hometown health

8
GOOD QUESTION
BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR DOCTOR

10
DATA TRACK
EVERYDAY WAYS TO MEDITATE

12
DOCTOR’S ORDERS
KEEP YOUR COLON HAPPY AND HEALTHY

15
CLASSES AND EVENTS
EVENTS HAPPENING NEAR YOU

FALL 2018
Modern miracle: Advances in treatment keep cancer in check

Kurt Jacobson blamed Florida. The 59-year-old Cumberland resident developed a cough in the Sunshine State, and thought it might be from something in the air. But when Jacobson, the former lead pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, returned home to Wisconsin, the cough remained.

“People kept telling me to get it checked,” Jacobson says. He did, and was diagnosed with sinusitis. Antibiotics failed to clear up the infection. At the end of February, a chest X-ray suggested Jacobson had pneumonia. He was again treated with antibiotics but never got better.

He was scheduled for a CT scan two days later.

That would depend, Dr. Al-Hattab said, on whether Jacobson’s cancer had a genetic mutation or would test positive for PD-L1. With the mutation, he’d be eligible for targeted therapy treatment that would likely keep the cancer at bay for close to three years. Without the mutation, he’d receive chemotherapy, and the response to treatment would likely not be as good.

Less than a week later, Jacobson learned he did have the mutation, called ALK, that promised to make treatment even more effective. His results have been as good as could have been hoped. In May, a chest X-ray showed his lungs were clear. The next month, a PET scan came back clear as well.

Jacobson knows that won’t always be the case. He hopes that by the time this treatment stops working, another will have been developed to replace it. Dr. Al-Hattab shares that hope.

“You can read more of Jacobson’s story and learn how his faith has impacted his journey by visiting mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health.

“By that time, I’d begun to have other symptoms,” Jacobson says. He’d searched online for his symptoms, so the doctor’s report that followed did not come as a surprise. Jacobson had stage IV non-small cell lung cancer.

The next day, he met with Eyad Al-Hattab, M.D., an oncologist with Mayo Clinic Health System.

“I was surprised,” Jacobson says. “I expected to have to go to Barron or Eau Claire.” Instead Jacobson met Dr. Al-Hattab at a community hospital in his hometown. Thanks to a partnership, Dr. Al-Hattab sees patients in the community once a month. That can be a tremendous benefit to people being treated for cancer.

“A cancer diagnosis by itself is stressful,” Dr. Al-Hattab says. “Being able to access care locally takes the stress of traveling away. And, if a patient needs to access a higher level of care, we can seamlessly refer them to Eau Claire or Rochester.”

At that first appointment, Jacobson and Dr. Al-Hattab discussed his diagnosis. “I asked him to tell me what the picture looked like for me,” Jacobson says.
Each year, around 14 million people in the United States are infected with human papillomavirus, or HPV. Most will never know it. But for some, the infection may prove deadly.

That’s because the vast majority of cervical cancer cases are caused by two strains of the virus. And cervical cancer is difficult to treat, especially if it has spread beyond the cervix.

Fortunately, there’s a vaccine to prevent HPV, which can also cause genital warts and lead to other life-threatening cancers, including vaginal, penile, anal, oral and throat.

The CDC recommends that boys and girls ages 9 through 14 receive two doses of the HPV vaccine at least six months apart. Older teens and adults up to age 26 should receive three doses of the vaccine. That’s because the immune system’s response to the vaccine is not as strong at later ages, and requires an additional dose to ensure protection.

Side effects and safety
The CDC and Food and Drug Administration monitor vaccines in the United States and have a wealth of data on the safety and effectiveness of the HPV vaccine. Potential side effects are mild and similar to those that might be experienced with other vaccines, such as soreness, swelling or redness at the vaccination site.

Less common side effects include headache, nausea, vomiting, fatigue or weakness. And though rare, the HPV vaccine causes some people to feel dizzy or faint. Sitting for 15 minutes after the injection can lower the risk of fainting.

“The bottom line is that this is a safe, effective vaccine that can prevent several types of cancer in both boys and girls,” Dr. Namachivayam says. “It's an easy way for parents to protect their kids far into the future.”
Back-to-school time means back to homework for the kids – and back to making lunches for parents. This year, take your inspiration from the fairground and try layering your kids’ favorite foods on a wooden skewer or cake pop stick. Emily Schmidt, a registered dietitian at Mayo Clinic Health System in Albert Lea, offers these ideas to get you started:

**Sandwich kabobs**
Layer cubed bread, meat, cheese and slices of lettuce. Send mustard and mayo for dipping.

**Breakfast for lunch**
Alternate small pieces of French toast or mini waffles with berries or banana slices. Include a side of syrup. (And a wet wipe.)

**Salad on a stick**
Skewer chunks of romaine lettuce, cherry tomatoes, sliced cucumbers and cheese and send a side of your child’s favorite dressing. Or try a fruit salad: melon balls, berries and banana slices with a container of yogurt for dipping.

**Dessert**
Layer marshmallows and brownie chunks for an easy sweet treat.

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**Calorie counts: New menu labeling rule in effect**
Earlier this year, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration began requiring restaurants and other establishments that have 20 or more locations disclose the number of calories contained in standard menu items. This gives consumers access to consistent calorie and nutrition information they can use to make informed decisions about what to eat and drink. Learn more and get tips for watching portion sizes while dining out.

**Finding happiness, gratitude in sobriety**
Addiction changes the brain in a way that limits your ability to feel happy. In time, and with sobriety, the brain heals and learns to send the right cues again. Gather tips on getting started on a path to create a happier you in sobriety.

**Headache medications: Get the facts**
Headaches can be pounding, piercing, throbbing or dull, but no matter what, they are always a pain. Learn how prescription medications can treat acute headaches, prevent future headaches, and/or reduce the severity and frequency of headaches.

**The importance of a cancer survivorship care plan**
Cancer care doesn’t end just because treatment is done. You may have long-term physical and emotional effects. Discover how a survivorship care plan can empower you to use resources and education as you move forward and successfully transition to life after cancer treatment.
Taking care of yourself

How can I get the most out of my relationship with my primary care team?

I think the first step is developing a good relationship with your primary care provider, whether that’s a physician, physician assistant or nurse practitioner. Your provider needs to be someone you trust and feel comfortable with so you can talk openly about your health and sensitive issues that come up. Honest information is essential to helping us play quarterback for the rest of your care team and connecting you to the right caregivers — such as a pharmacist, psychologist or dietitian — as health concerns arise. We also need to know your family health history. That information helps us make the right recommendations for things like when to start cancer screenings.

I also recommend using our electronic resources to connect with your care team and stay up-to-date on your own medical information. By signing up for Patient Online Services, you can communicate with your provider, check your test results and medical records and see your upcoming appointment schedule. It’s free and can be used 24/7, which is something I appreciate as a patient myself. I don’t have to try and reach my provider’s office during hours when I’m working, and can get the information I need when it’s most convenient for me. Another electronic option I recommend to my patients is Express Care Online.

The service offers care for 14 common conditions, including pink eye, sore throat and urinary tract infections.

Bottom line: I think getting the most out of your primary care team involves honest, open communication and knowing what resources are available — and using them. We have a great team of people who want to work together with you. A big reason most of us choose to work in primary care is because we enjoy developing relationships with our patients. It’s a privilege to be let into our patients’ lives and work together to keep them healthy.

How can I get the most out of my relationship with my specialist?

You may not see a specialist very often, so it’s important to come to your appointment prepared to make the most of the time you have together. It can be helpful to write down your concerns and questions, so you can be sure to cover them with your provider. I recommend writing your primary concerns at the top of your list, so that if you run out of time you’ll at least have had your biggest questions answered. If your list of concerns and questions is long, you may need to schedule an additional appointment.

It’s also important to be completely honest with your doctor about how your condition is affecting your life. Talking about your symptoms is the first step. But understanding how those symptoms affect your life can have an impact on our treatment recommendations. There may be medications or therapies that can help with some of the impact.

Consider bringing a friend or loved one with to your appointment. It can be helpful to have another set of ears in the room — someone who can listen, take notes and talk with you about what you heard. If you receive good news, you’ll have someone there to celebrate with. If you receive hard news, it’s nice to have someone beside you to provide support.

Finally, make sure you follow through on the recommendations your specialist provides. If your provider prescribes medication, take it. If he or she orders lab work or other tests, get them done. And if lifestyle changes are recommended, try to make them. The best medical advice is worthless if you don’t follow it.
Everyday ways to meditate

Meditation can wipe away the day’s stress, bringing with it inner peace. Try to meditate in a quiet setting while in a comfortable position such as sitting, lying down or even walking. Here are some ways you can practice meditation on your own, whenever you choose:

**BRAIN**
- **Read and reflect.** Many people report that they benefit from reading poems or sacred texts, and taking a few moments to quietly reflect on their meaning. You can also listen to sacred music, spoken words, or any music you find relaxing or inspiring. You may want to write your reflections in a journal or discuss them with a friend or spiritual leader.

**MOUTH**
- **Repeat a mantra.** You can create your own mantra, whether it’s religious or secular. Examples of religious mantras include the Lord’s Prayer in the Christian tradition, the holy name of God in Judaism, or the om mantra of Hinduism, Buddhism and other Eastern religions.

**HEART**
- **Focus your love and gratitude.** In this type of meditation, you focus your attention on a sacred image or being, weaving feelings of love, compassion and gratitude into your thoughts. You can also close your eyes and use your imagination or gaze at representations of the image.

**LUNGS**
- **Breathe deeply.** Focus all your attention on your breathing, and concentrate on feeling and listening as you inhale and exhale through your nostrils. Breathe deeply and slowly. When your attention wanders, gently return your focus to your breathing.

**ENTIRE BODY**
- **Scan your body.** Focus your attention on different parts of your body. Become aware of your body’s various sensations, whether that’s pain, tension, warmth or relaxation.

The ABCDEs of moles

Learning your ABCs the first time helped you read. Now, they could save your life. That’s because these ABCs can alert you to changes in moles that could signal melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer.

Your best chance of beating melanoma is to catch it early. If you notice any of the changes below, schedule an appointment with your provider.

| A | Asymmetrical shape: One half is unlike the other half. |
| B | Border: Notched, irregular or scalloped borders. |
| C | Color: Multiple colors, changes in color or uneven color. |
| D | Diameter: Larger than 1/4 inch. |
| E | Evolving: Change in size, shape, color or height, or new signs and symptoms, such as itchiness or bleeding. |

“[The first signs of melanoma are usually a change to an existing mole or a new skin growth,” Melanie Dixon, M.D., a dermatologist at Mayo Clinic Health System in Mankato, says. “They’re usually found on skin that has seen a lot of sun.”](mayoclinichealthsystem.org/54321)
Colon cancer screening and prevention

For years, turning 50 came with a special birthday message from your health care provider: Time to have a colonoscopy.

Now, that message will be coming a bit sooner. The American Cancer Society recently updated those screening guidelines, recommending most people get their first colonoscopy at age 45.

Watch your weight
According to the American Cancer Society, carrying extra pounds increases your risk of colon cancer, as well as cancers of the breast (in post-menopausal women), rectum, esophagus, pancreas and kidney, among others. Talk to your provider if you need help losing weight.

Limit alcohol, don't smoke
If you choose to drink alcohol, do so moderately. That means no more than one drink a day for women, two drinks a day for men. And if you smoke, quit. Your provider can offer tips or refer you to a program to help you stop.

Follow screening guidelines
It’s so important that we’re going to end where we began. One of the most important cancer prevention strategies is to follow the colon cancer screening guidelines that are right for you based on your age, risk factors and family history.

“There’s been an alarming uptick in colon cancer diagnoses in people under 50,” explains Deepti Jacob, M.D., a gastroenterologist at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. “Starting screening earlier will hopefully enable us to diagnose people earlier, when treatment is most effective.”

Whatever your age, Dr. Jacob says there are other steps you can take to avoid developing colon cancer, the third-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States.

Eat your veggies, fruits and whole grains
“The typical Western diet — high in fat, low in fiber and including lots of meats — is linked to higher colon cancer rates,” Dr. Jacob says. “Eating more fiber-rich foods provides more nutrients and helps keep you regular, which may also offer some protection against colon cancer.”

Get moving
You know exercise benefits your heart and can help you maintain your weight. It also may lower your risk of developing some types of cancer, including colon cancer. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate exercise on most days of the week.

If you’re 45 or older, talk to your provider about colon cancer screening. Visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/colonhealth for more information.
Sitting at a desk all day can be harder than it sounds.

“Too much sitting in one position puts a lot of strain on the body,” Beau Johnson, physical therapist at Mayo Clinic Health System in Holmen, says. “It can leave you feeling stiff and sore.”

It can also leave you feeling tired. (We’re talking to you, 3 p.m. slump.)

To break the cycle, try getting up to move every half hour or so. Walk to get a drink of water or touch base with a colleague about something you’d normally discuss via email. Or, try a few of the stretches and exercises below, which can be done right from the comfort of your cubicle:

**Neck stretches**

Bring your chin to your chest and hold for 15 to 30 seconds. Then, rotate your head left and then right, holding 15 to 30 seconds on each side. Finally, tilt your head to the side, leaning your ear toward your shoulder. Again, hold for 15 to 30 seconds on each side.

**Standing stretches**

While standing, put a hand on your desk or chair to stabilize yourself. Bend one leg, grab your ankle and pull it toward your buttock. Hold for 15 to 30 seconds, then repeat on the other side. Then, stand with feet hip-width apart and arms crossed across your chest. Twist to the left, then the right. Hold for 30 seconds on each side.

**Pushups and triceps dips**

Use your desk to do pushups. Do triceps dips on the arms of your office chair.

“Just a small amount of movement throughout the day can really help you stay alert and focused,” Johnson says.

**Creative Grief Workshop for Kids**

This creative arts support program is for children ages 6-12 who have experienced the death of a significant person. In this safe space, they can share stories they carry in their hearts and explore their grief through sharing and creative activities. Parents/adults will meet for discussion and support during the workshop.

- **Tuesday, Nov. 13 | 4-5:30 p.m.**
  - Meditation Room, Luther Building, hospital entrance, Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire
  - Free. Call 715-464-5086 to register by Nov. 9.

**Eat Well on a Budget**

This adult cooking class will focus on core concepts from the book Eat Well on $4/Day: Good and Cheap. Learn how to prepare tasty and budget-friendly recipes.

- **Thursday, Nov. 1 | 5:30-7:30 p.m.**
  - Menomonie High School

**Hope in the Valley**

The Primp-Pamper-Prevent event offers women a pampering retreat day. Join us to support cancer research and those who have been affected by cancer.

- **Saturday, Nov. 3 | 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**
  - Metropolis Resort, Eau Claire
  - $30. Visit hopeinthevalleyppp.org to register.

**Touchpoints — Grief Support**

If you’ve experienced the death of a significant person in your life or support someone who has, meet with Bereavement Services staff to connect with support, learn about services, and take home resources and tools for understanding grief and loss.

- **Free. Call 715-464-5086 for information.**

- **Tuesday, Oct. 2 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.**
  - Education Center, Mayo Clinic Health System in Menomonie

- **Tuesday, Nov. 6 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.**
  - Main entrance lobby, Mayo Clinic Health System in Barron

- **Tuesday, Dec. 4 | 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.**
  - Lower Level Clinic Conference Room, Mayo Clinic Health System in Bloomer and Meditation Room, Luther Building, hospital entrance, Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire

For more ideas to try, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/exercise.