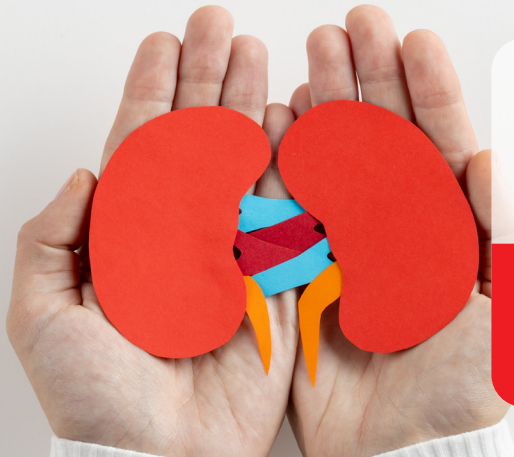


BROWN MEDICINE

Insider

Spring 2024



Commemorating National Kidney Month

March is National Kidney Month, a crucial time dedicated to raising awareness on kidney health and chronic kidney disease.

The kidneys are bean-shaped organs located on either side of the spine. They filter blood, removing waste products and excess fluids to make urine. Beyond filtration, they regulate blood pressure, control the production of red blood cells, and regulate certain nutrients such as calcium and potassium.

Lifestyle factors play a significant role in kidney health. Poor dietary choices, inadequate water intake, and sedentary habits can increase the risk of developing kidney problems. The key is to take a proactive approach by discussing your individual risk with your healthcare team. Making lifestyle changes such as adopting a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables, reducing salt intake, maintaining a healthy weight, engaging in 30 minutes of exercise five times a week, limiting alcohol consumption, and quitting smoking can all contribute to better kidney and overall health.

“The problem with chronic kidney disease is it’s largely asymptomatic,” states Kelley Doherty Sanzen, Pharm.D, Director of Quality Programs in the Division of Kidney Disease and Hypertension. **“More than 40% of patients with severely reduced kidney function don’t know they have it.”**

As kidney disease progresses, some individuals may experience symptoms such as changes in urine, nausea, vomiting, weakness, and disruptions in sleep patterns. Risk factors for kidney disease include older age, high blood pressure, diabetes, a family history of kidney disease, or a history of smoking.

Since symptoms often manifest later in the disease, regular screenings are vital for early detection and intervention. Tests like blood pressure checks, urine analysis, and blood tests can identify potential issues. Individuals with diabetes should undergo yearly bloodwork to assess kidney health, including serum creatinine and urine microalbumin creatinine ratio tests.

Maintaining kidney health through a balanced lifestyle and proactive monitoring ensures these organs can continue their intricate functions, promoting overall health and longevity. Those with kidney disease face an increased risk of cardiovascular issues. Now is the time to make sure you have appointments booked with your provider and talk to your healthcare team about any questions you may have.



To learn more about kidney health, watch this video with Kelley Doherty Sanzen, Pharm.D., Director of Quality Programs, Division of Kidney Disease and Hypertension.

How to Combat Colorectal Cancer

Colorectal cancer is a prevalent and potentially deadly disease that affects the colon or rectum, both parts of the large intestine. The American Cancer Society states **it is the second most common cause of cancer deaths among men and women.**

As one of the leading causes of cancer-related deaths globally, understanding the signs and symptoms are essential. It begins as benign polyps, small clumps of cells, that can transform into cancer over time. As these polyps progress, symptoms to be aware of may include persistent changes in bowel habits, blood in the stool, abdominal discomfort, unexplained weight loss, and fatigue.

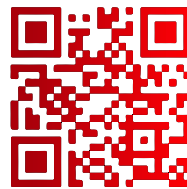
Dr. Bryce Perler, gastroenterologist at Brown Medicine, shares that there has been a recent increase in colon cancer among young people. This could be due to individuals underlying genetics, immune system, or microbiome. For this reason, there has been a push to lower the recommended screening age from 50 to 45.

Early detection significantly improves the chances of successful treatment. Regular screenings are instrumental in identifying precancerous polyps. Colonoscopies are the gold standard for this. During the procedure, a flexible tube with a camera is inserted into the colon. If polyps are detected, they can be removed during the procedure, preventing the development of cancer.

Other screening methods include fecal occult blood tests (FOBT) and fecal immunochemical tests (FIT), which detect blood in the stool, a potential sign of colorectal cancer. Combating colorectal cancer involves a combination of awareness, early detection, and regular screenings. Recognizing symptoms, understanding risk factors, and engaging in routine screenings are essential components of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the impact of this disease on individuals and communities.



Dr. Bryce Perler joined NBC10's Barbara Morse to discuss warning signs and preventative measures that can be taken with colon cancer.



For more information on warning signs and preventative measures for colon cancer, watch this video with Gastroenterologist, Dr. Bryce Perler.



Colon cancer is treatable and beatable when found early. The best way to detect colon cancer is through a colonoscopy. Watch this video to see Dr. Harlan Rich, Medical Director of the Brown Medicine Endoscopy Center, share colonoscopy findings with John Houle after his procedure.



Manager of the Year

Gail Martin, Practice Manager of East Providence Primary Care and Travel Medicine, has been honored as this year's recipient of the prestigious Brown Medicine Manager of the Year award!

With over 15 years of dedicated service to the organization, Gail's commitment and excellence have shone brightly.

Congratulations, Gail, on this well-deserved recognition! Thank you for your unwavering dedication and contributions.



Employee of the Quarter

We are thrilled to announce that Alexis Leech has been chosen as Brown Medicine's Employee of the Quarter for the period of October to December 2023. Alexis serves as the Lead Medical Assistant at Warwick Primary Care.

Thank you, Alexis, for your exceptional work and commitment to excellence!



Providence Business News Healthcare Heroes 2024

Dr. Ollila co-runs the Future Gen Cancer Scholars program, providing a fun, educational and immersive experience for students from underrepresented minorities in medicine and will help generate more diverse care in the future. He also started the Tour de Rhody annual bike ride, which has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to support Rhode Island cancer research.

Congratulations!

Dr. Thomas Ollila
Division of Hematology / Oncology

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8:00am-11:00am**

Bloodmobile
375 Wampanoag Trail, Riverside



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The Key to Understanding Stress

While our bodies possess the capability to manage occasional stressors effectively, **prolonged or chronic exposure to stress poses significant health risks.**

The body's stress response, known as the "fight-or-flight response," serves as a mechanism to confront stressful situations. Activation of this response prompts the central nervous system (CNS) to release stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones cause an increase in heart rate and redirect blood flow to critical areas such as muscles, the heart, and vital organs in times of emergency. Once the perceived threat subsides, the CNS should return to normal. However, if the stress response does not stop and your stress levels stay elevated for longer than necessary, it can significantly impact your health.

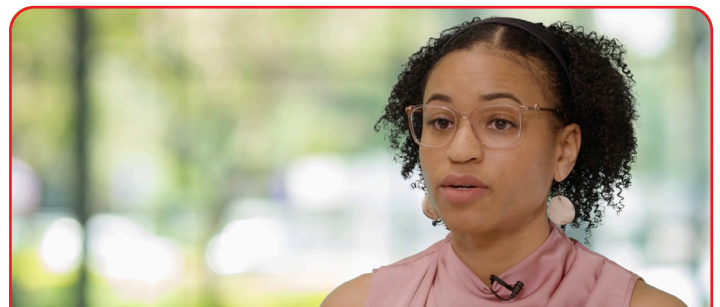
Chronic stress affects all systems of the body including the musculoskeletal, respiratory, cardiovascular, endocrine, gastrointestinal, nervous, and reproductive systems, as noted by the American Psychological Association. Individuals experiencing chronic stress may experience a variety of symptoms. Physical manifestations could include headaches, digestive issues, muscle tension, and elevated blood pressure, among others. Prolonged exposure to stress can also lead to mental health challenges such as anxiety and depression.

To lessen the onset of overwhelming stress, there are practical strategies individuals can employ. Engaging in physical activity, even through a brief walk, can effectively alleviate stress. Additionally, developing a mindset that focuses on acknowledging accomplished tasks rather than dwelling on unfinished ones can promote a sense of achievement and satisfaction. Setting short-term goals empowers individuals to regain control over their immediate circumstances.

There are many misconceptions about chronic stress. Some people may feel overwhelmed and embarrassed about their chronic stress symptoms. For individuals who feel this way, Krystal Morrison,

PhD, Psychologist at Brown Medicine, states, "Oftentimes I like to explain that it's likely you're having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation." Another misconception, especially for people dealing with long term stress, is that things can't get better. When you start to feel less like yourself and have these thoughts, it's essential to reach out for help.

For anyone looking to learn more about stress, there are reputable resources on the National Institute of Mental Health website as well as the Center for Disease Control site. To commemorate Stress Awareness Month this April, The Stress Management Society recommends the following: talk about stress and its effects to reduce the stigma associated with it, share coping mechanisms that have worked for you, and remember to look after yourself by taking time out of your day to do something you enjoy.



For more tips on stress management, check out this video with Krystal Morrison, PhD.

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BROWN MEDICINE
BROWN PHYSICIANS, INC.

110 Elm Street
Providence, RI 02903
1-877-771-7401
BrownMed.org

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