



VALLEY

health & life

A Mother's Wish Fulfilled

» WHAT'S
HAPPENING
AT HMC

» MAKE
THE MOST
OF YOUR
DOCTOR'S
VISIT

» THE
ROAD TO A
HEALTHY
HEART

» ALL HAIL
KALE



WE'RE BACK!

FRIENDS OF HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER,
I am extremely excited to introduce you to our redesigned health and lifestyle magazine, and welcome you back after a one-year hiatus.

A lot has happened during that year, and I am eager to tell you all about it. As I am sure you have noticed, we have changed our hospital logo and the name of our magazine. Both changes were made to recognize that we are more than a hospital. Valley Health Systems includes the Holyoke Visiting Nurse Association, the Hospice Life Care, the River Valley Counseling Center, the Western Mass Physician Associates and, of course, Holyoke Medical Center. Our new logo connects all of those services under one umbrella and symbolizes the significant changes that are taking place within our system with the rising sun over the medical cross. The cross, in turn, honors the blue and green of our beautiful valley, where our services have existed for more than 120 years.

But the changes are not just cosmetic. Since last year we have earned a "top hospital" award for safety and quality, a very special distinction nationally. We have brought to our patients and their families valet parking, a new top-notch food service, more private patient rooms, an expanded transportation system, more locations for our outpatient services, a newly renovated outpatient rehabilitation department and so much more.

In the months to come, more changes are happening. We will finish converting all of our patient rooms into spacious private rooms, renovate our emergency room and start a new wound care clinic...to name a few. But the most important change is the re-affirmation of our commitment to you to be the safest, most compassionate, most respectful, friendliest and most convenient health service in the Pioneer Valley.

As we are changing, we want to hear from you. Your feedback and input as we keep improving and growing is the most significant ingredient in getting it right.

I hope you enjoy *Valley Health & Life*.



Best Regards,

SPIROS HATIRAS

PRESIDENT AND
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER &
VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEMS, INC.



CONTENTS

3
Healthy habits
Reports on staying well—including the link between clean teeth and heart attack.

4
It's official...
Holyoke Medical Center is one of the nation's top hospitals.

5
Make the most of your doctor's visit
Follow our nine tips for using that time wisely.

6
What a difference a year makes
Read all about the recent renovations and upgrades at Holyoke Medical Center.

8
On the road to a healthy heart
Our five-step program can help keep your ticker ticking.

10
A wish fulfilled
With a supportive midwife by her side, a local mom gives birth naturally.

12
Give 'peaceful' a chance
Here are six ways to ease your troubled mind.

14
6 sneaky fees
Don't let hidden costs foil your finances.

15
All hail kale!
This good-for-you veggie is ready for its close-up.



- HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER
- HOLYOKE VNA HOSPICE LIFE CARE
- RIVER VALLEY COUNSELING CENTER
- WESTERN MASS PHYSICIAN ASSOCIATES

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Material contained herein is intended for informational purposes only. If you have medical concerns, seek the guidance of a health care professional.

HEALTHY HABITS

FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

THE TOOTH TRUTH

People who had their teeth cleaned twice a year for two years had a 24 percent lower risk of heart attack than people who never visited the dentist, according to a recent study conducted in Taiwan. Professional cleaning appears to reduce the growth of bacteria, which can lead to dangerous inflammation.



CAN WE “FEED” CANCER CELLS?

Sugar feeds every cell in our body—even cancer cells—but research shows that eating sugar doesn't necessarily lead to cancer. However, being overweight or obese puts you at a higher risk for some types of cancers and other diseases. Sugar contains calories, so watch your intake. According to the American Heart Association, you can help avoid the risk by maintaining the recommended amounts of sugar:

Women – no more than six teaspoons per day (25 grams), which is equal to 100 calories

Men – no more than nine teaspoons per day (37 grams), which is equal to 150 calories

Most Americans consume more than twice that amount daily (22 teaspoons), equaling 260 cups or 130 pounds of sugar each year!



PICKY, PICKY

Is your child a fussy, resistant eater? The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that you keep trying to encourage healthy eating habits with these suggestions:

- Add nonfat dry milk to soup, or sneak grated veggies into homemade muffins, breads or lasagna.
- Serve your child's favorite foods along with things that have been refused before.
- Let your child help prepare meals.
- Make sure food is visually appealing, in interesting shapes.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods yourself to set a good example for your child.
- Schedule regular family meals together.

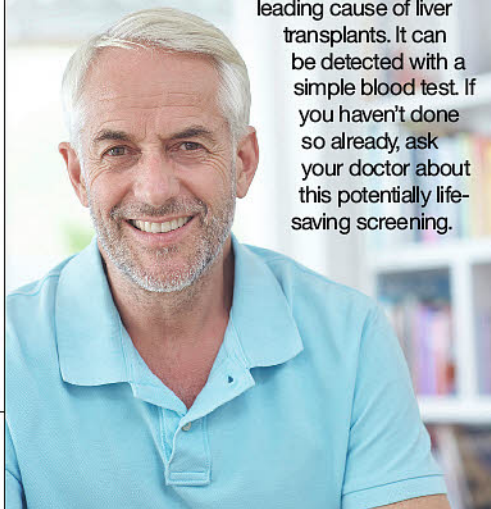
CALLING ALL BABY BOOMERS

If you were born between 1945 and 1964, you're a baby boomer. You also are at risk for hepatitis C. One in 30 baby boomers is infected with the virus and most don't know it. That's why the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that all baby boomers be tested for hepatitis C.

The virus is a leading cause of liver cancer and other liver diseases and is the

leading cause of liver

transplants. It can be detected with a simple blood test. If you haven't done so already, ask your doctor about this potentially life-saving screening.



FOR THE RECORD



MARCH WELLNESS

The NCAA has March Madness. Holyoke Medical Center has March Wellness, a lineup of seminars and screenings designed with your health in mind. Join us!

COLON HEALTH: PROBLEMS AND PREVENTION

Holly Kinnell-Rust, F.N.P., HMC Gastroenterology, and Francis Martinez, M.D., HMC Specialty Surgeons

Our experts explore the symptoms and prevention of colon conditions such as celiac disease and irritable bowel syndrome. **Please call 413.534.2789 to register.**

Date: Thursday, March 12, 2015

Time: 4 p.m.

Place: Auxiliary Conference Center

FREE HEARING SCREENING

A hearing screening is a quick way to have your hearing checked. Those who pass are presumed to have no hearing loss. Those who fail need a more detailed evaluation to determine the nature and degree of the hearing loss and the best treatment options. Space is limited. **Please call 413.534.2789 to register.**

Date: Tuesday, March 24, 2015

Time: Every 10 minutes from 8–11:40 a.m.

Date: Thursday, March 26, 2015

Time: Every 10 minutes from 1–4:10 p.m.

Place: HMC Speech & Hearing Department

QUIT SMOKING WORKSHOP

Seneca Egan, R.N., B.S., B.S.N., Tobacco Cessation Specialist

Our smoking cessation workshop is made up of six classes designed to give you the information and support you need to get through one of the most important changes of your life. **To register and for location information, please call 413.534.2734.**

Date: Monday, March 9, 2015

Time: 4:30–5:30 p.m.

Cost: \$30

TOUR WITH THE NUTRITIONIST: SHOPPING A HEALTHY DIET

Zoraida Rodriguez, R.D., L.D.N., C.P.T., HMC Endocrinology, and The Diabetes Center

March is nutrition month and our registered dietitian is on the go at a local grocery store. Join Zoraida at Stop & Shop and learn about shopping techniques and healthy tips right in the supermarket aisles. Space is limited. **Please call 413.534.2789 to register.**

Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2015

Time: 1 p.m.

Place: Stop & Shop, Lincoln Street, Holyoke

For more upcoming events, please visit holyokehealth.com/events.

IT'S OFFICIAL...

HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER IS A TOP HOSPITAL



Members of the Holyoke Medical Center staff show off the 2014 Leapfrog Top Hospital award. *Clockwise from top left:* Intensive Care Unit members Deborah Clark, R.N., Trish Ochoa, R.N., Arthur Weinstock, D.O., Kim Kinsley and Bryan Perry, R.N. Patty Meon, R.N., and Heather Tierney, R.N. Quality Improvement Integration members Karen Crevier-Estes, R.N., Tina Lesser, R.N., Ann Jubinville, R.N., Kim Lussier, Frances Fallon, R.N., and Gozel Pshenichnaya. Short Stay Surgery nurses Holly Larkin, R.N., and Patricia Moskal, R.N.

WHEN YOU OR A LOVED ONE ARE TREATED at Holyoke Medical Center (HMC), rest assured you're in the hands of one of the nation's top hospitals.

In fact, The Leapfrog Group recently designated Holyoke Medical Center as a Top Hospital for its ability to deliver safe, quality, cost-effective care. Holyoke Medical Center was one of only 94 hospitals nationwide to receive this coveted designation.

"Being designated a Leapfrog Top Hospital simply reinforces to our community the message we've been sending—at HMC we provide our patients and families with the highest quality, most patient-centered and cost-effective care available anywhere," said HMC's Corporate Quality Director Tina Lesser.

Based in Washington, D.C., The Leapfrog Group consists of Fortune 500 corporations and public agencies that collectively spend \$62 billion annually on health insurance for their employees—and they use that buying power to push for quality and value in the medical marketplace.

Working with healthcare experts, Leapfrog rates more than 2,500 hospitals each year on

patient outcomes, resource use, and their ability to prevent medication and treatment errors. Leapfrog then delivers an A, B, C, D or F grade based on 28 patient safety measures.

This year, HMC received the A rating, scoring high marks for treating and preventing surgery-related complications, following routine safety procedures, and having adequate and properly trained staff to prevent problems. (Visit HospitalSafetyScore.org to view the survey results.) This is the first time, however, that HMC's survey score was high enough to earn both the A rating and Top Hospital honor.

"Earning this recognition takes a collaborative effort by all members of the team, from every department and service area within the organization," said Lesser. "We have incredibly committed employees who do consistently great work every day. The longevity of service and individual employee recognitions here ('Nurse of the Year' in 2013 and 2014 in OB and 'Nuclear Med Tech' award in 2014) support the satisfaction employees experience in their work."

How did HMC do it? In recent years the hospital has implemented several new procedures,

such as bar-coding of patient prescriptions and electronic order entry to prevent medication errors. Electronic processing and storing of encrypted medical records has improved communication throughout the hospital, and 24/7 intensivist coverage in the intensive care unit has made critical care more effective.

Also last year, HMC physicians, nurses and ancillary staff completed a "Culture of Safety" survey. "It's conducted every few years to keep focused on the safety perceptions and attitudes of our staff," said Lesser. "Building and sustaining a safe culture takes consistent assessment and reassessment. It allows us to continuously make adjustments to improve the quality of care we deliver in each and every area of the organization. This activity reinforces the hospital's commitment to delivering the most satisfying healthcare experience possible."

The survey underscores HMC's commitment to continuous improvement to ensure that patients receive the best care possible. Now that we've achieved this Top Hospital award from Leapfrog, we intend to remain a Top Hospital recipient every year!



MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR DOCTOR'S VISIT

HERE ARE 9 TIPS FOR USING THAT TIME WISELY.

IT SOUNDS SIMPLE ENOUGH: YOU GO TO YOUR PHYSICIAN, get examined, ask your questions and learn what to do. But unfortunately we often let hurry, worry or embarrassment keep us from getting what we need from a doctor visit.

Try these tips to get the most benefit from this key encounter.

1 BE CLEAR IN SCHEDULING PHYSICALS. If your visit is for an annual physical exam, mention that to the office staff when you make the appointment—they usually set aside more time for physicals than for other visits.

2 MAKE A LIST. Before your appointment, jot down the two or three things you most want to ask the doctor. A list helps you stay focused and remember the points you want to bring up.

3 BE SPECIFIC. Without spending a lot of time on background, focus on your symptoms and describe them in as much detail as possible. If you're experiencing abdominal pain, for example, explain how it feels when it occurs. Is it sharp or dull, sudden or gradual, constant or intermittent? Does it happen after dinner? Is it worse when you consume certain foods?

4 BRING RECORDS. If you have a copy of the results from a recent test or a pertinent report from a specialist, bring it along.

5 GET MEDICINES CHECKED. If you take several prescription medications, bring a list of them—or bring the pill bottles themselves—for the doctor to review. You'd be surprised how often a physician will find a medicine that is no longer beneficial, or two drugs that duplicate each other—or even interact dangerously.

6 BRING A FAMILY MEMBER. Ask a spouse or an adult child to be present for all or part of a doctor's visit to help you recall what's important.

7 SPEAK UP PROMPTLY. Some patients leave their biggest fear or worry for the end of the visit, when the doctor is finishing the conversation. Mention big concerns early to be sure there is time to address them.

8 DON'T TRY TO BE YOUR OWN DOCTOR. It's good to do research, but resist jumping to conclusions about your condition—despite that dead-on diagnosis you may have found on the Internet! Describe what you're feeling, and you and your physician can decide what it means.

9 SUMMARIZE. Before the doctor leaves the room, ask for a moment to repeat back to him or her a summary of the main things you learned during the visit. That will help make sure you got it right.

Research shows that doctors base up to 80 percent of diagnoses on patient reports of symptoms and history. Need a new doctor? Call the HMC Physician Referral Service at 413.534.2789.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES

PRIVATE ROOMS, RESTAURANT-QUALITY FOOD, VALET PARKING AND AN EXPANDED EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT ARE JUST A FEW OF THE UPGRADES AT HOLYOKE MEDICAL CENTER.

THERE'S BEEN A FLURRY OF CHANGES at Holyoke Medical Center this past year—all aimed at improving patient care and making both patients and visitors feel welcome.

"We're adding a softer touch," said Carl Cameron, chief operating officer. "We want to make patients feel like they're not a number, that they're being treated like family."

The enhancements include:

Finer food. Boston-based Unidine became the hospital's new in-house food service provider in May 2014 and promptly began offering restaurant-quality meals made from scratch.

And, according to Director of Dining Services Valerie Lareau, everything is created in house. Soups are made from fresh meat stock. Vegetables are fresh or frozen. Muffins and desserts are baked on site daily. Meats are fresh, never processed. And absolutely no trans fats are used. (Of course, all menu items are prepared with patients' dietary restrictions in mind.)

"We've heard a lot of great things from the patients," said Lareau, who is a professional chef, adding that Unidine periodically asks patients to rate their meals.

In April, Unidine will be (apologies to Emeril Lagasse) kicking it up another notch when it launches the "My Dine" program. Patients will be able to choose made-to-order breakfast items, burgers, sandwiches and entrees from a menu that will rival that

of any chain restaurant. "It's room service-style service," said Lareau. "It's dining with dignity. It's ordering what you want to eat, rather than 'These are my choices.'"

Hospital staff and visitors are eating better too. The retail cafeteria now offers a salad bar, deli sandwich stand and fresh-grilled paninis.

Private rooms. Holyoke Medical

Center is transforming its double-bedded medical and surgical inpatient rooms into single-bed private rooms offering many of the comforts of home. The project is scheduled for completion in March.

The rooms are being repainted in soothing gray tones. Each will feature a 32-inch flat-screen television; new lighting for a brighter, cheerier feel; a bistro-style table and chairs so that patients and visitors can eat together comfortably; and a recliner for patients to relax or so a family member can stay overnight. "People come into the rooms and say 'Wow!'" said Peggy Riley, nurse manager for the medical/surgical floor.

Another touch of home sweet home: Children in Holyoke's public schools are painting pictures that will be hung in the rooms. The hospital is providing 100 canvases, plus paints and other supplies. "When you see a child's artwork, it gives you such a good feeling," said Cameron.

But patients won't just be more comfortable, according to Riley; they'll also receive better care. "Patients often sleep more soundly without a roommate," she pointed out. And now that all rooms will be private, patients won't be disrupted by transfers from semi-private rooms.

A bigger, better emergency department (ED). When it's completed in 2016, the expanded and redesigned ED will house 14 additional treatment bays and feature separate patient and ambulance



Carl Cameron,
Chief Operating
Officer at HMC

entrances for easier access.

It also will include an emergency wing for patients with mental health issues, and a revamped behavioral services program will offer broader services and more targeted treatment. These changes will allow psychiatrists to quickly and accurately assess patients with a mental illness and direct them to treatment. The behavioral ED will accommodate up to 12 patients and provide 24/7 access to psychiatric care.

The ED project will cost between \$6 million and \$8 million.

Valet parking...and a smile. Valet Park of America in Springfield launched a valet parking service at the front hospital lot last year. And it quickly proved popular, with approximately 50 visitors a day using it.

Then, at Cameron's insistence, Valet Park added another human touch: a greeter at the front of the main lobby. She cheerfully welcomes incoming visitors, asks if they need help finding their destination and offers wheelchair transportation.

The greeter has been winning the hearts of patients and visitors alike. Cameron recalls how she regularly welcomed one group of women who were visiting the oncology department. One cold day, Cameron said, the greeter surprised her friendly new acquaintances with scarves that she had made for them. "It's that human touch," he said. "It really creates a positive image for the hospital."

New rehab unit. Holyoke Medical Center is expanding its physical/occupational therapy and cardiac rehabilitation center. Adjacent offices have been gutted to make room for a revamped reception area and gym complete with weight equipment, treadmills and stationary bicycles. The \$350,000 project is scheduled for completion in mid-March.

From top: Members of the HMC Unidine team—Marcy Cartier, Director of Dining Services Valerie Lareau and Kim Sagan. The new private rooms at the medical center will feature a 32-inch flat-screen television, a bistro-style table and chairs, and a comfortable recliner so that a family member can stay overnight. Some 50 visitors a day utilize the convenient valet parking service launched last year.



ON THE ROAD TO A HEALTHY HEART

OUR 5-STEP PROGRAM
CAN HELP YOU KEEP YOUR
TICKER TICKING.

YOU'VE MADE THE DECISION TO LIVE A MORE HEART-HEALTHY LIFE. GOOD FOR YOU!

But starting the journey can be a bit daunting. Where to begin? What to do?

That's where the experts come in. Holyoke Medical Center's triple board-certified cardiovascular specialists offer the following road map to help you on your journey.

"Simple everyday changes in lifestyle go a long way in maintaining a very healthy heart," said Hari Subramanian, M.D. "You need to make only small changes in your diet, activity and general lifestyle to make a huge difference in your cardiac health."

The five simple steps on the next page will help you establish a heart-healthy lifestyle.

SO WHAT ARE
YOU WAITING FOR?



» MEET THE DOCTOR

Hari Subramanian, M.D., is the newest member of Holyoke Medical Center's cardiology team.

Dr. Subramanian graduated from Kilpauk Medical College in Chennai, India, and completed a three-year cardiology fellowship at Drexel University College of Medicine. He has expertise in noninvasive cardiology procedures, including multi-modality imaging, and in managing patients with advanced heart failure. He also is experienced in trans-esophageal echocardiography.

Holyoke Medical Center's team of triple board-certified cardiologists can help you get and stay heart-healthy. The department offers many patient-centered treatment and examination services, as well as expert advice when you need it.

To learn more or to make an appointment, visit the Holyoke Medical Center Cardiovascular Specialists at 575 Beech Street (first floor) in Holyoke, or call the office at 413.534.2870.

1



STOP SMOKING

Smoking is by far the leading preventable cause of death and disability in the United States, and one of its primary targets is the heart. The American Heart Association estimates that cigarette smoking results in a two-to three-fold increased risk of dying of coronary heart disease.

The reason: Smoking robs the heart of oxygen-rich blood and magnifies the effects of other risk factors, such as blood pressure, blood cholesterol levels and physical inactivity.

Quitting isn't easy, but working with your doctor is key. He or she can help design a smoking cessation plan that may or may not include medications aimed at reducing your cravings, making it easier to kick the habit for good.

2



EXERCISE 30 MINUTES MOST DAYS OF THE WEEK

That's the basic goal. But finding 30 minutes a day to exercise isn't easy. Don't worry—you can break that up into more manageable bits of time. Walk your dog for 10 minutes before work, then take another 10-minute walk on your lunch break, and then ride a bike around the block with your family after work. There's your 30 minutes.

You also can incorporate more movement into your daily life. Park your car at the far end of the parking lot at work or the shopping mall and walk to the entrance. Bypass the elevator or escalator and take the stairs when possible. Even standing while you're on the phone instead of sitting burns a few extra calories.

Still having trouble getting started? Enlist the help of friends. Start a walking club in the neighborhood or at work. It's easier to stay motivated when you have others cheering you on.

3



EAT A HEART-HEALTHY DIET

Major dietary changes almost never stick, and that's why it's better to start small, with easy substitutions.

For instance, eat whole grain bread. Switch to lower-fat meats like turkey. Substitute mustard for mayo and salt-free pretzels for potato chips. Learn to love baby carrots as a snack. Always choose nonfat dairy products.

The worst diet don'ts are processed foods—donuts, fast food, designer coffee drinks and above all, soda. Be sure to eat a healthy breakfast at home to help you avoid the drive-thru. Opt for water instead of other drinks. Water is what your body craves, not added sugars, chemicals and preservatives.

Drink water before you eat, to pre-fill your tummy. Eat your veggies first, for the same reason. And don't skip meals because that will likely cause you to overeat later.

Finally, practice portion control. Eat what you want, just less of it. Take home one-third of your meal in a doggy bag when you dine out. Eat slowly, because it takes about 20 minutes for the food you eat to trigger a "full" feeling. If you eat too fast, you're likely to eat more than you really need.

4

MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

How do you know what constitutes a healthy weight? Doctors typically use two measures: body-mass index (BMI) and waist circumference.

BMI is a ratio of your height and weight. It's determined through a complex math formula, but your doctor or one of the many online calculators can determine yours. The goal is to keep your BMI below 25. Waist circumference may be an even better predictor of heart health. Women should keep their waist below 35 inches and men below 40 inches to lower risk for heart disease.

Step No. 1 is to learn your BMI and waist numbers. Then, if they're too high, ask your doctor to recommend the best way to bring them back to where they belong.

5



KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Numbers matter when it comes to heart health. Here are the numbers you should know.

130: LDL—THE "BAD" CHOLESTEROL—SHOULD BE UNDER 130 MG/DL FOR THOSE WITH INTERMEDIATE RISK FOR HEART DISEASE, AND EVEN LOWER IF YOUR RISK IS HIGHER.

40/50: WOMEN NEED HDL—THE "GOOD" CHOLESTEROL—ABOVE 50 MG/DL. MEN SHOULD STRIVE FOR 40 MG/DL AND HIGHER.

150: TRIGLYCERIDES, ANOTHER FORM OF BLOOD FAT, SHOULD BE KEPT BELOW 150 MG/DL.

120/80: KEEP BLOOD PRESSURE AT 120/80 OR LOWER.

100: FASTING GLUCOSE (SUGAR) LEVELS SHOULD BE BELOW 100 MG/DL.

Your personal physician can determine these numbers with simple tests. Once you know your numbers, your doctor can help you set goals for improving them and choosing the best options—medication, lifestyle changes or a combination of the two—to start you on the road to a heart-healthier you.

» OVERCOMING ROADBLOCKS

Along the journey, you're bound to hit a few roadblocks. Here are common ones and how to avoid taking an unhealthy detour:

» ROADBLOCK: TIME BANDITS.

When your hectic schedule creeps in, you may start steering toward fast food.

Heart-smart detour: Plan meals ahead of time and find quick, easy recipes to have on hand. If you do find yourself headed for the drive-thru, avoid value meals with french fries and choose wraps, salads and healthier sides.

» ROADBLOCK: NO GYM

If you don't have a convenient gym, it can be tempting to miss your daily 30-minute exercise.

Heart-smart detour: Instead, start looking for ways you can exercise around your office or at home. Simple activities like gardening, walking around the block or taking the stairs all add up to great progress.

» ROADBLOCK: PORTION DISTORTION

Whether eating at home or at a restaurant, the world appears to be supersizing everything.

Heart-smart detour: Be sure to know proper portion sizes and pay attention to what's on your plate.

» ROADBLOCK: NAYSAYERS

Sometimes your friends and family aren't as willing to jump on the heart-healthy journey with you and can lead you astray.

Heart-smart detour: Keep focused and motivated on your journey to heart health and if possible, team-up with a close friend to tackle life's little roadblocks together.

A WISH FULFILLED

WITH A SUPPORTIVE MIDWIFE BY HER SIDE,
A WESTFIELD MOM GIVES BIRTH NATURALLY.





LAUREN KOCHANЕК WANTED TO HAVE A vaginal birth. Her first child, Madison, was born four years ago via cesarean section. This time, she hoped, would be different.

"I wanted the experience of doing what my body was supposed to do," said the 26-year-old Westfield resident. "And I wanted to be a part of the birth as it was happening, instead of being removed from it." Kochanek also longed for immediate skin-to-skin contact with her baby—something she didn't experience with her prior C-section—and wanted to avoid the breastfeeding challenges she experienced after delivering Madison.

On December 8, Kochanek's wish for vaginal delivery came true, when her second daughter, Raegan, was born at The Birthing Center at Holyoke Medical Center. Mary O'Brien, a certified nurse midwife with Midwifery Care of Holyoke, was right by her side.

Working with obstetricians, gynecologists and Birthing Center staff, the midwives provide patients with compassion, expertise and support of the maternal instinct. "We really try to honor all women's choices," said Liza Winston, C.N.M., midwife service director. "We've had patients give birth under water in the birthing tub, while standing, while squatting, with music playing.

"On any given day, any kind of birth could be taking place at The Birthing Center," she added, "and that is driven by what the patient wants."

Kochanek had been visiting Midwifery Care of Holyoke for well-woman care for two years when she became pregnant with Raegan. The midwives immediately began counseling her. She received monthly checkups through most of her pregnancy, then every other week starting at week 32, then weekly after week 36.

Sometimes the young mother would arrive for her appointments with a laundry list of questions, but the midwives didn't mind. "One thing I loved

about the midwives is that I was never rushed," Kochanek said. "They take as long as you need. I would have so many questions, and they would go over every concern." Many of her questions centered around alternative pain-management options, such as nitrous oxide, and the hospital's birthing tub. "I had to be constantly monitored because I was VBAC [vaginal birth after C-section], and I wanted to know whether the monitoring equipment could go in the water if I wanted to try the tub." The answer: yes.

Madison often accompanied her mother on visits to Midwifery Care of Holyoke. "She would be my 'helper.' She would stand on a chair and listen to her sister's heartbeat," Kochanek

recalled. And during ultrasound exams the midwives would let the little girl hold the Doppler monitor. "Everyone was so sweet," she said. "It felt like a second home."

When Kochanek went into labor on December 8, she was surprised to discover that it wasn't too difficult. "It was actually okay," she said. "I wanted to see how long I could go without an epidural. I made it to 6 cm. With Madison, I had an epidural within an hour of arriving at the hospital. This time, they let me decide. They let me take charge of my experience."

When she was 10 cm dilated, Kochanek really didn't feel the need to push. So, at Midwife Mary's suggestion, she didn't. "Mary was very laid back and encouraged me to trust in myself. So I just relaxed. Then, when I felt like I needed to push, I did." And Raegan was born at 3:39 p.m.

"I love the hospital and highly recommend the midwives," Kochanek summed up. "They believe in you

and in what a woman's body is made to do. It's empowering."

Midwifery Care of Holyoke has offices in Northampton, downtown Holyoke, at Chicopee Medical Center and at Holyoke Medical Center. To schedule an appointment, call 413.535.4700.

MIDWIFERY CARE OF HOLYOKE: FAST FACTS

» Number of
midwives
on staff:

8

» Combined years
of midwife
experience:
more than

100

» Number of
babies delivered
each year:

300
to
350

» MORE ON MIDWIFERY CARE OF HOLYOKE

Holyoke Medical Center's eight midwives have a combined 100-plus years of midwife experience, and together they deliver 300 to 350 babies a year.

» With that much practice, you get really good at it. Holyoke Medical Center consistently ranks near the top in statewide obstetric outcomes, particularly in the fewest C-sections and the most vaginal births after cesarean (VBAC), according to Liza Winston, C.N.M., midwife service director.

» The midwives, however, aren't just about healthy birthing. Midwifery Care of Holyoke offers a wide range of women's health services, including well-woman care, breast exams, contraception, pre-conception counseling, fertility and menopause management.

» In addition to their clinical know-how, the midwives also know the communities around Holyoke Medical Center and understand the psychosocial needs of the patients and families they serve. Most are bilingual, which helps them care for the area's Hispanic population.

» Over time, the patients bond with the midwives. Women who visit the practice during their first pregnancy return years later when they become pregnant again. "We are well-versed in the needs of the women and families we work with and are dedicated to personalized care," Winston said, "so we pay attention to what our patients are concerned about."

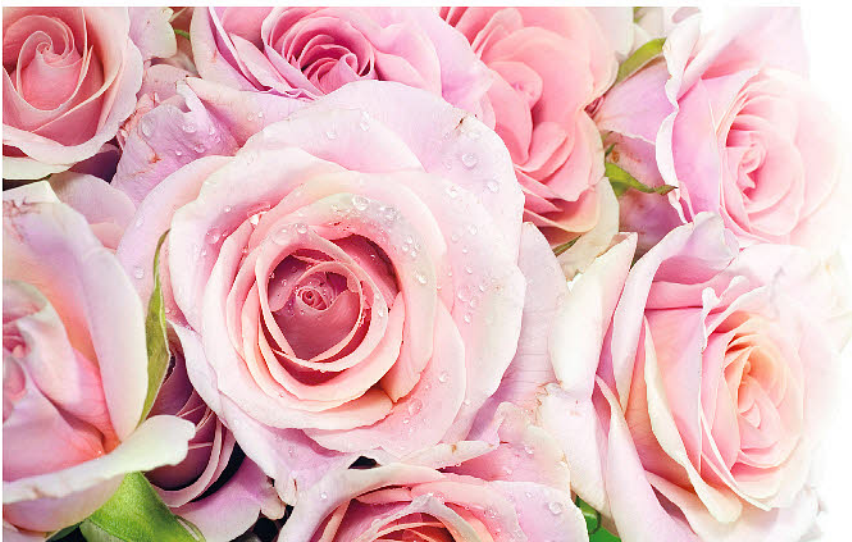
GIVE 'PEACEFUL' A CHANCE

CAN'T PICTURE YOUR LIFE WITHOUT CONTINUAL STRESS?
HERE'S HOW YOU CAN—AND WHY YOU SHOULD.

A PRESSURE-FILLED LIFE IS ABOUT AS AMERICAN AS APPLE PIE AND *FRIENDS* RERUNS—SO MUCH SO THAT many of us wear our stress as a badge of honor, accepting the cranky impatience, throbbing headaches and sleepless nights as the price we pay for how in-demand our time is. But the possible long-term effects of stress (a weakened immune system, blood clots, high blood pressure and heart disease among them) are nothing to boast about—or flirt with. So here we offer six ways to ease your troubled mind—and, in the process, do your body good.



1 TAKE A MEDITATION BREAK. Whether or not you're seeking spiritual enlightenment, a few calming moments of silence can have a wonderful soothing effect. The jury's still out on just how health-promoting meditation is, but some studies have found it reduces blood pressure, heart rate and cholesterol levels. A recent report published in the *American Journal of Hypertension*, for instance, found that people at risk for hypertension who practiced 20 minutes of meditation daily lowered their blood pressure significantly and reduced by 52 percent their risk of developing hypertension in the future. Experts suspect that meditation brings benefits by quieting the sympathetic nervous system (responsible for our "fight-or-flight" response) and amping up the parasympathetic nervous system (which slows heart rate and breathing and improves blood flow), notes the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, a division of the National Institutes of Health. The result: more day-to-day serenity. Techniques vary widely, but most involve finding a comfortable position in a quiet spot, then either focusing on your breathing or repeating a mantra. You might begin with just five minutes a day, gradually working up to 20 minutes or more. A wide variety of get-started manuals can be found at your local bookstore.



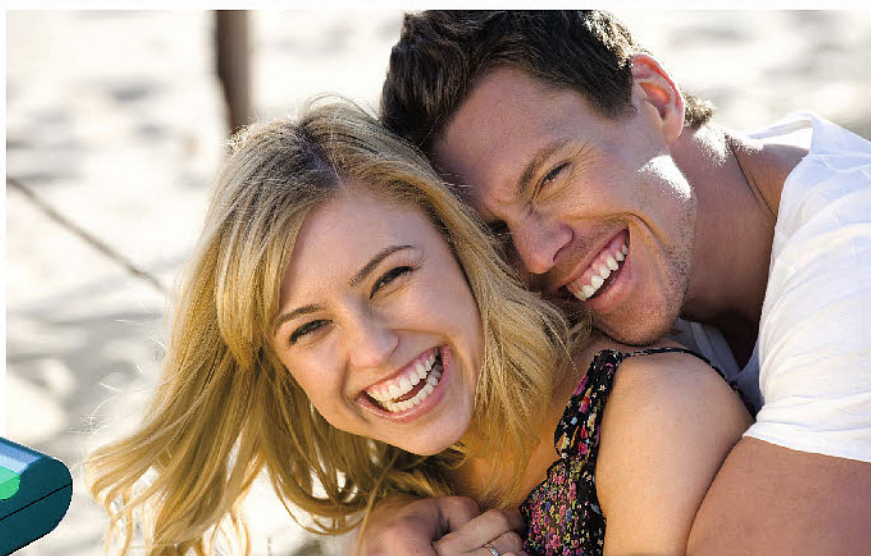
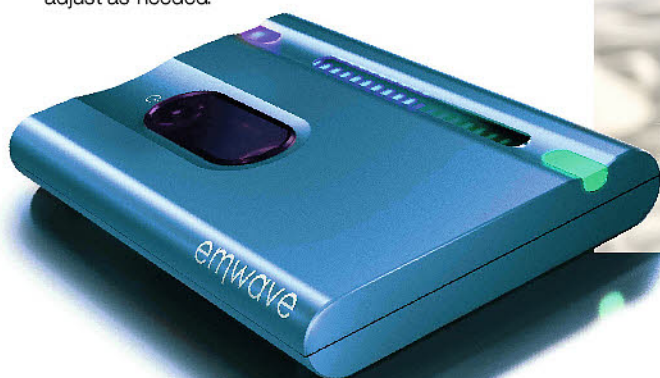
2 SMELL THE ROSES. It's not just their pretty petals that cause flowers to brighten your mood—their fragrance may actually calm tensed-out nerves. In recent Japanese research, mice exposed to stress-inducing situations had lower levels of neutrophils and lymphocytes—two types of stress-related immune cells—when they sniffed linalool, a scented compound found in blooms. They also showed reduced activity in more than 100 genes linked to the stress response. With additional research, this demonstrated physiological reaction may add credence to the therapeutic claims long made by proponents of aromatherapy.

3 PUT THE KETTLE ON. You've probably heard that a spot of hot tea can soothe frazzled nerves—now there's research to support the claim. British investigators (of course) divided 75 men into two groups, one of which sipped black tea daily for six weeks, while the other drank a caffeinated placebo. After this period, the men were asked to complete a stressful task. Researchers took blood samples an hour later and found that the tea drinkers had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol, indicating that they recovered from the stress more quickly than did the tea-free group.

4 GET SOME EXERCISE. It's well documented that physical exertion can help alleviate stress, so why not try something new? Setting a goal for yourself can help you stay motivated, and Cool Running's "Couch to 5K" plan (go to www.c25k.com and click "Cool Running") is a great place to start. Designed for the nonrunner, this nine-week program eases you in (you'll do no more than 60 seconds of jogging at first), but gradually gets you race-ready for a 5K competition. Those with more of a techie leaning might opt for "Full Fitness: Exercise Workout Trainer," a \$1.99 iPhone app that offers detailed instructions with pictures for hundreds of exercises, sorted by body region, target muscles and equipment needed. (There are instructive videos for the more complex exercises.) Just slip your phone into your gym bag and you're ready to go! (Be sure to consult with your doctor or other healthcare professional before embarking on a new exercise program.)

5 CHUCKLE. There's good reason why your mood improves when you've been giggling over *Modern Family* or scanning *The Onion's* headlines. The Mayo Clinic reports that laughter has a positive impact on your stress response, leading to a more relaxed feeling. Chuckles can also stimulate your heart, lungs and muscles and even ease stomachaches, thanks to their positive effects on digestion. Personally, we love any medical advice that deems watching *Animal House* (Bravo's top pick on its "100 Funniest Movies of All Time" list) time judiciously spent.

6 GO HIGH-TECH. Sure, venting on your cell phone or zoning out to your iPod might make you feel better, but what about a handheld device designed to help you chill? HeartMath's emWave2 Personal Stress Reliever (\$199) has a sensor that measures your stress levels based on breathing and changes in heart rhythm. The device then guides you through reducing your stress via breathing exercises and other techniques. A colorful display shows your progress as you go so you can adjust as needed.





6 SNEAKY FEES

DON'T LET HIDDEN COSTS FOIL YOUR FINANCES. HERE'S HOW TO ENSURE YOU DON'T PAY MORE THAN YOU BARGAINED FOR.

HUH, WHERE DID THAT CHARGE COME

from? Hidden fees and surprising surcharges are everywhere—from cable bills to gym memberships to airline tickets. And if you don't read the fine print, these small charges can add up to one major financial blow.

"Hidden fees get in the way of your budgeting and savings," says Andrea Woroch, a consumer-savings expert who contributes to CNN, MSNBC and other news organizations. "Racking up these charges each month across multiple accounts may keep you from contributing to your retirement savings or reaching another financial goal such as a down payment on a house."

The average adult in the U.S. pays nearly \$1,000 a year in hidden fees, according to a 2006 Ponemon Institute study. And chances are that number has risen in the past eight years.

The good news: "Most of the fees are not such a secret and can be easily found with a little digging," says Woroch. "Be a conscious consumer. Do your research, read the fine print and review your bills and credit card and bank statements regularly."

Here we've done some of the legwork for you. Read on for six hidden costs across a spectrum of goods and services.

1 AIRLINES. It's well known that airlines charge passengers for everything

that can remotely be considered an extra these days—parking, luggage, pillows, blankets, headphones, in-flight movies. But believe it or not, booking a flight the old-fashioned way with a live phone representative also can add up to \$35 to the total cost of your flight. Your best bet: Book online, six weeks in advance. According to a recent study by the Airlines Reporting Corporation, passengers pay nearly 6 percent below the average fare if they purchase tickets six weeks before their flight.

2 CABLE COMPANIES. You may have signed up with your local cable provider at a killer rate, but within three months to a year you'll likely notice your monthly bill steadily rising. This is because new-client promotions often expire at three months. "It's incredibly important to find out when promotions are set to expire so you can cancel any add-ons that you don't want to pay for," says Woroch. "And call customer service to find out if you qualify for any new promotions. You may be able to maintain the low new-client price."

3 CAR DEALERS. Buying a new car? Don't be surprised if you notice a "doc" fee preprinted on your contract. Also known as a conveyance fee, a processing fee or a service and handling fee, this charge is meant to cover the cost of processing pa-

perwork. Some states cap the amount that can be charged. But in Massachusetts, there is no cap on document fees, according to the Massachusetts State Automobile Dealers Association. While the dealer is not allowed to waive the fee—once one customer is charged, all customers must be charged, according to state regulations—you can ask the dealer to deduct the same amount from the price of the car.

4 HEALTH CLUBS. "If you aren't 100 percent committed to embarking on a new fitness journey then don't sign up for the year—go month to month," suggests Woroch. Health clubs are just one of many kinds of businesses that charge an early termination fee or a penalty for ending your contract before it expires. It can range from a flat fee to several monthly payments, depending on how much time is left on your contract. If you do sign up for a full year, avoid automatic payments and pay with a check every month. Preventing the health club from directly accessing your money is a simple way to avoid future breakup overcharges.

5 HOTELS. Hotels raked in about \$2.1 billion in fees and surcharges in 2013, according to *Consumer Reports*—almost double the amount made in 2000. Perhaps the most sneaky cost tied to your hotel stay is the minibar restocking fee, which can add as much as \$6 to the already overpriced nuts or beer you grab from the fridge. Another common culprit: resort, convenience, concierge or housekeeping fees, which are often left out of the base price and can reach levels of \$50 per night. Before you book your hotel, read the fine print and don't hesitate to pick up the phone and speak with a representative about exactly how much you'll be paying and for what.

6 RETAILERS. Returning your smartphone or TV can cost you: Both Amazon and Target charge a 15 percent restocking fee, says Woroch. And this practice is not limited to electronics. A variety of retailers, including mattress companies, furniture stores and car dealerships, charge these fees. So do your research before heading out to buy one of these items. And in the case of electronics and other "boxed" merchandise, be sure to open the box neatly and hang on to all of the packaging. The better the item looks when you return it, the better your chance of not being charged a restocking fee.

all hail KALE

THIS DISTINCTIVE, GOOD-FOR-YOU VEGGIE IS READY FOR ITS CLOSE-UP.

CRINKLY KALE, A COUSIN TO CABBAGE and cauliflower, was recently called “the hottest vegetable on the scene.” But it’s not new. One of Europe’s most common green vegetables in the Middle Ages, kale was later promoted as an easy-to-grow source of nutrients for English gardeners in World War II, when rationing made many foods scarce. Today kale is prized as a nutritional powerhouse.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many varieties of flowering kale are used as ornamental plants, with leaf colors ranging from blue and lavender to pink and red. Kale can grow well into winter, and it’s the cold that intensifies these hues. The frilly leaves are edible, but the decorative foliage isn’t as tasty as culinary kale.

POWER UP

Kale may look too pretty to eat, but this super-crisp green can do much more than serve as a bright bed for shrimp cocktail. Two cups of kale provide more than 250 percent of your daily requirement of vitamin A, 250 percent of vitamin C and 20 percent of vitamin B₆—all this for less than 70 calories! Kale is also rich in vitamin K, carotenoids, calcium, riboflavin, niacin, magnesium, iron, sulphur and phosphorus. And it offers more than 45 flavonoids (antioxidants) as well as cholesterol-lowering properties.

BUY • STORE • SERVE

Curly kale is the most readily available variety; it can be found at almost all grocery stores and local farmers’ markets. It has a lively, pungent flavor, and its texture is ideal for making kale chips (see recipe at right). The second most popular variety is dinosaur or lacinato kale,

which has tall, dark, narrow leaves and a wrinkled texture; it’s slightly sweeter and more delicate than the curly kind. When buying kale, choose small to medium, deep green leaves, because small leaves will be more tender and milder-tasting than large ones. Store in a plastic bag in the coldest part of the fridge for three to five days. Don’t wash until ready to use.

Kale is one of the few leafy greens that you can eat raw, sautéed, steamed, boiled, fried or baked. It’s often served in soups, pasta and stews. Try presenting it as a hearty side dish. To ensure even cooking, chop the leaves into 1- to 2-inch pieces, and steam on low heat for about 10 minutes or until tender. Enjoy!

RECIPE

ROASTED KALE CHIPS WITH PARMIGIANO-REGGIANO

Courtesy of Whole Foods Market

INGREDIENTS

1 bunch kale	¼ tsp. kosher salt
1 Tb. extra-virgin olive oil	2 Tbs. finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
½ tsp. chili powder	

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350° F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper. Trim tough stems from kale and discard; cut leaves into 2-inch pieces. Place in a large bowl, drizzle with oil and toss. Add chili powder and salt and toss again. Arrange kale on sheets in single layer; bake until it’s crispy and the edges begin to brown, about 12 minutes. Remove from oven; let cool for 2 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and toss with cheese. Store in airtight container for up to 5 days.

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