Stress-Proof Your Holiday Season

'Tis the season to be … stressed. At least that’s how the winter holidays can feel, thanks to family, work and financial pressures.

“Stress is bad for your heart. It raises your heart rate and blood pressure,” says Alex Su, M.D., a board-certified family medicine physician affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “Stress can also make some chronic diseases, such as arthritis or diabetes, worse. In addition, it can make it harder to remember things or pay attention.”

In this time of giving, make sure to give yourself what you need to feel less frazzled. Here are some ways to cope with – and avoid – holiday stress:

• Discuss plans in advance. If you can’t be with one branch of the family for the holidays, breaking the news early can prevent hurt feelings.
• If you have a child returning from college, don’t focus entirely on the visit. This can help prevent the “January letdown.”
• Don’t feel you have to accept every invitation or perform every holiday activity. Give yourself permission to let some things slide, like that seven-step holiday recipe.
• Feeling hassled by housework? Ask a friend to help you bake or decorate – then return the favor.
• Don’t budge on your budget. Small, thoughtful gifts can bring great delights and prevent postholiday financial woes.
• Don’t do all your heavy lifting at the mall. Try to move your body every day. Give yourself the gift of a yoga class or an exercise video.
• Have a strategy for handling family get-togethers. For example, plan your polite-but-firm response to that nosy relative with the knack for asking uncomfortable questions.
• Find a volunteer opportunity, or reach out to a relative or neighbor who needs assistance. Even if only for a few hours, volunteering can take the focus off your own holiday tasks and remind you how good it feels to help others.

Dr. Su is board certified in family medicine.
Partnership Gives Young Athletes Access to Expert Orthopedic Care

As a leader in the community, Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center is committed to giving children the right start, instilling confidence and making sure they have access to quality healthcare. That’s why Memorial City has partnered with the Spring Branch-Memorial Sports Association (SBMSA) and Albion Hurricanes FC soccer league, providing young area athletes education and advanced orthopedic services.

“Memorial City has exceptional expertise in the field of orthopedics and sports medicine,” says Peter Sabonghy, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon affiliated with Memorial City and medical director of the Ironman Sports Medicine Institute. “It’s our pleasure to share this level of knowledge and skill with athletes ages 5 to 19 through these partnerships.”

SBMSA is an independent, nonprofit sports organization that runs year-round programs for students in six sports. The Albion Hurricanes FC is a full-service soccer league offering opportunities for children at all skill levels.

**Education and Training**

Memorial City physicians and healthcare professionals provide regular training and education opportunities to parents and coaches of children at SBMSA and Albion on topics such as first aid, injury prevention and body mechanics. This provides the tools they need to help keep young athletes as healthy and injury-free as possible.

However, if a sports injury does occur, Memorial City is there to help.

Expedited, Exceptional Healthcare

“The greatest benefit of this program is that it ensures access to high-level healthcare services,” says Dr. Sabonghy. “Memorial Hermann provides expert care and treatment of professional and college athletes, such as those on the Houston Rockets and at Texas A&M University. We transfer what we know to the care of young athletes, too.”

Because of this relationship with Memorial City, young athletes at one of these partner organizations can get quick treatment in the event of an injury, such as a fracture. Parents do not have to seek out their own sports medicine physician or wait for an appointment. The child’s coach calls directly and expedites care.

“With our trusted relationship, the process is automatic,” explains Dr. Sabonghy. “When a coach calls and tells me that one of his athletes is injured, we get the athlete in right away. These kids get VIP service.”

In addition, if the orthopedist identifies other potential health problems, such as asthma or a heart condition, the child is directly referred to a specialist within the Memorial Hermann Healthcare System.

“We offer a security blanket of sorts to parents and coaches,” says Dr. Sabonghy. “We help ensure that the children get back to their sport as quickly and safely as possible.”

Dr. Sabonghy is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon.
Advanced Technology Targets Tricky Spinal Tumors

It’s not often that tumors start in the spine, but the spine is a common place where a spreading cancer will reappear. Treating spinal tumors can be difficult, since they may occur on or near the spinal cord, and doctors are careful to minimize damage to the spine, adjacent nerves and nearby organs. A new treatment — called stereotactic spine radiosurgery — makes the process much easier. And it’s available at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center.

“Stereotactic body radiotherapy is an extremely precise radiation treatment that delivers a high dose of radiation to a small targeted area, such as a tumor in the spine, lung or liver,” says Vivek S. Kavadi, M.D., a radiation oncologist affiliated with Memorial City. Stereotactic spine radiosurgery is the application of this approach for spinal tumors.

The technology uses sophisticated tools to identify the tumor and design an optimal treatment plan. Then, high doses of radiation are safely delivered to the precisely targeted areas of cancer. As a result, stereotactic spine radiosurgery minimizes damage to nearby healthy tissues. It’s also faster, requiring only one to five treatments while traditional radiation, which uses lower doses, requires 10 to 15 treatments. Saving time means patients can move forward with other treatments, such as chemotherapy, sooner.

“Many patients appreciate how convenient stereotactic spine radiosurgery is,” says Scott Shepard, M.D., a board-certified neurosurgeon affiliated with Memorial City.

Many Patient Benefits
Besides convenience, stereotactic spine radiosurgery provides the following benefits:

- New option for recurrent tumors: When radiation is prescribed, doctors are careful to administer an amount that’s within a safe limit for the healthy tissue surrounding a tumor. “However, if a tumor returns in the same region, traditional radiation therapy might not be an option again because those tissues have already been taken to their limit,” Dr. Kavadi explains. “Additional radiation could cause complications such as paralysis or loss of bladder control.” Since stereotactic spine radiosurgery is so precise and only targets the diseased area of the spine — avoiding nearby tissues — it offers a new option to patients with recurrent tumors.

- Fewer side effects: It’s another benefit of delivering radiation to a very specific area. “Patients have fewer issues with low blood counts, difficulty swallowing and diarrhea,” Dr. Kavadi says.

- Longer-lasting results: The high-radiation dose kills more diseased cells, reducing the risk that they’ll quickly multiply and form a tumor again.

Cutting-Edge Care, Close to Home
Memorial City launched its stereotactic spine radiosurgery program this fall. “We’re able to provide cutting-edge technology close to home, so patients don’t have to travel anywhere else to receive the care they need,” Dr. Shepard says.
Today, most cases of cervical cancer are preventable or treatable, thanks to the Pap test. This simple test detects early signs of cancer of the cervix, the lower part of the uterus that connects to the vagina. It also can uncover abnormal cells before they become cancer.

“A Pap test can reveal abnormal cells caused by infections, such as human papillomavirus, or HPV,” says Camille Boon, M.D., a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “HPV is the virus responsible for genital warts. Women with some types of HPV have a higher risk for cervical cancer.”

Other women who may have a higher risk for cervical cancer include those who:
- Do not get regular Pap tests
- Became sexually active before age 16
- Have had many sexual partners
- Have HIV
- Smoke

Teens who have had a sexually transmitted disease also have a higher risk.

Screening is important for women of all races. Yet some are at higher risk than others.

Latinas have a higher incidence of cervical cancer than Caucasian women. African-American women are more than twice as likely to die from cervical cancer, yet their incidence is slightly lower, compared with Caucasian women.

“A Pap test only takes a few minutes and is usually painless,” says Dr. Boon. “During the test, a doctor uses a small swab or brush to collect some cells from the cervix. The cells are later analyzed in a lab. Most tests turn out normal, but your doctor will contact you if yours is not.”

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends women begin cervical cancer screening at age 21. Women ages 21 to 29 should have a Pap test every other year. Women 30 and older who have had three consecutive negative Pap tests can reduce screening to every three years. Those at increased risk for cervical cancer should talk with their doctors about when to start and how often to have Pap tests.

WHEN WAS YOUR LAST PAP TEST? Talk with your doctor about this important screening tool. For a physician referral, call 713.222.CARE (2273) or visit memorialhermann.org.

The Next Time You Get Tested
When it’s time for your next Pap test, keep these tips in mind:
- Schedule a Pap test one to two weeks after your period is over. If you have a vaginal infection, wait until it’s been treated.
- Don’t have sex for 48 hours before the test. Also, don’t douche or use vaginal creams or foams for 48 hours beforehand.

Dr. Boon is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology.
Special Care for Children with Diabetes

Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed in children and young adults. It was previously known as juvenile diabetes. Being diagnosed with diabetes at a young age doesn’t have to be frightening. In fact, once children learn how to control the disease, they will have healthy habits to carry them through life.

“Researchers aren’t exactly sure why some young people develop type 1 diabetes,” says Virginia Cortes Araiza, M.D., a board-certified pediatrician affiliated with Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center. “Genetic, autoimmune and environmental factors may be involved. For some, a virus may trigger the immune system to attack the insulin-producing cells in the pancreas and cause type 1 diabetes in patients who are genetically predisposed.”

What to Look For
Children who develop this kind of diabetes may have gradual or sudden symptoms. These include the following:
• Urinating frequently, especially at night (toilet-trained children may start wetting their pants during the day or night)
• Feeling extremely tired
• Having more thirst and hunger
• Losing weight for no obvious reason
• Becoming irritable
• Experiencing blurred vision

If your child has any of these symptoms – regardless of her or his age – call your doctor as soon as possible.

Daily Habits
People with type 1 diabetes need to keep their blood sugar levels in balance every day for the rest of their lives. To do this, they must:
• Get insulin injections two to four times a day, usually before eating. Doctors decide how much insulin is needed depending on the child’s age, height and weight, what they eat and how active they are. Parents will need to inject the insulin for their children until they can do it on their own. There are alternatives to injections, such as an insulin pump, pen or jet injectors. Talk with a doctor about the best method for your child.
• Have their blood sugar tested several times a day. Portable devices can check a drop of blood, usually from a finger, to make sure that the sugar level is not too high or too low. This level can change throughout the day depending on children’s food and exercise habits, and whether they are sick or stressed. If their blood sugar is not in the “safe range,” they need to make some food, exercise or insulin changes.

• Eat right. Children with diabetes do not need special foods, but they do need to be more aware of what they eat. Today, experts suggest focusing on well-balanced, nutritious meals.
• Exercise regularly. Physical activity is an important part of moderating blood sugar. Many young people can safely participate in activities – including sports and gym class – if their blood sugar is in control.
Heart attacks and strokes may get all the attention, but a related condition—called peripheral arterial disease, or PAD—can be just as serious. PAD causes leg pain, numbness and an increased risk for stroke and heart attack. The Heart & Vascular Institute at Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center is dedicated to PAD treatment.

“In my work in cardiac rehabilitation, we see so many patients with uncontrolled cardiac disease, and the risk factors that go into PAD are similar to the risk factors for cardiovascular disease,” says Carilynn Carroll, R.N., a cardiac rehabilitation nurse who works in the clinic. “With an aging population, more people with diabetes and obesity on the rise, I think all that creates a huge need for Memorial City’s Heart & Vascular Institute.”

**The PAD Puzzle**

Having diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure increases your risk for PAD. The condition develops when plaque builds up in the arteries that carry blood from the heart out to the body, particularly the legs. Many people with early-stage PAD have no symptoms. But eventually, the condition can cause:

- Pain and numbness in the legs, especially when walking
- Slow healing of leg or foot wounds
- Serious leg damage that may require amputation in rare cases

“PAD can also be a sign that arteries elsewhere in the body have become blocked,” says Dean Chauvin, M.D., a board-certified diagnostic radiologist affiliated with Memorial City. “If you have PAD, you face a higher risk for heart attack and stroke. And that’s why it’s so important to diagnose the condition early and seek medical treatment.”

**Slowing PAD’s Progression**

That’s the goal at Memorial City’s Heart & Vascular Institute, although Carroll notes that patients with all stages of the disease are welcome. They are seen by a cardiologist and other experts, and the goal is to care for PAD symptoms and slow the disease’s progression.

Depending on each patient, this may involve:

- Bringing diabetes and high blood pressure under control
- Getting cholesterol to healthy levels
- Making suggestions for dietary improvements
- Discussing exercise needs
- Developing a plan for quitting smoking

Lifestyle changes or medications are options for controlling many of these factors. Your physician may also recommend strategies to address your symptoms.
community calendar

For more information on any of the events below, or to register, call 713.222.CARE (2273), unless otherwise noted.

EVENTS AND SCREENINGS
Spring Branch Memorial Sports Association 50th Anniversary Party
Feb. 4
Spring Branch Memorial Sports Association (SBMSA) is turning 50! They are celebrating this golden anniversary with a big bash at the Houston Farm and Ranch Club. The event will feature a live auction, raffle, dinner and fabulous entertainment performed by Pat Green. Proceeds from this event benefit SBMSA participants. For more information and reservations, please visit www.sbmsa.org.

Red Wine and Dark Chocolate
Feb. 15, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Join us for a fun-filled evening as physicians talk about living a heart-healthy lifestyle and the signs of cardiovascular disease. Enjoy dark chocolate, red wine and other healthy bites. To register, call 713.222.CARE (2273).

OB/Maternity Facility Tours
Tours of the facility are held regularly. Registration is required.

CLASSES AND SEMINARS
Heartburn/GERD Seminar
Jan. 25, 6 to 7 p.m.
Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center has opened a Heartburn Treatment Program. Learn the symptoms and treatments of GERD and stop the burn for good! To register, call 713.222.CARE (2273).

Joint Pain Seminar
Feb. 1, 4 to 5 p.m.
Don’t let joint pain slow you down. Join us as Houston’s orthopedic experts affiliated with Memorial Hermann lead an in-depth discussion on the latest minimally invasive options in arthroscopic and joint replacement surgery. Enjoy complimentary refreshments and appetizers.

Leg Pain/Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) Seminar
Feb. 1, 6 to 7 p.m.
Get a leg up on leg pain and learn about the symptoms and treatment of PAD. To register, call 713.222.CARE (2273).

FREE NewStart Weight-Loss Surgery Seminars
Dec. 28, 6:30 p.m.
These seminars are for people morbidly obese with a body mass index of 30 or more who are interested in learning about metabolic and weight-loss surgery. To register, call 713.242.4600.

Breastfeeding Class
Teaches expectant parents techniques to make breastfeeding a successful, satisfying experience. Cost: $30 per couple.

CPR for Infants
Teaches basic techniques used in the event of foreign-body airway obstruction (choking) in infants. Cost: $15 per person, $30 per couple.

Education Class for New Cancer Patients Held the fourth Thursday of every month, 1 p.m.

Look Good, Feel Better
Teaches beauty techniques to women cancer patients in active treatment to help them combat the appearance-related side effects of cancer treatment.

Newborn Care Class
Teaches prospective parents the fundamentals of infant care. Cost: $30 per couple.

Outpatient Yoga for Cancer Patients and Their Caregivers
Meets weekly. Call for days and times.

Prepared Childbirth Class
Prepares expectant parents for their childbirth experience. OB tour is included. Cost: $70 per couple.

SUPPORT GROUPS
Alzheimer’s
Meets the third Sunday of every month at 2 p.m. For more information, call 713.934.8844. Location: West Pavilion, Second Floor, Classroom A.

Better Breathers
Meets the second Wednesday of every month, 4 to 5 p.m. Call 713.242.3555 or 713.242.3190.

Breast Cancer
Meets the third Tuesday of every month, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For more details, call 713.242.3395. Location: West Pavilion, Main Conference Center.

Diabetes
Meets the second Thursday of the month, eight times per year, 7 to 8:30 p.m. For more information, call 713.242.3890. Location: West Pavilion, Frostwood Boardroom.

General Cancer
Meets the second Monday, 6 to 7:30 p.m., and the fourth Monday, 1 to 2:30 p.m., of every month. For questions, call 713.242.3508 or 713.242.3564. Location: Memorial Hermann Cancer Center-Memorial City.

Mended Hearts
Meets the third Monday of every month, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For details, call 713.242.3564. Location: Memorial Hermann Cancer Center-Memorial City.

Prostate Cancer
Meets the third Monday of every month, 6 to 7:30 p.m. For details, call 713.242.3564 or 713.242.3508. Location: Memorial Hermann Cancer Center-Memorial City.

Stroke
Meets the second and fourth Thursdays of every month, 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Call 713.242.2906. Location: East Tower, Fourth Floor, Neuroscience Conference Room.

Weight-Loss Surgery
Meets the first Wednesday of every month, 7 to 9 p.m. Call 713.242.4600. Location: West Pavilion, Main Conference Center.
Memorial Hermann Memorial City Medical Center
921 Gessner Road, Houston, TX 77024. Call 713.242.3000.

FEATURED DOCTORS

Dr. Virginia Araiza is a board-certified pediatrician. She attended medical school at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, where she also completed her residency and later became the chief resident of Pediatrics. Dr. Araiza received fellowship training in pediatric endocrinology. Her main interests include diabetes, thyroid disorders and growth problems.

Dr. Camille Boon is board certified in obstetrics and gynecology. She attended medical school at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Dr. Boon completed her residency at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston, where she received the Most Outstanding Intern Award, as well as a Teaching Award from the Tulane School of Medicine for teaching students who were displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Dr. Boon is committed to caring for women of all ages and stages of life for all their obstetrical and gynecological needs. She has a particular interest in minimally invasive gynecologic surgery.

Dr. Dean Chauvin is board certified in diagnostic radiology. He attended medical school at Louisiana State University Health and Science Center at New Orleans. Dr. Chauvin completed his residency at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and went on to receive his fellowship at Baptist Cardiac and Vascular Institute in Miami, Florida. His main focus areas include interventional radiology and cardiovascular imaging.

Dr. Vivek Kavadi is a board-certified radiation oncologist. He received his medical degree from Harvard Medical School in Boston and completed his residency at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. His areas of interest are advanced radiation technologies, breast cancer and prostate cancer. He serves on the board of directors for Texas Oncology and is the medical director of radiation oncology for US Oncology.

Dr. Peter Sabonghy is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon with fellowship training in sports medicine. He attended medical school and completed residency training at The University of Texas Medical School at Houston. He completed his fellowship in sports medicine and shoulder surgery at Methodist Hospital and Texas Orthopedic Hospital in Houston. He served as an orthopedic consultant to Rice University and stays involved in community sporting events and local high school athletics.

Dr. Scott R. Shepard is board certified in neurological surgery. He attended medical school at Weill Cornell Medical School in New York City. Dr. Shepard completed his residency at the University of California at San Francisco and went on to receive his fellowship at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Houston. His main focus areas include herniated disk, myelopathy, radiculopathy, spinal arteriovenous malformations, spinal stenosis, spondylolisthesis and spondylosis.

Dr. Alex Su is board certified in family medicine. He attended medical school at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Dr. Su completed his residency training at the Memorial Family Practice Residency Program, where he served as chief resident his final year. His main focus areas include infants and children as well as chronic adult diseases, including diabetes and hypertension.

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