Dear Friends:

I would like to take this opportunity to let you know that our CEO, Michael Ugwueke, was recently promoted to executive vice president and chief operating officer for the entire Methodist Le Bonheur Healthcare system. This is a wonderful honor for Michael, and we are all very proud. Methodist North has experienced tremendous growth under Michael’s leadership, and we are thankful for his dedication to our Associates and to our community. We have no doubt that he will continue in his new role with the same dedication to patients and families in all of the communities that Methodist serves.

As we search for a new CEO, I have the honor of serving as interim CEO/Administrator. Having served as Assistant Administrator here at North for the last three years, I am dedicated to continuing to grow our services, providing the highest level of care to our patients and families, and serving our community. I feel that working in the healthcare industry is a calling and a ministry, and the opportunity to heal and help our fellow man is something we must never forget nor take for granted.

Thank you for reading our newsletter and supporting our hospital. I look forward to continuing to share our story with you in the months to come.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Watkins, MPA, FACHE
Interim CEO/Administrator

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Eating for better health

You’ve heard “You are what you eat.” Well, it’s true. Eating nutritious foods can help you combat a variety of diseases — including heart disease, diabetes and some cancers — and promote better health. You can look better and feel better, too, when you follow a healthy eating plan.

Try putting some of the following foods on your grocery list and start enjoying the benefits (and flavors!).

**Berries.** According to the American Cancer Society, foods rich in vitamin C may lower the risk of cancers of the gastrointestinal tract. The antioxidants in berries may help maintain normal communication of the neurons in your brain. Strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C, and raspberries and blackberries are good sources, too. Strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries are also low in calories and high in fiber.

**Cruciferous vegetables.** Vegetables in this family contain compounds called glucosinolates, which are being studied for possible anticancer effects. A new laboratory study shows that compounds in cruciferous vegetables can selectively target and kill cancer cells while leaving normal, healthy cells unaffected. The family includes broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, kale, turnips, radishes and watercress.

**Nuts.** Almonds are rich in vitamin E, an antioxidant that may help protect against heart disease and promote brain health. Some research suggests that nutrients such as vitamin E may be important in lowering the risk of Alzheimer’s disease. Nuts also are high in protein and fiber (but also in fat, so be careful of portion size).

**Whole grains.** In contrast to refined grains such as white flour and white rice, whole grains are rich in fiber, healthy fats, vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. Eating whole instead of refined grains can help to lower cholesterol, triglycerides and insulin levels, lowering the risk of heart disease. Eating whole grains can also reduce the risk of diabetes and improve digestive health. Refining wheat strips away significant amounts of vitamins B and E and virtually all of the fiber.
Take control of high blood pressure

Do you have high blood pressure? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), almost one-third of Americans do and half of them don’t have it under control. Others don’t even know they have a problem.

To be fair, high blood pressure is a stealth foe. Though your numbers may be high, there’s usually no sign that anything is amiss. However, while you go about your life, this condition slowly damages your arteries and sets up the scene for complications. In fact, having high blood pressure makes you four times more likely to die from a stroke and three times more likely to die from heart disease, say CDC statistics.

The only way to know for sure whether you have high blood pressure (also called hypertension) is to have it measured. Most likely, every time you go to your health care provider’s office they strap on the blood pressure cuff and record your numbers. Normal blood pressure means readings are less than 120/80 mm Hg, while high blood pressure means a consistent reading of 140/90 mm Hg or more. In between those numbers is an area called “prehypertension.” This label indicates that while your readings aren’t high enough to classify you as having high blood pressure, they should still be a cause for concern and a wake-up call to make changes to lower your numbers, as you could develop full-blown hypertension down the road.

If your numbers are good, your provider may recommend getting screened every two years. If they’re not, he or she may recommend more frequent checkups or home monitoring.

Diabetes: Separating fact and myth

Many misconceptions exist on the subject of diabetes. With the growing prevalence of this disease, it’s increasingly important to dispel some of the common myths about diabetes.

Myth: Diabetes is not very common.
Fact: Chances are you know someone who has diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it affects one in 12 Americans today, and current trends could lead to one in three Americans having type 2 diabetes by 2050.

Myth: Diabetes is not a very serious disease.
Fact: People with diabetes are as likely to suffer a heart attack as individuals who have suffered a previous heart attack. Two-thirds of those with diabetes die from heart disease or stroke.*

Myth: Diabetes is completely preventable.
Fact: There are two main types of diabetes, type 1 diabetes (formerly called juvenile onset) and type 2 diabetes (formerly called adult onset). Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease and has no known prevention. With type 2 diabetes, many risk factors are lifestyle related, including poor diet, excess weight and low activity level. Others, such as family history and genes, are beyond your control.

Myth: You don’t have to worry about type 2 diabetes if you’re thin.
Fact: While weight is one risk factor for the disease, a thin person can also develop type 2 diabetes.

Myth: Eating sugar causes diabetes.
Fact: Again, type 1 diabetes is caused by genetic factors or other unknown factors. But, even in type 2 diabetes, sugar is not a direct cause. Weight does play a role as a major risk factor, and excess sugar can lead to weight gain, but there are other contributing factors.

Myth: Diabetics have to eat special “diabetic” foods.
Fact: Special foods are not necessary for successfully managing diabetes. A healthy diet for diabetics looks much the same as a healthy diet for most everyone — rich in vegetables, whole grains and fruits, moderate in sugars and salt, and low in unhealthy fats.

Myth: You can eat as many healthy foods, like apples and oranges, as you want with diabetes.
Fact: While healthy foods are important, they do still need to be included into a meal plan as discussed with your doctor. Fruits have very important vitamins, minerals and fiber; but they also contain carbohydrates which affect blood sugar levels.

Myth: People with diabetes can’t eat any “junk” foods like sweets and desserts.
Fact: These types of foods can be incorporated into a healthy meal plan just like other foods. There are no foods that diabetics are completely banned from eating. The key is moderation and exercise as prescribed by your doctor.

Myth: Physical activity should be limited for diabetics.
Fact: Exercise is an important factor in managing blood sugar levels, controlling weight and reducing cholesterol levels. Being physically active can also reduce the risk of heart disease and nerve damage, which are common diabetes complications. Consult your physician to find out what physical activity is right for you.

* Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov.
**Do you recognize these risk factors?**

Certain risk factors for high blood pressure can’t be changed. As you age, your numbers tend to start the upward climb. African-Americans and people with a family history of hypertension also face a greater risk.

But the good news is that there are even more factors that you can do something about. These include:

**Carrying excess pounds.** Being overweight or obese increases the amount of blood your body needs, which, in turn, puts added stress on your cardiovascular system. **What you can do:** Make those lifestyle changes. That means a low-fat diet that’s loaded with fruits, vegetables and whole grains (think the D.A.S.H. diet, www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf) and regular exercise.

**Eating too much salt, drinking too much alcohol.** Excess sodium causes fluid retention (and higher blood pressure), while more than two drinks a day can not only increase your blood pressure, but damage your heart as well. **What you can do:** Cut back. Depending on your current health, decreasing sodium intake may limit you to 1,500 mg a day or no more than 2,300 mg daily. Men should limit alcohol to no more than two drinks a day, one drink daily for women and those over age 65.

**Not consuming enough potassium in your diet.** Potassium is the sodium regulator, and not having enough potassium in your system can lead to a sodium buildup in your blood. **What you can do:** For most adults, the recommended daily intake of potassium is about 4,700 milligrams per day. Find it in a host of foods, including sweet potatoes, spinach, bananas and tuna. Always ask your provider first before you take any potassium supplement.

**Being stressed.** The significant rise in blood pressure readings may not be long term, but not getting a handle on your stress could lead to unhealthy behaviors known to play a part in the development of hypertension, such as drinking alcohol or weight gain. **What you can do:** Engage in relaxing activities, such as meditation or deep breathing exercises, and work on ways to cope with stressful situation.

**Having health conditions.** Sleep apnea, diabetes and high cholesterol are just some of the health issues that can also impact your blood pressure numbers. **What you can do:** Work with your health care provider to make sure you’re being properly treated for those health conditions you have and that they’re adequately managed. If your blood pressure isn’t controlled through lifestyle measures, medication will likely be needed. For information on Methodist North’s free Diabetes Wellness Classes, call 901.516.5038.

**The good news is that there are even more factors that you can do something about.**
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Upcoming events

**Diabetes Wellness Classes**
Need help staying on track? Methodist North offers free Diabetes Wellness classes on the last Tuesday of every month to provide support and information you can use to take control of your diabetes. For more information or to register for this free class, call 901.516.5038.

**Hip and Knee Replacement Classes**
The Methodist North Total Joint Center offers free Hip and Knee Replacement classes on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. If you are considering joint replacement surgery, this is a good opportunity to learn more about the procedure and what to expect during recovery. Space is limited, so please call to reserve your seat at 901.516.5639.

**Stroke Support Group**
We invite stroke survivors and caregivers to join us as we provide education and support. Our stroke support group meets the second Tuesday of each month at 2 pm, and discusses a new stroke-related topic each month. Meetings are held at HealthSouth Rehabilitation, Day Room 1, located at 4100 Austin Peay Hwy., and light refreshments are served. For more information or to register, please call Connie Holland, Stroke Support Coordinator, at 901.516.5646.

What people are saying about Methodist North

Here is a letter we recently received from a patient:

“My mom and I would like to commend the wonderful nurses and staff at Methodist North for the care she received while she was there. The care began when we walked in the door and were greeted warmly and continued all the way through to the end. Everyone was great, and I could not recommend a better hospital. Thank you again.”