

HEALTH

Currents



The air fryer
frenzy

**All about
kidney stones**

**A homerun
experience**

Get a leg up on varicose veins

Discover instant relief with minimally invasive treatments

Tired, heavy legs at the end of the day—painful, restless legs overnight. Sound familiar? You don't have to see varicose veins to suffer from them. There are a number of minimally invasive treatment options to consider, depending on your symptoms. They are safe, virtually painless and most patients can get back to normal activities almost immediately.



Call general surgeon,
Glen Hastings, MD, at
269.983.3368 to schedule
a consultation today.



ON THE COVER

Move to the beat

Cardio drumming has gained popularity across the U.S., including with participants at the St. Joseph-Lincoln Senior Service Center. The high-energy fitness class pairs an exercise ball and drumsticks with dance moves to create an aerobic workout suitable for all ages and fitness levels. The intensity of the workout can easily be adjusted based on how hard you drum.



HealthCurrents is published by the Marketing and Communications Department of Spectrum Health Lakeland. The information provided in this publication is intended to educate readers on subjects pertinent to their health and is not a substitute for a consultation with a physician.

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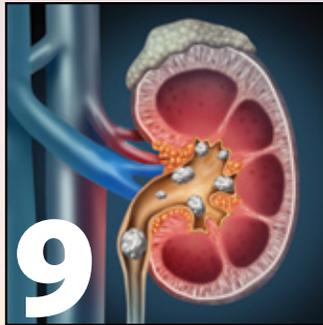
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Go to spectrumhealthlakeland.org/healthcurrents and sign up to have it delivered free to your mailbox.

A beginner's guide to exercise

Whether you're just getting started, or have been forced to switch up your normal fitness routine during the COVID-19 pandemic, this map will help you target four important types of exercise:

Endurance

Your goal: Increase your breathing and heart rate with aerobic activity.

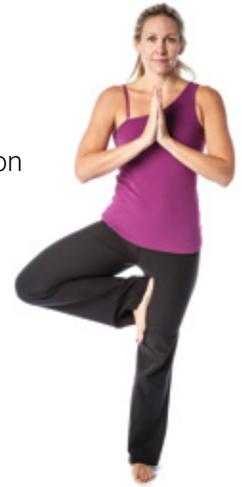
- Treadmills: Try walking briskly on a comfortable incline or lightly jogging.
- Stationary bikes: Pedal while maintaining a steady but increased heart rate.



Balance

Your goal: Improve your balance to prevent falls, which is a common risk for older adults.

- Mats: Practice standing on one foot, then the other. Or try holding a side plank for 15 seconds on each side.



Flexibility

Your goal: Stretch your muscles to give you more freedom of movement.

- Mats: Take time to focus on stretching all areas of your body.
- Yoga poses: Practicing a few basic poses can help stretch your muscles and increase your range of motion.



Strength

Your goal: Make your muscles stronger by lifting weights.

- Free weights: Start with two light weights as you practice bicep curls, shoulder presses, and tricep extensions.
- Mats: Try working against your own body weight with lunges or squats. You may also use a stability ball, which can help with core exercises.



"The most common sports injuries we see tend to involve the knees and shoulders," says local orthopedic surgeon, **Kenneth Edwards, MD**. "There are some really common-sense approaches to injury prevention that very often the recreational athlete will ignore. One is spending enough time on flexibility and the other is building up a level of endurance and not over doing it."

Hand, foot and mouth disease: what you need to know



Your child is grumpy, has another fever, and isn't eating well—again. Before you assume it's just another cold or flu, watch for other symptoms. Your young one may have hand, foot, and mouth disease.

Symptoms: Hand, foot, and mouth disease is common in children younger than age five. At the beginning, your child will most likely have a fever, reduced appetite, and sore throat. One or two days later, he or she may develop painful mouth sores that start as small red spots in the back of the mouth or a rash of blistering red spots on his or her hands, soles, knees, elbows, genitals, or buttocks.

How it spreads: Viruses cause hand, foot, and mouth disease. It spreads through contact with nose, throat, blister fluids, or bowel movements—for example, if you change a diaper and touch your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands. It can also spread by touching contaminated surfaces or breathing air after a sick child coughs or sneezes. Your child will be the most contagious during the first week of illness.

How to help your sick child: Keep your child at home until he or she is well. Hand, foot, and mouth disease is usually mild and resolves within seven to 10 days. There is no specific treatment, but you can help your little one feel more comfortable with medications to reduce pain and fever and lots of liquids to prevent dehydration.

Understanding middle ear infections

Middle ear infections, which occur behind the eardrum, are most common in children under age five. These infections are usually caused by bacteria or viruses and often begin when infections that cause sore throats, colds, or other respiratory or breathing problems spread to the middle ear. Symptoms include fever, severe ear pain, or any kind of discharge from the ear.

Watching and waiting

If your child is diagnosed with an ear infection, your health care provider may suggest a period of “watchful waiting.” This is because most ear infections usually improve within the first few days and resolve on their own within one to two weeks without any treatment.

How much do you know about this illness?

Take this quiz below to find out.

1. An ear infection usually begins with a cold. **T or F**
2. Ear infections typically affect babies and young children. **T or F**
3. Difficulty sleeping and loss of balance are two symptoms of ear infections. **T or F**
4. Babies who are given a bottle while they lie down are at less risk for ear infections. **T or F**
5. Children who live in homes where there is cigarette smoke are more likely to get ear infections. **T or F**

Answers: 1. T, 2. T, 3. T, 4. F, 5. T



Phase 2 of Pavilion renovations underway



With the new five-floor, 260,000-square-foot Pavilion now open to patients at Lakeland Medical Center in St. Joseph, work is currently underway on Phase 2 of the project, which will feature 80,000 feet of renovated space. New construction began in August to renovate the old operating rooms into an updated prep/recovery area. This is used to prepare patients who are undergoing a procedure and allow them a space to continue their recovery and healing process after surgery. In November, work will begin on the new main street which will renovate the hospital's current front entrance and feature a two-story design with multiple visitor amenities including dining options, quiet spaces, and retail.

The final phases of the project include renovations that will provide a 23-hour short stay unit for patients who need additional observation, but don't need to be admitted to the hospital overnight. The emergency department will also undergo several changes to the ambulance bays as well as the entrance and triage stations to better connect with the rest of the hospital and provide an enhanced wayfinding experience for patients.

For the latest updates on the project, visit spectrumhealthlakeland.org/pavilion

Lakeland welcomes new oncology genetic counselor



Spectrum Health Lakeland is pleased to welcome oncology genetic counselor, **Samantha Witt**.

Witt is seeing patients as part of the high risk cancer program at Lakeland. Located within the Center for Outpatient Services at 3900 Hollywood Road in

St. Joseph, the program will work closely with patients to help them understand genetic risks, learn strategies for cancer prevention, and diagnose cancer at an earlier stage when in it most treatable.

Witt holds a master's degree in genetic counseling from Indiana State University. Prior to coming to Lakeland, she completed over 125 genetic counseling cases during clinical rotations at six different health

systems with a focus in oncology, adult, and prenatal care. Witt is a member of the National Society of Genetic Counselors.

"It is very exciting to be joining a team who is focused on both helping patients diagnosed with cancer, and providing patients identified at higher risk of developing cancer with the tools to try to reduce their risks," said Witt. "I truly believe we are empowering our patients to make the best decisions for their health and that is what makes me so happy to be part of the high risk cancer program at Lakeland."

Genetic counseling services at Lakeland will initially support patients at high risk for developing breast cancer with a plan to expand to other types of cancer soon. For more information, or to find out if you qualify, call **269.932.9337**

Social distancing and reducing opportunities for person-to-person contact are among the most effective means of preventing the spread of COVID-19. As a result, many of our events have been canceled, postponed, or made virtual.



For the most up to date event listings, visit spectrumhealthlakeland.org/events

New online community seminars

I'm at high risk for breast cancer: what do I do?

Being labeled as “high risk” for breast cancer can be scary. The high risk cancer program at Spectrum Health Lakeland partners with patients on their breast health journey to provide advanced screening and individualized care. Oncology genetic counselor, **Samantha Witt**, and advanced practitioner, **Kathryn Vera, NP**, will discuss factors that contribute to an individual’s risk for breast cancer including genetics, family history, lifestyle, and personal medical history, and how patients can use this information to stay one step ahead of cancer.

Registration: 269.927.5361

Monday, October 26

6 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Online Seminar

When is the right time for palliative care?

Caring Circle medical director, **Jason Beckrow, DO**, will discuss the advantages of quality of life services and the value they bring people with a serious or advancing illness as well as their caregivers. Dr. Beckrow will share information on how beginning palliative care earlier can assist individuals in achieving what matters most to them.

Registration: 269.927.5361

Tuesday, November 17

12 p.m. to 12:30 p.m.

6 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Online Seminar

What you need to know about auto insurance changes

If you live in Michigan and own a vehicle you’ve likely heard about the recent changes to Michigan’s No-Fault Auto Insurance which allows you to select the level of coverage for Personal Injury Protection (PIP), or in some cases, opt out of it entirely.

PIP is the portion of your automobile insurance that covers medical expenses if you are involved in an automobile accident. It can also cover expenses such as attendant care, medical mileage, lost wages and rehabilitation services. You will want to be aware of your medical coverage when you review your auto insurance coverage.

If you have Qualified Health Coverage (QHC), you may elect a lower level of PIP, or in some cases opt out of PIP coverage, with your auto carrier. If your medical plan covers automobile accidents and has a deductible

of less than \$6,000, generally you have QHC.

As you evaluate your PIP coverage, remember that while your medical plan may cover auto accidents, it may not be unlimited coverage and may not cover all services that may be required. If you opt for a lower level of PIP and exhaust the amount of the coverage you purchase, or opt out of PIP entirely, any expenses not covered by your medical plan will be your responsibility.

As you make your decision, you will want to compare the benefits of a lower auto insurance premium to the risk of medical expenses as the result of a catastrophic auto accident. If you have questions about your health insurance coverage, or need assistance enrolling in a plan, contact a patient financial advocate by calling **844.408.4103**

A homerun experience



One, two, three strikes...you're out? This wasn't the case for 65-year-old, **Steve Petlick**, who refused to let pain win.

As a local high school baseball umpire and football referee, Steve spent a lot of time on his feet. It was during the fall football season that running became increasingly more painful.

"I would experience pain from time to time and normally it would go away within a couple weeks," said Steve. "This time it stuck with me and was beginning to interfere with my ability to keep up on the field."

Steve decided it was time to seek help. After discussing the situation with family and friends, and doing his own research, he scheduled an appointment with orthopedic surgeon, **Kenneth Edwards, MD**.

"I knew I wanted to receive care locally and took comfort in the fact that Dr. Edwards was well known in the community," said Steve.

During his initial consultation, Dr. Edwards performed a series of x-rays which revealed that both of Steve's knee joints were bone on bone.

"It was easy to see why I was in so much pain," said Steve. "I didn't have a good leg to stand on."

After discussing his treatment options with Dr. Edwards and knowing there were still a few months left until football playoffs, Steve decided to pursue

cortisone shots as a first round of treatment.

"Dr. Edwards was very upfront with me and explained this would only be a temporary fix because of how far the arthritis in my knees had progressed," said Steve. "The shots provided instant relief at the time, but when the pain returned a few months later I knew I needed to find a permanent solution."

Steve decided to undergo double knee replacement surgery which would replace both knee joints at the same time. The surgery was a success and Steve returned home to begin his recovery journey. All the while his sights were set on getting back in the game in time for baseball season in the spring.

"I knew my recovery would only be successful if I was an active participant," said Steve. "I was committed to following Dr. Edwards' instructions and completing the exercise plan provided by my physical therapy team."

Eleven weeks after his surgery Steve returned to work full-time at a distributing company. Four weeks later he stepped foot on the baseball diamond to umpire a double header at Benton Harbor High School.

"I no longer experience any pain in my knees," said Steve. "I didn't realize how much it was impacting my quality of life. There's no reason for anyone to suffer longer than they have to—it just isn't worth it."



Get back to living life pain free

Orthopedic surgeons are specially trained to help patients manage certain conditions, relieve pain, restore mobility and independence, or return to work and other daily activities. Call **888.313.9167** to find an orthopedic surgeon near you.

How to discuss race with your child

With all that is going on in the world right now, there may be no better time to talk with your children about race and racism. Spectrum Health Helen DeVos Children's Hospital experts weigh in on how to best discuss this topic with your kids and share their top tips to help turn the conversation into a teachable moment.

Q: Where do I start when it comes to discussing the topic of racism with my kids?

A: Pediatric psychologist, **Adelle Cadieux, PsyD:** It's important to acknowledge that racism exists and that bad things have and do happen because of racism. Ask your child what they think racism is, what they have learned about racism and what questions they have about it. This allows you as a parent to address misconceptions and answer the questions that are important to your child. Leave the door open so your child knows it's OK to ask more questions later or to bring the topic up again.

Q: At what age should I start having this discussion?

A: Pediatric psychologist, **Brittany Barber Garcia, PhD:** Acknowledging and celebrating differences for toddlers and young children is appropriate and helpful. By the time kids are starting elementary school, it's appropriate to teach them what race is and to begin asking questions about what they see and notice about how people are treated and what questions they have.

Q: How do I adapt the message differently by age?

A: Division chief for adolescent medicine, **Lisa Lowery, MD:** Keep it age appropriate. Sometimes when little kids notice differences, that's a good time to engage. And it doesn't have to be just one talk, but ongoing conversations.

Q: When I talk about race and racism, what should I say?

A: Dr. Barber Garcia: It is important to define race and racism in simple and clear terms. It is then important to ask questions and listen to what your kids have to say and respond to their thoughts.

Q: As a parent, what can I do?

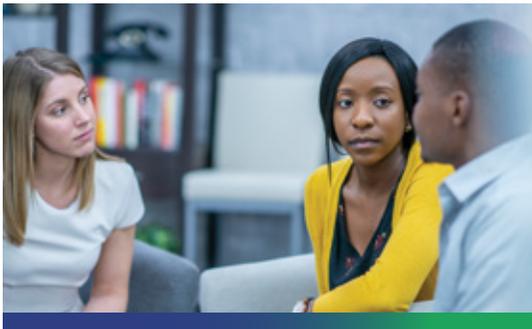
A: Dr. Cadieux: Modeling is a great way to teach our children. Model acceptance and respect. Model standing up for others. When current events happen, talk to your kids about what they have seen or heard and what questions they have about it. It's OK to acknowledge that bad things happen, but also limit the amount of exposure they have of the event so that they are not reviewing the event repeatedly.



Specialized pediatric care close to home

Patients at Spectrum Health Lakeland have access to expert care from more than 300 pediatric providers, in more than 50 services and programs at Helen DeVos Children's Hospital. Children can receive care at the regional pediatric specialty clinic established at the Center for Outpatient Services in St. Joseph or at the hospital's main campus in Grand Rapids. Visit helendevoschildrens.org to learn more.

Lory's Place plans facility expansion



Since Lory's Place, the grief healing and education center of Caring Circle, opened its doors in response to the death of beloved community member Dr. Lory Schults, roughly 40,000 adults and children have been touched by their services.

Fifteen years later, plans are underway to expand the organization's services by renovating the adjacent storefront next to Lory's Place to create a dedicated venue for adult programming. The new space will create a place for grieving adults to engage life with a new perspective, learn new skills, meet new friends, and most of all have access to a safe and supportive environment.

"Our vision is to create a place where people feel comfortable dropping by any time," said **Stephanie Kohler**, director, Lory's Place. "In addition to grief education and support, adults who lose a loved one may need guidance with everyday tasks such as learning how to cook, managing finances, or performing routine home or vehicle maintenance. If there is a need, we will find a way to walk the journey together."

Help make this vision a reality



Thank you to everyone who has generously given so far to help to make this expansion project a reality. We are currently at 96% of our campaign goal. Visit lorysplace.org/expansion or call **269.983.2707** to learn more about the project and how you can help.

Welcome new medical staff



Wajdi Al-Shweiat, MD
Nephrology



Angela Coleman, NP
Pediatric medicine



Jaclynn Jackubowski, NP
Cardiology



Emily Milliken, NP
Cardiology

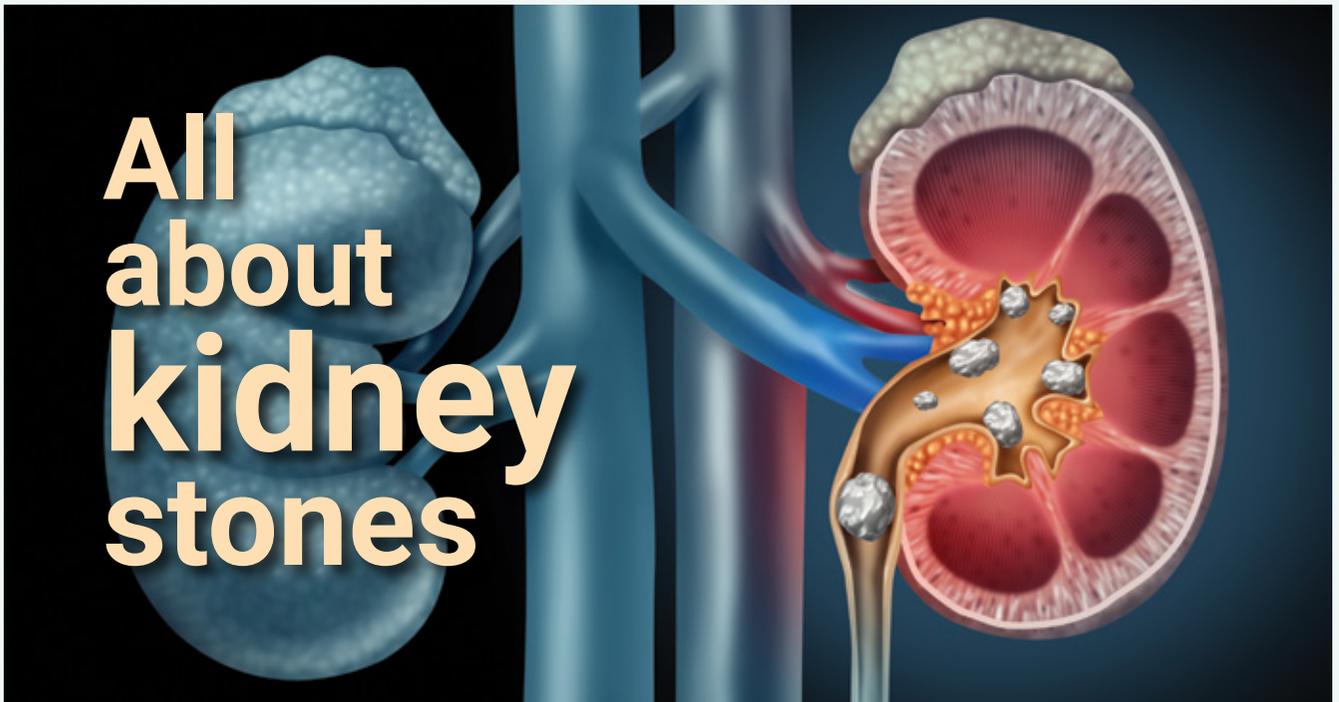


Jenna Ray, PA
Pulmonology






 Visit spectrumhealthlakeland.org/physicians or youtube.com/spectrumhealthlakeland



A kidney stone is a solid piece of material that forms in the kidney. It is made from substances that normally dissolve in the urine. Each year, about one million people in the U.S. get kidney stones. They typically strike between age 20 and 50 and are more common in men than women. If you get one stone, you are more likely to get more.

How stones form

While some people are more likely to get kidney stones because of their family history, in most cases they are caused by having too many salts in your urine. When the salts build up to a certain point, they no longer dissolve. They form crystals instead. Normally, the urine contains chemicals and enzymes that keep crystals from forming, or from sticking to the inner surface of the kidney.

Making a diagnosis

Small stones are usually passed unnoticed. Large stones often remain undetected until they become lodged in the ureter and you have severe and sudden pain in the back or lower abdomen. There may also be blood in the urine, nausea, and vomiting. If the stone is too large to pass, the muscles of the ureter tighten trying to squeeze the stone into the bladder. Fever or chills usually mean there is an infection.

Removing the stone

In most cases, treatment means letting the stone pass naturally. Your health care provider may give you medicine for pain relief. Then he or she will add fluids until the ureter builds up enough pressure to push the stone out. For stones that don't pass on their own, other treatments are used to break the stone into small pieces that can pass from your body in the urine.

Preventing stones from forming

The best treatment for kidney stones is to not get them in the first place. The most important part of prevention is getting plenty of fluids. This dilutes your urine and increases urination which helps remove extra chemicals from the body. You should also limit how much salt (sodium) you get each day. If you've had a stone in the past, it's best to speak with your health care provider to develop a treatment plan based on your type of stone.

Providers at Lakeland Urology diagnose and treat a variety of urologic conditions including kidney stones. For more information, or to find a physician, visit lakelandurology.com or call **269.684.5447** in Niles or **269.983.3455** in St. Joseph.



Restoring Confidence

Every woman fears the thought of finding out they have breast cancer. Coloma resident, **Shelly Morlock**, was no different. The day she discovered a small lump in her right breast, a million thoughts began running through her mind. Breast cancer didn't run in her family—but could she have it?

Initial biopsy results came back negative and Shelly felt a wave of relief wash over her. But just over a year later, the lump was still there and seemed to be growing. Shelly knew something wasn't right.

"I went back for a second biopsy which revealed that it was in fact Stage 2 breast cancer," said Shelly. "The first time around it was so small that the tissue sample resulted in a negative reading. I'm so glad I listened to my body."

Shelly consulted with a general surgeon to discuss her options. An MRI was ordered to get a better idea

of the exact size and location of the cancerous cells.

"The tumor was bigger than they originally thought, and my surgeon told me that if it was his own sister or aunt, he would recommend removing the entire breast," said Shelly.

Shelly trusted the advice of her care team and decided to move forward with a mastectomy. She later learned the cancer had traveled outside her breast and spread to the surrounding lymph nodes which would require a full course of chemotherapy and radiation treatment. Over the course of the next year, battling breast cancer became her full-time job.

"I knew what I needed to do in order to beat this and everything else in my life had to wait," said Shelly. "At the time I had six children and a husband to take care of. It truly made me dig deep and find courage I didn't know I had. Giving 100% was the only way I pushed through."



1 in 8 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with breast cancer during her lifetime. The good news? Breast cancer is one of the most treatable cancers, with an overall survival rate of 90%.

Talk to your provider about breast cancer screening and prevention, and if you're over 40, get an annual mammogram. To schedule, call **800.791.2810**



Join us in welcoming plastic and reconstructive surgeon, **Nicole Phillips, MD**, to the medical staff. Dr. Phillips is seeing patients alongside **Ginard Henry, MD**, at Stonegate Plastic Surgery.

Dr. Phillips completed her medical degree at The University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine and her residency at Harvard Plastic Surgery. Prior to relocating to Southwest Michigan, she completed a fellowship in aesthetic surgery and facial skin cancer/reconstruction at Pacific Private Hospital in Queensland, Australia.

To learn more, or request a consultation, visit **stonegateplasticsurgery.com** or call **269.556.6000**

One year later and officially cancer free, each time Shelly looked in the mirror she still didn't feel quite like herself.

"As a woman, you don't necessarily realize the role your breasts play in shaping your identity," said Shelly. "I remember the day after my mastectomy getting out of bed for the first time and feeling so off balance and nauseous. No one prepared me for that, and it was a really overwhelming experience."

After much consideration and discussion with her care team and family, Shelly decided she wanted to pursue breast reconstruction surgery at **Stonegate Plastic Surgery**.

"I knew the reconstruction would help me feel like a woman again," said Shelly. "At the time I was using a silicone breast but it was heavy and made wearing a bra or clothes difficult. I just wanted to feel like me again

and I knew I would be in good hands at Stonegate."

During the TRAM flap procedure, a plastic surgeon removes a section of skin, fat, blood vessels, and muscle from the lower half of the belly and moves it up to the chest to form a breast shape.

Since the procedure Shelly said she feels more confident in her own skin. Even with an implant, she continues to have a 3D mammogram once a year which allows radiologists the ability to examine breast tissue one thin layer at a time, making fine details more visible and less likely to be hidden by overlapping tissue. Shelly also follows up with local oncologist, **Edmund Paloyan, MD**, regularly to ensure the cancer doesn't return.

"The best advice I would have for women battling breast cancer or considering a mastectomy is to listen to your doctors and trust your care team," said Shelly.

Reducing racial disparities and improving health equity

In recent weeks and months, across the country, and here in Southwest Michigan, many have struggled to figure out what can be done to help eliminate systemic racism and the inequities it creates. Racial injustice is harming health and shortening the lives of African Americans in Berrien County by 5.1 years for women and 9.6 years for men. This translates into more than 61,000 years of life lost for Black women and more than 110,000 years of life lost among Black men.

As a health care system dedicated to improving health, inspiring hope, and saving lives, Lakeland has developed a four-part approach which commits resources, leadership, transparency and engagement dedicated to reducing racial disparities and improving health equity. A \$50 million Health Equity Fund was established using monies set aside and invested from operations over generations. The interest earned on the fund will provide the budget for health equity work locally.

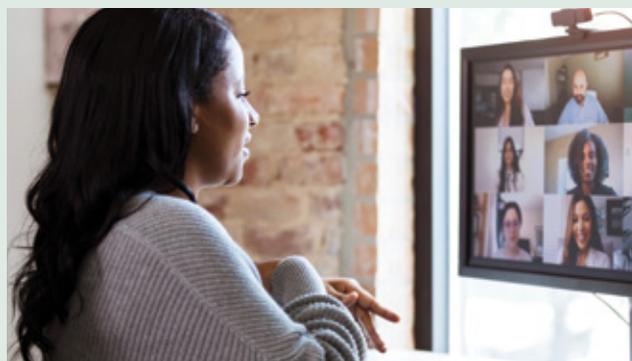
What is health equity? Health equity is the absence of persistent differences in health between groups of people that are created by social conditions such as poverty, hunger, and homelessness. It means all people—regardless of racial or ethnic identity, socioeconomic status, physical or mental ability, residential location, national origin, or sex or gender—can achieve an optimal level of health.

“Health equity calls for us to provide resources and create opportunities needed for good health, especially in those parts of our community that are most challenged by poor health,” said **Lynn Todman, PhD**, vice president health equity, Spectrum Health Lakeland. “It calls for us to create conditions that lead to permanent changes in health status.”

Some examples of health equity work at Lakeland include:



The **GROWTH (Guided Real-World Orientation and Work Training at the Hospital) program** which provides mentorship, professional competency and training, and health care career exploration to African American and Latinx students.



A **virtual mental health series**, conducted in partnership with the Healthy Berrien Consortium and Community Grand Rounds, which explores a range of mental health topics with a focus on the unique experiences of communities of color dealing with adversity such as the COVID-19 pandemic and injustices highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement.



Community influencer communications project provides local opinion makers with health-related information which they can circulate through their own community networks.



Neighborhood-based health homes provide participants with access to free blood pressure screenings, personal health coaching sessions, and discussions about key medical topics through a partnership with local barber shops, community centers, and low-income housing facilities. (On pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic)



Community Grand Rounds is a speaker series with workshops and other events that work to help increase understanding of the link between structural racism and health, as well as other topics related to health equity and population health.



The **Veggie Van** provides free, locally grown fruits and vegetables to hundreds of people who otherwise have limited access to fresh produce through a collaboration between Spectrum Health and the YMCA of Greater Grand Rapids in partnership with Spectrum Health Lakeland and the YMCA of Greater Michiana.



Brave Talks are small gatherings and informal groups of community members which focus on developing and deepening our collective understanding of structural racism and its impact on the health of our community.



Are you interested in learning more about this work, or things you can do to make a difference in your community? Visit the new population health website at spectrumhealthlakeland.org/populationhealth or email shlpopulationhealth@spectrumhealth.org to learn more.

A relationship worth having



Having an unhealthy relationship with food doesn't always mean being overweight. In fact, for most of 44-year-old **Heidi Schmitz's** life she was considered underweight and was constantly eating to try increase her body mass. It wasn't until undergoing a hysterectomy at age 30 that she began to gain weight at a rapid pace resulting from the hormone imbalance in her body. Before she knew it, it was out of control.

While visiting Lake Tahoe in July 2019 for her cousin's wedding, Heidi recalls wanting to try ziplining

for the first time. After a gondola ride up to the top of the mountain, she learned the weight limit to ride the zipline was 275 pounds.

"I remember them making me get on a scale before I could put on the harness and seeing 289 appear on the screen," said Heidi. "I had to walk back down in front of everyone waiting in line and felt so humiliated. From that day forward I vowed to never let my weight prevent me from doing anything."

Shortly after returning from California, Heidi called her primary care provider and asked him to make a

referral to the Lakeland Weight Loss Center. She attended a Lose Weight...Find Health seminar as a first step in the journey and knew right away it was the path she was meant to take.

"After attending the seminar, I knew I wanted to get started right away," said Heidi. "I was ready to make a change."

After an initial evaluation with bariatric surgeon, **Seth Miller, MD**, Heidi began attending six months of shared medical appointments which deliver patient education in a non-threatening environment with emotional support from group participants and health care providers. It was during these monthly sessions that Heidi realized she wasn't alone on this journey.



"Obesity is so common in our world today and I really valued being able to meet with other people who were going through the same struggles as I was," said Heidi. "Without the education leading up to surgery I don't think I would have had a clear picture of what I was getting myself into."

Heidi formed a connection with three other women in the group who quickly bonded over their shared experience. They would text regularly with helpful tips or recipe suggestions. When it came time for surgery, three of the women had their procedures scheduled at Lakeland Hospital Niles on the same day.

"It happened sort of by chance that we were all in the hospital at the same time, but it was nice to be able to see each other when our surgeries were

over and support one another during those first few difficult days," said Heidi.

After discussing it with her family and friends and Dr. Miller, Heidi chose to undergo a vertical sleeve gastrectomy which makes your stomach smaller, so that you feel full a lot quicker. Overall, she is pleased with the experience.

"Dr. Miller has a very good bedside manner and I knew exactly what to expect going into surgery," said Heidi. "I would give my entire care team five stars—it was a fantastic experience from start to finish."

Since her surgery, Heidi has lost a total of 79 pounds. She no longer has to take medicine for high blood pressure and notices an overall increase in her mobility.

"I didn't realize how much the extra weight was impacting my joints," said Heidi. "I used to love hiking and riding my bike, but it had got to be really uncomfortable. Now I can do it with no problem."

She is also focused on making healthier eating choices and limiting sugar in her diet. When she has questions or needs a little extra support, it's helpful to know her friends from the Lakeland Weight Loss Center are only a text or phone call away.

"I would highly recommend this experience to anyone," said Heidi. "There is nothing to be ashamed of. It simply means you care about your body and your health. There were certainly hard moments but anything this significant in your life isn't going to be a walk in the park."

What are the biggest health issues in our community?

In 2016, an estimated 36% of Berrien County adult residents were obese and out of 83 counties in Michigan, Berrien consistently ranks in the top 10.



If you are struggling with obesity and health-related problems because of your weight, you are not alone. Take the first step to living the life you have always imagined, call **269.687.4673**

Visit lakelandweightlosscenter.com/onlineSeminar to watch a free, online seminar and complete a short evaluation.



Emotional eating: how to cope

If you raid the fridge when you're stressed or upset, that's called emotional eating. Emotional eating affects most people from time to time. But regularly letting your feelings guide your food intake can affect your health.

Emotions that can prompt eating include:

- Anger
- Fatigue
- Feeling down on yourself
- Not feeling that you're in control of your own life
- Sadness
- Stress

Eating more food than your body needs can have dangerous results. People who eat for emotional reasons often gain too much weight. This puts them at greater risk for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, and cancer. Excessive eating has emotional consequences as well. These include feeling guilty or embarrassed afterward. Here are steps you can take to stop emotional eating episodes and break the cycle:

Learn to recognize hunger. Next time you reach for a snack, ask yourself what's driving it. If you are truly hungry, you'll notice physical symptoms such as a growling stomach. Other less obvious hunger cues include grouchiness and trouble focusing. If you don't have those signs, you likely don't need to eat right then.

Keep a journal. Write down what you eat each day. Also include the feelings you were having at the time and if you were truly hungry. You may find that certain feelings, such as anger or sadness, lead to your overeating. Once you see these triggers, you can learn healthier ways to deal with them.

Build a support network. Having friends and family around you who support your efforts to change your eating habits can improve your chances of success.

Find other interests. You may find that your eating is driven by boredom. A new passion can help boost your self-confidence and fill your free time making you less likely to look to food for emotional satisfaction.

Get help if needed. If you can't control emotional eating on your own, think about getting professional help to change your behavior. A counselor or a registered dietitian can help you change your eating habits and deal with unpleasant emotions in a better way.



The air fryer frenzy



Air fryers have recently gained popularity in many people's homes and for good reason. This method of cooking is considered a healthier alternative to traditional fried food and contrary to the device's name, it doesn't actually fry food at all. Instead, it acts as a convection oven and circulates hot air around and through the food, leaving your meal crispy and browned on the outside and tender on the inside. Air frying is also a great way to avoid excess oils while cooking.

"When using an air fryer, most people can reduce their calorie intake by 70 to 80% on average," said registered dietitian, **Selena Diaz, RD**. "The device also heats up very quickly, reducing cooking time, which is convenient for those who are looking to whip up a quick, healthy meal."

While the size of the air fryer makes it a convenient option for use on a countertop or in smaller spaces such as an apartment or camper, if you have a large family you may have to cook in batches to make enough, as most devices can typically only hold one to three pounds of food.

Air fryer brussel sprouts

(4 servings)

Ingredients:

- 1 pound brussels sprouts trimmed and halved lengthwise
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ ground black pepper
- 1 tbsp apple cider vinegar

Instructions:

1. Preheat air fryer to 350 degrees F.
2. In a bowl, drizzle olive oil over the brussels sprouts and season with salt and pepper. Toss to coat.
3. Transfer brussels sprouts to the air fryer basket and cook for 12 to 15 minutes, shaking basket once halfway through, or until brussels sprouts are brown and cooked through. Check for doneness and add more time if necessary.
4. Transfer brussels sprouts to a serving dish and drizzle with apple cider vinegar, toss to coat.



Enter to win an air fryer! Mail back the card inserted in this issue or visit spectrumhealthlakeland.org/airfryer



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Is that **flutter** in my chest serious?

Atrial fibrillation, or "a-fib," is a common form of irregular heartbeat that can lead to blood clots, stroke, heart failure and other heart problems. It affects up to six million Americans, but many people don't even know that they have it.

An electrocardiogram (ECG) is used to study the heart signal and rhythm and is an important first step in diagnosis and treatment. For more information, or to find a cardiac provider near you, visit lakelandheart.com

