



# The Hamaspik Gazette

News of NYSHA  
Member Agencies  
and General Health

JUNE '24 • ISSUE NO. 222



## GAZETTE SURVEY

The GAZETTE asks YOU:

**DO YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER HAVE COLITIS?**

**A: YES; B: NO**

Respond to: [survey@nyshainc.org](mailto:survey@nyshainc.org) • 845-655-0667



## HEALTH STAT

### CATEGORIZING COLITIS

U.S. adults with ulcerative colitis or Crohn's disease	1.3% (3 million)
Ages 45-64	40.9%
Men	1.3 Million
Woman	1.7 Million

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)



## HEALTH TIP

### CURBING COLITIS

For chronic ulcerative colitis, natural remedies can be part of the right treatment and management regimen, including probiotics, ginseng, psyllium or turmeric.

Source: Healthline

## INSIDE

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### PERFECT GROUNDS FOR DIGGING INTO FAMILY FUN

A GRAND TRIP TO NEW JERSEY'S DIGGERLAND, WHERE GUESTS (OF ALL AGES) GOT TO OPERATE OR RIDE REAL TRACTORS, WAS JUST ONE OF SEVERAL HAMASPIK-HOSTED HOLIDAY OUTINGS ACROSS GREATER NEW YORK



THE OPERATION OF ACTUAL EXCAVATORS, BACKHOES, STEAM ROLLERS AND THE LIKE AT DIGGERLAND IS THE PARK'S INNOVATION—AND A NATURAL MATCH TO THE MISSION AT HAMASPIK OF PERSON-CENTERED CARE, PUTTING THEIR NEEDS AND WANTS IN THEIR HANDS.

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## Services Provided by NYSHA MEMBER AGENCIES

### OPWDD SERVICES

#### INDIVIDUALIZED RESIDENTIAL ALTERNATIVE (IRA)

A supervised residence for individuals who need out-of-home placement.

#### INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT SERVICES (ISS)

Paid housing expenses and support for individuals who can live independently.

#### HOME FAMILY CARE (HFC)

Places individuals with developmental disabilities into private homes to care and support the individual.

#### DAY HABILITATION (DH)

A day program for adults with disabilities designed to develop skills, greater independence, community inclusion etc.

**Site Based:** Day Habilitation Service delivered in an OPWDD certified facility.

**Without Walls:** Day Habilitation Service delivered in a community-based setting.

#### COMMUNITY HABILITATION (CH)

Working one-on-one with individuals in their home or in the community to achieve valued outcomes by helping them develop daily living skills and achieve long-term goals.

#### COMMUNITY PRE VOCATIONAL

Working with individual to prepare them for paid community employment- Teaching individuals job skills and other related social skills to enhance their ability to obtain employment in the future.

#### SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT (SEMP)

Working with individual to support and provide them with necessary coaching so they can successfully engage in paid competitive employment.

#### FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES (FSS)

Support for the individual's family by reimbursing them for certain qualifying items or services, otherwise not available to them.

#### INTENSIVE BEHAVIORAL SERVICES (IBS)

Short-term interventional services for people with behavioral issues and their family members.

#### RESPIRE:

Home and Community-based respite services to provide a relief for the individual's caregiver and family.

**At-Home:** Respite services delivered in the home of the individual.

**After School:** Respite program provided every day after school hours.

**Sundays:** Respite program provided every Sunday.

**Legal Holidays:** Respite program provided on all legal holidays when school is not in session.

**Summer Break:** Full day respite program during the summer break weeks.

**Respite Night Program:** Respite services delivered in the evening hours to high-functioning individuals by taking them out in the community and doing recreational and stimulating activities with them.

**Weekend Getaways:** A weekend retreat for individuals receiving respite services.

#### SELF-DIRECTION

The Individual or their advocate takes direct responsibility to manage their services and self-direct their budget.

**Fiscal Intermediary (FI):** Assists individual or their advocate in implementing their Individual Support Agreement and to manage financial accountability and employer responsibilities.

**Brokerage:** Assisting individuals or their advocate in creating and managing their budget.

#### ARTICLE 16 CLINIC

Provides medical, diagnostic, and therapeutic services for persons with developmental disabilities. Such as: Physical therapy · occupational therapy · speech therapy · psychology · social work · psychiatry · nutrition

#### PARENTAL RETREATS

Providing: Getaways and retreats for parents of individuals with disabilities

#### EMOD, VMOD AND ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Individuals who are eligible and approved for OPWDD services who reside in non-certified home and community-based settings may qualify for AT, E-Mod, and V-Mod services funded through the OPWDD HCBS Waiver.

**Assistive Technology:** Any device, item, equipment, product, or system that is used to increase, maintain, or to improve an individual's functional capabilities and/or independence in performing activities of daily living (ADL).

**E-Mods:** Physical adaptations to an individual's home, like ramps, lifts and grab bars, needed to ensure his or her health, welfare and safety and to maximize independence and reduce need for institutionalization and/or more restrictive, costly living arrangements.

**V-Mods:** Physical adaptations to the individual's vehicle that are necessary to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of the individual or that enable the individual to function with greater independence.

### DOH

#### EARLY INTERVENTION (EI)

Provides a range of services to help young children (ages birth-3) who have a specific delay in their development.

**Group Development Model (GDM):** Provides Early Intervention services in a group-setting

**Therapy:** Provides OT, PT, SLP, Vision, Nutrition, Play, Special Education, Family Training etc. to help the child develop appropriately.

**Evaluations:** Provides full evaluations to assess child's skills and development.

**Ongoing Service Coordination (OSC):** Provides ongoing support for families of children enrolled in the Early Intervention Program.

#### NURSING HOME TRANSITION AND DIVERSION (NHTD)

Waiver services to help individuals who need nursing-home level of care safely remain home and avoid nursing home placement.

**Service Coordination (SC):** Provides coordination to the individual in gaining access to needed waiver and Medicaid State Plan services, as well as other local, state, and federally funded educational, vocational, social, and medical services.

**Community Transitional Services (CTS) / Moving Assistance (MA):** Provides moving assistance with packing and transporting individual's possessions and furnishings when he/she must be moved from an inadequate or unsafe housing situation to a viable environment.

**Environmental Modifications (EMODS):** Provides Internal and external physical adaptations to the individual's home, that are necessary to assure the health, welfare and safety of the individual and avoid institutionalization.

**Vehicle Modification (VMODS):** Modifications to a vehicle that is used to improve the individual's independence and access to services and supports in the community.

**Assistive Technology:** Provides durable medical equipment and supplies for the individual to increase their level of independence, safety, and functional limitations.

#### TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI)

Waiver services to help individuals who had a traumatic brain injury.

**Service Coordination (SC):** Provides coordination to the individual in gaining access to needed waiver and Medicaid State Plan services, as well as other local, state, and federally funded educational, vocational, social, and medical services.

**Community Transitional Services (CTS) / Moving Assistance (MA):** Provides moving assistance with packing and transporting individual's possessions and furnishings when he/she must be moved from an inadequate or unsafe housing situation to a viable environment.

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**Assistive Technology:** Provides durable medical equipment and supplies for the individual to increase their level of independence, safety, and functional limitations.

#### SOCIAL DAY PROGRAM

A comprehensive structured program providing functionally-impaired adults an array of services in a protective daytime setting. Each individual participant receives services in accordance with an Individualized Service Plan (ISP) based on a personalized assessment.

#### SENIOR DINING PROGRAM

Serves balanced nutritious meals to older New Yorkers up to five days a week in a variety of settings. Eligible to seniors age 60 and up, as well as to spouses younger than 60 and individuals with disabilities residing in eligible seniors' homes. Made possible by Orange county OFA/ NYS OFA.

### HAMASPIK CHOICE

#### MLTCP:

Providing: A managed long-term care plan (MLTCP) approved by New York State.

### HMO/INSURANCE

#### ABA

Behavior modification services for children with autism.

**Social Group:** ABA service delivered in a group setting.

**One on One:** ABA service delivered on a one-on-one basis in the child's home or community.

### HAMASPIK HOMECARE

#### LHCSA

Licensed HomeCare Services Agency.

**Home Health and Personal Care Services (HHA/PCA):** Our PCA/HHA assist individuals with personal care needs, activities of daily living, and light housekeeping. They are extensively trained, screened and supervised by a RN.

**NHTD/TBI Home & Community Support Services (HCSS):** Our HCSS Certified Aides assist those enrolled in the NHTD or TBI Medicaid Waiver Programs with oversight and supervision, in addition to personal care services.

**Nursing Services (RN):** Providing skilled observation and assessment - care planning - paraprofessional supervision - clinical monitoring and coordination - medication management - physician - ordered nursing interventions and skilled treatments.

**HHA/PCA Training:** Free PCA/HHA training and competency testing offered for those interested in a home care career.

#### CDPAS/CDPAP: CONSUMER DIRECTED PERSONAL AIDE SERVICES/PROGRAM

As an alternative to traditional homemaker, this program empowers the client to hire, train, and set the schedule of their personal assistants (PA). The PA's may be family members and can even live in the same home.

### NYS HCR

#### ACCESS TO HOME

Providing home modifications for people with physical disability.

#### RESTORE

Providing emergency repairs for low incomes homeowners over the age of 60.

### US AND NYS AGRICULTURE

#### CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

Provides federal reimbursements for the costs of nutritious meals and snacks which are served to eligible children and adults at participating daycare centers, after-school programs, or shelters.

### NYSED SERVICES

#### ACCESS VR

Assist individuals to achieve and maintain employment and to support independent living through training, education, rehabilitation, and career development.

#### PATHWAY TO EMPLOYMENT

Employment planning and support services that provide assistance for individuals to obtain, maintain or advance in competitive employment or self-employment.

### NYSHA

#### THE HAMASPIK GAZETTE

Providing: A bilingual monthly newspaper keeping the community up-to-date on all major news in medicine, public health, disability, hospitals, senior care, and general Hamaspiik news.

#### MAMTAKIM

A summer camp for individuals approved for OPWDD services.

### DOE

#### THE HAMASPIK SCHOOL

Private chartered school for kids age 5 - 10 with developmental disabilities, taking education to heart and teaching them in a way they can learn thru an individualized plan, including ABA, OT, PT, SPL and Multi-sensory hands-on learning.

### KINDERVILLE

A summer camp for individuals approved for OPWDD services. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides free meals and snacks to eligible children and teens ages 18 and under when school is not in session.

### OMH

#### SIPUK, ARTICLE 31 CLINIC

Mental Health-licensed behavioral health, Article 31 Clinic, servicing all ages.

### OMH/DOH

#### ADULT HEALTH HOME CARE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Intensive, comprehensive care management for Adults with chronic condition(s) and/or mental health issues at greater risk for relapse and/or lack of care.

#### CHILDREN HEALTH HOME CARE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Intensive, comprehensive care management for children ages 0-21 with chronic condition(s) and/or mental health issues at greater risk for relapse and/or lack of care

#### ADULT HCBS SERVICES

Behavioral Health Home and Community-Based Services for eligible adults over the age of twenty one.

**Community Psychiatric Support and Treatment:** Support and treatment to achieve functional improvement and stability, while working to attain the personal goals in a community setting.

**Family Support and Training:** Family training and support to engage the family in the treatment planning process and provide them with emotional and informational support to enhance their skills to assist in the recovery.

**Psychosocial Rehabilitation:** Assists with rehabilitating functional deficits and interpersonal or environmental hardships associated with the behavioral health condition.

**Empowerment Services-Peer Support:** Peer-delivered services designed to promote skills for coping with and managing behavioral health symptoms, while utilizing recovery-oriented principles.

**Habilitation:** Assist to acquire and improve skills such as: communication, self-care, socialization, mobility, etc. to successfully reside in home and community-based setting.

**Intensive Supported Employment:** Assists to obtain and keep competitive employment.

**Prevocational Services:** Prepares for employment, developing strengths and soft skills that contribute to employability.

**Transitional Employment:** Strengthens the work record and skills toward the goal of achieving assisted or unassisted competitive employment.

**Ongoing Supported Employment:** Ongoing follow-along support when holding down a job.

#### CHILDREN HCBS SERVICES

Behavioral Health Home and Community-Based Services for eligible children from birth to twenty one.

#### Prevocational Services:

Designed to prepare a youth (age 14 or older) to engage in paid work, volunteer work, or career exploration. Prevocational Services are not job-specific, but rather are geared toward facilitating success in any work environment.

**Caregiver Family Support and Services:** Teaches skills to caregiver/family's that will enhance their ability to care for the child/youth in the home and/or community.

**Community Self Advocacy Training and Support:** Provides family and caregivers with techniques and information not generally available so that they can better respond to the needs of the Individual related to their disabilities.

**Community Habilitation:** Provides assistance with learning social skills, daily living and health related duties by working with the individual on goal-oriented tasks.

**Supported Employment:** Designed to prepare youth with disabilities (age 14 or older) to engage in paid work.

**Planned Respite:** Provides short-term relief for the individual's family/caregiver while supporting the individual's mental health, substance use and/or health care goals.

**Day Habilitation:** Provides assistance with learning social and daily living skills in a certified agency setting.

► TRI-COUNTY CARE NEWS

# Caring Care Manager Provides Struggling Family With Wealth of Supports—Including a Great Special-Needs School for Their Son

*Over Months of Phone Calls and Personal Advocacy, Tri-County Care’s Mrs. Idy Sperber Brings the Care Home*

One of the individuals on the caseload of Tri-County Care (TCC) Care Manager Mrs. Idy Sperber is boy whose multiple conditions prompted various behavioral symptoms, making his education a challenge that regrettably drove several schools to discharge him. That was just the beginning when his family enrolled him in the Tri-County Care CCO (Care Coordination Organization).

But when Mrs. Sperber was first assigned the case, she quickly discovered that there was a lot more going on than just a schooling problem. The boy’s immigrant mother was still unfamiliar with American culture and customs, never mind English. That made navigating the system difficult in general, in addition to also having to navigate the special-needs system.

Thus, one of the first things Mom asked Mrs. Sperber was, “Can you help me with school?”

The child had just been expelled from his latest school—after a nightmarish, near-daily string of incidences in which the school would call his mother and ask that she come pick him up and take him home early because his behavior had been out of control. As such, the child was regularly coming home at 3:00 on most afternoons instead of later in the day when school ended. “I felt bad for her,” Mrs. Sperber admits.

Assessing the family situation, the Care Manager first got the lad on home-care services through Hamaspik HomeCare, one of Tri-County’s numerous community partners. “It’s the fastest thing to get,” she notes. These services provide individuals with home care aides. The situation at home was now stabilized, what with the boy (and therefore, his family) getting aides to help out around the house—always important in keeping things tidy in any

situation, and certainly with a child with behavioral issues at home.

Next, Mrs. Sperber got the boy signed up for After-School Respite (ASR) and Community Habilitation (Com Hab), two programs provided by Hamaspik of Kings County, another TCC partner. After-School Respite gives parents respite on weekday afternoons and Sundays, holidays, and summer months. Com Hab has one-on-one aides work with individuals with disabilities, acclimating them being out and about in their communities.

But all of the above is only background information for the real story here.

Having first laid a foundation of stability, Mrs. Sperber next turned her effort and heart toward getting the boy into a school—and one which would not only admit the child into their school but into their summer day camp, too.

Well, Care Manager Sperber called

one school after another. “She was initially told it’s late in the game to even apply for next year,” reports fellow Care Manager Yoseph Weingarten. “However, she did not give up. She continuously followed up with various schools and kept the family up to date... She assisted the family in the decision-making process, holding their hand along this journey.”

Finally, the Care Manager struck gold—in the form of STEP, or the Special Torah Education Program, a school for children with special needs located not too far from their house, either—and one which even accepted the child into their upcoming summer day camp program.

Now, the boy not only is going to school, despite the current school year winding down, but also has a plan—and therefore stability—for the summer, too.

Says Mrs. Sperber: “I’m happy that the family is happy!” ★

► HEALTH NEWS

# Experimental Brain Implant May Enable Communication with Thought Alone

*Device Decodes Brain’s Speech Signals to “Read” What Word Patient is Attempting to Speak*

**Durham, North Carolina** — A speech prosthetic developed by a collaborative team of Duke neuroscientists, neurosurgeons, and engineers can translate a person’s brain signals into what they’re trying to say.

Described recently in the journal *Nature Communications*, the new technology might one day help people unable to talk due to neurological disorders regain the ability to communicate through a brain-computer interface.

The device was devised by Duke researchers Gregory Cogan, Ph.D., and Jonathan Venturi, Ph.D. Their team packed an impressive 256 microscopic brain sensors onto a postage stamp-sized piece of flexible, medical-grade plastic.

Neurons just a grain of sand apart can have wildly different activity patterns when coordinating speech. That makes it necessary to distinguish signals from adjacent brain cells to help make accurate predictions on intended speech.

After fabricating the new implant, four patients were recruited to test the implants, which were placed shortly after unrelated surgeries. They then heard

a series of nonsense words, like “ava,” “kug,” or “vip,” and then spoke each one aloud. The device recorded activity from each patient’s speech motor cortex as

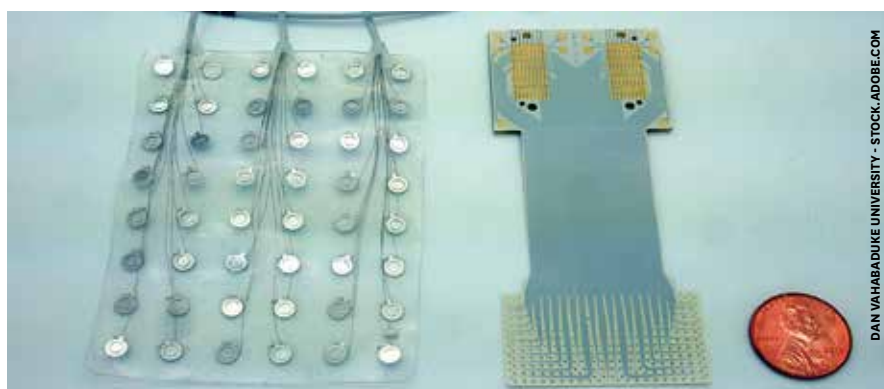
it coordinated nearly 100 muscles that move the lips, tongue, jaw, and larynx.

That neural and speech data was then fed to a machine learning algorithm to see how accurately it could predict what sound was being made, based only on the brain activity recordings.

Overall, the decoder was accurate 40 percent of the time.

That may seem like a humble test score, but it was quite impressive given that similar brain-to-speech technical feats require hours or days-worth of data to draw from.

Researchers are looking forward to making a cordless version of the device. ★



ARRAYED FOR ADVANCEMENT: DUKE’S IMPLANT “READS” THOUGHTS WITH SOME ACCURACY

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# Happening in Health Today

## STUDY FINDS THOUSANDS OF PLASTIC NANOPARTICLES IN RETAIL BOTTLED WATER

**New York, New York** — Researchers at New York City's Columbia University have found that your average liter of bottled water contains about 240,000 microscopic particles of plastic.

Most of those *nanoparticles*, or particles smaller than 100 nanometers, come off the plastic bottle itself, researchers say. (A nanometer is one billionth of a meter; for reference, an average human hair is about 70 to 75 thousand nanometers across.)

Scientists at Columbia's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory tested three popular brands of bottled water, scanning for seven common plastic types.

Researchers are now interested in learning what those plastic



THE TINIEST OF TROUBLES: PLASTIC NANOPARTICLES MIGHT LURK IN WATER BOTTLES

nanoparticles might do to the human body. Nanoplastics, like all nanoparticles, are small enough to pass through the intestines and lungs

directly into the bloodstream. Unlike natural organic matter, most plastics don't break down into harmless substances. ★

## EXPERIMENTAL MEDICAL PATCH PROTECTS LAB MICE AGAINST ZIKA DISEASE

**Brisbane, Australia** — A simple-to-apply, needle-free patch is being developed to protect people from the potentially deadly mosquito-borne Zika disease.

The prototype, which was developed by The University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, uses a *high-density microarray patch* (HD-MAP) to deliver a Zika preventative to lab mice. The patch delivers its pre-loaded medication to cells beneath the skin's surface with its thousands of tiny *microprojections*.

It works by targeting a specific protein called NS1—and in fact, according to researchers, it produces a 270-percent higher response than standard treatments.

Zika is currently a risk to people across the Pacific, Southeast Asia, India, Africa and South and Central America. The experimental patch could change current public-health efforts to combat Zika because it is effective,

pain-free, simple to apply, and easy to store.

## BREAKTHROUGH: SCIENTISTS LINK TINNITUS TO LOSS OF AUDITORY NERVE FIBERS

**Boston, Massachusetts** — Researchers at Boston's Mass Eye and Ear hospital have found a major clue into what really causes *tinnitus*, or chronic ringing in the ears. Tinnitus, which affects about one in ten adults worldwide, currently has no cure. Many individuals with tinnitus report a buzzing, humming, ringing or even roaring sound in the ears.

Researchers at the specialty clinic have discovered that tinnitus might result from underlying auditory nerve damage that can't be detected with conventional hearing tests. The work builds upon previous research into *cochlear synaptopathy*, or "hidden hearing loss," which refers to difficulty hearing in noisy environments despite showing normal results on hearing tests.

The researchers hope these

new findings into the mechanisms underlying tinnitus could lead to treatment options. The findings of the study were published recently in *Scientific Reports*.

## FUTURE GENETIC DIABETES TREATMENT MAY COME FROM FRUIT BATS

**San Francisco, California** — Blood sugar regulation is a problem for people with diabetes. Fruit bats, which eat huge amounts of sugary fruits, naturally regulate their blood sugar. By replicating the bats' regulation of blood sugar, scientists are now hoping to enable people with diabetes to regulate their blood sugar.

That's the idea at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF), where scientists are working to reverse-engineer the genetics of the nocturnal flying rodents, which controls their blood sugar no matter how much sugary fruit they eat. The UCSF team found that the fruit bat has a different pancreas and kidneys than other bats. These give it more

*insulin*, which regulates blood sugar, and better retention of *electrolytes*, which regulate muscle contraction and body hydration. Those differences are caused by different genes.

Scientists now hope to ultimately treat human diabetes at the genetic level.

## IN TEST ON ONE PARKINSON'S PATIENT, ROBOTIC SUIT LARGELY ELIMINATES WALKING "FREEZE"

**Boston, Massachusetts** — People with Parkinson's are all-too-often suddenly unable to move their feet when walking—a disease symptom known as "freezing." Commonly striking mid-stride, freezing is a primary cause of falls in people with Parkinson's. Current drugs, surgery and other treatments generally do not help.

But now, scientists at Harvard University have found that—at least in the case of one 73-year-old volunteer Parkinson's patient—a soft robotic suit that complements leg movement and muscle contraction can largely eliminate episodes of freezing.

The wearable device uses cable-driven motors and sensors worn around the waist and thighs, outlet *Healthday* reported. Without any special training, the exoskeleton allowed the patient to walk without any freezing episodes indoors and with only occasional episodes outdoors, the outlet also noted.

## MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY MIGHT BE TREATABLE WITH EXISTING HEART MEDS

**Rochester, New York** — Promising news for people with muscular dystrophy out of upstate New York: Tests on laboratory mice at the University of Rochester Medical Center suggest that existing medications for heart problems may be able to treat Myotonic dystrophy type 1 (DM1), the most common form of muscular dystrophy (MD).

Myotonic dystrophy type 1 occurs when genetic defects affect *calcium channel receptors*, which drive muscle movement. In tests, existing heart drugs called *calcium channel blockers*, like Verapamil, improved symptoms in lab mice that had been genetically altered to have that type of MD.

People with DM1 suffer from muscle weakness and prolonged muscle tension, which makes it difficult to relax muscles after use. Muscle problems caused by DM1 affect the eyes, heart and brain, eventually leading to problems walking, swallowing and breathing. ★

# Take Time to Unwind

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● ► HAMASPIK NEWS

# Not Passing Up on Passover Education

*Hamaspik Rockland's Shaarei Binah Yeshivah Program for Young Men Teaches Holiday the Experiential Way*



**GRINDING:** A STUDENT'S MANUAL HANDIWORK TURNS WHEAT KERNELS INTO FRESH FLOUR



**ROLLING:** HAMASPIK ROCKLAND'S MEN'S DAY HAB GETS RIGHT TO WORK MAKING THAT MATZAH



**SCORING:** THIS DEVICE KEEPS MATZOS FLAT



**BAKING:** PLACING DOUGH IN THE HOT OVEN



**TIMING:** MATZOS TAKE AN 18-MINUTE MAX



**PACKING:** FINISHED PRODUCTS READY TO GO

There's no teacher like experience, any veteran educator—or veteran of any career—will tell you.

That fact is exactly why the world of education includes what's known as *experiential education*—the discipline, honed by centuries of traditional apprenticeship, of mastering a subject not by book study of it but by literally getting your hands on it.

So to give his “boys” a positively impactful Passover education, Chesky Szabovits brought on the experiences.

Mr. Szabovits is the effective, energetic Director of Yeshivah Shaarei Binah, a program run by Hamaspik of Rockland County that educates and otherwise stimulates its participating young men from the community with the highest levels of function. And so when Passover rolled around, Director Szabovits rolled out the hands-on Passover curriculum.

First, the program bought brand-new Haggadahs for the young men to study. (The Haggadah is the traditional collection of sacred readings around which the ritual Passover Seder meal is constructed.)

The students got right into it in the weeks before Pesach, with instructor

Mr. Pinchos Eliezer “Lazer” Friedman guiding them through it. Each day, they reviewed parts of the Haggadah so that they would be familiar with the storied text come Seder night, as they indeed were.

Of equal excitement was the fact that in the run-up to Passover, the students also performed the *Sereifas Chalah* ritual, in which a small quantity of dough is burned.

But most exciting of all was the “matzah bakery” that Shaarei Binah ran on its premises for some time before Pesach. Matzah, of course, is the round flatbread at the center of the Seder and indeed the Passover holiday itself.

Centered around the oven on the premises, the replica bakery was also decorated thusly with reams of brown paper lain out all across the floor for quality-control and hygiene purposes, just like a real matzah bakery. The students had lots of fun setting that out.

Making it all the more authentic was the inclusion of a hand-powered wheat grinder, with which the students ground actual kernels of dry and inspected wheat. That turned into the flour needed to make matzah—after being mixed meticulously, also

by hand, with pure spring water to be turned into dough and then baked in under 18 minutes.

But not only did the students of Yeshivah Shaarei Binah experientially learn about matzah (and Passover as a whole) by actually participating in the making of matzah, but so did all of Hamaspik of Rockland County's Day Services programs, too.

An e-mail invite went from Shaarei Binah to those programs, and, Mr. Szabovits reports, they all replied that they were excited to do it.

Shaarei Binah's Matzah Bakery program took place two weeks before the holiday, running for one full consecutive week.

The first batch of matzos was produced by the Shaarei Binah students themselves.

On the following day, Hamaspik of Rockland County's Boys After-School Respite (ASR) program rolled in to roll in—make that, roll out—the dough. Standing around paper-covered tables all decked out in gloves, aprons and hair-protecting hats, they wielded wooden rolling pins to turn lumps of freshly-prepared dough into flat cakes, which were then gingerly transferred into the oven for quick baking at high temperature.

That ritual was repeated the next two days by the participants of the Women's Day Habilitation (Day Hab) and Girls After-School Respite (ASR) programs.

Bonanza, Hamaspik Rockland's program for very-high-function young women in the community, also attended the Matzah Bakery, and finally, the Hamaspik of Rockland County Men's Day Hab program.

The high-functioning Day Hab program, long directed by Hamaspik's very own Pinchos Knopfler, arrived with about 30 gentlemen. Individuals in the Day Hab's lowest-function program attended the next day, participating by virtue of simply being present—experiencing just being there.

Before Passover, Shaya, a beloved and popular young man and student at Shaarei Binah, recited the “Kol Chamirah” prayer and presided over the customary burning of the bread.

In the end, everyone at Shaarei Binah—and, for that matter, any beneficiary of Hamaspik of Rockland County's day programs—benefited from the Matzah Bakery project, as it drove home what matzah, and the entire holiday as a whole, is for them and the entire community. ★

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## Happenings around Hamaspik

# Discovering Bee Mindful

## *Hamaspik of Kings County has a meeting of minds at the Cohen Children's Medical Center*

A hospital visit can be scary for any child, even more so for a child with a silent disability. But one hospital is changing that.

Hamaspik of Kings County recently visited Cohen Children's Medical Center Northwell Health, part of Long Island Jewish Medical Center. Hamaspik is always looking for additional ways to service their clients, and they wanted to explore the hospital's services and introduce them to Hamaspik's expansive array of services in the community.

The visit included meetings with the NICU and Bee Mindful teams. The highly successful Bee Mindful program uses innovative approaches to support children with disabilities.

"The program was created after a non-verbal teenager with autism was transferred to the hospital," relates Mrs. Surie Morgenstern, manager of Hamaspik's Pillar Support. "The girl was clearly terrified, and the staff struggled to connect with her and give her treatment.

"Once she was given a communication device, and was able to express herself, everything changed."

In the wake of this experience, the Bee Mindful program was created, featuring several key components. Upon admission, a child with disabilities receives a "Bee Pass" pass, which reduces wait time. If the child is admitted, a bee is put on the door of his room, alerting the medical staff to his unique needs.

Once the parent shares the child's diagnosis and needs, this information is shared among staff through files, eliminating repetitive questioning.

Children with neurodiversity are often overwhelmed by the constant noise and bright lights of a hospital. Bee Mindful allows the children to wait for their appointments in one of their beautiful sensory rooms.

"We were all blown away by the sensory room," says Mrs. Dini Freund, director of intake. "It's such a warm, inviting place. There's soft lighting, gentle music, beanbags, plush toys,

and various calming activities.

"In addition, there's a cart with a variety of sensory toys that can be brought into any room if a child needs something to hold or squeeze."

Another element of the program was staff training. They learned how children with ASD or ADHD or other disabilities react to stressful situations and how you can put them at ease and make them comfortable. As an organization committed to ensure that employees are constantly learning the newest methods and interventions, this impressed the Hamaspik staff.

"The staff works closely with parents," says Mrs. Morgenstern. "If a child needs two different procedures, they try to schedule them on the same day.

"In fact, if a child needs to be sedated for a test, they invite the parent into the room and allow them to give the child a haircut or cut their nails — activities that are overwhelming for some children with disabilities — while the child is in a sedated state.

"This shows such a deep awareness of what it's like to live with a child with neurodiversity. As an organization which constantly focuses on what would be best for our clients, we particularly appreciated this."

The Bee Mindful program has greatly eased the experience of children who use the medical center. In fact, it's been so successful that the team has been invited to other hospitals to teach them how to implement the program.

It's not only disabilities that the staff is sensitive to. "This top-rated hospital is aware of cultural nuances," notes Mrs. Morgenstern. "They're eager to learn about our community, and ensure that our needs are met and our sensitivities respected."

"We came out of the meeting mutually impressed with the dedication we each have to every type of disability," adds Mrs. Freund. "We're looking forward to working together with them." ★

## On a Roll in Kings County



**RECREATION AND STIMULATION:** A YOUNG MAN AT HAMASPIK OF KINGS COUNTY'S MEN'S DAY HAB PROGRAM GETTING SOME EXERCISE (L) AND PROUDLY DISPLAYING HIS ART (R)



**A BUMP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:** THE GENTLEMEN OF THE DAY HAB ENJOY A DAY AT A LOCAL FAMILY FUN CENTER, WHERE BUMPER CARS PUT THEM RIGHT IN THE MAINSTREAM



● ► HAMASPIK NEWS | HAPPENINGS AROUND HAMASPIK

# An Agency of Fully-abled Good Citizens

*Hamaspik Rockland Men's Day Hab Visits Spring Valley Police Station, Meet Chief Rich Oleszczuk*

“We try once a year, or when we have a chance, to visit our officials who care about the community, to show our appreciation,” explains Pinchos Knopfler, longtime devoted Manager—explaining why the program he runs, the Hamaspik of Rockland County Men's Day Habilitation (Day Hab), recently visited the Village of Spring Valley Police Department.

As always, before popping into SVPD HQ at 200 N. Main St, Mr. Knopfler called ahead to see if a visit was feasible. As usual, it was. “They're very nice to us,” he says. “When our population comes, they show care and concern.”

Hamaspik has a long and healthy relationship with the Spring Valley Police Department, it turns out. “They look out for us,” says Mr. Knopfler. “They come when needed,” he says, such as in cases of fire alarms going off.

Upon arriving, Hamaspik asked if

Chief Rich Oleszczuk was available—and the police leader graciously came down to talk to the gentlemen.

“We really appreciate Hamaspik taking the time to visit our Police Department and recognize the work that our police officers do,” Chief Oleszczuk later told the *Gazette*. “We certainly value other organizations who are in the ‘help’ business.”

With many public servants having a place in their hearts for special needs due to a family member affected by disability, would that be true for himself? “Yes,” the chief candidly replies. “A few of our police officers have people with special needs in their families, including myself.”

“People with special needs have a special place in our hearts,” he adds, “and we take every measure possible to treat them with the dignity and respect that they deserve.”

And so does Hamaspik. ★

# Putting Indestructibility on the Table

*In preventing future home-furniture damage, Hamaspik Orange takes the “If you can't fix it, build it” route*

Bed frames and blankets, dishes and dryers, food and furniture and so on are precisely and indistinguishably what you'd find in the best-made homes of Kings, Orange or Rockland County.

Which explains why the dining room of Hamaspik of Orange County's Dinev Shvesterheim residence, like every Hamaspik residence, featured a large polished wooden table.

When it broke, Hamaspik of Orange County Maintenance Manager Mr. Solomon Rabi promptly saw to its repair. When it broke again, a second repair was conducted.

Because even that was a stopgap measure, a new table was considered. But, being a commonsensical problem-solver in the employ of a commonsensical problem-solving agency, Mr. Rabi simply custom-built a brand-new table himself.

Knowing what it was intended for and who exactly would be putting it through its paces, Mr. Rabi and

maintenance assistant Julio sallied forth to Home Depot. Their shopping list included extra-thick genuine wood, maximum-weight metal brackets and industrial-strength bolts.

Back at Hamaspik, a dining room table was cut, drilled, sanded, assembled, and stained that was indistinguishable from the original. Built with disability in mind, it unobtrusively seats people who use wheelchairs. Defying its builders' inexperience, it's also impressively pro-made-looking.

So, how long did it take them to manufacture it? Two-three days, reveals Mr. Rabi. Did he have any experience making tables? “Nope!” he affably admits—although he says he built his own bookshelves at home.

Are you thinking of going into the furniture line? Solomon Rabi heartily laughs.

But now, there's a dining room table at the Dinev Shvesterheim that can handle a good pounding with nary a creak. ★

## Hail to the Chief



FEELING BLUE (IN THE BEST OF WAYS): CHIEF OLESZCZUK (C) ENJOYING THE MOMENT WITH HIS APPRECIATIVE VISITORS FROM HAMASPIK ROCKLAND'S MEN'S DAY HAB PROGRAM

## Say “Cheese”!



A TASTE OF FUN: THE GENTLEMEN OF HAMASPIK ROCKLAND'S MEN'S DAY HAB TRY THEIR HANDS AT THE GAMES AT A LOCAL CHUCK E. CHEESE, AND EVEN ENJOY A SELF-PORTRAIT

## A Platform for Durability



FURNITURE WITH ALL THE FIXINGS: THE NEW TABLE STANDS PROUD IN THE CENTER OF THE DINEV GROUP HOME'S DINING ROOM, AND YOU'D NEVER KNOW IT WAS BUILT IN-HOUSE

# The Autism Update

News and developments from the world of research and advocacy

## IN NEW RESEARCH, AI ANALYZES AUTISM AT CELLULAR LEVEL WITH EYE ON NEW GENE-BASED THERAPIES

**San Francisco, California** — Groundbreaking analysis of the cells and proteins involved in autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has given researchers unprecedented understanding of how the disorder works, thanks to work by the University of California at San Francisco (USCF).

The research blended several current biotechnologies, including stem cells, the CRISPR genetic tool, and Google's new AlphaFold 2 AI program that predicts the behavior of proteins. Researchers also used virus-analyzing software to create a map of autism proteins' interactions.

The result? The discovery of some 1,000 proteins—and over 1,800 interactions between those proteins—produced by genes associated with autism. About 90 percent of those interactions were previously unknown to science.

The findings could one day lead to new drugs for patients, researchers said.

## TREATING THE PANCREAS MAY HELP PRESCHOOLERS WITH AUTISM

**Houston, Texas** — The irritability, hyperactivity and other behaviors exhibited by children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) might be linked to low-protein diets and the effect of protein deficiency on the brain. A new trial suggests that a special pancreatic enzyme supplement might correct the problem, easing problem behaviors.

Children with ASD often show strong preferences for carbohydrate-rich food like pasta and bread, while resisting protein-rich fare. But the amino acids needed to produce neurotransmitters can only be obtained from protein.

Now, while perhaps counterintuitive, researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston believe that treating the pancreas of a child with autism could help ease problematic behaviors in children with ASD.

The key here, they say, is the link between dietary protein intake and crucial brain neurotransmitter chemicals, such as serotonin and dopamine. When those neurotransmitters aren't working as they should, that can affect behavior.

## HOPE, QUESTIONS RAISED BY NEW TABLET-BASED TOOLS TO SPOT AUTISM

**Durham, North Carolina** — A team of scientists at Duke University recently debuted a tablet-based app to identify signs of autism in a child in just ten minutes.

The app, called SenseToKnow, uses the tablet's camera to monitor children as they watch short movies and to track their motor skills during a bubble-popping video game.

It then uses artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze their eye movements, blinks and other physical responses.

SenseToKnow correctly identifies children with autism (a measure called *sensitivity*) 87.8 percent of the time and correctly returns negative results (referred to as *specificity*) 80.8 percent of the time.

However, the most pressing questions critics raise is whether these tools can actually solve the problem they promise to address: delays in autism diagnosis and care.

Also a question is whether these devices should be deployed: in clinical

settings or at-home screenings.

## CLUES TO ORIGINS OF AUTISM FOUND IN BRAIN'S FLUID CAVITIES

**Chapel Hill, North Carolina** — It's too early to say that problems in the brain's "perivascular" spaces cause autism, but it seems to be an early marker for the condition, a team from the University of North Carolina (UNC) reports.

Those fluid-filled spaces around the brain's blood vessels need proper waste "clearance" every few hours. When that fails to happen, a baby's risk for autism appears to rise, the new research shows.

"Our findings were striking, given that neuro-radiologists typically view enlarged perivascular spaces as a sign of neuro-degeneration in adults, but this study reported it in toddlers," noted study co-author Dea Garic, a research assistant professor in UNC's department of psychiatry.

"This is an important aspect of brain development in the first years of life that should be monitored," Garic added in a university news release.

## CELL TRANSPLANT THERAPY FOR EPILEPSY SHOWS EARLY PROMISE

**San Francisco, California** — A Calif.-based company called Neurona has been working for the past decade on cell transplant therapy to treat neurological disorders.

The premise is based on inserting *inhibitory interneurons* into patients' nervous systems to treat the overexcited circuits that can give rise to conditions like epilepsy or Alzheimer's disease.

Last year, the company began injecting its inhibitory cells, now called NRTX-1001, into people's brains as part of a clinical trial on epilepsy. The trial's preliminary results have been striking, say some observers in the field: The first two participants, who had each been averaging more than a dozen seizures per month, saw a more than 90 percent reduction in the three months after being treated. If those results hold up, NRTX-1001 could be an important new treatment option for people with severe epilepsy. ★

## PENN.'S UPMC CHILDREN'S USES ADAPTIVE CARE TEAM APPROACH FOR SPECIAL-NEEDS PATIENTS



IT TAKES A TEAM TO CARE FOR A SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILD: STAFF KNOW PATIENTS AHEAD OF TIME UNDER THE "ADAPTIVE CARE" METHOD

**Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania** — Children with significant behavioral and developmental disabilities, primarily those with autism, can now expect a warm and well-planned welcome at UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, thanks to that facility's new Adaptive Care team.

A recently article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* described

the work of the new team, which has a specialist interview parents and caregivers of children with adverse behaviors before said patient's arrival—allowing the hospital, and all involved care staff, to prep the areas to be used with the furniture or configurations (or lack thereof) to which the patient will react positively.

The interview also allows doctors, nurses, and even anesthesiologists to know what the patient's proclivities are before arrival, the best to treat him or her.

According to the report, Both the Children's Hospital of Colorado and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center employ similar programs. ★



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# Digging for Pesach Family-Fun Gold at Diggerland—and Beyond

*Hamaspik Agencies Across New York Bring Holiday Spirit to Community*

Pesach (Passover) was decidedly in the air this year, with the weather cooperating most perfectly, too.

Ask any of the hundreds of venue operators throughout the Tri-State Area—who surely have a Jewish calendar handy and know where to find “Passover”—what the holiday means to them, and they’ll get right down to business. From local bowling alleys to huge state parks and, of course, the enormous theme parks and zoos that only seem to get bigger, better and more stimulating with each passing year, Passover time means guest surge time for these family-friendly locations—and that means one thing: sizable and family-heavy Jewish crowds.

Part and parcel of those surging crowds and the values they represent were the contingents of Hamaspik’s thousands of individuals of all ages with special needs—and their beloved parents and siblings—converging on several venues this past Passover.

Perhaps most symbolic and



**DIGGING IN:** A FATHER-AND-SON TEAM TRIES ITS HANDS AT CONTROLLING A REAL EXCAVATOR

impressive of those was the Hamaspik turnout again this year at the Nickelodeon Universe indoor theme park at the American Dream mall. Hamaspik of Kings County, under the leadership of Executive Director Hershel Wertheimer, had once again exclusively and privately rented the entire venue for the day—with the resulting gala outing being an

impressive, iridescent and effervescent feast of kosher stimulation, marked by waves of fathers, mothers and children from across the Orthodox Jewish spectrum filling up that park’s lines for every ride.

In a way, spiritually invoking the symbolism and meaning of the Passover holiday, it was a true “Exodus from Egypt” and “Ingathering of the Exiles” all in one—symbolically complete with the historical hustle and bustle of the original Exodus but in the finest and happiest sense—as all nuances and stripes of the diverse Jewish community were represented in person, and in the most joyous of settings.

## VOUCHERS FOR PESACH FUN, AND A CHOL HAMOED TO REMEMBER!

Besides bringing crowds of children and their families to the fun, Hamaspik of Orange County this year also elected instead to bring the fun to them. This they accomplished by delivering pre-loaded vouchers to the private homes of every individual supported by Hamaspik. The gift-packaged, elegantly-presented vouchers, delivered across Orange County, were spendable, at each recipient’s convenience, at any of the selected local retailers—where individuals could collect their traditional Passover “Afikoman” prizes of their choice. But of equal value, Hamaspik of Orange also brought its supported individuals to the fun. That they accomplished by having all those beloved individuals first converge at Kiryas Joel’s central shopping center at 51 Forest Rd.—where they then boarded an exciting balloon-and-banner-decorated double-decker tour bus for an

exciting excursion about town, en route to a local fair right in town. There, at 7 Zupnick Drive in the heart of the Kiryas Joel village, the Hamaspik “tourists” disembarked to enjoy a full day of carnival rides for one and all—with the individuals even getting toy double-decker buses emblazoned with the Hamaspik logo. Parental reaction was wonderful: As one happy mother put it, “I didn’t have to wake up my child early and drag him to the bus for a long trip!” Other parents reported the convenience of multi-day carnival attendance on any its three available days, what with unused vouchers not expiring. “It was a very good mix,” coordinator Mrs. C. M. Landau tells the *Gazette*. “One voucher was for the carnival, and the others were for a shopping spree at one of six stores,” so that families could choose the activity or entertainment that suited them best.

## DIGGING IN

Children of all ages, accompanied by fathers holding them by the hands and mothers pushing strollers, were seen strolling, trotting and otherwise making their way around the vast grounds of Diggerland, America’s largest (and possibly only) construction-themed amusement park.

Which child (and more than one adult) hasn’t wanted to get behind the controls of a real-life bulldozer, steam shovel or other bright yellow construction vehicle? The ubiquitous metal monsters, synonymous with construction sites everywhere, have always attracted the attention of and imagination the young and young at heart for a variety of reasons.

Fortunately, the folks behind Diggerland were paying attention. (In fact, a Diggerland employee later tells the *Gazette*, the park owners’ initial ownership of a construction company is what prompted them to convert what is pretty much everyone’s “childish” dream into a hands-on reality.)

That’s because, at the sprawling venue in West Berlin, New Jersey, over 100 repurposed backhoes, boom lifts, dump trucks, excavators, farm tractors, scissor lifts, skid steer loaders, steam rollers and other construction vehicles have been mechanically rendered completely safe for young hands and feet.

And this past Passover, thousands of

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# Pesach Family-Fun

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

those hands and feet gripped the controls and worked the pedals of the massive machines, moving them around “race courses,” navigating “bowling alley” challenges and, yes, digging in the sand.

In the center of the park stood a towering ropes course, with its three stories-plus of harnessed challenges inviting hundreds of children to safely step across its numerous pathways through the open sky.

Speaking of sky, plenty of park-goers had plenty of fun spinning around high in the air on the “Spin Dizzy,” a giant excavator whose huge shovel had been outfitted with roller coaster-style seats. With some 12 riders riding at once, the mechanical beast swung its yellow arm in circles well above the ground, a feast of fun that the vehicle’s makers probably hadn’t had in mind in manufacturing it. There was also the Greased Beast, a huge dump truck whose “dump body,” or empty rear container, is outfitted with seats—giving riders the thrill of precariously but safely tilting forward as that container’s front end rose way up to



**UP WITH FUN!** THE ROCK WALL AND ROPES COURSE DREW DOZENS THROUGH THE DAY

“dump” its “contents.”

But drawing some of the longest lines of all was the park’s Soaring Eagle Zipline, a two-person seat that pulls riders back and up to the top of a 130-foot tower—then sends them flying forth down a 700-foot line across much of the park.

The event took place on the first day



**NEW HEIGHTS:** A REPURPOSED GIANT FORKLIFT, SLIDES AMUSED GUESTS OF ALL AGES

of Chol Hamoed, the Passover holiday’s four “Intermediate Days,” which fell this year on a lovely Thursday. The event was hosted by Hamaspik of Rockland County.

They and their families arrived en masse via chartered school buses from the Rockland County village of New Square and other locations around

Monsey, as well as via private cars and minivans.

The busy event was capably manned throughout by several capable Hamaspik of Rockland County staff members. Those staff members were supported by several additional employees who helped man the front gate and ensure that all arrivals received wristbands granting them full-day access to the park.

A good number of additional staff in yellow reflective vests was out and about in force, along with a marked safety vehicle and ambulance, too, in case of any emergency. Those yellow-vested staff members were seen everywhere throughout the park: Returning straggling children to grateful parents, greeting arriving cars at the front gate, and generally ensuring overall safety and orderliness across the park throughout the day.

Light snacks and drinks were amply served at an indoor picnic area.

Guests congregated just outside the park’s main exit as the sun slowly set. There, buses departed to take them back home. It was the end of a long day filled with fun, not to mention dreams come true of being a construction worker for a day.

And which child doesn’t want that? ★

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# For Girls With Special Needs, New Grounds for the Greatest Summer

*Two Heated Outdoor Pools, Plus Building Filled with Activity Rooms, Keep the Sun Always Shining at Camp Mamtakim*

Not that the satisfied Mommies sending their precious daughters with special needs to Camp Mamtakim need another reason to do so.

But Hamaspik, which runs that one-of-a-kind six-week New York State-funded Respite program, is never one to be satisfied with “good enough.”

Which is why, new for this summer season, Camp Mamtakim—on the sprawling grounds of the Hamaspik Resort in upstate Rock Hill, New York—now boasts a huge outdoor swimming pool, plus a huge wading pool, with one side tapering to ground-level “beach entry,” for the easiest entry by little feet. Both are heated, too.

Camp Mamtakim is located at a former hotel and ballroom property now owned by the New York State Hamaspik Association (NYSHA), Hamaspik’s parent body.

It’s already a huge and sprawling property in its own right. But now, it has

even better grounds for a great summer for the girls and young women of Camp Mamtakim. The great additions are also complemented with a brand-new pool house complete with state-of-the-art showers and restrooms—and all surrounded with an extra-high fence for maximum privacy.

But that’s not all! A huge new building now finished on the Resort’s grounds puts 25,000 square feet of recreational activity space at the disposal of Camp Mamtakim.

As for why the Resort needed two new pools? Well, ask anyone who’s ever run a summer camp that’s had to

contend with a pool that’s too small for that many campers. But the real reason is simply that there’s nothing like an outdoor swim in the warm seasonal atmosphere. “Everyone,” says Mamtakim Director Shloime Kornbluh, “wants to benefit from the sun!” ★



**PARK IT HERE:** CAMP MAMTAKIM’S SPRAWLING NEW PLAYGROUND IS READY FOR THIS SUMMER



**ON THE UPSWING:** THE PARK’S NEW SWINGS

# Public Health and Policy News

## NEW ZEALAND NOW DROPPING ITS WORLD-LEADING TOBACCO BAN

**Wellington, New Zealand** — New Zealand made history last year by passing a law banning tobacco sales for future generations.

Now, it's making history again—by repealing that law.

Set to take effect in July 2024, the toughest anti-tobacco rules in the world would have banned sales to those born after Jan. 1, 2009.

It also would have cut nicotine content in smoked tobacco products and reduced the number of tobacco retailers by more than 90 percent.

However, the current coalition government, which had not enacted the law, has now repealed it.

Associate Health Minister Casey Costello said the coalition government was committed to reducing smoking, but was taking a different regulatory approach to discourage the habit and reduce the harm it caused.

But the decision has also drawn flak because of fears it could have a greater impact on the country's indigenous Maori and Pasifika populations, groups with higher smoking rates.

## COMMON CARCINOGENIC CHEMICAL TO BE BANNED NOW BY EPA

**Washington, D.C.** — *Trichloroethylene* (TCE) is a chemical commonly used in retail degreasing and cleaning products. However, now the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing a ban on most usage of the chemical—due to its association with cancer.

The EPA proposal to ban most uses of it is in response to President Joe Biden's Cancer Moonshot disease-eradication effort. The ban, if ratified, would prohibit most uses of TCE within one year. Limited remaining commercial and industrial uses would be phased out over a longer period and would require stringent worker protections.

"Today, EPA is taking a vital step in our efforts to ... protect people from cancer and other serious health risks," said EPA Deputy Administrator Janet McCabe in a press release. "The science is loud and clear on TCE. It is a dangerous toxic chemical."

## STUDY FINDS RENTERS MAY AGE FASTER THAN HOMEOWNERS

**Adelaide, Australia** — Owning your own home is better for your health, at least mentally or morale-wise, the notion goes. But now, according to joint research by the University of Adelaide (Australia) and England's University of Essex, it may be better for your physical lifespan, too.

A study by the two schools finds

evidence that renting may age a person faster than home-owning. To measure biological aging, researchers measured DNA methylation, or chemical changes to DNA, in both renters and homeowners. While the difference in aging came down to a fraction of a year, it was greater than the effects of being unemployed or being a former smoker.

In addition, the link was specifically seen among people who rented privately—not those in public housing. "We believe that the typically poorer physical conditions in privately-rented housing is likely one factor," said lead researcher Amy Clair of the University of Adelaide.

## MEDICAL DEBT IN NEW YORK REMOVED FROM CREDIT REPORTS

**Albany, New York** — Under a bill signed into law by Gov. Kathy Hochul, credit reports for New York residents will no longer contain any unpaid medical debt.

The new law, which makes New York the second state after Colorado to enact such a law, prohibits credit agencies from collecting information about or reporting medical debt. The law also bans New York hospitals and health care providers from reporting such debt to the agencies.

A federal measure is currently being considered by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

"Medical debt is such a vicious cycle," said Gov. Hochul, at the bill-signing ceremony. "It truly hits low-income earners, but it forces them to stay low-income earners because they can never get out from under it."

The new law took effect immediately. However, it doesn't apply to debt charged to credit cards unless the card was issued specifically for health services.

## FOUR COMMON FOOD ADDITIVES BANNED BY CALIFORNIA



**RELIEF:** CREDIT REPORTS IN NEW YORK NOW OMIT ANY MEDICAL DEBT UNDER A NEW LAW

**Sacramento, California** — Under a law recently signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom, California has become the first U.S. state to ban red dye No. 3, potassium bromate, brominated vegetable oil and propylparaben.

The four chemicals, while currently approved for usage by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), are commonly added to food items as diverse as orange soda, hamburger rolls and candies. They are also currently banned by the European Union (EU), where—like California, too, now—they are believed to be associated with various health issues.

Although the law only bans the additives in California, it's possible the chemicals could be removed from products across the country that are to be sold in California.

According to State Assembly members Jesse Gabriel and Buffy Wicks, who introduced the bill, the law won't eliminate the foods using the additives, but will require manufacturers to make minor changes to ingredients.

## DRUG-MANUFACTURING INSPECTIONS BY FDA STILL FAR BELOW PRE-PANDEMIC LEVELS

**Washington, D.C.** — A report based on extensive research by outlet *Health Affairs* finds that inspections of drugs by the FDA dropped dramatically in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), reported *Health Affairs*, has full-time officers who regularly inspect drug-manufacturing facilities in foreign countries. According to the report, "As of 2019, more than two-thirds of the establishments manufacturing active ingredients for pharmaceuticals sold in the U.S. were located outside its borders. India, China, and Italy are the leading foreign producers of these active ingredients."

However, according to the report, "By 2022, numbers of inspections remained well below prepandemic levels, with a 79 percent decrease in foreign inspections and a 35 percent decline in domestic inspections compared with 2019." ★



**RENTING BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH:** AUSTRALIAN RESEARCHERS FOUND THAT PEOPLE RENTING PRIVATE HOMES HAD SLIGHTLY SHORTER OVERALL AVERAGE LIFESPANS THAN PEOPLE OWNING

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# In the Know

*Food poisoning*, which in plain English translates to eating something that makes you sick, is more common than you'd think.

According to the federal U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated one in six Americans (or 48 million people) get sick due to food poisoning every year in America.

What's more, reports the CDC, some 128,000 have to go to the hospital every year, and some 3,000 fatalities due to foodborne diseases—a.k.a. food poisoning—also annually occur.

So let's take a look at what exactly food poisoning is—and how we can keep ourselves and our loved ones from becoming the wrong kinds of statistics.

## DEFINITIONS AND CAUSES

Food poisoning, or foodborne diseases, is caused by bacteria or viruses found in food, says the CDC. Cases of food poisoning often look like the stomach flu (gastroenteritis), with many people with mild cases believing they merely have the stomach flu or a virus.

But food poisoning is defined by the bacteria or virus in your food getting into your stomach after you eat the food—and then taking up residence in your digestive tract, where it starts growing, making its host (that's you) sick due to infection.

Alternatively, the bacteria that rode into your stomach on your food can begin producing a toxin or poison inside you once it's in your stomach, with that toxin or poison—not the bacteria itself—making its host sick.

While there are many types of bacteria and viruses which can cause food poisoning, here are the most common ones that generally define the condition:

### *Salmonella and campylobacter*

These two common and distinct strains of bacteria may be found in *raw* or *undercooked* meat, poultry, eggs, as well as on some raw fruits and vegetables. More commonly, they tend to proliferate in milk and other dairy products that are not *pasteurized*—meaning, heated to a very high temperature to kill any bacteria. (That's why you'll see “pasteurized” on your bottles of milk that you regularly buy at the grocery. Milk has been pasteurized under the law for nearly a century now. Louis Pasteur, 1822-1895 was a French scientist who discovered in 1864 that you could better preserve wine by first heating it; the technique was named after him. In 1910, New York City Commissioner of Health Ernst Lederle ordered the pasteurization of fresh cow's milk in the city, resulting in drastically fewer milk-linked illnesses.) According to the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), “the most common method of pasteurization in the United States today is High Temperature Short Time (HTST) pasteurization, which uses metal plates and hot water to raise milk temperatures to at least 161° F for not less than 15 seconds, followed by rapid cooling.”

### *Escherichia coli (E. coli)*

*E. coli*, as it's commonly referred to, can cause infection should one eat beef—mainly, ground beef—that is *undercooked*. *E. coli* can also be found in unpasteurized milk, or also in contaminated food or water.

### *Listeria*

This bacterium may be found in *unpasteurized* milk, as well as in soft cheeses that are made out of *unpasteurized* milk. *Listeria* may also

be found in deli meats, hot dogs, and store-made deli salads.

### *Staphylococcus aureus (a.k.a. “staph”)*

This more-common bacterium can spread to food when touched by someone with the bacteria. It can cause infection when foods such as meats and egg salad are not refrigerated.

### *Cyclospora*

This bacterium can sometimes be found on raw fruits, vegetables and herbs.

### *Clostridium perfringens*

This less-common strain may be found in *raw* meat, poultry, eggs, or *unpasteurized* dairy foods (which again, is not very likely because most dairy foods you'll buy nowadays in the supermarket are mass-produced and government-regulated, hence pasteurized). It can also be found in vegetables and crops that have touched soil. Food poisoning by *clostridium perfringens* can also be caused when soups, stew, and gravies that are made with meat, fish, or poultry are not refrigerated.

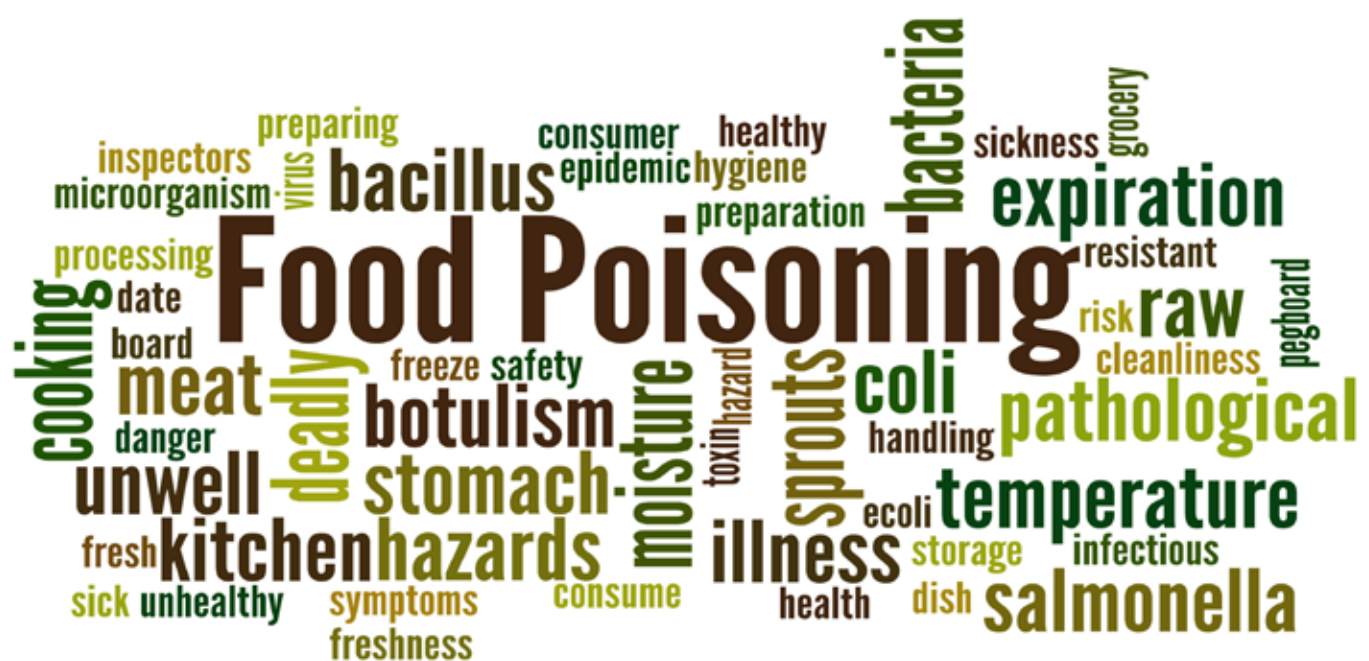
### *Clostridium botulinum*

Food items that host the *clostridium botulinum* bacterium can cause a rare but deadly form of food poisoning called *botulism* (BAW-choo-liz-im). This bacterium is found all over, even in soil and water. Fortunately, again, botulism is rare. (Although this writer's younger brother had a case of botulism when he was a baby and had to spend quite some time in the hospital; today, he's a happy and healthy 40-something with wife and children.) Anyways, botulism can happen upon consuming foods that have not been properly

## ALL ABOUT...

## FOOD POISONING

Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), Johns Hopkins Medicine





canned or preserved, or (as in the above case) when infants are fed raw honey or corn syrup.

### Viruses

Food poisoning, notes the CDC, can also strike due to a virus, not a bacterium. One such example is food poisoning that occurs due to infection by the *Hepatitis A* virus. Another is the *norovirus*, which can sometimes be found in leafy greens, fresh fruits, or unsafe water. Other sources include infected persons or touching surfaces that have the virus on them. Such viral cases of food poisoning can be caused due to passage of the virus from an infected person's hands to the hands of food workers. Viruses which cause food poisoning can also spread when food items touch unsafe, dirty water.

### At-risk populations

While anyone can get food poisoning, some people are likelier than others—and at the same time, are also at greater risk of getting sicker from it than the typical case. This is because their body's disease-fighting system (immune system) doesn't work well. People who are at greater risk for food poisoning include:

- Young children. Their immune systems aren't fully developed yet.
- Older adults. Their immune systems don't work as well. Age-related changes in our senses of taste and smell also make it easier to eat contaminated food by mistake.
- People with long-term (chronic) disease. Conditions like diabetes or cancer tend to leave patients with weaker immune systems.

### SYMPTOMS

Food poisoning symptoms can look like the symptoms of stomach flu (gastroenteritis). As such, many people with mild cases of food poisoning think they have stomach flu.

Symptoms of food poisoning can show up in varying times from when the invading agent first enters the digestive tract. While symptoms often start in about one to three days, they can start anywhere from 30 minutes to three weeks after consumption of contaminated food items. The length of time also depends on the type of bacteria or virus causing the illness.

Each patient's symptoms may vary, from very mild to very serious and from a few hours to several days. Symptoms may include:

- Belly cramps
- Watery or bloody diarrhea
- Nausea and vomiting
- Headache
- Fever
- Belly bloating and gas

### DIAGNOSIS

First, see a healthcare professional, especially if you can't keep fluids down and/or if symptoms aren't going away. The MD, NP or PA seeing you will ask you when you became sick, what your symptoms are, and what foods you have eaten. The professional will also look at your past health and conduct a physical exam.



## FOOD POISONING SYMPTOMS CAN LOOK LIKE STOMACH FLU. AS SUCH, MANY PEOPLE WITH MILD CASES OF FOOD POISONING THINK THEY HAVE STOMACH FLU.



Next, lab tests may be conducted to find out which bacteria or virus it is that is causing the symptoms. (In some cases the cause will not be found.)

### TREATMENT

Most mild cases of food poisoning are treated the same as stomach flu (gastroenteritis). If you have diarrhea or vomiting, you may lose a lot of fluids (get dehydrated). The goal is to replace your lost fluids and ease your symptoms.

For some types of bacterial food poisoning, depending on what bacterium is found to be causing the food poisoning, the patient will be prescribed various antibiotics. Note that these do not work on cases of food poisoning that are caused by various viruses.

### When to see a doctor

See a doctor or healthcare provider if symptoms are severe, such as:

- Bloody diarrhea
  - High fever (temperature over 102°F)
  - Frequent vomiting that prevents keeping liquids down (which can lead to dehydration)
  - Signs of dehydration, including little or no urination, a very dry mouth and throat, or feeling dizzy when standing up
  - Diarrhea that lasts over three days
- In some cases of severe food poisoning, the patient may need to be hospitalized.

### PREVENTION

There are two best ways to prevent food poisoning. One is simply to heat any food you eat to a temperature that is high enough to kill any bacterial or virus that may be in or on the food. Fortunately, pasteurization and regular cooking, baking or boiling—all of which involve high heat—are usually enough to kill off any unwanted organisms in your food.

The other best way to prevent food poisoning is to frequently wash your hands with soap—not Purell or other such products!—and hot (not cold) water for 30 seconds (not 25 or 20, as has been misleadingly popularized in the past few years).

(The only downside to frequent hand-washing is dry skin, so you may need moisturizing lotion around to counteract that.)

Anyways, *always* wash your hands as described after:

- Using the toilet
- Changing diapers
- Smoking
- Blowing your nose
- Coughing or sneezing
- Touching animals

### Making food safely

Here is the CDC's list of "10 Dangerous Food Safety Mistakes":

Washing meat, chicken, or turkey—which can spread germs to kitchen surfaces and then to other foods.

Eating raw batter or dough containing uncooked eggs or flour—which may contain *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, or other harmful bacteria.

Thawing or marinating food on the counter—which can multiply harmful germs very quickly at room temperature.

Not cooking meat, chicken, turkey, seafood, or eggs thoroughly—which leaves germs alive.

Peeling fruits and vegetables without washing them first—because peels or skins may have germs which then get on the fruits and vegetables' insides.

Not washing your hands—because germs on your hands can get on food.

Eating risky foods if you are likelier to get food poisoning—such as adults over 65, children under five, or people with weaker immune systems

Putting cooked meat on a plate that held raw meat—germs from raw meat can transfer to the cooked meat

Tasting or smelling food to see if it's still good—because germs that cause food poisoning *can't* be tasted or smelled

Leaving food out too long before putting it in the fridge—because harmful germs can grow in perishable foods if left out for over two hours

### Buying food safely

When shopping for food, make sure to:

- Not have any food made from unpasteurized milk
- Not have any food made from raw or undercooked eggs, poultry and meat

### Storing food safely

When storing food, make sure to:

- Refrigerators should be set at 40°F or below. Set freezers at 0°F
- Keep fruits and vegetables, cooked foods, and prepared foods away from raw meat and raw eggs
- Refrigerate mayonnaise, salad dressings, and any foods that have them
- Throw out food if you don't know how long it's been left out of the fridge
- Throw out food if you're not sure it is bad

### The CDC's four-step prevention process

The CDC recommends and promotes a simple four-step process towards preventing food poisoning: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

- Clean: Wash your hands and surfaces often. Germs that cause food poisoning can survive in many places and spread around your kitchen.
- Separate: Don't cross-contaminate. Raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs can spread germs to ready-to-eat food unless you keep them separate. When grocery shopping, keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and their juices away from other foods.
- Cook: Food is safely cooked when the internal temperature gets high enough to kill germs that can make you sick. The only way to tell if food is safely cooked is to use a food thermometer. You can't tell if food is safely cooked by checking its color and texture (except for seafood). Also, microwave food thoroughly:
- Chill: Refrigerate promptly. Bacteria can multiply rapidly if left at room temperature or in the "Danger Zone" between 40°F and 140°F. Keep your refrigerator at 40°F or below and your freezer at 0°F or below, and know when to throw food out before it spoils. ★



## Status Report

# Happening In Hospitals Today

### REPORT: HOSPITALS STILL HESITANT TO ADOPT VIRTUAL NURSING

**Atlanta, Georgia** — A survey of hospital executives from digital health company Panda Health found that virtual nursing was the digital hospital tool with the lowest adoption rate and most overstated value.

The survey of 100 hospital leaders found that just 13 percent have used virtual nursing technology in their organization. Additionally, more than a third of leaders, some 35 percent, said that the value of virtual nursing was overstated, according to a recent Panda Health report.

Despite the current low rate of virtual nursing adoption, 31 percent of hospital executives told Panda Health they would be using the technology by the end of 2024. Additionally, 19 percent of hospital executives said that the effect of virtual nursing is understated in value.

The report comes as the digital health market is exploding on a number of fronts, including remote patient monitoring and self-service patient scheduling.

### SURGERY PATIENT GETS BRAIN TUMOR REMOVED WHILE PLAYING GUITAR

**Miami, Florida** — No, that headline's not a joke.

A recent story out of Miami's Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center involved brain-tumor patient Christian Nolen, who literally played the guitar while neurosurgeons operated on his head.

Known as "awake brain surgery," the procedure involves a patient being under local anesthetic but otherwise fully alert while brain surgery occurs, allowing the patient to engage in small precise hand or foot movements. This allows surgeons to avoid active parts of the brain involved in their movement while they delicately remove dangerous tumors.

In the case of Mr. Nolen, a professional musician, surgeons needed to know what part his brain "turned on" when he played guitar. So, secured to the OR table, he was awakened mid-surgery and handed his instrument of choice.

Awake brain surgeries are common and lead to better outcomes for patients.

### MAYO CLINIC LAUNCHES \$5 BILLION, SIX-YEAR RENOVATION OF MAIN CAMPUS

**Rochester, Minnesota** — The Mayo Clinic, for decades considered the best hospital in the U.S. in many specialties, is expanding in a big way.

Its flagship campus, located in downtown Rochester, Minnesota, is now undergoing a \$5 billion, six-



**ROCKING BRAIN SURGERY:** A PRO MUSICIAN ACTUALLY PLAYED GUITAR WHILE IN THE O.R.

year expansion. The plans comprise five new buildings spanning 2.4 million square feet, including two new clinical buildings at the campus' center, a new logistics center, as well as a pair of patient parking ramps, above- and below-ground connections between buildings, and other related infrastructure and utilities.

"We have a once-in-three generations opportunity to redefine the future of healthcare," said Gianrico Farrugia, M.D., president and CEO of Mayo Clinic, in a press release. The project "will enable transformation by blurring the lines across hospital, clinic and digital care."

### DOCTOR SURVEY SAYS CORPORATE HOSPITAL OWNERSHIP MAKES PATIENT CARE WORSE

**Chicago, Illinois** — Reduced medical decision-making autonomy, and prioritizing financial incentives over good medicine, are among the top reasons doctors don't like hospitals owned by corporations—at least according to recent survey of doctors conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago.

The NORC survey, which reached out to 1,000 employed physicians, found that nearly 60 percent of

doctors who worked for hospitals or other corporate entities said patient care suffered when physicians didn't own the business. By contrast, only 18 percent of physicians said corporate ownership made patient care better.

"With corporate ownership comes a higher emphasis on financial outcomes and shareholder returns," said one survey executive. "This focus on the bottom line can interfere with best clinical practices."

### FACE-DOWN FOR ECMO PATIENTS NO BETTER THAN FACE-UP, FINDS RESEARCH

**Paris, France** — During the pandemic, *prone positioning*, or laying patients down on their chests as opposed to backs, was believed to benefit the most severe patients—especially those on *venovenous extracorporeal membrane oxygenation* (VV-ECMO) machines.

But now, a randomized trial by the Hôpital de la Pitié-Salpêtrière in Paris found that patients with severe acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)—mostly from COVID—in prone positioning didn't get off VV-ECMO machines any faster than those in supine positioning.

Among ARDS patients on ECMO, an identical 44 percent of patients were successfully weaned off ECMO after 60 days whether placed in sessions of prone positioning or simply kept supine, the trial found. Neither was there any significant difference in ECMO usage between both groups after 90 days—nor in 90-day mortality rates between positions.

### REPORT: WITH LESS PATIENT-CARE PROFITS, NONPROFIT HOSPITALS DIVERSIFYING INCOME STREAMS

**Boston, Massachusetts** — Non-profit hospitals are—or at least used to be—placed where a community care mission comes first and profits, second.

But with income from straight-up patient care at an all-time low, U.S. nonprofit hospitals are now expanding to more income streams than ever, according to a recent report in industry outlet *STAT News*.

According to *STAT*, American nonprofit hospitals have "all but abandoned the prospect of making significant profit on patient care" in recent years. "Instead, they're fully throwing their weight into other ways of making money—things like developing drugs or selling insurance."

In a late-2022 report, top management consulting firm McKinsey listed telehealth, value-based care services, and ambulatory surgical centers as leading areas of diversified income for hospital systems. ★



**MORE MAYO, PLEASE:** MINNESOTA'S FAMED MAYO CLINIC IS NOW UNDERGOING A MASSIVE \$5 BILLION, SIX-YEAR EXPANSION THAT WILL ADD 2.4 MILLION SQ. FT ACROSS FIVE NEW BUILDINGS



# The Senior Care Gazette

News from  
the World of  
Hamaspik  
HomeCare and  
Senior Health

## The Importance of Sunscreen Come Summer

*With Warm Months Here, Senior Skin Protection Important*

Getting out and about under the warm sunny skies: For our beloved seniors, what could be better? But while sunlight is great for natural vitamin D, the “Sunshine Vitamin” that the body produces when skin gets direct exposure, it’s also known to cause skin cancer.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over five million people in the United States are treated for skin cancer each year at a cost of about \$8.1 billion. Most cases, the CDC notes, involve people older than 65 years of age. Breaking it down further, the CDC’s 2018 data on new cases of melanoma—the least common but most serious of skin cancer’s three types—show that people 80 and up have the highest rates of melanoma.

However, the agency’s info page goes on, “little attention has been given to ways to reduce skin cancer risk among people in this age group. Because older adults are living longer, the need for public health efforts to promote life-long skin health is more critical than ever.” So let’s shine a light on keeping our most skin-cancer-vulnerable population safe while out in the summer sun.

A sunscreen information page on MD Anderson Cancer Center’s website notes that users commonly don’t read product labels and properly apply sunscreen. Here are Anderson’s five sunscreen usage tips:

1. Get UVA and UVB protection. Sunscreen should protect against ultraviolet-A rays that raise skin-cancer risk, as well as ultraviolet-B

rays that cause sunburn and skin damage.

2. Use SPF 30 or up. Sunscreen should have a minimum sun protection factor of 30. However, higher SPF doesn’t mean you can stay in the sun longer, notes Anderson.
3. Apply early, apply plenty. The general rule is to apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outdoors—and to apply one golf-ball-sized amount to every exposed body part.
4. Reapply every two hours. Because sunscreen wears off after a few hours, smear it back on every two hours—or every 60-90 minutes if swimming, or using sprays sunscreen.
5. Put on the gear! Sunscreen alone isn’t enough for complete protection. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, wrap-around UV sunglasses, and long

sleeves/pants/skirts.

So how should seniors juggle sunlight pros and cons?

A 2021 article in the *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* (AJLM) says, “It is optimal to have sun exposure for five to 30 minutes a day, most days a week, without sunscreen, as SPF ≤8 may block the body’s ability to absorb the UVB rays to effectively make vitamin D.” (Sunscreen should then follow, it notes.)

On the other hand, “The risk benefit should be discussed with their doctor depending on their risk factor for skin cancer,” notes Hamaspik HomeCare Field Nurse Adina Bodlander, RN. “A vitamin D supplement may be better.”

Bottom line? Summer-sunning seniors need to be careful about overheating, heat stroke—and wearing sunscreen. ★

## Seniors Cut High Blood Pressure by up to Eight Points After Week of Less Sodium

*Eating One Less Daily Teaspoon of Salt Practically as Beneficial as Taking Medication, Study Finds*

**Chicago, Illinois** — Heart attack and stroke are caused by high blood pressure. High blood pressure is caused by high salt (sodium) intake. Thus, heart attack and stroke are caused by high salt intake.

And thus, less salt equals less heart attack and stroke.

That medical fact is one of the reasons why people who eat less salt in their food have less heart attacks and strokes. Now, a study of over 200 seniors, from their mid-50s through their 70s, confirms that fact once again.

In fact, the study found that participants consuming one less teaspoon of salt per day in their food for just a week experienced an average drop of six points in their systolic blood pressure. *Systolic* refers to the higher first number of the two-number blood-pressure reading; it refers to the pressure the blood places against the insides of the arteries while the heart flexes and pumps. (The second *diastolic* lower number reflects that pressure while the heart rests between beats.)

The study first recruited 213 participants, a group of men and women ages 50 to 75.

For one week, they were then randomly assigned to follow a high-sodium diet (with an added 2,200 milligrams per day of salt) per day on top of their usual diet, or a low-sodium diet (with a total of 500 milligrams per day of salt). Then, they switched and followed the other diet for another week.

The study found that 72 percent of participants had lower systolic blood pressure (six less points, on average) on the low-sodium diet than their regular diet.

What’s more, systolic pressure dropped by up to eight points when comparing the high-sodium diet to the low-sodium diet.

“We found that 70-75% of all people, regardless of whether they are already on blood pressure medications or not, are likely to see a reduction in their blood pressure if they lower the sodium in their diet,” said study co-author Norrina

Allen, a professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago.

“The... decline in systolic blood pressure by about 6 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg)... is comparable to the effect produced by a commonly utilized first-line medication for high

blood pressure,” added co-principal investigator Dr. Deepak Gupta, an associate professor of medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, in Nashville, Tenn.

The study was published recently in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA). ★

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