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New leadership builds on strong legacy

NH+C begins the year by welcoming a new CEO, Zander Abbott.

He succeeds Steve Underdahl, who retires after 11 years of service to NH+C with a legacy of stewardship and growth.

Zander will lead NH+C's team of experienced and emerging leaders. Together, they continue the momentum that has made NH+C a community fixture and regional destination for 120 years.

They'll build on the good work that's been done over the past decade, including the expansion of the Birth Center and the clinics network; the addition of the Wound Healing Center; and the growth of Orthopedics and Women's Health.

"I'm excited to join this talented team that's providing excellent care to the community," Zander says. **"The caliber of talent in the clinical and leadership teams is impressive.** Every care team member I have met is professional, welcoming, and knowledgeable."

Zander recognizes the importance of a thriving hospital and excellent healthcare in our communities. He says NH+C's independence is a key asset for that: "As an independent organization, NH+C is able to maintain relationships with regional players such as Mayo Clinic and Hennepin Healthcare to provide access to those systems when patients need it, while providing great care close to home."



CEO Zander Abbott

Zander comes to NH+C from the MaineHealth System in Portland, Maine, where he has been an administrator for 11 years, jointly responsible for 650 FTEs across nursing, physician services, and administration. He brings to NH+C a strong track record in administration, strategy, financial management, provider sustainability, quality & safety, and patient experience. Zander is credited



COO Tammy Hayes



CFO Eric Guth



CNE Lisa Bauer



CMO Dr. Jeff Meland

with managing frequent change at MaineHealth with consistent results improving quality, patient access, infrastructure, IT systems, and patient volume.

This is an important time for NH+C to build on significant improvements over recent years:

- The expanded Birth Center has become a regional magnet for birth services, with over 600 births in 2024.
- NH+C has strengthened its workforce by recruiting and retaining excellent staff.
- Partnerships in telemedicine have expanded care for strokes, mental health, and infectious diseases.
- Cancer Care received accreditation from the Commission on Cancer, a rigorous process that distinguishes elite cancer care in the U.S.

NH+C is building on a strong base as we complete this chapter and begin the next.

Zander and his wife Abigail have four young children. Zander grew up in Northfield, and is excited to return to the area: "I'm eager to embed in the community and help NH+C keep providing excellent care."

Welcome home, Zander. The future is bright.





Kristi Pursell figured she'd just wait it out



Kristi was at the White House with her two kids for the traditional "turkey pardoning" ceremony the weekend before Thanksgiving.

As vice-chair of the Minnesota House of Representatives' Agriculture Committee, Rep. Pursell was there to see the Minnesota-grown turkey strut free.

They had "a whirlwind 48 hours" in DC, then flew home Monday for Thanksgiving plans with friends.

But by the end of that week, "I felt kind of off," Kristi says. She woke Friday with a fever that came and went despite fever-reducing medicine: "I couldn't shake it, and I was very lethargic." By Sunday, the fever was soaring, and she was vomiting and weak.

"Typical Minnesotan, I kept thinking, 'I'll go to sleep and it'll be fine,'" she says. "I didn't want to be a bother on a Sunday. But then my body very clearly was telling me that something was really wrong."

Kristi called her mom to take her to the Emergency Department. There, her temp was an alarming 102.9. "They thought the

machine must be broken," Kristi says. "I couldn't stop shaking for them to get a scan of my organs."

The ED team put Kristi on IV antibiotics and admitted her to the hospital, where "my blood pressure dropped so low they thought I was going to die," she recalls. The care team began fluid resuscitation, infusing fluids to increase her blood volume and raise her blood pressure.

Tests showed a startling combination of double kidney infection, urinary tract infection, and sepsis. It's unusual for a kidney infection to show up on a scan, but Kristi's infection was so severe that "it was clear to them neither kidney was functioning," she recalls.

Fortunately, all three infections responded to antibiotics; Kristi didn't need surgery.

After four nights in the hospital, her labs and bloodwork had improved enough that Kristi was able to go home. "But I still felt like hot garbage," she says. "It took a day or two more for my body to feel caught up."

"I had this beautiful feeling of being vulnerable and scared, and having my neighbors take care of me, people who knew me."

Good thing: Her election campaign was kicking off in 10 days, with Minnesota's Speaker of the House and legislative majority leaders coming to Northfield for it. "They said I'd be about 80% recovered by then, so I stayed on the couch all week to recover," Kristi says.

Onstage at the campaign kickoff event, "I got teary, thanking the staff of Northfield Hospital. I was coming to understand that I nearly died three times at the hospital, and they took care of me," she says.

"It was much more drama than I would have preferred – such a private thing squeezed between two events of my life as a public servant."

She's still praising Northfield Hospital: "It was an incredible small-town experience, with a hospitalist I had known since we were in middle school in Rochester, Dawn DeBus – plus doctors and staff whose kids know my kids," she says.

"I had this beautiful feeling of being vulnerable and scared, and having my neighbors take care of me, people who knew me. **I was so moved to get such incredible care without leaving my hometown.**"

Kristi's advice for others feeling progressively sick? "Don't be afraid to ask for help. I didn't want to put anyone out or draw attention to myself – a stubborn Midwestern approach. But it just felt like family, like community, the whole way through."

Kristi Pursell, Northfield



Haley Bulfer went way beyond morning sickness

Haley was happily pregnant with her first baby.

Her biggest challenge was hyperemesis – excessive nausea and vomiting to the point of dehydration and significant weight loss.

Most women get some morning sickness in their first trimester. “Mine was a step greater than that,” says Haley, who needed clinic visits at least three times a week to get fluids to stay hydrated.

When it continued beyond her first trimester, Haley got a PICC line inserted so she could administer IV hydration at home.

Medication helped too. “By my second trimester we knew what medications would help and what some triggers were, so most days it was under control,” Haley says.

An ultrasound at every pre-natal appointment showed that the baby was growing well. “Everything was normal, and I was so glad to hear that,” Haley

says. “When I felt like I couldn’t care for my baby like other women could, it was really reassuring that they could check that the baby was okay.”

Still, a few major episodes – vomiting every 10-20 minutes for days on end – landed Haley in the hospital for IV medication and fluids.

“Every time I was hospitalized, the care team looked at the big picture, the baby’s health and mine,” Haley says. Each time, ultrasounds showed the baby was gaining weight, had a strong heartbeat and “was growing and developing beautifully.”

But the team was concerned about the impact on Haley’s body. “A baby will take what it needs from the nutrients in the mom’s system, so the mom is the one who gets left depleted,” Haley explains. “Most of the care was for me.”

“I felt very thankful for Northfield Hospital,” Haley adds. “I didn’t feel well; I was frustrated and angry and had a lot of tears. **They welcomed me even when I wasn’t at my best self. They showed me so much kindness when I was feeling low.** Everyone – the nurses, OBs, front desk staff – were all so patient and empathetic. And there was always something else we could try, always a plan moving forward.”

Treating hyperemesis requires a lot of trial and error. Haley and her care team, led by certified nurse midwives Janelle Dahl, APRN, CNM and Brittany Cordes, APRN, CNM continued to reevaluate and adjust her care plan.

Then at 36 weeks, Haley was hospitalized again. Monitors tracked the baby’s heart rate and any contractions. As the team made a plan to get Haley and the baby through 3 more weeks, suddenly, the baby’s heart rate dropped. The team got Haley onto her hands and knees to reposition the baby, whose heart rate recovered.

Haley and her husband Josh had a decision to make. The baby was healthy, but Haley’s labs were concerning – gallstones, liver enzymes, white blood cell count. With recommendations from Janelle and OB/GYN Dr. Deb Suppes, “we decided to induce,” Haley says.

Labor and delivery “went beautifully,” and Louie was born hearty and hale. “He was three weeks early, but he had no issues. His lungs and heart were great,” Haley says. “He was 6 lbs., so a little bit small but mighty.”

“The moment he was born I began to feel back to my normal self,” Haley adds. “Now I feel so much better, so I can look back and say it was worth it.”

“It was definitely a challenging pregnancy. There were times I didn’t know how I’d get through this.”

Her advice to queasy moms: “You know your body; trust your gut and reach out if something seems wrong. There are different remedies they can try, and they can always adjust the plan.”

And keep your eye on the prize. “Louie is so healthy, and he’s such a good baby. We feel blessed in light of the challenges we faced.”



Haley Bulfer, Lonsdale

MORNING SICKNESS WARNING SIGNS

Vomiting as much as 4-6 times a day can be normal in the first trimester. Call your provider if you:

- can't keep fluids down for 12 hours
- are vomiting blood
- haven't urinated in 12 hours



Winter coughs explained

It's cough and sneeze season.

Viruses spread more in winter as people spend more time indoors together. How can you tell if it's a cold, flu, or something more serious?

Common Cold

Symptoms: Runny nose, scratchy throat, low-grade fever, fatigue, chills & aches, sneezing, coughing.

Treatment: Rest and liquids; decongestants, cough drops, antihistamines for symptoms.

Duration: A few days to several weeks.

See a provider: If symptoms last longer than a few days, get worse, or if new symptoms develop.

COVID

Symptoms: sore throat, congestion, cough, fever, chills, shortness of breath, body aches; maybe nausea, diarrhea, vomiting.

Treatment: Rest, fluids, fever-reducing medicine. Paxlovid may be prescribed for people at risk of serious illness.

Duration: 1-2 weeks; longer for severe infections. Some symptoms can last weeks or months: lingering cough, recurrent fever, fatigue, memory issues, changes in smell or taste.

See a provider: Right away if you're at risk of serious illness: Paxlovid is most effective if taken in the first five days that symptoms begin. Otherwise, seek care for trouble breathing, chest pain or pressure, onset of confusion, excessive sleepiness, bluish lips or face.

Influenza

Symptoms: Fatigue, fever, headache, body aches, sneezing, coughing, sore throat.

Treatment: Rest, fluids, medicines to relieve symptoms. Antiviral medication may be prescribed in severe cases or for people at risk of serious illness.

Duration: 3-5 days for most symptoms; cough and fatigue may linger as long as 2 weeks.

See a provider: If symptoms get worse after one week, especially a cough. See a provider right away if you are over 65, are pregnant, or have health conditions that put you at risk of complications.

RSV

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is especially serious for infants, when congestion and breathing problems lead to sleep and feeding issues. It's also serious for older adults, people with heart and/or lung problems, and people with weakened immune systems.

Symptoms: Difficulty breathing, runny nose, coughing, sneezing, wheezing, decreased appetite, low fever.

Treatment: Rest, fluids, acetaminophen for fever.

Duration: 1-2 weeks.

See a provider: For high fever, bad cough, wheezing, labored breathing, decreased appetite. For infants, see a doctor if baby is breathing fast (more than 1 breath per second), has labored breathing, isn't getting better after 5 days. Go to the Emergency Department for a baby under 2 months with difficult

breathing or fever, or a child under 2 years old with trouble breathing at night.

Whooping cough (pertussis)

It's a serious and very contagious bacterial infection that is prevalent this winter. See sidebar below for full details.

Pneumonia

Viruses are responsible for about one-third of pneumonia cases. Those at greatest risk are people weakened by surgery, illness, age, or smoking.

Symptoms: Confusion, fever, mucus cough, heavy

sweating, shaking chills, lack of appetite, rapid breathing, shortness of breath that gets worse with activity, chest pain that worsens with coughing or deep breathing.

Treatment: Medicines for fever and cough. Antibiotics for bacterial pneumonia. For viral pneumonia: rest, fluids.

Duration: 1-3 weeks.

See a provider: If cough gets worse, fever over 102, shaking chills, breathing makes your chest hurt.

Sources:

National Foundation for Infectious Diseases; Johns Hopkins Medicine

WHOOPING COUGH ON THE RISE

Pertussis is spreading widely across the region this winter. It's a highly contagious bacteria that causes a persistent cough. Anyone of any age can get it. It's especially common among school-aged kids.

Whooping cough can be harmful for young children, especially those who are too young to be vaccinated. **Infants and children who have not been fully immunized should see a provider if they have any symptoms, or have been exposed to someone with whooping cough or who has a chronic cough.**

- Spreads through coughing or sneezing
- Starts like a cold, then cough worsens to uncontrollable bursts
- Breathing in causes a "whoop" sound, and sometimes vomiting
- Causes fever, sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes
- Can last several weeks or months as lungs heal
- Can lead to pneumonia

It's important to treat whooping cough early, before coughing fits begin. Anyone who has a known exposure and some symptoms should see a provider.

Treatment:

- Antibiotics treat illness and reduce contagiousness
- Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed
- Eliminate coughing triggers like smoke, dust, chemical fumes
- Use a cool mist humidifier to loosen mucus and soothe the cough
- Eat small meals every few hours to help prevent vomiting
- Get plenty of fluids: water, juices, fruits
- Stay home for 5 days of antibiotic treatment (or 3 weeks after onset of coughing) until no longer contagious

Sources: Minnesota Department of Health and CDC



Vaccination is the best way to prevent pertussis. It's part of recommended childhood vaccines. A booster is recommended for adolescents and adults. "Hesitation to vaccines and the increase in children not vaccinated has led to this pertussis outbreak," says pediatrician Ben Flannery, MD. "The most important thing to stop this outbreak and prevent future ones is to get children their recommended vaccines."

Mike Heinzerling was goofing around...at first

Mike and his bowling buddies were tossing balls down the lane when Mike felt a snap in his right shoulder.

When it bruised up two days later, Mike got it checked out. An x-ray and an MRI showed that the muscle had pulled away from the bone, and his tendons were frayed. "I needed rotator cuff surgery," Mike says. "I was hesitant. Voluntary surgery was not high on my priority list."

He put it off . . . for 10 months.

Mike talked with orthopedic surgeon Hans Bengtson, MD about other options, like physical therapy. "He told me, 'You can try everything, but you need surgery.' I told him I was old-school, and I would just gut it out," Mike recalls. "He told me I needed to let go of the past," he laughs.

Another factor: At Mike's age, arthritis could set in at the injured joint. "That's not something I wanted to deal with either," Mike says. "So I decided surgery would be best."

The orthopedic and surgical team "made it very easy," Mike says. **"Everyone put my mind at ease.** They educated me with everything they were going to do."

Dr. Bengtson repaired Mike's rotator cuff tendon tear surgically. Mike went home the same day. Stabilizing the joint in a sling and wrapping his shoulder in

a cold therapy machine for several days helped reduce swelling and pain. "That was the best thing since sliced bread," Mike says.

Mike had physical therapy with Kevin Johnson, PT for about eight weeks. "Kevin is a nice guy, and really knows what he's doing," Mike says. "He showed me the benefit of more repetition, not more weights, to recondition the shoulder and gradually build muscle tone." A month after surgery, the ortho team was impressed by Mike's range of motion. He continues doing the exercises Kevin taught him, to help keep the muscles in both arms strong to protect his rotator cuffs, a key factor for long-term success.

In hindsight, Mike says he'd do one thing differently about having surgery: **"I wish I'd done it earlier."**

Mike's pretty active. "I've been a little accident-prone," he says. As a kid, a snowmobile accident left him with 50 stitches in his head. And in 2010, while at Elko Speedway, Mike was accidentally electrocuted. "I was dead," he says. "I actually could see myself walking down a dirt path lined with trees in bloom, and heard my name in the distance. The voice got louder, and when I opened my eyes, I was



Hans Bengtson, MD



Kevin Johnson, PT

lying on the back of the trailer and my hands where I held the cables were burned down to the bone."

At Northfield Hospital's Emergency Department, "they bandaged up my hands, watched me for a few hours to make sure I was okay, then discharged me." He asked to go back to the speedway "to let everyone know I was okay."

For all his medical mishaps, "I like to stay local," says

Mike, who lives in Farmington. **"It's a great hospital, and the Farmington Clinic is wonderful, too. The hospital is 20 minutes away. It's so convenient."**

Mike's advice for others who like to goof around? "If you get hurt, see your doctor. Take their advice. If you put it off, you're eventually going to have to take care of it. Do that sooner, so you can get better and enjoy life."

And move on to your next adventure.





Sue Swenson figured she was done with mammograms

With decades of clean mammograms and no family history of breast cancer, "I thought, 'I'm old enough now to quit doing this,'" Sue says.

Then she was given a to-do list at a clinic visit, and "mammogram" was on it. "A little voice inside said, 'Just do it.' So I thought I'd have a mammogram one more time to show I'm fine."

She wasn't.

Sue's mammogram and a biopsy found a small but dangerous tumor: Grade 3 on the Nottingham scale, cancer cells that grow fast in irregular patterns. ("Grade" is different from "Stage" of cancer: Doctors use the grade of the cancer, plus its size and other characteristics, to determine the stage of the cancer.) Sue's cancer was Stage 1.

Sue had surgery with Katya Ericson, MD a year earlier. Now, she chose Dr. Ericson again: "She's a marvelous surgeon."

Dr. Ericson removed the tumor and two lymph nodes, which tested clear. As a precaution, Sue had four rounds of chemotherapy at NH+C's Cancer Care & Infusion Center.

Mayo Clinic oncologist Jasmine Kamboj, MD, FASCO cared for Sue there. "Dr. Kamboj spends time with

"Cancer is a scary word, even today."

Sue Swenson, Northfield

you. She really wants to make sure you understand what's happening."

After her last chemo treatment, "there was a little party," Sue recalls. "They were all singing, and I was standing there crying. I didn't cry through the whole thing, but I cried then. **It was so emotional to get such tender care from this team.**"

Then Sue had six rounds of radiation at Mayo Radiation Oncology across the street from Northfield Hospital.

"NH+C has excellent connections," says Sue, who grew up in Northfield. "Even though I got all my care at Northfield Hospital, a lot of it happened beyond Northfield: They reach out to Mayo, Abbott, whomever they need for biopsies, tests, information so the patient has the best outcome."

Breast cancer nurse navigators Anya Sibunka, BSN, OCN, RN and Katie George, BSN, OCN, RN "were remarkable, always at my appointments, my surgery, my chemo," Sue says. "I had access to them daily. That gave me all the confidence in the world."



Katya Ericson, MD



Jasmine Kamboj, MD

Throughout her care, "I never felt I was alone," Sue says. "I'm a widow; I'd come home to an empty place. Coming home alone could have been the hardest part, but I knew I had this team with me every moment. They gave me the tools to reach out to the people I needed along the way."

The team "worked together behind the scenes with so much precision to get me to the next step of my care," Sue says. "I never felt rushed. I always felt like what I said was important. They listened, and did something about it."

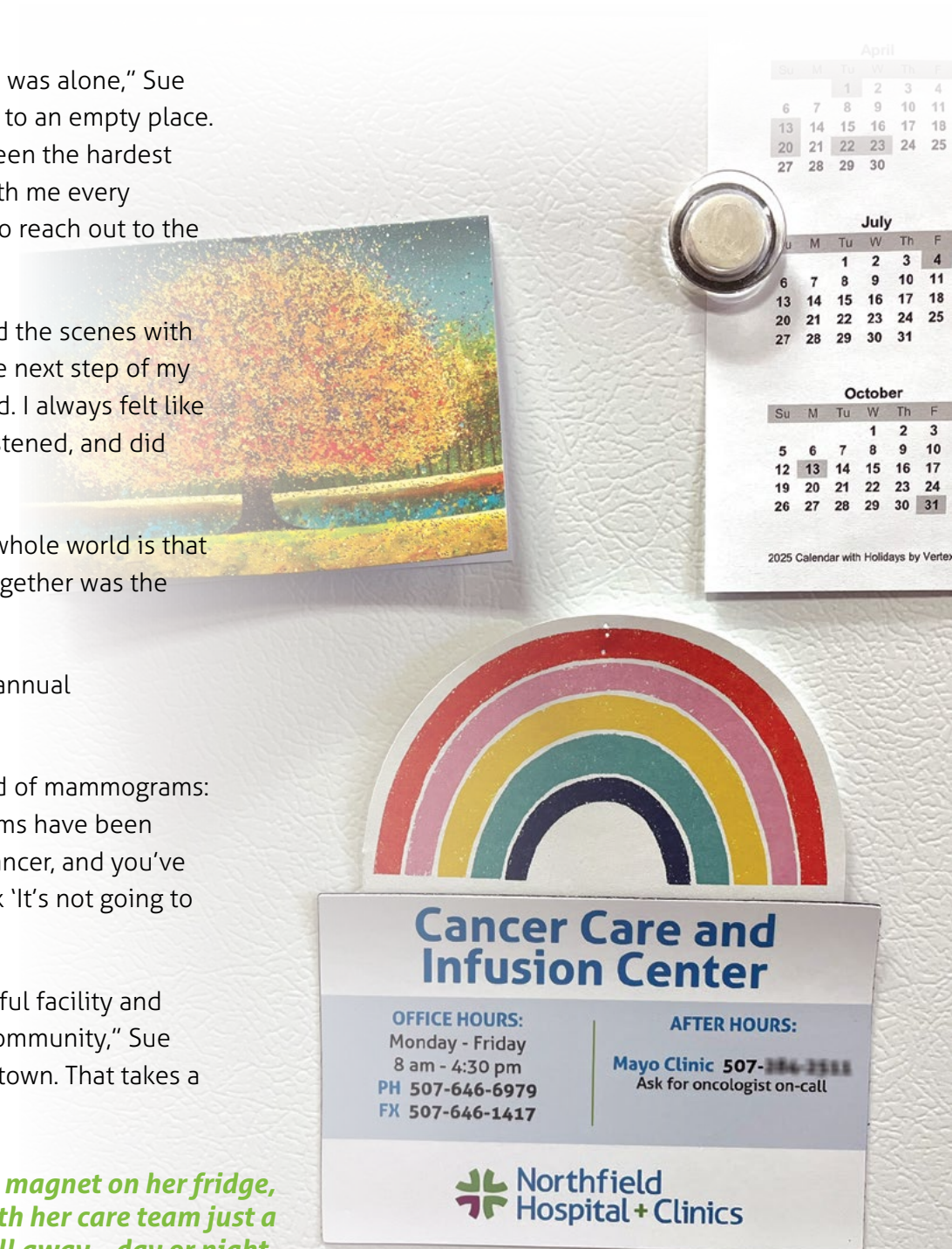
"When you're doing all this, your whole world is that team. Having this team working together was the best part of my care."

Part of Sue's ongoing care is, yes, annual mammograms.

Sue's advice for older women tired of mammograms: "Just because all your mammograms have been fine, and you have no history of cancer, and you've reached a certain age – don't think 'It's not going to happen to me.' Because it can."

Fortunately, "we have this wonderful facility and caregivers right here in our own community," Sue adds. "We don't have to go out of town. That takes a lot of stress away."

> Sue still has a magnet on her fridge, with her care team just a phone call away – day or night.



Healthy resolutions: Tips from the experts

New year, new ambitions. Our pros give advice to help make these common resolutions a success. We're cheering you on!

Eat better

It's a tempting resolution: "Lose weight." But follow-through is hard if the goal is too broad. Set smaller steps to build on throughout the year.



Kristi Von Ruden, RDN, LD

Get focused. Identify 1-2 eating habits you want to change – the office candy jar, the drive-thru, after-work chips and salsa. A food journal can help identify areas of improvement.

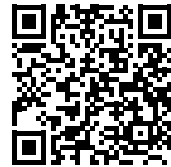
Name your motivation. What drives you? Want to feel better? Be healthier? Keep up with the kids (or grandkids)? Write it down to review whenever you feel discouraged.

Make SMART goals. Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timed goals are small steps toward the long-term target. For example:

- Bring a healthy snack to work to minimize temptations.
- Include a vegetable at dinner 4 days a week.
- Cut back from 3 cans of soda a day to 1 can.

Fix your plate. Dish up veggies, fruits, lean proteins, complex carbs. Focus on what to include – for nutrition – instead of what to avoid.

Get support. Enlist a friend, co-worker, family member to share your successes and challenges and encourage you along the way. Consider a program like ReShape U for nutrition education and support. Scan the QR code for more information on ReShape U.



Kristi Von Ruden, RDN, LD is Coordinator of Registered Dietitian services at NH+C. Learn more about nutrition services: (507) 646-1410

Exercise well

Regular exercise improves health and stamina, reduces stress, helps prevent or manage conditions like Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, depression.

Aim for a mix of all four types:

Aerobic exercise increases breathing and heart rate; benefits your heart, lungs, blood vessels; builds endurance. It also helps lower blood pressure and blood sugar, burn body fat, reduce inflammation. Try brisk walking, swimming, biking, tennis, dancing. Aim for 150 minutes per week.



Ericka Maldonado, DPT

Strength training builds muscle mass, stimulates bone growth, lowers blood sugar, improves balance and posture, reduces pain in the lower back and joints. Try squats, push-ups, lunges, weights, and resistance bands. Aim for 2-3 sessions per week.

Stretching keeps muscles and tendons flexible. Muscles shorten with age, increasing the risk of muscle cramps, joint pain, falls. Stretching for 3-4 sessions per week can help you stay flexible and keep your range of motion.

Balance training helps counteract age-related changes such as vision, inner ear problems like vertigo, weakness and joint stiffness. A physical therapist can assess your current balance and suggest tailored exercises to improve stability, such as walking heel to toe or standing on one foot.

Physical therapist Ericka Maldonado, DPT sees patients at Rehabilitation Services' Northfield clinic. Schedule: 507-646-8800

Sleep better

Winter conditions make it hard to sleep well: Less daylight, more carbs, furnace heat, couch time.

Get more light. Light tells your brain it's time to wake up. Your body clock is most responsive to light during 6:00-8:30 am. Best: Direct sunlight for 30+ minutes. A good substitute: Light box therapy



Stacey Zell, LRT

For 2025...

Get more exercise!

Eat healthier!

Get more sleep!

with 10,000 lux of light for 20-30 minutes.

Keep the thermostat low. Your temperature falls at night to tell your body it's time to sleep. You'll sleep better in a cool room. (Sorry, cozy blankets.)

Get some exercise. Vigorous exercise in late afternoon or evening is best: Your temperature drops about 4-5 hours after your workout.

Plan dinnertime. Try to eat dinner 4-5 hours before you plan to go to bed. Eat lighter: More protein, fewer carbs.

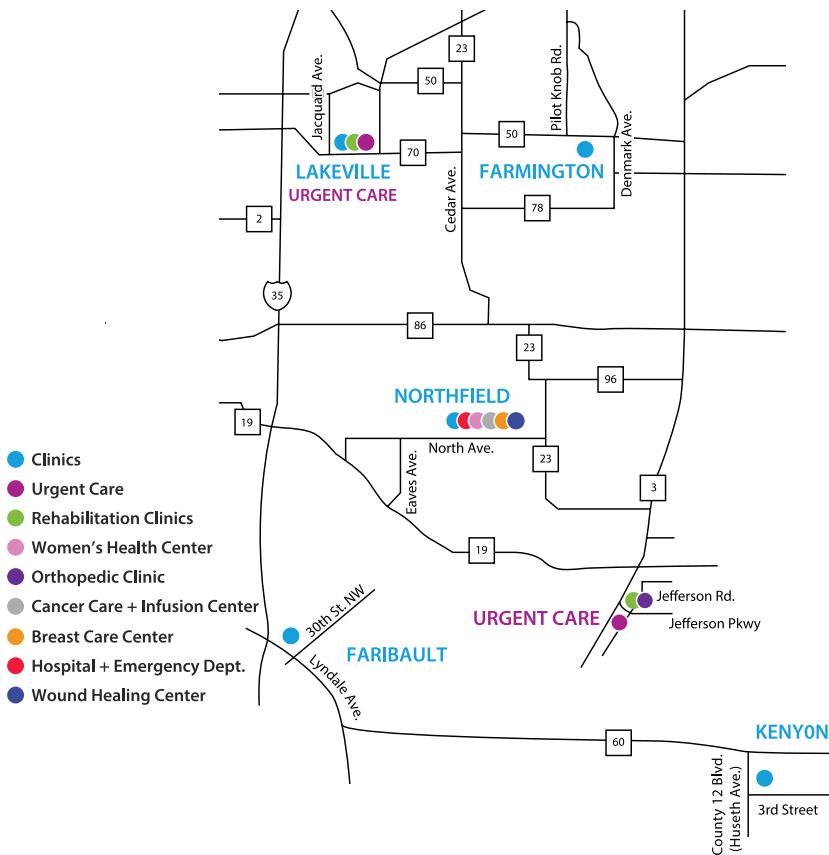
Get Zen. Pre-sleep rituals can calm your brain. Turn off electronics 1-2 hours before bedtime. Try meditation; there are lots of apps available to guide you.

Sleep tight.

Respiratory Therapy Coordinator Stacey Zell, LRT manages NH+C's Sleep Center, which is accredited by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Ask your provider if you'd benefit from a sleep study.

2000 North Avenue
Northfield, MN 55057

Clinics, Hospital + Specialty Care close to you



Hospital + Emergency

Northfield Hospital + Emergency

2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1000

Clinics + Urgent Care

Faribault Clinic

1980 30th St. NW (at Lyndale Ave.), Tel: 507-334-1601

Farmington Clinic

4645 Knutsen Drive, Tel: 651-460-2300

Kenyon Clinic

225 Huseth Street, Tel: 507-623-0123

Lakeville Clinic + URGENT CARE

9974 214th Street W., Tel: 952-469-0500

Northfield Clinic

2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1494

URGENT CARE Northfield

2014 Jefferson Road (Hwy 3), Tel: 507-646-6700

Specialty care available at multiple clinic locations

Schedule appointments online!

Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics

- Start at northfieldhospital.org or scan this QR code:
- Choose a time that fits your schedule
- Receive instant confirmation and reminders
- Your information is secure and private



Specialty Care

Breast Care Center – Northfield
2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1143

Cancer Care & Infusion Center – Northfield
2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-6979

Endoscopy – Northfield
2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1201

Orthopedics Clinic – Northfield
1381 Jefferson Road, Tel: 507-646-8900

Rehabilitation Clinics
Northfield: 1381 Jefferson Road
Tel: 507-646-8800
Lakeville: 9913 – 214th Street West
Tel: 952-985-2020

Sleep Center – Northfield
2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1099

Women's Health Center – Northfield
2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-1478

Wound Healing Center – Northfield
2000 North Avenue, Tel: 507-646-6900



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