

Spring 2021

# thrive

Appreciate Health. Enjoy Life.

## Virtually Inviting

Virtual Health Works for More Patients

## 10 Self-care Tips

Get ready for

# Spring

Welcome to our new magazine!

## Being Heard Never Gets Old

Age-Friendly Health Care Comes to St. Mary's Health System

New to Auburn 4 years ago, Nancy Tebbetts decided to volunteer at St. Mary's as a way to become involved with the community. Her smiling face and kind words brighten each day for both patients and staff.  
Photo by Séan Alonzo Harris



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*Appreciate Health. Enjoy Life.*

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## Welcome to *thrive*!

Winter is ending, and spring is in sight! In this season of growth and renewal, we are excited to cultivate our connection with you through the launch of our new magazine, *thrive*! Each issue is filled with inspiration and information to help you flourish and enjoy life to the fullest.

The pandemic has challenged everyone. In this issue, you'll find tips to help you take good care of yourself. You'll learn about the benefits of virtual appointments plus helpful pointers for practicing self-care as you navigate through this hectic time. In "Ask the Doctor," Covenant Health's Chief Medical Officer Douglas Waite, MD, addresses both pressing and common questions regarding the COVID-19 vaccines. Discover community connections with "Reaching Out." and learn how seniors "Get Personal" with Age-Friendly Health Care.

*thrive* is meant for you, your families and your friends. We are always looking for story ideas and feedback. Please send us your thoughts on the response card inside so we can focus our next issue on topics of interest to you.

Spring is a time to start fresh. We hope you'll find something in this issue that inspires you to make healthy choices and thrive in 2021!

*thrive* Magazine content is for general information purposes only, and should not be used as medical/health advice or instruction. No recommendations are made to diagnose, test or provide treatment for any health ailment, medical condition or disease.

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# Virtually Inviting

Virtual Health Works  
for More Patients

By Cheri Hinshelwood

Online shopping, virtual concerts or distance learning are just some of the digital advances making their way into our realities. Now telehealth, or virtual medical visits, is an option for more Covenant Health patients. Thousands of patients are now choosing to meet with their doctors remotely using their computers and mobile phones, rather than scheduling in-person office visits.

The COVID-19 pandemic paved the way for virtual health and Covenant providers embraced this new technology to limit possible exposures to the new virus and offer patients the care they needed.

"In the spring of 2020, like many healthcare systems, any non-essential medical visits and procedures were cancelled out of an abundance of caution," said Vamsi Dwaram, MHA, system director of virtual health at Covenant Health. "Patients were concerned about exposure to the new virus and many waited for routine care until we had online options to offer. Now patients are choosing virtual visits."

To be sure each visit is successful, a staff member helps to walk through the technology with patients before their appointments. This has been especially important for those not normally comfortable with technology. "I can't say enough good things about the virtual visit with my nurse practitioner," said one patient. "It's the way I would like all of my future visits."

## Virtual Health Tips

- Be available prior to your visit to test your device and internet connection with our office staff
- Confirm family members who want to be invited to the conversation since remote calls can involve more than two participants
- Select a quiet, private setting for your appointment
- Prepare any questions for your provider, just as you would for an in-person visit

## Unexpected Benefits

This new option also makes it easier for families to join in medical conversations, huddling around their computer together or joining by phone from across the country. Family involvement in medical care often improves outcomes, patient understanding and compliance with recommendations. Daughters or sons of older patients can hear first-hand discussions about lab results or new findings. They are involved in discussion and ask questions by joining the visits virtually.

"My doctor and his medical assistant were fantastic!" said another patient. "They made sure I felt comfortable, answered all of our questions, taking time to address my concerns and even those of my daughter."

## Virtual Medical Visits

And it doesn't stop there. Virtual health has made its way from the doctor's office to hospitals and emergency departments across the Covenant Health system. Through technology, doctors in high-demand specialties like psychiatry and neurology can provide excellent care remotely to meet the needs of patients who live in rural settings. Rather than driving hours to in-person appointments

or doing without, patients get the stroke or mental health care they need, when and where they need it. "The doctor was great at calling me back and settling my issues, and I was pleased with the whole set up as a whole," shared another patient.

Virtual consultations are also an option for hospital patients when a neurologist expertise is needed to pinpoint diagnosis or offer additional treatment options. These experts are easily reached by phone or computer to join the medical team. Having added experts available for patients expand the treatment available to patients when the medical system is starved for experts in certain hard-to-recruit specialties.

"It's the right care at the right time in the right setting," said Dwaram. ■

Call your provider to learn more about virtual health appointments.



# 10 Self-care Tips

## Support and resilience during a pandemic

**M**erriam-Webster's Dictionary defines resilience as 'the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change'. Of course, what the dictionary doesn't mention is how difficult it can be to come by resilience when faced with misfortune or change. Certainly, a global pandemic would be categorized as unfortunate. In addition, adhering to the safety guidelines to keep yourself safe can bring drastic change to your daily life.

Maintaining quality of life during challenging times requires a measure of resilience supported by a keen focus on self-care. These 10 tips can help you get there:



- 1 Maintain a Schedule** – Hold on to a sense of normalcy by maintaining your typical schedule as best you can. The familiarity of structure can be calming.
- 2 Eat Well** – Make good nutritional choices. After all, you are what you eat. Fill your plate with healthy choices including plenty of fruits and vegetables. And, be sure to enjoy dessert occasionally.
- 3 Share Your Feelings** – Reach out to family, friends and caregivers to share how you're feeling. Having your emotions validated can be both comforting and empowering.
- 4 Exercise Your Brain** – Keep yourself intellectually engaged by reciting prayers, reading books or doing crossword/jigsaw puzzles to help keep your brain sharp.
- 5 Stay Active** – Go for a walk, stretch your body, take part in an online exercise class. Help boost your immune system by adding physical activity to your daily routine.
- 6 Be Social** – Rather than social distance, strive to distantly socialize. Learn to connect with family and friends via technology – and do it every day. Connecting with loved ones in any way will elevate your mood.
- 7 Be Mindful** – Spend quality quiet time in the moment by being truly aware of your thoughts and environment. Stay focused on the present rather than allowing your mind to stray to the past or future.
- 8 Manage Stress** – Set aside your worries for a few moments each day. Take time to relax, get outside for fresh air or enjoy green space to provide a bit of much needed perspective.
- 9 Be Helpful** – Extend yourself to others. Lend a helping hand or offer an empathetic ear to someone who could use it. Simple acts of kindness are sure to be uplifting for you both.
- 10 Sleep Well** – Catch seven to nine hours of z's each night. Take the time to rest. Adequate sleep helps keep your body, mind and spirit stay vibrant and healthy.



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**COVENANT  
HEALTH**

St. Joseph Hospital - Bangor  
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St. Joseph Hospital - Nashua



# Seasonal Splendor

Spice up spring with this light and healthy offering

## Quinoa, Black Bean and Mango Salad

### Ingredients

1 cup	cooked quinoa (can buy frozen)
1 cup	canned black beans, rinsed and drained
1	sweet red bell pepper, finely chopped
1/2	red onion, finely chopped
1	mango, chopped
2-3 tbsp	fresh cilantro, chopped
1	jalapeño pepper, chopped
2 tbsp	toasted pepitas (pumpkin seeds) (optional)

### For dressing:

2 tsp	olive oil
3 tbsp	lime juice
1/8 tsp	ground cumin
1/4 tsp	chili powder
1/4 tsp	salt

### Preparation

Whisk the ingredients for the dressing together. Mix all of the ingredients for the salad together; pour the dressing over the mixture and stir to combine. Keep in fridge until time to serve.

### 4 servings

Nutrition information (per serving): 182 calories; 3.7 g fat; 0 mg cholesterol; 388 mg sodium; 35.5 g carbohydrates; 5.9 g dietary fiber; 6.3 g protein

## Guac Star

Everything you need to know about this popular fruit



### These wholesome properties make avocados nutritious and delicious!

- Nutrient-dense (high in nutrients for relatively few calories)
- Rich in healthy, good-for-you fats
- High in fiber
- Contain many essential vitamins and minerals including: folate and other B vitamins, potassium, vitamin K, copper, magnesium, powerful antioxidants such as vitamins C and E and carotenoids (which are beneficial for eye health), and cholesterol-lowering phytosterols

### Avocado Inspiration

- Add a piece to your daily smoothie.
- Toss it into a salad.
- Top with lemon and pepper as a snack.
- Use as a butter substitute in baked goods.
- Make Guacamole!



# Baja-style Salmon Tacos

## Ingredients

12 oz salmon fillet, cut into 4 portions (3 oz each)  
4 8-inch whole-wheat tortillas

## Taco filling

1 cup green cabbage (about ¼ head), rinsed and shredded  
2 tsp lime juice  
1 tsp honey  
½ cup red onion, thinly sliced  
1 medium jalapeño (seeds removed), minced  
1 tbsp fresh cilantro, minced

## Marinade

½ tbsp vegetable oil  
1 tbsp lime juice  
2 tsp chili powder  
½ tsp ground cumin  
½ tsp ground coriander  
¼ tsp salt

## Preparation

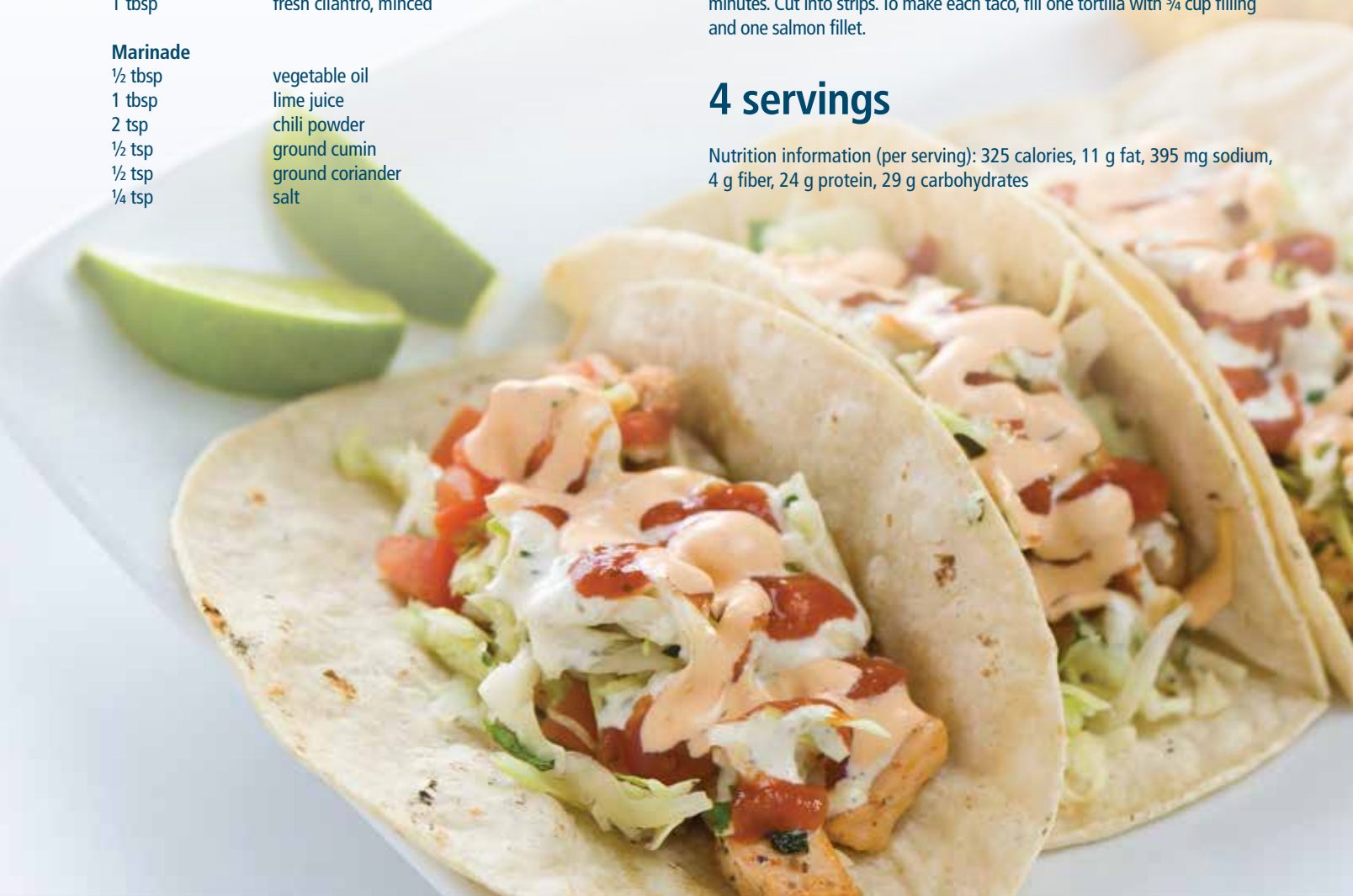
Preheat grill or oven broiler (with the rack 3 inches from heat source) on high temperature. Prepare taco filling by combining all ingredients. Let stand for 10-15 minutes to blend the flavors.

To prepare the marinade, combine the oil, lime juice, chili powder, cumin, coriander and salt in a bowl. Place salmon fillets in a flat dish with sides. Pour marinade evenly over fillets.

Place salmon fillets on grill or broiler. Cook for 3-4 minutes on each side, until fish flakes easily with a fork in the thickest part (to a minimum internal temperature of 145 degrees F). Remove from the heat and set aside for 2-3 minutes. Cut into strips. To make each taco, fill one tortilla with ¾ cup filling and one salmon fillet.

## 4 servings

Nutrition information (per serving): 325 calories, 11 g fat, 395 mg sodium, 4 g fiber, 24 g protein, 29 g carbohydrates



## Avoca-do's

The safe way to slice it:

1. Wash and dry the avocado before cutting to avoid food poisoning.
2. The avocado should stay on the board, not in your hand.
3. Slice avocado into two long halves with the knife horizontal to the cutting board. Then rotate avocado 90 degrees and slice again to quarter it.
4. Remove the seed and peel the skin, all with your fingers.
5. Slice, dice or mash for sandwiches, salads or toast!

## Avoca-don'ts

1. Don't eat the seed.
2. Never remove the pit by stabbing it with a knife. Leave this fancy trick to professional chefs.
3. Don't purchase avocados that are too soft or ones with dark spots.
4. Avoid paring knives for cutting avocados. A chef's knife is ideal, but a steak knife will do just fine.

## Avocado Hand: It's a Thing

- Not just a hashtag on Instagram, this has become a recognized term in emergency rooms for injuries caused by the improper handling or cutting of an avocado.
- In 2017, Consultant Plastic Surgeon Simon Eccles in London, told the Huffington Post that he treats about four patients a week for avocado hand, and his hospital even experiences a "post-brunch surge" on Saturdays.
- Famous avocado hand sufferers include Meryl Streep and "The View" co-host Joy Behar.

# Ask the Doctor

## COVID-19 Vaccines

Covenant Health's chief medical officer, Douglas Waite, MD, answers some of your questions about COVID-19

Douglas Waite, MD



The global pandemic has challenged all of us, but the COVID-19 vaccine provides us with another tool to combat this deadly virus. News reports can be confusing, so here are some answers to your questions.

First...the basics:

## What is a vaccine?

A vaccine stimulates your immune system to produce antibodies, exactly like it would if you were exposed to the disease. After getting vaccinated, you develop immunity to that disease, without having to get the disease first.

## What is different about the COVID-19 vaccine?

The first COVID-19 vaccines authorized for emergency use have been the messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “mRNA vaccines take advantage of the process that cells use to make proteins in order to trigger an immune response and build immunity to SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.” Unlike traditional vaccines, mRNA vaccines do not utilize live or killed virus to trigger the immune response. Pfizer and Moderna have been leaders in this technology and have provided the first vaccines in the United States.

## Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

According to the CDC, mRNA vaccines must follow “rigorous and effective safety standards” and none of the results of the clinical trials have reported serious side effects in test patients. That said, all vaccines carry the risk of side effects on administration including low grade fever, chills, nausea or muscle aches. This means that the body is producing the antibodies it needs to fight off the disease.

As these vaccines are approved by the CDC, extensive safety data is made available to the public.

## We hear a lot about herd immunity. What is it, and how do we reach it?

A: Herd immunity is when enough people in the population are immune to a particular disease, and the spread from person-to-person becomes unlikely. This differs from natural immunity that you acquire after you’ve been exposed to a virus.

Herd immunity is important because it helps protect those individuals who may not receive the COVID-19 vaccine due to

other reasons or complications. Mumps, polio and chickenpox are examples of diseases in the U.S. where vaccines have helped establish herd immunity.

## I’m not sure I want the vaccine, but I don’t want COVID-19 either. Are there conditions that increase my risk for contracting COVID-19?

According to the CDC, adults of any age with the following conditions are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19:

- Cancer
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Heart (cardiac) conditions, including heart failure, coronary artery disease and cardiomyopathies
- Immunocompromised individuals, due to solid organ transplant
- Obesity
- Pregnancy
- Sickle cell disease
- Smoking
- Type 2 diabetes

There is limited data about the following medical conditions, but CDC suggests you may be at an increased risk if you have:

- Asthma (moderate to severe)
- Cystic fibrosis
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Immunocompromised state, due to blood or bone marrow transplant, HIV, use of corticosteroids or other immune-weakening medication
- Neurologic conditions, like dementia
- Liver disease
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Thalassemia (a type of blood disorder)
- Type 1 diabetes

Additionally, children with sickle cell disease or chronic kidney disease also may be at an increased risk of severe illness.

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/8-things.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/8-things.html).



# Being Heard Never Gets Old

Age-Friendly Health  
Care Comes to St.  
Mary's Health System

By Cheri Hinshelwood

From curbside grocery pick-up to binge watching our favorite television shows, most of us are used to having our desires or needs met promptly. Integrating this concept into healthcare practice means creating a more personalized environment for patients, especially the increasingly important senior population.

This simple, yet ingenious framework, is called Age-Friendly and begins with the care team asking the question “what matters to you?”— rather than “what is the matter with you?”

It's fitting the age-friendly journey in Lewiston began in the Memory Clinic at St. Mary's Regional Medical Center where the majority of patients are over the age of 65.

“The heart and soul of this initiative starts with what matters most to our patients — what patients and their families are concerned about, what they value and what they share as goals,” said René L. Dumont, FACHE, chief patient experience officer at St. Mary's Health System.





“The new model makes sense to clinicians who are being especially intentional with each and every patient,” Dumont said. “Decisions are made balancing several factors to help achieve what patients’ value most.”

Since the journey began in 2019, the Memory Clinic has been honored as an Age-Friendly Health System.

It’s no surprise St. Mary’s is among early adopters of the age-friendly initiative when only about 20 percent of health

institutions have committed. St. Mary’s has long been at the forefront of senior care, and the time is right.

Seniors are the fastest growing population in the country. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, seniors are expected to double in number in the next 30 years, reaching 84 million people by 2050.

But there’s a catch. Each older person is as different as one sunset is from the next — beautiful, complex and one-of-a-kind. Older adults actually become more different from one another as they age, say geriatric experts. This is especially true when factoring in culture differences, values and preferences combined with life experiences and chronic conditions.

This new movement allows staff to balance the needs of the patient through the lens of what matters most to patients, while balancing mentation, mobility and medicine.

For example, to have a patient’s blood pressure perfectly controlled could come with side effects from their medicine such as making the patient light-headed when standing. Caregivers weigh the benefits of the medication regimen in light of any affects to mobility or mental state.

### A Closer Look at Age-Friendly

In Age-Friendly Health Systems, the following four Ms guide discussions and decisions. The intent is to keep older patients active, engaged, healthier and happier over their lifetime, while also respecting their individual preferences.

- **What Matters:** Learn and honor patient preferences to guide care including patient-specific health goals, care preferences, cultural differences, priorities and end-of-life care.
- **Medication:** If medications are needed, choose those that do not interfere with patient preferences, mental capacity or mobility.
- **Mentation:** Identify and attend to any changes in mental awareness, mood, dementia or delirium across care settings.
- **Mobility:** Ensure older adults maintain ability to move safely every day in order to keep strong and functioning so they can do What Matters.

St. Mary’s is striving to take this model to different care settings so patient preferences follow the patient no matter where they receive care. The goal is to embed the age-friendly concept in the electronic medical record and primary care physician practices where discussions about patient goals should be integrated into annual wellness visits. The power of this documentation is that patient goals are preserved and available to practitioners throughout the system.

“Everyone wants to have their preferences appreciated,” said Dumont. “At St. Mary’s our mission is to provide healing and care for the whole person. Age-Friendly Health Care puts the focus on our patients’ needs and wishes. By asking questions and listening to what really matters, we empower our patients to live lives that they define as fulfilling.” ■

To learn more, talk to  
your provider about  
Age-Friendly Health Care



# Vape Culture

## Local health experts tackle teen e-cigarette use

By Lindsey Grossman

**D**oes your teen know the dangers of vaping? Despite efforts to reduce teen cigarette smoking, youth vaping use has almost doubled in Androscoggin County for both middle school and high school students from 2017-2020.

This sharp rise has prompted health experts in the region to come together and take action. St. Mary's Health System, Central Maine Medical Center (CMMC) and Healthy Androscoggin are collaborating to address this growing public health issue with an anti-vaping campaign targeting youth. Funded in part by a generous grant from Covenant Health, this initiative gets the word out to kids about the dangers of vaping, providing key resources for quitting or helping loved ones quit. Young adults and teens who vape face a more serious risk of getting COVID-19, making the need for this outreach more essential than ever.

For free and confidential support to quit vaping, text "MAINE" to 88709.

Working with local substance use disorder counselors from the Lewiston and Auburn school systems, the campaign aims to fire up youth as influential voices among their peers in the education, prevention and treatment efforts for vaping. A youth-led social media push this spring will open teens' eyes to the facts, health effects and risks of vaping.

Jenny Cowie, mission integration manager at St. Mary's, is working on a photo voice project about vaping. "I am excited to collaborate with my youth group and see through their lens what drives them to either consider vaping or what makes them avoid it completely," she says. In a perfect world, Cowie would love to see vaping and cigarette use eliminated. Realistically, she hopes this campaign might give youth considering vaping or experiencing peer-pressure a chance to pause, consider the side effects and long-term harm on their bodies, and just say no. ■





Can't pinpoint the trigger for your sleep troubles? Download AASM's two-week sleep journal to track your behaviors and pick up on any possible patterns affecting your sleep: [sleepeducation.org](https://sleepeducation.org).



Scan here to learn more about good sleep.

# Get Your Vitamin Zzz's

## A guide to good sleep hygiene

By Lindsey Grossman

**W**hat we eat and experience during the day — especially in the evening closer to bedtime — has a direct effect on the amount and quality of sleep we get.

According to the American Association for Sleep Medicine (AASM), the term “sleep hygiene” refers to the practice of healthy habits that help you fall asleep and stay asleep. Good sleep hygiene doesn't just help you get quality shut-eye at night — you'll also be more bright-eyed and productive during the day.

What's so great about good sleep? Getting enough, quality sleep helps your body restore itself and lowers your risk of disease. It can help regulate blood pressure, diabetes and hormone levels, too. Other proven benefits to good sleep include reduced stress, improved mood and maintaining a healthy weight.

In general, adults need 7-8 hours of sleep, but a good night's sleep means something different for everyone. Some people can function just fine off of six hours, while others may need 10 or more hours of sleep to make it through the day.

If you are experiencing sleep issues, talk to your provider. Minor adjustments in your lifestyle may make a big difference. ■

## 7 Tips for a Good Night's Sleep

1. Eat a healthy diet and stay hydrated.
2. Avoid/limit caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime.
3. Exercise regularly (any time of day, depending on the person).
4. No screen time 30 minutes to an hour before bed.
5. Focus on relaxing activities before bed, like reading.
6. Establish a consistent bedtime routine, especially for kids.
7. Create a pleasant sleep environment (cool, dark and comfortable).





# Hey, Man ... You Good?

## Three areas where men can focus on better health

By Jennifer Sellers

June isn't just a time to remember dear ol' dad; it's also a month set aside to encourage men to take charge of their health, wellness and medical care.

When it comes to good health and longevity, men aren't fairing as well as the fairer sex. According to Health.gov, men die, on average, five years younger than women. They also die at higher rates of heart disease, most cancers and even suicide.

Many factors contribute to these alarming statistics. Hormonal and physiological differences between men and women certainly play a role. So do lifestyle and career choices. Men are also less likely to prioritize a healthy lifestyle or seek medical help. In many cases, however, minor changes in a man's habits can have a profound impact on his health, helping him to live longer — and better.

### Heart Health

Cardiovascular disease is the No. 1 killer of all Americans, men and women alike. However, men die at younger ages from this disease.

To start combating this killer, men should:

- Incorporate healthier foods into their diets, filling at least half of every plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Exercise. Long hours at the gym pumping iron aren't necessary to achieve a healthier heart and longer life; 30 minutes of exercise a day will help — especially aerobic exercise that gets the heart rate up is best.
- Make annual preventive care appointments with a primary care physician to stay up on heart-health indicators, such as blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

### Prostate Health

Men have higher rates of most cancers. Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men — it's also the second-most deadly cancer in men. The good news is that prostate

cancer is highly treatable if caught early. That's why regular prostate exams are critical to a man's good health.

Cancer isn't the only prostate concern that can be addressed by a doctor. Enlarged prostate, while not cancerous, can cause a man a good deal of discomfort, as well as difficulty urinating. It's the most common prostate problem in men over age 50.

Meanwhile, prostatitis is the most common prostate problem in men under age 50. It is an inflammation of the prostate that can lead to a number of troubling symptoms, including fever, chills and painful urination.

### Mental Health

Men are three times more likely than women to die from suicide — this means they make up over 75 percent of suicide victims. Again, the reasons behind any statistic are complex. But as with general health care, men are also less likely than women to seek mental health care. This reality, combined with the high suicide rate, is why American men are suffering what mental health experts call a “silent crisis.”

Good mental health is just as critical to a man's well-being as any other kind of health. One place to start is a conversation with a doctor about good mental health practices, such as daily walks, talking out problems and stress management techniques. Men who are struggling with deeper issues, such as depression or substance abuse, should ask for a referral to a mental health professional who can help them find their way toward healing.

### Men: Make Your Health a Priority

The key to an overall healthy life is to prioritize healthy habits and to seek regular preventive and maintenance care from health care providers. Changes as simple as a daily walk, extra veggies on the plate and an annual checkup can make all the difference for a healthy life. ■

**Good mental health is just as critical to a man's well-being as any other kind of health. One place to start is a conversation with a doctor about good mental health practices, such as daily walks, talking out problems and stress management techniques.**



Kimberly McGrath-Chase standing in front of a photograph of her grandmother in nursing school from 1918.

Photo by Meg Moore

# Caring Careers

## Healthcare hero Kimberly McGrath-Chase shines in the shadow of COVID-19

By Lindsey Grossman

**K**imberly McGrath-Chase didn't choose nursing; she truly feels like it chose her. The clinical nurse manager for Milford Urgent Care graduated high school as an aspiring attorney, but when her 13-year-old brother unexpectedly died in an accident, everything changed. "When you go into a place like a hospital, you're looking for that literacy because you're looking for people to educate you," she explained. "You're looking for them to make you feel better, too, because there's so many things you're feeling. Going through my brother's death was pretty horrific and feeling hopeless and helpless are feelings I never want to experience again, nor do I want anyone else to feel that way."

With a new career path, she followed in the footsteps of her great-grandmother, who graduated from St. Joseph School of Nursing in 1918. "Her picture dons the wall there so it's a really important part of my life," she said.

McGrath-Chase graduated from St. Joe's as a Licensed Practical Nurse in 1996, and returned to school in 2015 to become a Registered Nurse. Her great-grandmother's photo is still there. "Before every test I would go to her and just say a little prayer," she laughed.

To learn more about the St. Joseph School of Nursing please visit [sjson.edu](https://sjson.edu).

McGrath-Chase says nursing has been her best friend for nearly 25 years. "I used to be an introvert, and now I feel as though I'm an extrovert, because I feel comfortable talking with patients," she explained. "I feel comfortable with the knowledge base St. Joe's has given me to educate people. Having

confidence in myself has allowed me to run towards COVID-19, not run in the opposite direction. My education gave me the tools I needed to help educate the public and keep everyone safe. Nursing wasn't something I chose originally; I really feel like it chose me and I went with it. Now, I can't imagine my life without being a nurse, it's who I am." ■





The Lots to Gardens program converts once-vacant lots into sustainable, urban gardens fostering self-reliance and healthy eating for families in Lewiston-Auburn.

# Harvesting More than Produce

By Cheri Hinshelwood

**T**he St. Mary's Nutrition Center has a wonderful program called Lots to Garden that has been operating for over 20 years. This nationally recognized program intentionally uses food as a tool for community building, leadership and youth development, as well as neighborhood revitalization. Converting once-vacant lots into sustainable, urban gardens includes the benefits of fostering self-reliance and healthy eating and strengthens community connections in Lewiston-Auburn. Best of all, food grown here is consumed by local families who need it most.

By being part of the rewarding volunteer work at the Nutrition Center, St. Mary's former President and CEO Jim Cassidy and his wife, Rita, understand how vital gifts are to the Center's operation. This led the Cassidy's to include the Nutrition Center in their estate plans, providing support long into the future.

Just as this garden produce benefits in Lewiston-Auburn community, donations made to St. Mary's also remain local.

"One of the promises that Covenant Health makes to each donor is that the gift will stay local and help your community in the ways you decide," said Steve Costello, Executive Director of Philanthropy at St. Mary's.

Planned giving options are as varied as the people who support St. Mary's and can be structured to meet your personal, family, and financial needs. You can leave property such as real estate or include St. Mary's as a beneficiary of your life insurance. A popular option is to establish gifts that pay you back through charitable gift annuities or charitable remainder trusts. With annuities and trusts, the possibilities are almost endless for creating income for yourself or your loved ones while supporting the hospital's

work in the community.

"One of the beautiful things about a gift is that we honor how a donor wants it to be used," Costello continued. "Your gift can support the Nutrition Center or other programs that mean the most to you." ■

For more information, talk to your financial advisor or contact **Stephen Costello**, St. Mary's Executive Director of Philanthropy, at 207-777-8828 or [scostello@covh.org](mailto:scostello@covh.org).

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COVID-19 has tested all of us. Many now work remotely, our children learn from home and we celebrate special occasions with family and friends on ZOOM®.

What hasn't changed is our sense of community. Through the darkest of days, you've reached out to neighbors in need. You've exchanged smiles under your masks, and you've worked together to find solutions to challenges.

Each of you has made our jobs as caregivers easier. We thank you for supporting each other and helping to create a path forward for your neighbors and friends.

We are grateful, and know that together we really are stronger.

COURAGE. FAITH. HOPE.

*From All of Us at St. Mary's Health System*