THE DIRTY TRUTH:
HAND WASHING MATTERS

CRYSTAL BALL:
DIET DOS AND DON'TS

WHY YOU NEED A PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER

CAROLINAS HOSPITAL SYSTEM
HEALTH HAPPENINGS

Waiting Can Be a Losing Game

Life’s busy schedule can often make weight loss seem like an elusive idea — you may have good intentions but often procrastinate. Here is some motivation: The longer you wait, the greater the risk for obesity-related cancers.

In a study published in *PLOS Medicine*, researchers examined approximately 74,000 post-menopausal women from the Women’s Health Initiative to see how time affects the risk of various cancers in overweight or obese women. The results suggest that the longer a woman is overweight, the more vulnerable she is to several obesity-related cancers such as colorectal, liver, pancreatic and post-menopausal breast cancers.

This study is the first of its kind and shows that, even in small amounts, losing weight sooner rather than later betters your chances of avoiding cancer.

FOR EVERY DECADE OF BEING OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE, THERE WAS A 7% INCREASE IN CANCER RISK.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 40 million Americans wear contact lenses. Although using contact lenses is generally safe, they can cause serious vision-related complications if they’re not cared for properly.

The CDC studied more than 1,000 cases of serious contacts-related corneal infections between 2005 and 2015 and found that roughly 25 percent of these cases may have been prevented if users avoided certain behaviors, including wearing lenses longer than prescribed, improper cleaning and swimming or sleeping in them.

Lesson to learn? Follow your optometrist’s or ophthalmologist’s instructions carefully. Don’t sleep, swim or shower while wearing contact lenses, and remember to properly clean them and change out your contacts case regularly.

Better Contact Lens Care

Every year, nearly 20 million people over the age of 65 go to the emergency room. While it is important to receive emergency care when needed, new research reveals that older adults can reduce their chances of an ER visit if they receive regular primary care.

Published in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, the study revealed that Medicare beneficiaries have lower chances of going to the ER if they regularly receive outpatient care from the same doctor or a small number of doctors. Examining more than 3 million Medicare patients, researchers observed up to a 20 percent decrease in ER visits in individuals who fostered a continuous relationship with their doctor versus patients who did not.

Check out our hospital website for primary care doctors near you.
Coronary heart disease, electrocardiograms, cardiac stress tests, stents — you’ve likely heard these common terms. But do you know what they mean?

Review this glossary to get up-to-date on heart-healthy lingo.

1. **Coronary heart disease** — Also known as coronary artery disease, coronary heart disease is the most common form of heart disease. The condition occurs when cholesterol and other substances build up in the arteries, which causes them to harden or narrow. Over time, this limits the heart’s access to oxygen and can lead to a heart attack.

2. **Electrocardiogram (EKG)** — During an EKG, a technician places stickers containing electrodes on your chest, arms and legs to measure your heart’s electrical activity. The test can tell your doctor several things about your heart health, including whether or not your heart is working too hard or if you have an arrhythmia (an irregular heartbeat).

3. **Cardiac stress test** — Exercise stress tests help determine if you have coronary artery disease or an arrhythmia that occurs during exercise. To perform a stress test, technicians place EKG electrodes on your chest and arms. You will then be asked to exercise on a treadmill or stationary bicycle. The speed and incline of the treadmill or bike will increase throughout the test to see how your heart tolerates physical activity.

4. **Stents** — If you have a blockage in one of your arteries, your doctor may place a stent in that artery. Stents are small tubes usually made of metal, mesh or fabric that are used to open blocked arteries and help restore blood flow. By placing a stent, doctors can often avoid invasive open-heart surgeries.

**WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION LABORATORY?**

If doctors suspect you have a blockage in one of the arteries of your heart based on results from tests, such as an electrocardiogram or cardiac stress test, they may recommend you visit the cardiac catheterization laboratory for further diagnostic testing.

One of the most common procedures performed in the cardiac catheterization laboratory is a coronary angiogram. This test is used to diagnose coronary heart disease and involves using a special type of dye to view how well blood is circulating through the arteries. Once the dye is injected into the heart, an X-ray is taken to show whether or not the dye is moving properly through the arteries, which highlights potential blockages. If a blockage is present, doctors may recommend placing a stent in the artery via a procedure known as coronary angioplasty with stenting.

If you need a cardiologist, call Carolinas Medical Alliance – Cardiology at (843) 202-4878 or visit 4healthier.me/CHS-cardiology to request an appointment.

Doctors at Carolinas Medical Alliance – Cardiology are members of the medical staff at Carolinas Hospital System.
With so much conflicting advice in magazines and blogs, making the right calorie choices can feel like gazing into a crystal ball. If you’re one of the 30 percent of Americans who resolve to lose weight every year, start by separating fortune-telling from facts.

**VERDICT: GOOD ADVICE!**

One pound of muscle can burn three times as many calories at rest as a pound of fat, according to the American Council on Exercise. That’s why men — who tend to have less body fat and more muscle mass than women — are more efficient calorie-burners. It seems unfair, but there’s a silver lining. People who carry excess weight burn more calories during exercise than fit people do. If you’re overweight and just starting to exercise, a little bit will go a long way. Once your initial weight loss slows down, start incorporating more muscle-building exercises such as weight lifting and ab crunches into your routine.

**VERDICT: TRY AT YOUR OWN RISK.**

You may have heard of diets based on the idea that if you constantly shift when and how many calories you consume, your metabolism learns to be more efficient. Similar diets opt for five or six micro-meals instead of the traditional three square meals a day. Unfortunately, science doesn’t back up these diet trends. A small-scale study published in 2014 in the *International Journal of Preventive Medicine* showed minor advantages of calorie shifting over simple calorie restriction, but it did not improve participants’ resting metabolic rate.

**A BETTER IDEA:**

Listen to your body. Don’t wait to eat until you’re starving, which can lead to poor nutritional choices. Don’t eat out of boredom, either. When snacking, choose filling foods, such as whole-grain crackers, green vegetables and other foods rich in complex carbs, which have appetite-curbing effects for as long as 24 hours.
THE MYTH OF THE AGING METABOLISM

You’ve heard the excuse before — “When I was young, I could eat whatever I wanted. Then I turned 40, and my metabolism slowed to a halt.” The truth is, your metabolic rate doesn’t slow down because you age, but rather because you lose muscle mass as you age. According to the National Institutes of Health, sedentary adults lose about 8 percent or more of their muscle mass every decade after age 40. You can’t stop aging, but you can prevent muscle loss through regular physical activity. Try these tools to preserve your muscle mass and keep your metabolism going strong.

Consult your primary care provider before starting a new exercise regimen.

Exercise Band— These giant rubber bands provide resistance to stretch and tone your muscles without harmful impact on your bones.

Kettlebell— Increasingly popular among fitness buffs, kettlebells enable ballistic exercise, a unique combination of aerobic, strength and flexibility training.

Medicine ball— Medicine balls filled with water can offer a harder challenge. As the water sloshes around inside, it requires more muscle engagement to control the ball.

A study published in 2016 in the *BMJ Open* journal found that 58 percent of Americans’ total energy intake comes from ultra-processed foods, which include candy, desserts, packaged baked goods, reconstituted meat products, and sweet and savory snacks. On average, the amount of added sugar in these foods is eight times greater than in regular processed foods.

VERDICT: TWO THUMBS UP!

Eating a well-balanced diet is a better weight-loss strategy than restricting or eliminating certain food groups. Unsaturated fats found in eggs, vegetable oils, nuts, seeds and avocados are considered good fats because they decrease harmful LDL cholesterol and provide important nutrients such as fatty acids. A 2007 study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* showed that consuming fatty acids actually reduces body fat and improves metabolic health.

Zero-calorie means zero weight gain.

VERDICT: KEEP WISHING.

Several studies suggest zero-calorie beverages could actually contribute to weight gain. One preliminary study published in the journal *NeuroImage* in 2008 found that the brain can tell the difference between caloric and noncaloric sweeteners, which could trigger the body to crave the calories it was expecting to get — and lead to overeating.

A 2015 study published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* found that older adults who drank diet soda every day for almost a decade experienced an increase in waistline size three times that of those who never drank it.

A BETTER IDEA:

To satisfy your sweet tooth, stick with natural sources of sugar, such as whole fruit or a teaspoon of honey. Pair your sweet with a protein or complex carb to avoid a blood-sugar crash.

This explains why it becomes harder to lose weight as you become slimmer!
ACT FAST FOR APPENDICITIS

Do you know how to tell if your appendix is inflamed?

Imagine this — you’re going about your day, working, exercising or spending time with your family, when all of a sudden you feel a sharp, stabbing pain in your abdomen. You’ve been a little nauseous all day, and you haven’t felt hungry, so you chalk it up to eating too much at your last meal. Right? Wrong.

These are all signs that you have appendicitis, the inflammation of the appendix — a small tube attached to the large intestine. Appendicitis may occur when there is a blockage in the appendix caused by an infection or trapped stool. If you have appendicitis, you’ll likely experience symptoms such as:

- constipation or diarrhea
- feeling unable to pass gas
- loss of appetite
- low-grade fever or chills
- nausea and vomiting
- sharp, sudden pain in your abdomen, the most common symptom, which will start near your navel and make its way down and to the right, getting worse over time
- swelling in your abdomen

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

If you have appendicitis, you need emergency care. If left untreated, an inflamed appendix could rupture and put you at risk for peritonitis — a condition that occurs when the tissue that lines your abdomen becomes inflamed due to infection — and death if the infection reaches the bloodstream.

Thankfully, when treated promptly, most patients who have their appendix surgically removed go home the next day and are feeling back to their old selves within a week or two.

WHAT’S YOUR FUNCTION?
The appendix is a small, pouch-like organ that is located near your large intestine. The appendix has often been called a vestigial organ, meaning it seems to have no purpose. However, that’s not entirely true. Immune system cells live in your appendix.

The so-called “good” bacteria that lives in your stomach exists to help your body digest food. Your appendix actually provides that “good” bacteria with a place to safely hide in the case of a stomach bug or diarrhea. Once your body has fought off the infection, the bacteria can return to your gut.

If you’ve had appendicitis and no longer have an appendix, don’t worry. You can live just fine without it. If you do still have your appendix, rest easy knowing your gut bacteria are safe.

Doctors at The Floyd Medical Group are members of the medical staff at Carolinas Hospital System.

Is your abdominal pain a common occurrence? Talk with your doctor or a general surgeon. Surgeons at The Floyd Medical Group are accepting new patients. Call (843) 202-4570 or visit 4healthier.me/CHS-Floyd-Medical for more information.

Patient results may vary. Consult your doctor about the benefits and risks of any surgical procedure or treatment. In an emergency, dial 911.
HANDS OFF!

These everyday items could be crawling with germs and bacteria that can make you sick. Proceed with caution, and wash your hands frequently to stay healthy.

**KEEP 'EM CLEAN**

To get your hands clean and help prevent illness, follow these steps from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- **Step 1:** Use clean water to wet your hands.
- **Step 2:** Work soap and water into a lather all over your hands — the palm, back of the hand, around fingernails and between fingers.
- **Step 3:** Wash for 20 seconds (long enough to sing Happy Birthday twice).
- **Step 4:** Rinse off soap under clean, running, warm water.
- **Step 5:** Air dry or use a clean surface to dry your hands.

5% of people wash their hands correctly, according to a Michigan State University study.

**KITCHEN SINK**

According to the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF), 45 percent of kitchen sinks are contaminated with dangerous coliform bacteria (Salmonella and E. coli are part of this family).

**Clean tip:** Sanitize sponges and scrub your sink regularly.

**Note:** Beware the sponge! 75% have coliform bacteria.

**CELL PHONE**

Research from NSF found:

- 5% tested positive for coliform bacteria.
- 23% tested positive for yeast or mold.

**Clean tip:** Wipe your phone down with a lint-free cloth daily.

**WET LAUNDRY**

Germs survive cold washes. Use hot water, at least 140°F Fahrenheit.

**Clean tip:** Use a detergent with bleach or peroxide in it to kill germs. Or hang your laundry in the sun to dry — the ultraviolet rays kill germs.

**SHOPPING CART**

Food Protection Trends found that of the shopping carts in one study:

- 72% had coliform bacteria.
- 51% had E. coli.

**Clean tip:** Grab a disinfesting wipe and clean the cart before use.

73% of weight training equipment at gyms is contaminated with rhinovirus, (the culprit behind the common cold), according to a study in the Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine.

If a minor illness or cold gets you down, call your primary care doctor.
In a medical emergency, every minute matters. So, at our hospital, you’ll find faster care in the emergency room. We work diligently to have you initially seen by a medical professional* in 30 minutes – or less. And, with a team of dedicated medical specialists, we can provide a lot more care, if you need it.

For average wait times in the emergency room, visit 4healthier.me/CHS-ER-pledge.

*Medical professionals may include physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners.