friends is proven to be good for your overall health, including lowering blood pressure and reducing risk for depression. Having strong social ties is also beneficial for your brain health," Dr. Ryerson says. "Spending time with others has been associated with lowering your risk of developing memory disorders like dementia."

3

### Protect Your Head

Traumatic brain injury (TBI), which can be caused by a bump or blow to the head, disrupts the normal function of the brain and can cause cognitive issues like difficulty concentrating or comprehending, as well as impaired memory function. "Particularly if you engage in physical activities that make you more prone to injury, like road cycling or rock climbing, it's imperative to wear the appropriate protective headgear," says Dr. Ryerson. "Parents should set the right example for their kids by wearing a helmet when riding a bike."



4

### Eat Right and Exercise

"High blood pressure, diabetes and obesity are a threat to keeping your brain well," Dr. Ryerson says. Eat fruits, vegetables and healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, seeds, avocados and certain types of fish like salmon or tuna. "Also, aerobic exercise has been one of the only things shown to reduce the rate of brain atrophy, which is a process occurring with natural aging where brains get smaller as we age," Dr. Ryerson says.

2

### Break New Ground

"As a child, when you grow and learn, you build something called your cognitive reserve," says Dr. Ryerson. "This is your brain's ability to process a situation and decipher the best means for getting a job done. Those who take on new activities and experience new situations continue expanding their cognitive reserve." Try activities like word puzzles, reading, drawing and knitting.

5

### Get a Good Night's Rest

Poor sleep can influence brain function. "Try to abstain from bringing electronics into the bedroom and maintain a consistent sleep schedule," Dr. Ryerson says. "During sleep, cerebrospinal fluid flows through the brain, clearing away toxins and protein buildup that happens during the day. This is critical to maintaining good brain health."



Lana Zhovtis Ryerson, M.D.  
Neurologist  
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Neptune

iStock.com/Serayadigar/AlexSava

## Go Online

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

# Sunnier Days

**Penni Morey thought her hydrocephalus was resolved. After years of severe migraines, anxiety and depression, doctors at Jersey Shore University Medical Center gave her needed answers.**



*Today, Penni Morey is a typical 21-year-old who is enjoying all that life has to offer—now without debilitating migraines.*

The Morey family won't soon forget the Presidents Day blizzard of 2003, but for a reason unlike most: That day, 2-year-old Penni began repeatedly vomiting and passing out.

Penni's mother, Kerri, called 911. The ambulance couldn't get to the Morey home because of unplowed roads, so paramedics parked the ambulance as close as they could get. Penni's father carried little Penni through 2-foot-high snow to the vehicle, which took her to the closest emergency room.

Initially, the ER staff thought Penni had the flu, but a CAT scan showed she had a benign brain tumor blocking the "plumbing"—the ventricles that allow fluid in the brain to drain out—which was causing hydrocephalus (fluid build-up in the brain). She was transferred to another hospital, where she underwent surgery to place a shunt in her brain to bypass the blocked ventricles. That shunt failed within a month, but the placement of her second shunt was successful.

### Finding Answers

When Penni was 15, the second shunt became dislodged and was removed. It wasn't replaced because Penni's doctors deemed her hydrocephalus stable.

But Penni began having severe migraines that repeatedly landed her in the ER, and she began experiencing severe anxiety and depression. She struggled in school, unable to participate in activities or socialize.

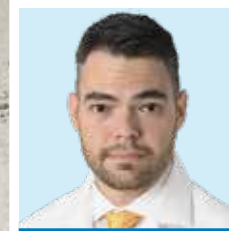
Her doctors offered a variety of treatments, but nothing reduced the migraines, anxiety or depression. Then she was referred to **Eduardo Correia, M.D.**, a neuro-oncologist at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center** who specializes in the therapeutic administration of Botox®, an option considered to help Penni's migraines.

But after talking to Penni and her mother about their experiences and reviewing her records, Dr. Correia felt that her hydrocephalus was causing the migraines and associated anxiety and depression.

"When I first saw her, she was distraught and completely miserable," Dr. Correia says. "She was staying at home, crying and depressed."

Instead of starting her on Botox® treatments, Dr. Correia reached out to his colleague, **Shabbar Danish, M.D.**, chair of neurosurgery at Jersey Shore, to investigate if Penni's hydrocephalus was causing the problems, and to see if a new shunt would help.

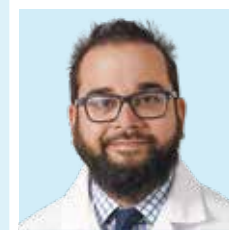
Dr. Danish proposed a simple experiment: Penni would take a medication called acetazolamide, which is a diuretic, to help reduce fluid in her body. "Our hypothesis was that Penni was not absorbing cerebrospinal fluid efficiently in the brain, which was causing severe headaches. A trial of the drug allowed us to test that hypothesis," Dr. Danish says. "It gives you a decision without doing something invasive."



Eduardo Correia, M.D.  
Neuro-oncologist

800-822-8905

Neptune



Shabbar Danish, M.D.

Neurosurgeon

800-822-8905

Neptune

Penni saw results immediately after taking the medication: no more migraines. A few weeks later, Dr. Danish placed a new shunt.

### A New Lease on Life

Now 21, Penni feels like she has a new lease on life. "Honestly, that's what it feels like. Looking at my life just a few months back in comparison to now, it's like two different people," she says. "It's crazy to me."

Adds Dr. Correia: "I can't believe the change from the last time I saw her. She was like a different person."

Penni's migraines are gone, and her anxiety and depression are greatly diminished. She's getting out and socializing, and she's happier and peppier, says her mom, who credits Drs. Danish and Correia for the transformation.

"Dr. Correia and Dr. Danish are awesome," Penni's mom, Kerri, says. "They work as a team and talk things out, finding the best approach for treatment. That's why I love this team!"

GASTROENTEROLOGY

# Should You Avoid Gluten?



Robert S. Aaron, M.D.  
Gastroenterologist  
800-822-8905  
Freehold, Monroe Township, Old Bridge and Holmdel

*Following a gluten-free diet has become popular in recent years, but if there's no medical reason to do so, it's not necessary.*

Gluten-free diets are becoming increasingly popular in the U.S., with millions of Americans following one. But while the number of gluten-free dieters has grown considerably, the number of people who are medically diagnosed as gluten-intolerant has remained flat, suggesting that the majority of people on gluten-free diets are doing so without a known medical benefit.

"Gluten is not bad for your body if you can tolerate it," says **Robert S. Aaron, M.D.**, gastroenterologist at **Bayshore Medical Center**. "Pay attention to how you feel or how your body reacts when you consume food or beverages that contain gluten, and talk with your doctor if anything concerns you."

### When Is Gluten Harmful?

Gluten is a protein found in wheat plants, barley, rye and triticale, and it is processed

by an enzyme called protease. However, protease does not completely break down all the gluten we consume. "The gluten that remains undigested makes its way to the small intestine, which for most people is perfectly fine," says Dr. Aaron.

The remaining gluten can be harmful to certain people who have:

- ▶ Celiac disease, a chronic autoimmune disease that causes damage to the intestine
- ▶ Gluten intolerance
- ▶ Gluten ataxia, a neurological autoimmune disease that attacks the brain
- ▶ Wheat allergy

### What to Do If You Suspect a Gluten Problem

Talk to your doctor if you experience any of these constant symptoms, which could stem from a gluten-related condition:

- ▶ Diarrhea
  - ▶ Bloating
  - ▶ Abdominal pain
  - ▶ Itchy rashes
  - ▶ Weight loss
  - ▶ Growth delay in children
- If your doctor suspects celiac disease or a gluten-related condition, they may recommend certain genetic tests, blood tests and biopsies to determine the cause.
- For those who need to or want to avoid gluten, there are plenty of gluten-free foods and alternatives, including:
- ▶ Quinoa
  - ▶ Corn
  - ▶ Rice, including wild rice
  - ▶ Buckwheat
  - ▶ Flax
  - ▶ Fruits and vegetables
  - ▶ Eggs
  - ▶ Soy

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

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Jennifer Lillis was out of the hospital only two days after her procedure and back to work within two weeks.



Steven Tizio, M.D., FACS, FASCRS  
Colorectal surgeon  
800-822-8905  
Neptune

# Turning the Tides

**When diverticulitis brought on agonizing pain for Jennifer Lillis, her doctor found a way to avoid emergency surgery with a minimally invasive solution.**

Out of nowhere, painful abdominal cramps hit Jennifer Lillis in June 2021. The 49-year-old bar manager from Bradley Beach, New Jersey, assumed they were just bad menstrual cramps and tried to relieve the pain with ibuprofen. But her agony intensified. By evening, the pain was so bad that Jennifer thought she might pass out, so she drove straight to **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**.

There, she learned that diverticulitis had led to a perforation in her sigmoid colon and intestinal air had flooded her abdomen. "When you see air on a CT scan or an abdominal X-ray, you assume that the contents of the intestines are leaking into the abdominal cavity, which is a surgical emergency," says colorectal surgeon **Steven Tizio, M.D., FACS, FASCRS**, who was called in to help that night.

### An Alternative to Emergency Surgery

The doctors who initially examined Jennifer suspected she'd need emergency surgery, which would involve removing the diseased portion of the colon, draining a potential abscess and creating a stoma (an opening through the abdominal wall where the end of the colon exits and allows waste to be diverted out of the body) to allow her colonic contents to temporarily drain into a colostomy

bag. "I didn't even know I had diverticulitis, so all this information was new and very frightening to me," Jennifer says.

But after examining her, Dr. Tizio offered an alternative approach. "He said I didn't present like someone who was as sick as the scans," Jennifer recalls. "I had no fever, I wasn't vomiting, and although I was in pain, I was able to carry on a conversation with him."

Dr. Tizio wanted to treat Jennifer with antibiotics to prevent further infection and give her colon time to heal. "I considered, 'Let's watch her closely and see how she does in the next 24–48 hours,'" he says. "Given that she was stable and not showing signs of peritonitis [a life-threatening inflammatory process in the abdominal cavity], I couldn't justify surgery and a colostomy bag."

Jennifer was all in. "From the minute Dr. Tizio came into my room, he looked right at me, asked how I felt and took time to explain what was going on. He made me feel comfortable, and that's why I trust him 100 percent," she says.

Dr. Tizio's strategy worked, and Jennifer was able to go home five days later. She had no further attacks and very quickly returned to her normal routine.

### Preventing Future Flare-ups

At a follow-up visit, Jennifer's scans revealed chronic inflammatory changes of the sigmoid

colon, which Dr. Tizio says is typical for diverticulitis. A colonoscopy confirmed this. He recommended surgery, but this time, it would be under controlled conditions, as opposed to emergency surgery. Dr. Tizio would be able to use the da Vinci surgical robot to remove the diseased section of colon. "By performing the surgery electively with no signs of acute inflammation, the patient is less likely to need a temporary colostomy," he says.

The robot would allow Dr. Tizio to perform minimally invasive surgery, which would decrease post-surgical pain, accelerate the return of normal bowel function, and have Jennifer back to her life more quickly—giving her a long-term solution that would prevent future flare-ups.

Jennifer was out of the hospital only two days after the procedure and back to work within two weeks. Today, she is thriving and cured of her diverticulitis, thanks to the procedure.

"I'm so lucky that Dr. Tizio was in the hospital the night I came in," she says. "He told me that he's always been taught to look at the person, not the scan, and for that, I am forever grateful."

Learn more about colon and rectal surgery at Hackensack Meridian Health at [HMHforU.org/Colorectal](https://www.hmhforu.org/Colorectal).



# Ditch the Flops?

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

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

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

“During the summer months, we typically see an increase in foot injuries because people are either wearing flip-flops way too often or they're wearing them for activities that require a protective shoe,” says **Larry Bloomstein, M.D.**, an orthopedic surgeon affiliated with **Bayshore Medical Center** and **Riverview Medical Center**.



Larry Bloomstein, M.D.  
Orthopedic surgeon  
800-822-8905  
Red Bank, Morganville  
and Holmdel

### When to Avoid Flip-flops

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

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

### Are Ballet Flats OK?

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

### What to Do if You Have Foot Pain

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

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

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### Go Online

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

# First in Line



*Within a short period of time, Frank Fiorella Jr. went from using a walker to a cane, and he anticipates being able to drive again soon.*

## Frank Fiorella Jr. is the first patient at Ocean University Medical Center to benefit from CORI robotic-assisted technology for knee replacement surgery.

After nonsurgical treatments failed to control the pain in 75-year-old Frank Fiorella Jr.'s right knee, he recalls thinking about knee replacement surgery. “My knee was causing me to miss out on playing with my grandchildren, golf and so many other things I enjoyed,” he says.

The pain was caused by osteoarthritis, which occurs when the natural cartilage between the bones of the knee wears away and the bones are in direct contact with one another, causing pain and stiffness.

### Looking for Optimal Results

Frank was scheduled for traditional knee replacement surgery in February 2022 when his orthopedic surgeon, **David Rodricks, M.D.**, offered him a chance to be the first patient at **Ocean University Medical Center** to have surgery using the medical center's brand-new robotic-assisted technology.

The robotic system features a tool that the surgeon holds while performing the surgery to get optimal results. “Robotic surgery uses computerized virtual representations of the patient's knee on a screen,” Dr. Rodricks explains. “The image includes different anatomical points on the leg to determine the appropriate size of the knee replacement device as well as the best alignment of the knee and precise measurements. It enables me to balance the knee appropriately, so it is not too tight or too loose, and perfect balance can be achieved.”

Adds Frank: “Everything was explained to me. I felt very comfortable and confident.”

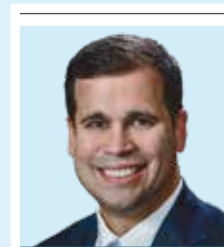
The surgery took an hour, and Frank remained in the hospital overnight for observation. He remembers excellent and attentive care from his team of nurses and therapists, who told him they had never seen such a wide range of motion immediately after surgery. Frank's range has since improved to a full 125 degrees.

### Long-term Success

Soon after surgery, Frank started regular physical therapy appointments. There, he received leg massages to prevent tight scar tissue formation and worked to rebuild his mobility skills using a bicycle and treadmill. Within a short period of time, he went from using a walker to a cane, and he anticipates being able to drive again soon.

Dr. Rodricks expects Frank to have long-term success with his implant. “The robotic surgery may not make a difference in the healing over the short term, but studies have shown that implants done with robotic surgical support will last longer and feel better over time because of the technology's ability to get optimal alignment,” he says.

Today, Frank speaks enthusiastically of his experience: “I am proud to be the first one to get the total knee replacement with the robotic system at Ocean. I also am happy that Dr. Rodricks was the first to perform this type of surgery at the medical center. I think that is pretty special.”



David Rodricks, M.D.  
Orthopedic surgeon  
800-822-8905  
Brick and Forked River



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

# A Good Run

*Use these tips to prevent knee pain the next time you go out for a run.*



Kenneth Chern, M.D.

Orthopedic surgeon

800-822-8905

Ocean, Barnegut,  
Monroe Township,  
Freehold and Brick

Running is a higher-impact form of exercise than walking, so there's a greater chance of developing knee pain. Fortunately, you can take steps to lower your risk of developing knee pain while you run.

To ward off running-related knee pain or minimize discomfort when it strikes, try these ideas:

**Stretch before you run.** When you stretch your quadriceps, hamstrings and calf muscles before running, it helps strengthen the muscles in your legs, which takes pressure off your knees. For best results, hold your stretches for about 30 seconds, rather than going through the motions more quickly.

**Strengthen your leg muscles.** Building up your quads and hamstrings supports your knees and may help lower your risk of knee pain. Incorporate squats and lunges into your daily warmup, and you may notice a difference.

**Walk, bike or swim on alternate days.** When you cross-train, you use your joints and muscles differently, which gives your body a break from the daily rigors of running. Consider running every other day, mixing it up with other forms of heart-pumping exercise in between.

**Gradually build up your mileage.** Increase your time or distance a bit at a time, rather than adding miles onto each run. If you push yourself too far, you may overdo it and hurt yourself.

**Ice your knees after you run.** The cold should help reduce pain, swelling and inflammation. Wrap your ice pack in a paper towel or thin cloth, so the ice doesn't

directly contact your skin, and remove it after 15 or 20 minutes. Reapply the ice periodically, once your skin has warmed up again.

**Use anti-inflammatory medication as needed.** Over-the-counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can alleviate pain and reduce inflammation, providing much-needed relief. Taking medication for up to a week may help your knees feel better.

**Consider taking certain dietary supplements.** The supplements glucosamine and chondroitin may ease knee pain. They may also help increase the amount of cartilage in the knees, although more research is needed. These supplements aren't associated with serious side effects, so they may be worth trying.

If you notice knee pain developing, take a break from running for a few days to allow yourself to heal. Within a week, if things don't improve, make an appointment with your doctor to determine the cause of your knee pain.

"Sometimes, knee pain may be a sign of inflammation, which may resolve on its own or with the help of physical therapy. But other times, you may have structural damage—a tear, arthritis or another problem that may require a higher level of medical intervention, including surgery," says **Kenneth Chern, M.D.**, orthopedic surgeon at **Ocean University Medical Center** and **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**. "An orthopedic surgeon can determine the cause of your knee pain and offer you a plan of action to get you running again." ❄️

istock.com/izf

# Doctor Spotlight

**RAJNEY BAIS, M.D.**

**Internal medicine**

HMH Primary Care – Eatontown

**Witnessing her mother claw her way back to health after two major accidents and accomplish a long-deferred dream of attending medical school inspired Rajney "Monica" Bais, M.D., to make a difference in others' lives from the time she was a young girl.**

Dr. Bais, an internal medicine physician at the new Health and Wellness Center in Eatontown, finds great fulfillment in solving her patients' medical problems and guiding them toward healthy habits. The high-energy mother of two also finds time for regular runs with her golden retriever, Leia—she plans to participate in her second marathon next year—as well as a bevy of creative hobbies. But shepherding generations of patients through challenges scratches her steady itch to problem-solve.

"I'm one who gets bored easily, and I like being able to treat conditions ranging from head to toe," says Dr. Bais, who's been practicing since 1997 and joined Hackensack Meridian Health in 2011. "I like the variety."

**What health questions do your patients ask most often?**

How to lose weight. Obesity is the number one disease in the United States, and it's not adequately addressed because people are afraid to talk about it. I'm a vegetarian who enjoys making healthy meals for my family, and most of my patients know I'm big on fitness, nutrition, sleep and preventing disease before it happens.

**You have an eclectic mix of hobbies, including photography, sketching, interior design and piano playing. How do these activities lend balance to your life?**

My husband tells me he's never seen someone else who's constantly trying to create something beautiful in their head all the time. It's cathartic

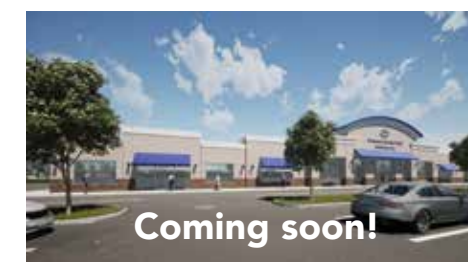


*Rajney "Monica" Bais, M.D., loves to sketch in her interior design notebook while finding relaxation and inspiration at the beach.*

for me. When I take pictures, I like to find a different angle or a new setting. The same with interior design—my notebook is filled with designs and sketches. Piano is fun because I escape in the music. The scientist in me is always working as a doctor, but this is my break from everything.

**If you could have dinner with any celebrity, whom would you choose and why?**

My three idols: Audrey Hepburn, Jackie Onassis and Princess Diana. All were glamorous and fashionable, but behind the scenes, they were all very loving mothers and charitable, altruistic people. And all had their own adversities and insecurities, which is true of most of us. I would want to find out what made them so strong. ❄️

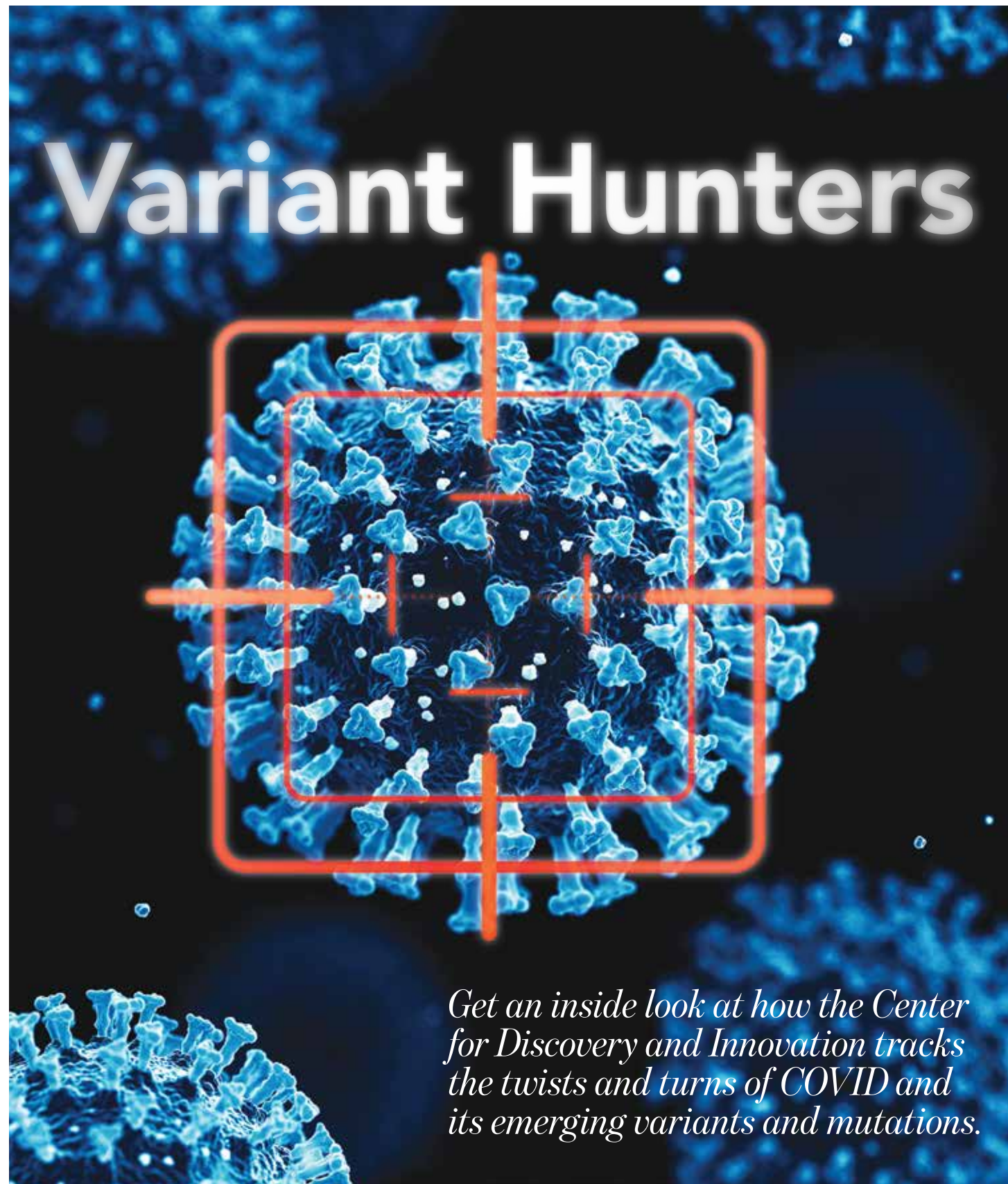


**Coming soon!**

**Our new Health & Wellness Center, featuring a variety of services conveniently located under one roof, is opening soon at 135 NJ-35 in Eatontown.**

Visit [HMHforU.org/Eatontown](https://www.HMHforU.org/Eatontown) for more information.

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



## The Hunt for Variants

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

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

CDI first identified the omicron variant in December 2021.

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

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

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

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

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

### How COVID Surveillance Works

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Identifying Future Variants

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

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

The hunt continues.

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

### Go Online

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





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

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

# SchedUle

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

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

## Special Events

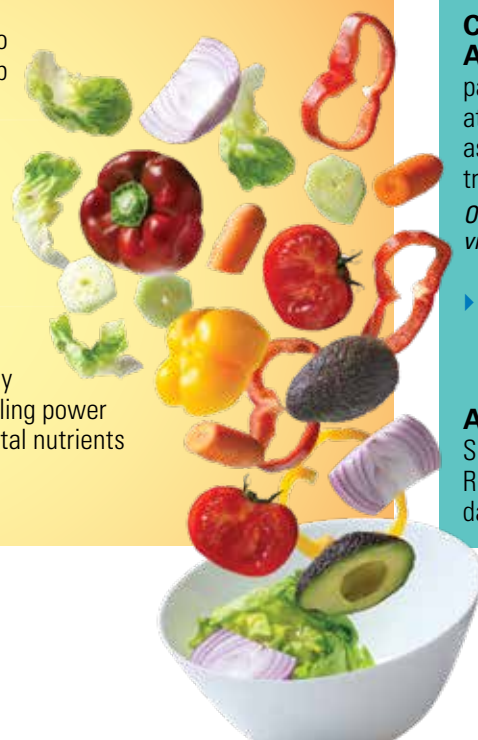


**Living the Impossible Every Day: Mitchell Vassar Vision Awareness Day**  
Join inspirational keynote speaker Danelle Umstead, a blind ski racing champion with multiple sclerosis, as she reveals the three secrets to lead and empower yourself to overcome obstacles and go for the gold. Donald J. Parker from Hackensack Meridian Health Behavioral Health will also discuss resiliency. Lunch will be served. **Registration is required.**  
Nov. 3, 11 a.m.–2 p.m., Grand Marquis, Old Bridge

**Mental Health Series** Dr. Joe Miller Mental Health to Mental Strength Series in Partnership with the Atlantic Club

**Intentional Living** Join us for this interactive discussion where we take the time to reflect, reevaluate and renew our mind, body and souls.  
Oct. 26, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

**Nutrition Balance for Optimal Health: Enhancing the Immune System** Learn the five key nutrients to nourish your body, mind and heart with the healing power of food. Participants will learn which foods contain these vital nutrients and learn a great new recipe to support immune health.  
Sept. 21, 7–8 p.m., Atlantic Club, Manasquan



## Behavioral Health

**Stress and Depression**  
How to adapt, cope and manage.  
Sept. 27, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

► **Celebrate Recovery Month** Learn more about "recovery capital" and how you can be a recovery ally.  
Sept. 20, 6–7 p.m., virtual event



## Heart Health

**Chest Pain or Heart Attack?** Learn if the chest pain you are having is a heart attack, possible causes, as well as symptoms, risk factors and treatment options.  
Oct. 4, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

► **Living with Heart Failure**  
Speaker: Kanika Moody, M.D., Aug. 3, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

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



## General Wellness

**Strength Training** Join our rehabilitation experts, and learn the benefits of strength training and how it helps your body.  
Sept. 8, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

► **Weight Loss With Hypnosis** Fee \$30, Aug. 10 & Oct. 12, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Take Control of Your Health 6-week Program** Sept. 20–Oct. 25, 10 a.m.–noon, Upper Shores Lavallette Library

► **Arthritis and Joint Pain** Sept. 14, 1:30–2:30 p.m., Neptune Township Senior Center, 1607 Rte 33, Neptune

► **Weight Loss Surgery** To learn more about weight loss surgery, attend a free seminar. To find a seminar near you, visit [HackensackMeridianHealth.org/WeightLoss](https://HackensackMeridianHealth.org/WeightLoss).

► **Support Groups** Hackensack Meridian Health offers regular support group meetings. Learn more at [HackensackMeridianHealth.org/SupportGroups](https://HackensackMeridianHealth.org/SupportGroups).

## Pediatrics

**Safe Sitter** Babysitter training for boys and girls ages 11–14. The class includes handling emergencies, childcare skills and first aid. Must attend both sessions. Fee: \$40. Virtual event. Visit [HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events](https://HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events) for upcoming dates.

► **Safe at Home by Safe Sitter** Fee: \$15. Virtual event. Visit [HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events](https://HackensackMeridianHealth.org/Events) for upcoming dates.

**Parent/Guardian Talks**  
► **How Do We Help Our Kids With Their Emotions and Socialization?** Sept. 29, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Dangers of Teens and Vaping** Speaker: Nader Nakhleh, M.D., Oct. 13, 7–8 p.m., virtual event



## Cancer Care

**Head and Neck Lymphedema Treatment: What Is All the Swelling About?** Learn how physical and occupational therapy can assist with head and neck lymphedema, self-management and other secondary issues.  
Oct. 5, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

► **Fresh Start Smoking Cessation** Aug. 1, 5, 8 & 12, Sept. 2, 12, 16 & 19 and Oct. 3, 7, 10 & 12, 10–11 a.m., Riverview Rechnitz Conference Center

► **Fresh Start Smoking Cessation** Sept. 13, 15, 20, & 22, 6–7:30 p.m., Ocean East Wing Conference Center

► **Stop Smoking With Hypnosis** Fee \$30, Sept. 14, 7–8 p.m., virtual event

► **Breast Reconstruction After Breast Cancer Treatment** Speaker: Christina M. Pasick, M.D., Oct. 7, noon–1 p.m., virtual event

► **Thriving and Surviving Cancer Survivor Workshop** Oct. 13, 20 & 27 and Nov. 3, 10 & 17, 4:30–6:30 p.m., virtual event

## Diabetes

**Pre-diabetes** Join our certified diabetes educator, and learn all you need to know about diabetes and what to do if you have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes.

Aug. 11, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

Oct. 6, 6–7 p.m., Bradley Beach Recreation Center, 39½ Main St., Bradley Beach

► **Complications of Diabetes** Sept. 14, 11 a.m.–noon, virtual event

## Neuroscience

**Brain Health and Memory Loss** Join Kristine Keane, PsyD., as she discusses the ability to remember, learn, plan, concentrate and maintain a clear and active mind.

Aug. 24, 6–7 p.m., virtual event

► **Are You Getting A Good Night's Sleep?** Speaker: Adrian Pristas, M.D., Sept. 15, 6–7 p.m. SCAN, Monmouth Mall, 180 Rte. 35 South, Eatontown



# For the Kids

*The owners of Jenkinson's Boardwalk pledge to support children in a new way through the Greatest Need Fund at Hackensack Meridian Children's Health at K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital.*

For many families vacationing on the Jersey Shore, summer simply wouldn't be summer without a visit to Jenkinson's Boardwalk at Point Pleasant Beach. It's the quintessential land of fun, where people from across the region come for the beach, boardwalk, rides, mini golf, arcade games, aquarium, ropes course and more.

"Jenkinson's has been on the boardwalk for nearly 100 years and draws people from all over the state of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New York," says Pasquale "PJ" Storino, whose family has owned and operated the East Coast attraction since the '70s.

Just 20 minutes up the road sits **K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital** at **Jersey Shore University Medical Center**, which coincidentally has a similar mission: "They're both wonderful places that are designed for families," PJ says.

Philanthropy is important to the Storino family, and they were looking for a way to give back to the local community. Partnering with the Children's Hospital that provides nationally recognized care made perfect sense.

The Storino family made a generous gift to the Greatest Need Fund at the Children's Hospital. The fund supports a variety of pediatric programs,

including the child life program and support groups, as well as unexpected needs like capital equipment purchases. The fund allows the hospital to help patients wherever it's needed without restrictions.

"My family and I hope that our gift to the Children's Hospital helps provide top-quality health care close to home for local families and children," PJ says. Plans are underway to renovate the pediatric waiting area and include pictures of Jenkinson's Boardwalk.

"The Storinos are long-time members of the community and wonderful supporters," says Ellen Hahn, development manager for Children's Health at Hackensack Meridian *Health* Foundation. "We are grateful to them for their partnership and for making such an impactful gift for our smallest patients."

Adds Paul Huegel, vice president of development at Jersey Shore University Medical Center Foundation: "For decades, the Storino family has provided the best boardwalk experience for children and their families at the Jersey Shore. With their extremely generous gift to K. Hovnanian Children's Hospital, they are now helping ensure that our children receive the best health care possible, right here at the Shore." ❄️

Start your virtual fundraiser today at [Give.HackensackMeridianHealth.org/HostYourOwn](https://Give.HackensackMeridianHealth.org/HostYourOwn)

Select your fundraiser type and sign up

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

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

Feel good about making a difference



Need help getting started? Email [giving@hmhn.org](mailto:giving@hmhn.org).

Use your smartphone or tablet camera to scan me

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

# BUG DEAL

## Increasing Risk

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

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

**TRIPLED** FROM 2004 TO 2016.

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

## Tips to Prevent Bug Bites

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

Sleep under a mosquito net if snoozing outdoors.

Wear long-sleeved shirts and pants.

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

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

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

**Go Online**

For more tips on staying healthy this summer, visit [HMHforU.org](https://HMHforU.org).



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## Make an Appointment Today

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

Scan the  
QR code to  
get started.



## Get Screened for Heart Disease and Stroke

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

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

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## We Are Hiring!

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

See open positions at [jobs.hackensackmeridianhealth.org](https://jobs.hackensackmeridianhealth.org).



Hackensack  
Meridian Health  
KEEP GETTING BETTER

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