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REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

HouseCall

CO-PUBLISHED WITH COMMUNITY HEALTH MAGAZINE
FALL 2016

A PINCH OF

Good Health

Tips for eating healthy
throughout the holidays.
Plus: how to watch your salt intake



COMMUNITY

Just Want to Be ...

3 BY STEVE METSCH Teddy Bear Fund Drive has in 37 years grown into a community-wide effort to raise money for IRMC's pediatric unit and Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.



Caring Returned

15 BY STEVE METSCH People who care for loved ones often take on stressors that can put their own health and well-being in jeopardy; but they can find help in support groups and fellow caregivers.

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Toss the salt

27 BY JOHN O'BRIEN Every day we eat foods riddled with sodium, from jarred spaghetti sauce to salad dressing and even those "healthy" granola bars. Find out how much sodium is in your favorite foods, and how you can avoid it — and the problems that come with it.

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Squash It Real Good

25 BY PAIGE FUMO FOX Bake 'em, mash 'em, eat 'em raw. Explore your autumn eating options with the diverse, versatile and nutrient-packed members of the underappreciated fruits known as squash.



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Your guide to good health

Welcome to the first IRMC 2016 edition of *HouseCall* magazine. Over the past few years we have had many requests to bring this publication back to life. In response to those requests, Indiana Regional Medical Center has committed to offering *HouseCall* magazine in a digital format on a quarterly basis.

We hope that you enjoy the articles and are encouraged by the feature stories of your friends and neighbors. This fall 2016 addition of *HouseCall* magazine is focused on keeping you healthy through the holiday season.

Inside, you will find a feature article on the importance of monitoring the sodium level in your diet. Other stories include healthy eating for the holidays and even tasty recipes you can prepare for your own holiday parties.

Don't forget to take time for yourself during the busy holiday season, and be active. Keeping in an exercise routine not only helps to keep you on track with your healthy living plan, but can help combat the stress that is often associated with the hustle and bustle of the season.

You will also find other information to assist you with forming strategies to handle holiday stress.

Moving into 2017, make a fresh commitment to your health. Start your winter season off by considering the winter safety tips found inside these pages. In addition, make this the year of improving your health.

Find out your health status by visiting your primary care physician for an annual wellness visit. Many preventive health exams and screenings are covered under the Affordable Care Act. Be sure to schedule your appointments today.

My hope is that as you read this inaugural issue of *HouseCall*, you will be inspired to make lifestyle changes that will lead you to better health. Remember, every small step adds up to big changes.

IRMC would like to wish you and your family a healthy holiday season.



Amanda Augustine
CORPORATE &
COMMUNITY
WELLNESS MANAGER
INDIANA REGIONAL
MEDICAL CENTER

Moving into 2017, make a fresh commitment to your health. Start your winter season off by considering the winter safety tips found inside these pages.

INDIANA

REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

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Not Your Average Bear



The annual Teddy Bear Fund Drive raises money for IRMC's pediatric unit

BY STEVE METSCH

The Teddy Bear Fund Drive is in its 37th year helping to raise funds for the pediatric unit of Indiana Regional Medical Center, and it has no signs of slowing down or stopping.

The drive raised a record \$131,000 last year that benefitted the pediatric unit of IRMC and the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC, says Mark Bertig, Teddy Bear Fund Drive chairman and general manager of the Renda Broadcasting Corporation, which has four radio stations in the Indiana County area.

"When I became the chairman, we decided to keep more money local," Bertig says. "Eighty percent of the money stays local. Obviously, there's a need for more serious cases in Pittsburgh, and we recognize that, so we send 20% to Children's Hospital."

"We have a great partnership with IRMC on many fronts, and this is one way we can give back and help the local families," he says.

SCHOOLS DRIVE EFFORTS

Despite the name, no actual teddy bears are involved. It's strictly a monetary drive, Bertig says. Many schools are involved with students holding fund-raising efforts.

"Indiana Senior High School last year set a school record by raising \$13,000 in a variety of ways, from an October Trick-Or-Trot 5K race to events in the school," he says. "We call that 'kids helping kids' where schools play an integral role in raising tens of thousands of dollars."



On Sept. 29, the 37th annual Teddy Bear Fund Drive campaign received \$2,500 from The Point Sheetz Café. Mark Richards of Indiana Regional Medical Center, from left Sheetz district manager Gina Cecconi-Hazelet, Renda Broadcasting vice president and general manager Mark Bertig and Sheetz concept development manager David A. Smith Jr. show off the check.

And, it's "absolutely" a good way for kids to learn about helping others, Bertig says.

"When we host a lot of the elementary students, they come in and tell stories about how they raise money," Bertig says. "I'm an emotional Italian. What can I say? It brings tears to my eyes every year. The stories are always genuine and heartwarming about how these kids raise money and how they learn at a young age to give back to children who may be less fortunate than them."

For IRMC unit manager Lori Hennessey, seeing these kids give back is of the most impressive parts of the Teddy Bear Fund Drive.

"When you listen to the kids who've raised money, it's pretty amazing and kind of heart warming," she says.

PEAK TIME

While fundraising efforts are year-long, "the thrust is really from now until Christmas," Bertig says.

Renda's radio stations include

It brings tears to my eyes every year. The stories are always genuine and heartwarming about how these kids raise money and how they learn at a young age to give back to children who may be less fortunate than them.

MARK BERTIG
VICE PRESIDENT
AND GENERAL MANAGER
RENDA BROADCASTING



Participants on course to the finish line at the Teddy Bear Fund Drive Trick Or Trot 5K Run/Walk, which was hosted by Indiana High School in October.

WCCS-AM, news/talk; WDAD-AM, classic hits; WLCY-FM, country; and WQMU-FM, adult hits. And, yes, you can expect to hear about the Teddy Bear Fund Drive on those stations.

“We do multiple fundraisers, from a spaghetti dinner to a corn hole tournament to a charity baseball game to benefit concerts with 100% going to the Teddy Bear Fund Drive,” he says. “I’m blessed to have employees who want to give back to the community.”



IRMC has purchased six “panda warmers.” Babies are placed in the panda warmer immediately after birth. Vital signs are monitored and oxygen is available if needed.

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

The money raised through the drive is used to purchase state-of-the-art equipment for use in IRMC’s pediatric unit, Hennessey says.

“At the beginning of this year, we purchased high-tech beds,” Hennessey says. “We are in the process right now of purchasing apnea monitors to monitor a baby or child. These help with their breathing if they’re having problems. They tell how much oxygen they are receiving.

“The biggest thing with the Teddy Bear Fund Drive is it keeps us up to date with the latest technology. We’re a community hospital, the only hospital in Indiana County, and we have to do it.”

All of this wouldn’t be possible without Bertig, who “spearheads everything,” Hennessey says.

“He and Renda Broadcasting do a remarkable job,” she says. “I’ve been the manager of OB here for 11 years and I’ve seen the drive grow immensely over the years. He’s spearheaded that.”

“We are appreciative of it. With health care it’s difficult to always keep up with everything (in technology). Last year, we got a machine to check jaundice levels in babies. We’re able to purchase equipment we need thanks to the Teddy Bear Fund Drive. I’d say in the last 10 years, it could be up to \$1 million worth.”

The biggest thing with the Teddy Bear Fund Drive is it keeps us up to date with the latest technology. We’re a community hospital, the only hospital in Indiana County, and we have to do that.

LORI HENNESSEY
IRMC UNIT MANAGER



LEARN MORE, GET INVOLVED

For more information about the Teddy Bear Fund Drive and regular updates on money that’s being raised for 2016-17, go to 1160WCCS.com/TeddyBearFundDrive2016-17.aspx. You can also call the drive at (724) 465-4700 or send an email to jmathers@1160wccs.com.

To make a contribution, mail a check to: 840 Philadelphia St., Indiana, PA 15701.

Time for Change



How the Wellness Center got one woman on track to losing the weight, keeping it off and bettering her health

BY STEVE METSCH

Melanie Cicon knows the importance of eating healthy and wants others to follow her lead. But she wasn't always so fluent in healthy living. In fact, it wasn't until just a few years ago that Cicon, a 62-year-old retiree, came to the realization that she needed a lifestyle change.

"I had a few bad blood tests, and my A1C and my fasting glucose levels were elevated," she says. "I had high blood pressure. (Doctors) put me on blood pressure meds, and I wound up going to a nutritionist who looked at my blood work."

Cicon turned to the Indiana Regional Medical Center's S&T Wellness Center to get some much-needed direction. Through the Wellness Center, she was able to partner with Wellness Coordinator Lori Smith who helped Cicon develop a nutrition plan.

"Although I had attended the Wellness Center for exercise on and off over the past several years, I never intended to take advantage of the nutritional counseling there until I got bad news regarding issues with my fasting blood glucose, cholesterol and triglyceride results," she says.

Smith worked with Cicon to develop a food plan that included the proper amount of carbs for meals and snacks, suggestions for keeping food logs, and how to make good choices when going out to eat and attending the many functions that accompany holidays and celebrations throughout the year.

"The most important thing that I learned from these sessions was that I needed structure, guidance, advice and support, in addition to being accountable to someone other

than myself on a regular basis," Cicon says. "My first goal was to improve my fasting blood glucose and A1C levels and avoid going on medication."

As the months and sessions went on, her fasting blood glucose levels, as well as her A1C index, have consistently improved and dropped down to acceptable, normal values, therefore avoiding the need for diabetes medication.

In a year's time, Cicon ended up losing about 60 pounds.

"I also saw decreases in my triglyceride and cholesterol levels, and all are within the normal values," she says. "My blood pressure medication was cut to one and the dosage reduced. My doctor thinks I will no longer need it when I see her next month for my next appointment and I think she plans to take me off of that completely if I continue with my success."

Cicon attributes her success to recording everything she eats, staying within the proper number of carbs each day, and adjusting her meals when she has opportunities to go out to eat or attend gatherings and parties, especially around the holidays.

"My main frustration through the year is there's one thing after another," Cicon says. "There's summer and potlucks and Halloween candy. There's all the eating with Thanksgiving and Christmas, too. It's a big obstacle to eating healthy."

But this year, Cicon didn't let any of that get to her — she was able to keep the weight off.

"I've never done it before," Cicon says. "I had lost weight before and gained it back. I've really made a lot of progress."

The most important thing that I learned from these sessions was that I needed structure, guidance, advice and support, in addition to being accountable to someone other than myself.

MELANIE CICON

Healthy Holiday Eating



Melanie Cicon says that to eat healthy, you just need to follow a simple blueprint. Here are some of her tips.

► **Portion control.** Take smaller portions of calorie-laden foods and those high in carbs, while taking larger portions of items from veggie and fruit trays.

► **DIY meals.** Being able to know and have some control over what was in her food played a big part in helping Cicon control her calorie intake. "When I prepared food for my own holidays, I felt more in control since I calculated the amount of carbs and calories in entrées, side dishes and desserts," she says. "I ate everything, but I ate smaller

portions and did not feel deprived."

► **Look for options.** Cicon keeps an eye open for websites and magazines that offer healthy alternatives to traditional recipes. "It is amazing that you can adjust the recipes without affecting the taste or appeal," she says. "Many websites ask for your email and will send you advice and tips on a consistent basis for preparing healthy foods, including desserts, for all occasions."

► **Good food for kids.** Making healthy food fun for kids is always a challenge. While there are no quick fixes, Cicon suggests thinking about food from a kid's perspective – think playful and colorful. "On the few occasions when kids were

at my house, I made sure there was a variety of fruit, yogurt parfaits, lighter desserts," she says. "I tried to make it appealing and full of color."



FUN FOOD

Getting your child to eat, and enjoy, healthy foods isn't easy. To make sure they're snacking on the right stuff, visit YumFoodsAndFun.com for some creatively nutritious ideas.

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Hospital Winter-Proofing

IRMC takes steps to improve seasonal safety and reduce injuries

BY STEVE METSCH

Faced with an increasing number of injuries sustained in slippery parking lots during the winter, the folks at Indiana Regional Medical Center took the necessary steps to make things safer. And, so far, it's paying off.

UNCOVERING THE ISSUES

According to assistant director of facilities management Mark Neurohr, there were problems with footing in the parking lots outside the medical center.

Neurohr partnered with Steve Leuschel, who's in charge of operational excellence, secretary for facilities management Melissa Mundorff, and director of safety and security Michael Grimes to come up with solutions.

"We wanted to reduce the injuries," he says. "One of our responsibilities is maintaining the grounds. We looked at the previous year and saw there were 14 slips and falls. We analyzed the falls to see if there was any kind of trend and what we could do about this."

They found that most of the falls were suffered near the victims' own vehicles.

The problem: When it snows, the plows can't get to the areas between parked vehicles. The solution: rolling lot closures.

"We would put up signs and close a lot that would be full of cars," Neurohr says. "We'd let the people leave but we wouldn't let anybody back in. Then after everyone was done with their shift, we'd be able to go in to plow and salt like it was no one's business."

As soon as one lot was cleaned, it would re-open, and another lot would be closed, plowed and salted.

Other improvements included painting cross walks using brightly colored paint with bits of rubber in it to enhance visibility and prevent slips. Salting material and patterns were changed, too.

"Salt is and isn't good," Neurohr says. "It's only good to about 15 degrees. Below that it's not good for melting. So the new product we use is tinted green so we can see where we salted and it works below zero degrees, which is incredible."

"The green tint is an improvement, because they have a better idea of how much salt I put down and where it is spread. This stuff has less bounce to it. You pay more but it works in colder weather."

ONGOING IMPROVEMENTS

So far, the number of injuries has dramatically decreased.



IRMC facilities and safety staff and crew show off one of the signs that alerts clients and employees of the rolling lot closures for snow removal.

“From November to March, we had 14 injuries that first year, seven from November 2014 to March 2015, and just three from November 2015 to March 2016,” Leuschel says. “It’s pretty impressive.”

Most injuries happen in Lot D, which is the largest lot used by employees. Therefore, it’s also home to the most issues.

“Our campus takes up 63 acres and we have big volume parking lots with no parking garage and a little over 1,300 parking spaces,” Grimes says.

The hospital has also been in talks with its IT department and Indiana University of Pennsylvania about implementing a mass text system through which employees and guests can be alerted about weather advisories, Mundorff says.

“We have screensavers on everybody’s computers reminding them to use caution,” Mundorff says. “We also remind the staff about rolling lot closures and parking lot policies. We try



Dan McQuiston, from left Allan Peace, Mark Neurohr and Garry Birchall study the map that updates staff on progress to keep lots safe for pedestrians and motorists.

to keep up on that with communication.”

Other improvements to the hospital campus have included removing steps and replacing them with ramps and handrails, Neurohr says.

“The steps were very hard to clear,” he says. “It was done by hand. We also now have a tractor set up that has a snow plow and spreader that’s the exact width of our sidewalks. The guys ride right down the sidewalk with the tractor.”

IRMC also restructured its parking policy, moving employee parking out farther in the lots, and freeing up space for patients and visitors closer to the building.

“If it wasn’t for those people, we would not be here to begin with, and it makes it easier to plow the lots at night, as opposed to having employees parking where they shouldn’t,” Grimes says.

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The S&T Wellness Center offers both cardio *left* and weight-lifting machines *above* to cover all areas of a client's fitness regimen.

Centered on Wellness

Sweat equity pays off with IRMC S&T Wellness Center's customized workout plans

BY STEVE METSCH

The **Indiana Regional Medical Center S&T Wellness Center** is not only a place where folks can exercise. It's a place where lives change, says coordinator of personal wellness Cody Krynock.

Krynock is the onsite manager of the wellness center that opened in July 2012. More than four years have passed, and he's witnessed many transformations.

A LOOK INSIDE

The center, which is open from 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 7 to 11 a.m. on Saturday, is split into two areas. One is devoted to cardio health, while the other is all about weight lifting. Together, they form a powerful one-two punch.

You will find treadmills, stationary bikes, ellipticals and step machines in the cardio area. And where the heavy lifting is done awaits a range of free-weights, dumbbells and machines.

"The majority of our clientele is more comfortable on the assisted weight machines," Krynock says.

Each person that comes to the wellness center gets a personalized exercise program that is developed for him or her by center staff.

"The nice thing is we have people here who are able to help with specific exercises, to make a program that gives them guidance," Krynock says.

Often, patients who recently underwent surgery become clientele after they've been released from physical therapy.

According to Krynock, the center sees fairly steady business, and Mondays tend to be busiest. Weather seems to play a role, but, overall, clients are serious about improving their health and most fight through the snow, sleet and ice, he says.

PERSONALIZED SERVICE

When you sign up at the center, you'll meet with a staff physiologist who will go over your goals and health history, and set up a program for you based on those, Krynock says.

Having an exercise plan in place serves as a guideline for visitors, some of whom have never stepped into a fitness center before.

"Each patient is different, so we have to see what we can do to help," says S&T Wellness Center physiologist Ryan Smith. "A lot of them end up doing some of the same things, but it all depends on the surgery they've had."

There are four physiologists at the wellness center. They work staggered

The nice thing is we have people here who are able to help with specific exercises, to make a program that gives them guidance.

CODY KRYNOCK, COORDINATOR OF PERSONAL WELLNESS

shifts in order to cover the hours it is open for business.

If you aren't familiar with exercise and weight machines, don't fret. The staff is more than happy to go over each machine and answer any questions.

"Sometimes, people are nervous," Smith says. "We're here to encourage them and to help them get over their fears."

TOM'S TESTIMONIAL

One of the many clients the wellness center has helped is 62-year-old Tom Lubic.

Lubic has been at the center for about six years, ever since he was diagnosed with an aortic aneurism and had a metal stent surgically implanted.

Although he spent his youth doing chores on the family farm, time, age and a more sedentary lifestyle led to his putting on extra pounds.

After his aortic aneurism, he decided to get more serious about his health and came to the wellness center at least three times a week.

The wellness center helped build him back up.

"When I first started coming here, I was rather weak," Lubic says. "They helped me with different things to build up my stamina and my muscles."

Working with the staff, he was able to have a plan to follow, directing him which machines would help him and how to use each correctly.

"I've worked with most all of the staff," Lubic says. "If I have any questions, I'm not afraid to ask. They're more than helpful."

He enjoys working out on the treadmills and the elliptical machines and some of the weight machines, doing exercises like arm curls and downward press. But for Lubic, it's about more than just working up a sweat.

"I enjoy the camaraderie," he says.

"I like seeing people I know there. All the staff members do a very good job. They are very knowledgeable."



Clients of the S&T Wellness Center are offered personalized workout programs to cater to their specific needs.



Want to take your running to the next level — perhaps even join a race? Consider Running Geeks, an offshoot of the wellness center is Running Geeks. For \$60 per month, you can train with physiologist Sara Zambotti, who is in charge of the group.

"Basically, it's a running program that is for you if you want to run a race or you just want to start running and want to learn more about it," Zambotti says. "It all depends on what you need. Suppose you want to run a 5K in two months. The Running Geeks will put together a detailed plan on how to achieve that goal."

If you're not quite that ambitious and prefer to run for your own well-being, the Running Geeks can work up a plan for you, too.

When you come in the first time, Zambotti will ask you a few questions to get to know you and what your goals are. With that knowledge, she's able to determine a starting point for each person, from someone who's never run before to someone who's been running for years and needs some expert advice.

"It's just basically me as the 'head geek,'" Zambotti says with a laugh. "Someone meets with me when they come in. I have a questionnaire for them to fill out that tells me what their goals are: Are they running now or not? Or if they've had any bodily injuries, so I can get where they are coming from."



Sara Zambotti



Cut Stress for the Holidays

A free program offers relief and aid to employees during the busiest season of the year

BY STEVE METSCH

If the holidays are becoming a bit too much, employees of Indiana Regional Medical Center can get some help. It's just a phone call away.

Sam Anderson, director of the Washington Employee Assistance Program, says the organization is at the ready to help the 1,300 employees of IRMC year-round, but especially during the often stress-filled holiday season.

"What we offer them is a chance to come in for counseling, any employee or dependent family member," Anderson says. "People can call us about anything."

One of the most predictable reasons for a phone call, Anderson says, is relationship issues.

"People can be going through a divorce or having issues or not getting along with their children," he says. "We get a lot of calls about work stress, calls about depression, and sometimes about addiction and those kind of

things. What we offer is short-term counseling. They can meet with one of our providers."

The holidays also tend to ramp up the stress level for some, especially women, who often take on the brunt of holiday preparations.

"A lot of women work in hospitals and I'd say the burden of the holidays often seems to fall more on them," Anderson says. "You do have people working long hours in hospitals and they have all this added stress with family. Sometimes, the stress is financial. One thing about the hospital, people aren't as free to say they're going to take the whole week off because hospitals have to stay in motion."

Anderson knows firsthand

Most find they are more normal than they thought. They may be embarrassed they have to ask for help. But we remind them it is okay to talk with us.

SAM ANDERSON
WASHINGTON EMPLOYEE
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
DIRECTOR



because his daughter is a nurse and “has to pick if she works Christmas Day or Thanksgiving. Even if she gets it off, she’ll have to work the day after or the day before. You run into a lot of that.”

And of course, there’s the extra stress that comes with gathering together with family members — especially those we don’t see all that often — and the

potential drama that comes with it.

Holidays can also stir up reminders of lost loved ones, be it songs on the radio or certain recipes prepared for Christmas, Anderson says.

“Things can get awfully complicated,” Anderson says. “Holidays force families to get together, and most families are not perfect. It just seems to stir things up.”

HOW YOUR EAP CAN HELP

Through Washington EAP, IRMC employees are entitled to six counseling sessions at no cost, and you can consult insurance if you need more sessions, Anderson says. Washington EAP has licensed clinicians, some with backgrounds in psychology and social work.

After working with a counselor, many clients discover things aren’t quite as bad as they thought.

“Most find they are more normal than they thought,” Anderson says. “They may be embarrassed they have to ask for help. But we remind them it’s okay to talk with us.

“It’s comforting to learn they’re not the only one who gets sad or upset. It’s okay to not be okay. Maybe you did something you shouldn’t have. Nobody will say that’s good news, but give yourself a break. You’re not the first person to make a mistake.”

For more information about Washington EAP, go to WashingtonEAPServices.com.



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Life-Saving LAB

IRMC opens up state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization lab

For every 10 minutes that you don't get treated for your heart attack, your chances of surviving go down by 10%. Now imagine going unaided for two hours.

It's a common case among hospitals, especially small community hospitals that are unable to care for patients with heart problems. Patients have to be transferred, either by ambulance or helicopter, to hospitals with open-heart surgery programs.

Indiana Regional Medical Center was one of those community hospitals. But what's different is that it has introduced a new cardiac catheterization lab that will allow it to treat heart patients — and save lives — within minutes.

WHAT IS CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION?

Cardiac catheterization is the term for any procedure in which a long, thin hollow tube is inserted into the heart to examine the heart and find any problems, such as a hole in the heart or a valve issue, according to Dr. Rajeev Pillai, IRMC interventional cardiologist.

When you go to the hospital for a cardiac catheterization, you'll lay on a table, above which there's a large X-ray machine. The doctor inserts an IV into either an artery (to check the left side of the heart) or a vein (to check the right side of the heart). There's no anesthesia and no ventilator needed; you are given medicine but are conscious so you can communicate with the doctor.

The doctor inserts the tube into your heart as he uses a blood pressure machine on your wrist to check the pressure in your heart. The machine also takes pictures of your heart and arteries.

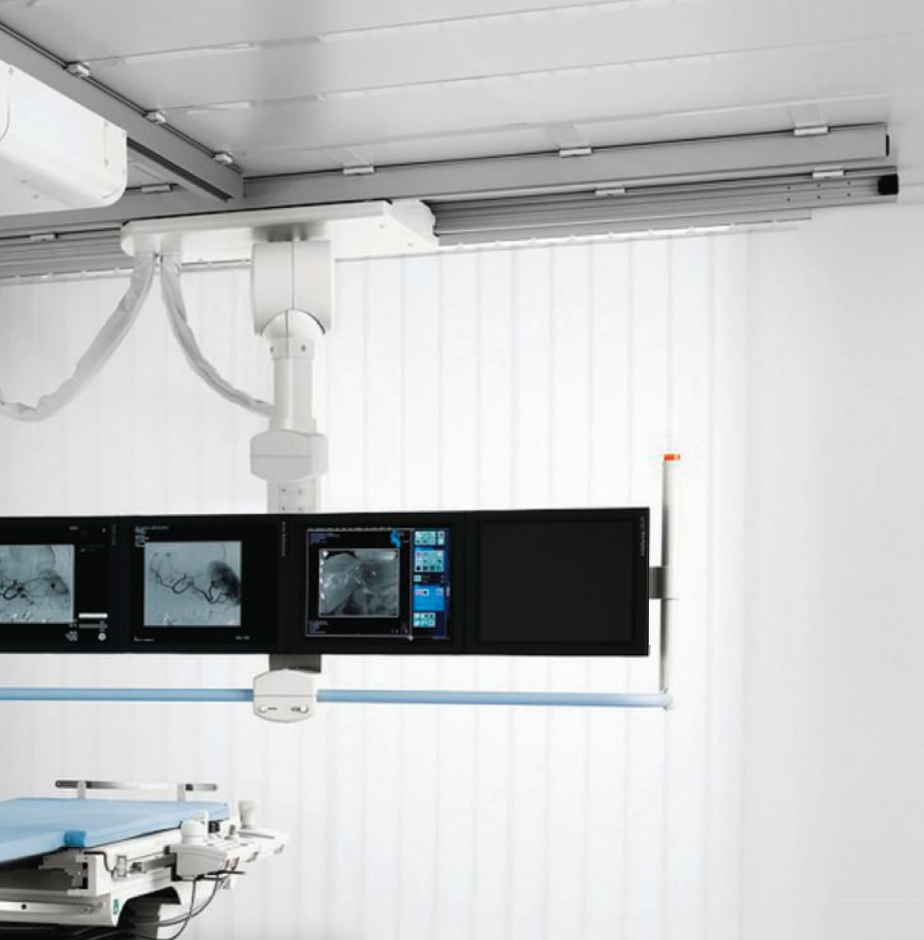


INSIDE THE LAB

Because there are so many equipment and personnel needs for the cardiac catheterization process, it must be performed in one place with all the equipment ready to go — a lab just like the one at IRMC.

“A cardiac catheterization requires specialized physicians and nurses,” Pillai says. “It requires very specialized imaging equipment, which primarily relies on video X-rays, and several computer assisted digital processing techniques. It also involves a variety of catheters, balloons and stents, and is a clean procedure. It requires continuous monitoring of the patient and the ability to address emergencies that may arise. It is not a procedure that you can do in any room.”

The new lab at IRMC, which opened in November, features all of the cardiac catheterization needs and state-of-the-art equipment, including a Siemens Artis video X-ray machine. With a video X-ray, your doctor can see your heart and lungs moving. And, because interventional cardiologists inject dye into the bloodstream so they can monitor the blood supply to the heart, the video X-ray allows them to see it in real-time.



CARDIAC REHAB

If you've had heart problems, your doctor might prescribe cardiac rehabilitation to you. According to Indiana Regional Medical Center registered nurse Theresa Sweithelm, patients who have had myocardial infarction, coronary artery bypass, angioplasty or coronary artery stenting, aortic or mitral valve surgery, heart or lung transplant, congestive heart failure, or stable angina may be referred to cardiac rehab.

According to Sweithelm, the goal of cardiac rehab is to help you be able to return to your previous activities, or a higher level of physical activity.

Throughout the program, you'll be assessed daily for any symptoms of heart problems. You'll wear a heart monitor to be screened for changes to your heart rhythm. You'll also have an EKG, or electrocardiogram test, to check for changes in your heart's electrical activity.

Patients in a cardiac rehab program exercise at their own level, and are closely supervised. Each patient's workload will be adjusted according to his tolerance. You'll also get the chance, if you want, to interact with other patients to connect with others who are in the same situation and understand what you're going through. At IRMC, sessions are three days a week, and last for about 30 to 45 minutes. Patients typically go to rehab for anywhere from six to 12 weeks.

For more information about the cardiac rehab program at IRMC, contact the program at (724) 357-7107 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.



The fundamental purpose of this program is to reduce time and save lives. It's a win-win for the hospital and the community.

DR. RAJEEV PILLAI
IRMC INTERVENTIONAL CARDIOLOGIST

According to Pillai, the new lab will also be offering patients the option of getting the Impella heart catheter — a state-of-the-art device that helps with circulation.

BETTER FOR YOU

Prior to getting the cardiac catheterization lab, IRMC was mostly inserting pacemakers into heart patients. The new lab is a huge step for the hospital and a huge benefit to the community.

“What we're providing is acute heart attack care and caring for minor heart attacks, which should be catheterized in 24 hours,” Pillai says.

Before making his way to IRMC, Pillai worked to bring a cardiac catheterization lab to a hospital in Virginia. Thanks to the program, the hospital was able to treat about 100 major heart attacks a year, and do 1,000 heart catheterizations a year.

According to Pillai, the benefits of having a cardiac catheterization lab in community hospitals like IRMC is huge, especially when you're dealing with time-sensitive conditions, like heart attacks. And especially if you live in a small

community where, should you have a heart attack, you might have to be transferred to another hospital.

“For every 10 minutes you wait to open up the blood vessels (during a heart attack), your risk of dying goes up 10%. If you delay two hours, your risk goes up from 10% to 22%. That's huge,” Pillai says.

“For some people, the time from the hospital to the emergency room can be two hours and 15 minutes. My personal average time of using the lab—getting the patient from the ER and opening up the artery — is 30 minutes. It's above average. It changes lives.”

Pillai says that with the lab, IRMC can now treat patients in minutes. For some, he says, it could take as little as nine minutes. For others, it could take up to 20.

For community hospitals without open-heart surgery facilities, having these programs is a “great service to the community,” he says.

“The fundamental purpose of this program is to reduce time and save lives,” he says. “It's a win-win for the hospital and the community.”



Caring for the Caregivers

Providing care for a loved one can be tough and stressful, especially during the holidays

BY STEVE METSCH

Being a caregiver is a rewarding job, but one that can also be demanding. Add the holidays to the mix, and there's a whole new level of demands.

"It is tough for the caregiver especially at the holidays because there's all the stress of shopping, making sure everything is good," JoAnn Graham, program director of Behavioral Health Services at Indiana Regional Medical Center, says.

"But you still have the care of the person in need," she says. "Sometimes, we see the person in need reacts to that stress, sometimes they start acting out and that causes even more stress for the caregiver. It's a vicious cycle."

It's best to have a plan going in.

"Have a backup caregiver who can fill in for you," she says. "If there are several siblings caring for a father, maybe they could take turns. But if you're in a family without siblings, you can reach out to care agencies that

offer that service."

One never knows when it could be necessary to become a caregiver for a loved one, she says, especially if parents are older.

"We have some families going through end-of-life," she says. "We have social workers who meet with them. We also have referral nurses from a visiting nurse association who have extended care and hospice care. So whether or not that person is in need of that service, this helps get the information out."

It's important, she says, to address end-of-life plans, even though that topic may be hard at first.

"Sometimes, they're sitting at 89 and say 'No, I've got another 10 years,'" she says. "Approaching that must be done delicately."

Caregiving is not an easy job, and Graham doesn't see many caregivers seeking help for themselves. Some, she says, resist getting help when they are "in

that stress mode."

Support groups exist for caregivers in the county. For example, Graham suggests an Alzheimer's Support Group conducted by Hillsdale Skilled Nursing Facility on the first Tuesday of each month from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Clymer Family Medicine Health Education Center in Clymer. There's also the Caregiver Support Group hosted by Aging Services at 1055 Oak Street in Indiana, Pa.

There are also events that allow caregivers to come together and confide in each other. For example, on Nov. 9, IRMC's Behavioral Health Services hosted its 10th annual Spirit of Caring Award & Recognition Luncheon to which caregivers were invited to tell their stories.

"Last year, we heard from 13 caregivers," Graham says. "None of them see themselves as being special. But they are a tremendous piece of the pie."

Last year, we heard from 13 caregivers. None of them see themselves as being special. But they are a tremendous piece of the pie.

JoANN GRAHAM, PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

10 Symptoms of Caregiver Stress

If you see these signs in a caregiver, offer help — whether emotional support or helping them find someone to step in for a bit. If you're a caregiver and find yourself feeling and saying some of these things, find someone to talk to and get assistance from a professional. Don't be afraid to take some time for yourself.

1. **Denial about the disease** and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed. *"I know mom is going to get better."*
2. **Anger at the person with Alzheimer's** or other chronic illness, or anger that no cure exists or anger that people don't understand what is happening. *"If he asks me that one more time I'll scream!"*
3. **Social withdrawal from friends** and activities that once brought pleasure. *"I don't care about getting together with the neighbors anymore."*
4. **Anxiety about the future.** *"What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?"*



5. **Depression** that begins to break your spirit and affects your ability to cope. *"I don't care anymore."*
6. **Exhaustion** that makes it difficult to complete daily tasks. *"I'm too tired for this."*
7. **Sleeplessness** caused by a never-ending list of concerns. *"What if she wanders out of the house or falls and hurts herself?"*
8. **Irritability** that leads to moodiness and triggers negative responses and actions. *"Leave me alone."*
9. **Lack of concentration** that makes it difficult to perform familiar tasks. *"I was so busy; I forgot we had an appointment."*
10. **Health problems** that begin to take a mental and physical toll. *"I can't remember that last time I felt good."*

SPIRIT OF CARING: DEREK CONNER

On Nov. 9, Indiana Regional Medical Center's Behavioral Health Services department hosted its 10th annual Spirit of Caring Award. According to IRMC, the event and the award help raise awareness and "honor family members, friends or neighbors who care for their loved ones on a consistent basis."

Of the 12 people who were up for the award, Derek Conner, nominated by family friend Vickie Paouncic, was the 2016 recipient. In Paouncic's nomination letter, she shares how Conner cares for his wife, Julie.



Derek Conner left and his wife, Julie

Derek has been caring for his wife, Julie, for the past 16 years ever since she was diagnosed with peripheral lateral sclerosis at the age of 25. This condition results in muscle weakness and paralysis over the entire body that causes Julie to be wheelchair-bound and unable to move her arms and legs. She is able to hold a water bottle with her left hand if it is properly placed close to her body. Julie depends on Derek to meet her all of her daily needs that include feeding, bathing, using the toilet, transferring and more.

Derek and Julie's love for one another is immediately apparent to anyone who comes in contact with them. Derek's humble demeanor as he meets Julie's every need is heroic in my eyes.

Since Derek voluntarily coaches our sons' hockey team, I see him every game day in the parking lot lifting Julie to her wheelchair — not only on those cold snowy winter mornings but also on the days of pouring down rain. He keeps the concept of "family" strong as he values his wife being with him to watch their son play his favorite sport. He does whatever it takes to make it all happen.

After getting Julie's blanket to warm her legs and positioning her water bottle and straw in her left hand, Derek carries his hockey whiteboard under his one arm as he pushes Julie into the hockey rink lobby.

He makes sure she is comfortable in her wheelchair by positioning her legs and hands just perfectly before heading to the locker room. Never forgetting to check Julie just prior to each game, he then comes out to the lobby to escort her to the restroom — all with a smile on his face.

While most coaches would be by focused solely on the upcoming game, Derek never lets his responsibility as a husband be overshadowed. His caring attitude is something that is admired by so many bystanders.

He carries out the duties at home preparing meals, running errands and cleaning. With so much on his plate, he appears to have mastered something so great that appears overwhelming to many others. He is an illustration of all that were are here to do on this planet — to love and give of ourselves.

Get Home Safe

It's celebration season, but drunken drivers aren't invited to the party

BY STEVE METSCH

If there's one thing that's better not to mix during the holidays, or any time, it's drinking and driving.

With that in mind, Indiana County Sheriff Robert Fyock likes to remind people of the dangerous and lethal combo, and how you can avoid it.

"We have information on our website, and we periodically do radio announcements about not drinking and driving," Fyock says. "It's best to have a designated driver if you are going be drinking."

He's noticed a change for the better over the years, as more people seem to be thinking about safety while they are out enjoying the holidays. And more, he says, are using designated drivers. He attributes that, in part, to the surplus of safety information available online, as well as awareness campaigns.

"I think it's helped," he says. "But the main thing is to not drink and drive. Studies have shown that even if you have one drink, you are a bit impaired and have more of a chance to have an accident. It's a safety factor you should always keep in mind."

And it's important to remember that this applies year-round, not just for Christmas or New Year's Eve parties. "It can happen to anybody," Fyock says.

This holiday season, Fyock and his 14 deputies will be busy patrolling the county, which has roughly 88,000 residents, keeping an eye for impaired drivers. But they can't do it all alone.

In addition to using a designated driver, look into other transportation options, such as Uber, which expanded into Indiana County earlier this year.

According to an *Indiana Gazette* article, Uber is now available in DuBois, Johnstown, Altoona, Gettysburg and the Williamsport areas. The service allows people to use a smartphone to book and pay for a ride.



The main thing is to not drink and drive. Studies have shown that even if you have one drink, you are a bit impaired and have more of a chance to have an accident. It's a safety factor you should always keep in mind.

INDIANA COUNTY SHERIFF ROBERT FYOCK

Of course, there's always a taxi. Turbo Taxi, based in Indiana, Pa., offers comfortable vehicles with drivers who are "friendly, courteous, efficient and professional," according to the company's website.

The service operates seven days a week and is based near Indiana University of Pennsylvania campus at University Square in Indiana.

To schedule a ride, call (724) 465-TAXI, or use the convenient "Schedule a Ride" feature on the website. If you're

scheduling online, you must do so at least 24 hours in advance.

Do you want to ride in style? Consider renting out a limousine. Red Carpet Limousine can be reached at (724) 465-4400. The company also offers party buses to keep you, your friends and other drivers on the road safe and sound.



Your **Safe** Transportation Options

Want to avoid driving after you've had a drink, but don't know whom to call? Don't sweat it — there are plenty of options in the area.

BusRental.com

You can rent out large charter buses, mini buses, limousines or sedans. (866) 711-1364

Vogue Limousines

Located in Jeannette, Pa., Vogue Limousines has provides luxury limousine service throughout Western Pennsylvania and surrounding states. VogueLimousines.com | (724) 523-0545

Pittsburgh Party Buses and Limos

Rent out party buses, limousines, limo buses and motor coaches. Price4Limo.com/Pittsburgh-Party-Bus.html | (855) 458-7001

RIX Limousine Service

RIX provides a variety of transportation styles, including a 20-passenger bus limo bus, 18- to 20-passenger Hummer, and a 20- or 26-passenger trolley. RIXLimos.com | (724) 463-3992

Pittsburgh Limo

You can rent out a limousine or reserve private black car transportation in the city of Pittsburgh. Limo.com/Cities/Limo-Pittsburgh-Limousines



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Understand your coverage under the Affordable Care Act

Under the Affordable Care Act, all nongrandfathered health plans are required to cover certain preventive care procedures without any cost to the members as long as the services are performed by an in-network provider. If not already outlined by the ACA guidelines, plans can determine the allowable frequency, method, treatment or setting for these services.

There are many benefits to preventive care. These services can often provide early detection or even prevention of diseases, which is much more cost-effective for employers and results in higher quality of life for participants. The key to success is education and finding ways to make these services more convenient to obtain.

There are a variety of preventive care services that are available to all members within specific age ranges or risk groups.

ADULT PREVENTIVE CARE

- Alcohol abuse screening and

counseling

- Blood pressure screening
- Cholesterol screening
- Colorectal cancer screening including specialist consultation prior to the screening, bowel preparation medications prescribed for a colonoscopy, and pathology exam on a polyp biopsy
- Depression screening
- Diabetes screening
- Immunization vaccines
- Obesity screening and behavioral interventions
- Tobacco use screening for all adults and cessation interventions

WOMEN PREVENTIVE CARE

- Breast cancer genetic test screening and counseling
- Breast cancer mammography screening
- Breast feeding support and counseling
- Cervical cancer screening

- Contraception including FDA (Food and Drug Administration) approved contraceptive methods, sterilization procedures, and patient education and counseling unless health plan is sponsored by exempt “religious employer”
- Domestic violence screening and counseling
- Gestational diabetes screening
- Osteoporosis screening
- Pregnancy screenings for conditions that can harm mothers or their babies, including iron deficiency, gestational diabetes, Hepatitis B, Rh incompatibility, and urinary tract infections
- Well-woman visits (annual preventive care visits)

CHILDREN PREVENTIVE CARE

- Autism screening
- Behavioral assessment
- Hearing screening
- Immunization vaccines
- Obesity screening and counseling
- Oral health risk assessment
- Physical examination including height, weight, and body mass index measurements
- Vision screening
- Well-baby/well-child visits

The following situations are exceptions when cost-sharing can be required:

- Preventive care services are performed by out-of-network providers
 - The preventive service was not the primary purpose of the office visit and was billed separately; the preventive service should not impose any cost-sharing, but the office visit can
 - The preventive service was not the primary purpose of the office visit and was not billed separately; the office visit is all inclusive and can impose cost-sharing
 - Use of brand-name drugs when a comparable generic drug is available
- To schedule an appointment with an IRMC physician, please call (888) 452-IRMC (4762).



Mark Your Calendars

Join healthy living during this hectic time

Indiana Regional Medical Center hosts a variety of health and wellness activities throughout the year. Check out some of what's coming up over the next couple of months. And for more details about Indiana Regional Medical Center's community events, go to the Classes and Events section at IndianaRMC.org.

NOV. 30, 2016

LIVING HEALTHY THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

6 p.m.

Rustic Lodge

2199 Oakland Ave., Indiana, PA 15701

Stay on track during the holiday season. Learn how to keep a healthy lifestyle during this hectic time. Join us to discover how to make your holiday eating healthy. Call (724) 357-8088 to register.

JAN. 11, 2017

FOODIE DOODIE

6 p.m.

Rustic Lodge

2199 Oakland Ave., Indiana, PA 15701

Impact family health through meal planning and prep. You may not consider yourself a gourmet cook or fine food aficionado, but what you eat and how you prepare food for yourself and your family can keep you healthy and help prevent serious disease.

JAN. 18, 2017

JOURNEY TO LEAN

Institute for Healthy Living

2010 Shelly Drive, Indiana, PA 15701

Introducing a low-cost alternative weight loss class offered by professional experts. Journey to LEAN is a 12-week course that includes: pre and post biometric screening, weekly educational/support sessions and group exercise sessions, a personalized eating plan and grocery store tour.

JAN. 27 & 28, 2017

FREE CHOLESTEROL SCREENING

Institute for Healthy Living

2010 Shelly Drive, Indiana, PA 15701

Join us for a free cholesterol screening. By appointment only. Call (724) 357-8088 to reserve your spot.



FEB. 2, 2017

COUNT ON YOUR HEALTH

There are four key measurements of health you should know and track. They are early warning signs for heart disease and diabetes. Since these two diseases have few noticeable symptoms, you may not even realize you are ill — or at risk for becoming ill — until it's too late. Keeping these numbers within a healthy range can help prevent a medical emergency, such as a heart attack.

FEB. 3, 2017

SPIRIT OF WOMEN DAY OF DANCE

7 p.m.

Indiana Country Club

495 Country Club Road, Indiana, PA 15701

Join the IRMC Spirit of Women for an evening of dancing to promote cardiovascular health. For more details or to register, please call the Institute for Healthy Living at (724) 357-8088.



Baby Wait

As more women wait to have children, egg freezing offers a viable option

BY ERIN GOLDEN

A couple decades ago, it might have sounded a bit like science fiction if someone told you that you could freeze your eggs to delay motherhood until later in life.

Fast forward to 2014, when both Facebook and Apple offer women health benefits packages that include egg freezing, and now, when women attend parties hosted by egg-freezing fertility clinics. It's clear the option has gone mainstream.

It's what some experts call "social egg freezing" — women preserving eggs as a safety net when, for both personal and professional reasons, they choose not to have a baby during their prime childbearing years.

Kyle Orwig, director of the fertility preservation program at University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, says researchers began exploring egg freezing as an option for women diagnosed with cancer — cancer treatments can dramatically reduce the likelihood of conceiving a child, so egg freezing can provide a chance to have a child later.

But the process has attracted women who are trying to build their careers, attain financial stability or meet the right partner, and worry they won't be able to start a family when the time is right for them.

"It's women who, for a whole variety of reasons — financial, going to school — decide they don't want to start a family until later in life," Orwig says.

He adds that part of the reason more women are opting to freeze their eggs is that more realize the real implications of the proverbial biological clock.

"We're doing a better job of educating women that their fertility will decline with age," he says.



We're doing a better job of educating women that their fertility will decline with age.

KYLE ORWIG, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

HOW DOES IT WORK?

A woman looking to freeze her eggs spends about two weeks receiving hormone injections aimed at stimulating her egg production. To improve the odds of successful egg harvesting, the hormones will cause her to produce more than the typical one egg per month. The eggs will then be removed through a vaginal procedure and frozen using liquid nitrogen.

HOW LONG DO THE EGGS LAST?

Egg freezing technology is still relatively new, so experts don't yet have a firm grasp on how long eggs will stay well preserved. But Orwig says there are strong indicators they'll stay in good shape for years. Embryos, which women have been freezing for a longer period of time, can last up to 20 years.

IS THERE AN IDEAL AGE FOR FREEZING YOUR EGGS?

Fertility declines with age, particularly after your mid-30s, Orwig says. The quality and quantity of your eggs are likely to be better if you freeze them before then, and some clinics have an upper age limit. Orwig notes, however, that women facing cancer in their 40s or beyond the typical egg-harvesting age might still want to freeze their eggs if they're hoping for a shot at childbearing.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Prices vary depending on where you live, but freezing eggs isn't cheap. Companies covering egg freezing as a benefit are the extreme exception, not the rule, and insurance usually doesn't cover the procedure. The cost to harvest eggs can be near \$10,000, plus additional annual costs to store frozen eggs. And, if a woman later decides to use the eggs, she'll pay for in-vitro fertilization, which can range from \$10,000 to \$50,000, Orwig says.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Clinics offering egg-freezing services are popping up around the country. Some, including the University of Pittsburgh Fertility Preservation Center, have special expertise in egg-freezing options for women with cancer.

Keep Calm

Learn to better manage your stress —
it's good for your body

BY BENJAMIN FELDHEIM

The body and mind are connected. Stress takes a toll on our physical health as much as it does our mental state.

Chronic stress leads to elevated levels of the hormone cortisol in our blood, which, over time, can contribute to more visceral fat around organs, hypertension, insulin resistance that can lead to diabetes, and inflammation that can lead to heart disease.

What some might not realize is that stress can also affect your bones. A new study on rodents found that chronic stress contributed to loss in bone density, which is a precursor for osteoporosis.

"It's almost a no-brainer," says Dr. Victor Prisk, orthopedic surgeon with the Allegheny Health Network. "We know that's related to cortisol. It's a reality that our stressful lives lead to multiple medical problems including loss of bone density and subsequent osteoporosis."

Researchers working on the study found that male mice showed more bone density loss than female mice who were subjected to the same chronic stress. But how that manifests in people — especially in men — remains to be seen.

"For men, it's one more reason to improve our stress management beyond the typical metabolic syndrome conditions, such as a high blood pressure, weight gain and inflammation," he says.

Prisk believes in finding balance when it comes to stress, in part by accepting that some stress can be beneficial.

"I think there is a Goldilocks 'just-right' zone we all have to aim for in terms of our health," Prisk says. "There's such a thing as too little stress and such a thing as too much stress."

"Too little stress might mean you're just sitting around doing nothing. But

if you have too much stress, your body might break down if you don't give yourself a chance to recover. The same goes for the mind."

Prisk recommends getting an outside, and more objective, opinion on your habits and approaches toward dealing with stress by talking to doctors, mental health professionals and dietitians.

"Men can't be afraid to ask for help when it comes down to figuring it out for themselves," Prisk says.

"I think more people are hoping they'll just figure it out themselves, and they just keep plugging away, and before long their diets are out of control, they're not getting to gyms and just not figuring it out.

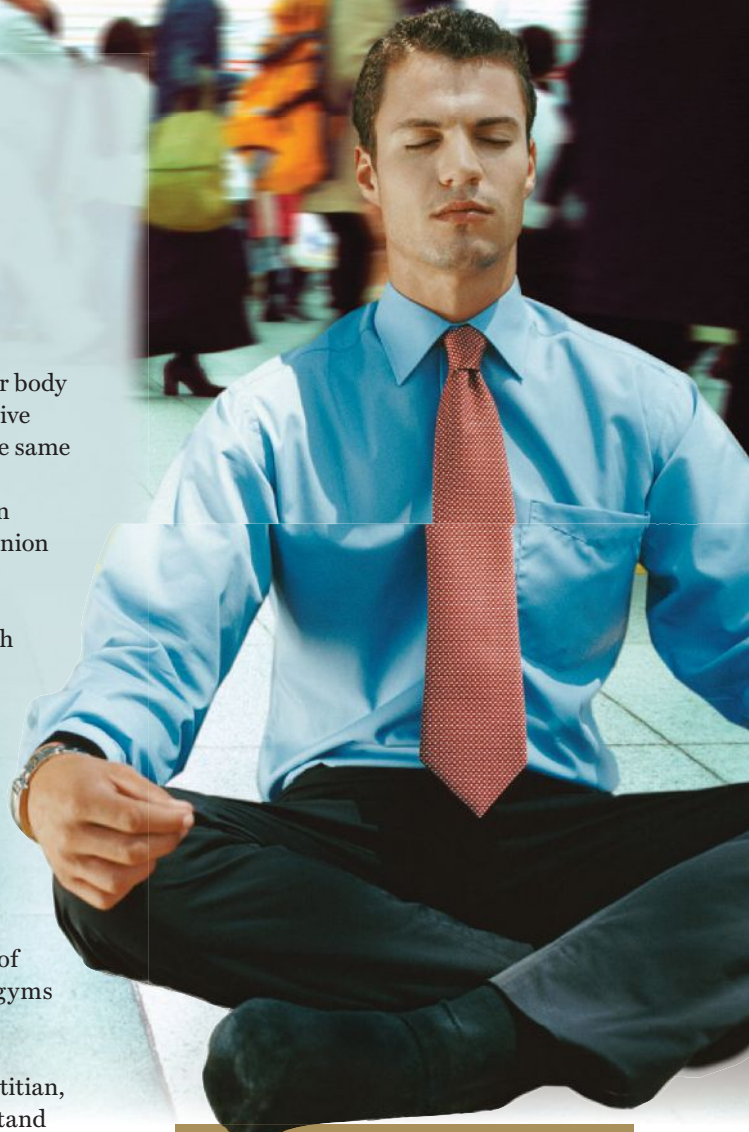
"Get a personal trainer, a dietitian, get someone to help you understand these facets of life. The worst thing is constantly thinking you have it all under control and you don't."

Prisk says he's also seen more patients in recent years using antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication.

Medications that affect the sleep cycle can also contribute to stress if a person isn't getting deep, restorative sleep.

"A lot of our day-to-day stress, and our lack of recovery from it, results in altered sleep," he says.

"We can't forget that anti-anxiety medicines like benzodiazepines, Xanax and some sleep meds actually affect the level of sleep that we get, so we might not get deep sleep, which is when we release growth hormones, which help recover your bone density, and can counterbalance the cortisol. It's a give and take."



It's a reality that our stressful lives lead to multiple medical problems including loss of bone density and subsequent osteoporosis.

DR. VICTOR PRISK
ALLEGHENY HEALTH
NETWORK

More than a Number

Understand your blood test screening results

BY JOANNE K. CLOBUS

Numbers dictate our lives. From how fast we drive to our checking account balance, numbers represent limits that should not be ignored. If you're like most people, the numbers most vital to your well-being are also the most confusing: your blood test results.

Blood is a window to the body's health, so it's no wonder doctors rely heavily on blood tests to properly care for their patients.

"It's especially important for older adults to have bloodwork done yearly, because it shows changes in the body before they turn into heart or liver disease, cancer or diabetes," says medical laboratory scientist Naomi McMillan.

When you go in for an annual wellness visit to your primary care physician, you will typically go through a metabolic or chemistry panel; complete blood count, or CBC; and a lipid profile. But what does all of that mean?

The metabolic panel is a group of blood tests that gives an overall picture of your body's chemical balance and metabolism, as well as a snapshot of the health of your kidneys, blood sugar levels and the levels of key electrolytes, such as potassium and sodium, says the National Institutes of Health.

The CBC is used to evaluate your general health status, and can also detect disorders such as anemia, infection and leukemia, based on the ratio of white to red blood cells. A lipid profile measures different types of cholesterol in your bloodstream: high-density lipoprotein, or HDL; low-density lipoprotein, or LDL; and triglycerides, or fats, which indicate heart disease.

According to NIH, your doctor will interpret your bloodwork results against reference ranges, or values, which factor in your age, gender and any disease or chronic condition you might have. A critical value is one that's so far from the normal range that it could indicate a life-threatening condition.

To make sure you get the most accurate results from your blood tests, McMillan says it's important to adhere to pre-testing guidelines, including fasting, proper hydration and taking your medication for the prescribed amount of time before your blood draw.

"All of those things can make a pretty big difference," she says.

Once you've seen your results and identified any issues, it's time to take action. Can you improve your numbers? The answer is yes.

Eating a balanced diet rich in whole, unprocessed foods that



WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?

Heart disease and diabetes are two major health issues that actually have a strong correlation, according to the American Heart Association. At least 68% of people age 65 or older with diabetes die from some form of heart disease. The AHA considers diabetes to be one of the seven major controllable risk factors for heart disease, which is why knowing your numbers for both can help you make a major change that could save your life. Here are some of the numbers you should know, according to the AHA and the American Diabetes Association.

HEART DISEASE

| | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--|
| Total cholesterol | Healthy | 200 or lower |
| | Borderline high | 200-239 |
| | High | 240 or higher |
| Triglycerides | Healthy | 40-160 |
| HDL | Best | 60 or higher |
| | Good | 50-60 |
| | Poor | Lower than 40 for men Lower than 50 for women |
| LDL | Optimal | 100 or lower |
| | Near optimal | 100-129 |
| | Borderline high | 130-159 |
| | High | 160-189 |
| | Very high | 189 or higher |

DIABETES

| | | |
|-----------------------|---------|---------------|
| Hemoglobin A1C | Optimal | 4.5% or lower |
|-----------------------|---------|---------------|

are low in fat and sugars is one essential key to improving your numbers, says certified exercise physiologist Shelby Conn.

The other key to improving your numbers is getting the right kind of exercise. You can work with a professional to create a fitness plan targeted toward your specific goals.

"(An exercise physiologist) can use lab results as baseline measures to create an exercise prescription for you," Conn says. "(The physiologist) will monitor your progress against new labs every eight weeks, making adjustments along the way, taking into account other lifestyle or environmental factors that could affect improvement."

Know Your Squash

Tips and tricks for cooking up these vitamin-rich foods

BY PAIGE FUMO FOX

As you stroll through the grocery store or explore your local farmers market this time of year, you're bound to notice bins overflowing with bushels full of winter squash — acorn, butternut, delicata, hubbard, spaghetti, turban and more — and don't forget pumpkins.

While you've probably incorporated some of these into your fall cooking plan, others might take on a more decorative role in your household — centerpieces, jack o'lanterns, you know the drill. But before you start sprucing up that squash to sit pretty on your dinner table, think about how you can mash it, cube it, sauté or steam it to transform it from decoration to dinner, and reap the health benefits.

WHAT ARE SQUASH?

Squash is the name for a group of plants. Squash are “botanically a fruit,” says Caroline Passerello, a Pittsburgh-based dietitian and spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. However, nutritionally, they're more like a vegetable. The most well-known members of the squash family include zucchini and pumpkin, acorn, vegetable spaghetti and butternut squashes.

A half cup of cubed winter squash — hubbard and banana squash — can yield about 15% of the daily vitamin C you need, and 110% of the vitamin A, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Fiber-rich squash are also a great



COOKING UP FALL FLAVORS

BY TIM DUDIK, COMMUNITY HEALTH HOUSE CHEF

CURRIED PUMPKIN AND COCONUT SOUP

The subtle spices mixed with the pumpkin will undoubtedly warm you during the cool fall months and into the winter. Pumpkin is also an excellent source of vitamin A, great for eye health and a boost to your immune system. *6 servings*

For the soup

1 cup diced yellow onion
 ½ cup diced carrots
 3 cloves garlic
 2 tablespoons butter
 2 teaspoons ground ginger
 2 teaspoons cumin
 2 tablespoons curry powder

1 tablespoon salt
 6 cups chicken broth (or vegetable broth to keep vegetarian)
 1 cup coconut milk
 3 cup canned solid pumpkin pack

For the garnish

1 cup plain Greek yogurt
 ½ cup toasted pumpkin seeds

- 1 In a large stock pot over medium heat, melt butter. Add carrots, onions and garlic and sauté 8-10 minutes or until soft and onions become translucent. Add ginger, cumin and curry powder and stir to incorporate with vegetables.
- 2 Stirring constantly, let the mixture cook for 2 minutes. This will help to bring out the flavors in the spices even more.
- 3 Add pumpkin, chicken broth and coconut milk. Bring to a boil and then reduce heat to low. Let simmer, stirring occasionally for 40 minutes.
- 4 Using an immersion blender or counter blender, blend until very smooth. Garnish with Greek yogurt and pumpkin seeds if desired.



APPLE WALNUT-STUFFED ACORN SQUASH

This is a hearty dessert for one, or a great dessert to split with someone on a chilly autumn night. Top it with your favorite frozen yogurt.

2 full servings, or 4 shared servings.

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1 medium acorn squash, cut in half and scooped clean | 2 tablespoons butter, melted |
| 2 medium apples, medium diced (I like Fiji, but any firm apple will work) | 1 tablespoon brown sugar |
| ½ cup chopped walnuts | 1 teaspoon salt |
| | 1 teaspoon cinnamon |
| | 1 teaspoon nutmeg |
| | ½ teaspoon ginger |
| | ½ teaspoon allspice |

- 1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a cookie sheet with cooking spray, and place acorn squash flesh side down on sheet. Bake for 15 minutes to soften.
- 2 While acorn squash is cooking, combine cut apples, walnuts, melted butter, sugar, salt, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and allspice.
- 3 Remove squash from oven and turn over so that the skin side is facing down. If the squash is rocking, roll a piece of foil and place around squash to keep it in place.
- 4 Fill scooped out center with apple filling and bake for another 15 minutes at 350 degrees.
- 5 Once baked, let sit for 10 minutes before serving. Goes great with a scoop of cinnamon frozen yogurt.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH HASH

This is a great side dish to roasted chicken or turkey, and has a nice bit of heat with a Cajun flavor. You can also serve it over a bed of brown rice to make it a healthy, hearty vegetarian dish. 4 servings

- 2 cups butternut squash, diced small
- 1 medium sized red bell pepper, diced small
- 1 small red onion, diced small
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon ancho chili powder
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 cup vegetable or chicken broth

- 1 In a large skillet over medium heat, add olive oil, red onion and garlic. Sauté for five minutes or until slightly softened.
- 2 Add in butternut squash, bell pepper, sugar, chili powder, thyme, oregano, paprika, salt and pepper. Cook for five minutes, then add in broth.
- 3 Reduce heat to low and stir occasionally, cooking for about 20 minutes, or until squash is soft, but still holds its shape when a fork is inserted.

source of potassium, which helps the body keep sodium in check, can help ease muscle cramps and promotes heart health. Winter squash are a little higher in carbs than their summer cousins (think zucchini and patty pans), so people with diabetes should keep an eye on their intake.

COOK 'EM UP

While not all squash are interchangeable, they can often be swapped for one another when cooking, and a simple cube-and-roast is a good way to start, Passerello says.

She typically recommends butternut squash for its mild, slightly sweet flavor. You can peel it, remove the seeds and pulp and cube it, toss the pieces in a little olive oil and salt and pepper, and roast for about 25 minutes at 400 degrees.

QUICK COOKING TIPS

Passerello offers a number of other tips on how you can transform your squash.

- Instead of mashed sweet potatoes, try mashing squash, with a splash of orange juice.
- Roast acorn or butternut squash, purée some or all of it, and add milk or broth as the start of a comforting fall soup.
- Use squash in place of wheat or rice noodles. Halve a spaghetti squash, remove the seeds, cook cut-side down until the flesh is tender, then scrape with a fork to loosen the strands and serve with a favorite sauce.
- When choosing a squash, pick up

several of the same size, Passerello says. "Pick one that feels heavy for its size," she says. Squash can last weeks, as long as there are no signs of bruising or soft spots.

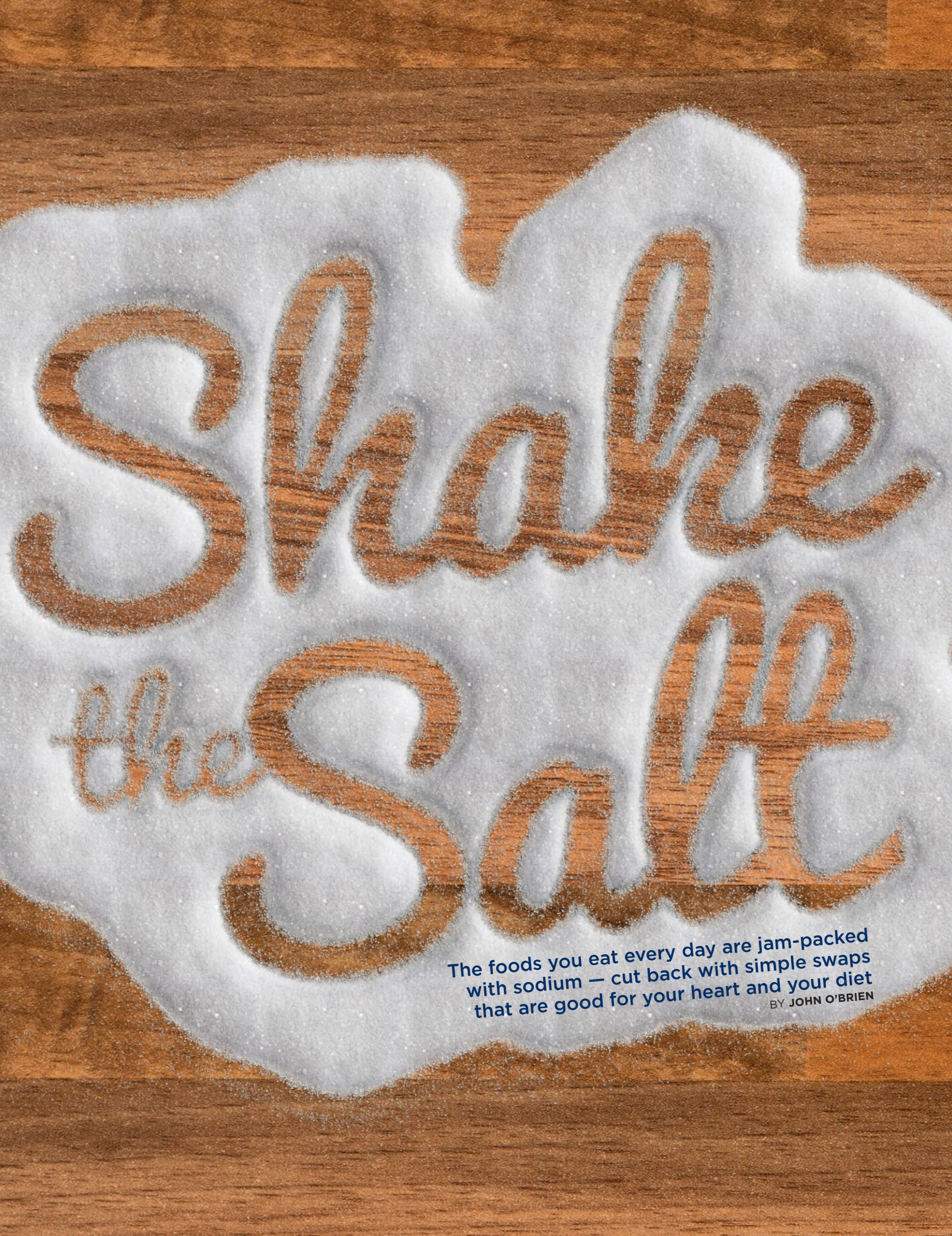
- Use a spiralizer to make other kinds of squash "noodles" when cooking Thai food or other Asian cuisine.

- If you don't think you're going to use an entire squash at once, Passerello recommends cooking it plain and seasoning it afterward.



remove the rind or scoop out the flesh.

Don't feel like cooking? Seek out "raw winter squash" recipes for ideas on grating pumpkins, butternut squash and more to use in salads and slaws.



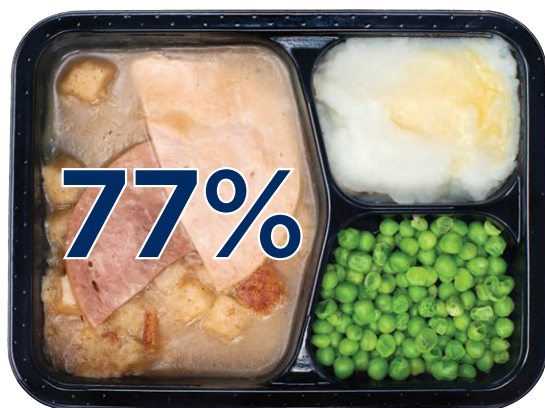
Shake the Salt

The foods you eat every day are jam-packed with sodium — cut back with simple swaps that are good for your heart and your diet

BY JOHN O'BRIEN

It's everywhere — in your home, at the store, at your favorite restaurant and even at the neighborhood potluck. You try to avoid it, but there's no escape. It's sodium, and even though you've taken action to limit your intake — cutting the salt you use while cooking and maybe even stashing the saltshaker in the cabinet — you could still be eating more than you're supposed to. Sodium is sneaky, hiding in all kinds of foods you might not expect. But what exactly is the problem with it, and do we need to cut all salt forever?

Sodium in America



77% of the sodium we consume comes from restaurant meals and processed foods — including TV dinners.

SOURCE: U.S. CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL

People are consuming mass quantities of sodium and they don't even know.

DIETITIAN KATHIE KING



A PINCH OF REALITY

Doctors and nutritionists have long advised people to cut back on sodium to stave off high blood pressure and the health consequences that come with it.

In many households, that's led us to ditch chips and pretzels, and buy low-sodium broths and soups.

But Americans still consume too much sodium, health experts say. In fact, we're eating an average of 3,000 to 4,000 mg a day. That's beyond the recommended 2,300 mg a day for most people, and beyond the recommended 1,500 mg per day for people over 51, African-Americans and those with high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

The vast majority of that sodium — 77%, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control — comes from meals we eat in restaurants and processed foods we buy in the grocery store, things like TV dinners, canned vegetables and cereals.

"People are consuming mass quantities of sodium and they don't even know," says Kathie King, a registered dietitian and certified nutrition support clinician with Penn Medicine, the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

And years of sodium overconsumption eventually takes its toll on your body. "It literally pulls more fluid into your bloodstream, makes the heart work harder and stretches blood vessels," King says. "Fifty years later, you start to have problems."

Too much sodium disrupts the kidney's process for expelling fluid from the body, which can lead to high blood pressure and can set off a host of other major health issues.

"Once you raise the blood pressure, it raises the risk of all the trouble that high blood pressure brings," like diabetes, kidney failure, heart failure and heart attack, says Dr. John Bisognano, president-elect of the American Society of Hypertension and director of UR Medicine's Comprehensive Hypertension Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center.

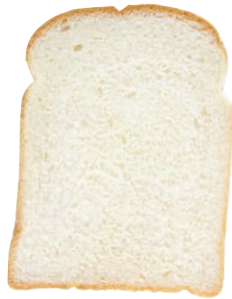
Sodium Solutions

You might be surprised at how much sodium is in many of your favorite foods. Discover some healthy, lower-salt swaps.



LUNCHEAT
300 mg+
per 2 ounces

Sodium solution: Opt for low-sodium meats, or use meat you cook yourself. And control your portion sizes.



WHITE BREAD
95 mg+ per slice

Sodium solution: Sodium is an important part of the baking process because of its ability to hold in water, King says. Breads can range from 95 mg to 300 or 400 mg per slice, King says, so a sandwich could have around 200 mg of sodium or as much as 800 mg—just in the bread. Look for breads with the lowest amount of sodium.



SLICED CHEESE
90 mg to 500 mg per slice

Sodium solution: Cheeses are an “interesting problem,” King says, because they range from low in sodium to very high — there’s about 90 mg in a slice of Swiss to up to 500 mg for a slice of American. Choose sandwich cheese wisely because when combined with meat and bread, “even in a little sandwich, you can have 500 mg of sodium,” King says.



*Ingredients
add up!*

FROZEN PIZZA
700 mg
per slice

Sodium solution: Like sandwiches, pizza is problematic because it’s a combination of many ingredients that often are high in sodium on their own. Most slices can average 700 mg each, according to King. If possible, make your own pizza with low-sodium ingredients.

BUT DO WE NEED IT?

Despite the risks excess sodium poses to your health, your body needs reasonable amounts of the element for a crucial function. Sodium works in conjunction with potassium in your kidneys to regulate the flow of fluids out of your body.

Most table salt today also contains iodine, another element your body needs. Iodine helps your thyroid produce hormones, which the salt industry touts as a benefit of salt.

However, King says eating too little sodium is a problem “only for a very few people.” We get more than enough sodium from other sources — including foods like milk, water, beets and celery — she says, and you get iodine from seafood, eggs and other dairy items.

“Unless something is wrong with your thyroid, most people aren’t in danger of not getting enough iodine,” King says.

LOW-SODIUM STRATEGIES

Cutting back on sodium is as simple as monitoring your intake, King says. “People need to understand how much sodium is in what they eat,” King says.

The most effective strategy is to avoid eating processed foods, says registered dietitian nutritionist Sonya Angelone, of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. However, it’s tough

BREAKING NEWS



New York City recently took steps to help residents reduce their sodium intake, requiring chain restaurants to post warning labels next to menu items that contain high levels of sodium. The New York City Board of Health passed the proposal Sept. 9. Now, restaurants with 15 or more locations in New York City must post the saltshaker warning symbol next to foods that meet or exceed the recommended daily limit of 2,300 mg.

to avoid packaged foods completely — sometimes it’s the only option. When that’s the case, check the nutrition label to see how much of your daily value of sodium is in the item.

“When eating packaged foods, read the nutrition facts labels and choose lower sodium options,” Angelone says.

However, remember that just because something is labeled “healthy” or “organic” or even “reduced sodium” doesn’t mean it’s really low in sodium.

“Some people think ‘reduced sodium’ is a good thing. However, this just means that the sodium is reduced by 25% from the original food. (The total amount) may still be high,” Angelone says.

What's in a Day?

Check out some common meals and see how your day stacks up to the recommended daily amount of 2,300 mg of sodium.

Breakfast

Quaker Oats Apples & Cinnamon
Instant Oatmeal 200 mg

Toast—One slice Pepperidge Farm
Farmhouse Hearty White Bread 240 mg

Meal total: 440 mg

Lunch

Cold cut sandwich:

- 2 slices Pepperidge Farm white bread 480 mg
- 2 ounces Sara Lee Oven Roasted Turkey 440 mg
- 1 slice Sargento Sliced Colby Jack cheese 125 mg

Nature Valley Oats ‘n Honey Granola Bar 180 mg

Meal total: 1,225 mg

Snack

17 Rold Gold Tiny Twists pretzels 450 mg

Meal total: 450 mg

Dinner

1 serving Swanson Chicken Stir Fry
Skillet Meal 1,540 mg

Meal total: 1,540 mg



Your daily total:
3,655 mg
1,355 mg over the
maximum recommended
daily amount of sodium

Fresh is best!

JARRED SPAGHETTI SAUCE

577 mg per 1/2 cup

Sodium solution: There are actually low-sodium and no-sodium versions available, so shop around, King says. "Once they add stuff (like five-cheese sauces), there's way more sodium," she says. You can also make a simple homemade tomato sauce with a jar of whole or crushed tomatoes, fresh or dried herbs, garlic, olive oil and a pinch of salt.



BACON PRE-SLICED

195 mg per slice

Sodium solution: Control portion sizes. An occasional serving is OK, Angelone says, but too much is not. You can also try reduced- or low-sodium bacon. "Bacon's not necessarily off-limits if you're managing your sodium," King says. "Everything comes down to portion size."



CONDIMENTS

57 mg (mustard) to 154 mg (ketchup) to 200 mg (ranch dressing) per tablespoon

Sodium solution: A little ketchup or mustard on a burger is OK, King says. Slathering your fries with ketchup ... not so much. All condiments are pretty salty.

"Salad dressing is a nightmare," King says. Keep your dressing on the side, and dip your salad instead of drowning it. Better yet, dip your fork in the dressing first. You'll end up using way less. And when possible, choose oil and vinegar dressing instead.

Other condiments to avoid:

➤ Soy sauce, which has 1,000 mg of sodium per tablespoon

➤ Teriyaki sauce, which has 700 mg of sodium per tablespoon

➤ Marinades. Newman's Own Herb and Roasted Garlic marinade, for example, has 370 mg in 1 tablespoon (and most people will consume more than 1 tablespoon)

➤ Barbecue sauce, which has 400 mg of sodium per 2 tablespoons (and most people eat at least twice that amount)

Instead of using these to add flavor after cooking, try marinating meat and poultry in vinegars or lemon, orange or pineapple juices plus herbs, she says.



GRANOLA BARS

60 mg to 300 mg each

Sodium solution: Look for low-sodium versions. Or make your own granola bars from fresh ingredients. That way, you control how much salt goes in.

For example, people often opt for low-sodium soy sauce, thinking it's healthier. And it is, but at 575 mg of sodium per tablespoon, it's still about a quarter of your entire daily value in that small amount.

"Also, sodium can be disguised in terms other than just salt, including sodium carbonate, bicarbonate, sulfite and ascorbate bicarbonate (baking soda)," Angelone says.

King says you should read the nutrition label to see exactly how much sodium is in an item, and opt for foods with the least sodium. However, she also admits that making the switch to low-sodium versions can be challenging.

"Generally, when you first try them they're absolutely wretched," she says.

To lessen that shock, mix low-sodium ingredients with some full-sodium versions and eventually wean yourself off the higher sodium versions.

Eventually foods with less sodium will begin to taste normal, and those with more sodium will be too salty for your palate. "That's the thing about salt—it's actually an acquired taste," King says.

People think 'reduced sodium' is a good thing. However, this just means that the sodium is reduced by 25% from the original food.

NUTRITIONIST SONYA ANGELONE

DON'T LET IT SNEAK UP ON YOU

We're used to checking food labels for calories, fat and cholesterol, but not sodium. In conversations about nutrition, salt sometimes gets lost.

"People don't really understand how much sodium is in their food and how it affects their health," King says. "Take responsibility and know how much sodium is in your food."

And all of these habits can trickle down to your kids, as well. Teach them how to read and understand labels and encourage them to eat fewer salty foods. And that includes curbing the amount of salt added at the table.

"You want to start healthy habits younger," Bisognano says. **CI**

Sodium vs. Salt: What's the difference?

We often use the words salt and sodium interchangeably, but they are actually different from each other—related, but slightly different.

Salt, a.k.a. sodium chloride, is a crystal-like compound used to flavor and preserve food. **Sodium** is one of the chemical elements found in salt.

Salt is the main source of sodium for most people, but common food additives such as **monosodium glutamate (MSG)**, **sodium nitrate** and **sodium bicarbonate** also contain sodium. According to the

U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the human body needs a small amount of sodium to maintain a balance of body fluids, keep muscles and nerves running smoothly, and help certain organs function properly. However, about 90% of American eat too much.

Common table salt is 40% sodium by weight, says the American Heart Association. According to the AHA, once you begin to understand how much sodium is in table salt, you can begin to take steps to reduce how much sodium you're eating.



FROZEN DINNERS AND SKILLET MEALS

700 mg to 1,800 mg each

Sodium solution: Avoid them, Angelone says. "You can make a quick dinner by browning chicken tenders in a skillet for just a couple of minutes and then adding a bag of fresh chopped spinach or other plain mixed vegetables," she says.

"Add some lemon juice, garlic, chipotle chili, cumin, and basil or other herb, and you have a quick, low-sodium meal. Make a larger batch so you can reheat leftovers in a jiffy. You can add a side of precooked, frozen plain rice or pre-cooked rice packaged in a vacuum bag that has no added sodium. Read labels because some brands are flavored and include a significant amount of sodium. Just heat and eat."



Total sodium bomb!



PREPARED RICE DINNERS

1,100 mg each

Sodium solution: "Just forget it. They're just not worth it," King says. Make your own rice dinner from scratch — cook up your rice of choice, then combine it with herbs, spices, veggies and meat, and your favorite sauce or salsa for a hearty, healthy, custom meal.

Just forget it!



CANNED SOUP

400 to 500 mg, though many top 1,000 mg per 1/2 can
Sodium solution: Avoid eating canned soup and canned foods in general, King says. "I tell my patients never to eat canned soup," King says. Even soups labeled organic can be jam-packed with sodium. "Amy's Organic Lentil Soup has 590 mg of sodium in one cup," Angelone says. "That's half a can, and most people eat the whole can."



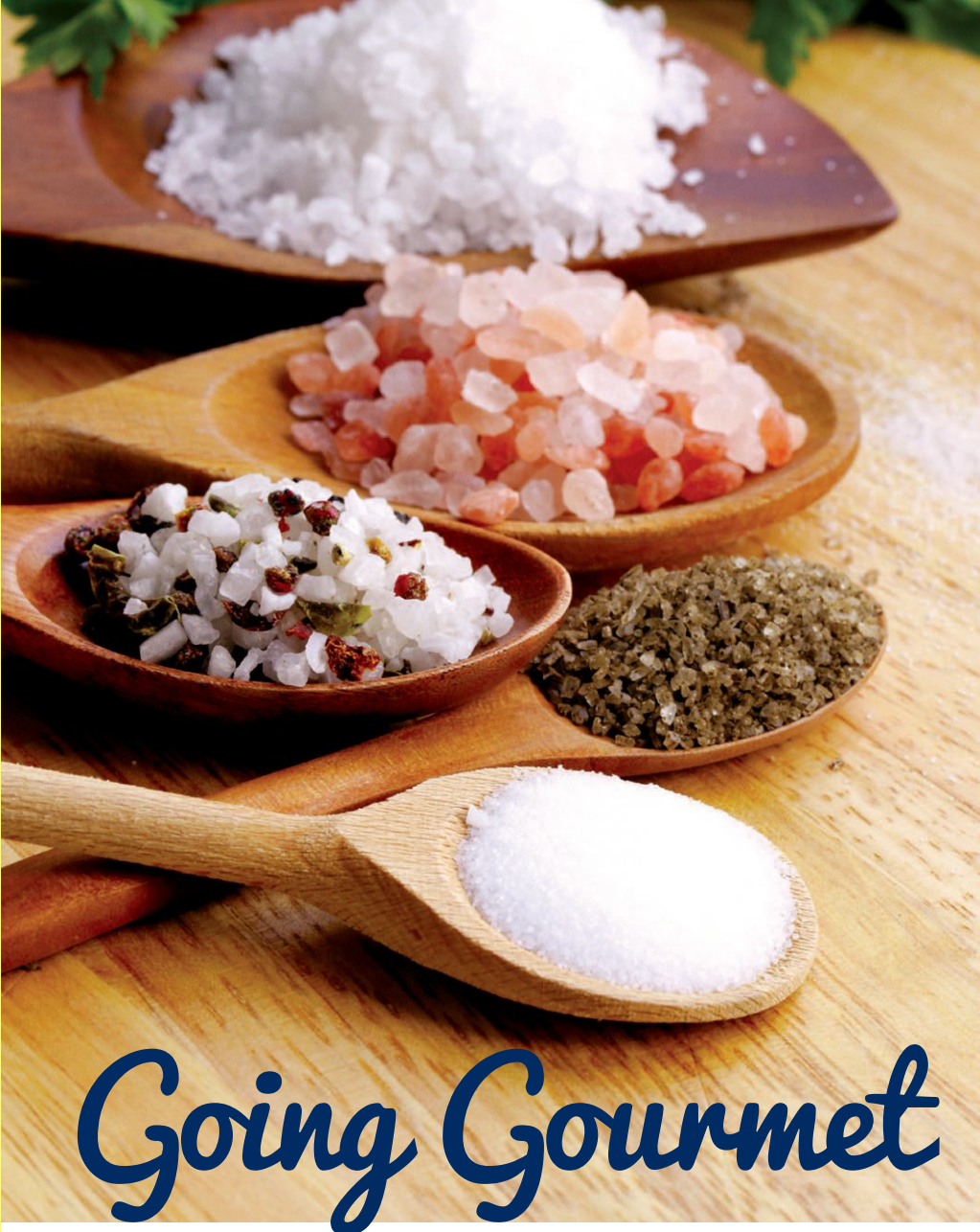
DRY CEREAL

270 mg for one cup of cornflakes
Sodium solution: Cereal sodium levels vary widely. Stick with plain oatmeal without added flavors. Those added flavors come with added sodium, sometimes as much as quadrupling the amount, King says. Instead, add fresh fruit or your own cinnamon for flavor, she suggests. "Puffed rice and puffed wheat are sodium-free," Angelone says. "Mix them in with your regular cereal to lower the sodium."



CANNED VEGETABLES AND BEANS

400 to 600 mg+
Sodium solution: While fresh vegetables are always preferred, canned vegetables like beans can actually be made a little less unhealthy if you drain them and then rinse them with water before using them. This can reduce the sodium level by 30% to 40%, King says.



Going Gourmet

You've probably heard a number of times that sea salt is better for you than table salt. But, is that true? And, if so, why?

The major factors that determine the sodium content of a salt are crystal size and mineral content, says Kathie King, a registered dietitian and certified nutrition support clinician with Penn Medicine.

Sodium chloride — the main ingredient in salt — is 40% sodium and 60% chloride, she says. Table salt is 100% sodium chloride, meaning it's 40% sodium by weight. Other salts, though, contain other trace minerals, pushing down the sodium content, which is why they are sometimes thought of as healthier.

When you measure by volume, sea salt, pink Himalayan salt and other "gourmet" salts may have less sodium because the crystals tend to be bigger, so fewer crystals will fit on the spoon, King says.

"When you weigh the various salts, they may contain less sodium, but keep in mind that sodium chloride is still the main ingredient," she says.

Most people are already getting way too much sodium in their diets, primarily from processed foods, so it would be better to avoid adding any more salt, gourmet or otherwise, says Sonya Angelone, registered dietitian nutritionist and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

"Most salts, even flavored salts, have similar amounts of sodium unless specifically formulated to be low-salt or low-sodium," Angelone says. "I recommend people not use flavored salts, but rather flavor food with herbs, lemon and vinegars."

Table Salt

2324 to 2840 mg OF SODIUM
PERTSP

Table salt is 97% to 99% sodium chloride. Many varieties are iodized, meaning they contain iodine, which helps promote thyroid health.

Sea Salt

1760 mg

Sea salt is produced by evaporating sea water. It can include small amounts of other minerals, including iron and zinc.

Kosher Salt

1872 mg

Kosher salt, used in the Jewish food preparation process to help extract blood from meat, tends to have larger crystals and fewer additives like iodine.

French Sea Salt

1560 mg

French sea salt is harvested from the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of France. It's also known as Celtic salt, for the variety that comes from near the Celtic Sea.

Fleur de Sel

1628 mg

This type of salt is gathered from the sea off the coast of France by workers who scrape the top layer of salt before it sinks to the bottom of the collection pan.

Pickling Salt/ Canning Salt

1560 mg

This is used in the preserving and pickling process.

Himalayan Salt

2,250 mg

This salt is mined from in the Himalayan mountains in Pakistan. It tends to have a pink or reddish hue thanks to its mineral content, particularly iron.

Flake Salt

1508 mg

Flake salt is sea salt that is heated during the evaporation process to produce flaky crystals.

Note: All sodium content is approximate and may vary significantly by brand.

