

Healthy *Living*

WINTER 2025

Inside:

**New Tricuspid Valve
Heart Procedure**

**How to Cope with
Stress**

**Exercise for
Solutions Busy**

People AND MORE...

Healthy *Living*

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Novant Health interventional cardiologists Dr. Sam Turner, left, and Dr. Robert Preli stand beside Kay Hiatt before her tricuspid valve heart procedure Dec. 11 at Novant Health Forsyth Medical Center.

There's a new procedure for your heart's 'forgotten valve.'

Mount Airy woman is first to receive new tricuspid valve heart procedure at Novant Health Forsyth Medical Center

BY JOSH JARMAN

Kay Hiatt, a retired nurse from Mount Airy, recently became the first patient at Novant Health Forsyth Medical Center to benefit from a brand-new procedure to treat her malfunctioning tricuspid valve, one of four valves that control blood flow to and from the heart.

Hiatt knew something was wrong when she started to experience shortness of breath during normal everyday

activities. She could no longer cook dinner, take a shower or even walk across the parking lot at church without having to rest. So, she stopped going. As a nurse, she knew something wasn't right and decided to ask for help.

Dr. Charles Harris at Novant Health Cardiology - Kimel Park did an echocardiogram and confirmed that her leaking valve was to blame. The tricuspid valve is often referred to as the "forgotten valve" because unlike the other three heart valves (aortic, mitral and

pulmonary), it is difficult to scan with imaging technology and reach with surgery. In fact, open heart surgery was the only option – until now.

Harris referred Hiatt to Dr. Sam Turner and Dr. Robert Preli, interventional cardiologists at Novant Health, to be evaluated for a new, less invasive transcatheter procedure that was recently approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2024.

Interventional cardiologists specialize in treating heart problems using smaller tools

rather than performing open-heart surgery. The procedures they perform use much smaller incisions than traditional surgery. That means less pain, a faster recovery and a lower risk of complications.

HOW IT WORKS

The tricuspid valve has three flaps, known as leaflets, that open and close in unison. However, if one of the leaflets stops lining up correctly with each closure, a gap can form and cause blood to leak or flow backward into vital organs, like the liver and intestines.

“Tricuspid valve issues are concerning because patients can usually live with their symptoms for a long time before serious complications start to develop,” said Preli. “While medication can help manage these symptoms, tricuspid valve patients are at an increased risk for pulmonary hypertension, atrial fibrillation and congestive heart failure.”

Now, there is a procedure that allows interventional cardiologists to insert a catheter through the femoral artery (groin) and up to the heart. Once it reaches the tricuspid valve, this device can deploy a clip to help reconnect the leaking leaflet, effectively correcting the problem and substantially reducing the risk of regurgitation and other symptoms.

“The best part is that we know right away if the

procedure worked,” said Preli. “It’s extremely gratifying for everyone on our care team to be able to bring a brand-new heart procedure to our patients here in the Triad.”

Hiatt noticed improvements with her general well-being, enhanced stamina and reduced shortness of breath. She is also looking forward to going back to church on Sundays.

BRINGING NEW TREATMENTS TO LIFE WITH CLINICAL RESEARCH

Clinical research is needed before any new treatment option can receive FDA approval.

Dr. Oluseun Alli at the Novant Health Heart & Vascular Institute in Charlotte actually served as the principal investigator, overseeing research for this new tricuspid valve medical device at Novant

Health Presbyterian Medical Center.

“Patients no longer need to travel to huge academic medical centers to receive high quality heart care,” said Alli. “At Novant Health, we’re committed to bringing expert care close to home. This includes offering our patients the opportunity to

participate in clinical research opportunities that help to spearhead the future of medicine.”

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Activities that can promote cardiovascular health

Resolving to be physically active is an important step towards heart health and overall well-being. Exercise is one of the most effective tools for strengthening the heart and avoiding various illnesses, including high cholesterol, that can affect cardiovascular health, according to Johns Hopkins Medicine.

Although any exercise can be beneficial, there is a fitness recipe designed to be the most effective for strengthening the heart and helping it to work to its full potential. Here are the guidelines recommended by the American Heart Association and Johns Hopkins

Medicine.

- Get 150 minutes per week or more of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes per week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, or a combination of both. These activities can include running, cycling, swimming, and others that will get the heart pumping.

- Incorporate moderate-to high-intensity muscle-strengthening activity at least two days a week.

- Strength training should be designed to work the entire body. It doesn't have to be traditional weightlifting, either. Body weight exercises, yoga, Pilates, and even tai

chi can build strength and offer additional benefits like improving balance.

- Consider HIIT exercises. HIIT stands for high-intensity interval training, which involves exercising as hard as one can for a short period, and then resting briefly before exercising hard again for a short period. While there are many different HIIT programs, UT Southwestern Medical Center says a popular one involves exercising hard for four minutes, followed by three minutes of recovery time, for four cycles total.

- While stretching, flexibility and balance exercises do not directly affect

heart health, they do help one stay flexible and free from joint pain and other issues that can sideline a person from exercise. Doing what one can to protect against falls and reduce risk of being sedentary will benefit the heart in the long run.

- Don't discount everyday activities in relation to how they can enhance heart health. Walking, gardening, playing with children, or tossing a ball to a family pet are beneficial aerobic activities.

Heart health is something to take seriously, and exercise plays a key role in strengthening the heart.

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Healthy ways to cope with stress

Stressful experiences are a part of life, and the physiological responses that occur in response to these challenges are natural tools humans developed as survival mechanisms. People learn and grow as they deal with positive stressful occurrences, such as when speaking in public or taking a test. But when stressors cannot be avoided or prove chronic, the body's response to stress can take a toll on a person's mental and physical well-being.

The COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, an uptick in strong storms and subsequent weather-related disasters, and global conflicts have proven stressful for people around the world. According to a report from the American Psychological Association titled "Stress in America 2023: A Nation Recovering from Collective Trauma," the long-term stress sustained since early 2020 has had a significant impact on well-being, as evidenced by an increase in chronic illnesses. The report found people between the ages of 35 and 44 have been particularly affected.

Long-term stress poses many health risks, including wear and tear on the immune system and an increase in worry, anxiety and irritability. Some people turn to drugs or alcohol to combat stress, but there are healthy options. The following are better ways to cope with stress.

- Reduce the number of stressors. It is not possible to remove all of the stress of life, but people can try to reduce some forms of stress. Think about sharing some responsibilities or asking for



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help. If a person is causing you stress, then distance yourself from this person as much as possible. Work is a major source of stress for many people. Finding a new job or cutting back on tasks could help.

- Get quality sleep. Prioritize sleeping better and longer. Fatigue can exacerbate the ability to deal with even minor stressors, leaving you more irritable and edgy. Most adults require between seven and nine hours of sleep per night, so adjust your schedule to achieve this.

- Plan for daily exercise. The APA says brisk movement improves sleep and can combat stress. In one study titled "Relationships between Leisure Time Physical Activity and Perceived Stress," first published in 1996, researchers found that working adults who engaged in moderate physical activity had half the perceived stress when compared to working adults who did not participate. A 30-minute session each day can work wonders.

- Engage in pleasurable activities. It's easy to drop fun things from the schedule when stress is high. But the

Cleveland Clinic advises making time for pleasurable things as a means to combatting stress. Laughter and humor can go a long way towards reducing stressful feelings, so a night out at a comedy show or watching a funny movie can help.

- Improve your diet. Well-nourished bodies can handle stressors, illnesses and life in general much easier. Aim for a well-balanced diet that is low in processed foods and sugar. Avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine, as each can worsen stress in the long run, according to Sutter Health.

Stress is a natural part of life. When stress becomes too much to take, individuals can cope in various healthy ways.



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Surprising foods and behaviors that can derail weight

Weight loss is a popular topic of conversation, particularly at the start a new year when health and fitness resolutions are on the minds of many. According to Statista, in 2023, roughly 47 percent of men and 55 percent of women in the United States indicated they had interest in losing weight. In 2022, 43 markets surveyed within YouGov Global Profiles found 52 percent of global consumers are “usually trying to lose weight.”

It has long been established that creating a calorie deficit, wherein a person consumes fewer calories than he or she needs, and regular exercise to boost metabolism to burn calories more efficiently, are effective means to losing weight. People diversify their diets in different ways to facilitate weight loss. However, they may be inadvertently foiling their plans in the process. Certain foods and behaviors billed as “diet-friendly” may be doing more harm than good. The following

are some sneaky things that can knock diet and weight loss plans off track.

“REDUCED FAT” OFFERINGS

Check the labels before eating foods billed as “reduced fat.” Oftentimes food manufacturers will remove one or more ingredient only to substitute a laundry list of not-so-healthy ingredients to compensate for texture or flavor. This could be added sugar, salt, artificial flavorings, and more. Although calorie-for-calorie you may be able to eat a reduced-fat item and stay within your calorie goal, the price to pay may be a lot of unnecessary extras. Sometimes a smaller portion of a regular fat option is a better choice.

SALT

The Lamkin Clinic for Optimal Health says most Americans consume more than 50 percent of the daily recommended amount of salt. Having too much sodium can contribute to water retention, bloating, high blood pressure and other conditions. Turkey

bacon is a good example of a “lean” and seemingly healthier option than regular pork bacon that is actually less healthy due to salt. Karen Ansel, RD, says turkey bacon has upwards of 180 milligrams of sodium per slice.

PREPARED SALAD KITS

Salad is billed as a healthy option, and people frequently chow down on greens for a low-calorie meal. However convenient they may be, ready-made salad kits may be tipping the calorie scales due to their ingredients. Kits with full-fat cheeses, salty, oil-soaked croutons, dressings containing saturated fats, and lettuces with little nutritional content may be compromising efforts to eat healthy.

SMOOTHIES AND JUICES

Juice drinks and smoothies often are touted as

nutritional options and meal replacements. But people need to be careful to check the portion size and what is going into those drinks, particularly if they’re pre-made. Tammy Lakatos Shames, author of *The Nutrition Twins’ Veggie Cure*, says some drinks may contain between 600 and 1,000 calories. Fruit and vegetable juices also are not a replacement for fresh fruit and vegetables, which are much lower in calories than the same amount of juice.

In addition to these foods, rushing through meals, eating a meal or snack while doing something else and failing to get enough sleep can affect weight-loss plans. A consultation with a registered dietician can help individuals determine if their eating habits are adversely affecting their overall health.



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Three short-term fitness goals that can lead to long-term success

As New Year's Day 2024 approached, millions of individuals were preparing to make changes they hoped would improve their fitness. In a Forbes Health/One Poll survey of 1,000 adults in the months leading up to the start of 2024, nearly half (48 percent) of respondents indicated improving their physical fitness would be a top priority over the course of the new year.

Fitness-based resolutions are popular every year, but people who aspire to make such changes recognize how difficult it can be to achieve them. In fact, the Forbes Health/One Poll survey found that roughly 44 percent of respondents indicated their resolutions flamed out at the two- or three-month marker. Though there's no one-size-fits-all strategy for sticking with and ultimately achieving a

resolution, identifying short-term goals that can help people stay motivated can lead to long-term progress. Individuals who want to improve their physical fitness can consider these three short-term goals and use them as measuring sticks as they pursue more long-term objectives.

1. Aspire for incremental weight loss. Weight loss goals were the fourth most popular New Year's resolution for 2024 among participants in the Forbes Health/One Poll survey. Though that survey separated fitness goals from weight loss goals, the two are certainly linked. Individuals who aspire to lose 10 pounds undoubtedly recognize that such a goal cannot be achieved overnight, so why not aspire to lose small amounts of weight at predetermined intervals? For example, if the end goal is losing 10 lbs., aim to lose two pounds by the end of January.

Incremental progress can motivate individuals to stay the course and ultimately propel them toward achieving a more substantial, long-term goal.

2. Exercise for a predetermined number of days each week. Another way to gradually build toward achieving long-term fitness goals is to establish monthly minimum exercise sessions. Individuals accustomed to a sedentary lifestyle can resolve to exercise three days per week in the first month of their resolution, and then increase that by a day in the second month. A consistent schedule when designing this goal is imperative, which is why it can make more sense to plan for three days per week as opposed to 12 days per month.

3. Resolve to walk a mile per day. Walking is an accessible cardiovascular activity that can have a profound effect on overall

health. Walking also can help condition sedentary individuals' bodies for more strenuous activity, which is a transition many people aspire to make when setting long-term fitness goals. A daily one-mile walk won't require a significant commitment of time, but it can help acclimate the body to routine exercise. As the effects of a daily walk begin to take hold, individuals may find it easier to engage in more strenuous physical activities, making this an ideal stepping stone on the way to achieving long-term fitness goals.

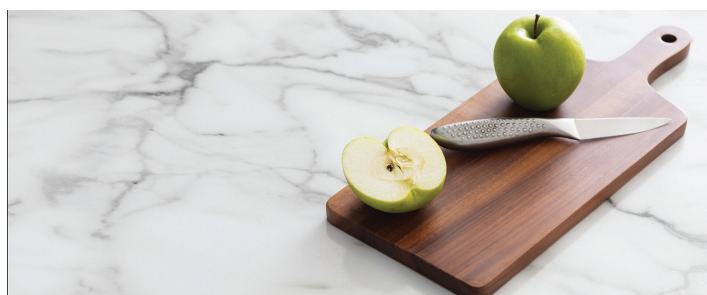
Short-term goals can help people remain motivated as they pursue more substantial goals that take longer to achieve. Such an approach can be especially useful for individuals resolving to improve their physical fitness at the start of a new year.

Tips to reduce nutrient loss while cooking

It's not unheard of for people to turn over a healthy leaf at the start of a new year. After a holiday season filled with social engagements and diet-busting meals, it's no surprise many celebrants view January as a time to right the dietary ship.

Home cooking provides an opportunity for people to gain greater control over what they eat, and it's well known that certain methods of cooking are healthier than others. But Healthline notes that nutrient content is often altered during cooking. For example, a 2017 study published in the journal Food Science and Biotechnology noted that vitamin C is a water-soluble and temperature-sensitive vitamin, which means it is easily degraded during cooking. As a result, researchers behind the study noted that elevated temperatures and long cooking times have been found to cause substantial losses of vitamin C.

Such knowledge is undoubtedly useful, but individuals may wonder what they can do to ensure the meals they prepare remain as nutritious as possible, even after they've been cooked. When preparing meals, individuals looking to maximize the nutritional value of each meal can consider



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these tips.

- Consume the liquid left after cooking vegetables. It's commonplace to drain pots and pans of water after using them to cook vegetables. However, when doing so, individuals might literally be pouring nutrients down the drain. In a 2016 interview with CNN, registered dietitian and author Elaine Magee noted that boiling vegetables causes water soluble vitamins like vitamin C, B1 and folate to leach into the water, thus denying people some of the nutritional content of these healthy foods. Though it might seem unusual, consuming the water that vegetables are cooked in can ensure no nutrients are poured down the drain of a kitchen sink.

- Consume cooked vegetables within a day or two. Healthline notes that exposure to air after cooking can decrease the vitamin C

content of vegetables. This is something for people to keep in mind, particularly if they like to prepare meals in advance due to hectic schedules that leave little time for daily cooking. Consume cooked vegetables within a day or so of preparing them to avoid losing out on nutrients.

- Avoid pre-cut fruits and vegetables. Some grocery store produce aisles feature an array of pre-cut fruits

and vegetables. Though such offerings are undeniably convenient for time-pressed individuals who want to eat healthy, they also might not be as nutritious as shoppers hope. According to Verywell Fit, heat, oxygen and light are the three factors that lead to nutrient loss. When produce is uncut, the interiors are of the food are protected from oxygen and light. Once cuts are made, such as when apples are sliced, then nutrients such as vitamin C, vitamin A and vitamin E might be lost.

Healthy eating is a common New Year's resolution. It's important individuals aspiring to eat healthy recognize that how foods are cooked and cut may affect their nutritional value.



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Exercise solutions for busy people



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Lack of time in the day to get enough done is a common lament. Work, family and social obligations have made many individuals busier than ever before, and that can eat into people's ability to find time for daily exercise.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says adults need to get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week, or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity. For the moderate-intensity recommendation, that boils down to about 21 minutes per day, which is manageable even for the busiest of individuals. To that end, here are some ways busy people can get the

exercise they need.

- Wake up early. Starting your day 30 minutes early can allow you to fit exercise in before a day becomes hectic. Put workout gear out the night before, and when the alarm sounds in the morning, get up and out, whether it's to head to the gym or go for a morning walk or jog around the neighborhood.

- Use your lunch hour. If you're not a morning person, use a portion of your lunch break for exercise and then eat your lunch afterwards.

- Take part in high-intensity workouts. High-intensity exercise regimens typically pack exercises into routines that get the heart rate going, but don't require a lot of

time. They may only be 20- to 30-minute sessions, which is doable for most people.

- Recognize exercise comes in many forms. Many people would be surprised that activities they engage in each day can be classified as exercise. Intense gardening or lawn care sessions and even home cleaning and improvement projects can work the body. Also, exercise can be built into regular activities, such as taking the stairs rather than an elevator or parking further away in parking lots to ensure a lengthy walk.

- Consider doing the "Daily 50". The Daily 50 is an informal exercise routine

that can occur anywhere and utilizes body weight to get the job done. Exercises can include 50 squats, 50 lunges, 50 wall push-ups, 50 crunches, and/or holding a plank position for 50 seconds. Some also perform 50 knee lifts or hold a wall sit for 50 seconds. These exercises don't require much time and work most of the major muscle groups.

- Exercise as a family. Turn family leisure time into enjoyable exercise time. Take hikes, go for bike rides or even kayaking trips together to get everyone up and moving.

Busy people can make time for exercise with some easy solutions.

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The nutritional benefits of sweet potatoes

A reference to sweet potatoes may immediately conjure images of Thanksgiving dinner tables, where the popular tuber often is featured during dinner and dessert. Though it's likely sweet potatoes, also known as yams, are most popular in fall, they're both available and enjoyable year-round. That's good news for people aspiring to eat healthy, as sweet potatoes pack quite a nutritional punch.

- Sweet potatoes and vitamin A: The food and nutrition database from the United States Department of Agriculture indicates one cup of baked sweet potatoes provides 213 percent of the recommended daily minimum value of vitamin A. That's nothing to take for granted, as the National Institutes of Health notes that vitamin A is a fat-soluble vitamin that promotes normal vision and a healthy immune system. The NIH also reports that vitamin A is vital for reproduction, growth and development.

- Sweet potatoes and vitamin C: Sweet potatoes are

high in the antioxidant vitamin C. That's a notable benefit, as the Mayo Clinic indicates a diet rich in antioxidants has been linked to stronger immune systems and lower risk for diseases such as heart disease and cancer. In addition, the health care experts at Mount Sinai note that vitamin C is vital for healing wounds and repairing and maintaining bones and teeth. Data from the USDA indicates one cup of sweet potatoes contains roughly 44 percent of the recommended daily intake of vitamin C.

- Sweet potatoes and gut health: The NIH notes sweet potatoes contain both soluble and insoluble fiber. The body does not digest soluble or insoluble fiber, which is actually beneficial, as the fiber remains in the digestive tract and promotes a healthy gut. The NIH also notes that some soluble and insoluble fibers can be fermented by bacteria in the colon, a process that ultimately keeps cells along the intestinal lining healthy and strong.

- Sweet potatoes and

vision: The Discovery Eye Foundation notes that sweet potatoes are loaded in vitamins that can help to prevent

or delay the development of cataracts and macular degeneration. Vitamin C features prominently in that regard, but so, too, does vitamin E, which the USDA notes is more abundant in sweet potatoes than yellow potatoes. Cataracts and macular degeneration can compromise vision, particularly among the aging population. The next time homemade mashed potatoes are on the menu, consider making mashed sweet potatoes, which pack a flavorful punch and offer some notable nutritional advantages compared to other types of tubers.

Sweet potatoes can be enjoyed year-round. Individuals who do so can reap the nutritional rewards of consuming sweet potatoes all year long.

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Tips to get children excited about exercise



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Human beings need to engage in physical activity to stay healthy. But too many children are not getting the exercise they need. Only 50 percent of boys and less than 34 percent of girls between the ages of 12 and 15 are adequately fit, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Children who are not physically fit are at greater risk for chronic diseases. In addition, children who are overweight or obese are at a higher risk of retaining that extra weight into adulthood.

Getting children to exercise regularly can be an uphill battle with so many distractions, such as electronic devices, vying for their attention. But parents can explore the following ways to get children more excited about physical activity.

- Choose interactive toys. Select toys for kids that require movement. These can include sporting activities, scooters,

bicycles, and even video games that involve physical activity. Kids will be moving while they play, which is a first step.

- Set an example. Children may be more likely to embrace physical activity if they see their parents exercising regularly. Adults can share their passions for activities that encourage movement, whether it is hiking, heading to the gym, swimming, or rock scrambling.

- Make it a contest. People can be very competitive, especially young children. If kids know there is a prize or reward attached to doing something, they may have more motivation to engage with it. Offer a prize to the person who can log the most minutes of physical activity each week.

- Make things social. The more people involved in an activity, the greater the chance kids will want to be involved. Therefore, invite their friends, cousins, classmates, and other

relatives to participate.

- Look for new ways to exercise. Plan vacations and day trips around an activity. Perhaps the family can learn how to surf or snorkel on a trip; otherwise, a trip to the zoo or a museum can involve a lot of walking.

- Find reasons to walk. Kids and parents can walk to or from school each day to get exercise. Parking further away from stores ensures some extra steps as well. Take the stairs in malls instead of elevators or escalators.

- Encourage participation in team sports. Afterschool athletics often involve multiple days of practices and games or meets, which can be all the exercise a kid needs to be healthy. Athletics also present a fun way to exercise with friends.

Kids need physical activity to stay healthy, and there are various ways to make them more inclined to be active..

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Diseases linked to high cholesterol

High cholesterol is an issue that affects millions of people. Johns Hopkins Medicine says roughly 71 million Americans have high cholesterol. Recent Manulife drug claims data indicates the number of Canadians ages 19 to 24 taking medication for cardiovascular conditions has increased by 35 percent over the past four years, and the number of people 17 years and younger taking medication for cardiovascular conditions increased by 17 percent. Cholesterol and certain proteins known as lipoproteins are necessary for the body to function normally. Cholesterol testing measures total cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL) and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL). When LDL is elevated in the body, that can raise a person's risk for various health conditions.

1. Peripheral artery disease: PAD is a hardening of arteries in the legs or arms that causes reduced blood flow to these

areas of the body.

2. High blood pressure: Cholesterol and hypertension are linked. Cholesterol plaque and calcium can cause the arteries to harden and narrow so the heart has to strain to pump blood throughout the body, indicates the Cleveland Clinic.

3. Coronary heart disease: The main risk from high cholesterol is coronary heart disease, says WebMD. Again, cholesterol plaque can build up in the walls of the arteries and cause them to harden and restrict blood flow. Eventually arteries that feed blood to the heart can cause a partial or total blockage. Heart attack can occur if the blood is completely restricted.

4. Stroke: Arteries in the brain can become blocked by plaque in the blood, potentially leading to a stroke.

High cholesterol is a cause for concern that can adversely affect the cardiovascular system.

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