hometown health

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Benign brain tumor discovered and removed – all in a week

“My son took me over, and after the MRI they told us it would be a little while before they had the results,” Lindner says. He and his son were having lunch when Lindner received a call. “They wanted me back at the hospital.”

There, Lindner was told the MRI had revealed a meningioma, a type of brain tumor.

“Most meningiomas are benign, slow-growing tumors,” says Shelly Lwu, M.D., a neurosurgeon at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse. “If the meningioma is small and not causing any symptoms, we would most likely follow with repeat imaging. For the ones that are large, causing symptoms, and/or growing faster, surgical removal is usually recommended.”

Since Lindner’s tumor was large and causing symptoms, he was admitted to the hospital and scheduled for surgery two days later. Testing revealed that the tumor was non-cancerous, as Dr. Lwu had predicted.

“It all went textbook,” Lindner says. “I was walking the day after surgery and went home Friday at noon. It was pretty incredible.”

Dr. Lwu says that the ability to help people quickly when they need it is one of the strengths of the Neurosurgery Department at Mayo Clinic Health System.

“We were able to provide David with good care in a timely fashion, which then allowed him to get back to his regular life quickly,” she says. “We will be following David in the future with repeat MRIs as there is a very small chance of recurrence. But most likely the surgery is all the treatment he will ever need.”

Lindner says he’s grateful for the care he received.

“Dr. Lwu and her assistant were so nice and explained everything so well,” Lindner says. “I was totally confident going in to surgery. Everyone at the hospital was so concerned and so nice. I can’t say enough good things about them.”

Dr. Lwu says that’s another strength of her department.

“I work with a really great group of people, genuine and kind,” she says. “We all have the same goal of providing excellent patient care.”

At first, the headaches were easy for David Lindner to brush off. He’d just returned to work after a vacation, and suspected that the travel and time change were responsible for his aching head. But when the headaches continued and his vision began to blur that weekend, he realized he might have a bigger problem than jetlag.

“I thought, ‘There’s something wrong,’” says Lindner, a Sparta resident who works in construction. “I knew I couldn’t be driving a lift like that.”

So that Monday morning, instead of going to work, Lindner went to the Sparta Eye Clinic, part of Mayo Clinic Health System. After examining him, a provider told Lindner he’d need an MRI and called his primary care provider, Marc Tumerman, M.D., to schedule the test for him at Mayo Clinic Health System in La Crosse.

You can read more of Lindner’s story at mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health.
Whether they’re pounding, pulsing or piercing, headaches are a pain. Scott Spritzer, D.O., a neurologist at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire, shares tips for taming — and possibly preventing — common types of headaches.

Know your type

“We tend to talk about headaches as if there’s just one type, but that’s not the case. There are real differences, and treatment options depend on the type of headache,” Dr. Spritzer says. “Your provider’s primary goal when evaluating headaches is to be sure there is not a worrisome secondary cause to the headaches. After performing an evaluation and completing any necessary tests, your provider then is able to distinguish primary headache disorders from headaches that are due to something else.

The most common headache types are:

- **Tension**
  These headaches cause dull and achy pain. They may include a sensation of tightness or pressure across your forehead, or on the sides and back of your head.

- **Migraine**
  These headaches cause severe, throbbing pain, usually on one side of the head. They’re often accompanied by nausea or vomiting, and may last up to three days.

- **Cluster**
  These headaches are sudden, severe and repetitive. The pain often is focused around one eye. Cluster headaches generally come at the same time every day for a period of time, usually from several weeks to several months. Then they stop for a period of time — months or years — before striking again.

Common treatments

“I always try and emphasize the benefits of nonmedication headache treatments, as they alone may help significantly,” Dr. Spritzer says. “There is evidence that nonmedication treatments like mindfulness, cognitive behavioral therapy and progressive muscle relaxation therapy can help people with chronic headaches. In many circumstances, medications also may be part of your headache treatment plan.”

Some medication treatment options include:

- **Over-the-counter pain relievers**
  Aspirin, ibuprofen and acetaminophen all may do the trick for tension headaches and migraines, but they won’t relieve cluster headaches.

- **Prescription medications**
  A number of prescription medications can be used to treat migraines and the nausea that often accompanies them. There are also medications that can be taken to prevent migraines. Some of these medications also work on cluster headaches.

Prevention

“A number of lifestyle factors can impact the likelihood of developing tension headaches and migraines,” Dr. Spritzer says. “Managing those factors can not only help you avoid pain, but also have other health benefits, as well.

Dr. Spritzer makes these headache prevention recommendations:

- **Exercise.**
  Aerobic exercise releases tension and stress, which can contribute to developing headaches.

- **Get enough sleep.**
  Aim for enough sleep — seven to nine hours for adults — and try to go to bed and get up at the same time each day.

To print a headache tracker, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/headache.
Late harvest bounty

Pumpkin isn’t just for pies and lattes. The fall staple can be added to a host of foods for a tasty — and healthy — treat.

“Pumpkin is a great source of vitamin A, fiber and potassium,” says Nancy Olson, a dietitian and certified diabetes educator at Mayo Clinic Health System in Red Wing.

To get some of those benefits, use pumpkin puree in place of butter or oil in baked goods. Or try this easy soup recipe for a warm dose of fall flavor.

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**Pumpkin Soup**

**Ingredients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Servings: 4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/4 cup water, divided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small onion, chopped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 can (15 ounces) pumpkin puree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 cups unsalted vegetable broth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cup fat-free milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8 teaspoon black pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 green onion top, chopped</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nutrition information per serving:**

- 77 calories
- 1 g fat (trace amounts of saturated fat; 0 g trans fats)
- 1 mg cholesterol
- 57 mg sodium
- 14 g carbohydrate
- 4 g fiber
- 3 g protein

**Directions**

- In a large saucepan, heat 1/4 cup water over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Don’t let the onion dry out.
- Add the remaining water, pumpkin, broth, cinnamon and nutmeg. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes. Stir in the milk and cook until hot. Don’t boil.
- Ladle soup into warmed bowls, and garnish with black pepper and green onion tops. Serve immediately.

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Our Hometown Health blog is a place for you to get information and resources to improve your health and well-being.

Here are five recent posts that generated some buzz:

- **“Mental and emotional health assessment”**
  Many aspects affect your mental and emotional health, including worry, mood, sleep, stress, relationships and alcohol consumption. Take a few minutes to answer nine questions that will help evaluate your wellness.

- **“Kindhearted kid perseveres through multiple heart surgeries”**
  Matthew Makela is a 3-year-old who tucks in 20 stuffed animals nightly and gives his younger sister a kiss, hug and farewell at day care drop-off. He’s also a kid who had his first cardiac surgery at seven days old. Read about his congenital heart defects and watch a video of him run the bases at a local baseball game.

- **“What is a spinal fusion, and does it work?”**
  “Oh, my aching back!” If your back pain is caused by structural issues, and not muscle or ligament strain, find out what spinal fusion is and how you may benefit.

- **“Is Botox the fix for all facial wrinkles?”**
  Botox is a great treatment for some but not all facial wrinkles. Learn about other treatment options that can help restore a more youthful appearance.

- **“Over-the-counter prescription medication safety”**
  When medication is prescribed by a health care provider and taken correctly, it can help you with day-to-day life. But did you know that you also should take precautions with over-the-counter medications?

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For more healthy recipes and to learn how to make your own pumpkin puree, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/healthyrecipes.

Read these and more blogs at mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health.
What should I say and how I can help a loved one that has a problem with drugs or alcohol?

Communicating with someone you love about a drug or alcohol problem can be challenging and painful. People who are addicted to drugs or alcohol sometimes can be in denial and may not recognize the negative effects their drug or alcohol use has on them — and on others. Even with family members, there can be denial and avoidance. However, an honest, caring conversation may help lead them to get the help they need.

Timing is important. Talk to them when they are sober. Let them know you are concerned about them, and share examples that illustrate why. Tell them about destructive behaviors you have seen and the effects those behaviors have on them, as well as on family and friends. Maybe their drug or alcohol use has caused them to call in sick to work, putting their job at risk. Or maybe they’ve missed important family functions or their children’s events because of their use. Try to be as specific as possible about what you have seen. And be ready to offer solutions and help to quit using, such as a list of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous meetings or treatment facilities nearby.

If a one-on-one conversation doesn’t lead to change, you may need to stage an intervention. This is a structured process that involves family; friends; and often a professional, such as a doctor or drug and alcohol counselor. An intervention should be well-planned, with each person involved knowing exactly what he or she is doing. You also should have a specific treatment plan in place to present. If they refuse to follow the plan, friends and family should be ready to take action on consequences that they presented during the intervention.

These are not easy conversations to have or easy steps to take. But these conversations and steps could save their lives. Lead with compassion and avoid accusations or blame. They have a disease and are not bad people who need to ‘get good.’ They are ill and need help to get well. Addiction is a disease that can be treated. There is hope, and talking about the problem is the first step toward freedom from addiction.

How is stress connected to my physical health? How can I manage stress in our 24/7 connected world?

If you’ve spent a day with cranky kids or been stuck in traffic when you’re supposed to be at an appointment, you’re probably familiar with some of the ways stress can effect your body. You may have felt tight muscles in your neck, a pounding headache or pure exhaustion.

When you live with stress over a longer period, the physical effects are even greater. Today’s fast-paced lifestyles and 24/7 connectivity mean that many of us are experiencing stress on a near-constant basis. That means our body’s stress-response system — which is meant to act as an alarm alerting us to immediate dangers — is engaged all the time, releasing a constant flood of hormones that trigger a number of responses in our bodies. The release of adrenaline leads to increased heart rate and higher blood pressure. Surging cortisol leads to an increased amount of blood sugar in the bloodstream.

Over time, these responses can contribute to the development of many serious health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, anxiety and depression. That’s why it’s important to find ways to manage stress. Start with foundational habits, which can go a long way toward managing stress. Get enough sleep; eat healthy foods; and get some physical activity most days of the week.

Work on being present in the moment.

Avoid constantly checking your phone. Instead focus on what you’re doing and the people you are with. Take focus a step further by meditating. There are some great apps that can help you get started. Yoga is another great way to focus and calm your mind while also moving your body.

And don’t be afraid to set boundaries. Saying no to work, family or friends can be hard. But it’s important to carve out time for yourself. Making space in your life for self-care means you’ll be better able to handle the obligations you commit to.
Everyone has a memory slip now and then. But those slips can become more frequent as you age. To turn back time—or try to—consider the simple activities to the right. Each of these activities may help slow memory loss and lower your risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias, according to Donn Dexter, M.D., a neurologist at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire:

1. **Get moving.** Exercise appears to benefit your brain and your body. Active people are less likely to experience a decline in their mental function, and they have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Aim for at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

2. **Get your Z’s.** Sleep consolidates memories, which makes them easier to recall. Sleep also may clear abnormal proteins from your brain. Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep per night.

3. **Go Greek.** Following a Mediterranean diet—heavy on plant-based foods, whole grains and healthy fats, and light on red meat and salt—is associated with a reduced risk of Alzheimer’s disease.

4. **Train your brain.** Exercise keeps your muscles strong while mental exercise keeps your brain strong. Do crossword puzzles or sudoku. Play bridge. Learn something new.

5. **Get social — and not just on your phone.** Spending time with others can ward off depression and stress, which can contribute to memory loss. So invite your neighbors over for coffee or take a walk with a friend. Volunteer at your place of worship or an elementary school.

**Ways to keep your memory sharp**

**DONN DEXTER, M.D.** Neurology, Eau Claire

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**DATA TRACK**

| Hometown Health | Fall 2019 |

**BACK PAIN COSTS**

$100-200 BILLION

annually with 2/3 being lost wages and productivity.

80% OF THE POPULATION will have low back pain in their lifetime.

25% OF THAT POPULATION REPORT back pain in the past 3 months.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Rest and activity modification
- Physical therapy
- Pain medication
- Spinal manipulation and chiropractic
- Steroid injections
- Surgery, in some cases
- Complementary and integrative health treatments (massage and acupuncture)
- Adult stem cells (experimental)
- Neurostimulation therapy, in some cases

**Get additional memory tips**
at mayoclinichealthsystem.org/64321.

**Download back pain graphic** at mayoclinichealthsystem.org/achingback.

Source: National Institutes of Health
When it comes to back pain, there’s good news and bad news.

“The good news is it’s rarely a sign of something serious and usually relatively short-lived,” says Mark Pichelmann, M.D., a neurosurgeon at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. “The bad news is that it’s common. Most of us will experience an episode or more of back pain that limits our activities at some point.”

What’s behind the pain?
Dr. Pichelmann shares that the most common causes of back pain include:

- **Muscle or ligament strain**
  Repeatedly lifting heavy objects or twisting your back quickly can strain muscles and spinal ligaments. Carrying extra weight can strain your back, leading to pain.

- **Bulging or ruptured disks**
  Disks — the cushioning between the bones in your spine — can bulge or rupture, and press on a nerve.

- **Arthritis**
  Lower back pain sometimes is caused by osteoarthritis. Arthritis also can lead to a narrowing of the space around the spinal cord, a condition called spinal stenosis.

  Dr. Pichelmann says that it’s not always possible to pinpoint a reason for back pain.

  “Sometimes you can trace back pain to muscle strain from a fall or from lifting something heavy,” Dr. Pichelmann says. “But commonly we see patients who can’t tie their pain to any specific activity or event.”

 Relief
When you’re hurting, you may want to head for the couch. But that’s moving in the wrong direction, Dr. Pichelmann says.

  “You want to keep doing your regular activities and even light exercise, if you can tolerate it,” Dr. Pichelmann says. “If activity makes the pain worse, you may have to slow down a little for a short period of time.”

  Over-the-counter pain medications, such as ibuprofen or naproxen, might be enough to ease the pain.

  If your pain isn’t better after several weeks, Dr. Pichelmann says you may need to see your health care provider for an evaluation.

 Prevention
“The best way to avoid back pain is to prevent it by taking good care of your back,” Dr. Pichelmann says.

He recommends:

- **Exercise.**
  Walking, swimming and other low-impact aerobic activities can strengthen your back.

- **Build muscle strength and flexibility.**
  Stretching your back, and strengthening your back and core muscles, can support and protect your back.

- **Sit, stand and lift correctly.**
  Avoid slouching, and standing or sitting in one position, for too long. When you have to lift something heavy, lift from your legs — not your back.

- **Maintain a healthy weight.**
  Carrying extra pounds strains back muscles.

- **If you smoke, quit.**
  Smoking reduces blood flow to the lower spine, which can keep your body from delivering enough nutrients to the disks in your back.

When to worry
Rarely, back pain may be a sign of something serious. However, you should schedule an appointment with your health care provider if you have pain that:

- Follows a fall, blow to your back or other injury
- Is constant or intense, especially at night or when you lie down
- Spreads down one or both legs, especially if the pain extends below your knee
- Causes weakness, numbness or tingling in one or both legs
- Occurs with swelling or redness on your back, which could indicate an infection
- Occurs with unintended weight loss
- Occurs with new bowel or bladder control problems

To learn more and download a back pain graphic, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/achingback.
Posture check

Modern life seems to be conspiring against your better habits. You want to stand tall and sit up straight. But cellphones draw your eyes down, curving your neck.

At work, many spend their days staring at a computer, slouching rather than sitting at attention. Those habits can strain muscles and joints, causing body pain.

“Good posture is not just about the way you look,” says Andrew Jagim, Ph.D., director of Sports Medicine Research at Mayo Clinic Health System in Onalaska. “It can have an effect on how you feel in addition to impacting certain movement abilities over time.”

Find your healthy posture

Dr. Jagim shares this technique for finding your healthy posture: stand up against a wall with your upper back, shoulders and bottom touching the wall. Your feet should be a couple of inches away from the wall. Step away from the wall and maintain that position. “It will get easier over time as your muscles strengthen,” Dr. Jagim says.

Sitting strategies

Frequent standing is one of the easiest ways to protect against the harms of sitting. “If you work at a desk, try to get up at least once an hour,” Dr. Jagim says. “Walk to talk to a colleague or get a drink of water. While you’re up, take a minute to focus on your posture and do a few light stretches.”

Dr. Jagim recommends that your desk is set up to support proper body alignment.

Check that:

- Your keyboard is at elbow height, so your hands can rest on the desk.
- Your computer screen or laptop is at eye level.
- Your chair’s height allows your feet to touch the ground.

Cellphone tips

Dr. Jagim says that when you’re looking at your cellphone, you should hold it at eye level. “That way, you’re not bending forward and straining your neck,” he says.

To download more posture tips, visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org/exercise.

New Mom and Baby Group

Join other moms and babies for conversation and information.

Thursdays, 10:30–11:30 a.m.
Sally Olson Conference Room, Mayo Clinic Health System, 815 11th St. S., La Crosse

Successful Aging Series

A monthly presentation series designed to educate seniors on health care topics.

Fourth Monday of each month, 2:30 p.m.
Marycrest Auditorium, Mayo Clinic Health System, 700 West Ave. S., La Crosse.
Call 608-392-4172 to register.

“Annie Jr.”

Don’t miss this all-ages play presented by The Penguin Project and sponsored by Mayo Clinic Health System.

Oct. 11–13
La Crosse Community Theatre, 428 Front St. S., La Crosse
Tickets are available at lacrossecommunitytheatre.org.

Enchanted Forest

Enchanted Forest is a trick-or-treat hike through Myrick Park that is not scary. Here children can dress up in their Halloween costumes and meet friendly characters as they collect candy and other goodies along the way. This event is sponsored by Mayo Clinic Health System.

Saturday, Oct. 19, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.
Myrick Park, 2000 La Crosse St., La Crosse

Mobile Teaching Kitchen Demonstration

If you think meatless meals are only for vegetarians, think again. Learn about the benefits of going meatless and how you can incorporate these tasty, budget-friendly meals into your weekly routine. This demonstration is sponsored by Mayo Clinic Health System.

Tuesday, Oct. 29, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
Southside Neighborhood Center, 1300 Sixth St. S., La Crosse
Register at cityoflacrosse.org/parksandrec.

ADHD: Super Parenting Skills and Beyond

Learn advanced techniques for parenting your ADHD child.

Thursday, Oct. 7, 6–7:30 p.m.
Marycrest Auditorium, Mayo Clinic Health System, 700 West Ave. S., La Crosse.
Call 608-392-9717 to register.