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Nurse-to-be becomes patient, learns lessons on caring

Allie Harmatys was playing basketball when she ruptured her Achilles tendon. “It felt like someone kicked me,” says Harmatys. “It started swelling and bruising immediately.”


She made that appointment and then she started to worry. Not just about her injury, but also about whether her care would be covered by her insurance, which was set to end soon.

“I’d been a medic in the Army Reserve for six years, and was still covered by Tricare, the military insurance,” she says. “But I wasn’t sure how many days I had left on my policy.”

There was another worry as well: Harmatys was a week away from graduating from nursing school and moving home to West Bend, Wisconsin. “It was stressful and not a convenient time to be injured,” she says.

When Harmatys explained her situation to staff at Mayo Clinic Health System in Onalaska, they got to work scheduling tests. And when those tests revealed Harmatys would need surgery, they quickly scheduled that, as well.

“Everything happened within days,” Harmatys says. “It was amazing to me how my health care team met my specific, time-sensitive needs.”

That team included Charles Nolte, D.O., the orthopedic surgeon who repaired Harmatys’ ruptured tendon, and Aaron Jacobson, the physician assistant who Harmatys would see for her postsurgical appointments. “I moved the day after surgery, but still drove 3 1/2 hours back to La Crosse for my postsurgical appointments,” she says. “It was worth it to me. Everyone was so kind.”

That kindness and care followed her home to West Bend, where Harmatys began physical therapy. “Aaron contacted my PT (physical therapist) before I started therapy and made it so smooth to transition my care,” she says. “And he called me soon after I started to see how things were going.”

Harmatys says her recovery is going well. “I can’t run or jump yet, but I’m able to use the stationary bike and elliptical,” she says. “Everything’s going according to plan.”

And while she’s anxious to fully recover, Harmatys says there’s a silver lining to being a patient. “This experience gave me great perspective on the patient’s point of view,” she says. “People went out of their way to make things happen for me. They genuinely listened to my needs and concerns. I’ll carry all of that forward into my nursing career.”

If you’ve got a nagging pain that’s keeping you from being at the top of your game, Mayo Clinic Health System can help. Learn more at mayoclinichealthsystem.org.
Creak, creak, creak. If achy joints have you feeling like the Tin Man, don’t just chalk it up to getting older. Those aches and pains could signal something more serious. And treatable. No oil required.

“Arthritis is a common cause of joint pain and stiffness,” says Kariline Bringe, M.D., an orthopedic surgeon at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse and Onalaska. “It affects millions of people, and you don’t have to be as old as you might think to develop it. People of all ages have arthritis.”

2 types of arthritis
There are two main types of arthritis: osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.

“Over time, the cartilage in your joints can wear down and cause osteoarthritis,” Dr. Bringe says. “Carrying extra weight can increase the damage to your joints.”

If that wear and tear gets bad enough, the cartilage can become so damaged that your bones rub against each other. That can be painful and limit your movement.

The other common type of arthritis — rheumatoid — is an autoimmune disorder. Your body’s immune system attacks itself, causing your joints to become inflamed and swollen. Eventually, your joints may become deformed.

Treatment
“There are a number of treatments you can try to reduce pain and have more function,” Dr. Bringe says.

Common treatments include medication, including over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Your health care provider may recommend prescription medications, depending on the type of arthritis and symptoms you’re having. There are also medications that can be injected directly into your joints to relieve pain.

While arthritis may leave you feeling like taking it easy, gentle exercise may be just what the doctor ordered.

“People might not feel like going to the gym when they are in pain,” Dr. Bringe says. “But regular exercise has a host of benefits for people who have arthritis. It really does help keep joints flexible.”

Other benefits include strengthening the muscles around the joints, maintaining bone strength, and improving energy and mood. Low-impact activities, such as swimming and yoga, are good choices.

Exercise also can help with weight loss and weight management. That’s important because extra weight can stress your joints.

Your diet also can play a role in managing pain.

“Eating clean can make a big difference for some people with arthritis,” Dr. Bringe says. “There are certain foods that cause inflammation and avoiding them can help manage the condition.”

Processed foods, carbohydrates, unhealthy fats and red meat can all contribute to inflammation. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fish are anti-inflammatory choices.

If your pain persists despite nonsurgical treatments, you may benefit from surgery. Options include joint fusion, repair or replacement. For information on joint replacement, turn to page 12.

“There are lots of things you can do to manage arthritis pain,” Dr. Bringe says. “Talk to your health care provider about which might be best for you.”
Curl up with something warm and healthy this winter: cream of wild rice soup.

"Wild rice is a nutrient-rich whole grain with a nutty flavor that is a good source of dietary fiber and contains more protein than other types of rice," says Allie Wergin, a dietitian at Mayo Clinic Health System in Le Sueur and New Prague, Minnesota.

Using 1% milk and pureed beans in this recipe keeps the fat low and amps up the flavor and texture.

Cream of Wild Rice Soup

**Ingredients**
Servings: 4

- 1/2 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 1/2 cups diced yellow onion
- 1 cup diced carrot
- 1 cup diced celery
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 cups chopped kale
- 1 tablespoon minced parsley
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 1 teaspoon fennel seeds, crushed
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup unsalted prepared white beans (or about half of a 15.5 ounce can of white beans, rinsed and drained)
- 2 cups 1% milk
- 1/2 cup wild rice, cooked

**Directions**
In a pot over medium heat, add canola oil and saute onion, carrot, celery and garlic until lightly brown. Stir in kale, parsley, stock and spices. Bring to a boil.

In a blender, puree beans with milk. Add the bean mixture to the soup, bring to simmer and add rice. Cook for 30 minutes.

**Nutritional information per serving** (2 cups): 236 calories; 4 g fat (1 g saturated fat; 0 g trans fat); 6 mg cholesterol; 180 mg sodium; 38 g carbohydrates; 7 g fiber; 0 g added sugars; 12 g protein.

Visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/healthyrecipes for more hearty and healthy recipes to try this winter.
**Expert answers for your questions**

**How can knowing my numbers improve my health?**

Knowing your numbers — generally, blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and body mass index — can alert you to your risk for developing a host of serious problems, including heart disease, stroke and diabetes. And knowing you are at risk can motivate you to make healthy changes.

If your measurements are outside of the normal range, you can take steps to bring your numbers back in line. That may mean taking medications prescribed by your health care provider. Or it may mean adopting healthy habits at home, such as eating lots of fruits and vegetables, limiting processed foods, avoiding alcohol and smoking, and exercising 30 minutes or more most days of the week.

There are some other numbers that are helpful to know, as well. Measurements that test your cardiovascular fitness, strength, flexibility and balance can help you set fitness goals.

Take a few minutes to perform some baseline tests or meet with a personal trainer. Measure how fast you can walk or run a mile, how many pushups you can do without stopping, how far you reach past your toes when sitting on the ground, and how long you can stand on one foot. Then start working toward improvement in all areas. Move just a little faster on your next run. Buy some weights and perform bicep curls while watching TV. Take a yoga class to help with flexibility or a tai chi class to help with balance. Stand on one foot while brushing your teeth or standing in line, which can help you develop balance. After six weeks, check your measurements and see how much you’ve improved. Repeat again every six weeks. You manage what you measure, and it’s motivating to see progress over time.

**Can expressing gratitude improve my mental and physical health?**

In a word, yes! A gratitude practice has a host of mental and physical benefits. Studies have shown that feeling thankful can improve sleep, mood and immunity and can decrease depression, anxiety and your risk of disease. If there was a pill that could do this, we’d all be taking it.

To reap the benefits of gratitude, it should be practiced daily — just as you’d take that magic pill if it existed. Try starting your day out by thinking of someone you’re grateful for as soon as you wake up. It could be a friend who sends you funny texts, a teacher who recognizes your child’s gifts or the barista who hands you your coffee with a sincere smile. Later, thank that person with a text, note or kind word when you see him or her.

Gestures like that benefit you by releasing oxytocin, a hormone that helps connect people. Some people call it the love hormone. You’ll also benefit the person on the other end of the exchange. After all, who doesn’t like to be thanked or recognized for their efforts or just for being who they are?

Another idea is to keep a gratitude journal. This could be an evening practice — something you do right before bed to get your mind ready for sleep. Think back on the day and write down things that went right. Maybe your spouse took care of a household repair, you heard your favorite song on the radio or you saw a double rainbow. Or write about the many blessings that you may have started to take for granted, such as having clean water to drink or having the ability to walk.

Our lives are full of reasons to feel thankful. Sometimes we just need to remember to notice them.
The start of a new year is a great time to get moving. To lose 1 lb. of fat per week, you need to burn 500 calories per day more than you consume. Here are some ideas on how to accomplish this.

Calories burned in one hour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Calories Burned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking (2 mph)</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weightlifting</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking (3.5 mph)</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking (leisurely)</td>
<td>292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golfing</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross-country skiing</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rope jumping</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running (8 mph)</td>
<td>986</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Everyday activity expends a lot of energy. Here are a few more ways to burn more calories.

**AT HOME**
- Wash your own car
- Choose hand tools
- Speed up the pace of housework

**AT WORK**
- Choose the stairs
- Take walk and talk meetings
- Use a standing work station

**OUT AND ABOUT**
- Park at the back of the lot
- Take an extra lap while shopping
- Take a longer route when walking

For more ideas on incorporating movement into your day, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/livewell

Working out can increase your health and fitness, but getting to the gym can be difficult.

"Buying a few pieces of fitness equipment can bring the gym to you, and may increase your chances of working out," says Jason Lee, D.O., a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Sports Medicine physician at Mayo Clinic Health System in Faribault and Rochester, Minnesota.

Here are some inexpensive pieces of gear to start your home gym:

1. **Jump rope**
   Jumping rope gets your heart pumping and offers a great cardiovascular workout. It requires little space and can be performed by people at any fitness level.

2. **Mat**
   Mats can protect your back and joints from hard surfaces during your workout.

3. **Dumbbells**
   Dumbbells come in various weights and designs. Choose weights that offer a little challenge and keep them handy. You could curl your way through a commercial break or use first thing in the morning.

4. **Resistance bands**
   Using resistance bands can improve your strength and muscle tone. They take up little space and can travel with you for work or on vacation.

5. **Stability ball**
   This piece of gear will strengthen your core. Stronger back and abdominal muscles can improve your balance and stability.

Read more about a stability ball workout on page 14 and download instructions on using this equipment for a full-body workout at mayoclinichealthsystem.org/54321
Joint replacement: Not your grandfather’s surgery

New materials mean artificial joints are lasting longer than in the past. And in the case of hip surgery, new techniques have made recovery easier and less painful. In short: This isn’t your grandfather’s hip replacement.

How it’s done
In a joint replacement procedure, an orthopedic surgeon removes damaged bone and cartilage and replaces them with parts made of metal, ceramic, plastic or polymers. The artificial joint improves function and reduces pain.

“One of the best parts of my job is seeing patients after surgery,” Dr. Johnson says. “They can’t believe how much better they feel.”

Risks
Risks with hip or knee replacement procedures are similar to those of other surgeries. They include the possibility of developing an infection or blood clots. In the case of hip replacement, there’s also a chance of a fracture during surgery or dislocation after surgery. And because even artificial joints can wear out, there’s a chance that the procedure would need to be repeated at some point in the future.

Recovery
Most patients go home after one or two nights in the hospital. Usually, people go home using crutches, a cane or walker for several weeks after surgery. Most daily activities such as shopping, driving and housekeeping can be resumed three to six weeks after a knee replacement and six to 12 weeks after a hip replacement.

To get the most out of the procedures, patients need to stretch and strengthen their new joints. A physical therapist will help patients begin those exercises in the hospital the day after surgery.

“Patients are given exercises to do at home during their recovery,” Dr. Johnson says. “They’re crucial to getting back strength and mobility in the joint.”

Results
Most people experience pain relief and overall improvement in their quality of life after surgery. And thanks to new materials, artificial joints are lasting longer than in the past — up to 20 or 30 years in some cases.

“Performing joint replacement surgery is one of the best parts of my job because I see people get rid of pain they’ve been living with for years,” Dr. Johnson says. “They feel like they’re starting a new chapter after surgery.”

As countless Americans — maybe even you — know, arthritis can make every step a pain. Over the years, wear-and-tear on knee and hip joints can eventually make it difficult to walk, climb stairs, and get in and out of chairs. When this pain persists despite conservative treatments such as physical therapy and medication, it may be time to consider joint replacement surgery.

“If pain is getting in the way of your daily life, I recommend at least looking into it,” says Nathan Johnson, D.O., an orthopedic surgeon at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse and Tomah. “Joint replacement is safe and effective for most people. It’s a procedure we do every day and with very good results.”

To learn more about joint replacement surgery, including information on patient education classes to help decide if surgery is right for you, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org.
Discover Gratitude
Practicing mindful thankfulness is one way to boost your spirits and enhance your overall health. Join this virtual challenge to journal daily about the big and small things in life for which you are thankful.
March 30–May 1
Free. Go to mayoclinichealthsystem.org/gratitude to learn more, register and print your journal by March 28. Journal sheets are private and will not be collected.

Passport to Heart Health
Join this monthlong virtual challenge to take action and improve your personal heart health. You will receive weekly emails with activities to guide you on a heart-healthy journey. Print a passport card to track your progress and complete a survey at the end to receive a prize.
Feb. 1–29 | Free.
Go to the Classes & Events section of mayoclinichealthsystem.org to register.

The Big Blue Dragon Boat Festival
Join Mayo Clinic Health System and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse at the seventh annual Big Blue Dragon Boat Festival. Teams will take part in a colorful and spirited competition on the Black River. Funds raised at the event will support the Center for Breast Care and youth programming at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater La Crosse.
June 20
Copeland Park, 1130 Copeland Park Drive, La Crosse
Visit bigbluedragonboat.com for information.

Strengthen your core

About 80% of Americans struggle with lower back pain at some point. One key to preventing this, or quickly recovering from back pain, is to strengthen your abdominal, pelvic, diaphragm and back muscles. These muscle groups are also referred to as core muscles.

“Implementing core workouts into your daily exercise help prevent back pain, but also it improves your posture,” says Denise Grabowski, a physical therapist at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

When performing core exercises, make sure to use a mat or lay on carpet. Also, don’t forget to take deep, slow breaths and exhale with the effort of the movement to activate your core muscles.

“There are non-strenuous exercises that can help strengthen your core at home including yoga and Pilates or using a stability ball” says Grabowski. She recommends using a stability ball and yoga mat when you try the following core exercise at home.

Bridge
1. Lie on your back with your legs resting on top of the ball.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Inhale deeply.
3. Exhale as you tighten your core, lifting your hips and buttock off the floor into a bridge. Hold steady for three deep breaths. This works your core muscles and the muscles along your backside — the gluteal muscles and hamstrings — as they contract to keep you in place.
4. Return to the starting position and repeat.
5. For added challenge, raise your right leg off the ball. Repeat with your left leg.

Bridge

Denise Grabowski, physical therapist
La Crosse

Get tips for selecting the right size stability ball for you and download instructions for a quick, 15-minute core workout at mayoclinichealthsystem.org/exercise.

For more information and other upcoming event and wellness opportunities close to home, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org and click on “classes and events.”