

Look North

A community and wellness publication from Mather Hospital

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Mather Hospital
Northwell Health®

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5 healthy heart habits from a cardiologist

A cardiologist shares the top five ways he keeps his heart beating strong, plus ways you can adopt the same habits



Luis Gruberg, MD, is Northwell Health's director of cardiovascular research for eastern Long Island and medical director of Mather Hospital's new cardiac catheterization lab. When it comes to keeping the cardiovascular system healthy for the long haul, he doesn't just give recommendations to patients — he also makes sure to follow those good habits himself.

Here are his top five picks for heart health:

1

Eat a Mediterranean-style diet

Your heart health starts with what's on your plate. Dr. Gruberg tries to stick to the elements of a Mediterranean diet, which means plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and lean protein. He does his best to avoid sugary treats and loads up on cold-water fish like salmon.

"In addition to making these choices, I also focus on portion sizes," he said. "That doesn't mean I don't eat favorites like pizza, but like I tell my patients, it's all about moderation with those options. Have a slice and enjoy it. You don't need to eat the whole pie."

2

Exercise every day

Numerous studies have shown that regular exercise can have significant cardiovascular benefits. An intense workout isn't the only way, or even the best, to get those advantages. Dr. Gruberg advises a brisk walk once a day, for example.

"Personally, I love to jog, and I do that two to three times per week because it's good to get your heart rate up," he said. "But even just going out in the evenings for a walk after dinner is beneficial."

3

Don't smoke

"Nobody should be smoking — we know what a negative impact it has on the cardiovascular system," said Dr. Gruberg. "The good news, though, is that if you do smoke or used to smoke, the benefits start as soon as you quit. It only takes a couple years to get back to the level of heart health that you'd see in someone who never smoked." If you smoke and you need help quitting, Northwell's Center for Tobacco Control can help. Contact them at tobaccocenter@northwell.edu or (516) 466-1980 and start living smoke-free.

4

Drink in moderation

Dr. Gruberg enjoys a glass of wine when out to dinner with his wife and their friends, as part of the enjoyment of the meal and the company. Some studies have shown that there are health benefits to drinking red wine, said Dr. Gruberg. But even so, be sure to limit alcoholic beverages to no more than two per day for men and one for women.

5

Find stress relievers

Feeling anxious, overwhelmed or frazzled takes a toll on the heart, said Dr. Gruberg. Stress is also challenging for other aspects of your health, and chronic stress can lower immune-system response, increase digestive problems and potentially lead to weight gain.

"Every person is different when it comes to what helps them lower stress levels," he said. "You need to find what works best for you. For me, it's reading and jogging. For others, it might be working on cars or playing with their grandkids or baking. Find your strategy."

Mather's new cardiac catheterization lab

Mather Hospital's cardiac catheterization lab is slated to open in spring 2021. Having this state-of-the-art technology will have a significant impact on patient health by bringing more cardiovascular services to the area, said Dr. Gruberg, the lab's medical director. Learn more about Mather Hospital's new cardiac catheterization lab and take a virtual tour at matherhospital.org/cathlab.

Luis Gruberg, MD



Heart healthy meals

A full day of quick and easy
— and delicious — meals
that protect your heart

There's no getting around it: What you eat affects your heart health. So whether you're already under a doctor's care for heart disease or you're looking to keep your ticker in great shape, a healthy diet can make a big difference. According to the American College of Cardiology, three eating patterns in particular have been proven to protect your heart: the Mediterranean Diet, the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet and a nutrient-rich vegetarian diet.

Those diets share several key elements. They all encourage you to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, healthy fats, beans, and nuts and seeds. On the flip side, they recommend you minimize processed foods (like cold cuts, frozen pizza and chips), added sugar and saturated or trans fats. With such a rich assortment of foods to choose from, it's not hard to come up with nutritious, heart-healthy meals you'll actually want to eat.

To get you started, here's a full day's worth of recipes — three meals plus a snack. Each one uses affordable ingredients you may already have on-hand. And they offer many irresistible flavors, your family will never guess they're good for you.

Breakfast

Easy apple-cinnamon oatmeal

Start your heart-healthy day with a comforting bowl of whole grains, fresh fruit and the crunch (and healthy fat) of nuts. Bring 3 1/4 cups water to a boil in a large saucepan. Add a pinch of salt, a teaspoon of ground cinnamon, 1 3/4 cups of rolled oats and two chopped apples, stir and reduce heat to a simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until most of the liquid has been absorbed. Cover and let sit for 5 minutes before serving, topped with chopped toasted pecans, a drizzle of maple syrup and a splash of low-fat milk.



Lunch

Mediterranean tuna wraps

Omega-3-rich canned tuna meets fiber-filled cannellini beans, chopped veggies and briny olives, rolled inside a whole-wheat tortilla. Drain and flake a can of tuna packed in olive oil, and put in a large bowl. Add a can of drained and rinsed cannellini beans, finely chopped red onion, diced English cucumber and carrots and quartered kalamata olives. Toss with olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper, and divide mixture among four whole-wheat tortilla wraps. Roll tightly, cut each in half diagonally, and serve.



Snack

Frozen yogurt bark

Satisfy your sweet tooth while also getting plenty of protein and fiber from Greek yogurt and fresh fruit. First, line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Combine plain, low-fat Greek yogurt with a spoonful of honey, and spread onto the baking sheet. Top with fresh berries, sliced almonds and chopped dark chocolate, then freeze for at least 3 hours. Break into pieces and serve.

Dinner

No-recipe-required whole grain burrito bowls

The easiest dinners work with whatever you have on-hand, like this flexible, fiber-packed grain bowl. Start with two cups of cooked whole grains (like brown rice, farro or quinoa). Top with cooked salmon, chicken or tofu; rinsed and drained canned beans (like black, pinto or red kidney); grilled or roasted vegetables; fresh vegetables (like sliced avocado, chopped tomato or shredded cabbage); pickled jalapeños; and salsa or pico de gallo.



Shoulder to shoulder

These patients are back in motion after shoulder procedures at Mather Hospital

How often do you think about your shoulders? Not much — except when injuries to these joints happen and resulting pain and mobility problems cause a ripple effect. Suddenly you're forced to rethink simple things like hoisting a toddler or reaching for a plate on a higher shelf. This can really impact your quality of life.

There are viable fixes for many shoulder problems that require surgery, and Mather Hospital has experts who can get you back on track. Here are two patients who've found relief and renewed mobility.

From pain to relief

When 70-year-old Barbara Meyer fell while getting into a pool nearly three years ago, she suffered a fracture dislocation of her shoulder. To repair it, Richard Savino, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at Long Island Bone & Joint, a division of Orlin & Cohen, working at Mather Hospital, put several pins in her joint, and although the fracture healed well, the joint was badly damaged.

The damaged joint started to cause issues about a year ago, limiting her range of motion. Even everyday tasks like carrying a laundry basket, grocery shopping and brushing her hair had to be adjusted to using the non-injured shoulder. But favoring the other shoulder can be problematic, too, since it increases risk of overuse injury.

Dr. Savino suggested shoulder replacement surgery, which would alleviate her pain and hopefully restore proper function. By the time she had surgery in June 2020 — the procedure was delayed by early COVID-19 restrictions — the pain and immobility had become impossible to ignore.

"What I appreciated was that Dr. Savino was very calm, he explained everything so I knew what to expect, which is comforting when you're in pain," said Ms. Meyer.

Dr. Savino is one of the surgeons who helped launch Mather Hospital's Joint Replacement Program more than 10 years ago, and he appreciates the program's focus on dedicated teams and a patient-centric approach.

"At Mather, you have a personalized experience," he said. "I take my time with each patient to ensure they feel comfortable and happy, and that they're getting the best possible outcome."

In addition to surgery, that means a strong emphasis on recovery. Ms. Meyer found that part fairly easy, even pleasant. After physical therapy for six weeks following the procedure, she's continued to exercise and feels that her progress is excellent.

"I'm just so relieved to be able to live without pain and do everything I want to do," she said. "I have probably 90 percent of my movement back. If I had to do it over again, I wouldn't change a thing."





Erika Shapiro and her son, Mario

From limitations to snowball fights

It was the kind of moment any mom could have: Holding her 5-year-old son's hand while standing in the waves at the beach in 2019, Erika Shapiro got knocked down by a big surge, but made sure she didn't let go of her boy. The pair were fine, but Ms. Shapiro's shoulder took the brunt of it as she got tossed around. The result: a major rotator cuff tear and a torn biceps tendon.

She needed surgery to repair her injuries, and turned to shoulder specialist Gregory C. Mallo, MD, of Orlin & Cohen Orthopedic Group. After a successful surgery and a few months of physical therapy, the now 47-year-old was able

to return to her job as a nurse. Then, last year, the other shoulder began to ache.

Since Ms. Shapiro has rheumatoid arthritis and had played sports when she was younger, Dr. Mallo attributed the pain to a rotator cuff tear caused by overuse. An MRI revealed a cyst under the biceps tendon as well as a significant rotator cuff tear. This meant she'd need a similar procedure to the one she'd had the previous year.

"It's little moments like that — you don't realize how important they are until you can't do them. I'm grateful for the feeling of getting stronger and more mobile every day."

— Erika Shapiro

"We were able to do a minimally invasive technique in a very efficient and effective way, leading to a shorter time in surgery and a faster recovery," said Dr. Mallo.

"Before surgery, she was having difficulty taking care of herself and her two young children, and now she's able to do pretty much whatever she wants."

Ms. Shapiro is grateful that now when her son, 7, and his 4-year-old sister ask, "Mommy, can you play with us?" she can say yes. Just a month after surgery, she was helping build a snowman and having snowball fights. She also "fences" with foam swords in the living room.

"It's little moments like that — you don't realize how important they are until you can't do them," she said. "I'm grateful for the feeling of getting stronger and more mobile every day."

For more information on orthopedic surgery visit matherhospital.org/jointreplacement or call (631) 825-9749.



Halting COVID-19 in its tracks

Monoclonal antibodies are a game-changing treatment for some people who test positive for COVID-19

The final weeks of January were tough for 62-year-old Steve Ciavarella. Only a day after a hip replacement, he got an unrelenting, intense headache and felt lethargic, sometimes with chills. At first, he thought it was related to the epidural he had during surgery. A few days later, as a precaution before another procedure, he went to the Mather Hospital Emergency Department (ED) for a COVID-19 test — and it was positive.

There was one piece of good luck: the test caught the virus so early, Mr. Ciavarella was a candidate for monoclonal antibody treatment, an infusion that contains antibodies to the coronavirus made from immune cells

that have been exposed to the virus. After just an hour of getting the infusion in the ED, followed by another hour to monitor in case of side effects, he was able to go home. His headache lifted soon after.

“Mostly, what I felt was an emotional boost,” he recalled. “I knew this treatment would limit the virus from spreading in my body and keep me from

having to be hospitalized with it. That came with such relief.”

Monoclonal antibodies work by attaching to the spike-shaped proteins of the COVID-19 virus. That prevents the virus from invading your cells and replicating, according to Adam Wos, MD, medical director of the Mather Hospital ED.

Currently, this outpatient treatment isn’t available for everyone who tests positive, Dr. Wos said. It’s primarily used for those who would be at higher risk for severe complications of COVID-19, including those over age 65, as well as people with diabetes, kidney disease, a compromised immune system, or with a body mass index greater than 35. Those over 55 would also qualify if they have hypertension, or chronic lung or heart disease.

“It doesn’t matter if your symptoms are very mild, or you’re asymptomatic,” said Dr. Wos. “The people in these categories are at such high risk that they are candidates for the treatment.”

It’s also reserved for those who get a positive COVID-19 test early. It’s vital to catch the virus before it’s active for seven to 10 days — the sooner, the better. For example, Mr. Ciavarella had the treatment within 72 hours of his positive test.

Because those getting monoclonal antibodies are receiving passive immunity, the Centers for Disease Control recommends waiting 90 days after treatment to get the COVID-19 vaccination.

“The biggest takeaway is that if you have a positive COVID-19 diagnosis from an urgent care center or your doctor’s office, ask if you qualify for this treatment,” suggested Dr. Wos. “It really can make a significant difference with how the virus progresses.”

For information about COVID-19 vaccines, please visit northwell.edu/ourbestshot.

Precision CyberKnife of New York is a program of Mather Hospital at New York Cancer & Blood Specialists in East Setauket.



Doing an about face

A non-invasive targeted radiation procedure can relieve facial pain from a debilitating nerve condition

Brushing your teeth, taking a bite of food, saying hello to a friend — for people with trigeminal neuralgia (TN), everyday actions like these can trigger mild to severe facial pain. TN is a condition that affects nerves in the face that send signals to the brain.

The trigeminal nerve is so called because it has three (“tri”) major branches, which connect to the eyes, jaw and sinuses. Overly active nerve signals mean people with TN might have continuous, dull pain throughout their face, or stabbing pain whenever they move a facial muscle — which is all day long. These can feel like electric shocks, said Prachi Jain, MD, a radiation oncologist at Precision CyberKnife of New York who treats TN with advanced CyberKnife technology.

“The patients who are good candidates for CyberKnife are those who have tried many other treatments like medications and still haven’t found relief,” she said.

Although TN only affects about 15,000 people in the U.S. each year, the constant sharp pain is debilitating, she added. Even the lightest touch can trigger a major pain response, so some people try to limit eating, working, hobbies, even speaking — greatly reducing quality of life.

Though TN can be treated with invasive brain surgery, that comes with risks like stroke and facial paralysis. Radiation treatments can help, but traditional radiation therapy for TN requires a rigid metal frame secured to the patient’s head with screws.



Prachi Jain, MD

Instead, CyberKnife works by focusing high-dose radiation on the trigeminal nerve in an extremely precise way. Usually, the procedure takes less than an hour, said Dr. Jain, and there’s no anesthesia necessary, which means patients can go home right afterward. Most importantly, it’s highly effective.

“Up to 80 percent of patients have significant and lasting pain relief,” she said. “People are able to return to normal activities immediately after treatment.”

For more information on Precision CyberKnife, or to schedule a consultation, visit precisioncyberknifeofny.org or call (631) 407-2709.

Sharon Tursi





Getting her life back

This retired nurse wasn't willing to watch her life get smaller from back pain

Having back problems wasn't surprising to Sharon Tursi. At 73, and after a physically taxing career as a nurse, she figured she'd be sore and struggle with some pain. A few aches didn't bother her. But the way her life kept getting smaller as a result did.

"I have six grandchildren, and it got to the point where I couldn't play with them," she said. "Then I wasn't able to do other things I love, like gardening. I couldn't even get out of the car without pain. It had reached a point where everything I did hurt."

Ms. Tursi tried physical therapy and yoga, but her back pain continued to worsen. Seeing her frustration, her husband, a surgical physician assistant, suggested she call Sumeer Sathi, MD, of Long Island Neuroscience Specialists and medical director of neurosciences and the Back & Neck Pain Center at Mather Hospital. That advice turned out to be a quality-of-life saver.

After looking at her MRI results, Dr. Sathi suggested a procedure called Intracept, a treatment only approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration about two years ago.

Intracept works by selectively blocking nerve impulses that send pain signals to the brain, and although it doesn't correct a spinal issue, it can be a significant improvement when pain is a patient's main problem. Intracept, Dr. Sathi explained, could be an alternative to spinal fusion surgery, and is offered through Mather's Interventional Radiology program to

patients like Ms. Tursi whose pain hadn't lessened after six months of trying more conservative measures.

"The success rate is almost 85 percent, without an extensive surgery," he said. "Ms. Tursi's procedure took less than an hour, she went home afterward, and was extremely happy with the results." Dr. Sathi advises people with ongoing back pain to seek an evaluation

"I really feel like I got my life back. I didn't realize how unhappy and limited I was until I was able to move again." – Sharon Tursi

with a surgical spinal specialist, who can determine if Intracept would work for them.

Ms. Tursi is now looking forward to gardening season and is ready for a summer spent crawling in and out of tents with her grandchildren in the backyard.

"I really feel like I got my life back," she said. "I didn't realize how unhappy and limited I was until I was able to move again."

For more information on neurosurgery, visit matherhospital.org/neuro. For more information on interventional radiology, visit matherhospital.org/ir.



Be your own health advocate

Ever think there's something not quite right with either your own or a family member's health, but you aren't sure how to make your doctor understand you? Speaking up to someone who holds a medical degree can be intimidating. But you know yourself best, and you deserve quality health care.

These suggestions from the Katz Institute for Women's Health can help you become a smarter health care consumer so you can advocate for yourself or the people you love.

1 Arm yourself with knowledge.

The more you understand about your condition or symptoms, the better you can convey your concerns to your care team and get the help you need. While the internet is teeming with useful health information, you can also become overwhelmed with unhelpful, and sometimes scary, misinformation. Don't rely on the first websites that Dr. Google recommends. Get your health care facts from reputable sources. Often, this means ignoring websites that end in .com and putting your trust in medical centers (websites ending in .edu), national health organizations (websites ending in .org) and government entities (websites ending in .gov). Print out webpages to take to your next appointment or use the patient portal to send information to your care team. Be sure to include any questions or concerns you have in this electronic communication.

2 Get to know your medical records.

Electronic medical records (EMRs) put important information like blood test and lab results, prescriptions, diagnoses and treatments at your fingertips. But an estimated one in five patients have found errors in their records, according to a 2020 JAMA Network study. Of those errors, 40 percent were serious. Take the time to review your EMR before each medical appointment. If you find a mistake, continue checking (and sending reminders to staff, if needed) until the record is accurate. Be sure to carefully review all medical bills for errors, too.

3 Don't be shy about changing doctors or seeking second opinions.

Your health and well-being are the top priorities — not your doctor's feelings. If you aren't getting the care you seek, ask friends and your family for referrals to doctors they respect. With EMRs, transferring your care history is easy. It's beneficial to seek second, or even third, opinions, especially when dealing with a complicated or life-threatening diagnosis. In fact, a supportive doctor will encourage you to seek the advice of others.

4 Know your patient rights.

Federal laws protect the privacy of your medical records and give you complete access to them. Informed consent laws require your health care provider to give you the information you need to make an educated treatment decision. There are also state laws that protect your right to health care coverage, timely access to care and the right to file a complaint or grievance.


Prepare for each appointment.

You have a lot to cover with your doctor in a limited amount of time. To get the most from your visit, bring a prioritized list of questions. To make sure you understand everything; you can take notes, ask for permission to use a recording app or bring someone with you. If you don't get all questions covered, ask to leave the questions with a nurse with the expectation that they will call or email you within 72 hours. Get their contact information in case you need to follow up.

A person with long brown hair, wearing a blue sweater and purple polka-dot pants, is blowing a large, iridescent bubble. The background is a soft-focus scene of green trees and bright sunlight filtering through the leaves, creating a bokeh effect. The overall mood is peaceful and hopeful.

It's time to **RAISE HEALTH**

**A look at our
ambitious new
initiative, and what
it means for you**



The rollercoaster ride of unprecedented events of 2020 upended so much in our world. Chief among those events, of course, was COVID-19, which highlighted the resilience of our front line workers, but also brought to the fore some alarming discrepancies in our health care system. Last year we were at the epicenter of COVID's initial wave, and our battle against the virus clearly demonstrated how vital public health is. It also demonstrated the impact that our organization can have when we work with a coalition of people, organizations and communities to push back against problems like social injustice and inequities in health care.

What does Raise Health mean for Northwell?

Raise Health is about fighting for the health of everyone — raising our expectations for better health care for all, better outcomes, safer communities. We don't want to settle for the status quo, especially when the status quo is making us sick. You'll most likely hear about Raise Health through our ads, but we see Raise Health as a movement. It means:

Raising our voices.

We are speaking up about the things that are making people sick and causing harm, such as the public health threat of gun violence, or the lack of widespread access to nutritious food.

Raising awareness.

Racism in all its forms is a health crisis when it keeps people from seeking or receiving the care they deserve.

Raising the standard of care.

We're expanding services across our region, because quality care should exist where you are, and where you live shouldn't determine how you live.

What does Raise Health mean for you?

A movement requires participation, and Northwell wants New Yorkers to take an active role in being "health raisers" — demanding

the best clinical medical outcomes, living healthy lifestyles, standing up for what's right. Try to:

Raise your voice.

You are the first and best expert on your own health and that of your family. We're challenging everyone to be a partner in their care, speaking up when something doesn't feel right, getting questions answered, and advocating for those you love.

Raise your mental health.

This has been a challenging, heartbreaking and undeniably stressful time for all of us. Managing anxiety and stress goes a long way toward improving health overall, as stress is a major contributor to ailments such as cardiovascular disease. If anxiety and stress are overwhelming you, seek help; start by contacting your primary care doctor.

Raise your physical health.

Don't skip important annual health screenings and tests, such as colonoscopies and mammograms. Don't ignore concerning symptoms; see your doctor. Remember, COVID-19 safety protocols in physicians' offices and hospitals make these areas safer than grocery stores. To make a telehealth appointment, go to northwell.edu/telehealth.

Raise your immunity.

As COVID-19 vaccine production and distribution ramp up in the coming months, and more and more of us become eligible to receive vaccination, sign up and roll up your sleeves (check with your primary care doctor or visit northwell.edu/ourbestshot). The more widespread community vaccinations are, the quicker we can get back to normal.

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