



# VALLEY

health & life

**DIAGNOSTIC  
IMAGING**  
RAISING THE BAR  
**CELEBRATING  
OUR HEROES**  
ANNUAL GALA

**TWO  
NEW HIPS**  
And a  
**New Lease  
on Life**

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### On the Cover:

After two hip replacements at Holyoke Medical Center, Brian L. David is back to his favorite activities.



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# HEALTHY HABITS

FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

## MINUTES TO MEDITATE

Just 12 minutes of meditation daily could help reduce the risk of cognitive decline in adults.

— *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*



## EAT PROTEIN FOR BREAKFAST

People who eat a breakfast high in protein—40 percent of the meal—have fewer food cravings than those people who skip breakfast or have meals with only 15 percent protein.

— *Nutrition Journal*



## TELEMED HELPS DEPRESSION

Remote video consultations between patients and mental health specialists show a small but significant improvement of symptoms of depression and anxiety.

— *The BMJ*



## 800 MILLION

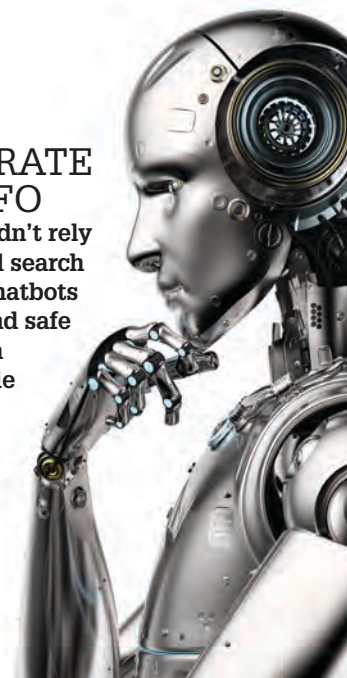
The number of adults worldwide who have diabetes—more than twice as many as previous estimates.

— *The Lancet*

## DON'T RELY ON AI ACCURATE DRUG INFO

Patients shouldn't rely on AI-powered search engines and chatbots for accurate and safe information on drugs, conclude researchers after finding a considerable number of answers were wrong or potentially harmful.

— *BMJ Quality & Safety*



## 80

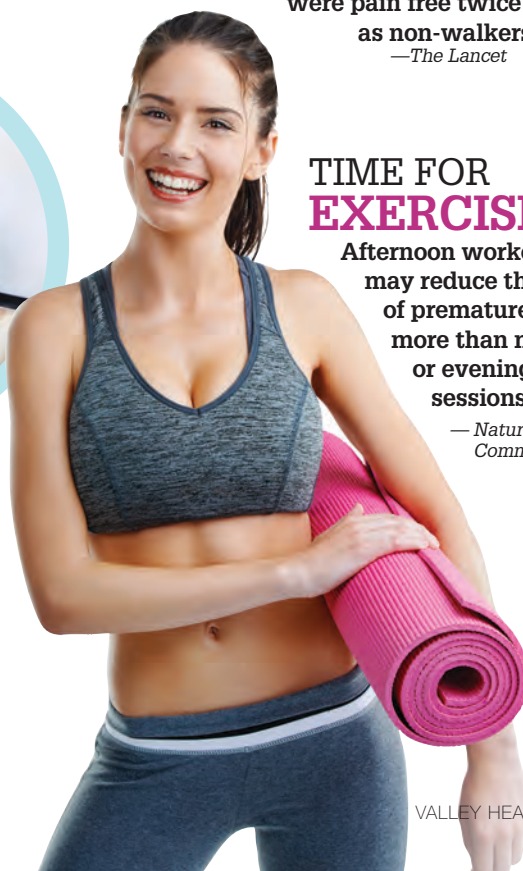
The percentage of Americans who will experience back pain during their lives. Researchers report that those with low-back pain who walk three or four times a week were pain free twice as long as non-walkers.


— *The Lancet*

## TIME FOR EXERCISE

Afternoon workouts may reduce the risk of premature death more than morning or evening exercise sessions.

— *Nature Communications*





After two hip replacements, Brian L. David is back to his favorite activities.

# ONE HIP AT A TIME

**A LOCAL MAN GETS TWO NEW HIPs—  
AND A NEW LEASE ON LIFE.**

## **WHEN CHICOPEE RESIDENT**

Brian L. David, now 78, began experiencing pain in his left hip, he took it in stride—at first. “Eventually, though, it got so bad, I just couldn’t take it,” says Brian, a retired partner in a large CPA firm who also works as a professional musician. “I knew I had to do something.”

Brian’s primary care physician

referred him to Noah Epstein, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC). Interestingly, Brian was already familiar with Dr. Epstein; he had seen him in 2019, when the surgeon performed a knee arthroscopy to repair some torn ligaments. “What a beautiful job he did,” recalls Brian. “I was walking normally in no time, and I was thrilled. So, when my hip started giving

me problems, I was glad to see him.”

Dr. Epstein examined Brian and took X-rays, which showed arthritis in his left hip. “I don’t know if Brian was initially convinced that it was his hip that was causing his pain,” says Dr. Epstein. “He said it felt like a groin pull, but I gave him a cortisone injection in his hip, which alleviated the pain completely. Unfortunately, such injections provide only temporary relief.”

The pain returned and, now sure that the source was indeed his hip, Brian had his hip replacement surgery scheduled for December 5, 2023. “Dr. Epstein explained everything so thoroughly,” says Brian. “He showed me samples of the replacement and how the parts of it fit and work together, he explained the surgery itself as well as what was involved in the recovery and he answered all my questions,” says Brian.

## **THE LEFT HIP REPLACEMENT**

Dr. Epstein performed Brian’s surgery, and the entire procedure took about an hour. “Hip replacements are excellent surgeries,” says Dr. Epstein. “They are straightforward operations, and the vast majority of patients do very well.”

Brian, who had home physical therapy, was happy with his recovery. “I was in a fair amount of pain the first night, but I felt much better the next day,” he says. “Dr. Epstein was very careful and did almost no cutting. Before the surgery, I had tears in my eyes just trying to walk. Two or three weeks afterward, I was running up and down the stairs. It was unbelievable!”

According to Dr. Epstein, Brian’s recovery was smooth and uneventful. “Brian did great,” he says. “He stayed in the hospital overnight and was walking the next day. He returned to see me several times and was doing very well.”

## **A NEW RIGHT HIP**

Brian was walking without pain and feeling great when, several months after his surgery, he started feeling pain in his right hip. “When I originally saw Brian, the pain was in his left hip. He didn’t present with bilateral hip pain, so there was no reason to consider a right hip replacement,” says Dr. Epstein.



Noah Epstein, MD, an orthopedic surgeon at HMC, is an experienced hip-replacement surgeon.

## WHAT ARE THE COMPONENTS OF A HIP IMPLANT?

Modern hip implants consist of four parts:

- 1. A stem**, usually made of cobalt-chromium and/or titanium metals, which is inserted into the femur (thigh bone).
- 2. A cup**, which inserts into the pelvic bone and is made from a variety of materials, often titanium or tantalum metals.
- 3. A femoral head** (the “ball” in the ball-and-socket hip joint) which is usually made of ceramic or cobalt-chromium.
- 4. A liner**, which takes the place of human cartilage and is snapped into the cup and most often made of ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene (UHMWPE).

“Dr. Epstein took X-rays and said that I was bone-on-bone and needed a right hip replacement,” says Brian. Because he had a previous commitment that he couldn’t change, Brian needed to postpone the surgery. Instead, he had a cortisone shot. “It helped for a few days,” recalls Brian, “and then I got the most horrendous pain, which was twice as bad as before the shot.”

### SAFETY FIRST

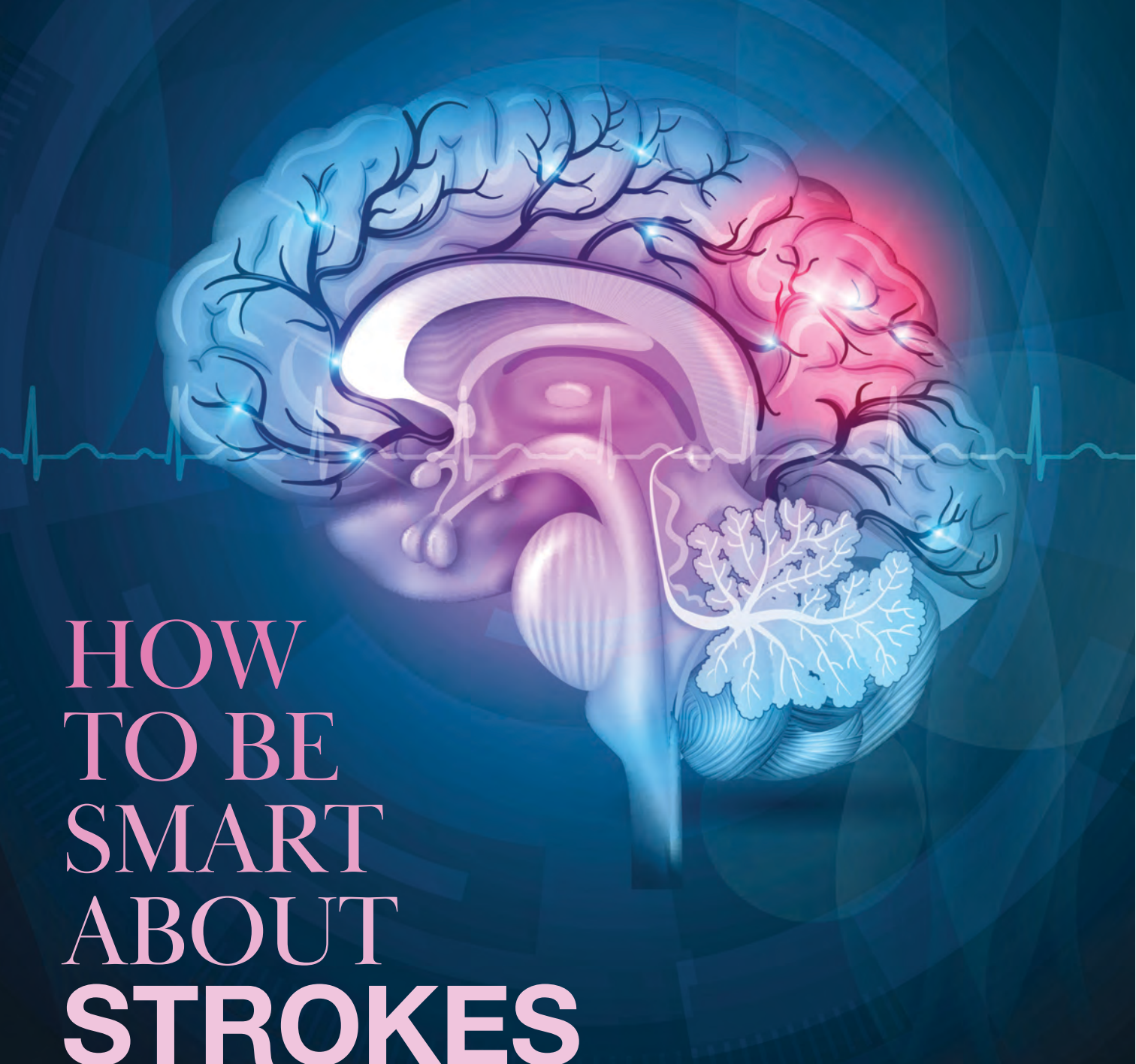
Brian went back to see Dr. Epstein but, unfortunately, because he had had the injection, he could not have the surgery right away. “Once you inject the hip, you have to wait three to six months before surgery is performed,” says Dr. Epstein. “Cortisone is a steroid and steroids

are immunosuppressants, so they decrease your ability to fight infection.” There is always a risk of infection with any procedure that breaks the skin, so Brian had to wait.

In November 2024, Dr. Epstein performed Brian’s right hip replacement. “He did great again,” says Dr. Epstein. “He’s walking well and has no limitations. Implants generally last 20 to 30 years.”

Brian is grateful for the care he received from Dr. Epstein and his team. “I’m so thankful to everyone,” he says. “I feel great and my pain is gone. It’s unbelievable. Dr. Epstein is a compassionate, wonderful doctor.”

✱ To make an appointment with the HMC Orthopedic Center, please call **413.536.5814**.



# HOW TO BE SMART ABOUT STROKES

KNOWING THE SIGNS  
AND ACTING FAST  
CAN MAKE ALL THE  
DIFFERENCE.

**DO YOU KNOW** the signs of a stroke? Recognizing them could save a life—perhaps your own—and minimize a stroke’s potential life-changing effects.

Yet stroke symptoms can sometimes seem mild or transient, and people often shrug them off.

If you feel something is suddenly different or notice something you haven’t felt before—or if you notice someone else not acting like themselves—you should call an ambulance.

The memory trick known as “B.E.F.A.S.T.” makes it easier to connect suspicious symptoms with the possibility that a stroke is causing them. Warning signs include:

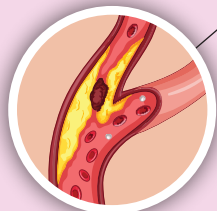
- **B for Balance:** Dizziness, vertigo or a fall.
- **E for Eyes:** Blurred vision or loss of vision.
- **F for Face:** A slight droop, an uneven smile or a change in the way the eyes look.

## THE 3 TYPES OF STROKE

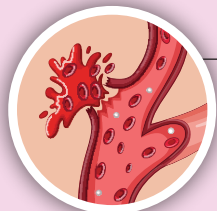
No matter what type of stroke a person suffers, time is always of the essence when it comes to treatment.



- **Ischemic stroke:** The most common type of stroke, it occurs when an artery-blocking blood clot travels to the brain.



- **Transient ischemic attack (TIA):** Sometimes called a ministroke, this is a precursor to an ischemic stroke. Sometimes stroke symptoms resolve, at least temporarily. But often, a TIA is a warning that a bigger stroke is just down the road. In fact, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the chance of having a stroke within 90 days of a TIA is as high as 17 percent, with the greatest risk during the first week.



- **Hemorrhagic stroke:** Occurring when a blood vessel in or near the brain ruptures, these strokes are less common. They can occur because of a trauma, such as a fall, or uncontrolled high blood pressure and typically require surgical intervention.

- **A for Arm:** Is one arm weak or does it feel heavy and difficult to lift?
- **S for Speech:** Is there slurred speech or an inability to get words out?
- **T for Time:** Time to call 911.

Don't delay help for yourself or any potential stroke victim. When blood flow to the brain becomes blocked, a few minutes or even seconds can cause a substantial loss of brain cells, and the longer you wait to treat and reverse these blockages, the poorer the outcomes tend to be.

Call 911 rather than calling a doctor or driving to the Emergency Department. It's best to have emergency responders take you right to the part of the hospital geared to evaluate and treat strokes as quickly as possible—or even begin treatment on the way.

✱ **If you believe you or someone you are with is having a stroke, call 911.**

## A TEAM FOR TREATMENT

Once at the hospital, a stroke patient requires a team of specialists such as physicians, nurses, neurologists, radiologists and lab technicians.

The team assesses symptoms, checks vital signs, conducts a neurological exam and takes images of the brain, typically with a CT scan. Many patients are given a clot-busting, or thrombolytic, medication that dissolves blockages and can stop a stroke.

Treatment within a few hours, especially within the first 45 to 60 minutes, can often minimize a stroke's potentially devastating effects.

If any B.E.F.A.S.T. symptoms occur suddenly out of the blue, get an evaluation immediately. Recognizing symptoms and acting in a timely manner is critical.

## HMC NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED FOR HIGH-QUALITY STROKE CARE



Holyoke Medical Center (HMC) meets specific scientific guidelines as a Primary Stroke Center, featuring a comprehensive system for rapid diagnosis and treatment

of stroke patients admitted to the emergency department.

In 2024, HMC once again received multiple awards for its commitment to high quality stroke care, including The American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines Stroke Gold Plus, Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite and Target: Type 2 Diabetes Honor Roll quality achievement awards for stroke care.

Additionally, HMC received four prestigious awards from the Department of Public Health Massachusetts Paul Coverdell Stroke Systems of Care Collaborative:

- Door to Needle in 60 minutes or less from arrival time for at least 90% of stroke patients
- Dysphagia screening greater than or equal to 90%
- Documentation of NIHSS screening greater than or equal to 95%
- Increase in Pre-notification Award

"We are very proud of our entire stroke care team, under the medical direction of Dr. M. Zubair Kareem, for consistently ensuring that stroke patients at HMC receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally recognized, research-based guidelines," said Spiros Hatiras, President and CEO of Holyoke Medical Center and Valley Health Systems. "It is the knowledgeable and quick work of our employees that ultimately leads to more lives saved and reduced disability."

# Healthy Snacking

## MADE SIMPLE



NUTRITIOUS SNACKS DON'T HAVE TO BE EXPENSIVE OR FANCY. HERE'S HOW TO GIVE YOUR KIDS EASY, NUTRITIOUS BITES ON A BUDGET.

**NUTRITIOUS FOODS ARE** essential for children's growth, health, energy and brain function—and that includes snacks. Most kids snack during the day and what they munch on away from the table is more important than you might think. For instance, even if a child eats balanced meals, having lots of ultra-processed snack foods packed with fat and/or sugar alongside sugar-sweetened beverages in between can

undo all that good nutrition.

"Generally speaking, when it comes to children's meals and snacks, incorporating fresh fruits and vegetables is a good idea," says Beth Laton Brown, MD, a pediatrician at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC). "For families who have limited incomes or who live in 'food deserts'—meaning they may not have ready access to affordable, healthy food—this can

sometimes be challenging." But it doesn't have to be.

The good news, according to Dr. Brown, is that, even with grocery prices 30 percent higher

than they were just five years ago, there are still many easy (and inexpensive) ways to help ensure that your kids don't snack on junk.

### **USE LOCAL RESOURCES.**

"You don't have to spend a lot more money to eat healthier," says HMC Community Nurse Navigator Kyrie Bretz, BSN, RN. "There are many community services, including the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), which provides families with lower incomes additional monthly support for purchasing fruits and vegetables." In addition, the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts has free mobile food banks that take place throughout the four counties west of Worcester. According to HMC Community Nutrition Navigator Marissa Chiapperino, MPH,



Kyrie Bretz, BSN, RN



Beth Laton Brown, MD



Marissa Chiapperino, MPH, RD, LDN, CNSC, CDCES

RD, LDN, CNSC, CDCES, parents and guardians can get the most help by communicating their struggles to their children's healthcare team.

### START WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.

"As a dietitian, I try to work with what a family already has and then slowly increase variety as nutritious foods come in and out of season and as families improve on their kitchen and culinary skills," says Chiapperino. She also advises encouraging children to eat slowly and chew well. "This alone can reduce portion sizes of added fat and sugar and food costs without even changing what is eaten," she says. "When this happens over time, funds can be shifted around to try new fruits, vegetables and whole grains that will keep kids full longer than convenience foods like chips and candy."

### TREAT SNACKS AS SMALL MEALS.

"We want to teach families to view snacks as mini meals," says Chiapperino. "A snack placed in a large gap between two meals [five or more hours] will help a child feel filled up until it is time for their next meal." Chiapperino recommends that parents incorporate two of the three macronutrients—carbohydrates, protein and fat—that provide the body with energy into their kids' snacks.

### LET KIDS CHOOSE.

"We recommend giving children options," says Bretz. Allowing them to choose from a variety of healthy items makes them feel empowered, exposes them to new foods and keeps them from getting bored. Of course, choices should be age-appropriate (e.g., don't give whole grapes, which can be a choking hazard, to toddlers). "Offer cheese sticks or cubes, mixed nuts or trail mix, apple slices or baby carrots, home-popped popcorn without butter, chips and salsa rather than potato chips," says Dr. Brown, who cautions that, even with healthy foods, moderation and portion size are key.



### CUT BACK SUGARY DRINKS.

Cutting back on sugary drinks is a great way to help children stay healthy. Offer young children only milk and water, with occasional diluted 100 percent juice as a treat. "Children don't need juice to be healthy," says Dr. Brown. "They get plenty of vitamin C from other sources." For older children, milk and water continue to be the healthiest beverage choices. For a treat, "parents can try offering children unsweetened seltzer rather than soda, or try a mix of unsweetened seltzer and fruit juice," says Dr. Brown.

Bretz agrees. "Soda has been a big barrier to successful nutrition," she says. "While an occasional soda is okay, having it in the household creates an environment of temptation." According to Chiapperino, the same goes for energy and sports drinks, flavored milk and smoothies. "They have little benefit to overall health and should not be a primary source of hydration since long-term consumption can lead to costly health issues."

### LEAD BY EXAMPLE.

It's unrealistic to expect your children to drink water if you're drinking soda or to snack on nuts and cheese if you're indulging in ice cream and cookies. "Many parents expect their children to make healthier choices while they themselves continue to make very unhealthy choices," says Bretz. "Nutrition

## 5 HEALTHY SNACK IDEAS TO TRY

Here are a few easy, nutritious options:

- 1. Peanut Butter Sandwich Crackers:** Place 1 teaspoon of peanut or other nut butter between 2 whole grain crackers for each sandwich; make two total.
- 2. Fruit and Cheese:** Have small piece of fruit (like a small apple or plum) with a string cheese.
- 3. Hard-Boiled Eggs:** Boil several eggs and store unpeeled in the fridge for a quick protein-packed snack.
- 4. Raw Veggies and Dip:** Dip raw veggies (like cucumbers, carrots or red bell peppers) in 2 tablespoons of ranch dressing or hummus.
- 5. Trail Mix:** Combine 1 tbsp each of pumpkin or sunflower seeds, chopped nuts, and raisins or other dried fruit.

changes need to be viewed as a whole family approach to ensure success."

### EASE TEMPTATION.

Parents can ease temptation—and stretch their food budgets—by not stocking their fridge or pantry with sugary drinks and ultra-processed snacks like chips or packaged cookies and cakes. Kids may balk at first, but they will soon adjust and develop positive food habits they can carry with them into adulthood. "It is important to remember that the children are not typically the ones shopping for food," says Chiapperino. "What comes into the house is out of the child's control, but when attempting to introduce new foods slowly over time, children should be involved in the conversation, shopping and preparation so they feel more invested."

✱ To make an appointment with HMC Pediatric Care, please call **413.534.2800**.



# DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING: RAISING THE BAR

NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART ANGIOGRAPHY SUITE  
OFFERS FASTER, SAFER, HIGHER QUALITY  
IMAGING THAN EVER BEFORE.

**HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER (HMC)** recently upgraded its diagnostic imaging equipment, replacing it with new state-of-the-art equipment that is faster, safer, more advanced, uses the latest technologies and improves patients' comfort and overall experience.

Among the new additions is the Shimadzu Trinius C-Arm Hybrid Operating Room and Angiography Suite which, says Sandip Maru, MD, FACS, RPVI, a board-certified vascular surgeon and Medical Director of the HMC Vascular Center, "provides higher quality and more precise imaging to allow us to push the boundaries of minimally invasive interventions."

## UNPARALLELED IMAGES

According to S. Lowell Kahn, MD, FSIR, a board-certified vascular and interventional radiologist and Section Chief of Interventional Radiology at HMC, "This cutting-edge C-arm imaging platform has Shimadzu's proprietary SCORE Opera, the AI-based image processing engine that reduces X-ray exposure and produces unparalleled high-quality images for angiography procedures."

In addition to broadening the scope of procedures offered by HMC with superior image clarity and quality, the platform



Sandip, Maru,  
MD, FACS, RPVI



**Opposite page:** Sandip Maru, MD, FACS, RPVI, completes an interventional radiology procedure in the new suite. **Above:** S. Lowell Kahn, MD, FSIR, in the new interventional radiology suite at Holyoke Medical Center.

also enhances patient safety and provides 3-D rotational angiography, which produces CT scan-like images that can be incorporated during many procedures. “This has numerous applications,” says Dr. Kahn. “These include aortic endografting for aneurysm disease; planning and treatment of targeted cancer treatments, particularly for primary or metastatic liver disease; and specialized imaging of the prostate during prostate embolization procedures for men suffering from symptoms related to prostate enlargement.” In addition to endovascular aortic aneurysm repair, Dr. Maru says he will be using the platform for carotid intervention, peripheral arterial interventions and deep venous interventions.

### AT THE FOREFRONT

Dr. Maru is confident that the new equipment will have even more uses in the future. “The new machine is now in HMC’s main operating room to expand its use and capabilities,” he says. “Currently, it is being used by Vascular Surgery and Interventional Radiology with hopes of cardiac interventions as well. This machine is propelling HMC into the future. In the future, there will be less open surgery and more catheter-based or remote-access surgery. The new suite will allow us to offer our patients not only the latest technology, but also the most advanced care. It will bring us to the forefront of clinical excellence.”

✱ To make an appointment with Dr. Maru at the HMC Vascular Center, please call **413.535.4785**. To make an appointment with Dr. Kahn, please call **413.534.2523**.

### WHAT CAN BE DONE WITH HMC’S NEW ANGIOGRAPHY SUITE?

According to vascular and interventional radiologist S. Lowell Kahn, MD, FSIR, the new Shimadzu Trinius C-Arm Hybrid Operating Room and Angiography Suite can be used for a variety of procedures including:

- Thoracic and aortic endografts for repairing aneurysms in the body
- Advanced lower extremity revascularization procedures
- DVT and pulmonary embolism treatment with thrombectomy
- TIPS (transjugular intrahepatic portosystemic shunt) procedures for patients with cirrhosis suffering recurrent GI bleeding or a buildup of fluid in the abdomen (ascites)
- Targeted radioembolization and chemoembolization procedures for managing primary and metastatic liver cancer
- Prostate embolization for men suffering from an enlarged prostate
- Mesenteric angiograms with embolization for GI bleeding and much more.



▲ From left: HMC and VHS President and CEO Spiros Hatiras; best nurses Giovanna Ricci (silver), Brielle Bergeron (gold) and Gianna Crean (bronze); HMC Chief Nursing Officer Margaret-Ann Azzaro; and HMC and VHS Chief Operating Officer Carl Cameron



▲ Nancy Walford, one of Barbara Bernard's daughters, accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award on behalf of the Bernard family.

# Celebrating HEALTHCARE HEROES



▲ From left: Spiros Hatiras; best leaders Chris Giroux (bronze), Joel Rivas (gold) and Ormond Hamilton (silver); and Carl Cameron

NEARLY 400 PEOPLE ENJOYED THE HMC ANNUAL GALA, RECOGNIZING STANDOUT PROVIDERS AND HONORING LONGTIME HMC SUPPORTER BARBARA BERNARD.

**THE HMC ANNUAL GALA** took place on Saturday, February 8, 2025, at the Log Cabin in Holyoke. Nearly 400 people gathered to celebrate our 2024 award recipients and dance the night away to Shaded Soul Band. The proceeds from the event will support appreciation events for our healthcare heroes. Many thanks to our sponsors, and to all who attended!

## THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

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▲ From left: HMC Medical Staff President Dr. John Mazzucco; best physicians Dr. Nayyer Ghias (silver), Dr. Nirav Sheth (gold) and Dr. Tuyyab Hassan (bronze); and HMC Chief Medical Officer Dr. Vishal Tiwari

▼ From left: Spiros Hatiras; best caregivers Jacklyn Rosa-Jamieson (gold), Nicholas Felton (silver) and Yadira Santiago Farin (bronze); HMC Chief Human Resources Officer Beverly Fein; and Marcel Moniz, HMC VP of Ambulatory Operations

## AWARD RECIPIENTS

A Lifetime Achievement Award for Barbara C. Bernard was presented to her family, while several outstanding employees were honored with gold, silver and bronze awards:

### BEST PHYSICIAN

GOLD: Nirav Sheth, MD (Cardiovascular)  
SILVER: Nayyer Ghias, MD (Hospitalist)  
BRONZE: Tuyyab Hassan, MD (Gastroenterology)

### BEST NURSE

GOLD: Brielle Bergeron, CCRN (ICU)  
SILVER: Giovanna Ricci, BSN, RN (Behavioral Health – M3)  
BRONZE: Gianna Crean, BSN, RN (OR/Surgery)

### BEST CAREGIVER

GOLD: Jacklyn Rosa-Jamieson, RN, BSN (Case Management)  
SILVER: Nicholas Felton, PA-C (Adult Primary Care – Holyoke)  
BRONZE: Yadira Santiago Farin (Med-Surg)

### BEST SUPPORTING EMPLOYEE

GOLD: Nakeisha Greene (Anesthesia/Operating Room)  
SILVER: Katelyn Williams (Quality)  
BRONZE: Sharon Read (Coffee Shop)

### BEST LEADER

GOLD: Joel B. Rivas, MBA, BSN, RN (Medical-Telemetry)  
SILVER: Ormond B. Hamilton, MSN, RN, CCHP (Behavioral Health)  
BRONZE: Chris Giroux (Information Systems)



▲ From left: HMC Chief Financial Officer Dean Vitarisi; Spiros Hatiras; best supporting employees Nakeisha Greene (gold), Katelyn Williams (silver) and Sharon Read (bronze); and HMC Chief Quality Officer Avadhoot Gokhale



Scan the QR code to watch  
the tribute video created  
in memory of Lifetime  
Achievement Award Recipient  
Barbara Bernard.





# BYE-BYE, BLADDER LEAKS

A MINIMALLY INVASIVE TREATMENT FOR STRESS URINARY INCONTINENCE CAN IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE.

**IF YOU'RE A WOMAN**, chances are you have had the uncomfortable experience of “wetting” yourself, a lot or a little, when you’ve laughed, sneezed or coughed too hard, hoisted a heavy load or exercised at the gym.

While involuntary bladder leaks can be embarrassing and frustrating, if you’re experiencing them, rest

assured that you’re not alone. Stress urinary incontinence (SUI), the involuntarily loss of urine on effort or physical exertion, is a very common



Corlis Archer-Goode, MD

condition, affecting 13 million adults, 85 percent of whom are women.

Fortunately, SUI is highly treatable, and one of the most effective, least invasive treatments for SUI, a urethral bulking agent called Bulkamid, is available locally at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC).

## BULKING AGENT BENEFITS

Urethral bulking agents work by adding volume (or bulk) to the wall of the urethra (the tube through which urine leaves the bladder). This bulking of the urethral wall helps prevent urine from

leaking out of the bladder while allowing the urethra’s closing mechanism to open normally for urination.

There are two types of urethral bulking agents: particulate and nonparticulate. “Bulkamid is the only nonparticulate bulking agent that is FDA-approved for treating SUI,” says HMC urologist Corlis Archer-Goode, MD, who has been treating patients with this product since the fall of 2024 with excellent results. The difference between the two types of bulking agents is important. Dr. Archer-Goode explains: “Unlike particulate bulking agents, which work by causing an inflammatory reaction, Bulkamid is a smooth, water-based gel and the ‘bulking’ that occurs results from the volume of hydrogel injected. There are no particles to migrate or cause inflammation in surrounding tissue.”

The Bulkamid procedure consists of three to four injections of gel, each the size of a pea, into the urethral wall. The bulking agent is similar to how filler is used in some cosmetic procedures. “We perform the procedure in an outpatient setting with sedation and/or local anesthesia, and the whole procedure takes about 15 to 20 minutes,” says Dr. Archer-Goode. “It’s a great way to treat SUI for women who prefer a less invasive treatment option. Since we began offering it last fall, we’ve had patients report 60 to 85 percent improvement after one treatment.”

In studies, as many as 92 percent of women treated with Bulkamid reported being cured or having symptoms of SUI improved, and one study showed symptom relief out to seven years. In a 2020 study, the majority of women chose Bulkamid before other options to treat SUI. “SUI is really a quality-of-life issue,” says Dr. Archer-Goode. “Bulkamid improves quality of life for so many women. That’s one of the greatest benefits of this treatment.”

**\* To make an appointment with HMC Urology Center, please call 413-533-3912.**

# THE BEET Goes On

FOR CENTURIES, THIS REDDISH-PURPLE ROOT VEGGIE HAS BROUGHT A BOUNTY OF BENEFITS IN THE KITCHEN.

**WHO KNEW THAT** folks in the Italian Renaissance, surrounded by glorious painting and sculpture, worried about garlic breath? Apparently they did, and writer Bartolomeo Platina had just the solution: when consuming garlic, eat a bit of beet too.

The culinary history of the subtly sweet, purplish-red beet, known to science as *beta vulgaris*, goes back even further. This tuberous root vegetable was grown by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans (though early ancients ate only the plant's green, leafy portion). Beets were mentioned in Assyrian accounts of the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, and they've been a staple of earthbound planting in the millennia since. Easy to grow, they're a versatile material for the chef in the kitchen too. And that ubiquitous Russian and Eastern European soup called borscht? It's based on beets.

## POWER UP

Golden beets tend to be mild, while Chioggia (alias candy-cane) beets are red-and-white striped and Cylindras are long and cylindrical. But red beets are the most common and familiar variety, in our language ("red as a beet") and on our plate. And if you remember one thing, make it this: Beets keep you upbeat. They're rich in the chemical betaine anhydrous and in the amino acid tryptophan, which helps the body manufacture serotonin, "the happiness

hormone." Both contribute to a feeling of well-being.

Beets are rich in potassium, folic acid, calcium and dietary nitrates. The nitrates are good for the lining of blood vessels, aiding blood flow. Beets also have deposits of silica, a naturally occurring mineral, which helps maintain healthy bones, hair, teeth and skin. They contain antioxidants called betalains, which impart the red color. (Nineteenth-century women used beet juice to boost the rosy hue of their cheeks and lips.) Betalains have anti-inflammatory properties too, and some studies suggest they may inhibit cancerous tumors.

One cup of raw beets, at a modest 58 calories and with just 0.2 grams of fat, gives you 37 percent of your daily requirement of folate, 22 percent of your manganese, 15 percent of your fiber, 13 percent of your potassium and 11 percent of your vitamin C. And beets contain high concentrations of the element boron, which can be conducive to generating human sex hormones. (A caution, though: If you indulge heavily in beets, don't freak out if your urine takes on a reddish tinge.)

## BUY/STORE/SERVE

Beets, like any produce, can be found at your local market. Besides fresh out of the ground, they're sold jarred or canned, pickled or plain. You want



### DID YOU KNOW?

The Greek goddess Aphrodite is said to have feasted on beets to enhance her physical appeal.

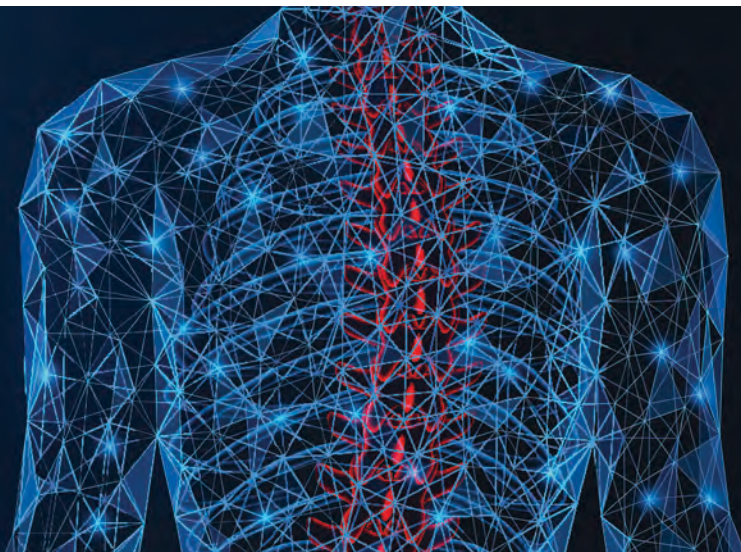
to capture fresh beets in the prime of life, when recently harvested. Look for firm skin and a healthy green top, whether or not you decide to stick with that top while preparing your dish.

Having purchased beets, treat them as you would any other taproot vegetable. Don't keep the leaves attached, lest the moisture seep out too quickly. Cutting beets off the stem and keeping them in a closed bag in your refrigerator's crisper drawer is your best bet. They'll keep for two to three weeks in there. To keep them longer you'd have to maintain a root cellar.

Beets can be boiled, roasted, pickled or eaten raw as a touch of surprise among other munchable veggies. You can slice your beets into thin segments, put them in the oven with some sensible seasoning and make beet chips. If you're celebrating a Jewish occasion and are tired of the same old borscht, try tossing beets in with green beans and pistachios to make a nice salad. Roasting beets really brings out flavor, and you can get a tartare from them. Point being, the versatility of the beet can't be beat.



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