

PA

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HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING

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Living with intent

A Danville organ
recipient gives his own
gift of health

+

FIND A WAY TO REIN
IN THAT PAIN

TAKE STEPS TOWARD
A HEALTHIER HEART

DECODING
TEENS' EMOTIONS



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On the cover:

After receiving a lifesaving gift, Charlie White is giving back, too.

Photo by Robb Malloy.



As winter starts covering the ground with blankets of snow, we look ahead to the new year. It's a time to reflect, and to look at how we can make the most of the future.

Are you making resolutions to be healthier this year? You'll discover some resources in these pages to get you on the right track. And since February is American Heart Month, we're sharing some tips and advice for a healthy heart.

If you have a teen in your life, you know their increased hormones can influence their emotional mindset. Find out how to tell the difference between normal teenage moodiness and clinical depression, and what you can do to help your teen navigate these feelings.

We'll also look at physical pain and its many causes. Explore some pain management techniques and treatments and how they can help you cope with it.

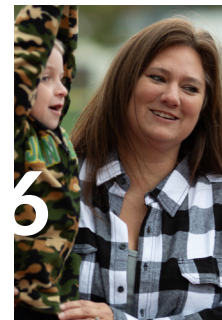
Finally, we'll get at the core of why apples are so good for you. You may want to try your hand at our delicious recipe featuring this crunchy, nutrient-dense fruit.

Wishing you all a healthy and prosperous new year!

Jaewon Ryu, MD, JD
President and CEO
Geisinger

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Can a bed save a life?

Yes — if it's the right bed, in the right place, surrounded by the right team of skilled caregivers.

One such special bed was recently installed in the Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center's Tambur Family Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

It looks like a typical NICU bed, but it's a genius multi-tasker. Called the Giraffe™ Carestation, this self-contained environment maintains the perfect temperature and light, touch and sound exposure for fragile young patients.

The bed is meeting a tremendous need, says Geisinger neonatologist and medical director of the Tambur NICU Patricia Spitale, MD.

In 2022, the Level III NICU admitted 305 babies who required a total of more than 700 days on ventilators. That's nearly double the number of days from 2021.

Purchase of the special bed was made possible through a \$40,000 donation by the Colleen Shea Children's Foundation in Wilkes-Barre.

Dr. Spitale is grateful to the Colleen Shea foundation, which funds charities that promote children's health and welfare — and to everyone who makes any donation, large or small, to the Geisinger Health Foundation in support of the Tambur NICU.

"Thank you for keeping the NICU in your heart," she says. "We can certainly use all the help that can be sent our way."

You can donate to help newborns (and other patients), too: [geisinger.org/becauseofyou](https://www.geisinger.org/becauseofyou)

Because of you

Living a more grateful life

Retired physician Charlie White lay in a hospital bed at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville. From his room, he could see the helipad.

Although very ill — he estimates weeks to months from death — he was keenly alert to each landing.

“Helicopters were coming in, and patients would come out on stretchers,” he recalls. “And then one landed, and a doctor came out. Holding a box.”

In that box was the liver that would save Dr. White’s life.

Soon, the hospital’s exterior was bathed in green light, the symbolic color of transplantation, and an operation Dr. White wondered if he’d survive was underway.

By Beth Kaszuba

Transplant surgery isn’t limited to big-city hospitals. Michael Marvin, MD, who leads Geisinger’s liver and kidney transplant program, says he and his team transplant 60 to 90 kidneys and 10 to 20 livers each year, right in Danville.

For Dr. White, who lives in a colorful, art-filled house just outside Danville, having a transplant program five minutes from home was lifesaving.

“If I’d had to travel to Pittsburgh or Philadelphia, I wouldn’t be here,” he says.



Even before his liver began to fail, Dr. White was no stranger to considerations of mortality.

As a medical oncologist who began practicing in the 1970s, he’s seen many advancements in cancer treatment. But, he notes, “I went into oncology knowing there were many people I wasn’t going to be able to save.”

And so, when this former director of medical oncology at Geisinger found himself in the role of patient, he made the most of every day he had left — and he was realistic about his possible death. “When facing my own mortality, I felt empowered to make the most of every moment of my life,” he says. “And I never gave up.”

That resolve, with the support of his late wife, Bonnie, remained strong right up until the day he

received the call he didn't really expect. A liver was available — if he was willing to accept one from a donor with hepatitis C.

Some patients are reluctant to do so, but Dr. White wasn't concerned, even though he did develop the condition after the operation. "It's highly curable with oral medication," he says. "The transplant team jumped on it, and I got medication that day. Within two or three weeks, I had no detectable evidence of hepatitis C in my bloodstream."

More frightening, he says, was when his body began to reject his new liver.



Rejection isn't uncommon, Dr. Marvin says. Problems arise when patients don't follow protocols after surgery — such as taking the many prescribed medications. But if transplant patients follow instructions, "rejection can be treated," he says. "And with the liver, consequences are low. The liver can take a big hit."

Dr. White admits he "freaked out" when he realized his liver was being rejected, despite his compliance with protocols. But his care team, which also included transplant surgeon Anil Kotru, MD, was unfazed.

"You'd think I had the common cold," Dr. White says. "One of the things that

amazed me was how the transplant team approaches problems in a cool, calm and objective manner."

After about five days of steroid treatment, the rejection was reversed. And the number of medications he takes, and medical appointments he attends, have gradually decreased. Four years after his surgery, at age 73, he says he's "healthier than ever."

He's also grateful — to Geisinger, to everyone who supported him, and especially to his donor and donor's family, who are unknown to him.



Liver transplant, which usually requires a deceased donor, is bittersweet. Dr. Marvin prefers to focus on the positive aspects. Like the selfless gesture — sometimes made by the donor in life and sometimes by a family during a heartbreaking crisis — that extends life for someone else's loved one.

"It doesn't take away the loss," he says. "But it gives the solace that you can save up to eight lives. From that perspective, it takes the most tragic event and allows some good to come from it."

The surgeon's flight to recover organs isn't just symbolic, he says. Organ recovery is surgery, although the patient has been declared brain-dead and is on a ventilator. Once death is

confirmed, an organization called Gift of Life takes over to allocate suitable organs.

"Often, several surgeons are all operating at the same time," Dr. Marvin says, because time is of the essence. "You're always grateful to the donor family — and to the recipients who put their trust in you."



One year after his transplant, Dr. White wrote an essay in which he wondered how he could ever thank his donor, transplant team and everyone who supported him. The question, he decided, "was unanswerable." And yet he tries.

Along with thinking of his donor daily, Dr. White maintains a liver-shaped memorial garden at his home with a Japanese weeping maple at the center.

He also lives differently, with more gratitude, patience and kindness. "It's made me a different person," he says. "I am super positive now."

And he gives back to Geisinger financially, through his estate planning and a fund he's set up to support the transplant program. Because it was difficult to get around during his own illness, he wants to help provide transportation for transplant patients. He's also interested in helping patients pay for medication and supporting education.

But he leaves allocation of the fund largely up to Dr. Marvin and Geisinger Health Foundation, Geisinger's charitable arm. After all, he trusted the transplant program with his life, and he's going strong.

"To think this is available in my backyard in Danville, Pennsylvania, is amazing," he says. "It's a miracle, and the stars just lined up. I appreciate everything."

**You have
the power to
donate, too.**

Because of you

If you want to donate your organs after death but prefer to keep that directive to yourself — for example, not on your driver's license — sign up at donatelife.net. You could save your loved ones from having to make a difficult decision, and you'll make sure your wishes are honored. Want to help fund Geisinger's transplant program? Visit geisinger.org/becauseofyou.

Persisting through pain

Going from 'Ouch!' to 'Ahhh'

Whether you've broken a bone, bumped your head, pulled a muscle or pinched a nerve, pain is the unwelcome messenger telling you something is wrong. And it's the most common symptom of thousands of conditions.

Types of pain

Not all pain is the same. The many types can be classified into different categories:

Acute – This type of pain is sharp and usually results from an injury. Acute pain improves when the injury or disease that caused it is treated. Conditions like burns, bone fractures, muscle spasms, appendicitis and shingles lead to acute pain.

Chronic – Pain lasting more than six months is considered chronic. It's usually due to an untreated injury or disease, or to arthritis, fibromyalgia or nerve damage. A common example is lower back pain.

Beyond how long it lasts, pain is also classified by its cause.

Nociceptive – When you have damage to a tissue, like breaking a bone or pulling a muscle, nerve cell endings called nociceptors send pain signals to your brain. Nociceptive pain can be sudden and temporary (acute) or long-lasting (chronic).

Neuropathic – This kind of pain happens when nerves send pain signals to the brain because they're damaged – or in error, when there's no injury or condition to cause it. Multiple sclerosis, HIV and diabetes are some conditions that lead to neuropathic pain.

Kicking pain to the curb

To manage aches and pains, your options are as diverse as there are different types of music. Some you can DIY, and some require teaming up with a healthcare professional to get you dancing again.

Ways to alleviate pain on your own:

- **Home treatments** such as the RICE method (rest, ice, compression and elevation) are good for acute pain due to an injury.
- **Lifestyle changes** like losing weight, eating a balanced diet and managing stress can reduce chronic pain.
- **Exercise**, if recommended by your doctor, can reduce pain and improve your body's general condition. Yoga, swimming and walking not only benefit your physical health, but can positively impact your mental health as well.

So what happens when at-home treatment isn't cutting it? If the pain doesn't get better, gets worse, keeps recurring

Pictured above: Less pain means Brenda Tibbens gets more play time with her kids.

or prevents you from sleeping or doing your usual activities, it's time to get help.

Depending on what kind of pain you have and the cause of it, your doctor can recommend one or several approaches to treat it. Your primary care physician (PCP) may manage your pain or refer you to a specialist.

Pain management options include medications, injections and therapies. Your PCP or specialist can help you find the treatment — or combination of treatments — that will help you get back to doing the things you love.

Managing pain with meds

Chronic pain can often be controlled with medication, but finding the right prescription for your specific needs might take some time.

Geisinger's award-winning Medication Therapy Disease Management (MTDM) program works closely with patients and their physicians to find the right medications that reduce the risk of complications and drug interactions.

"Patient education is key," says Leeann Webster, RPh, Geisinger clinical pharmacist and director of the MTDM program. "Studies have shown that by educating patients about their medications, they are empowered to be more involved in their healthcare, which results in reaching their treatment goals more easily."

Several types of medications can reduce pain, such as:

- Acetaminophen
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medicine (NSAIDs)
- Antidepressants
- Antiepileptics
- Local anesthetics, like lidocaine
- Opioids (for severe pain)

Work with your healthcare provider to find the right medication and the right dose to manage your pain. Just remember, you may need to try different medicine before landing on one that works for you.

Sometimes surgery is the answer

For some conditions, surgery can help to correct the problem that's causing the pain when other methods don't work. Back, neck and shoulder/arm pain, for example, don't always respond well to therapies or medication. Surgical treatment may be the best option in those cases.

Brenda Tibbens, 42, of Salladasburg, was sidelined by pain from a lumbar disc injury. With a busy life of work and babysitting

(continued on page 8)

Pain management during the opioid crisis

Pennsylvania has one of the highest rates of death due to drug overdose — mostly due to opioids.

That's why Geisinger takes proactive steps to reduce opioid addiction and misuse, including:

- Educating patients about the risks of opioids and other forms of pain relief
- Helping patients find safe, effective ways to manage chronic pain
- Following evidence-based prescribing guidelines
- Identifying patients at risk of opioid addiction and providing interventions
- Providing treatment and recovery services for patients who need help
- Participating in the Pennsylvania Prescription Drug Monitoring Program
- Coordinating care between primary care providers and specialists to keep pain management safe

Naomi Johnson, 75, of Lewistown, had radiating nerve pain due to a degenerative disc condition. She took an opioid pain reliever, but it only helped so much. "I was getting up every night crying, walking the floor in pain," she says.

Her doctor, concerned about long-term use of the opioid, took her off the drug and referred Ms. Johnson to Geisinger's Medication Therapy Disease Management program. There, clinical pharmacist Eva Gerhart worked closely with her to manage her pain using gabapentin, a non-narcotic nerve pain medication.

It took some time to land on the correct dosage.

"We finally got the perfect regimen for her after one year," says Ms. Gerhart. Now Ms. Johnson is pain-free, and she can do the things she loves, like delivering meals for the Lewistown Senior Center.



children, she needed to get back on her feet. Minimally invasive spine surgery performed by Sanjay Konakondla, MD, a Geisinger specialist in endoscopic surgery for spinal disc repairs, had her home the same day with instant pain relief.

Unfortunately, Ms. Tibbens had a fall the following year and reinjured her disc. This time, Dr. Konakondla performed a more traditional type of surgery involving screws and a titanium graft.

Though Ms. Tibbens still has some lower back problems, they're nothing like they were before. "I like to be on the floor with the kids, doing a lot of imaginary play and interacting with them at their level," she says. "Geisinger gave me my life back."

Alternative treatments for chronic pain

Pain is complex — and every person's causes and perceptions of it differ. That's why taking a comprehensive, holistic approach is often the best way to manage pain. This strategy also helps reduce using opioids and other pain medications. The Multidisciplinary Pain Management Program (MPP) at Geisinger is an innovative example of this method.

"The MPP is a holistic educational approach to chronic pain management," says Leyna Kipp, MSN, RN, a clinical nurse educator in pain medicine at Geisinger. The MPP uses different modalities for treating pain, such as:

- Stress management
- Relaxation techniques to desensitize the nervous system
- Behavioral pacing to help improve function and activity levels
- Stretching and movement
- Energy conservation
- Sleep
- Nutrition
- Alternative thinking approaches
- Self-management

The goals for the program: to decrease pain levels and to improve function, overall mood and quality of life.

"We've seen firsthand how it changes people's lives and helps them get back to enjoying their favorite activities," Ms. Kipp says.

Don't suffer in silence

If pain is a constant presence in your life and restricts what you do, talk to your doctor about it. Be open and honest about how pain affects your daily activities. Let your doctor know if you feel depressed or anxious. Understand that it may take time to find a treatment that works. You may not even get rid of all your pain, but working with your healthcare team can help manage it so you can get back to living your best life.



See how other Pennsylvanians have found relief from pain: [geisinger.org/painrelief](https://www.geisinger.org/painrelief)

A month away from better heart health

Your heart works for you day and night, all year round. But since February is American Heart Month, it's a great time to think about your heart health habits — and ways to improve them. Try these simple, easy-to-adopt tips and advice from Geisinger cardiologist George Ruiz, MD. With just one or two a week, you'll be well on your way to a healthier heart.



Week 1

Step away from the salt. Use other seasonings and herbs as salt substitutes, steer clear of high-sodium processed and fast foods and retrain your taste buds to savor healthier options.

Opt for a flu shot. If you have heart disease, catching the flu is risky. The right vaccinations for your age — including the flu shot — help you avoid illnesses that can worsen your condition.

Take your medicine. Follow your doctor's instructions for taking your medications, and don't take any that have been prescribed to someone else.

Skip the elevator. Take the stairs instead of the elevator to build exercise into your day-to-day routine and keep your heart and muscles working.

Week 2

Move more often. Exercise for 30 minutes a day to keep your heart strong and healthy. It doesn't have to be high-intensity — it could be as simple as walking.

Limit alcohol consumption to one to two beverages a day to keep your heart, vascular system and liver working at their peak.

Manage that AFib. AFib is an abnormal heart rhythm that's linked to an increased risk of stroke. Be sure to talk to a doc if you have AFib — there are new ways to reduce the health risks with medication or devices.

Have your blood pressure checked regularly at your doctor's office. High blood pressure can damage arteries, but medications help keep it in a healthy range.

Week 3

Know your cholesterol numbers. A simple blood test can tell you your cholesterol levels. Your doctor will analyze your risk profile and decide if medication is needed to protect your arteries.

Clear the air. Quitting smoking is the best way to improve your health. You'll drive down your risk for cardiovascular disease (especially if you have chronic health conditions).

Watch your weight. Staying close to an ideal body weight reduces stress on your heart and joints and helps you stay healthier overall.

Get hooked on fish. Choose fish for lunch or dinner instead of red meat. It's lower in the saturated fats that clog arteries.

Week 4

Un-friend frying. Making the right choices in both food selection and preparation is crucial to maintaining a healthy diet. While fried foods can be delicious, they're less healthy than foods prepared in other ways, such as baking.

Tune up your snacks. Stock the kitchen with healthy choices (think fruit or nuts) to grab when you have the urge to snack. They'll fill you up while keeping your energy levels high.

Take a history lesson. Find out if heart disease runs in your family — and if so, be sure to tell your healthcare provider. This information can influence prevention measures and treatment.

Snag some shut-eye. Shoot for seven to eight hours of sleep every night, and set a specific time to go to bed. Talk to your doctor if you're having trouble falling or staying asleep.

Want more advice from Dr. Ruiz on maintaining your heart health?
Visit [geisinger.org/hearttips](https://www.geisinger.org/hearttips).



By Lyndsey Frey

Mood swing or more?

Spotting teenage depression

Life's ups and downs can make anyone moody, especially during adolescence. But when should parents be concerned?

Being a teen isn't an easy business. They're juggling a lot — family responsibilities, schoolwork and extracurriculars — all while navigating social pressures and relationships. Add in raging hormones and rapidly changing bodies, thanks to puberty, and teens' emotions can seesaw rapidly.

"Stress can be a major contributor to depression and anxiety," says Tawnya Meadows, PhD, a clinical child and adolescent psychologist at Geisinger. "With so many stressors on a teen's life, it can be difficult to tell if a child's mood swings and rebellions are typical or something more serious, like depression."

Teenage moodiness vs. depression

Depression can occur at any age, but symptoms typically appear during adolescence to early adulthood.

One way to distinguish typical mood swings from depression: Look at the severity of symptoms. Mood swings that seem out of proportion to the circumstances or abrupt changes in behavior, such as frequent crying fits, can be cause for concern. Duration is key, as well — watch for bad moods lasting two weeks or more.

If symptoms are affecting more than one area of your teen's life, such as a drop in grades as well as frequent arguments at home, that's also a sign your child needs help.

"A telltale sign your teen's moodiness could be depression is if your child starts withdrawing from family and especially friends, and stops participating in activities they once enjoyed," says Dr. Meadows. "A teen who's



sad or moody may drop one activity, but typically replaces it with another to remain active. One who is depressed most often won't."

Other warning signs of depression can include:

- Frequent sadness, anxiety or feelings of hopelessness
- Increased or persistent frustration, irritability or anger
- Lack of motivation or energy
- Gloomy moods that last for two weeks or more without improvement
- Difficulty concentrating
- Spending more time alone than usual
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Low self-esteem and thoughts of self-harming or suicide

"If you're worried about suicide, always ask your child. You're not going to plant the idea," Dr. Meadows says. "Always take seriously what your child states, and seek help immediately by reaching out to school counselors, a pediatrician or even the ER."

How can parents help?

Check in with your teen about what's going on in their lives — often. Be supportive, listen actively and keep the lines of communication open. Having an ongoing dialogue and regularly spending quality time together means you'll notice changes sooner.

As best you can, keep teenage kids involved with family events, socializing with friends and being physically active. Eating well and getting enough rest are other key ways they can maintain overall wellness.

If you think your child may be depressed, don't wait to seek help. A good place to start is with their primary care doctor. Pediatricians and family practice physicians have screening tools to identify depression and can refer your child to a behavioral health specialist, if necessary.

"There is so much overlap in symptoms between typical mood swings and depression that it can be difficult to know what's what," says Dr. Meadows. "But if you're questioning depression, the best advice is to reach out for help. Don't write anything off as typical teenage drama, because it may just be the sign your child needs help."

Mental health is part of overall health. That's why Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine is training all its medical students — regardless of the field of medicine they plan to enter — in mental health first aid. Building mental health literacy gives students key skills to manage crises.

Building a bridge to better behavioral health

The COVID pandemic accelerated a decades-long national rise in suicidal thoughts and attempts among school-age children. In response, Geisinger established the Pediatric Bridge Clinic in April.

The clinic addresses the local need for behavioral health resources by alleviating wait times. The clinic also coordinates follow-up care for young patients who come to the emergency room with a behavioral health crisis.

This extension of Geisinger's Pediatric Behavioral Health Consultation/Liaison service provides:

- Access to providers skilled in psychiatric emergency care
- Effective psychological and behavioral skills to help kids and families manage psychiatric crises
- Medication management, if needed
- Services making sure kids have a long-term follow-up care plan

Through rapid access to care, the Pediatric Bridge Clinic can shorten a young person's stay in the ER. And it could lower the chance they'll need inpatient psychiatric admission or readmission after an ER visit.

Local mental health organizations have even begun referring kids directly to the bridge clinic instead of the ER. "In this way, we have started to become a buffer between the community and the ER, furthering our initial goal of getting kiddos out quickly by preventing them from showing up in the first place," says Sam Faulkner, PhD, director of the Pediatric Bridge Clinic.

The Pediatric Bridge Clinic was funded

Because of you

in part by the Susan W. McDowell Pediatric Behavioral Health Catalyst Fund and by Project AWARE IMPACT. You can help, too: geisinger.org/becauseofyou

Hidden healthcare gems

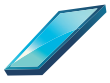
By Beth Kaszuba

Schedule a mammogram, get that colonoscopy on the calendar, book a dental cleaning — you’ve taken your usual “start-of-a-new-year” steps to safeguard your health. (You have, right?)

But there’s a good chance you’re overlooking these lesser-known ways to get healthier in the coming months.



Find the four items from page 13.



Better health? Phone it in.

You already use your phone to buy coffee, store your plane tickets, learn French and match enough striped candies to reach level 3,000. (Congrats!)

Now it's time to manage your health right from the palm of your hand.

Sign up for the MyGeisinger patient portal and download the MyChart app. In minutes, you'll be messaging your care team, scheduling appointments and renewing your prescriptions with just a few screen taps. And if you care for others, like children or aging parents, you can request to manage their care, too. You can even see test results the minute they're available.

Think of it: No more calling and waiting on hold to make appointments or renew medications. That's a lot of extra time to master French verbs and crush candy.

[geisinger.org/mygeisinger](https://www.geisinger.org/mygeisinger)



Make an advance directive.

There's no way to sugarcoat it. Making an advance directive isn't fun. You'll have to face and discuss topics related to the end of life.

But you'll be doing a favor for yourself — not to mention your loved ones.

No one wants to make tough healthcare decisions on behalf of someone else during a crisis. Take charge of your care while you're healthy and make your wishes clear.

Imagine your family's relief if the time for difficult choices arises and they're told, "You don't have to guess. We have instructions."

And once you make your advance directive, you'll have peace of mind, too.

Not sure where to start? Geisinger has an experienced team to guide you through the process. Call them at **570-214-2497** or visit [geisinger.org/advancedirectives](https://www.geisinger.org/advancedirectives) to learn more.

It's your precious health. So let us help you maximize and protect it with every tool we have available.

Search and sign up for classes and events at [events.geisinger.org](https://www.geisinger.org/events) and read our blog at [geisinger.org/balance](https://www.geisinger.org/balance). To reach a Medicare expert, visit [geisinger.org/medicare](https://www.geisinger.org/medicare) or call **866-530-8745** (TTY: 711) daily, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Take a free sleep survey.

Who hasn't wished you could get healthy just by lying flat on your back?

If you're getting enough high-quality sleep, guess what? That dream is already a reality.

Research shows that proper sleep can improve your cognitive function, productivity, immune system — even your relationships, by helping regulate your moods.

Get a handle on your slumber with Geisinger's Sleep to Be Well program. Start by visiting [geisinger.org/stbw](https://www.geisinger.org/stbw) to take a free survey and get instant feedback on how well you're sleeping and areas that can use improvement.



Ask us anything. We have answers.

You don't always have to make a clinic appointment to get answers to your healthcare questions. And you shouldn't be randomly searching the internet.

Turn to us instead. Geisinger has myriad free ways for you to learn about your health and how to maintain it. For example, we offer:

- Virtual and live events with Geisinger doctors on topics such as prostate cancer care and orthopaedic surgery options
- A revolving roster of courses to help you manage diabetes, quit smoking, reduce your fall risk and even raise your cooking game, to name just a few available classes
- A searchable blog, Balance by Geisinger, that's full of engaging posts on topics like flu prevention, kids' health, health insurance — anything you need to know about your health
- A Geisinger YouTube channel with educational videos and patient stories
- A team of Medicare advisors to help you navigate the tricky ins-and-outs of health insurance, so you get the best protection at the most affordable price

A close-up photograph of a hand reaching down to touch a red apple. The hand is positioned at the top left, with fingers gently resting on the top of the apple. Below the hand is a large pile of several other red apples, some showing yellowish-orange streaks. The background is plain white.

By Lyndsey Frey

Crunch time

What makes apples so nutritious (and delicious)?

It's no secret apples are great for your health. There's a reason for the phrase "An apple a day keeps the doctor away." But it begs the question: What makes them so nutritious?

“Eating fresh apples is a terrific source of vitamins and minerals, plus a great way to get more fiber in your diet,” says Jennifer Franceschelli-Hosterman, DO, an obesity and weight management physician at Geisinger. “Fiber is good for your digestive health, can lower cholesterol, help control blood sugar and aids in maintaining a healthy weight.”

Don’t skip the skin, either. It packs a nutritional punch because it’s often the richest layer of fiber, vitamins and minerals in an apple.

Dr. Franceschelli-Hosterman also shares this juicy tidbit: Not all apples are created equal. The more color and variety, the bigger the health benefit. So the next time you reach for an apple, look for bright colors, flesh that’s firm without bruises and has a nice aroma that assures it’s fresh.

“The varying and bright colors of Red Delicious, Fuji and Gala apples found locally, for instance, are associated with different kinds of phytonutrients, an antioxidant that helps to reduce the risk of heart disease, certain types of cancers and other chronic disease,” says Dr. Franceschelli-Hosterman.

But while nutrients can vary by type, any apple is a winner and a great addition to a healthy diet.



Not getting an apple a day? Try this easy recipe.

Apple coleslaw

Ingredients:

- 2 cups cabbage
- 1 medium carrot
- 1/2 green pepper
- 1 apple
- 5 tablespoons yogurt, low-fat
- 1 tablespoon mayonnaise, low-fat
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon dill weed

Directions

1. Wash the cabbage and cut it into fine shreds. Peel the carrot and grate it with a grater.
2. Chop half a green pepper into small pieces. Chop the apple and remove the core.
3. Stir together the cabbage, carrot, green pepper and apple in a large mixing bowl. In a separate small bowl, mix the yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon juice and dill weed to make a dressing.
4. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to mix. Add salt and pepper to taste.

The apple recipe doesn’t fall far from the tree. Try this tasty way to tame your sweet tooth: [geisinger.org/applecrumb](https://www.geisinger.org/applecrumb)



Adapted from [myplate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov)

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