



**UPBEAT**  
**Mended Hearts Newsletter**  
**Chapter # 130 – May 2026**  
**Olympia, WA**

**It's Great  
To Be Alive  
And  
To Help  
Others**

**Meeting Notice**

**Program: Heart Transplant Patient – Jim Elsner**

**Date/Time: May 14, Thursday, 2PM**

**Location: MyMedSupplies  
6149 Martin Way East  
Lacey, WA**

**Upcoming Dates**

May 7-Board Meeting  
May 10-Mother's Day  
May 14-Chapter Meeting  
May 25-Memorial Day

**President's Message**  
**Michael Blonden**

Jim Elsner will be the May speaker. He has a very experienced background with heart disease and procedures/surgeries. He had stents, a bypass, a LVAD, and a heart transplant. I hope all of you can make it to Jim's presentation. In June we are planning on participating with Walk with a Doc, Rachel Ballou, DO, Family Medicine, leader of Walk with a Doc presenting to our group. Please join us in attending the next Walk with a Doc group get together on April 25th and May 23rd at 10 am in Ranier Vista Park, Lacey. I'd like to see us get at least a dozen members to attend the walks. The walks are on the fourth Saturday of each month. Before we know it, our summer picnic will be here again in August. Plan on attending this fun social event.

As mentioned in our member meeting, we could use more Volunteer Visitors. If you have been thinking about volunteering with other visitors now would be the time to step up to the plate. I've been visiting now for years and find it very rewarding to meet with patients at St. Peter Hospital.

Members can volunteer to write or record a video of your heart story. Ideally, the story will tell not only about your heart event, but also about lifestyle changes or enhancements you have made since your heart event. Please consider sharing your heart story online or in our newsletter.

If you have special skills you would like to share with our Chapter, please let a Board Member know of your skills and interests.

Another reminder, look for emails sent from our website  
[mblonden@mendedheartsthurstoncounty.org](mailto:mblonden@mendedheartsthurstoncounty.org).

# Heart Transplant Patient

**Jim Elsner**



When I was 49 years old, I had a significant heart attack. One that I should have died from but didn't. I had a stent put in and about five months later had a 5-way bypass surgery. I spent the next nine years trying to regain some of the heart function that I lost with drug therapy like ace inhibitors and beta blockers, etc. I also got a pacemaker/defibrillator, because my heart rate was so low. Finally, in January of 2011 my heart nearly gave out. I spent two weeks in Providence Hospital on a dopamine and dobutamine drip. Unfortunately, whenever they tried to wean me off these drips, I went into heart failure.

My cardiologist and I had a long talk and it was decided to send me to the UW Heart Institute in Seattle where they had more "tools in the box". At UW I had an LVAD Heart Pump put into me. That truly saved my life, and I remained on the LVAD for 23 months. On December 23, 2012, I got the greatest Christmas present you can get, a heart transplant. I look forward to sharing with all of you, my journey from heart failure to a second chance at life on May 14th.



# Sugar Can Affect Your Sleep

## Ann Monaghan



As we work on healthy lifestyles, sugar is identified as one of the most commonly consumed ingredients in the world. It can be found in a wide variety of foods and drinks across all nationalities. While sugar consumption can provide a quick burst of energy, it can also affect your weight, obesity, and result in increased blood glucose leading to diabetes, but did you know that it also negatively affects your sleep?

Our bodies undergo several processes during sleep that are important for health. During sleep, your brain consolidates memories and learning. Your body also repairs and rejuvenates tissues. Lack of sleep can lead to various health problems. These include depression, weight gain and decreased immune function.

Sugar can affect your sleep in several ways. First, consuming large amounts of sugar can cause blood sugars to spike, leading to feelings of wakefulness and alertness. This can make it harder to fall asleep and can lead to waking up throughout the night. Sugar consumption can also lead to increased cortisol levels. Cortisol is a hormone that is responsible for regulating your sleep-wake cycle. High cortisol levels can disrupt this cycle. This makes it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep throughout the night.

Finally, sugar consumption can also lead to weight gain and obesity. This increases the risk of developing sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is a condition where the airway becomes blocked during sleep, disrupting sleep quality.

Reducing sugar consumption can be a challenge, but it is worth it for better sleep quality. Here are some tips for reducing sugar consumptions:

- Many processed foods and drinks contain hidden sugars. It is important to read labels carefully.
- Choose whole foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole grains that contain natural sugars. Whole foods are a much healthier option than processed foods.
- Avoid sugary beverages like sodas, juice and energy drinks. They're are often high in sugar.
- Reduce sugar consumption too quickly can lead to cravings. Make changes slowly.
- Choose sugar alternatives such as natural sweeteners like honey, maple syrup and stevia.

In conclusion, sugar consumption can negatively impact your sleep quality. By changing your diet can improve your sleep and overall health. Reducing sugar can be challenging, but it is worth it.

By making small changes to your diet and making healthier choices, you can improve your sleep and reap the benefits of overall health.

## Did You Know (DYK)

May 2026

### Sneaky Steps to a Stronger Heart □ □

What if exercise didn't feel like "exercise" at all? For many of us, especially with heart concerns, the idea of a workout can feel like a mountain. But here's a lighter path: turn everyday moments into tiny bursts of movement that quietly add up to big heart benefits. Shoot for 150 minutes per week. This can be broken down into smaller bites...example: Start your morning with a short walk before breakfast, even 10 minutes counts. If that feels like too much, split it into two smaller strolls. Think of it as waking up your heart with a gentle nudge instead of a loud alarm.

Around the house, movement can hide in plain sight. Seriously! Try a few squats while brushing your teeth or rise up on your toes for calf raises at the sink. During TV time, march in place during commercials. Your living room becomes your secret fitness studio.

Out and about? It is May, after all, and better weather is coming! Mow the lawn, rake the leaves, or park a little farther away or get off a stop early if you use public transportation. These extra steps are like pocket change for your health, small but valuable.

Throughout the day, set a reminder to stand and move for a few minutes each hour. Take the stairs when you can, or try a walking chat instead of a seated visit. Even phone calls become opportunities to stretch or balance.

And don't forget: strength matters, too! Simple movements like wall push-ups, sitting down and standing up from a chair, or stepping onto a low step can be done in short sessions. Just a couple of times a day builds strength safely and can help avoid osteoporosis.

After dinner, a gentle walk can help digestion and add a calming finish to your day. And don't forget to track your progress. A pedometer or phone can help you gradually increase your steps, even by just a few hundred more each week.

A good rule of thumb: you should be able to talk, but not sing while moving. And always listen to your body. If something feels off, stop and check with your healthcare provider. Little moves, done often, can keep your heart dancing happily to the rhythm of life!



## Memorial Day Was Born From Grief

After the Civil War left 600,000 Americans dead, communities across the country began setting aside days to decorate soldiers' graves. In 1868 it was formalized as Decoration Day, a national observance, then later Memorial Day. Over time it softened into long weekends and the unofficial start of summer. In quiet years it became, for many Americans, more of a great weekend than heartache.

But, the original observance was always meant for years like this one when, after a near five year hiatus, U.S. soldiers are once again in harm's way in Iran.

This spring, American military families are preparing for the original Memorial Day. At the date of this writing, 13 servicemen and women have been killed in the Iran conflict: six soldiers from Iowa's 103rd Sustainment Command, an Army Reserve unit that was hit in a drone attack, and one death of an Army sergeant from Kentucky who was killed on an air base in Saudi Arabia. Another six service members died when their KC-135 refueling tanker crashed in western Iraq, (not combat related).

The Memorial Day tradition is older than the country itself. But it is not abstract. It is a mother in Iowa setting a place at a table that will stay empty. It is a folded flag on a mantelpiece. It is a name that will be spoken carefully, for a long time.

Memorial Day asks us, once a year, to stop and acknowledge that freedom has a bill, and that some people pay it in full. Most years we manage that acknowledgment between the cookout and the ball game. Some years it is easier than others.

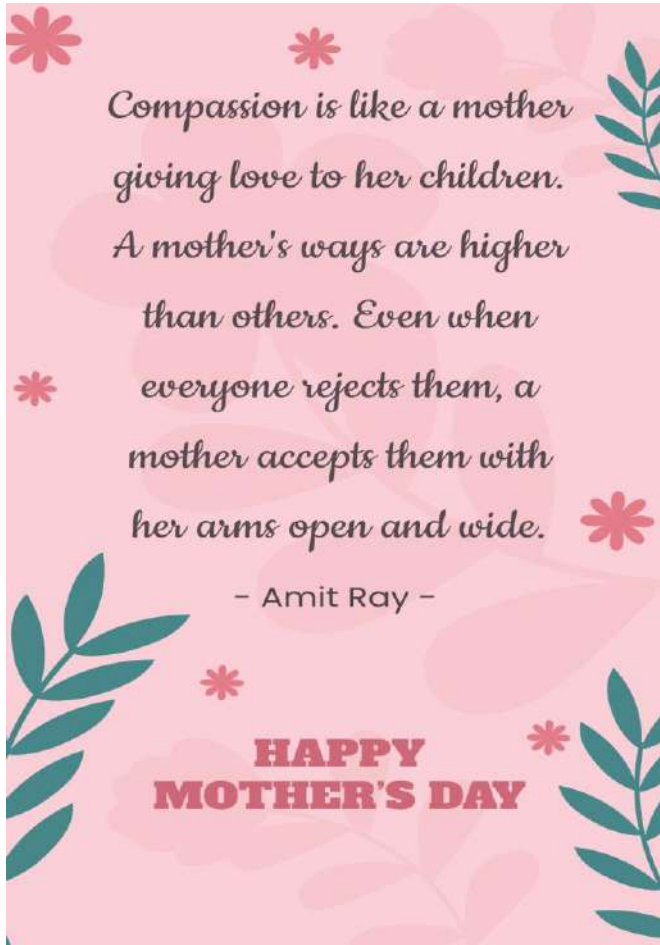
## MEMORIAL DAY

HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



## Happy Mothers Day

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**Chapter 130 Website:**  
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**Mended Hearts National Website:**  
<https://mendedhearts.org/>

**To Make Suggestions, go to  
Suggestion link below:**

[Suggestion Box](#)

**Facebook Webpage Address:**  
<https://www.facebook.com/mendedheartsthurstoncounty>

Chapter Board Meetings are open to all Chapter Members. We are currently meeting via ZOOM. If you are interested in attending, contact Michael Blonden at [mblonden@msn.com](mailto:mblonden@msn.com) for a Zoom link.

If you are feeling great and would like to help others, why not make a donation to our Chapter (Mended Hearts of Thurston County).  
Mail Donation to:

**Mended Hearts Chapter 130  
PO Box 5551  
Olympia, WA 98509-5551**

**Every Dollar Helps. Thanks!!**