

PA

ISSUE 2, SUMMER 2019

HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING



SUN SAFETY: FROM CANCER SURVIVOR TO ADVOCATE



**BIKE THE PINE
CREEK TRAIL**

**RECOVERY AFTER
A BEAR ATTACK**

**TOP 5 WAYS YOU'RE
AGGRAVATING ALLERGIES**

Welcome to *PA Health* magazine's second issue. Summer is finally here — let's go outside and get moving! From paddling down the Susquehanna to mountain biking in the Poconos, Pennsylvania has beautiful landscapes to explore and recreational activities to enjoy with friends and family. You'll find great suggestions for where to go and what to do right here in these pages.

Summer is also the time when our backyard gardens and farmers' markets are filled with an abundance of fresh, healthy produce. So how do you make the most of what the fields have to offer? This issue features a recipe your whole family will enjoy, along with eight healthy breakfast ideas from a registered dietitian to help you start your days off right.

Summer also can bring health risks. As much as we love the sun, we know it can be harmful. Our cover story this month features Stacia Romeo of Nescopeck who learned that lesson the hard way when a mole on her back was diagnosed as melanoma. Thankfully, the 32-year-old caught it early

and is now committed to spreading awareness about skin cancer: how to prevent it, how to detect it and how to get it treated if necessary. It's a message everyone should hear.

What about summer allergies? Learn from board-certified immunologist Puneet Bajaj, MD, how you might be accidentally aggravating yours (and what you can do to stop).

As we all know, living in Pennsylvania means we share the great outdoors with all forms of wildlife, including black bears. They can be dangerous in any season — but especially when there are cubs to protect. In this issue, you'll read about Melinda LeBarron of Muncy who was attacked in her own backyard. This brave woman is lucky to be alive today, and she has quite a story to tell about survival and recovery.

We hope you enjoy the second issue of *PA Health*, and we welcome your feedback, comments and suggestions.

Enjoy your summer!

— Don Stanziano
Executive Editor



On the Cover: Stacia Romeo, who was diagnosed with skin cancer, is now serious about sun protection when she spends time outdoors, including at Danville's Riverfront Park. (Photo by Gordon Wenzel, Impressions Studio, Lewisburg)



If you have a story suggestion or an amazing health story to tell, we'd love to hear it, and maybe we'll even feature it in an upcoming issue of *PA Health* magazine. Email us at PaHealth@geisinger.edu.

Publisher

ERICA L. SHAMES
Susquehanna Life Custom
Publishing Division

Creative Director

SIMONE TIEBER
estudio-5.com

Production Manager

JASON LOWSY
estudio-5.com

Contributing Writers

LISA Z. LEIGHTON
CARRIE PAULING
ERICA L. SHAMES

Photography

GORDON WENZEL

Geisinger

**Chief Marketing Officer/
Executive Editor**

DON STANZIANO

**Vice President of System
Marketing**

JEFF BEAN

**Associate Vice President of
Brand Management**

JANNIENNE JONES VERSE

Contributing Writer

PAULA FRANKEN

Creative Director

PATRICK PACACHA

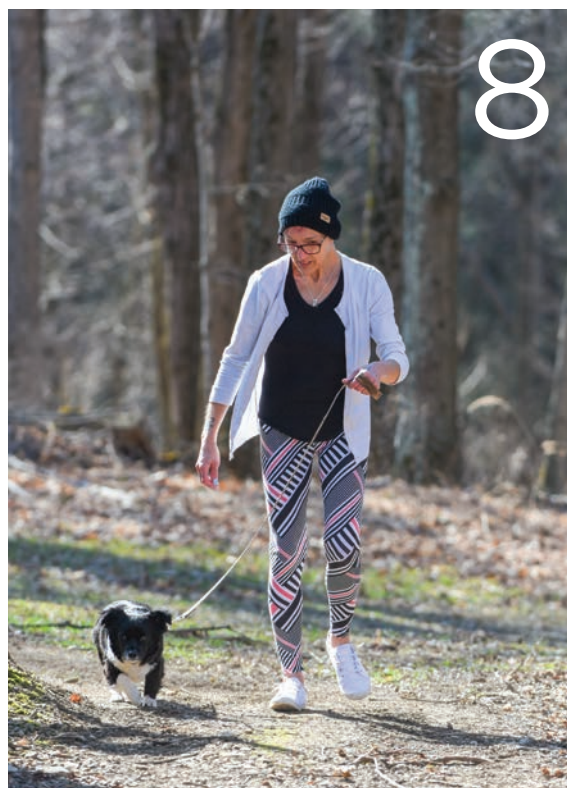
Editorial Support

BETH KASZUBA
JESSICA MARTIN

CONTENTS



- 4 COVER STORY**
Sun Safety
Coping with summer sun.
- 6 OUTDOOR PURSUITS**
Bike the Pine Creek Trail
Highlights of this top-10 trail.
- 8 FEATURE**
A Story of Survival
The road to recovery following a devastating bear attack.
- 10 WELLNESS TIPS**
Top 5 Ways You're Aggravating Your Allergies
How to feel better this summer.
- 11 YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT**
8 Great Breakfasts for Busy Mornings
Easy, nutritious meals to start your day.



HEALTH EVENTS NEAR YOU

Yearning to do yoga? Searching for a support group to manage diabetes? Want to quit smoking? A wealth of wellness events awaits you — including classes, lectures, support groups, screenings and more! Just visit events.geisinger.org and browse by category, date or location.



SUN PROTECTION:

IT'S NOT JUST A SUMMER THING

Melanoma is one of the most common cancers in young adults, and the fifth leading cause of cancer-related death. Early diagnosis is key to survival.

BY PAULA FRANKEN

“When I see friends posting online about going to tanning beds or complaining about nasty sunburns at the beach, I really try not to yell at them,” says Stacia Romeo of Nescopeck. “But I don’t want anyone to go through what I went through, so I do give them advice.”

In March 2018, Ms. Romeo noticed that a mole on her back was tender to the touch. Even though it was the same size and color it had been for years, the 32-year-old made an appointment with Geisinger dermatologist Michele Maroon, MD.

“When Dr. Maroon said I had melanoma, I wasn’t all that surprised,” Ms. Romeo says. “But then she started talking about seeing a surgical



results showed her lymph node was clear, and she now follows up with her dermatologist every six months for checkups. “I’m so thankful I had that mole looked at when I did,” she says. “What if I hadn’t made that appointment? Outside of dermatology, no one talks about sun safety, and most people don’t realize how serious skin cancer is. There needs to be more awareness.”

Now, Ms. Romeo protects herself from sun exposure whenever she’s outdoors, no matter what the season. Hats and sunglasses are staples of her wardrobe, she’s invested in some UPF clothing and she’s very careful to always use sunscreen — even when the day is overcast and in winter.

When it comes to sunscreens, Ms. Romeo looks for broad-spectrum products — meaning they protect against both UVA and UVB rays — with an SPF rating over 30. She also tries to use products that contain mineral blockers like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide instead of chemical blockers. And even with all this protection, she likes to find shade on sunny days.

“People should check their moles between dermatology appointments,” Ms. Romeo says. “I’d recommend doing it at least once a month and to keep the ABCDEs of moles in mind.” (See sidebar)

“There are so many misconceptions about skin cancer. I want everyone to hear my story, check their moles, put on sunscreen and stop using tanning beds. I have a 6-inch scar now, but I consider myself to be lucky. If I can get people to take sun protection seriously, I know everything I went through was worth it.”

— Stacia Romeo

oncologist to have my lymph nodes checked, and my mind went blank. I was having trouble processing the information. This was way more serious than I’d thought.”

Melanoma is a dangerous form of skin cancer that starts in the cells that form moles. Although melanoma can occur anywhere on your body, it most often develops in areas that have been exposed to the sun. The average age for diagnosis is 63. But melanoma is not uncommon among those younger than 30. In fact, it’s one of the most common cancers in young adults — especially young women. And melanoma is the fifth leading cause of cancer-related death — but if detected early, it can be treated successfully.

In May 2018, Ms. Romeo had her mole and a lymph node removed by Joseph Blansfield, MD, a surgeon at Geisinger Medical Center. Test

The **ABCDE** warning signs to look for with moles are:

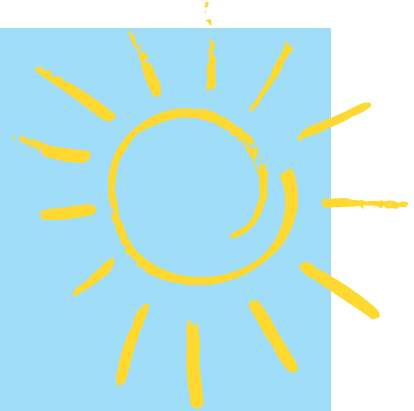
Asymmetry

Border irregularity

Color that is not uniform

Diameter larger than 6 mm

Evolving size, shape or color





OUTDOOR

PURSUIITS

A BICYCLE RIDE ON THE PINE CREEK TRAIL

One of the premier rail-trails in the northeast, the Pine Creek Trail in the Pine Creek Gorge offers bicyclists a 62-mile, relatively flat journey through an unspoiled, picturesque area known as the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania.



NICHOLAS A. TONELLI

With numerous trailheads, comfort stations, campgrounds and small towns along the route, the well-maintained Pine Creek Trail, voted by *USA Today* as one of the “10 Great Places to Take a Bike Tour,” is a perfect destination for an afternoon of cycling. When selecting your bicycle, keep in mind that the trail is composed of finely crushed limestone best suited for hybrid or mountain bikes.

The trail, which starts at Wellsboro Junction and ends in Jersey Shore, has many access points, allowing you to choose your journey. You can divide up the trail using a detailed map that includes point-to-point mileage, available at VisitPotterTioga.com.



SOME HISTORY

The Jersey Shore, Pine Creek & Buffalo Railroad began operating in 1883, carrying timber to sawmills in towns along the floor of the gorge. The railroad also conveyed coal north to New York. The last freight train passed through in October 1988. A few of the old stone mile markers from the railroad era are still visible along the trail, adding to its historic feel, and interpretive panels about the region’s railroad and logging history can be found at the Darling Run and Tiadaghton trailheads.

From Wellsboro Junction, the trail heads south to Jersey Shore with a slight downhill slope from north to south. The route traverses the Tioga and Tiadaghton state forests, which offer hiking trails.



ERICA L. SHAMES

OTHER ACTIVITIES

The trail parallels Pine Creek, offering great views of the water and dramatic rock outcroppings. Keep the location in mind for potential whitewater rafting, kayaking and canoeing in the spring, when the water level is highest.

Fishing, especially for trout, is another popular activity, and wildlife abounds. You may see an eagle, osprey, coyote or even a black bear on the hillsides adjacent to the trail. Other wildlife can also be spotted in the gorge, including deer, wild turkeys, herons, hawks, river otters and beavers. And watch out for rattlesnakes, which enjoy lounging on sunshine-warmed rocks beside the trail.

You’ll also pass charming little villages that offer rest stops and opportunities, in some places, to pick up sandwiches, ice cream and drinks at country stores or to dine at full-service restaurants. Have fun!

PARKING AND TRAIL ACCESS

To reach the northern trailhead from U.S. Route 6, where it meets PA-287 north of Wellsboro, turn left to travel north on PA-287 and then turn left on Patten Road. The trailhead is on the left beyond the ice cream shop.

To reach the southern trailhead in Jersey Shore from Lock Haven, exit U.S. Route 220 North at Thomas Street. At the top of the hill, turn right at the stop sign then drive downhill to the first traffic light. Turn right on Railroad Street and travel two blocks. The trailhead, restrooms and parking lot are on your right.

If you’re traveling from Williamsport, take U.S. Route 220 South and exit at Thomas Street. At the stop sign, turn left, go over the overpass and proceed down the hill to the first traffic light. Turn right onto Railroad Street and go two blocks to the trailhead on your right.

There are many other access points along the route. Several with parking are located south of Blackwell along Route 414. The parking lot at Rattlesnake Rock is a popular drop-off point for canoe and bicycle shuttle services. Another large parking lot is located at the southern end of the trail just north of Waterville.



A STORY OF SURVIVAL

BY ERICA L. SHAMES

By all accounts, Melinda LeBarron should not be here. Her remarkable story of survival is a testament to an invincible spirit, medical technology and the caregivers who administer it — along with the optimism needed to survive a near-tragedy.

Mauled by a bear last December, Melinda LeBarron is lucky to be alive — thanks to her strong will to live, a Geisinger trauma team and an operation performed years before the attack.

Behind Ms. LeBarron's rural Muncy home one evening, a female black bear knocked her down, locked its jaws around her head and dragged her almost 90 yards.

Typically, bears break their prey's neck. But in 2014, Ms. LeBarron had surgeries at Geisinger to correct scoliosis, leaving her with metal rods in her spine.

"With all that twisting, turning and pulling on my neck, I should have been dead from the time she started dragging me," says Ms. LeBarron. "The doctors told me, 'The only reason you are here today is the metal in your neck.' She couldn't snap it."

Still, the attack was nearly fatal. Transported to Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Ms. LeBarron spent most of a seven-week hospital stay in the trauma intensive care unit, where the trauma team, led by Matthew Factor, MD, worked to stabilize her and repair her severely

damaged scalp.

"There was no skin left to cover her head," says Susan Baro, DO, the unit's medical director. "That presented a plastic surgery nightmare."

Ms. LeBarron underwent multiple surgeries to graft skin from her legs onto her head. She was also treated for extensive facial injuries, a broken clavicle, fractured ribs and pelvis, and a partially detached left ear and thumb.

Dr. Baro went beyond providing medical treatment, according to Ms. LeBarron. "She would stay with me for hours — and she had other patients to worry about — and pick me up when I was at my worst."

For their part, Dr. Baro and her team were inspired by Ms. LeBarron's "incredible will to live" and forged a strong bond with their patient. Dr. Baro orchestrated a dance party for Ms. LeBarron, and nurses arranged for her to have a manicure.

And when Ms. LeBarron's son and daughter-in-law arrived at the hospital to deliver their first baby, the team made sure Ms. LeBarron was present for the birth, although that required special nursing staff to administer her pill and



“I’m a part of a family at that hospital now. I do hand them my life, and I’m grateful for every single doctor, nurse and aide.”

antibiotic regimen.

“Melinda is one of those people you become instantly attached to,” says Dr. Baro. “She made you want to put your time and effort into her. She is an amazing woman.”

The feelings are mutual. Every time Ms. LeBarron returns to Geisinger for follow-up appointments, she visits her former caregivers.

“Everyone comes up to see how I’m doing,” she says. “I’m a part of a family at that hospital now. I do hand them my life, and I’m grateful for every single doctor, nurse and aide.”

Two fundraisers and contributions from a neighbor helped cover costs for care of injuries to Ms. LeBarron’s dog — coincidentally named Bear! — including surgery and a three-week stay at the veterinary clinic.

Ms. LeBarron sees the bear attack as a metaphor for overcoming whatever challenges life throws her way.

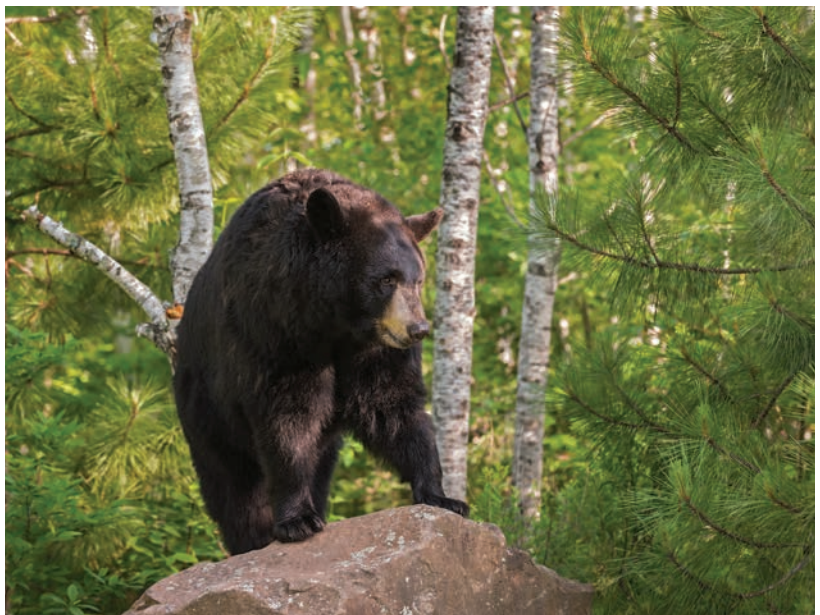
“I have a story to tell,” she says. “I’m moving forward with my life. I could be worse off; there are a lot of things I’m grateful for. I used to worry all the time. No more.”

LIVING WITH PENNSYLVANIA BLACK BEARS

Typically, black bear attacks are rare. However, if you do meet up with a bear, here are some coping tactics from the PA Game Commission.

- **Alert the bear** — If you see a bear, make some noise to alert the bear of your presence, giving it ample time and space to leave.
- **Back away** — If you have a close encounter, back away slowly while facing the bear to defuse the situation and give the bear room to flee.
- **Stay calm** — Avoid sudden movements and talk to help the bear keep track of your retreat. Don’t turn and run or attempt to climb a tree. Running may prompt the bear to give chase, and climbing a tree could be interpreted as a threat to any cubs present. Move toward your camper, house or vehicle, if nearby.
- **Pay attention** — Some bears may stand upright or move closer to detect your odor. Don’t consider this a sign of aggression. Once a bear identifies you as a human, it will usually leave. If it keeps approaching slowly, face the bear, wave your arms wildly and shout while backing away to intimidate it into retreating.
- **Watch for warning signs** — A surprised bear might feel threatened and show its discomfort by clacking its jaws together or swaying its head. If it charges, wave your arms, shout and swing a stick, your backpack or whatever is handy.
- **Fight back** — If a black bear attacks, fight back. Bears have been driven away when people have fought back with rocks, sticks, binoculars and even their bare hands.

If you have a problem with a bear, visit pgc.pa.gov to find the appropriate game commission office to contact.



TOP 5 WAYS YOU'RE AGGRAVATING YOUR ALLERGIES

What are you doing on a daily basis to aggravate your allergies, perhaps without even knowing it?

BY LISA Z. LEIGHTON

If you're an allergy sufferer, you probably know the three main culprits: pollen, dust mites and pets, which can cause itchy or watery eyes, a runny nose and congestion, an itchy throat and sneezing episodes. Fortunately, most symptoms are manageable with medications and immunotherapy.

Puneet Bajaj, MD, an allergy and immunology specialist at Geisinger Medical Center, also suggests avoiding these behaviors.

1. OPENING YOUR WINDOWS IN THE SPRING

Pollen easily travels through screens, and dry dusting can make things worse by stirring up the pollen.

2. SHOWERING IN THE MORNING

Evening showers remove pollen and pet dander before you get into bed. Also, shower — or at least wash your face and hands — right after working outside.

3. WASHING BEDDING IN COLD WATER

Dr. Bajaj suggests washing bedding and, if possible, pillows in water that's at least 130° F to control dust mites. And change your pillow at least once a year.

4. FAILING TO USE A DEHUMIDIFIER

Dust mites thrive in high humidity, so use a dehumidifier in sleeping areas, Dr. Bajaj suggests.

5. YOU'RE ALLOWING FIDO ON THE COUCH — OR BED

If pets are allowed in your bedroom, keep them off the bed. Pet hair and dander get trapped in bedding, aggravating allergies until laundering. It's also smart to clean your pets' paws and bathe them regularly.



TREATMENTS TO TRY

Over-the-counter and prescription medicines can be very effective — if used as directed.

“Often people take allergy medicines ‘as needed,’ but many of these medicines take time to work,” Dr. Bajaj adds. “They should be taken throughout the peak allergy season.”

WHEN TO SEE AN ALLERGIST AND WHAT TO EXPECT

“If you have tried over-the-counter medicines for a month or more and symptoms stay the same or continue to get worse, it's time to visit an allergist,” Dr. Bajaj says.

An allergist will discuss your symptoms and triggers and may order skin testing, which exposes skin to possible allergens. Results are usually available within 15 minutes. Medications or immunotherapy may also be prescribed.

Over time, visits to the allergist's office gradually increase your body's resistance to allergens.

Pennsylvania's four seasons offer great opportunities to explore the outdoors. But three seasons can trigger allergies. Tree pollen production begins in March, followed by grass pollen in the summer and weed pollen until temperatures drop below freezing.

You can track pollen counts using phone and tablet apps, including:

- Pollen.com Allergy Alert
- WebMD
- Zyrtec AllergyCast
- Weather apps such as Weather Channel and WeatherBug

8 GREAT BREAKFASTS FOR BUSY MORNINGS

BY CARRIE PAULING

“Breakfast sets the plan for the rest of the day,” says Kim Segiel, dietitian at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center. “Skipping breakfast often leads people to make poor eating choices later in the day based on cravings rather than nutrition.”

Here are some breakfast options for busy mornings.

1. EGGS. Hard boiled and scrambled eggs are low in calories and high in protein, so you feel fuller longer — and less inclined to snack.

2. PLAIN GREEK YOGURT. Add crunch with whole grain,

low-sugar cereal, sweetness with honey and fiber with berries.

3. OVERNIGHT OATS. Add whole grain oats, low-fat milk or almond milk, fruit, honey and flax or chia seeds for extra fiber.

4. CEREAL BARS. Choose bars with at least 3 grams of fiber and under 5 grams of sugar.

5. COTTAGE CHEESE WITH FRUIT. Unlike cream cheese, cottage cheese is mainly protein. Add peaches, berries or pineapple to sweeten.

6. EGG MUFFIN CUPS. Scramble eggs, add veggies and optional low-fat cheese, and bake in muffin tins. If you add meat,

consider low-calorie, low-fat turkey bacon or Canadian bacon. Freeze big batches for added convenience.

7. WHOLE GRAIN BAGEL OR WAFFLES. Opt for half a bagel, topped with nut butter and banana slices. Use syrup sparingly on waffles, or top with nut butter or berries.

8. PB&J. Make this classic healthy with whole grain bread and a touch of fruit spread.

“I always say there are no ‘bad’ veggies or fruits — it’s the cheese, dairy, dips and spreads you add to those veggie and fruit recipes that increase the calories and fat.”

— Kim Segiel, RDN



HEALTHY TIPS FOR SUMMER EATING

- **Take advantage** of abundant local fruits and veggies.
- **Eat light, cooling foods** such as salads, vegetables and grilled fish.
- **Hydrate** with fruit-infused waters.
- **Organic or not organic?** It’s a personal choice. “Produce will still be healthy even if it doesn’t have the ‘organic’ stamp,” says Kim Segiel, Geisinger dietitian.

OVERNIGHT OATS

Oatmeal slows digestion and makes us feel full longer. It controls sudden rises in blood sugar, so it’s also good for people with diabetes.

Ingredients:

- ½ cup whole grain oats
- ½ cup nonfat milk or almond milk
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- ½ cup mixed berries

Optional add-ins: chia seeds, sliced banana, nuts

In a Mason jar add oats, milk, yogurt and toppings. Store in refrigerator overnight or at least 5 hours. Stir and enjoy!



What kind of insurance brings
you home from overseas when
you need emergency care?

Mine does.

I needed emergency surgery while on vacation in the Dominican Republic. Geisinger Health Plan didn't just pay my bill for the surgery. They sent an air ambulance to bring me back right away so that I could recover at home.

This isn't just health insurance. This is caring.

[GeisingerHealthPlan.com/MineDoes](https://www.GeisingerHealthPlan.com/MineDoes)

Geisinger
Health Plan

Kathy
Hughesville, PA