

# VALLEY

## health & life



**LUNG CANCER  
SCREENING**  
SAVES LIVES

**KIDNEY CARE:**  
AN EXPERT  
TEAM



**WINNING AT  
WEIGHT LOSS**

# SAVE THE DATE!

# NURSES ROCK '24

## SALUTE TO NURSE HEROES

Holyoke Medical Center's  
Nurse Appreciation Concert will be held on

## Friday, May 10, 2024

It is our way of showing our gratitude to **ALL NURSES**, not just our own, for working tirelessly to keep our community healthy.

**ALL NURSES** are invited, regardless of where you work!

**FREE FOOD | FREE DRINKS | FREE PARKING |  
FREE GIVEAWAYS | LIVE MUSIC**

Featuring the band:

## AQUANETT

Registration will open in March, 2024 at:  
[HolyokeHealth.com/NursesRock](https://HolyokeHealth.com/NursesRock)



### On the Cover:

Marsha McKinley (left) and Bonnie Germain hold photos of themselves taken before laparoscopic surgery, which—combined with guided lifestyle measures—helped them achieve healthier weights.



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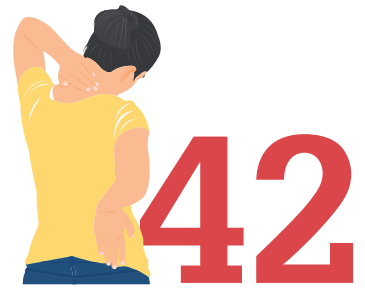
## Valley Health Systems, Inc.

- **HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER**  
575 Beech Street, Holyoke | 413.534.2500
- **HOLYOKE MEDICAL GROUP**  
15 Hospital Drive, Holyoke | 413.535.4800
- **HOLYOKE VNA HOSPICE LIFE CARE**  
575 Beech Street, Holyoke | 413.534.5691
- **RIVER VALLEY COUNSELING CENTER**  
P.O. Box 791, Holyoke | 413.540.1234



# HEALTHY HABITS

FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY



## SNOOZE TO AVOID THE COMMON COLD

Sleeping fewer than six hours nightly has been linked to a four times greater risk of catching a cold compared with getting seven or more hours of shut-eye.

—Sleep

The percentage of women who do not have chest pain during a heart attack. Beware of other symptoms including nausea; pain in the back, neck, jaw or arms; and shortness of breath.

—Journal of the American Medical Association

## LACE UP TO THINK

Research has shown that taking even a short walk can trigger ideas and boost creative output by as much as 60 percent.

—Stanford University



## DIET AND COVID

People eating a plant-based diet of fruits, veggies and whole grains were less likely to develop moderate to severe COVID-19 infections compared with people who ate a low-carb, high-protein diet.

—BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health



## SUGAR'S NOT SO SWEET

Drinking more than one 12-ounce, regularly sweetened drink daily has been shown to increase your risk of having higher levels of LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, which can increase your chances of developing cardiovascular disease.

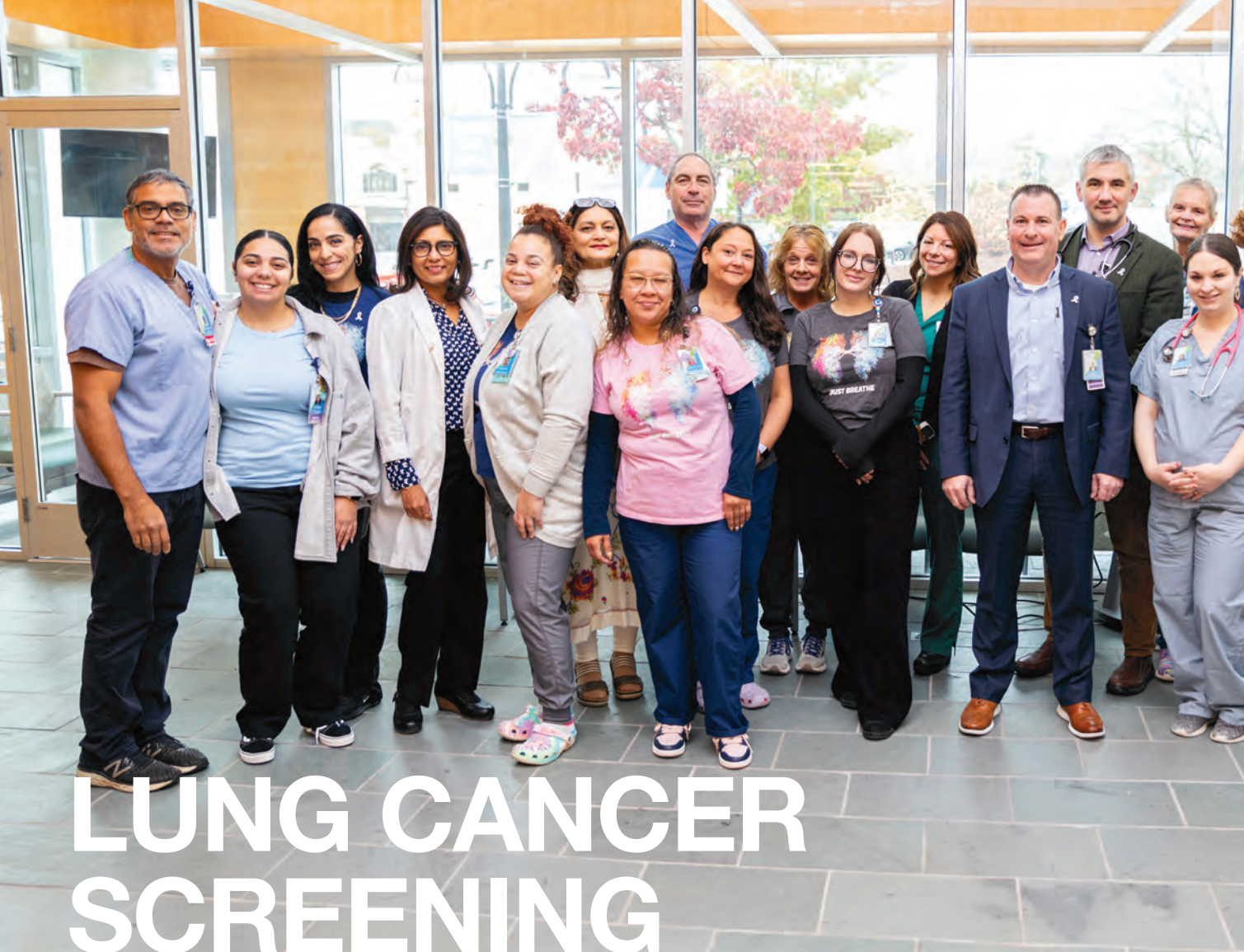
—The Journal of Nutrition



## A REASON TO CONTROL STRESS

Having trouble concentrating or remembering things? Stress might be to blame. A recent study found that people with elevated stress levels were 37 percent more likely to experience a decline in cognitive function.

—JAMA Network Open



# LUNG CANCER SCREENING SAVES LIVES

LOW-DOSE CT SCANS DETECT DANGEROUS TUMORS AT EARLY STAGES WHEN CANCER MAY BE CURED.

**IF YOU SMOKED TOBACCO** at some point in your life, you may worry about the lasting effects of your habit, specifically an elevated risk for lung cancer. A screening test called low-dose



Andrey Pavlov, MD



Pasquale Rocco, MD

computerized tomography (LDCT) can help put your mind at ease.

LDCT, which has been offered at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) for about seven years, is designed to detect lung cancer before symptoms appear. The earlier a cancer is detected, the higher the chances of curing it.

"Utilizing this technology, we find cancers at the earliest stages, which are more treatable," says pulmonologist Andrey Pavlov, MD, Director of the Lung Cancer Screening Program at HMC. "And the benefit seems to be

significant." In fact, studies have shown that LDCT lung cancer screening reduces the risk of dying from lung cancer by 20 percent among people at highest risk.

"We recommend that patients get mammograms for the early diagnosis of breast cancer and colonoscopies for the early diagnosis of colon cancer," adds Pasquale Rocco, MD, a thoracic and general surgeon at HMC. "LDCT is essentially that same thing in the appropriate patient population for lung cancer."





A multidisciplinary team at Holyoke Medical Center meets regularly to discuss best practices for lung cancer screening, which can significantly improve outcomes in patients whose cancer is caught when the disease is most treatable.

## A THREATENING DISEASE

Screening is important because more than 238,000 Americans are diagnosed with lung cancer and about 127,000 die from the disease every year. That makes it the No. 1 cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States.

Smoking is the primary cause of lung cancer. According to Dr. Pavlov, lighting up is responsible for 85 to 90 percent of lung cancer cases. Secondhand smoke can be just as harmful. Certain environmental exposures, such as to radon or

asbestos, can also increase a person's risk for lung cancer.

By the time symptoms appear, the cancer has likely spread and is more difficult to treat.

"A lot of these tumors are asymptomatic until it's too late," says Dr. Rocco. "That's a general theme for all cancers. But lung cancer in particular is very lethal when it's at an advanced stage."

The survival rate for patients with stages 3 or 4 lung cancer is less than 20 percent. But when lung cancer is found early, treatment can be curative. "For a patient diagnosed with early-stage lung cancer, the five- and 10-year survival approaches 92 percent and 90 percent, respectively," Dr. Rocco says.

## SCREENING AND TREATMENT

Candidates for lung cancer screening start by meeting with a member of the radiology team to review their medical and smoking history and discuss the benefits and risks of screening. The scan involves exposure to radiation, but the low dose is very safe.

Patients also learn how follow-up works and are counseled on smoking cessation and the importance of adhering to yearly screening. If a patient is eligible, a scan is scheduled.

"The scan itself is quick," says Dr. Pavlov. Patients lie down on the CT table, holding their breath for about six seconds while the machine takes a series of X-rays to produce a 3D image of the chest and lungs. The whole procedure lasts about 15 minutes.

Physicians usually meet shortly afterward to discuss results and determine the best follow-up. The radiographic images are judged by a set of criteria and assigned a score from 0 to 4.

"That criterion determines what the next step in the patient's workup will be," says Dr. Rocco. "It could be another low-dose CT scan in six months or a year, or something more



## ARE YOU A CANDIDATE FOR LDCT?

According to the American Lung Association, you are considered to be at high risk for developing lung cancer and are likely to benefit from screening if:

- You are 50 to 80 years old.
- You have a 20 pack-year history of smoking. This translates to one pack of cigarettes a day for 20 years, two packs a day for 10 years and so on.
- You currently smoke or have quit within the last 15 years.

aggressive, such as a lung biopsy or PET scan."

If cancer is found, a biopsy helps doctors determine the proper treatment. Options may include surgery, radiation and/or chemotherapy. Early-stage tumors may just require an operation to remove the cancerous tissue.

"If it's an early, small lesion—which is the whole point of these scans—and the patient is able to tolerate surgery, they would have a minimally invasive procedure called video-assisted thoracic surgery, or VATS," says Dr. Rocco. "We can resect everything from a lobe to an entire lung using small ports and a four-centimeter incision under the arm. Patients usually go home within two to three days."

Some 3,000 people receive LDCT for lung cancer at HMC every year. "My message is that, while it's a little bit of a nuisance, screening can significantly decrease the risk of having an advanced cancer," Dr. Pavlov says. "That can be lifesaving."

**✱ To learn more or to make an appointment with the Lung Cancer Screening Program at Holyoke Medical Center, call 413.535.4721.**





# 5 WAYS TO AVOID WINTER FALLS

THESE SITUATIONS CAN TRIP YOU UP, BUT SMART STRATEGIES CAN KEEP YOU ON YOUR FEET.

**WINTER IS A HIGH-RISK TIME** for slips and falls—and the injuries that can result. But most falls are preventable, especially if you're alert to common hazards.

As colder weather makes ice and snow more prevalent, follow this advice for sidestepping winter pitfalls that often contribute to tumbles.





**HAZARD  
#1**

### HURRYING

In cold conditions, it's tempting to walk faster or take more hazardous shortcuts to get inside or reach a destination, but rushing is the underlying

cause of many falls.

#### FOIL FALLS:

- Give yourself plenty of time to get where you're going.
- Walk slowly and carefully, taking slower, smaller steps and keeping your weight over your feet.
- Keep hands out of your pockets to help catch or block a fall if necessary.



**HAZARD  
#3**

### ICY SURFACES

Ice on pavement can be hard to spot—especially under a surface puddle that makes all the water look melted. Awkward twisting while standing can make getting out of a car on ice particularly treacherous.

#### FOIL FALLS:

- When it's necessary to walk on snowy or icy surfaces (as when clearing the driveway), sprinkle a gritty substance such as sand, salt, cinders or cat litter for traction.
- In parking lots, pull into well-lit spots and scan the ground before getting out of your vehicle.
- When exiting your car, swing both legs out and plant them firmly on the ground before standing.
- Feel around and steady yourself on the doorframe before you start walking.



**HAZARD  
#4**

### SLIPPERY FLOORS

Melted snow from shoes can make indoor surfaces slick in winter, especially in public areas like stores and offices where many

people have trod.

#### FOIL FALLS:

- At home, take off shoes or boots when you come inside—and ask guests to do the same.
- Be extra careful in indoor public places, especially near exterior doors, where floors are often wettest.
- Wear shoes or boots with good traction and ankle support.



**HAZARD  
#2**

### COLD MUSCLES

Cold muscles tend to become more rigid. That means chilly limbs could hinder your ability to react quickly if you slip or lose your balance.

#### FOIL FALLS:

- Put on winter clothes such as a hat, gloves and a coat each time you head outside, even to grab the mail.
- Give preference to gear that's both warm and light, such as down or fleece coats and vests, so clothes themselves don't restrict mobility.



**HAZARD  
#5**

### UNWISE TRAVEL

Many people think it's important to keep appointments or get their shopping and other errands done

even during hazardous weather.

#### FOIL FALLS:

- Stay inside during bad weather unless your task or appointment is an emergency. Very few things can't wait until after a snowstorm.
- Keep tabs on weather forecasts and reschedule commitments for times when conditions are likely to be better.



## AVOIDING FALLS AS YOU AGE

Falls are more likely as people age due to a combination of factors including a declining sense of balance and reduced muscle strength, along with vision and hearing issues. These steps can help you stay safe.

#### • Practice balance and strength exercises all year.

If you do lose your balance, having good muscle strength lets you recover by regaining your footing or grabbing a railing and supporting yourself.

#### • Have your eyes checked and keep your vision sharp.

Go to the eye doctor to make sure contacts or eyeglasses prescriptions are current.

#### • Be mindful about medications.

Everyone reacts differently to medications, so any kind can potentially impair your balance or make you unsteady. Be especially cautious when starting a new prescription.



Bonnie Germain

# A WINNING COMBINATION FOR LASTING WEIGHT LOSS

WHEN COMBINED WITH A DISCIPLINED APPROACH TO DIET AND EXERCISE, LAPAROSCOPIC SLEEVE GASTRECTOMY SURGERY HELPS PATIENTS SHED UNHEALTHY WEIGHT.

**IT'S BEEN MORE** than two years since Marsha McKinley of Hartford, Connecticut, had a laparoscopic sleeve gastrectomy (LSG) and lost 98 pounds—40 percent of her total body weight. Yannis Raftopoulos, MD, PhD, director of the Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) Weight Management Program, performed the surgery—one of more than 200 LSGs the program's surgeons do each year. LSGs performed as part of the HMC Weight Management Program have resulted in up to 20 percent more weight lost after 12 months than the national average.

While LSG can work very well for patients, the process takes a lot of discipline. "Even before surgery," says Marsha, "the protocol calls for losing 10 percent of your body weight, which was 20 pounds in my case. It was tough, but I've always been a goal-oriented person, and I was motivated to lose weight. My joints hurt, and I had fatty liver disease. I wanted to be healthy and pain-free."

## WHAT IS LSG?

LSG is a procedure to remove a portion of the stomach. After making small incisions in the abdomen, the surgeon uses specialized instruments to remove most of the stomach. The incisions are made along the stomach's vertical

axis, leaving behind a long tube that resembles a sleeve. The surgery takes about an hour and a half, and most patients go home within 24 hours.

## AN INTEGRATED PROGRAM

Although the surgery is highly effective, it's only one element of the program. An evidence-based weight loss and maintenance protocol is ultimately what makes the difference, especially over the long term.

"During the preoperative phase, we teach patients how they're going to be eating and create an exercise program tailored to their needs," Dr. Raftopoulos explains. "Based on our research, patients' ability to lose weight and follow the diet during this period is associated with a better long-term weight loss after their weight loss surgery. In developing the diet, we emphasize protein intake, not calories. We also put special emphasis on teaching the patients how to assess their food portions in a simple



Yannis Raftopoulos, MD, PhD



Martin Walko, MD



## CONTINUING CARE

After Marsha McKinley lost almost 100 pounds following surgery, she had excess skin on her abdomen hanging over the lower stomach and thighs. Sometimes this problem results in infections, which is what happened to Marsha. That's why Dr. Raftopoulos performed a panniculectomy, a procedure to remove the troublesome skin.

"Thankfully, there's not going to be a scar," Marsha recalls. "Just as with the first surgery, with the same support from the HMC team, this procedure went smoothly. The bottom line is that these procedures saved my life."

and practical manner that is easy to do in any setting. Simultaneously, we help patients organize their schedules so that there's time for exercise," he says. In other words, HMC's program provides real help with all aspects of the weight loss process: nutrition, diet, exercise and behavior modification.

An important benefit of this approach is that people lose fat instead of water and muscle, which is not a healthy way to lose weight. Losing fat means that patients look healthy after their significant weight loss. Working with a nutritionist during the maintenance phase helps them cultivate good lifelong eating habits.

## HEALTH RISKS OF OBESITY

Developed countries are experiencing an obesity epidemic, which has brought with it an increase in comorbidities, or conditions that develop from or are made worse by obesity. Typical comorbidities of obesity include sleep apnea, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. The good news, however, is that losing weight can help reverse these conditions.

"Just about all the patients we see have tried multiple diets but have not been successful," says Martin Walko, MD, a fellowship-trained bariatric and laparoscopic surgeon. "Many come from families with obesity, so they likely inherited the disease. If they live in communities without access to high-quality food, their diet tends to be mostly carbohydrates and fat, which is not a formula for successful weight loss."

Like Dr. Raftopoulos, Dr. Walko has found that a laissez-faire approach to

weight loss doesn't work. "The more structure provided, the better the results," Dr. Walko says. "We point out that there is no magic bullet, though if patients learn how to make smarter choices, they can keep the weight off."

## SUPPORTING PATIENTS

Bonnie Germain, a patient of Dr. Walko's from Chicopee, Massachusetts, benefited from the team's support. "By the time I reached out to HMC, I was mentally ready to lose weight, but I knew that I couldn't do it alone," she says. "I was inspired by the enthusiasm of the team—they wanted me to succeed and helped push me to do my best."

Her hard work and perseverance paid off. Over the course of a year, Bonnie's weight went from about 255 pounds to 130 pounds. "Before surgery, I was supposed to lose 25 pounds, but I lost 50," Bonnie recalls. "I was fortunate that even at age 60, I didn't have many comorbidities, though I do notice that I no longer get out of breath when I go up and down stairs. I've rediscovered my love of biking, and I participate regularly in aqua fitness."

Bonnie has found that her whole life has improved since her weight loss. "I've opened myself up more, and, in turn, new opportunities have emerged," she adds. "I have a new job and a new man in my life. My journey has changed the way I look at the world."

**\* To learn more or to make an appointment at the HMC Weight Management Program, visit [holyothealth.com/wmp](https://holyothealth.com/wmp) or call 413.535.4757.**



Marsha McKinley

# PROVIDING EXPERT KIDNEY CARE

KIDNEY ASSOCIATES AT HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER  
OFFERS ONE-STOP SPECIALIZED SERVICES.

Shaji Daniel,  
MD, MRCP, FACP, FASN



Balaji Padmanaban Athreya,  
MD, FASN



**IF YOU LIVE IN THE REGION** and need treatment for a kidney condition, two names you may hear are those of Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) board-certified nephrologists Balaji Padmanaban Athreya, MD, FASN, and Shaji Daniel, MD, MRCP, FACP, FASN. That's because few doctors can top the experience, expertise and credentials of these kidney specialists, both of whom have been respected members of the Holyoke medical community for years.

In November, Kidney Associates at Holyoke Medical Center, led by Dr. Athreya and Dr. Daniel, opened at the main hospital campus in Holyoke at 10 Hospital Drive, Suite 302 and at a second location at 2150 Main Street, Suite 110, in Springfield.

With the establishment of Kidney Associates, HMC now offers highly specialized in-house kidney services by highly qualified providers full-time, says Dr. Athreya, who has been on staff at HMC since 2000.

## CONVENIENT CARE

"Patients will benefit immensely from this service being brought in-house under the Department of Medicine," says Dr. Daniel, who has been on staff at HMC since 2008. "Our patients can get their treatment locally and avoid unnecessary transfers for renal care,



which should help patients as well as their loved ones.”

In addition to Dr. Athreya and Dr. Daniel, Kidney Associates staff will include two additional providers such as nurse practitioners or physician assistants.

“We provide all aspects of kidney disease management, including screening and implementing all available strategies to slow the progression of kidney disease,” says Dr. Athreya. “All types of dialysis, based on patient needs, and pre- and post-kidney transplantation services are provided as well.”

## COMPREHENSIVE TREATMENTS

At both locations, patients can receive expert care for a wide range of renal conditions. Some of the most common include:

- **Chronic kidney disease (CKD).** Also known as chronic kidney failure, CKD is marked by a gradual loss of kidney function. Symptoms vary depending on severity but can include loss of appetite, vomiting, fatigue, weakness, sleep problems, swelling of the feet and ankles, muscle cramps and high blood pressure. CKD can progress to end-stage kidney failure which—though treatable with dialysis or a kidney transplant—is potentially fatal.

- **Acute kidney injury (AKI).** Sometimes called acute renal failure, this condition consists of kidney failure or damage that occurs suddenly, often within hours or days, resulting in kidneys losing their ability to filter waste products in the blood. People who develop AKI are often already hospitalized; kidney damage may be due to causes such as decreased blood flow, blockage of the urinary tract or direct damage to the kidneys

from various conditions. Treatments vary and can include medications and dialysis.

- **Diabetic kidney disease (DKD).**

This condition, also known as diabetic nephropathy, consists of chronic loss of kidney function in people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. DKD results from damage due to high blood glucose levels and affects one in three people who have diabetes. Treatment varies depending on the stage of the disease. Early treatment may include medication and/or dietary changes, while late-stage treatment options include dialysis and kidney transplant.

- **Kidney stones.** These hard deposits made up of certain chemicals in urine can affect any part of the urinary tract and vary from as tiny as a grain of sand to as large as a pebble or even larger. Treatment varies depending on the type of stone (calcium oxalate, uric acid, struvite or cystine). Options include medication; lithotripsy, a procedure that breaks up stones using sound waves; surgery to remove stones; and ureteroscopy, in which a stone stuck in the ureter or bladder is removed using an instrument with an attached camera that is inserted into the urethra and passed to the appropriate part of the urinary tract.

Kidney Associates also treats a wide range of other conditions, including high blood pressure, protein or blood in the urine, low sodium in the blood and abnormal potassium levels.

Whatever a patient’s kidney condition, Dr. Athreya and Dr. Daniel offer not only expertise but also compassion. “I like to take time to listen to my patients,” Dr. Athreya says. “We educate patients about chronic disease.”

## MEET THE DOCTORS

- **Balaji Padmanaban Athreya, MD, FASN,** completed his Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery degree at Thanjavur Medical College in India. He then completed senior house officer roles in general surgery, and accident and emergency medicine in London, United Kingdom. He completed a residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in nephrology and hypertension at Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center in New York. Dr. Athreya is board-certified by the American Society of Internal Medicine as well as board-certified in nephrology and hypertension, and is a designated specialist in treating high blood pressure.

- **Shaji Daniel, MD, MRCP, FACP, FASN,** completed his Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery degrees at the University School of Medicine, Kerala, India, and underwent a residency at the University School of Medicine, Calicut, India. He completed his internal medicine residency in Ireland and was awarded the Membership of the Royal College of Physicians (MRCP) in Dublin. Further training followed at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, the University School of Medicine in London, Ontario, Canada, and Baystate Medical Center in Massachusetts. Dr. Daniel is board-certified in internal medicine and nephrology and is a fellow of the American College of Physicians and the American Society of Nephrology.

To make an appointment with Dr. Athreya or Dr. Daniel at Kidney Associates, call **413.534.2787**.



# NEW HOPE FOR EARLY-STAGE ALZHEIMER'S

A NEW DRUG CAN SLOW THE COURSE OF THE  
DISEASE FOR SOME PATIENTS.

**“FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER,** we now have a drug that can change the course of Alzheimer’s disease,” says M. Zubair Kareem, MD, MS, Director of the Stroke Program at Holyoke Medical Center. The new drug, lecanemab (Leqembi), was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in July 2023.

Lecanemab has been shown to be effective in reducing amyloid plaques, a by-product of cell metabolism that forms in the brain and eventually destroys brain cells. “It is very exciting that we finally have a drug that can target the underlying disease process of Alzheimer’s,” Dr. Kareem says.



M. Zubair Kareem,  
MD, MS

As news of a new drug for Alzheimer’s has spread, however, neurologists are receiving an increasing number of referrals for patients concerned about

forgetfulness. “Lecanemab is not for everyone experiencing memory issues. There is a need for education of the public in this area,” he says.

## THE IMPACT OF ALZHEIMER’S

Alzheimer’s disease is a form of dementia in which a person struggles in three main areas:

- Cognitively—for example, forgetfulness and problems following directions.
- Behaviorally—for example, depression and anxiety.
- Functionally—for example, performing complex tasks such as driving or managing finances.

Until recently, medicines used for Alzheimer’s were helpful in treating some symptoms but did not change the course of the disease. Lecanemab can help slow down the course of this disease.

Establishing the right patient population for the new drug can be

tricky. That’s because forgetfulness is a common symptom of the earliest stages but is also a normal part of aging.

For a person with early-stage dementia, forgetfulness crosses a line in some way. For example, occasionally losing track of keys may not be outside the norm for people as they age. But asking the same questions repeatedly, making uncharacteristic mistakes at work or getting lost in places a person knows well may raise a red flag. (Dr. Kareem provides a lot of information about dementia for patients and their families on his blog at [www.my-neurologist.com](http://www.my-neurologist.com).)

“Lecanemab is only approved to treat patients in the earliest stages of Alzheimer’s,” says Dr. Kareem. “The condition must be properly and definitively diagnosed, which requires some physical tests in addition to a psychological assessment. This may include brain imaging, preferably with an MRI, a PET [Positron Emission Tomography] scan, and by taking a sample of spinal fluid.” Some blood tests are helpful but are not widely available.

## AN EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

Nonetheless, the future looks brighter for Alzheimer’s treatment. Lecanemab and other similar drugs in development are part of a growing class of medications known as biologicals, which are created using living cells instead of being chemically synthesized.

Biological drugs are already being used to treat many conditions, including cancer, arthritis and migraines. “I compare this situation to how treatment for multiple sclerosis has developed,” says Dr. Kareem. “Forty or so years ago, there was no specific drug to treat MS. Now we have dozens of drugs that are making a significant difference for MS patients.

“With Alzheimer’s,” Dr. Kareem continues, “we’re at the beginning of this process, with a new drug to slow the disease and hopefully more on the way. Drug development is a slow process—but the landscape is changing for the better.”

✱ To make an appointment with Dr. Kareem, call **413-534-5135**.





# 9

## WAYS TO HAVE MORE ENERGY THIS YEAR

ENHANCE YOUR PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND HEART HEALTH WITH A FEW SIMPLE CHANGES.

**PREDICTION: 2024** will be your year—the one in which you get out of any rut you may be in and create new, healthier habits. Your two key tools: movement and food.

Exercise improves cardiovascular health and boosts energy. Food is fuel, and the right foods provide nutrients the body needs to repair, heal and stay strong. Here's how to kick-start your journey.

**1 START SMALL.** People often see the best results when they take small steps. Choose goals that meet criteria in the acronym SMART: Specific, Measurable, Actionable,

Realistic and Timely. It's usually not enough to say, "I want to lose weight" or "I want to be healthier," experts say. Instead, think more along the lines of, "I want to lose 20 pounds by next January by doing X, Y and Z."

**2 FIND EXERCISE YOU ENJOY.** Walking is often the easiest exercise to incorporate into a daily routine. But if you're more inclined to swim, dance, golf or play tennis, get out there and do it.

**3 CREATE A SUPPORT SYSTEM.** Having an exercise buddy makes it easier to keep going, as does using

a personal trainer. Trainers often can provide one-on-one or small-group guidance. If you have a condition such as diabetes, arthritis, heart disease or Parkinson's, or have had weight loss surgery, you may be able to find sessions tailored for people with those health concerns.

**4 TRY HABIT STACKING.** This process builds new habits by adding them to existing actions. Booking appointments? Add exercise to your calendar as with any other priority. Filling your plate? Serve vegetables first. Grabbing keys to go out? Clip them to a packed gym bag so you'll have it with you.

**5 READ LABELS.** When buying packaged foods, favor products higher in fiber and lower in sugar and fat. High-fiber foods make you feel more satisfied so you eat less.

**6 CHOOSE "GOOD" SUGAR.** Sugar from an orange comes packed with fiber, vitamins and minerals; sugar from orange candy or soda, not so much. Sugar from whole foods provides nutrients important for satiety, whereas added sugar in processed foods does not.

**7 GO NUTS.** Nuts are a great go-to source of protein and healthy fats, which are vital for cellular turnover, hormone synthesis and bowel health. Other good sources include sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds and flaxseeds, which can be added to yogurt and oatmeal to boost nutritional value.

**8 EMBRACE YOUR ROOTS.** Root vegetables such as yams, beets, carrots, turnips, rutabagas and parsnips are perfect for soups, stews and frittatas—dishes that are great places to hide a lot of vegetables or to try a vegetable for the first time.

**9 EAT THE RAINBOW.** Every color of fruit or vegetable has a different nutrient profile, and the more you mix things up, the more your body will benefit.



# REGENERATIVE MEDICINE: HELPING THE BODY HEAL NATURALLY

TREATMENTS THAT USE A PERSON'S OWN BLOOD PROTEINS AND CELLS OFFER HEALING FOR MANY CONDITIONS, INCLUDING ARTHRITIS AND SOFT TISSUE INJURIES.

**THERAPIES SUCH AS** platelet-rich plasma (PRP) and stem cell injections are forms of regenerative medicine. These treatments, now available at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC), use a person's own, natural blood proteins and cells to jump start stagnated healing processes. Benefits of this approach include improved function and

decreased pain in muscle, joint and bone conditions.

"We're proud to bring regenerative medicine offerings to Holyoke Medical Center and are able to perform



Syed M. Khurram  
Owais, MD

these procedures in our outpatient procedure suite," says Syed M. Khurram Owais, MD, an HMC doctor who specializes in interventional treatment of spine and musculoskeletal conditions.

Dr. Owais continues, "Regenerative medicine may be defined as the process of replacing or regrowing human cells and tissues to restore normal function. In the context of musculoskeletal medicine, this field holds promise for regenerating damaged tissues in the body by stimulating the body's own repair mechanisms to heal worn-out bones or soft tissues such as discs, ligaments and tendons."

**\* To learn more or make an appointment with the HMC Pain Management Center, please call 413.535.4933.**

PRP is generated using a patient's blood, while stem cells are typically harvested via a bone marrow aspiration. Both modalities may be used to treat conditions such as osteoarthritis, tendon and ligament injuries, arthritis in the spine and vertebral disk degeneration.

Both PRP and stem cell injections are administered on an outpatient basis. These procedures take about 45 to 60 minutes. Afterward, your doctor may want to monitor you for a little while before you go home.

Insurance currently does not cover these treatments. However, they can be paid for using an HSA or FSA account. "While the out-of-pocket cost may sound high at first, it is an investment in your long-term well-being," says Dr. Owais.

## BENEFITS OF REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

Because a patient's own blood or bone marrow is used in these treatments, the risks associated with surgical instrumentation of tissues or introducing a foreign substance into the body are avoided.

Another significant benefit of regenerative medicine is that it can reduce the need for medications, cortisone injections and surgery. This is why these techniques are especially preferred by high-performance athletes who place a high premium on returning to full fitness for their busy play schedules following sports injuries.

Tissue regeneration takes time, so you may not feel instant relief as you might with anti-inflammatory medications or cortisone injections. But as the regenerative process continues, you can expect steady improvement in musculoskeletal function and longer periods of pain relief.

"You may sometimes need one to three injections to get your body to kick-start its regenerative processes," says Dr. Owais. "If the procedures are a success, you can expect longer lasting results over the following years."



# The Egg and You

PACKED WITH PROTEIN AND MINERALS,  
THIS STAPLE FOOD IS EVERYTHING IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE.

**REGARDLESS OF** what you call the most lovable breakfast meat, neither ham nor bacon would probably be on the culinary map without the egg. We've always been reliant on eggs in that way. The consumption of eggs dates back to around 7000 B.C., when people in China and India domesticated chickens. Although other fowl like quail, duck and ostrich produce edible eggs (as do fish and reptiles), the chicken variety is most popular in the U.S. thanks to the animal's rapid biological cycle and poultry commercialization. It also helps that they're so versatile and delicious.

## POWER UP

Perhaps no other American diet staple has had as many ups and downs as eggs—and we're not just talking about the various sunny-side ways to prepare them. For decades, medical publications like the *Journal of the American Medical Association* have touted the food's health benefits, and there are plenty in the basket.

As Rocky Balboa can attest, eggs are packed with energy-producing and muscle-building components: One whole large chicken egg (about 50 grams) contains 70 calories and provides 6 grams of protein, roughly 12 percent of the recommended daily value (DV). Prefer the jumbo size? Those will boost your protein intake to 8 grams (16 percent DV). Eggs are also a go-to source for vitamins D, B6, B12, biotin—a vitamin that improves hair, skin and nails—as well as the antioxidant selenium.

Despite the pros, eggs continue to scramble minds in the medical

community, with some research linking high egg consumption with increased risk of heart disease. One whole large egg contains 185 mg of cholesterol (a whopping 62 percent of the DV), thought to be a contributor to cardiovascular disease. Although the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services recommend capping daily cholesterol intake at 300 mg—less than two large eggs—the federal offices still consider eggs part of a healthy diet. If you're concerned, opt for egg whites. Removing the yolk drops the calorie count to 17 grams and eliminates cholesterol.

## BUY/STORE/SERVE

Eggs are a grocery-list essential, and there are a variety from which to choose beyond size. White and brown eggs are similar in taste and nutrition, so whichever you select is based on personal preference. (The chicken's breed determines color.) The best eggs are pasteurized from local farms. Chickens at these sites live on an open range and are free of antibiotics, hormones and steroids, and their eggs are typically picked and on the shelves within 48 hours of being laid. Most supermarkets offer farm-fresh (organic) eggs as well as store brands, which use the product of battery-caged hens that are given a formulated feed.

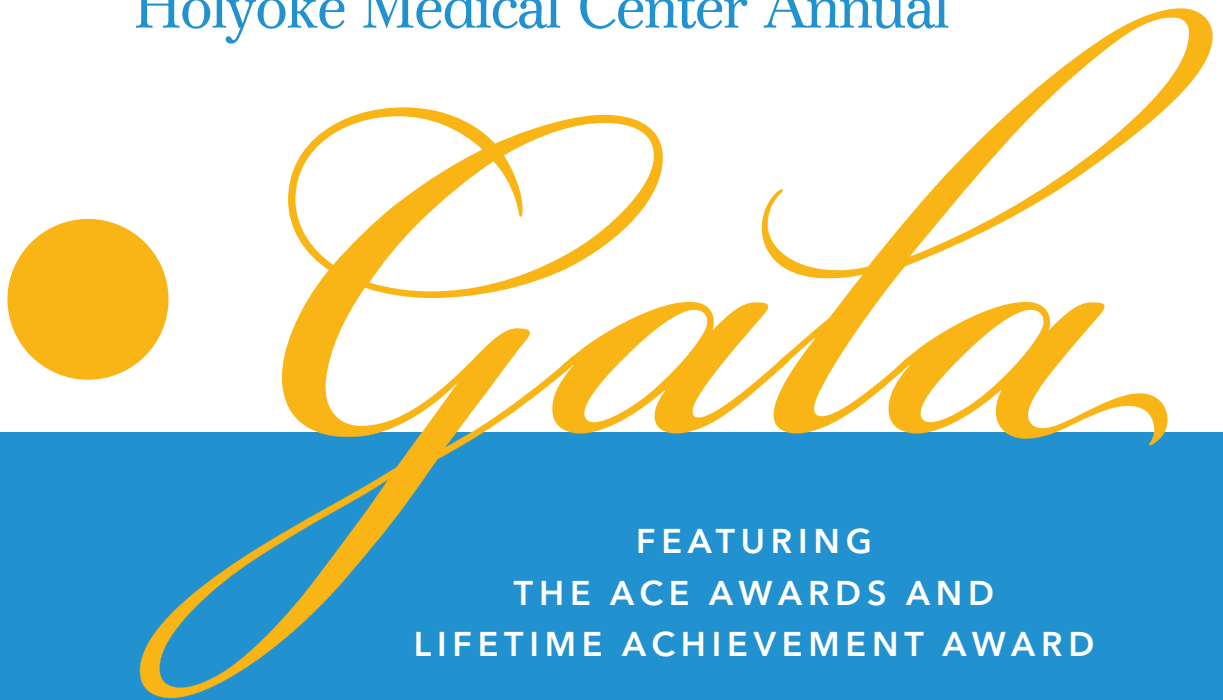
To maintain a consistent temperature,

eggs should be placed in the main compartment of the refrigerator instead of the door and kept in their carton, where they'll be protected and won't absorb other odors and flavors. (Bonus: The "Best By" date is also stamped on the carton.) Eggs will stay fresher longer when they're stored large-end up (pointy side down); this prevents the egg's natural air pocket from rising and keeps the yolk centered.

Because of their proteins, eggs are an ideal binding agent and thus are often used to give dishes like meatloaves, baked goods and casseroles stability. While their culinary applications are innumerable, eggs are incredible on their own—scrambled with home fries for breakfast or poached on a benedict for brunch, sunny-side up atop a burger for lunch, hard-boiled for a midday snack or mixed with meat and veggies for an easy dinner frittata. Of course, there's always the classic, good-at-anytime sandwich.



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