



A Message from
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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am pleased to present the inaugural edition of Mount Sinai Fit, the Mount Sinai Health System (MSHS) Wellness newsletter. Wellness, or well-being, is an individual experience. For some, a 20-minute nature walk or an hour on the yoga mat provides grounding and restoration. For others, preparing nutritious meals, spending quality time with family and close friends, or regular meditation gives a sense of wholeness. With this newsletter, we aim to offer health and wellness tips and provide access to programs that will encourage and inspire you to deepen your journey to well-being.

This first edition offers information about creating and sustaining a healthy lifestyle, including tips on nutrition, mindfulness, and exercise. Jennifer Kartashevsky and Maria Elena Rodriguez, registered dietitians (RD) and certified diabetes educators (CDE) at the Health System, share nutrition secrets in "Mount Sinai Foodie." George Apanasevich, Executive Chef of The Mount Sinai Hospital and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Plaza Cafe, shares a seasonal recipe and his own wellness story in "Chef's Corner." Danielle Wheelwright and Nina Yousefzadeh, health care practitioners and yoga instructors at Mount Sinai, describe the benefits of developing a yoga practice and its impact on our emotional and physical health.

I hope you find this initial issue of Mount Sinai Fit valuable. If you would like more information about the Mount Sinai Wellness offerings, please email wellness@mountsinai.org.

Be well,
Jane



YOGA

A Metaphor for Life

Danielle Wheelwright, RN, and **Nina Yousefzadeh, PharmD,** believe that yoga is a metaphor for life. In their role as health care practitioners and yoga instructors at The Mount Sinai Hospital and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, Ms. Wheelwright and Dr. Yousefzadeh are engaged in promoting a culture of wellness. Some poses are stressful and frustrating, much like the challenges we experience in our day-to-day lives. "Keep practicing: do not give up or run away. You can progress and even conquer things you thought were impossible," advises Ms. Wheelwright. She encourages students to practice yoga with patience and self-compassion. Uncomfortable poses achieve positive results by teaching students to use their breath and to work gently through the discomfort. In her classes, Dr. Yousefzadeh emphasizes the importance of connecting body and mind with breath and movement. At the end of each class she guides students

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Up to **25%**

of US adults who have diabetes don't know that they have it or that they could be developing serious complications.*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). <https://www.cdc.gov>.

› Yoga: A Metaphor for Life *(continued from page 1)*

through a meditative relaxation exercise to promote self-awareness and internal connectedness. Here are two of their yoga tips to help release tension, improve focus, and clear your mind:

A forward bend to make everything better

We store a lot of stress and emotion in our hips. A seated forward bend helps loosen the hips and release tension. It is a great pose for those who sit at a desk all day. It can help when you feel tired or when you need a few moments of inward reflection. Hold this pose for a few seconds and work your way up to holding longer. Ms. Wheelwright encourages students to go deep!

Gratitude to relax and calm the chatter of the mind

It is always helpful to be thankful for all things that are going well in our lives. This is of particular value on a bad day or when the unpredictability of life strikes. With each inhale, think "I am grateful for" and with each exhale bring to mind those things in your life for which you are most appreciative. For example, when you inhale, say to yourself, "I am grateful for," and as you exhale, "my children, my family, my health..." Repeat for several minutes.

To learn more about Mount Sinai Health System yoga offerings, email: mountsinaiyogaprogram@gmail.com

When Valerie Ruffin, an Information Technology professional at MSHS, was told by Jane Levitt, MD, Assistant Professor, Medicine (General Internal Medicine), at the Mount Sinai Doctors Faculty Practice that she had developed diabetes, she decided to take action.

"I wanted to beat diabetes. So I immediately made an appointment with Maria Elena Rodriguez, RD, CDE, of the Mount Sinai Health System's Diabetes Alliance." In July of 2015, Ms. Ruffin had her first visit with Ms. Rodriguez. Her A1C, or average blood sugar, was 10.3. For individuals living with diabetes, it is recommended that A1C be at or below 7.

"My first visit with Maria was amazing. She gave me so much information, including the Mount Sinai 30-day meal plan and shopping list. Dr. Levitt started me on diabetes medicine and Maria taught me about this medicine — when to take it and how it lowers my blood sugar."

Ms. Ruffin put those nutrition tips into practice. That night, she prepared breakfast and lunch for the next day. "I made a salad with grilled chicken, carrots, and cucumbers. I packed a small amount of salad dressing, using one tablespoon of olive oil, some lemon, and one tablespoon of apple cider vinegar. I also sliced up some apples and packed a container of peanut butter to keep at my desk." Ms. Ruffin also made a change to her physical activity. She increased her daily walks from 30 minutes to almost one hour, including an after-dinner walk around the local track. "Psychologically,

Meet Mount Sinai Health System Wellness Ambassador Valerie Ruffin



I knew that if I walked eight laps that would be two miles. Exercising for 60 minutes a day made me feel so much better. It was part of my commitment to myself."

At the end of September, Ms. Ruffin returned to see Ms. Rodriguez. "I lost ten pounds and my A1C dropped from 10.3 to 8.1. Maria and I celebrated and she gave me a big hug." During this visit, Ms. Ruffin was introduced to the Livongo for Diabetes Program. Livongo is a

cloud-connected blood glucose meter. After blood glucose is checked, results are securely uploaded to the cloud. Ms. Ruffin will then receive a message on her blood glucose meter indicating whether her blood sugar is low, high, or just right. "My Livongo blood glucose meter notifies me when I have eaten a meal that was too high in carbs or sugar. On the other hand, my meter notifies me that my blood glucose is normal when I eat a meal of non-starchy vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains."

Through the program, Ms. Ruffin also benefits from a diabetes coach. "I meet with Maria when I am at work and every month I speak with my Livongo coach, Myra Eberling, CDE. I have a fantastic team."

Apart from personal tracking of blood glucose, Livongo's meter presented a simple way to share Ms. Ruffin's blood glucose levels with Dr. Levitt during her primary care visits. In January 2016, Dr. Levitt related to Valerie that her A1C had dropped to 7.0. "I was over the moon. With small lifestyle changes—eliminating juice, increasing my fiber intake, and weekly activity—I was able to achieve my goal. I feel great about myself. My children and grandchildren are eating healthier as a result of my new wellness practices. I encourage any employee who has diabetes or who would like to make any lifestyle change to see Maria Elena Rodriguez or Jennifer Kartashevsky. This is a free service and a gift from Mount Sinai, so take advantage of this benefit. It changed my life for the better."

Mount Sinai FOODIES



Two self-proclaimed foodies, Jennifer Kartashevsky, RD, CDE, and Maria Elena Rodriguez, RD, CDE, are dishing on their favorite topic: food! We took a walk with these two nutritionists to discuss their secrets for staying Mount Sinai Fit.

Mount Sinai Fit: Over the past year, you have seen more than 450 employees for one-on-one nutrition visits and/or diabetes self-management education. Please tell us about your experiences with Health System staff.

Jennifer: I am proud to work with employees across the Mount Sinai Health System. Faculty and staff at Mount Sinai devote many, if not most, of their waking hours to improving the health and well-being of our patients. I feel fortunate to devote 30 minutes with each employee during our 1:1 nutrition sessions, and they share my enthusiasm—particularly when they recognize that the time we spend together has been customized just for them. It is rewarding to meet with each individual and share the knowledge that helps them establish an eating plan that is satisfying and nutritious.

Maria: I have had the privilege of seeing Health System employees for more than a year. As a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator, I am responsible for empowering employees with knowledge and self-care skills to create a healthy eating plan. I see employees as often as they wish, whether it be every month or every three months. Together, we review personal health goals and build a meal plan that suits their needs and those of their family. After our meetings, employees are making wiser dietary choices, reading food labels, carrying healthy food and snacks (like apples with peanut butter or carrots and hummus) to work, and incorporating exercise into their lifestyle. Employees feel a sense of accountability. They are eating foods that fuel their body and mind. As a result, they are losing weight and experiencing improvements in blood sugar, blood pressure, cholesterol levels, mood, and sense of well-being. Together, we celebrate their commitment to taking care of themselves.



Jennifer Kartashevsky,
RD, CDE



Maria Elena Rodriguez,
RD, CDE

Employees are truly motivated to get healthy. Maria and I are providing them with the tools needed for success.

—Jennifer Kartashevsky

Mount Sinai Fit: What specific changes are employees making in their lifestyle to bring about such positive results? We know that making lifestyle changes can be difficult. How are employees successfully incorporating different components of a healthier lifestyle?

Jennifer: Employees are truly motivated to get healthy. Maria and I are providing them with the tools needed for success. We share a sample 30-day meal plan and shopping list. Using this guide, employees learn how to make better choices, starting at the grocery store and improving what they place in the shopping cart. During one of our eight-week programs, Food Fit for Life, we examine the list of ingredients on food labels. Program participants use that information to make healthier choices, such as reducing hydrogenated oils and high-fructose corn syrup, and choosing lower-sodium foods.

Maria: One specific positive change employees are making is reducing portion size. We teach how to balance calories and reduce the amount of refined carbohydrates (sugar and starch), saturated fat, and processed food consumed. We work together at finding substitutions for what folks are currently eating and replacing long-standing food choices with healthier options. For those who are not exercising, we work on carving out time for stretching at the desk, deep breathing, walking after lunch, and getting their family members walking in the evening and over the weekend.

Mount Sinai Fit: If an employee is interested in making nutrition lifestyle changes, what are some of the initial tips you would give them?

Jennifer: One of the first tips would be regarding beverage choices. Soda, juice, and energy drinks are a source of added calories and sugar. It may be eye opening to discover how many calories they add to our diet.

Maria: Sometimes we have a magical idea about diets being the answer. There is no pill or one meal plan to use. We talk about how to begin making small changes. We want to promote a lifestyle change, not a diet. Important factors to look at are total calories consumed; the amount of sugar, salt, and fat in the diet; and daily habits.

Mount Sinai Fit Delivers Wellness Services to Patient Care Teams

Mount Sinai Fit offers “Wellness for Life”, a four-part, educational series for the entire patient care delivery team. If you are interested in this wellness program for your department, please email wellness@mountsinai.org.



Chef George Apanasevich

Executive Chef of The Mount Sinai Hospital and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, spreads his passion for using local, sustainable, and seasonal ingredients to nourish Health System employees and patients.

Here is a recipe that will be featured at the Plaza Café in 2017.

Chef George's Seared Atlantic Salmon with Endive Apple Frisee Salad 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 fresh Atlantic salmon filets (6 ounces each)
- 1 pint fresh apple cider
- 1 Belgian endive, halved and sliced thinly
- 1 head of frisee, chopped
- 4 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
- ½ Gala apple, cut into thin wedges
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation

Season salmon with salt and pepper and sear on both sides in a sauté pan with one tablespoon of extra-virgin olive oil. Finish in a 350°F oven for 10 minutes or to desired doneness. In a separate bowl, whisk together two tablespoons of fresh lemon juice and extra-virgin virgin olive oil. Add chopped frisee, Belgian endive, sliced apple and crumbled feta cheese. Mix together thoroughly. Reduce apple cider to a quarter of the original volume in a saucepan and then brush on top of cooked salmon. Plate the salad mixture. Place the cooked salmon filet on top.

When the Mount Sinai Fit staff members entered the Plaza Café "Restaurant" at The Mount Sinai Hospital, we all thought the same thing: this is not your typical hospital cafeteria. Beautifully plated selections of mixed greens, brightly colored vegetables, lean protein offerings (tofu, hard boiled eggs, and grilled chicken), couscous and quinoa salads, grilled asparagus, and Caprese salad were available to employees. The takeaway bar included Asian-inspired options, such as stir-fried vegetables, chicken and brown rice; the sushi bar selection of artfully cut pieces of fish (locally caught whenever possible); and sides of vegetables and dumplings. After reviewing the variety of food options, we were thrilled to meet the chef responsible for creating the delectable spread.

Chef George comes to Mount Sinai with experience gained as the Executive Chef at several Four Seasons and Mandarin Oriental resorts. "I have worked in the hospitality industry for more than 20 years before joining Mount Sinai. It was always about pleasing guests and getting the highest satisfaction scores with our resort guests. I am trying to bring the same level of service to the food we serve to our patients and employees."

Chef George is committed to using local, seasonal fruits and vegetables. "When you cook with seasonal ingredients, there is very little 'cooking' that needs to be done to bring about flavor. The entire team at the restaurant provides me with ideas each month. We seek to offer sustainable greens and proteins, such as local fish or poultry, from New York State farms. Just like many of the New York City restaurants, we change our ingredients with the season."

Chef George also shared a bit of his own wellness story with us: "I have lost 40 pounds over the past year. I did this by increasing the amount of non-starchy vegetables, eating lean protein and minimizing carbohydrates such as pasta and rice. I am spreading the success I achieved throughout the restaurant. If I can adopt a healthy nutrition lifestyle, anyone can!" In order to promote this healthy initiative, the Plaza Café offers delicious side salads to pair with a wrap or a turkey burger to minimize the consumption of empty calories.

Chef George and his team are excited to bring you a new seasonal menu.

If you have any favorite meals from the Plaza Cafe, please email us at wellness@mountsinai.org so we can share them in an upcoming issue of Mount Sinai Fit.

PULMONARY MEDICINE SPECIAL GRAND ROUND

At a special Grand Rounds event held in February, "**New Strategies to Empower Patients to Achieve a Smoke-Free Lifestyle,**" Mary O'Sullivan, MD, Director, Smoking Cessation Clinics, Mount Sinai West

and Mount Sinai St. Luke's, presented strategies physicians/health care professionals can utilize to engage patients and motivate them to quit; assist patients in developing a quit plan; Mount Sinai Health System's smoking cessation educational tools and materials; Nicotine Replacement Therapy and smoking cessation aides; and the services available for patients at the Mount Sinai West and Mount Sinai St. Luke's Smoking Cessation Clinics. For more information about this and other wellness events, email abby.schwartz@mountsinai.org