

The Miriam Hospital Traditions

For our friends and supporters.



2021

Losing is Winning at the Center for Weight and Wellness

Maintaining a healthy weight and proper eating habits are essential components of continued wellness. But even in “normal” times, many struggle to achieve these goals as busy lifestyles and everyday stress often undermine best intentions. And during the COVID-19 pandemic, this has been doubly so.

“It’s been a tough time for people who’ve maybe never had weight issues in their lives before,” says Vincent Pera, MD, director of the Center for Weight and Wellness (CWW) at The Miriam Hospital. “But, it’s been particularly difficult on that population of people who have and do struggle with weight.”

For these individuals, Dr. Pera explains, the disruption of schedules, the isolation of being home more with fewer social connections, and the closing of gyms, parks and other places where they’d go to stay active, has created a perfect storm for weight gain.

“Anxiety, uncertainty, stress, and change of routine are factors that have a profound effect on one’s emotional state and decision making,” Dr. Pera points out. “Cumulatively, these issues add up in specific ways that are unique to each patient and often trigger the behaviors that lead to weight gain.”

Fortunately, the CWW is here to help. For more than 30 years, the center has offered a full spectrum of treatment options for moderately to severely overweight adults and adolescents. The center’s founding philosophy is rooted in taking a holistic and collaborative approach to addressing the various issues that contribute to obesity. “It was a novel idea at the time and remains the hallmark of our program today,” Dr. Pera says.



Lorraine Russell before



Lorraine Russell after

As such, their treatment teams still comprise a collection of multidisciplinary health care professionals including physicians, exercise physiologists, behavioral therapists, nurses, and registered dietitians, among others. The tailored, personalized services provided by the center include dietary counseling; behavioral evaluations; specialty groups dedicated to topics such as emotional eating, diabetes management, and binge-eating; as well as maintenance programs for long-term support.

(continued on page 2)



The Miriam Hospital

Lifespan. Delivering health with care.®

Since its launch, the center has served roughly 14,000 patients and boasted an average weight loss of 45 pounds for those in active treatment after 16 weeks—the treatment team even helped one patient lose 320 pounds. But their success isn't measured solely by numbers on a scale.

“A lot of our patients have comorbidities like hypertension, hyperlipidemia, acid reflux, diabetes, or arthritis,” Dr. Pera says. “So, as we work with them to reduce their weight and improve their overall health, we'll also work with their docs to help modulate and reduce their medications ... and many are off meds completely.”

Lorraine Russell is but one example of a patient who has turned things around under the center's guidance. The 60-year-old from Riverside, Rhode Island, entered the program in August 2019. A patient who suffered from heart failure and rheumatoid arthritis, Lorraine had just completed a cardiac rehab program at The Miriam and was encouraged to enroll in the center. At first, she declined. But when she was later told that she needed to lose 50 pounds in order to undergo a knee replacement surgery, she agreed.

Initially put on the center's full fast program (i.e. six meal replacement shakes a day) and later transitioned to a more balanced intake regimen, Lorraine has seen her weight drop from 291 pounds down to 176 pounds by dedicating herself to the program mind, body and soul. In addition to the nutritional aspects, she participates in daily low-impact exercise and various education and counseling sessions. “If you follow the program it works!” she says, even though she feared the restrictions brought about by COVID-19 might derail her.

“At first, I missed the in-person weigh-ins. That was a big thing for me. And I missed the camaraderie, too,” she says. “I had to learn to adjust to participating in the program virtually, but I got the hang of it.”

Dr. Pera is thankful that Lorraine and so many others like her did. “The therapeutic connections we've been able to establish and maintain with people like Lorraine during the pandemic have been very strong. Our patients are grateful, and the results have been positive. So, it doesn't get better than that.”

TIPS FOR REVERSING PANDEMIC WEIGHT GAIN

Gained weight during quarantine? You are not alone. Here are some helpful tips to get you back on track.

EAT RIGHT.



The basics still apply. Control portion sizes, stay hydrated, and maintain a balanced, varied diet of nutrient-dense foods. Also, make healthy foods more easily accessible by cutting them up and storing them in clear containers and avoid the pandemic food rut by trying “boredom busting” new recipes.

GET MOVING.



Physical activity supports weight loss and weight management. Aim for 150 minutes each week and find activities that combine aerobics and muscle strengthening. Remember, anything that gets your heart rate up and burns calories—activities like climbing up and down stairs to do laundry or chasing the kids around the yard—counts.

STRESS LESS.



Practicing mindfulness, getting plenty of sleep, and adopting a nonjudgmental and accepting attitude are all effective ways to reduce stress and stave off emotional eating during difficult times.

STAY CONNECTED.



Social distance is good. Social isolation is bad. People need people, and video platforms like Zoom, FaceTime, Skype and Google Hangouts make it easy to stay in touch with family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. So, use one to set up game nights or just engage in conversation.

Q&A with The Miriam Hospital's New President, Dr. Maria Ducharme

Following a national search, senior vice president of patient care services and chief nursing officer Maria Ducharme, DNP, RN, NEA-BC, was named the hospital's next president, succeeding Arthur J. Sampson. She began her new role on January 1.



Dr. Maria Ducharme

Congratulations on being named president of The Miriam Hospital – what does this opportunity mean to you?

I am beyond excited – and humbled – to lead an organization that means so much to me and to our community, and to continue The Miriam's tradition of excellence into the future. When I started here in 1987, I never imagined my journey would lead to this point. I have held eight different roles within the hospital and each helped prepare me for the role of president, along with having tremendous mentors, with Arthur Sampson right at the top of the list.

You've stayed at The Miriam for more than three decades, what's kept you here on Summit Avenue?

There's no question that I've stayed because of the people. The Miriam has a special culture that values compassion and relationships, and that translates into strong communication, which is the root of delivering exceptional patient care. The people that work here, at every level, are truly unique. We're constantly raising the bar, and that pursuit of excellence is ingrained in everything we do.

What are you most proud about when you think about The Miriam?

There is so much I'm proud of that I could never pick just one thing. Exemplary care, certainly, is right there. And not just the care we extend our patients, but that we show each other. The Miriam to me is family and that further fuels our mission. Of course, being a 6-time Magnet hospital is just amazing. I was 10 years into my Miriam career when we were named Magnet for the first time, and I'm especially grateful to have been a part of each designation.

Looking ahead, what do you envision for the future of the hospital?

There is much uncertainty in our world right now. Post-pandemic, when that comes, may look very different. It is imperative that we retain the elements that define The Miriam and how we work. We must also continue to be creative and innovative, and learn from our recent experiences. We've been able to see where there is significant value added, and we have an opportunity to focus on those areas to further enhance care. And it will always be a priority to continue investing in our staff, and remaining a hospital where people want to come to work every day. Investment in our people translates into improved quality of care for our patients.

Being Grateful is Good for You

Gratitude comes in all different shapes and sizes. There are also many ways to express gratitude. But one thing is consistent—gratitude is good for you.

Officially defined as “the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness,” gratitude can mean different things to different people. Whatever your definition is, it pays to be grateful whenever you can. Studies have shown that gratitude has multiple health benefits, including improved physical health, like fewer headaches and a healthier heart; enhanced mental health, such as feeling happier, reducing depression, and lessening regret; better sleep and increased energy; and higher self-esteem.

With all those benefits, why wait to incorporate gratitude into your daily life? Try recognizing something you're grateful for every day, even write it down, and see how being aware of gratitude begins to make a positive impact on you and those around you.



Peanut Butter Oatmeal Bars



Dry ingredients:

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup whole wheat flour
- 1 cup brown sugar, loosely packed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon baking soda

- 1 cup dry old-fashioned oats
- Optional: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup peanuts or raisins, chopped

Liquid ingredients:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup natural peanut butter
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 1 tablespoon milk (avoid non-fat/skim milk)

Directions:

Yield: 8 Bars

Preheat the oven to 375°

Combine the dry ingredients in a large bowl, adding any optional ingredients. In another bowl, mix together the liquid ingredients. Make a well in the dry ingredients and add the liquid ingredients, using a rubber spatula to combine. The batter should be thick.

Press the mixture into a 9×9-inch square nonstick cake pan. Bake the bars for 14 to 15 minutes, or until the edges are browned. Let cool in the pan, then cut into 8 servings.

Recipe provided by Mary Flynn, PhD, RD, LDN, research dietitian at The Miriam Hospital.

Traditions, a publication of The Miriam Hospital Foundation, is published for the friends and supporters of The Miriam Hospital. For more information, please contact the Development Office at 401-793-2004.

giving.lifespan.org/The-Miriam/Give-Now



The Miriam Hospital

Lifespan. Delivering health with care.®