

PA

ISSUE 13, Summer 2022 • Free

HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO F

Movement made new

Amelia Benjamin of
Danville is healed up
and healthier than ever.



PUTTING RUNNING WITHIN REACH

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WELCOME

Have an amazing health story to share? We'd love to hear it. And maybe we'll feature it in an upcoming edition. Send us a note:

pahealth@geisinger.edu



Summer's here! And what better way to enjoy the magnificent weather than to get outside and get moving?

This edition of *PA Health* is focused on movement. In these pages, you'll meet two young athletes who overcame injury and adversity to get themselves back in the game.

You'll also learn about our bariatrics and weight management program, which has performed more than 7,500 bariatric surgeries. It's made exercise and movement easier for everyone who's benefited from their services over the last 20 years.

Ever thought about running a 5K — or even a marathon? In this edition, we share training tips to help you prepare. If knee pain is holding you back, but you're not ready for surgery, read on to find nonsurgical treatment options that'll get you up and moving again.

I wish you and your family a healthy and active summer. Get out there and have fun. If you're on the Rail Trail in Lewisburg, you'll probably see me — so be sure to wave.

Jaewon Ryu, MD, JD
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GEISINGER HEALTH FOUNDATION

Geisinger gets moving — for the sake of everyone's health.

Did you know Geisinger is a nonprofit organization, supported by donations? Hosting golf tournaments is just one method of raising money for priorities like Geisinger Janet Weis Children's Hospital. They're a healthy way to bring in healthy donations — all for better health.

Never tried golf? Borrow or rent some clubs and hit a local driving range for an inexpensive, fun way to move your muscles, from arms to core to gluteus maximus.

Visit [geisinger.org/foundation](https://www.geisinger.org/foundation) to find the next tournament where you can play "fore" a good cause.



Amelia Benjamin is back to practicing ballet — and all her other dance styles.



RISING UP

An athlete's comeback from a bad break

By Paula Franken

Danville High School student Amelia Benjamin plays for the tennis team and is a weightlifter and a dancer. Hip hop and contemporary are her favorites.

Like most 15-year-olds, she also enjoys hanging out with friends — and they were with her the day she fractured her leg in two places. “I knew I was in trouble when the toe pick of my skate got stuck in the ice,” she says. “Before I knew it, I was falling backwards.”

At first, Amelia thought she was okay. But when she tried to stand, she couldn't. And that's when the pain set in. “I'd never broken anything before, so I wasn't sure what was happening. But I knew it was bad,” she says.

Her brother and friends rushed in to help. They called her parents, who drove her to Geisinger Medical Center's emergency room. Her mom assumed they'd set her daughter's leg in a cast and send her home.

As it turned out, Amelia needed surgery.

Because she has Type 1 diabetes, doctors were concerned her fractures wouldn't mend properly with just a cast. Healing would go better and faster with stabilizing rods. So pediatric orthopaedic surgeon Mark Seeley, MD, implanted two of them through fingernail-sized incisions around Amelia's knee.



Amelia was afraid she'd never be able to do what she'd done before at the gym, on the court or on the stage, especially since COVID-19 had most rehab facilities closed for business. But with Dr. Seeley's help, she tackled her rehabilitation at home.

In a full leg cast, Amelia began deadlifting the end of a couch and improvising other workouts. Within a few months she'd returned to form and sent Dr. Seeley Tik Tok videos of herself lifting weights and dancing.



Amelia made an outstanding recovery. Before long, she was stronger than ever — and able to deadlift 225 pounds.

"Patients like Amelia make you, as a physician, want to come to work every day," Dr. Seeley says. "They're able to take a very negative experience and turn it into something positive. And you get to watch them transform from someone very scared and apprehensive to someone who took their experience and used it as a trampoline to do bigger and better things in life."



▶ Want to watch Amelia back in action?

[geisinger.org/amelia](https://www.geisinger.org/amelia)

Dedication. Discipline. Drive.

By Paula Franken



When Mifflin County High School basketball star Ty Felmslee took to the court on the Huskies' final game of the season, few in the audience could have known what it took to get him there.

Six months and 20 days earlier, Ty had torn a ligament in his knee.

Ty Felmslee goes for a layup.



The injury was serious enough to require surgery, and he'd been recovering and rehabilitating ever since.

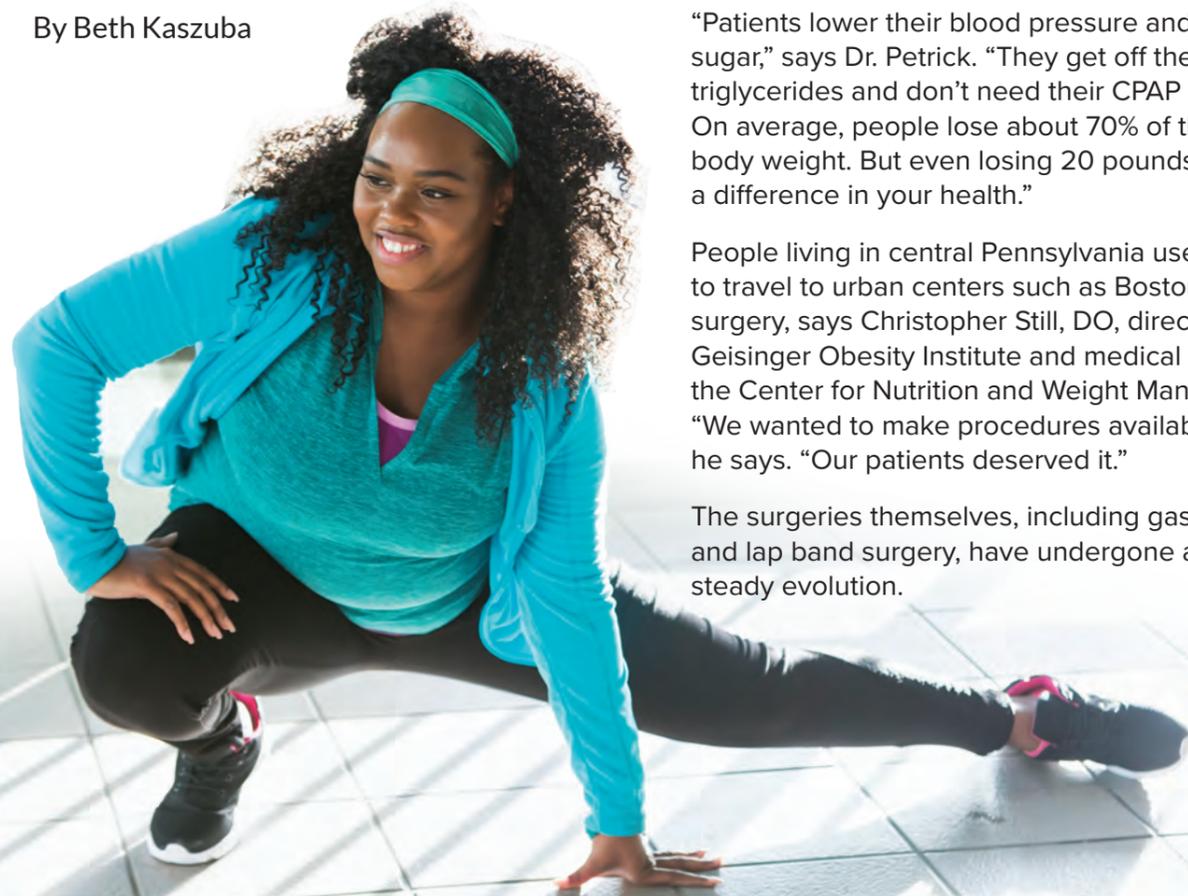
Geisinger athletic trainer Zach Kavov, who also worked as a trainer at the high school, began working with Ty shortly after his injury and helped get him scheduled with the orthopaedic surgeon.

"Ty was determined to return to basketball this season and immediately bought into the rehab process," Mr. Kavov says. "There were times when we had to hold him back a little because he always wanted to do more. Ty worked extremely hard to get back to play — and seeing the smile on his face and the crowd's reaction when he made his three-pointer made all the hard work worth it."

Slow and steady wins the race

Bariatric surgery is a long-term commitment for providers and patients.

By Beth Kaszuba



Some surgeries are undeniably immediate lifesavers.

Compared to those procedures, bariatric surgery is like the proverbial tortoise.

It might not be fast-acting or flashy, but over time, it saves as many — if not more — lives than more dramatic procedures, according to Anthony Petrick, MD, who's performed bariatric surgery at Geisinger since the Nutrition, Weight Management and Bariatric Surgery program launched in 2001.

"Patients lower their blood pressure and blood sugar," says Dr. Petrick. "They get off their meds for triglycerides and don't need their CPAP machines. On average, people lose about 70% of their excess body weight. But even losing 20 pounds can make a difference in your health."

People living in central Pennsylvania used to have to travel to urban centers such as Boston for bariatric surgery, says Christopher Still, DO, director of the Geisinger Obesity Institute and medical director of the Center for Nutrition and Weight Management. "We wanted to make procedures available here," he says. "Our patients deserved it."

The surgeries themselves, including gastric bypass and lap band surgery, have undergone a slow but steady evolution.



Bariatric surgery patients Elizabeth Royer (second from left) and Bradley Hare (far right) join surgeon Anthony Petrick, MD, and RailRiders mascot Champ at a celebration of the bariatric surgery program's 20th anniversary. *Photo by Kirsten Peters.*

"Bariatric surgery started in the late 70s and early 80s — and it was largely unsuccessful," Dr. Petrick says. "They tried to bypass the digestive tract, and patients got into trouble with nutrition."

The gastric band, which restricts the size of the stomach, was introduced in the 1980s and showed some promise. But "it was largely seen as a cosmetic procedure," Dr. Petrick explains. "And when patients didn't do well, they got terribly sick."

The bands also proved problematic in the long run, slipping or failing and often needing to be removed.

Today, gastric bypasses account for about 70% of the bariatric procedures performed at Geisinger. "Over the last 21 years, gastric bypass has become the most durable and reliable operation," says Dr. Petrick, explaining that only a small percentage of patients have any postoperative issues.

Teaming up for success

Geisinger's program also helps increase the odds that patients will be successful by using a team approach and carefully vetting potential candidates for surgery.

"Along with surgeons, our team includes behavioral medicine specialists, dietitians, obesity medicine specialists and exercise physiologists," says Dr. Still. "It's really that team approach that sets us apart. We have one of the best programs in the nation, if not the world."

The screening process — a red-, yellow- and green-light system — is also key, Dr. Petrick notes. "Nobody

"My life has been changed for the better in so many ways. It's been a great journey — and it's still ongoing."

— Bradley Hare, Sunbury

can just walk in and have surgery. They go through an effort to lose weight without surgery. And they need to have clearance from behavioral health and a dietitian."

He adds, "We've declined patients if they get a red light from behavioral health, because they may get in trouble postoperatively."

Along with making sure patients are physically and mentally prepared to succeed, the team follows them after surgery — for life, if possible. The goals are to help them avoid issues down the road and to stay on track with their diet, exercise and possibly weight-management medications.

"Obesity is a chronic and relapsing disease," says Dr. Still. "It's not a lack of willpower. Our bodies want to regain weight over time due to biologic and metabolic factors. Therefore, each individual has their own definition of success, which may not just be weight loss. It could be getting off insulin or not using a CPAP machine, for example."

Dr. Petrick says broader life changes can happen, too. "This can help with body issues, job issues, relationships and quality of life. People even leave abusive relationships. They're incredibly grateful."

Not surprisingly, the rewards for providers in the program often aren't immediate. "There may not be a lot of instant gratification," says Dr. Still. "But I love my job, and a lot of it is because of patients who are so successful — not just with losing weight, but most importantly, controlling medical problems like diabetes, sleep apnea, fatty liver disease and others."



HIKE, BIKE AND DANCE AGAIN WITHOUT KNEE PAIN. OR SURGERY.

By Paula Franken

Is knee pain keeping you from doing the things you love? Surgery might help — and minimally invasive robotic surgery makes recovery easier and quicker than ever. But surgery’s a big step.

You might want to consider trying one of these options first:

- **Just chill:** A handheld device that creates a cold zone under the skin, iovera® keeps nerves from sending pain signals. One treatment can last up to 90 days.
- **Give pain the boot:** AposHealth® is a shoe that’s calibrated for your body. By wearing it for just an hour a day, you strengthen your knees and treat your pain.

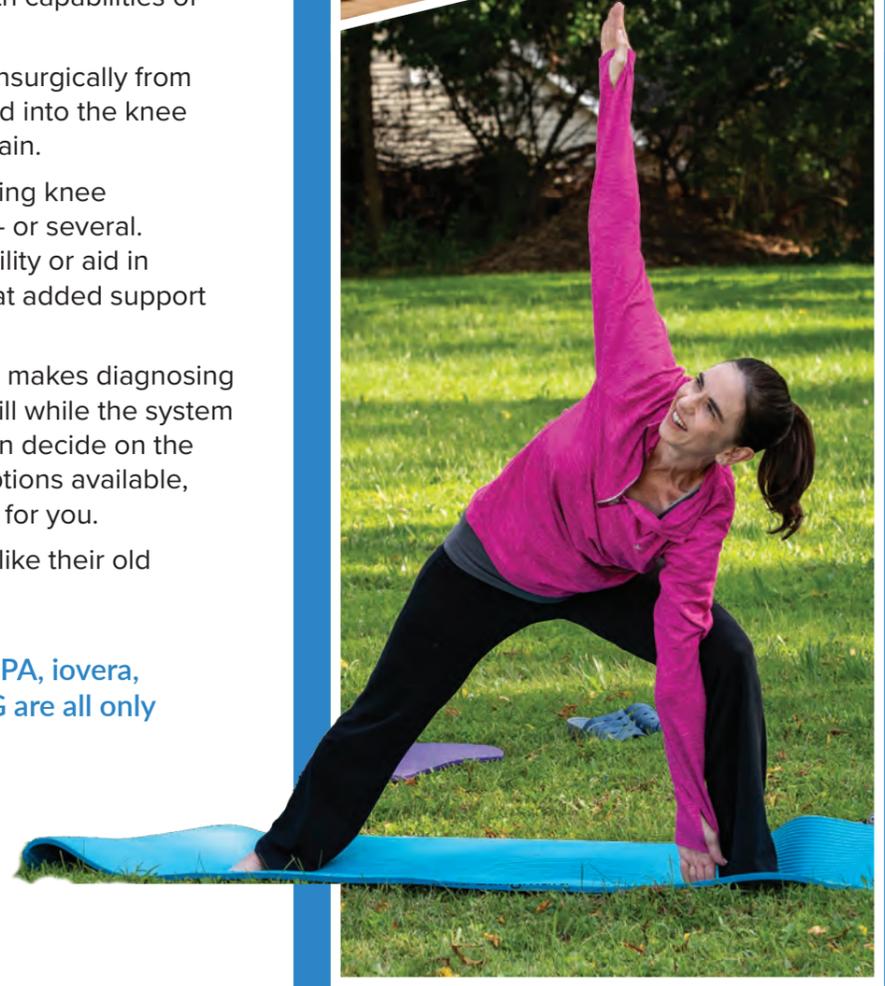
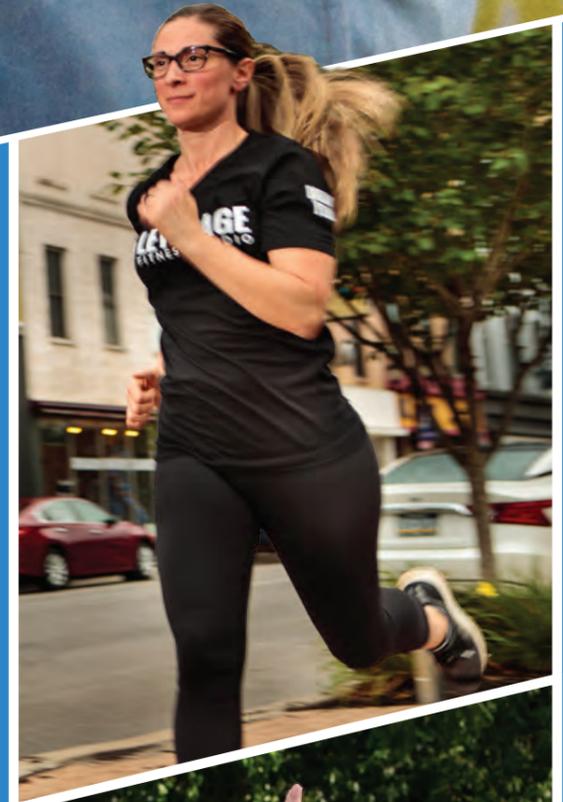
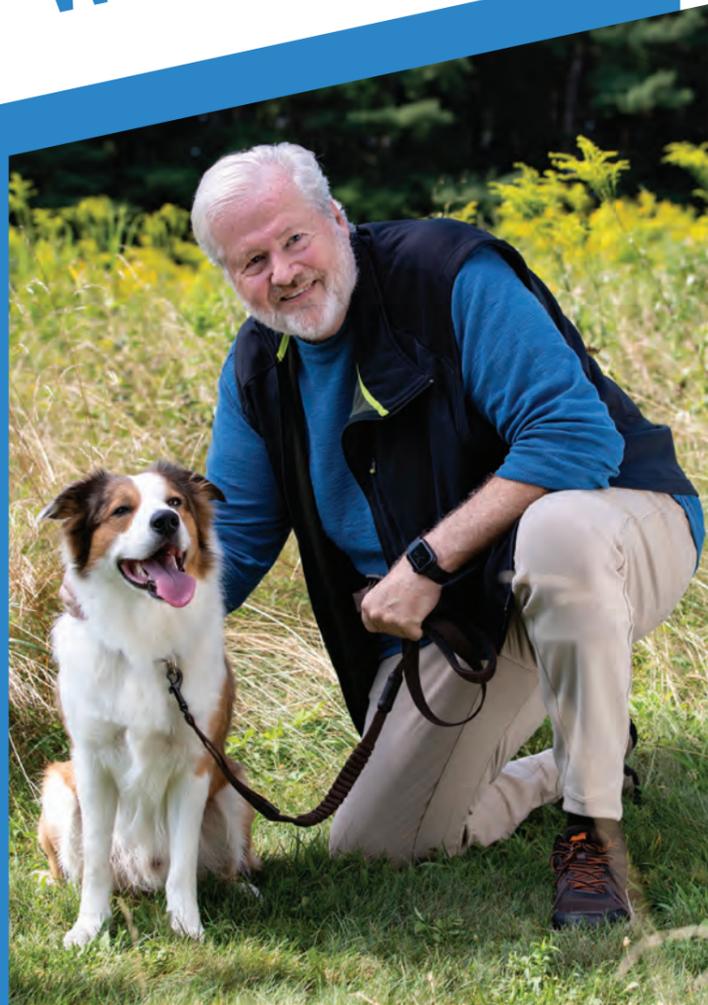
- **Inject to protect:** Different types of injections can ease knee pain. These include:
 - Cortisone – Commonly called a “steroid shot,” cortisone reduces inflammation quickly, which soothes sore knees.
 - Gel – Your body naturally produces a substance called hyaluronic acid, a fluid that lubricates your joints. Hyaluronic acid injections top off that fluid.
 - Platelet-rich plasma – Also known as a PRP injection, this treatment uses the healing and regrowth capabilities of platelets from your own blood.
 - Stem cell – Stem cells are extracted nonsurgically from bone marrow or fat tissue and re injected into the knee joint. There, they relieve swelling and pain.

Knee braces can help, too. And if you’re having knee pain, chances are you’ve already tried one — or several. Their design can prevent injury, provide stability or aid in rehabilitation after injury. And sometimes, that added support is all you need.

State-of-the-art technology like the KneeKG® makes diagnosing knee pain a breeze. Just walk on the treadmill while the system measures your knee in motion so doctors can decide on the right treatment. With so many nonsurgical options available, there’s a good chance one of them will work for you.

And before you know it, your knees will feel like their old (young) selves again.

In central and northeast PA, iovera, AposHealth and KneeKG are all only available at Geisinger.



Get your health on track

(Or trail. Or treadmill.)

By Beth Kaszuba

Running a marathon might seem like an impossible dream, a goal only for elite athletes willing to train for years.

But Kenneth Tomczyk, DO, says crossing the finish line is within reach of the average person. And you'll have fun along the way.

Dr. Tomczyk, who practices at Geisinger 65 Forward in Scranton, never considered himself a runner. He'd trained for one 5K before the pandemic shut down group activities. Then he didn't run again until June 2021 — at age 44, with a history of knee and back injuries.

And yet, he soon set the goal of running the New York City Marathon that same November.

A key step? Joining a running group affiliated with Ryan's Run, a fundraising campaign started by NEPA media personality Ryan Leckey. There, Dr. Tomczyk found supporters and a friend in his 60s who helped him set up a training program.

"I didn't understand how to ramp up," Dr. Tomczyk says. "But running became therapeutic. I'd have 30 minutes alone wearing my headset. I enjoyed that."

Still, on his first 10-mile run, "I was dehydrated — and I almost got hit by a train," Dr. Tomczyk recalls, laughing.

Nevertheless, he persevered, building endurance and friendships that helped carry him all the way to and through the marathon.

"The camaraderie is so uplifting," he says, explaining that even strangers along the route were supportive, especially during the grueling last few miles. "When I reached Brooklyn, the crowds were cheering and high-fiving you. It was one of the most amazing experiences of my life."

Still think you couldn't run more than 20 miles?

Dr. Tomczyk shares a secret.

"A lot of people alternate walking and running throughout the whole marathon," he says. "And by the last six miles, most people are walking."

Even if you don't plan to run a marathon, running benefits your body, he adds. "It's good for your physical and mental health. Some of the benefits include weight loss, boosted confidence, stress relief and disease prevention. It's just a great exercise."



"Anybody can do this. Our bodies are meant to move."

— Kenneth Tomczyk, DO

Dr. Tomczyk's training tips

To complete a 5K:

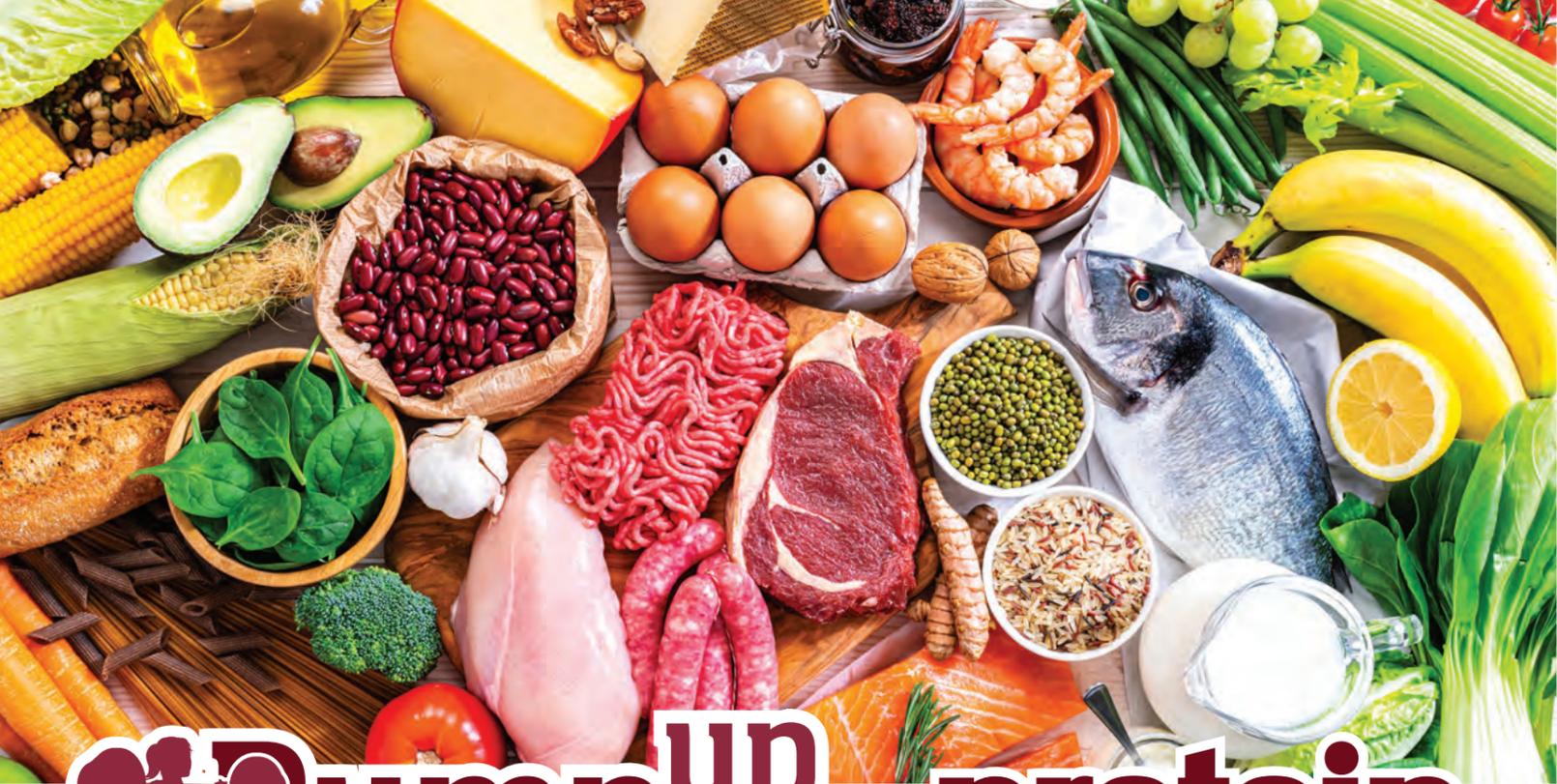
- Invest in good running shoes and replace them every 300 to 500 miles.
- Stretch and do strength training to protect your joints.
- Use an app like Couch to 5K to keep you on track.

Add these tips for marathon training:

- Join a running group and consider posting to social media. Reporting to followers keeps you motivated.
- Focus on technique. Using a strategy like chi running, which is based on principles of tai chi, can help protect your joints over long distances.
- Consider a training program that includes strategic walking intervals. The breaks are good for your body and make covering 26.2 miles less daunting.

**3.1
miles**

**26.2
miles**



Pump up the protein

By Kimberly Adler-Morelli

Some weightlifters take protein supplements to bulk up their muscles. But why does the average person need protein in their diet? Because this nutrient does a lot for your body. It's in almost everything: muscles, tendons, enzymes, hormones, skin and even hair. It also fuels your body and carries oxygen in your blood.

Most people should get 10% to 35% of their daily calories from protein. The good news? No pills or powders needed — it can all be from what's on your plate.

Foods rich in protein include:

- Eggs
- Fish
- Poultry
- Lean beef or pork
- Dairy products (think cottage cheese or yogurt)
- Seeds
- Nuts and nut butters
- Legumes (beans and peas)
- Grains (like wheat, rice, oats or corn)

If you're looking for an on-the-go protein boost, power bars are a good choice. You can whip them up from easy-to-find ingredients that pack a protein punch. And you can't go wrong with peanut butter: Versatile. Tasty. And a protein powerhouse.

Peanut butter cereal bars

Ingredients

- ½ cup honey
- 1 cup peanut butter (or swap out for another nut butter)
- 2 cups rice cereal or unsweetened cereal flakes
- 2 cups quick oats
- 1 cup raisins or other dried fruit

Directions:

Bring honey to a boil in a saucepan. Reduce heat to low and stir in peanut butter. Add the rest of the ingredients and mix well. Remove from heat. Spray an 8-inch square pan with cooking spray and press the mixture into the pan. When cool, cut into 16 bars.

Source: myplate.gov



Looking for a cool, sweet protein treat to beat the heat? Try a peanut butter banana smoothie. Check out our bonus recipe: geisinger.org/smoothie



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