

# AWARE!

## A New Test for Improved Detection of Prostate Cancer: PSMA (PROSTATE-SPECIFIC MEMBRANE ANTIGEN) PET SCAN

A new type of scan is helping doctors at The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center detect very small, hard-to-find areas of prostate cancer, which could lead to better treatment outcomes.

Prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer in men, other than skin cancer. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 268,490 new cases of prostate cancer will be diagnosed in 2022.

While prostate cancer can be a serious disease, most men diagnosed with prostate cancer do not die from it. In fact, the prognosis for prostate cancer is among the best for all cancers. For prostate cancer that has not spread to other parts of the body, the five-year relative survival rate (how likely the person is to live five years compared to someone who has not been diagnosed with cancer) can be as high as 99%, with a 15-year survival rate around 95%.

The prognosis isn't as good for cases where the cancer has spread significantly, so it's important to catch prostate cancer — both the initial disease and the spread to other parts of the body—as early as possible.



The Leever Cancer Center is now using a new, more sensitive biomarker for PET/CT scans for prostate cancer. A biomarker is a liquid that is injected into the patient and searches the body looking for specific cancer cells. There are a number of different biomarkers for different types of cancer.

☞ The new test has really changed our ability to address where the disease is in the patient and how to treat it appropriately. **It allows us to tailor the therapy specifically for that individual to get the best result.** ☞

Joseph Ravalese, III, MD, Radiation Oncologist, The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center

The new prostate cancer biomarker is called Pylarify (Piflufolastat F 18) which seeks out the Prostate-Specific Membrane Antigen (PSMA) within prostate tumor cells and makes them visible in a PET/CT scan. Imaging with PSMA has been shown to detect prostate cancer cells missed by other scan types, such as CT, MRI, or bone scans.

### Who Should Get a PSMA Scan?

This new test is used in two different scenarios. In the first scenario, the scan is used for patients who have already been diagnosed with prostate cancer and received some type of treatment, but who have shown a rising PSA level indicating that the cancer has come back. In those cases, a PSMA scan can identify where in the body the new or remaining prostate cancer cells are located, and allow for targeted

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treatment in those areas.

“Knowing where the disease is allows me to escalate my radiation dose for the patient, which will increase the curative value,” said Dr. Joseph Ravalese, III, a radiation oncologist at The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center. “And knowing the exact location of the disease makes the treatment safer, since we can target the specific area and minimize the radiation dose to surrounding tissues.”

In the second scenario, the scan is used for initial staging of prostate cancer. This allows for a more accurate prostate cancer staging, which in turn directs the type of treatment the patient will receive.

For patients with prostate cancer that has not spread to other parts of the body, there are six risk groups: very low risk, low risk, intermediate risk-

favorable, intermediate risk-unfavorable, high risk, and very high risk. Dr. Ravalese, in conjunction with the national guidelines, favors using the test for anyone in the intermediate risk-unfavorable group or higher.

“What I’ve found with patients who have received the scan for initial staging is that we are finding disease we did not expect to see — in the lymph nodes and even bone,” said Dr. Ravalese. “This allows us to do more aggressive and tailored treatments for the patient.”

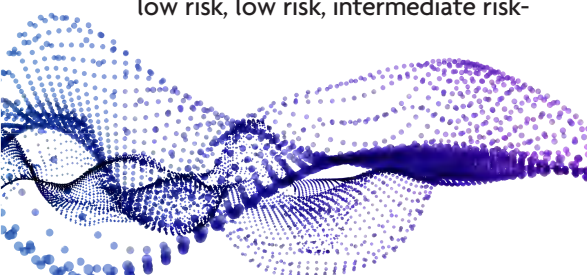
#### **How to Prepare for the PSMA**

There is no prep for this type of scan. You will be asked to sit quietly for one hour after your injection, then you will empty your bladder before the scan, which takes 20 to 30 minutes.

Once your images are complete, the technologist will forward them to the reading radiologist, who will send a final report to the doctor who ordered the test for you. Your doctor should be ready to review the results with you within 48 hours.

It is important to note that this test is perfectly safe. There is a small amount of radioactivity in the injection you receive, so we recommend staying at least five feet away from anyone who is pregnant or under age 12 to avoid exposing them to any residual radiation. All radioactivity will be gone by the day after your scan, and you may resume normal activities. There are no known side effects to PSMA.

*If you have any questions or concerns about PSMA or PET/CT or if PSMA has been recommended for you or a loved one, our radiology staff is available to answer any of your questions. Our goal is to keep you comfortable and relaxed while giving the radiologist a top-quality image to help with your diagnosis and treatment.*



IT'S A NEW YEAR. IT'S TIME TO QUIT.

## Start living smoke-free.

**Quitting smoking can be challenging, but it's worth it.** Smoking can cause or increase your risk for numerous health problems including heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), tuberculosis, and diabetes, as well as more than 10 different types of cancer.

Do the right thing for your health — take the first step toward a longer, healthier life free of smoking.

**Use Quitline!** Quitline is a FREE tobacco cessation service available through a toll-free telephone number. Quitlines are staffed by counselors trained specifically to help smokers quit. Quitlines deliver information, advice, support, and referrals to tobacco users — regardless of their geographic location, race/ethnicity, or economic status — in all U.S. states.

Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)  
or scan the QR code at right:





# Spotlight on: Radiation Therapists

When undergoing radiation treatments at The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center, you will meet Leever’s Radiation Therapists, who administer the doses of radiation prescribed to patients.

As with every Leever team member, the main goal of the radiation therapy team, aside from providing the best medical care possible, is to make patients feel welcome and comfortable.

“Most people are apprehensive about the unknown when they first arrive,” says Kerrie Huria, Senior Therapist. “After a course of treatment, patients are often sad on their last day due to the bonds they have developed with our therapists. We develop a great camaraderie with them.”

Kerrie leads a team of eight radiation therapists. As Senior Therapist, it is her responsibility to work closely with the therapists, as well as to communicate and coordinate care between her department and Medical Oncology. “We have developed friendships throughout the years and have become a family,” Kerrie says of her team. “We combine old school with new school techniques, from our oldest to our newest therapist. Each team member brings unique strengths, which

helps create individualized care for each patient. It really is a team effort.”

Kerrie has been with Leever for almost 25 years — even before it became the Leever Cancer Center. She enjoys working in a smaller environment, as opposed to a larger hospital setting. Initially she got into the field because both her grandmothers had breast cancer, and she has enjoyed being able to use her skill and expertise to help others in the same situation.

“It has been so rewarding to help people over the years,” says Kerrie. “Together our team will continue to give the best of care!”



“Each team member brings unique strengths, which helps create individualized care for each patient. **It really is a team effort.**”

— Kerrie Huria,  
Senior Radiation Therapist

Left to right: Coreen, Mikal, Cheryl, Kerrie, Shyanne, and Jennifer. Missing from photo: Melissa and Janet.



*What's on your mind?*  
Do you have a specific interest?  
Question? Concern?

AWARE is designed to help you, the Leever community, so your feedback is important to us.

Visit [leevercancercenter.org/myleever](http://leevercancercenter.org/myleever) to tell us what would make your experience at Leever better. We'd love to hear from you!

# CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

## 20th Anniversary Pizza Party

*Celebrating our dedicated staff*

At the Leever Cancer Center, our people make all the difference, so we invited staff members to a special gathering outside on Tuesday, September 27th to celebrate our 20th anniversary. Everyone had the opportunity to socialize and enjoy pizza, salad, cappuccino, espresso, and gelato from the La Tavola Pizza Truck.



**2:** Dr. Victor Chang and Deborah Parkinson, HLRCC Operations Director, in front of the La Tavola pizza truck.

**3:** Janet Hubert and Christina Kidulas, HLRCC nuclear technologists.

**1:** Front row (left to right): Dr. Kert Sabbath, Katrina Chang, Sophia Chang, Dr. Victor Chang and Mireille Chang. Back row: Kevin Kniery, HLRCC Executive Director, and Dr. Joseph Ravalese, III.

## Watertown Police 7th Annual Golf Tournament

### *Benefiting "Stepping Forward"*



We are very grateful to the Watertown Police Department, which held its seventh annual Charity Golf Tournament to benefit the Leever Cancer Center. The event raised funds for the Stepping Forward Survivorship Program, which is designed to address the needs of cancer survivors and provide them with an effective post-treatment plan for care, disease prevention, and support. Thanks to Watertown PD, event coordinator Officer Austin Keeney, and the volunteers, sponsors, and participants who, once again, made this day a huge success.

Tom Belzek, HLRCC Finance Director (left) shakes hands with Officer Austin Keeney, tournament coordinator.



# OF *hope and healing*



## Hope & Healing Candlelight Event

*Honoring the past, lighting the way to the future*

Thank you to all who attended our Hope & Healing Candlelight Event on Tuesday, October 18th, where attendees were invited to light a candle in honor of, in memory of, or in celebration of a loved one or anyone touched by cancer. It was a special way of celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Leever Cancer Center and honoring the ones we love.



- 1:** *Sandy Micalizzi and Tom Belzek, HLRCC Finance Director, enjoyed the moving evening.*
- 2:** *Dr. Douglas Housman, Dr. Jeffrey Bitterman, and Mrs. and Dr. Raymond Sullivan.*
- 3:** *Berenice Toomey-Welch, Linda Triebe, and Karen Bailey.*
- 4:** *Dianne Bedard (left) read a "Prayer for the Control of Cancer" and Kerrie Huria, HLRCC senior radiation therapist (right) read the poem "A Silent Tear."*
- 5:** *Joanne Lee, RN from the Smilow office, read the names of those honored at the ceremony.*

# Superfoods: Is there such a thing?

**“If you eat certain superfoods, you won’t get cancer (or heart disease or diabetes or high blood pressure or arthritis or Alzheimer’s).”** The concept of superfoods was originally developed by the United Fruit Company, banana importers, around World War I as part of a marketing campaign touting the many benefits of eating bananas, including the fact that they came in their own germ-proof package.

And then there’s the famous “an apple a day” slogan. We all are familiar with the promotion of blueberries as a superfood, which was initiated by the Maine Blueberry Board to market wild blueberries. The list goes on and on. The most recent “superfood” about to be marketed is cockroach milk. Yes, you read correctly.

It turns out the term “superfood” is only a marketing tool with no scientific basis or definition. Foods labeled as superfoods are usually nutrient-rich and are often packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that can impact health, but do not have magical benefits. The term “superfoods” often translates into super sales, and people are willing to pay more for foods they perceive as extra healthy, even if there’s no research to back up the claims.

Does that mean that the many foods on the list of superfoods, lots of which are fruits and vegetables, are not worth eating? Absolutely not! In fact, the multiple health benefits of a plant-based diet, also known as the Mediterranean Diet, are well documented and highly recommended. And many of the popular superfoods have always been a part of this healthy eating plan. Eating a wide variety of healthy foods can have tremendous health benefits. It is the combination and variety of foods consumed, rather than one particular food, that provides the many vitamins, nutrients, and naturally occurring antioxidants and phytonutrients that help to lower the risk of many chronic diseases.

**Eating a Mediterranean Diet** The Mediterranean Diet is based on the foods and eating style that people from countries like France, Italy, Spain, and Greece enjoy on a daily basis. Research has shown that people in these countries are often healthier, live longer, and have fewer chronic diseases. Although there are no strict rules, the diet typically includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans), nuts, seeds, heart-healthy fats, and lean proteins. Processed foods, refined grains, and added sugars are kept to a minimum. Portions of meat are smaller, and the majority of the meal is from plants (fruits, vegetables, nuts, and whole grains).

The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid at right can be used as a guide to incorporating this plant-based diet into your lifestyle.

**Rainbow of Plant Nutrition** To get the maximum benefit from your food, it is important to include a wide variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables. Eating as many “colors” as you can in a day or week gives you the best coverage. If you think of the Mediterranean Diet as a wealth of foods that are “super” healthy, you will be giving yourself a gift of good health.

### Are you up for the plant-based food challenge?

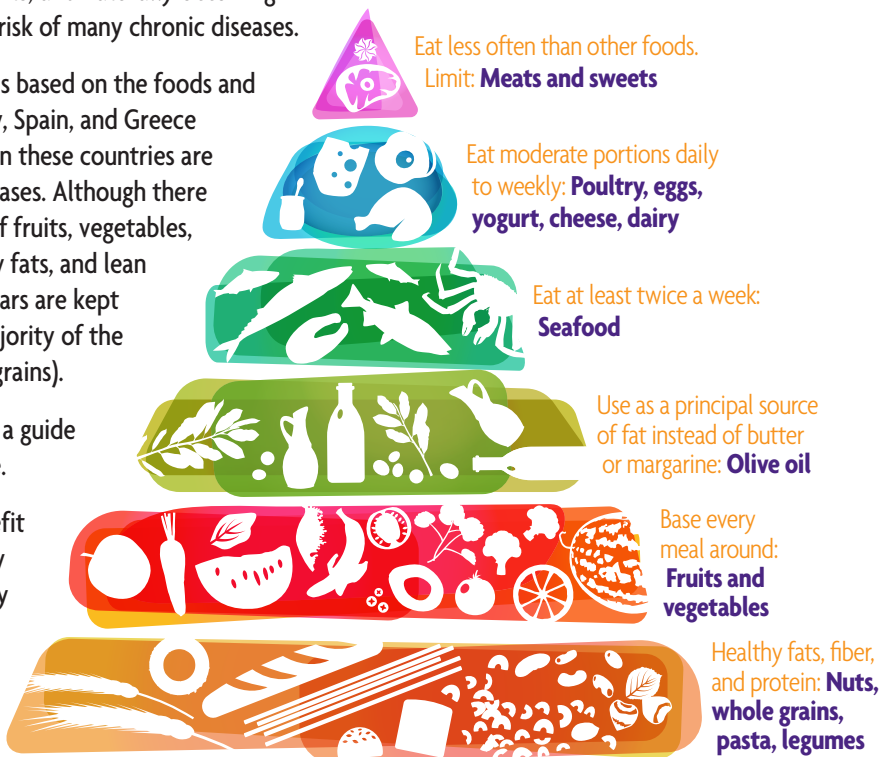
Every day, try to consume 10-20 different fruits, vegetables, or whole grains; 14-15 plant-based foods are highlighted in the sample menu below.

**Breakfast:** Oatmeal with added almonds and blueberries, and orange juice

**Lunch:** Salad with lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, grilled chicken, olive oil, and balsamic vinegar OR sandwich on whole wheat bread with turkey, lettuce, tomato, and a pickle

**Snack:** Yogurt with added strawberries or an apple

**Supper:** Salmon, asparagus, sweet potato, whole wheat roll, dessert of cut-up cantaloupe or watermelon



**The Mediterranean Diet Pyramid**

Nutrition Notes is authored by Leever Nutritionist Karen Sabbath, MS, RD, CSO (ksabbath@leevercancercenter.org or 203-575-5510).



# A Community of Caring

The Harold Leever Regional Cancer Center wishes to express its appreciation to our neighbors and friends...

We are so very appreciative for a generous bequest received from the Estate of **Irene Handle**.

A big thank you for the generous donations received from **Gianna Lourenco** in memory of **Marilyn Olmstead** and the **Watertown Soccer Fundraiser** in memory of **Crissy Donorfio**.

Our HLRCC staff is most thankful to **Joe Capella** and the **Are You Dense Organization** for recognizing the Leever Cancer Center at its Music Fest 2022.

Thanks to all those who ran Pink Out events and donated the proceeds to the Leever Center including **ACES at Chase, Maloney Interdistrict Magnet School, and Wolcott High School Boys and Girls Soccer Teams**.

Our sincere gratitude for head coverings received from **Lou Valenti (on behalf of Beverly Valenti), Rose L. Moss, Maiorano Funeral Home, Rita M. Greene, Susan Phillips, and Alex Vinh (in memory of Lois A. M. Brodeur)**.

We are most grateful for the following donations: Four cases of Ensure from **Ada Lugo**, personal care items and beautiful ornaments (pictured at right) from **St. John of the Cross Women's Group** and **David Ferguson**, and small patient gifts from **Hope on Main Street, "Team Hope."**

Great thanks, too, to all who donated items including knit hats, shawls, afghans, blankets, and other items: **Wolcott Senior Center Knitting Club, Peg Vaghi, Staff of Middlebury Convalescent Home, North Purchase Happy Hookers, The Prayer Shawl Ladies at the First Congregational Church of Watertown, Helen Lang and the Naugatuck Senior Center, Janice M. Kulpa, Jo-Anne Pallacovitch, Betty Reynolds, and Maryann Jackson.**



**100% Generosity** Members of the Sacred Heart Class of '72 presented a check from the proceeds of their reunion 50/50 raffle to Deborah Parkinson, Director of Operations at Leever.

Left to right: Linda Baldoni Nelson, Deborah Parkinson, Mary Ellen Berthiaume, and Cindy Giordano Obar.

## aware

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We encourage your feedback.  
If there is a cancer topic you would like covered, to respond to an article you've read, or to be put on our mailing list, please call 203-575-5555 or email: [dparkinson@leevercancercenter.org](mailto:dparkinson@leevercancercenter.org)



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IN MEMORY OF  
**Anne  
Pringle**



*A good friend of Leever's, Anne Pringle, passed away at the end of November. Anne was proud to be one of the Leever Center's first patients and had a heart of gold. She supported Leever from the beginning, attending events such as the Relay for Life. Anne collected gift cards for patients every Christmas with the group she co-founded years ago and led until recently, the Brave at Heart Breast Cancer Support Group.*

*Anne will be remembered for the joy and kindness she shared with all.*

## IMPORTANT ONSITE INFORMATION ABOUT COVID-19

**All onsite support groups and events are on hold until further notice.**

As always, the health and safety of our patients and staff are of the utmost importance, and we are doing everything we can to provide the necessary care to our patients while protecting against the spread of COVID-19.

For the most up-to-date patient alerts and safety precautions, go to [leevercancercenter.org/news/important-information-about-the-leever-cancer-center](http://leevercancercenter.org/news/important-information-about-the-leever-cancer-center).

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

**For programs providing support and information:  
211 or 211.org**

**Direct numbers for specific resources:**

**Domestic violence**  
888-774-2900 English  
844-831-9200 Spanish

**Suicide**  
866-794-0021 Greater Waterbury

**Child abuse**  
800-842-2288

**Crisis hotline for young adults**  
Text "listen" to 741741

**Elder abuse**  
888-385-4225

**Sexual assault**  
888-999-5545 English  
888-568-8332 Spanish

**Veterans crisis hotline**  
800-273-8255 and press 1  
Text: 838255  
or [veteranscrisisline.net](http://veteranscrisisline.net)

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
866-783-7712 English  
or [ct-aa.org](http://ct-aa.org)

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
800-662-4357/800-420-9064  
[ctna.org](http://ctna.org)

**National Alliance of Mental Health (NAMI)**  
800-215-3021

**Food resources**  
[ctfoodbank.org](http://ctfoodbank.org)  
(Local food pantries can be looked up by zip code)