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Peggy Schoenbauer has made great strides with little steps

Peggy wanted to lose weight to improve her health.

“It was to the point where if I walked anywhere I was breathing hard, my back hurt, my knees hurt. I had to do something.”

With her oldest grandson going into high school, it hit home. “I have five grandkids. I want to see them grow up and graduate and get married and have kids. I want to be able to do stuff with them. I just knew I had to do this – for them and for me.”

The ReShape U program had the right ingredients: a philosophy of mindful eating, nutrition lessons, practical tips and recipes, and ongoing personal support.

Peggy joined ReShape U’s 10-week weight loss class, and weekly support group. Classes equipped Peggy for a lifestyle of healthy eating; the weekly support group keeps her going. In 10 months she has lost nearly 70 pounds, and counting.

Her blood pressure medication has been cut in half. “If I keep going, I can get off the blood pressure meds completely,” Peggy says.

“My health and energy are so much better. I don’t have trouble going up and down steps anymore. Before, I’d stand on the deck and watch the kids play. Now I get out in the yard with them and throw the lacrosse ball or kick the soccer ball.”

Peggy walks a half mile to a mile every morning now. The first time she walked up the hill to her son’s house she surprised the kids. “They said ‘Good for you, Grandma!’” Peggy beams.

The modest cost of ReShape U – $50 for 10 weeks of class, led by a registered dietitian nutritionist – is a great investment, Peggy says.

“It’s worth $50 to learn what’s in the food you’re eating; how to use common sense; how to change your habits and make choices for your own health.” For example? “I didn’t like green vegetables, but ReShape U has got me eating Brussels sprouts now. They’re so good.”

And weekly support meetings are well worth $30 per month, and the time. “It’s so nice to be able to sit and talk with other people facing the same challenges,” Peggy says.

And that support group at home helps, too.

“It’s so nice to be able to sit and talk with other people facing the same challenges.”

Peggy Schoenbauer
Indigestion is a bummer. Relief from a pill seems easy.

But acid reflux – and some treatments – can become serious health problems.

People are increasingly treating their acid reflux with over-the-counter PPIs (proton pump inhibitors) meant to treat gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD): About 50 million Americans use PPIs such as Prilosec, Omeprazole and Nexium. But studies show that long-term use of PPIs can put users at greater risk of heart disease, kidney disease, bone fractures, some infections, nutrient deficiencies, and even death. And not all who take PPIs actually have GERD. If you don’t have GERD, taking PPIs casually can harm rather than help.

As research on PPIs mounts, it’s more important than ever to be officially diagnosed with GERD, and then create a treatment plan with your provider. If medication doesn’t relieve your symptoms within eight weeks, you may not have GERD. And if you take PPIs often, or for more than three months, or without monitoring by your doctor, you should talk to your doctor about getting tested.

“As new research shows potential problems with PPIs, it’s more important to have an official diagnosis,” says Kaya Latzke, RN, MBA, manager of the Endoscopy Clinic at Northfield Hospital. “If you don’t have 100% relief on a PPI, some further investigation needs to be done.”

Reflex happens when stomach contents flow back into your esophagus. Two kinds of over-the-counter medication treat it, in different ways: Antacids and H2 blockers decrease acid production in your stomach; they work rapidly, but only for a short time. With few side effects, they’re good for mild reflux symptoms. Proton pump inhibitors prevent acid production by blocking the final step in the process. They’re usually taken once or twice daily, before meals, and are the most effective medication for frequent reflux symptoms.

Heartburn that occurs more than twice a week for a few weeks could be GERD, says the National Institutes of Health. GERD can lead to more serious health problems over time, such as esophageal stricture (tightening), Barrett’s esophagus, and even esophageal cancer.

GERD can be diagnosed via upper endoscopy (EGD), a simple out-patient procedure that uses a scope to look at your esophagus, stomach and the first part of your small intestine. Another option is an ambulatory esophageal pH study with a Bravo probe, which measures the pH level (acidity) in your esophagus and matches it to your symptoms. A small capsule is attached inside your esophagus; it’s calibrated to a hand-held recorder that’s programmed with your three top symptoms. When you feel a symptom, you press that button on the recorder, and the probe matches your symptoms with your pH level at that time. You record for about four days, then return the recorder for analysis. (The capsule works its way out through your system.) If your symptoms coincide with moments of acidity, this helps your doctor confirm a diagnosis of GERD.

Then you can work with your doctor to set a treatment plan, and fine-tune your PPI dosage and timing.

Lifestyle changes can help curb reflux, too. Lose weight; quit smoking. Limit alcohol, caffeine, and spicy or fatty foods. Eat smaller meals; don’t eat three hours before bed. Raise the head of your bed. And review all medications with your doctor; some can trigger reflux.

Because better digestion just feels…better.

Kaya Latzke, RN, MBA

Get to the heart of heartburn

See your doctor if you have:

• Frequent indigestion
• Burning in the center of your chest
• Sour- or bitter-tasting fluid in your throat or mouth
• Acid in your throat when lying flat or bending over
• Unexplained weight loss
• Trouble swallowing

ENDOSCOPY CARE
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Endoscopy provides valuable information for you and your doctor when determining your plan of care. Northfield Hospital provides a full range of services for prevention, diagnosis and treatment for digestive disorders.

Call for your appointment: 507-646-1201

Learn more at northfieldhospital.org/endoscopy

People with GERD are also at higher risk for esophageal cancer (adenocarcinoma), with nearly 17,000 new cases in the U.S. this year. Knowing if you have GERD can help you and your doctor monitor your health. (National Cancer Institute)
Sarah is standing stronger with less pain

When Sarah saw her doctor about chronic pain in her hips and trouble sleeping, the doctor suggested physical therapy.

At her first appointment, Maria Bohl, DPT, evaluated Sarah’s strength, posture, gait and more to rule out structural problems. The muscles in Sarah’s core were weak from childbirth, and Sarah had a habit of standing with her hips loose, especially while holding her toddler. “I was letting my muscles relax and forcing my joints and bones to carry the weight of my body,” Sarah says. Plus, lack of sleep contributes to chronic pain — common for parents with young kids.

To relieve her hip pain, Sarah needed to strengthen her core and heighten her body awareness “to engage my body mechanics to support my weight... and my child’s,” she explains.

To fit her schedule (and her habit of procrastinating), Sarah asked Maria for exercises she could do in bed, and at her desk. Maria adapted Sarah’s treatment to her lifestyle, to give her the greatest chance of success.

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A lot of pain and discomfort can be resolved by learning how to use your muscles correctly and build the strength and endurance needed to perform the activities you want,” Maria says.

“Marie was really willing to talk about my plan of care with me,” Sarah says. “She was always supportive, and never judgmental.”

After three months, Sarah’s pain is “definitely improved,” and she’s building new habits by listening to her body and keeping up with exercises and stretches.

“I’m very pro-active about pain management. I have chronic headaches and migraines, so I deal with a lot of pain and manage the pain that I can,” Sarah says. “It’s a lot easier to manage pain before it becomes debilitating.”

Sarah’s advice to those with nagging pain? “Talk to your doctor, and ask about getting a referral for physical therapy. Chronic pain affects your quality of life. A lot can be solved by making lifestyle changes.”

And standing up for yourself.

“It was like having a personal trainer for two months. It was awesome.”
Beyond clean: Best practices prevent infection

Your mom may have taught you about hospital corners when you learned to make your bed as a kid.

But in the hospital, “cleaning your room” is far more complicated . . . and critical to your health.

A germ-free environment prevents infection. The same way you wash your hands to keep from spreading germs, hospital crews clean and disinfect every surface to reduce your exposure to infection.

“It’s been said that one well-trained environmental services technician can prevent more disease than a room full of doctors can cure,” says Jay Bridley, T-CHEST, NH+C’s Environmental Services Supervisor.

That’s why all of NH+C’s Environmental Services staff now receive extensive training as Certified Healthcare Environmental Services Technicians. They learn industry best practices and the science behind them.

CHEST is a certification program that sets national standards specifically for environmental services technicians working in healthcare. It was launched in 2015 by the Association for the Healthcare Environment (AHE) and its parent organization, the American Hospital Association. Northfield Hospital is among the first hospitals nationally to complete CHEST training and certification.

Technicians learn the cycle of infection and how to interrupt it through environmental cleaning, including highly contagious infections such as C difficile and MRSA.

Knowing the science behind each process helps staff take effective action during time-sensitive situations. “They can apply that knowledge, take pride in their jobs, and know they are doing something important,” Bridley says.

All 20 Environmental Services staff members completed certification-level training this year, and all new staff get the training when they join NH+C. Specialized training is in the works for other departments, including the Surgery Center for operating room staff.

And hospital corners? Here’s a secret: You’re more comfortable with loosely tucked sheets.

Research shows that when healthcare facilities, care teams, and individual doctors and nurses are aware of infection problems and take specific steps to prevent them, rates of some infections can decrease by more than 70 percent. (Centers for Disease Control)
Jose Fulco, MD is one of the top doctors in Minnesota

Dr. Jose Fulco is honored among leading surgeons in Minnesota Monthly’s annual “Top Doctors” feature... the only Northfield doctor on the prestigious list of physicians in the Twin Cities and beyond.

Dr. Fulco provides top-quality care for residents throughout the southeast region.

“I chose to practice in Northfield to be part of providing excellent care here – so people can choose NH+C based on quality of care, not just because it’s nearby,” he says. “NH+C invests in excellent providers and facilities, and that’s a great service to the communities we serve.”

Dr. Fulco is also NH+C’s 2016 Physician of the Year, chosen by physician colleagues who say, “Dr. Fulco creates a genuine physician-patient experience with kindness, grace and care...He is an exceptional physician: engaged, compassionate, and gifted surgically with exceptional judgement and skill.”

We’re proud to be home to one of Minnesota’s best surgeons.

To make an appointment with Dr. Fulco, call 507-646-1494.

Sara Gergen, APRN, CPNP-PC, NNP-BC

Sara Gergen brings special expertise to the Birth Center and the Northfield Clinic.

Sara is a neonatal nurse practitioner who cares for newborns in the Birth Center.

With Sara’s extensive training and experience in neonatal intensive care, the Birth Center expands critical care for babies who have health problems at birth – giving parents more options to keep a fragile newborn close to home.

Sara also attends every scheduled cesarean section at the Birth Center. That kind of specialized care is typically available only at a large metro hospital.

Sara also sees children of all ages at the Northfield Clinic. She joins pediatricians Ben Flannery, MD and Todd Amunrud, DO with more appointment times available to suit families’ busy schedules.

“I enjoy establishing relationships with patients and their families and supporting them through their growth and development from the newborn period onwards,” Sara says. Her special interests are newborn care, growth and development throughout childhood, and adolescent medicine.

"Adding Sara to the team expands pediatric care in the Northfield Clinic," says Dr. Flannery. "Her expertise with newborns, and broad experience with kids of all ages, lets us provide more – and more complex – care for families. We’re excited to welcome Sara.”

Sara has advanced degrees in pediatrics and newborns and has over 20 years of experience. She comes to Northfield Hospital + Clinics from the University of Minnesota Masonic Children’s Hospital.

Sara has practice pulling double duty: She has two graduate degrees in Pediatric Nurse Practitioner from the University of Minnesota and Neonatal Nurse Practitioner from the College of St. Catherine. She is board-certified in both disciplines.

In her free time, Sara enjoys time with her husband Mark and their four adult sons, traveling, golfing, skiing and running.

To make an appointment with Sara in the Northfield Clinic, call 507-646-1494.

Molly Hart, LAT, ATC

Athletic Trainer Molly Hart joins Rehabilitation Services to care for individuals in the workplace as well as athletes. She enjoys working with a wide range of individuals, and every day is different.

“The best part of my job is working with a patient to get through an injury, and watching them get back to the thing that they love to do without pain,” she says.

Molly is a Certified Athletic Trainer with special certification in M1 Graston Technique, which treats scar tissue and fascia, and improves range of motion. She has a Bachelors of Science with emphasis in Athletic Training from the University of Wisconsin.

To make an appointment with Molly, call Rehabilitation Services Northfield Clinic at 507-646-8800.

Heidi Richardson, PT

Heidi is a Pediatric Physical Therapist who loves to work with children of all ages. “All children need to move, and when there is difficulty with movement, I am there to help,” she says.

Heidi has extensive experience in evaluation and treatment of children with a wide range of diagnoses including cancer, cerebral palsy, concussion, developmental delay, genetic disorders, hypotonia, toe walking, stroke, plagiocephaly, torticollis, and pediatric obesity.

Heidi has a Bachelor of Arts in Biology from Luther College and a Masters in Physical Therapy from St. Catherine University.

To make an appointment with Heidi, call Rehabilitation Services Northfield Clinic at 507-646-8800.
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- **Northfield Clinic**
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- **Summit Orthopedics Clinic**
  1381 Jefferson Road, Tel: 507-646-8900

- **Women’s Health Center**
  2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1478

- **O’Halloran ENT Clinic – Faribault**
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