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Lee Edition - Monthly

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## THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Unlocking Longevity Through  
Cosmetic Botox, Weight Loss Shots,  
and Stem Cell Hair Restoration

## HOLIDAY TRAVEL

Understanding the Risks of  
Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)

## HAVE YOU BEEN CONSIDERING A FACELIFT?

## 12 SOCIAL CLUBS FOR OLDER ADULTS TO JOIN

## EMPOWERING LIVES

The Evolving Landscape of Crohn's  
Disease and Colitis Treatment

## NAVIGATING THE FESTIVE SEASON

CBD's Role in Easing  
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# The Fountain of Youth: Unlocking Longevity Through Cosmetic Botox, Weight Loss Shots, and Stem Cell Hair Restoration

In the quest for longevity, modern science and medicine have made remarkable strides. Beyond traditional approaches to health, emerging treatments at medical spas are gaining popularity for their potential to not only enhance appearance but also extend life. In this article, we delve into the promising realms of cosmetic Botox, weight loss shots, and stem cell hair restoration, exploring how these therapies may contribute to a longer and healthier life.

## Cosmetic Botox: More Than Skin Deep

Botox, short for Botulinum Toxin, has long been associated with wrinkle reduction and facial rejuvenation. However, recent research suggests that its benefits may extend beyond cosmetic enhancements. The key to understanding the potential longevity benefits lies in Botox's ability to target and relax muscles.

As we age, facial muscles can contribute to the formation of fine lines and wrinkles. By inhibiting muscle contractions, Botox not only smoothens the skin but may also impact the aging process at a cellular level. Studies have shown that reduced muscle activity can lead to decreased oxidative stress, a major contributor to aging. Oxidative stress, caused by an imbalance between free radicals and antioxidants, can damage cells and accelerate aging.

Furthermore, Botox may have an impact on inflammation, a factor linked to numerous age-related diseases. Chronic inflammation is associated with conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and neurodegenerative disorders. By mitigating muscle-related inflammation, Botox could potentially contribute to a lower overall inflammatory burden, promoting longevity.

## Weight Loss Shots: A Shot at a Longer Life

Weight management is a cornerstone of a healthy lifestyle, and medical spas are now offering innovative approaches to help individuals shed excess pounds. Weight loss shots, often containing a combination of vitamins, minerals, and amino acids, are gaining attention for their potential to accelerate fat metabolism and support overall wellness.

These injections typically include compounds like B vitamins, which play a crucial role in energy metabolism and can boost the body's ability to convert food into usable energy. Additionally, amino acids such as L-carnitine may enhance the transportation of fatty acids into cells, promoting efficient fat burning.

Maintaining a healthy weight is not just about aesthetics; it is intricately linked to longevity. Obesity is a significant risk factor for various chronic conditions,

including heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers. By addressing weight concerns through targeted injections, individuals may not only experience the cosmetic benefits but also reduce their risk of developing life-threatening illnesses.

## Stem Cell Hair Restoration: Unlocking Regenerative Potential

Hair loss is a common concern that can affect confidence and self-esteem. However, the innovative field of stem cell hair restoration is providing more than just a solution to thinning locks; it may hold the key to unlocking the body's regenerative potential and promoting overall longevity.

Stem cells are undifferentiated cells with the unique ability to develop into different cell types. In the context of hair restoration, stem cells can stimulate the regeneration of hair follicles, promoting thicker, healthier hair. Beyond the cosmetic appeal, this process taps into the broader regenerative capabilities of stem cells.

Recent research suggests that stem cells may contribute to tissue repair and rejuvenation throughout the body. By harnessing the regenerative power of stem cells for hair restoration, individuals may inadvertently be promoting overall cellular health. This could potentially extend to other organs and systems, offering a holistic approach to longevity.

## Combining Therapies for Maximum Impact

While each of these therapies—cosmetic Botox, weight loss shots, and stem cell hair restoration—holds promise in its own right, the synergistic effects of combining these treatments may provide a comprehensive approach to promoting longevity.

For example, Botox and weight loss shots may complement each other by addressing both the external signs of aging and internal factors contributing to age-related conditions. Botox can target facial muscles, reducing wrinkles and potentially impacting cellular aging, while weight loss shots address metabolism, aiding in weight management and reducing the risk of obesity-related diseases.

Integrating stem cell hair restoration into the mix adds another layer of potential benefit. By tapping into the regenerative power of stem cells, individuals may not only experience cosmetic improvements in hair density but also promote systemic rejuvenation at the cellular level.

## Conclusion: A Holistic Approach to Longevity

As medical spas continue to evolve, offering cutting-edge treatments that extend beyond mere aesthetics, the potential for promoting longevity becomes increasingly tangible. Cosmetic Botox, weight loss shots, and stem cell hair restoration, when used in combination, may offer a holistic approach to age management.

While these treatments are not a substitute for a healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise, a balanced diet, and stress management, they may complement existing efforts to promote overall well-being. As research in these fields progresses, the integration of these therapies into personalized longevity plans may become a reality, ushering in a new era where the pursuit of beauty aligns seamlessly with the pursuit of a longer, healthier life.



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# Navigating Holiday Travel: UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS OF DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

**A**s the holiday season approaches, the excitement of travel often takes center stage. However, amidst the joy and anticipation, it's crucial to acknowledge a hidden risk associated with long hours of sitting during travel: Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT).

Deep Vein Thrombosis, commonly referred to as DVT, is a serious condition where blood clots form in the deep veins of the body, often occurring in the legs. While it can happen to anyone, the risk increases during extended periods of immobility, such as those experienced during long flights, car rides, or train journeys—a scenario quite common during holiday travel.

When we settle into our seats for extended periods, the reduced blood flow in our legs becomes a breeding ground for potential blood clots. Added to this, the cramped conditions, dehydration, and changes in cabin pressure while flying further contribute to this risk.

Preventing DVT during holiday travels starts with awareness and a few simple precautions. Here are some essential tips:

**1. Keep Moving:** Whether you're on a plane, train, or in a car, take breaks to stretch your legs and move around every hour or so. Simple leg exercises while seated, such as ankle rolls and calf stretches, can help promote blood circulation.

**2. Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration, which can contribute to the risk of developing blood clots. Avoid excessive alcohol and caffeine intake as they can lead to dehydration.

**3. Wear Compression Socks:** These specially designed socks can aid in preventing blood from pooling in your legs, reducing the risk of clot formation.



**4. Consider Seating Choices:** If possible, opt for an aisle seat, allowing easier access to move around or perform simple exercises during the journey.

**5. Consult Your Doctor:** If you have pre-existing conditions or are at a higher risk for DVT, consult your healthcare provider. They might recommend preventive measures or medications suitable for your situation.

Moreover, it's important to recognize the signs and symptoms of DVT, which include swelling, pain, warmth, and redness in the affected leg. If you experience any of these, seek medical attention immediately.

While the risk of DVT during travel exists, it's crucial to remember that millions of people travel safely every day. Being mindful of preventive measures

and staying informed can significantly reduce this risk, allowing you to enjoy your holiday journeys worry-free.

In conclusion, holiday travel brings joy, reunions, and adventures, but it also comes with potential health risks like DVT. By staying informed, taking regular breaks, staying hydrated, and considering preventive measures like compression socks, travelers can minimize the risk of DVT and ensure a safer and healthier journey.

Remember, a little mindfulness and proactive measures go a long way in making your holiday travel experiences not just enjoyable but safe too.

The Vascular and Vein Center at Gulfcoast Surgeons is one of the first and most respected vein clinics in Southwest Florida. Our surgeons, Dr. Abraham Sadighi and Dr. Johan Escribano have performed thousands of vascular and vein surgeries with consistently positive outcomes. We focus on diseases of the vascular system that can range from harmless but unattractive spider veins to dangerous conditions such as peripheral artery disease. Our caring and dedicated team will help you identify problems and offer the best treatment options for you.



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# UNDERSTANDING HEARING LOSS AND CELEBRATING HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

By John Nobile - HAS (Hearing Aid Specialist), BC-HIS, ACA

**T**he holiday season brings joyous celebrations and gatherings with family and friends. However, for those with hearing loss, these occasions can present unique challenges that often go unnoticed. As the laughter, music, and conversations fill the air, individuals with hearing impairment might feel isolated or struggle to actively participate.

One of the primary issues faced by those with hearing loss during holiday gatherings is the increased background noise. Festive environments often involve bustling activities, music, and overlapping conversations, making it arduous for individuals with hearing impairments to discern speech. Background noise can overwhelm the senses, making it difficult to focus on a single conversation or voice.

Moreover, the holiday season typically involves larger gatherings, which can exacerbate the communication hurdles. Crowded spaces and multiple conversations happening simultaneously can be particularly challenging for individuals with hearing loss. They may find it hard to follow conversations or fully engage in social interactions, leading to feelings of isolation or exclusion.

Family and friends can play a pivotal role in ensuring that individuals with hearing loss feel included and comfortable during holiday festivities. Simple yet impactful measures can make a significant difference. Consider arranging seating in a way that facilitates clearer communication, ensuring better visibility and proximity between speakers. Additionally, maintaining well-lit spaces can aid those who rely on lip-reading or visual cues.

Encouraging the use of assistive listening devices, if available, can enhance the experience for those with hearing impairments. These devices, such as hearing aids or personal amplifiers, can help amplify sounds and make it easier for individuals to follow conversations amid the noise and commotion of holiday gatherings.

Communication strategies can also play a crucial role in ensuring inclusive celebrations. Encourage family members and friends to speak clearly and



face the individual with hearing loss when conversing. Emphasize the importance of taking turns while speaking and avoiding interrupting or talking over one another, allowing everyone to participate more actively in discussions.

Furthermore, incorporating visual cues or gestures can aid in communication. Simple hand gestures or utilizing writing pads can bridge communication gaps, ensuring that individuals with hearing loss remain engaged and involved in the festivities.

For hosts organizing holiday gatherings, being mindful of the auditory environment can significantly benefit guests with hearing impairments. Consider controlling background noise by lowering the volume of music or selecting quieter areas for conversations. Creating designated quiet spaces where individuals can retreat for more intimate conversations can also be immensely helpful.

It's crucial to foster a supportive and understanding atmosphere where individuals with hearing loss feel comfortable expressing their needs. Encourage open communication and empathy among all guests to ensure that everyone can partake in the holiday joy.

In conclusion, while holiday gatherings can pose challenges for individuals with hearing loss, simple accommodations and thoughtful considerations can create a more inclusive and enjoyable experience for everyone. By embracing inclusive practices and fostering a supportive environment, we can ensure that the festive season remains a time of joy, connection, and celebration for all.

**John Nobile, HAS, BC-HIS, ACA** is a licensed hearing aid specialist and an ACA-certified audioprosthetologist who is also board-certified in hearing instrument sciences. With over 55 years of experience, he has transformed thousands of lives in Cape Coral and Fort Myers, FL, by providing his patients with the gift of sound. He is also a former veteran committed to providing all veterans with free services.



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# Have You Been Considering a Facelift?

RALPH R. GARRAMONE, MD, FACS

**A**s a plastic surgeon, I take great pride in empowering my patients with newfound self-confidence. Over the course of my career, I've witnessed firsthand how facelifts can significantly elevate self-esteem. Nonetheless, it's evident that facelifts remain one of the most misconstrued procedures in the realm of plastic surgery. To shed light on the reality of facelifts, here are some key insights that debunk common myths and misconceptions:

**A FOCUSED APPROACH:** Contrary to popular belief, a facelift doesn't address the entire face. Instead, it primarily targets the cheeks and the jowls. For comprehensive facial rejuvenation, additional procedures for areas like the eyes, brow, forehead, and neck may be combined with the facelift.

**ROOT CAUSES OF AGING:** The sagging we observe in aging faces is not solely caused by aging facial muscles. Rather, it primarily involves the downward shifting of the fibrofatty layer between facial muscles and the skin. This results in deep lines around the mouth, diminished cheek volume, and the development of jowls that obscure the jawline. Additionally, thinning skin and the loss of elasticity play a significant role. In the neck, however, sagging muscles contribute to the formation of bands from the chin to the base of the neck.

**NATURAL RESULTS:** A successful facelift should yield a natural, rejuvenated appearance, not a conspicuously tightened or unnatural look. The goal is to impart a rested, softer aesthetic, with smooth and well-contoured jawlines and necks, effectively shaving off years from the patient's appearance.



Client before and after a comprehensive rejuvenation journey featuring a Facelift, Liplift, Necklift, and Facial Fat Grafting on cheeks and lips

*photos provided*

**ADDRESSING VERTICAL LIP LINES:** Vertical lines above the lip are best treated with non-invasive methods like Botox, dermal fillers, laser treatments, or chemical peels. In some cases a surgical lip lift can rejuvenate the upper lip to eliminate signs of aging.

**COMPLEMENTARY TREATMENTS:** Post-facelift, patients may still require non-surgical treatments to address skin texture, wrinkles, and volume loss. Techniques such as Botox, fillers, laser treatments, medical-grade skincare, micro-needling, and fat grafting can be employed to ensure comprehensive facial rejuvenation.

**THE DECISION TO UNDERGO A FACELIFT:** If sagging skin or prominent lines are adversely affecting your self-esteem, or if other minimally invasive procedures no longer suffice, a facelift could be the optimal solution. Age isn't a limiting factor for considering this procedure.

**RECOVERY AND LONGEVITY:** Contrary to misconceptions, the recovery period after a facelift is typically manageable, with minimal discomfort for most patients. Stitches are typically removed within a week, and individuals can comfortably resume normal activities within approximately two weeks. While no guarantees can be made, the results of a facelift generally last for many years, and maintaining these results can be facilitated by sun protection, a balanced diet, and quality skincare regimens.

In essence, a facelift, when executed with precision and complemented by appropriate post-procedural care, can significantly enhance both the physical appearance and emotional well-being of patients, ultimately fostering a greater sense of confidence and self-assurance.

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# Health Insurance – Important Dates!

By Ulla-Undine Merritt (Dee) National Producer Number (NPN) 8853366

**MEDICARE ENROLLMENT ENDS SOON – Annual Enrollment Period October 15-December 7th, 2023, for January 1st, 2024, effective. Medicare Advantage – Part C & Part D Prescription Plans.**

Most of the plans in your area have made many changes and things you might not notice, especially important, are your doctors still in network, what tier are your medications and maybe the tier changed, copays, coinsurance. What extras are the plans offering? Maybe you need extra dental, vision, hearing aids. Many plans include some wonderful extra benefits, but it is also particularly important to know how to use the benefits and if they work for you. If the insurance company, you are with comes up with a better plan they will NOT switch you to it automatically. Your insurance agent should be making you aware of a better option. **It is illegal for an insurance agent to call you regarding Medicare,** do not talk to someone you have not given permission to call. Ask them for their National Producer number and report them to Medicare for an unsolicited call.

CMS has made many rules for 2024 Medicare season. If you want to enroll or review your plan over the phone, you need to agree to be recorded and Medicare requires us to keep the recording for 10 years. In person appointments do not have that requirement, but you need to sign a scope of appointment that authorizes us to talk to you about Medicare Advantage or a Drug Plan. It does not allow us to do anything but talk to you about these topics.

Many plans have decreased the cost of Insulin which will be a huge savings for so many in 2024. Part D after you, the plan and the pharmaceutical company paid \$8,000 you no longer have a cost for your medications for the rest of the year.

When you turn 65 you are eligible for Medicare, once you have worked 40 quarters roughly 10 years there is no cost for Medicare Part "A". Part A covers Hospitals, Skilled Nursing, Home Health & Hospice. Medicare Part B you can choose to take at 65 or you can hold off if you are still working and have credible coverage. If you do not have group health insurance that is considered qualified, and then you want it you would have a late enrollment penalty for each month you did not have Part B & Part D and that penalty will last for the rest of your life.



Part B covers doctors, imaging, blood work, ambulance, durable medical equipment, etc. Part D is a Medicare Drug Plan and covers medications. During your initial enrollment period it is especially important to understand your options! Medicare Supplements/Medigap Plans are NOT guaranteed issue you may need to medically qualify. You can purchase a Medigap Plan during your 1st 6-month on Medicare Part B without medical underwriting. There are a lot of things you need to know. Again, work with an agent you can trust! **Especially important:** when you **move** you need to know your options. Can you keep the same plan? Do you need to make a change and what does that look like?

We offer **Free Medicare Seminars** in Lee & Collier County please e-mail [info@logicalinsurance.com](mailto:info@logicalinsurance.com) to register or call 239-362-0855 for dates. Medicare's website is [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov).

**MARKETPLACE -Obama Care/Affordable Care Act – open enrollment starts November 1st- December 15th for January 1st effective. December 16th to January 15th will have February 1st, 2024, effective.** The website is [HealthCare.gov](http://HealthCare.gov), your local insurance agent can help you through the maze. The government also changes each year how much you can earn to receive subsidies to help lower your cost for insurance. Many people are not aware that they do not need to forgo having health insurance and there are affordable options for them. Insurance is not just about the price of the premium but particularly important the network of doctors, hospital, etc. that you can have access to. Be careful carriers that are selling in your area might not have a good network, so the price might be right but if your hospital and your doctors are not in their network that is a problem. So always check the network!

Understanding deductibles, out-of-pocket maximums, what applies to the deductible? Do I have to pay the deductible before the plan pays? This differs by each plan, Copays vs. coinsurance if you do not understand ask, become informed about what you are buying and how it works.

**Individual/Family Health Insurance –** Being young and healthy does not mean you do not need health insurance. Do you know anyone that knew when they were going to be diagnosed with cancer, or when they were going to have a heart attack or even a serious accident? I do not, it happens, and insurance is there to help you get the care you need and limit your financial exposure. What are your insurance options, and what is best for you? Employer Group Coverage, Individual Medically Underwritten Health Insurance, Medicaid, or the Government Marketplace Guaranteed Issue Health Insurance. There is a lot to know about the differences, as well as the cost. The monthly premium should not be your only consideration. *You do not know what you do not know* so ask the experts, which do know about all the plans and can help educate and guide you through the enrollment process. When it comes to medically underwritten plans, most of them you can enroll all year long, but you can also be denied based on medical underwriting.

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# THE DANGERS OF IGNORING YOUR PLANTAR FASCIITIS

By Patrick Bartholomew Jr., DPM, AACFAS

**P**lantar fasciitis, a common foot ailment characterized by inflammation of the plantar fascia, can have lasting consequences if left untreated. While the discomfort associated with this condition may tempt some to ignore or delay seeking medical attention, doing so can lead to three significant dangers that can impact one's overall health and quality of life.

## 1. Chronic Pain and Reduced Mobility:

One of the primary dangers of leaving plantar fasciitis untreated is the risk of chronic pain and diminished mobility. The persistent inflammation and microtears in the plantar fascia can escalate, causing increasing discomfort in the heel and along the arch of the foot. As the condition progresses, the pain may become constant, making simple activities such as walking or standing unbearable. Reduced mobility can significantly impact daily life, hindering both work and recreational activities.

## 2. Structural Changes in the Foot:

Untreated plantar fasciitis can lead to structural changes in the foot over time. The ongoing stress and strain on the plantar fascia can alter the biomechanics of the foot, potentially causing the development of conditions such as flat feet, high arches, or the most common consequence, heel spurs. Addressing plantar fasciitis early is crucial in preventing these structural alterations and maintaining proper foot function.

## 3. Increased Risk of Secondary Injuries:

Neglecting plantar fasciitis can increase the risk of secondary injuries in other parts of the body. As individuals modify their gait or posture to alleviate pain caused by plantar fasciitis, they may unknowingly put additional stress on other joints and muscles. This compensation mechanism can lead to overuse injuries, such as tendonitis, stress fractures, or joint problems in areas like the knees and hips. Treating plantar fasciitis promptly not only relieves foot pain but also reduces the likelihood of developing secondary injuries associated with altered biomechanics.



Early intervention is key to preventing these dangers and preserving overall well-being. If you suspect you have plantar fasciitis or are experiencing persistent foot pain, seeking professional medical advice promptly can lead to effective treatment strategies and prevent the escalation of risks associated with untreated plantar fasciitis. Taking proactive steps to address plantar fasciitis promptly can safeguard your foot health, ensuring a future marked by comfort and unrestricted movement.

**Patrick Bartholomew Jr., DPM, AACFAS**

Dr. Bartholomew works at Family Foot & Leg Center at the Cape Coral office. He is accepting new patients.

To make an appointment, call 239-430-3668 or visit [www.NaplesPodiatrist.com](http://www.NaplesPodiatrist.com).



530 SE 16th Place, Suite A  
Cape Coral, FL 33990  
(Across from Cape Coral Hospital)

(239) 430 - 3668 (FOOT)  
[www.NaplesPodiatrist.com](http://www.NaplesPodiatrist.com)



# 12 Social Clubs for Older Adults To Join

**R**etirement is an exciting time full of new opportunities to fill your days. While you've been celebrating your retirement with close friends and family members, you may also be interested in expanding your social circle to connect with fellow active older adults.

Meeting new people is always a little nerve-wracking, even if you're the life of the party. Luckily, there's an easy way to meet others while doing something fun and engaging – joining a social club. There are all kinds of clubs for older adults for you to explore.

## The Benefits of Clubs for Older Adults

Clubs help you stay connected, grow your social network, and keep you active, three major factors in better health for older adults. When you're leading an active lifestyle, you gain the following benefits:

- Increased happiness
- Improved cognition
- Longer life
- Better coping skills
- Decreased risk of heart problems

Spending time doing something you enjoy with people you like enhances your quality of life. Below, we've outlined some of our favorite ideas for clubs you could join during this new chapter of your life.

## Social Clubs at The Terraces at Bonita Springs

The Terraces at Bonita Springs is a senior living community in Florida that provides all kinds of exciting opportunities for residents to join in all the fun offered at the community and connect with other residents. Take a look at some of our most popular clubs and ways for residents to get involved.

### 1. Wellness and Sports Clubs

Staying physically active is essential to maintaining your health and wellness. It's easy to get moving at The Terraces with these amenities:

- **Tennis and Bocce Courts** – Take some friends to the courts and enjoy some friendly competition!
- **Wellness Program** – Form a personalized wellness plan to help you reach your health and fitness goals.
- **Pool** – Go for a swim or take an aquatic aerobics class.
- **Putting Green** – Perfect your short game on the putting green.

### 2. Lectures

Your wellness reaches beyond physical fitness – it's important to exercise your mind as well. The Terraces at Bonita Springs hosts lectures for experts to speak about interesting topics. Listen to these lectures to broaden your mind and learn more about fascinating subjects.

### 3. Card Club

This club is a perfect option if you love to play card games. Join the Card Club to play enjoyable games like bingo, poker, bridge, and more.

### 4. Theater

For those who love theater, shows, and appreciating arts and culture, you can enjoy it right at your community and go on outings to shows outside of the community.

- **Performing Art Center (PAC)** – The PAC at The Terraces hosts all kinds of shows for residents to watch. You can also attend wine tastings!
- **Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre** – The community organizes trips to Broadway Palm Dinner Theatre in Fort Myers.

### 5. Shopping Groups

Whether you're going on an organized trip to go shopping in downtown Bonita Springs, you don't have to travel far within your community to find a unique shop to browse.

- **Pop-Up Boutiques** – Residents at The Terraces can enjoy the pop-up boutiques in the community.

## National Social Clubs for Older Adults

There are plenty of nation-wide clubs you can join that offer important resources, benefit your health, or appeal to a particular interest. Popular social clubs include the following:

### 6. AARP

The American Association of Retired Persons is a fantastic organization to join. Not only does it provide you with resources for local activities and continuing education, but you are also eligible for a considerable amount of senior discounts when you use your AARP membership.

### 7. SilverSneakers

SilverSneakers is a health and wellness group for older adults that offers online and local community fitness classes and nutrition tips so that you can look and feel your best. There are classes for all fitness levels and abilities.

### 8. Audubon Society

Fall in love with nature and avian wildlife through the National Audubon Society. You can learn all about the native birds in your area, including how to identify them, where they nest, and what they sound like. When you join, you can help with conservation and habitat protection with other enthusiastic Audubon members.

### 9. AmeriCorps Seniors

This large senior organization provides endless volunteering opportunities for you to give back to the community. Available to adults 55 and older, volunteers can help children learn how to read, become a companion to a fellow senior, join the Foster Grandparent program, and more.

## JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT EVENT!

**Tuesday, December 12**

**3 – 4 p.m. Cocktail Hour and Tour of Model Apartments**

**4 – 5 p.m. Holiday Tour**

Step into a winter wonderland at The Terraces at Bonita Springs, Southwest

Florida's luxury retirement living community.

Jingle and mingle as we celebrate the joy of the season, touring model residences all decked out in their holiday finery.

This is a festive way to experience the lifestyle, campus, and peace of mind offered all year round in this Life Plan Community with a Type A LifeCare contract.

Space is limited. Valet parking will be available. Please RSVP by Tuesday, December 5.

Are you interested in learning more about The Terraces at Bonita Springs? Schedule a community tour and private lunch or dinner today by calling **239-204-3469** or take a virtual tour right now!

**The Terraces**  
at Bonita Springs  
A SantaFe Senior Living Community







AmeriCorps Seniors is all about giving engaged older adults a chance to use their life experiences, skills, and knowledge to help younger generations and make a positive impact in the community.

#### 10. The Red Hat Society

This women's group focuses on having fun and embracing a zest for life. The Red Hat Society encourages women to continue trying new things, traveling, forming friendships with other members, and making the most of each day. With members all across the globe, you can find true connection and sisterhood through The Red Hat Society.

#### General Clubs for Older Adults

These general clubs for older adults are easy to find or start if your community hasn't established one yet. General social clubs provide ways for you to connect with others with a shared interest or activity.

#### 11. Walking Clubs

Walking groups are an easy way to get your steps in and spend quality time with friends. You can decide if you want to walk around in nature, enjoy the garden paths close to you, or visit a nearby city to get a change of scenery and do some exploring.

#### 12. Book Clubs

There's nothing better than snuggling in for a long read with a good book, but talking about it with others comes close. Gather with other readers to discuss your ideas, opinions, and predictions with the book you're all reading. You may find a genre or author you have never heard of before or discover your new favorite story.

#### Lead a Fulfilling Life at The Terraces

Independent living can give you the engaging, active retirement you've always wanted. At The Terraces at Bonita Springs, you can live your best maintenance-free life and with all kinds of top-notch services and amenities.

Our Vitality Program is tailor-made to promote your physical and mental well-being. Surround yourself with new friends and plenty of things to do right here at The Terraces. Call us today to schedule a tour and to learn about our Type A LifeCare contract.



**The Terraces**  
at Bonita Springs  
A Santara Senior Living Community  
CELEBRATING 10 YEARS

A Floor Plan With More  
**Living Room.**

A Life Plan With More  
**Breathing Room.**



With a move to The Terraces at Bonita Springs, you'll not only live in comfort and style, but you'll also delight in the social and service-rich lifestyle and resort-quality amenities of this vibrant community. Thoughtfully designed and elegant accommodations are among the many distinctions loved by our residents. Choose from more than a dozen spacious floor plans, each carefully constructed with luxury and comfort in mind.

As a Life Plan Community offering a Type A LifeCare contract, The Terraces welcomes you to breathe easy, knowing that you've got a secure plan that protects you and your estate.

**Mirella Features**

A spacious two-bedroom residence, Mirella is home to thoughtful and distinctive design, including:

- A well-appointed and brightly lit kitchen
- Stainless steel appliances and high-end finishes
- A personal one-car garage
- Complimentary valet parking
- A screened lanai
- Large walk-in closets

**MOVE NOW AND SAVE!**

Close before January 31, 2024, and receive a 10% discount on the entrance fee.\*

*Style. Security.  
And Savings!*

**Call today to schedule a tour of our Mirella floor plan or take advantage of this limited-time offer.**

**239-204-3469**

\*Applies to first-person entrance fee on select residences only

26455 S. Tamiami Trail | Bonita Springs, FL 34134  
TheTerracesAtBonitaSprings.com

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# BRIGHTEN YOUR HOLIDAY TRAVELS: ESSENTIAL EYE CARE TIPS FOR A SAFE JOURNEY

The holiday season brings joyous reunions and exciting adventures. As you gear up for your holiday travel plans, ensuring your eyes remain healthy and comfortable is essential for a seamless journey. Here are some expert eye care tips to keep your vision crystal clear while you traverse the holiday trails.

## 1. Pack Essentials

Start with the basics. Always carry your prescription glasses or contacts, an extra pair if possible, and any necessary eye medications. Sunglasses are a must, protecting your eyes from harmful UV rays and reducing glare during sunny or snowy travels.

## 2. Hydrate Regularly

Airplane cabins and road trips can lead to dehydration. Keep yourself hydrated to prevent dry eyes, which can cause discomfort and irritation. Drink plenty of water throughout your journey to maintain moisture in your eyes.

## 3. Blink Often and Rest Your Eyes

Long hours of staring at screens or focusing intensely while driving can strain your eyes. Make a conscious effort to blink frequently to prevent dryness. Additionally, take regular breaks during long drives or flights to rest your eyes and reduce fatigue.

## 4. Use Eye Drops

Consider carrying lubricating eye drops, especially if you'll be exposed to dry or dusty environments. They can provide quick relief from dryness and help keep your eyes refreshed.

## 5. Protect Against Digital Eye Strain

If you're using electronic devices during travel, follow the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look at something 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This simple practice helps reduce eye strain caused by prolonged screen time.

## 6. Clean Your Glasses Regularly

Keep your glasses clean to ensure clear vision. Use a microfiber cloth and lens cleaner to remove smudges, fingerprints, or dust, which can obstruct your view and strain your eyes.

## 7. Sleep Well

Adequate sleep is crucial for overall health, including eye health. Prioritize a good night's sleep before



embarking on your journey. Proper rest can reduce eye puffiness and prevent redness and irritation.

## 8. Mind Your Diet

Consume a balanced diet rich in vitamins and nutrients essential for eye health, such as omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin C, and antioxidants. Snack on fruits, vegetables, and nuts during your travels to support your vision.

## 9. Protective Eyewear for Activities

Engaging in outdoor winter activities? Ensure you use appropriate protective eyewear, especially when skiing, snowboarding, or participating in any sports. This guards your eyes against potential injuries from debris or UV exposure.

## 10. Be Mindful of Allergens

Traveling to different locations means encountering various allergens that could trigger allergic reactions in your eyes. Consider carrying antihistamines or allergy eye drops if you're prone to seasonal allergies.

Remember, your eyes are your windows to the world, so taking care of them is vital, especially during holiday travel. Incorporating these simple yet effective eye care tips into your travel routine can help you maintain optimal eye health and enjoy your holiday adventures with clear vision and comfort.

### CENTER FOR SIGHT

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**BRADLEY MIDDAGH, O.D.**  
Optometric Physician

Dr. Bradley Middaugh is a board-certified optometric physician committed to providing his patients the highest level of care through innovative technology and a focus on providing an excellent patient experience. Dr. Middaugh has extensive training in ocular disease, vision testing, eyewear prescriptions, specialty contact lenses and the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders for patients of all ages, from pediatric to geriatric.

Dr. Middaugh graduated from Wake Forest University and earned his doctorate at The University of Alabama at Birmingham. He has been in private practice since 1988 and founded The Fort Myers Eye Center in 1993. In 2020, he joined the Center For Sight team to offer his patients direct access to the some of the finest cataract, LASIK, glaucoma, cornea, retina, and oculo-plastics specialists in Southwest Florida.

Dr. Middaugh has served on the Lee County School Board as a member of the Health Care Advisory Panel and the Early Intervention Health Care Panel. He is also an active member of the Southwest Florida Optometric Association, the Florida Optometric Association, and the American Optometric Association, and Above Board Chamber. In addition, he enjoys leading Medical Mission teams annually to El Salvador.

Dr. Middaugh and his wife, Meg, enjoy raising their two boys. The family is very active in their church, Walk to Emmaus, Kairos Prison Ministry, and enjoy serving on medical mission teams.



# MEMORY MATTERS

By Amy Hoffmann Schenk, RN, BSN, MS Ed, Community Engagement Lead

**H**ow did it get to be December? The time of year filled with holidays, parties, family, food and more often than not, stress. If you are caring for someone with memory issues, there can be additional considerations that will impact your holiday plans. Every situation is unique, and there is no one right recipe for a successful and enjoyable holiday season. With some advance planning, thoughtful consideration, realistic expectations and plans, the holidays can be pleasant and joyful. The keys to success include anticipating the barriers, and developing a plan for the hiccups along the way.

To start, evaluate how your loved one manages in unfamiliar situations. Do they have anxiety and worries with changes in routine? Have you traveled recently and how did that go? What support systems do you have in place? Are holidays spent quietly at home? Is holiday season full of energy, family, friends and big events? What did the holiday season look like last year? What do you want to avoid, and what activities brought joy? Once you have thought through the ideal holiday scenario, start to narrow down the critical elements for the celebration.

Will you and your loved one be traveling? Read on to learn more about travel tips. Is the holiday celebration local? Is your home the place of holiday gatherings? Is it realistic to host the celebration or is it time for a new tradition? Be honest with yourself and acknowledge that some traditions may need to evolve and that expectations may need to be tempered to decrease anxiety and disappointment.

No matter what your holiday scenario looks like there are a few key approaches that work in any setting.

- Keep a consistent routine as much as possible.
- Plan for rest breaks.
- Know your loved one's signs of anxiety and agitation and have a plan to help manage these feelings.
- Allow more time for activities, travel, and new situations than you think you may need.
- Allow others to help. Make a list of things that others can do such as holiday shopping, running errands and/or spending time with your loved one so you can attend to holiday preparations.



Of course, there is not one perfect solution all situations. If you are planning a holiday at home, identify the elements of holiday routines that bring the most joy. Can someone else host the celebration if you are not able to do so this year? Are there things on your holiday tradition list that cause anxiety, frustration and worry? Let those go! If you will be going to another local location for the holiday, let the host(s) know how things have changed and what your loved one needs to be comfortable. Social interactions may become too overwhelming. Identify a quiet area where your loved one can relax or nap. Acknowledge that your visit may be shorter than usual, and let the hosts know ahead of time.

Prepare other friends and family members and let them know of your loved one's current condition. Focus on sharing past holiday memories with your loved one, versus questioning them, which can be upsetting and confusing. Also remember that declining invitations, requests, and deciding not to take on more responsibilities are all acceptable and may be preferable.

What if your holiday plans take you to another location? The keys to successful travel include anticipating challenges, keeping the travel simple and avoiding situations that have the potential to become upsetting and frustrating. Considering

airline travel? Look for flights that are direct, identify less hectic travel times, and take advantage of TSA resources. If you and your loved one travel routinely, you may want to invest in TSA PreCheck enrollment. The TSA also has another resource called TSA Cares. You contact TSA Cares 3 days ahead to let them know you are traveling with someone with dementia, and they can assist. TSA Cares can be reached at 855-787-2227.

Airports can be hectic, loud, confusing and overwhelming, particularly at the holidays. This is the perfect environment for people living with dementia to become confused, lost or scared. Making sure that you keep your loved one in sight at all times is essential. Ensure your loved one has identification at all times, and you may want to consider a medical ID band. Find a quiet area prior to boarding and/or consider noise canceling headphones for your loved one.

Another option may be to use a traveling companion service, such as GOMO travel. Kerri Johnson, RN, CDP, EMBA is the CEO and founder of GOMO travel echoes many of the tips we have suggested. GOMO is a unique, specialized travel resource, offering door-to-door service, and traveling companions, who serve as travel guardians throughout the journey.

If you or your loved ones seem to be forgetting a bit more, give the gift of peace of mind and schedule a free memory screen at NPRC on 12/11 or 12/20.

**Scan the QR code, and get scheduled today.  
Memories matter!**



**Resources:**

GOMO Travel: 904-395-7500 <https://gomotravel.com/>

The Alzheimer's Association:  
<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/safety/traveling>



**239-939-7777 | NPRC-SWFL.COM**  
14271 Metropolis Avenue., Fort Myers, FL

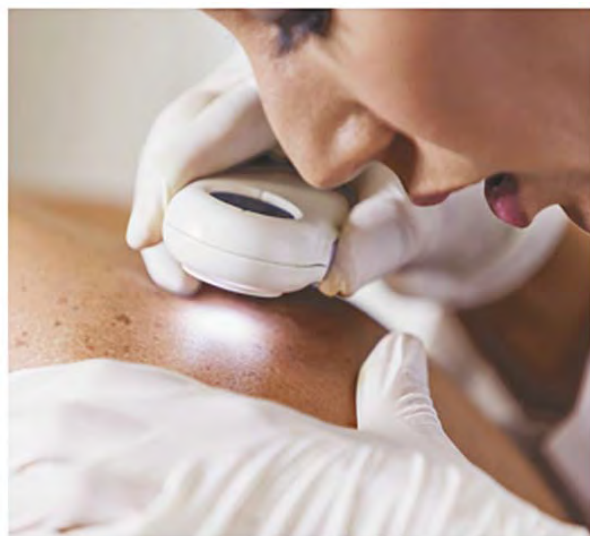


# Happy Holidays:

## Why it's Important to See Your Dermatologist This Season

By Joseph Onorato, MD, FAAD

**E**ven though it's the holidays and are schedules are packed a little more tightly, that's no excuse to put off your dermatology appointments.



Every hour a person dies of melanoma, and this year alone, over 76,000 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed. On average skin cancer screenings take about 10 minutes, which could potentially save your life.

Along with the unfortunate diagnosis of melanoma, there are many other concerns and cancers that can be detected in your dermatologist's office with a thorough, proper, skin cancer screening. On a regular basis, you should have a screening at least once a year. And, because some forms of skin cancer grow very rapidly, if you are experiencing any new forms of lesions, bumps, moles that are of concern, you should schedule a dermatology appointment immediately.

Skin cancer is often on the scalp, ears, bottom of the feet and other areas that usually go undetected by patients. That is why it's imperative to see your dermatologist regularly. However, if you do notice changes in your skin, don't wait.

Make an appointment immediately, as skin cancer can proliferate rather quickly.

The symptoms to look for in moles or lesions are outlined in this simple acronym, ABCDE:

- A—Asymmetry
- B—Border Irregularity
- C—Color-Variiegated or a Halo Effect
- D—Diameter (>6 mm)
- E—Evolving

In Addition to the symptoms above, there are supplementary signs to look for, which include:

- A—Amelanotic (Pink or Red Lesion)
- B—Bleeding/Bump (Raised Lesion)
- C—Color Uniformity
- D—De Novo Development  
(A New Development <6mm)

Schedule your dermatology appointment now to make sure that you are maintaining healthy skin, and if anything is abnormal, getting an early diagnosis is critical for optimal treatment.

Schedule a consultation today at SWFL Dermatology Plastic Surgery & Laser Center online or by phone at 239-500-SKIN.

**SWFL Dermatology Plastic Surgery & Laser Center**  
SWFL (Southwest Florida) Dermatology is a full-service skin care practice offering Adult Pediatric Family Dermatology services and Mohs Micrographic Surgery.

SWFL Dermatology is an extension of All Island Dermatology Plastic Surgery MedSpa & Laser Center - a leader in providing skin care to its patients in the greater Garden City and Glen Cove communities in Long Island, NY since 1995.

We are proud to join the Southwest Florida community and welcome the opportunity to service its residents as well as all of its visiting snow-birds.

Our Mission is to establish and maintain a practice built on positive patient relations and patient satisfaction.

SWFL Dermatology is an Affinity Member of the Naples Zoo and is proud to support the Zoo in its endeavor to inspire people of all ages to respect, value and conserve wildlife and our natural world.

We are also a member of the Naples and Bonita Springs Chambers of Commerce and support their efforts to foster local business advancement in helping make Southwest Florida one of the best communities to live, work in, and visit.

### *What's on YOUR Skin?*

Contact SWFL Dermatology Plastic Surgery & Laser Center.

- Welcoming New Patients
- New York Trained
- Mohs Surgery
- Accepting most Florida & New York Insurance plans including Florida Blue and GHI.



### Founder & Owner

**Joseph Onorato, MD, FAAD**

Dr. Onorato has over 25 years of experience practicing dermatology and is board certified. He serves as SWFL Dermatology's medical director, encouraging his team to provide the best skin care services in the area. He focuses on general dermatology and dermatological surgery including laser treatments, chemical peels, and injectable fillers.

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**SWFLDermatology.com**  
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Naples, FL 34110

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# NEOWAVES – FINALLY You Can Say Goodbye to ED

Alejandro Miranda-Sousa, M.D.

**O**ur office specializes in the treatment of Erectile Dysfunction through the use of low-intensity shock wave therapy. Our method is a scientifically proven, non-invasive procedure that uses focused sound waves to increase blood flow to the penis, optimizing erections, sensitivity and sexual performance.

## What Are Some of the Causes of Erectile Dysfunction?

Most men who suffer from ED have vascular issues that affect blood flow to the penis. By utilizing low-intensity focused sound waves, our method can repair aged blood vessels, stimulate the growth of new blood vessels and remove decades of micro-plaque that's been built up over time.

## Are There Any Side Effects or Pain Associated with the Treatment?

There are no side effects from our treatment. More importantly, it is completely painless, and non-invasive as well. Patients can resume their normal activities, including sexual activity following each treatment session.

## How Many Sessions Are Required for a Patient to Achieve Optimal Results?

Our office follows European protocol and guidelines, which based on a series of clinical studies and trials recommends a total of 6 sessions, over the course of six weeks. On average, patients will start noticing results after the third or fourth treatment.

## Is there a Difference Between Radial and Focused Shock Waves?

Absolutely. Radial Shock Waves are released into the tissue and radiate within, affecting a larger area than a Focused Shock Wave does, yet not penetrating as deeply as a Focused Shock Wave. As a result, Radial Wave therapy is more beneficial for treating superficial injuries and areas that benefit from tissue stimulation such as muscles



and backs. On the other hand, the energy delivery of a Focused Shock Wave is precisely controlled, the focal size is constant and penetrates a lot deeper than Radial Shock Waves do. Due to the purpose of our treatment being able to remove decades of micro-plaque, we must use a machine that uses high-frequency, focused energy that will do precisely that.

## How Does it Work and How Long Will the Benefits Last?

The Neowaves procedure breaks up plaque formation in blood vessels and stimulates the growth of new blood vessels in the penis. This process, called neurogenesis, increases blood flow to the penis, improves sexual function and enhances sensitivity in the penis. In addition, our procedure activates the growth of new nerve tissue in the penis. Effects from the treatment have been scientifically proven to last at least 2-3 years, although this can vary dependent of individual health and lifestyle habits.

## Is Your Equipment FDA Approved?

Yes! Our machine is FDA approved and uses state-of-the-art technology. More importantly, it is a multi-purpose device that has been tested and proven to work in several other medical fields, including orthopedic medicine, urology, anti-aging treatments and wound healing.

Visit [www.neowaves.com](http://www.neowaves.com) or call us at (239) 226-2727 to learn more.



**239.226.2727**  
**NEOWAVES.com**



**Alejandro Miranda-Sousa, M.D.**  
Board Certified Urologist

**FORT MYERS**  
12995 S. Cleveland Ave. Ste. 184  
Fort Myers FL 33907

**CAPE CORAL**  
1206 Country Club Blvd  
Cape Coral, FL 33990

\* FDA-approved for treatment of plantar fasciitis 2018  
Individual results may vary. | © All rights reserved



# Ketamine Health Centers:

## HELPING NAVIGATE THE HOLIDAYS

October marked the 75th anniversary of World Mental Health Day, with the theme of Mental Health being a Universal Human Right. We all know that the holidays can be a very stressful time for everyone, especially for those who have ongoing mental health wellness issues. This added layer of stress can easily affect functioning and quality of life. Some common symptoms of stress include anxiety, sadness, headaches, body aches, inability to sleep, restlessness, and irritability.

A survey conducted by the American Psychological Association found that over 38 percent of those surveyed felt increased levels of stress, depression, and anxiety and reported more substance abuse during the holiday season.

At Ketamine Health Centers, we address these concerns through a holistic approach that individualizes treatment for each person based on their symptoms and needs. Our goal is to assist our clients in managing this stress in the healthiest possible ways, which will lead to fulfilling holiday experiences.

Here are a few general tips that could lead to more positive outlooks and events for this time of year:

1. **Plan ahead**, and make a list of "must do" items with dates attached of expected completion.
2. **Put yourself first!** Giving to others is often the complete focus, but we must also remember to give to ourselves if we are to continue to give to others. (Examples - yoga, massage, walk in nature, lunch with a friend, mindful breathing)
3. **Be realistic about finances**, only what you can comfortably afford. Being creative and staying within your budget will lower your stress. (4.) Give yourself permission to say "No" to those events that will only cause you to be overwhelmed. Say "Yes" to those that you know will bring you joy and happiness.



5. **Come treat yourself** to an Immunity Boost Alive nutritional infusion!

6. **Honor loved ones who are no longer here.** Celebrate their lives by reflecting or doing something meaningful in their honor.

7. **Give Yourself Permission to Feel Good** (from *Super Attractor* by Gabrielle Bernstein): We need practices for feeling good in order to make feeling good a habit. We've given more faith and energy to the negativity in our minds, and it's time to redirect our focus...The next time something doesn't go your way, do something to feel good fast! Listen to your favorite guided meditation or your favorite song. Call a friend who always makes you laugh. Take a walk outside. Allow yourself to access happiness even in the midst of a difficult time. That joy will be your guide out of the negative experience. It's totally fine to let yourself feel discomfort, but don't be afraid to balance it with joy.

Ketamine Health Centers offers comprehensive clinical consultations, ongoing mental health therapy, medication evaluations, and alternative treatments, including Stellate Ganglion Blocks, IV Ketamine Infusions, Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, and ALIVE Nutritional Infusions.

According to research studies, infusions of ketamine to treat depression can be effective for 60-80% of individuals. Unlike traditional treatments, ketamine is safe, and patients report minimal side effects.

We are here for you and your loved ones. If you have questions or concerns about holiday stress or other mental health issues, please call or email us. Remember, Mental Health is a universal human right!

### What Our Patients Are Saying

"I did my first treatment in January of 2019, and it was life changing to say the least. The staff is spectacular, and this place was essential on my road to mental health recovery. You can view my testimonial on the Instagram page for the ketamine health centers. Truly grateful, thank you so much!!" - Juan C.



### KETAMINE HEALTH CENTERS

As the leading provider of IV ketamine infusion therapy in Florida, we aim to provide relief and offer hope to those suffering from treatment-resistant conditions. We are one of the very few centers specializing in ketamine infusion therapy, with a team of both mental health and certified anesthesia professionals to help our patients on their journey to recovery.



**ketamine**  
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239-387-3496

[www.ketaminehealthcenters.com](http://www.ketaminehealthcenters.com)

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Suite 302  
Miami, FL 33176

**ORLANDO**  
616 E. Altamonte Dr.  
Suite 206  
Altamonte, FL 32701

**WEST PALM BEACH**  
1411 N. Flagler Dr.  
Suite 9300B  
West Palm Beach, FL



In addition to ketamine infusion therapy, our centers have multiple treatment options designed to help you regain control and start living again. Considering your health, our practical and minimally invasive therapies are available for various conditions.

**Ketamine Health Centers Vision** - Create a holistic array of heart-centered services that promote mental, physical, and spiritual health and well-being while partnering with like-minded community resources that share our vision and values.

At **Ketamine Health Centers**, our goal is for our patients to succeed. We want you to be happy and healthy. Our mission is to help depression, fibromyalgia, and post-traumatic stress disorder sufferers to regain balance in their lives.

*Check out our YouTube channel to see what we have to offer and how we can help you.*

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**Dale Alice Block, LMFT**

*Dale Alice Block, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, Clinical Director of Ketamine Health Centers*

After graduating from the University of Rhode Island with a masters in MFT, Ms. Block completed three years of post-graduate study in clinical supervision and management, culminating in the AAMFT Qualified Supervisor designation. Her clinical experience and supervision of other professionals spans 30+ years. She has established and supervised multiple programs, both inpatient and outpatient, including trauma focused care programs, addiction facilities, loss and bereavement programs, neurodiverse support programming, spiritual healing programs, general counseling and currently all clinical aspects of the counseling and alternative services at Ketamine Health Centers across the state.



**Jessica Mitchell**

Jessica Mitchell is a Registered Mental Health Counseling Intern working toward licensure Status. She has been servicing clients and patients at Ketamine Health Centers since Spring of 2021.

Jessica completed her Associate in Science Degree in Human Services at Florida Southwestern University, her BS in Applied Psychology and MS in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Hodges University; graduating with Honors in May of 2022.

Jessica's passion for understanding Human Behavior, paired with her passion for the application and integration of alternative treatment methods has helped to pave the way for her educational focus, and a career in the field of Mental Health and Wellness.

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# EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF MEDICAL MARIJUANA IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CROHN'S DISEASE AND COLITIS

In recent years, medical marijuana has emerged as a topic of interest in the realm of inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), particularly in the treatment of Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. As individuals seek alternative therapies to manage the debilitating symptoms associated with these conditions, the potential benefits of cannabinoids, the active compounds in marijuana, have garnered attention from both patients and the medical community.

## Understanding Crohn's Disease and Colitis

Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are chronic inflammatory bowel diseases characterized by inflammation and irritation of the digestive tract. These conditions can lead to a range of symptoms, including abdominal pain, diarrhea, fatigue, and weight loss. Managing IBD often involves a combination of medications, lifestyle modifications, and, in some cases, surgery.

## The Endocannabinoid System and Cannabinoids

The human body has an endocannabinoid system (ECS), a natural and complex cell-signaling system that plays a crucial role in regulating various physiological processes, including immune response, inflammation, and gastrointestinal function. Cannabinoids, such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), found in marijuana, interact with the ECS and may influence these processes.

## Research Findings on Medical Marijuana and IBD

Several studies have explored the potential therapeutic effects of medical marijuana in the context of Crohn's disease and colitis. Some research suggests that cannabinoids possess anti-inflammatory properties, which could be beneficial in reducing inflammation in the gastrointestinal tract.

A study published in the Journal of Clinical Investigation found that cannabinoids may help modulate the immune response and decrease inflammation in the colon. Another study in the European Journal of Gastroenterology & Hepatology reported that medical marijuana could improve symptoms and quality of life in patients with Crohn's disease.



## Pain Management and Symptom Relief

One of the most common challenges faced by individuals with Crohn's and colitis is the management of chronic pain. Medical marijuana has been reported by some patients to provide relief from pain associated with IBD. The analgesic properties of cannabinoids may offer an alternative or complementary approach to traditional pain management strategies and is often preferred when compared to traditional narcotic pain relief options.

## Nausea and Appetite Stimulation

Nausea and loss of appetite are frequent symptoms in individuals with Crohn's disease and colitis. Medical marijuana, particularly THC, has long been recognized for its antiemetic effects and its ability to stimulate appetite. This could be especially beneficial for patients experiencing weight loss and malnutrition due to the impact of IBD on their digestive system.

## Considerations and Caveats

While there is growing interest in the potential benefits of medical marijuana for Crohn's and colitis, it's essential to approach this topic with a nuanced perspective. The medical community is still exploring the long-term effects, safety, and efficacy of cannabinoids for IBD treatment. Not all patients may experience the same benefits, and individual responses can vary.

The legal status of medical marijuana varies widely, with some states allowing its use for specific medical conditions while others maintain strict regulations or prohibit its use altogether. Patients considering medical marijuana in Florida will be pleased to know that Chron's Disease in addition to similar conditions in kind and class are approved for medical cannabis usage in Florida.

## Consulting with Healthcare Professionals

Before considering medical marijuana as a treatment option, individuals with Crohn's or colitis might want to consult with their healthcare providers or gastroenterologist on its potential benefits. Once they desire to move forward they can contact a certified cannabis doctor who can assess the individual's medical history, current symptoms, and overall health to complete the certification for a medical marijuana card.

These specialised providers can also offer guidance on dosing, potential side effects, and interactions with other medications. Open and honest communication between patients and healthcare professionals is crucial to making informed decisions about improving their life and incorporating medical marijuana into an IBD management plan.

## Conclusion

The exploration of medical marijuana as a potential holistic therapy for Crohn's disease and colitis represents an exciting and promising avenue in the quest for effective IBD management. While research is ongoing, and the landscape of medical marijuana is evolving, some patients report extremely positive outcomes in terms of symptom relief and improved quality of life.



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# The Importance of Progesterone Replacement in Both Men and Women

By Dr. Melissa (Mel) Irvine, DNP - Clinical Sexologist  
Specializes in Sexual Medicine and Beauty

**O**f the many hormones in the body, a select few are typically categorized as being for one gender or for the other. Many people are often surprised to learn, though, that despite these hormones being more prominent in one gender, they are essential for proper body functioning in both.

One example of these hormones is progesterone, which is often considered for women, although it has many essential roles in men. However, progesterone can decline in both genders for a number of reasons, including with age or due to health conditions. When progesterone levels fall, unpleasant symptoms can occur, which is why progesterone replacement is a crucial treatment for those with unbalanced hormones.

## What Is Progesterone?

Progesterone is a hormone most often known to be released by the corpus luteum after a woman has ovulated. Also referred to as the “pregnancy hormone,” progesterone prepares the uterus for pregnancy by thickening the lining and preventing muscle contractions that would expel an egg.

Despite its primary role in preparing the female body for pregnancy, though, progesterone is also vital for men, albeit with different roles.

Let’s further discuss the role of progesterone in both genders and why it is crucial for men and women to have balanced progesterone levels.

## The Role of Progesterone in Women

Progesterone varies considerably through a woman’s menstrual cycle, with it being produced in low levels during the first half but rising considerably following ovulation. If a woman becomes pregnant, progesterone remains high throughout the pregnancy and aids in breast milk production upon delivery of the baby.

While the ovaries initially produce progesterone, the placenta begins producing progesterone at a higher rate after 8 or 10 weeks of pregnancy. This increase in progesterone keeps the body from releasing more eggs and prepares the breasts to produce milk.



Despite the role of progesterone in pregnancy, it can also be used to prevent pregnancy. In fact, progesterone is often used by itself or in combination with estrogen in hormonal contraceptives. When in this format, it helps the cervical mucus thicken, making it difficult for sperm to reach and fertilize an egg. It can also cause the uterine lining to thin, or it may stop ovulation entirely.

Because of these extremes in the body, promoting an ideal amount of progesterone is critical for healthy fertility, if pregnancy is a woman’s goal.

## Signs Of Low Progesterone in Women

Some signs of low progesterone in women include:

- missing periods or having abnormal periods
- uterine bleeding
- repeated miscarriages
- spotting and pain while pregnant
- infertility

Progesterone and estrogen are also closely related, so if progesterone is too low, it may cause estrogen levels to become high, which can cause weight gain, headaches, or mood swings.

## The Role of Progesterone in Men

Despite being considered the “pregnancy hormone,” progesterone is also an essential hormone in men.

In men, progesterone plays a vital role in mood regulation and keeping the mind calm. It also impacts libido and promotes fertility from the man’s side. This is because progesterone influences spermiogenesis, or the creation of sperm; if the amount of progesterone in a man is too low, the body might not be able to produce as much sperm, which can influence a couple’s ability to conceive.

Progesterone is also crucial for the biosynthesis of testosterone, otherwise known as the male sex hormone, which is responsible for the development of secondary sex characteristics such as body hair, muscle growth, and a deeper voice.

Progesterone also plays an essential role in the male body regarding counteracting the effects of estrogen, which can cause testosterone levels to decline. Proper progesterone levels ensure that these sex hormones are in the correct balance.

## Signs Of Low Progesterone in Men

Some of the signs of low progesterone in men include:

- hair loss
- low libido
- fatigue
- weight gain
- depression
- breast growth
- muscle loss
- bone loss
- erectile dysfunction

Low progesterone levels can also increase the risk of certain health conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, prostate cancer, and prostatism.

## Estrogen Dominance and Progesterone

Progesterone is an antagonist to estrogen, giving it an important role in keeping estrogen levels in check. However, this also means that if progesterone levels are too low, estrogen levels can become high without anything to keep them in the correct range, a condition called estrogen dominance.

While estrogen dominance is most often referred to in women, it can affect men as well, with both genders having shared and also different symptoms.

Women with estrogen dominance may have symptoms that include:

- swelling and tenderness in the breasts
- low libido
- bloating
- weight gain
- mood swings
- headaches
- increase premenstrual syndrome symptoms
- fatigue
- cold hands or feet
- memory problems
- anxiety and panic attacks



Men can share some of the above symptoms in addition to experiencing infertility issues, breast tissue growth, or erectile dysfunction.

Normal estrogen levels in adult, menopausal women range from 15 – 350 pg/ml. In adult men, estrogen levels should range from 10 - 40 pg/ml. Estrogen counts higher than these ranges may signify low progesterone.

#### What Causes Low Progesterone?

There are many causes of low progesterone, some due to a temporary situation, whereas others may be more chronic.

#### Hypothyroidism

Many of the hormones in the body interact, which is evident between the thyroid hormones, T3 and T4, and progesterone. With hypothyroidism, the thyroid does not produce enough hormones, and since the thyroid is responsible for regulating the endocrine system, this can then influence how well the body is able to produce progesterone.

It is also possible for low progesterone to lead to hypothyroidism, so this connection is bi-directional.

#### Low Cholesterol

Cholesterol is needed by the body in order to make progesterone. So, if your cholesterol is low, your body does not have enough of the building blocks required to produce enough progesterone.

#### Stress

Stress contributes to many health conditions, and low progesterone is one of them. This is because the hormone secreted by the body when in a perceived stressful situation, cortisol, utilizes the resources needed to make progesterone.

Essentially, when the body is stressed, it halts progesterone production in order to increase the amount of cortisol produced. For those experiencing chronic stress, this means that cortisol continually interferes with progesterone production.

#### Anovulatory Cycle

An anovulatory cycle is a menstrual cycle where ovulation does not occur. Since a rise in progesterone is triggered by the release of an egg and the empty follicle it leaves behind called the corpus luteum, an anovulatory cycle results in no increase in progesterone.

Anovulatory cycles are common in those on certain types of birth control or with PCOS.

#### Abnormal Bodyweight

Your body weight can play a prominent role in progesterone production because of its impact on the menstrual cycle. This is because women need a certain amount of body fat in order to have a regular cycle, which leads to ovulation and a rise in progesterone. Because of this, low body weight may impede ovulation, leading to no progesterone production.

Problems can occur at the other end of the spectrum as well, though. This is because fat cells produce estrogen, so high body fat can result in an overproduction of estrogen, which can lead to low progesterone. Studies have shown this correlation between obesity and low progesterone in men as well.

#### Prolactin Disorder

Prolactin is a hormone produced by the pituitary, and it negatively affects the production of sex hormone precursors. Those with hyperprolactinemia produce too much prolactin, which can disrupt the menstrual cycle, keeping progesterone from being produced.

#### Correcting Low Progesterone

Progesterone replacement therapy involves progestins, which are synthetic compounds mimicking the effects of progesterone on the body.

Some reasons why someone may be treated with progesterone hormone therapy are to:

- correct a low amount of progesterone due to underproduction
- bring on menstruation
- reverse low progesterone resulting from certain medications
- replace progesterone that is limited due to specific medical procedures

There are many different forms of progesterone hormone therapy, such as:

- injections
- oral capsules
- vaginal gels
- vaginal inserts
- vaginal suppositories

The ideal method of progesterone replacement will depend on gender, symptoms, and personal preferences.

#### The Importance of Progesterone Replacement

Besides helping to address problems with fertility, progesterone replacement can also be essential for a healthy pregnancy in women. For example, women who are pregnant, but have low progesterone, may be at a greater risk of preterm delivery or miscarriage. Replacing progesterone can help prevent these complications from occurring.



Progesterone replacement produces similar benefits in men regarding improving fertility due to its role in spermatogenesis and the fact that low progesterone can lead to erectile dysfunction.

Progesterone can also help with other symptoms affecting well-being, including those that appear in men with low progesterone. These benefits can include an improvement in mood, better sleep, and stronger bones.

Some cases of low progesterone are temporary, but for those suffering significantly from low progesterone, it is likely due to a chronic cause, and the only way to find relief is by addressing the hormonal imbalance.

Progesterone can be supplemented in many forms, such as injections, pills, or creams, which help raise progesterone levels and assist the body in functioning correctly, reversing unpleasant symptoms. Working with a doctor who specializes in hormones can also ensure that you get just the right amount of progesterone, as too much can also cause problems, especially for those looking to conceive.

By adequately balancing progesterone, all other hormones in the body can work in balance again, significantly improving your quality of life.

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## Every Day Luxury:

High-quality skin care can promote the feeling of every day luxury without the high-ticket price. Gifting something as simple as a handmade soap, creamy body lotion or foaming body wash, can provide that feeling of indulgence and joy.

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## Stocking Stuffers:

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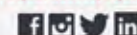
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- Managing these emotions, thoughts, and actions.
- Coping with day-to-day stressors.
- Finding satisfaction in life.

### What is Quality of Life?

The WHO (World Health Organization) defines QoL as “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live, in relation to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns”.

Your Quality of Life includes your health, social relationships, personal safety, and emotional well-being. It impacts how you think and feel about all the big and small things that you do, think about, and experience daily. This includes how your body functions, how safe you feel (both alone and with others), your perception of self-worth, and how you engage in social interactions. Your Quality of Life revolves around the meaningful daily activities of your life.

With a neurological condition such as Parkinson’s Disease, the nervous system is affected. It might feel like something has “hijacked” your life, including many of the things you love to do! It’s known that the nervous system relays sensory information to our brains and enables us to think, move, feel, breathe, see, and hear.

Lasene offers solutions to those living with conditions that negatively influence Quality of Life. Enhancing QoL can mean improved sleep, enhanced brain functions, reduced brain fog, and improved responses in movement, as well as decreased chronic pain — all aimed at fostering hope for living with the challenges of a neurological condition while providing enhancements in areas that impact your Quality of Life.

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Lasene is part of a series of research-based protocols focusing on the world of pain management and neurological restoration. From our discoveries, we pioneer the strategies to deliver safe, affordable, and effective care to assist those in need.

As the founders of Lasene, our mission is to bring the best of technologies and protocols together for the sole purpose of reducing the suffering associated with neurodegenerative and neuromusculoskeletal conditions, and to bring our patients back to a more active and productive life.



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# EMPOWERING LIVES: THE EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF CROHN'S DISEASE AND COLITIS TREATMENT

**C**rohn's Disease and Ulcerative Colitis, collectively known as Inflammatory Bowel Diseases (IBD), significantly impact millions worldwide. With Paragon Healthcare's dedication, the landscape of treating these conditions is shifting positively. In 2022, Paragon's commitment was evident, administering nearly 15,000 infusions to aid patients. In the ongoing year, that number soared to over 16,000, showcasing a vital increase in support for IBD patients in 2023.

Paragon Healthcare's arsenal of therapies encompasses a diverse range, tailoring treatments to individual needs. From Albumin to Avsola, Cimzia, Entyvio, Infliximab (and biosimilars), Iron (Injectafer, Monoferic, Venofer), Hydration, Skyrizi IV, Steroids, and Stelara (IV & subcutaneous), this comprehensive array reflects the commitment to personalized care.

The impact of these treatments goes beyond mere numbers; it echoes in the stories of individuals battling IBD. Each infusion represents a step towards betterment, offering relief from the relentless symptoms that define these conditions. Through Paragon Healthcare's interventions, lives are being transformed, allowing patients to regain control and quality of life amidst their challenging journey with Crohn's Disease and Colitis.

The rise in administered infusions from 2022 to 2023 is not just statistical growth; it's a testament to the continuous advancements in healthcare. It mirrors the ongoing efforts to enhance treatment accessibility, efficacy, and patient experience. It signifies a collective stride towards a future where IBD is better understood and managed.

However, awareness remains a cornerstone in this journey. Educating individuals about Crohn's Disease and Colitis is pivotal in fostering a supportive and informed community. It's crucial to demystify misconceptions surrounding these conditions, cultivating empathy and understanding among the public.



Moreover, the integration of innovative therapies like Skyrizi IV alongside established treatments showcases a commitment to exploring and embracing cutting-edge solutions. This proactive approach underlines Paragon Healthcare's dedication to not just meeting current needs but also anticipating and addressing future challenges in IBD treatment.

The significance of Paragon Healthcare's impact extends beyond the medical realm. It's a beacon of hope for those navigating the complexities of IBD. Each infusion administered represents a compassionate touch, a lifeline that propels patients towards a better tomorrow.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of Crohn's Disease and Colitis treatment is promising, bolstered by the dedication of organizations like Paragon Healthcare. As research progresses and technology evolves, the possibilities for improved therapies and outcomes continue to expand.

In conclusion, the strides made by Paragon Healthcare in administering infusions and their diverse treatment options exemplify a paradigm shift in Crohn's Disease and Colitis care. Their unwavering commitment not only transforms statistics but fundamentally reshapes lives. Together, as awareness grows and advancements continue, a future where those battling IBD find solace, support, and effective treatments draws nearer.

This ongoing commitment to innovation and patient-centric care heralds a future where the burdens of Crohn's Disease and Colitis may be alleviated, enabling individuals to live life beyond the confines of their conditions.

## Paragon Healthcare

Our story began in 2002 with a heart to serve people. We strive to make the healthcare process easier for patients and physicians just like you. Our compassionate team of nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, and customer service representatives are dedicated to serving each person who joins our family. Each patient receives exceptional and customized care focused on maximizing their quality of life. We specialize in providing life-saving and life-giving infusible and injectable drug therapies through our specialty pharmacies, our infusion centers, and the home setting.



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# Shopping for the Best Incontinence Underwear?

There Might be a Better Solution

**Do you experience accidental bladder leaks before making it to the restroom? Are you on the search for the best incontinence underwear?**

**A**lthough incontinence underwear may help conceal leaks you experience or prevent leaking to your clothes, it does not treat your underlying symptoms. If you struggle with bladder control or leaks, this may be a sign that you have overactive bladder.

## What is Overactive Bladder?

Overactive bladder is an umbrella term that includes the frequent and urgent need to empty your bladder. One of the most common symptoms of overactive bladder is a sudden urge to urinate, resulting in unintentional urine loss which is referred to as incontinence.

Overactive bladder can affect 1 in 3 people in the United States over the age of 40.<sup>1,2</sup> Though this bladder control issue may occur more often as people get older, it is not a normal part of aging.

You may be suffering from overactive bladder if:

- **Urgency** - You experience a sudden or compelling need to urinate with inability to hold urine or control it
- **Urgency Incontinence** - You experience an urgent need to urinate and have urinary leakage accidents or trouble holding urine before making it to the restroom
- **Frequency** - You go to the restroom to urinate so often that it disrupts your life—typically 8 or more times a day
- **Nocturia** - You wake up more than 1 time per night because you need to urinate

The good news, there are treatment options available to help regain control of your bladder. The Florida

Bladder Institute is now offering Axonics® Therapy, a long-lasting solution that is clinically proven to help regain bladder control and deliver clinically meaningful improvements in quality of life\*.

## What is Axonics Therapy?

Axonics Therapy is an advanced treatment option that works by providing gentle stimulation to the nerves that control the bladder and bowel, which can help restore normal control and result in symptom improvement.

If you and your doctor believe you are a candidate for Axonics Therapy, you will first try the therapy for a brief test period that allows you and your doctor to see if the therapy provides satisfactory reduction of your symptoms. If it is determined that the therapy is right for you, you will have an outpatient procedure where a miniaturized Axonics implant is placed just beneath the skin in the upper part of your buttock.

## What are the benefits of Axonics Therapy?

Axonics Therapy provides the possibility of saying goodbye to bladder leaks!

**Long-lasting symptom relief:** Designed to provide therapy for at least 15 years, providing a long-term solution for your symptoms

**Clinically proven results:**

- **93%** of treated patients achieved clinically significant improvements\* at 2-years<sup>3</sup>
- **94%** of patients were satisfied with their therapy<sup>3</sup>

Important Safety Information: Implantation and use of the Axonics System incurs risk beyond those normally associated with surgery, some of which may necessitate surgical intervention. Results and experiences may vary and are unique to each patient. No promise or guarantee is made about specific results or experiences. For more information about safety and potential risks, go to: [www.axonics.com/visi](http://www.axonics.com/visi). Caution: Federal law (USA) restricts this device to sale and use by, or on the order of, a physician.  
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## It's time to regain control!

Take the first step towards symptom relief. Call us at 239-449-7979 to schedule your Axonics Therapy consultation today.

“ ”

Brilliant. Amazing staff. Incredible results. Totally life changing. I am going to retire and work on my bucket list instead of settling for 'I have issues'.

— Tricia M., Patient —



Joseph Gault, MD



Nicole Houser, PA-C

  
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[info@floridabladderinstitute.com](mailto:info@floridabladderinstitute.com)

\*50% or greater reduction in symptoms

### References:

1. Coyne KS, et al. The prevalence of lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS) in the USA, the UK and Sweden: results from the Epidemiology of LUTS (EpiLUTS) study. BJU International. 2009;(104): 352-360. US Census Reporter <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/01000US-united-states/>
2. Census Reporter website: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/01000us.united-states/> Accessed July 19, 2019.
3. Pezzella A, McCrery R, Lane F, et al. Two-year outcomes of the ARTISAN-SNM study for the treatment of urinary urgency incontinence using the Axonics rechargeable sacral neuromodulation system [in press]. Neurourol Urodyn. 2021.





# Mistletoe: It's not just for kissing under

**R**oot Causes is proud to announce that we are now offering Mistletoe injections and IV's to address various conditions Like Lyme and Epstein Barr, cancer treatment side effects, and several other conditions.

There is a lot of research on the effectiveness of mistletoe and various conditions and illnesses. We are working with Believe Big and we are excited to offer this therapy that is very well established in Europe and in integrative medicine in the US, and it is now becoming mainstream.

*The following information is provided by The American Cancer Society:*

## What is mistletoe?

Mistletoe is a semiparasitic plant that grows on trees, such as apple, oak, maple, elm, pine, and birch. It has been used for hundreds of years to treat medical conditions such as epilepsy, hypertension, headaches, menopausal symptoms, infertility, arthritis, and rheumatism.

Mistletoe is one of the most widely studied complementary and alternative medicine therapies for cancer. In Europe, mistletoe extracts are among the most prescribed therapies for cancer patients.

## Immunity Issues

With issues like Epstein Barr, Rheumatoid arthritis, and other autoimmune disorders, mistletoe helps to calm the immune system.

## Immunity Details

Adaptive and innate immunity are essential to how your body protects you against foreign invaders. Your adaptive immunity is within your tissues and has memory as to how if fought off infections and illnesses from the past. Your innate immunity is how well your body fights off a new infection by utilizing antimicrobial and host defense peptides. T Cells are lymphocyte immune cells or white blood cells that originate from our bone marrow and help fight off pathogens. These T Cells work directly with B cells to create y-shaped antibodies (immunoglobulin) that connect to the pathogen and destroy it. The problem is that many people have a weakened immune system that is not able to fight



off these pathogens. The other issues is that many of us are in a hyper-state of inflammation and our own antibodies start attacking our healthy organs and tissue. This is the basis of autoimmune dysfunction.1

Cytokines are a diverse group of small proteins that are secreted by cells for the purpose of intercellular signaling and communication. Specific cytokines have autocrine, paracrine, and/or endocrine activity and, through receptor binding, can elicit a variety of responses, depending upon the cytokine and the target cell. Among the many functions of cytokines are the control of cell proliferation and differentiation and the regulation of angiogenesis and immune and inflammatory responses. 2

## How are mistletoe extracts given?

At Root Causes Holistic Health & Medicine, mistletoe extracts are usually given by intravenous or IV Injection.

*If you are interested in mistletoe injections or other IV nutrients, please call us today at (239) 347-9234.*

## References:

1. Mobilizing peptides in immunity. Nat Chem Biol 9, 747 (2013). <https://doi.org/10.1038/nchembio.1409>
2. Alirezaei M, Kemball C. Short-term fasting induces profound neuronal autophagy. Autophagy. 2010 Aug 16; 6(6): 702-710. Published online 2010 Aug 14. doi: 10.4161/auto.6.6.12376 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3106288/>

## Root Causes Holistic Health & Medicine

Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine is committed to helping you achieve optimal health. Our mission is to find the root cause of your symptoms and help you achieve wellness through correcting any contributing factors that can be corrected. We look at you as a whole person, and not just a collection of symptoms to be corrected. We strive for balance and wellness through lifestyle management, nutrition and naturally occurring compounds and therapies whenever possible.



## Doreen DeStefano, Nhd, APRN, DNP

Dr. DeStefano came to Fort Myers in the early 1980's, leaving and coming back again several times until finally settling here in 2001. She has a lifelong background in health and wellness that began in middle school when she started running.

Dr. DeStefano is also a lifelong student. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing, and another in exercise physiology. She has a Masters (ABT) in criminology, a Master's in public business administration and a Master's in nursing. She holds a doctorate in natural health and is a licensed Advanced Practice Registered Nurse. She holds numerous licenses and certifications from advanced practice training. She continues to attend educational seminars in integrative and functional medicine twice a year to stay abreast of the most recent, cutting edge therapies available.

Her practice is centered on naturopathic principles that include healing the whole person on various levels and avoiding pharmaceutical intervention unless absolutely necessary. She believes your health Is within your control. Her goal is to help you achieve maximum health.



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# WEIGHT LOSS MAKES YOUR BONES AND JOINTS HAPPY

By Physicians Rehabilitation

**D**egenerative joint disease, also known as osteoarthritis, is a condition that affects your joints, causing them to deteriorate over time. It primarily involves the breakdown of the cartilage that cushions the ends of your bones, leading to pain, stiffness, and reduced joint mobility. This condition can affect any joint in the body but commonly occurs in weight-bearing joints like the knees, hips, and spine. To manage and overcome degenerative joint disease and minimize further wear and tear on your joints and spine, Physicians Rehab recommends the following steps:

**1. Exercise:** Engaging in low-impact exercises can help improve joint function and strengthen the supporting muscles. Activities like walking, swimming, and cycling are excellent options. Your doctor or a physical therapist can guide you on suitable exercises based on your condition and fitness level.

**2. Weight management:** Maintaining a healthy weight is crucial since excess weight stresses your joints, accelerating wear and tear. By losing weight or keeping it within a healthy range, you can reduce the strain on your joints and alleviate pain. Being overweight will exacerbate osteoarthritis and can expedite joint degeneration, especially in weight-bearing joints, like the knees, hips, and ankles. For every pound of excess weight carried, 4 pounds of extra pressure is applied to a weight-bearing joint. For example, if you are 10 pounds overweight, that equates to 40 extra pounds of pressure that is applied to the knees. Having your joints, like your knees, absorb all that extra pressure over time can cause significant and irreversible damage to the joints.

**3. Proper posture:** Pay attention to your posture while sitting, standing, and lifting heavy objects. Avoid slouching and try to keep your spine and joints properly aligned. This reduces unnecessary pressure on your joints and promotes better spinal health.

**4. Joint protection:** Be mindful of your activities and avoid repetitive movements that can strain your joints. Use joint-protective devices, such as knee braces or ergonomic tools.



**5. Balanced diet:** A nutritious diet rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants can support joint health. Include foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish may also have anti-inflammatory benefits.

**6. Heat and cold therapy:** Wearing warm compresses or a hot bath can help soothe joint pain and stiffness. Conversely, cold packs can reduce inflammation when applied to the affected area.

**7. Medications:** Over-the-counter pain relievers like acetaminophen or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can help manage pain and inflammation. Always consult your doctor before starting any new medication.

**8. Physical therapy:** Working with a physical therapist can provide targeted exercises and techniques to improve joint flexibility, strength, and range of motion.

**9. Assistive devices:** In some cases, assistive devices like canes or walking aids can help reduce stress on your joints during daily activities.

**10. Avoid smoking and limit alcohol intake:** Smoking and excessive alcohol consumption can contribute to inflammation and may worsen joint problems.



(239) 320-3342

[www.PhysiciansRehab.com](http://www.PhysiciansRehab.com)

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The Villages 4064 E SR 44, Suite A, Wildwood, FL 34785

Everyone's condition is unique, so working closely with your healthcare provider to develop a personalized plan for managing your degenerative joint disease is crucial. Regular check-ups and open communication will ensure you receive the best care and support for your joint health. If necessary, your doctor may recommend more advanced treatments, such as injections or surgery, but these are typically reserved for severe cases when conservative measures are no longer effective.

By taking proactive steps and making lifestyle adjustments, you can effectively manage degenerative joint disease and maintain better joint and spinal health. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to ask, and together with Physicians Rehab, we'll work towards improving your quality of life.

We, at Physicians Rehabilitation, have always taken a multi-modality approach to treating chronic joint pain and osteoarthritis by offering various types of injection therapies, physical therapy, bracing, and interventional pain management, but now we are also offering medical weight loss options to help you with your long-term health goals. We are focused on helping you gain mobility, improve your strength, and live a pain-free lifestyle, but also getting you to look and feel your best! Call us today to get more information on our weight loss program!

## MEDICAL WEIGHT LOSS IS NOW EASIER THAN EVER

At Physicians Rehabilitation, we offer Semaglutide injections for weight loss. Approved by the FDA for weight loss in June of 2022, using Semaglutide, 90% of patients are losing 5% or more of their body weight.

### Semaglutide (Wegovy/Ozempic generic) injections:

- Increase insulin production
- Decrease glucagon synthesis
- Delay gastric emptying
- Suppress hunger
- It signals your brain that you are full so you can lose weight without feeling like you are depriving yourself.

**Schedule a weight loss consultation with Physicians Rehab and bring your copy of Health and Wellness Magazine for a \$100 DISCOUNT Off your initial consultation and injection. We are serious about your health and wellness!!**



# PrimeHealth Urgent Care Arrives in Lee County: A New Hub for Immediate Medical Assistance

**R**esidents of Lee County are in for a health-care treat with the highly-anticipated grand opening of PrimeHealth Urgent Care. This bustling urgent care facility promises to be a valuable addition to the neighborhood, offering a plethora of services catering to immediate medical needs.

Nestled in the heart of Lee County, PrimeHealth Urgent Care is set to revolutionize accessible healthcare. Whether it's a sudden ailment or an unforeseen injury, the clinic aims to bridge the gap between primary care and emergency services. Their dedicated team of experienced physicians and medical professionals are geared up to provide top-notch urgent care services to the community.

One of the standout features of PrimeHealth Urgent Care is its commitment to walk-in care, ensuring that individuals can seek medical attention without the hassle of appointments. This convenience is a game-changer for those in need of prompt medical assistance but without the luxury of time for scheduled appointments.

Moreover, the clinic boasts state-of-the-art facilities equipped to handle a wide range of medical concerns. From minor injuries to acute illnesses, residents can rely on PrimeHealth Urgent Care to deliver quality care promptly. The facility is equipped with advanced diagnostic tools, allowing for swift and accurate assessments to aid in timely treatments.

What sets PrimeHealth Urgent Care apart is its dedication to personalized patient experiences. Understanding the unique needs of each individual, the clinic strives to create a welcoming and comforting environment, ensuring that patients feel at ease while receiving care.

Furthermore, the clinic's commitment to community well-being extends beyond the walls of the facility. They actively engage in health education and outreach programs, aiming to promote preventive care and empower residents with essential health knowledge.

As PrimeHealth Urgent Care throws open its doors to the neighborhood, it brings not just medical services but a promise of reliability, accessibility, and quality care. The grand opening marks a significant milestone in enhancing the healthcare landscape of Lee County, providing a much-needed resource for immediate medical attention.

PrimeHealth Urgent Care's arrival in Lee County signifies more than just a new establishment; it signifies a dedication to the community's well-being, a commitment to convenience, and a promise to be the go-to destination for urgent medical needs.

## Top 5 Things to Know About PrimeHealth Urgent Care

### 1. Providing care for patients aged 6 months and older.

PrimeHealth Urgent Care is here to help people of all ages, from 6 months to seniors. Our team of experienced healthcare professionals provide timely and compassionate care whenever you need it.

### 2. Bilingual Staff.

At PrimeHealth Urgent Care, we have team members who are fluent in both English and Spanish.

### 3. Cost-Effective.

We are committed to providing patients with the best possible healthcare at an affordable price. Compared to a hospital and/or hospital-affiliated urgent care, patients pay a fraction of the cost for comprehensive services at PrimeHealth Urgent Care.

### 4. Extended Hours.

Say goodbye to squeezing in doctor's appointments between work and other commitments. With our extended hours, you can have peace of mind knowing that you can easily access quality healthcare without disrupting your daily routine.

### 5. Walk In, No Appointment Necessary.

At PrimeHealth Urgent Care, your health can't wait, and neither should you. We're your go-to destination for prompt medical care, and the best part? No appointment is necessary.

## Our Services:

- Acute Injuries, Auto Accidents, Workers Compensation
- Allergies, Asthma & Difficulty Breathing
- Colds, Coughs, Fever & Respiratory Infections, RSV
- Covid Testing & Treatment
- Diarrhea, Nausea & Vomiting
- DOT Physicals
- Ear Infections, Ear Lavages, Eye Infections
- EKG Testing & X-RAYS
- Employment Physicals
- Flu Testing & Treatment
- Headaches & Migraines
- Heartburn, Acid Reflux & High Blood Pressure
- Minor Abdominal Pain, Constipation & Hemorrhoids
- Minor Abrasions, Burns, Contusions, Cuts & Scrapes
- Pre-Operative Clearance Evaluations
- School & Sports Physicals, Sprains, Strains, Dislocations
- Sinus Infections, Sore Throat & Strep
- STD Testing & Treatment
- UTI Treatment & Vaginal Infections



### Alfonso L. Espinel, MD

*Dr. Espinel is certified by the American Board of Family Medicine. He attended the Catholic University in Ecuador and the University of Miami - Jackson*

*Memorial Hospital followed by a preliminary General Surgery residency at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, NY and Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, CT. Dr. Espinel completed his Family Medicine residency in Montgomery, AL and has practiced emergency medicine for over 10 years.*

*Dr. Espinel is a member of the American Academy of Family Physicians, American Medical Association, Florida Medical Association, Florida Academy of Family Physicians, Manatee County Medical Society, Parrish Civic Association, Manatee Chamber of Commerce and Gulf Coast Latin Chamber of Commerce. He also holds certifications in Advanced Trauma Life Support, Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support, Pediatric Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support.*

*Dr. Espinel has served as a physician for Turning Points - a non-profit organization dedicated to providing free medical care to the homeless in Manatee County. Dr. Espinel and his staff are committed to providing the most compassionate and quality healthcare to people of all ages.*



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# Navigating Life with Crohn's: A Comprehensive Guide to Medications and Management

Living with Crohn's Disease demands a nuanced and individualized approach to management. In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the specifics of managing Crohn's Disease with a focus on prominent medications, including Cimzia, Delzicol, Entyvio, Humira, Pentasa, and Skyrizi.

## Understanding Crohn's Disease

Crohn's Disease is a chronic inflammatory condition that primarily affects the digestive system. It can lead to a range of symptoms, from abdominal pain and diarrhea to fatigue and weight loss. While the exact cause is unclear, a combination of genetic, environmental, and immune system factors is believed to contribute to its development.

## MEDICATION SPOTLIGHT

### 1. Cimzia (Certolizumab Pegol)

Cimzia, belonging to the class of biologics, specifically targets tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-alpha) to reduce inflammation. Administered via injection, it has shown efficacy in inducing and maintaining remission for some individuals with moderate to severe Crohn's Disease.

### 2. Delzicol (Mesalamine)

Delzicol, an aminosalicylate, works as an anti-inflammatory agent, primarily used for treating mild to moderate symptoms of Crohn's Disease. Typically administered orally, it releases mesalamine in the colon to reduce inflammation and maintain remission.

### 3. Entyvio (Vedolizumab)

Entyvio, a gut-selective biologic, targets the alpha-4 beta-7 integrin to modulate the immune response specifically within the gastrointestinal tract. This makes it a valuable option for individuals who have not responded well to other treatments or those with concerns about systemic effects.

### 4. Humira (Adalimumab)

As one of the most widely prescribed biologics, Humira inhibits TNF-alpha, reducing inflammation and providing relief for those with moderate to severe Crohn's Disease. Administered via injection, it has demonstrated effectiveness in inducing and sustaining remission.



### 5. Pentasa (Mesalamine)

Similar to Delzicol, Pentasa is an aminosalicylate used to treat mild to moderate cases of Crohn's Disease. Administered orally, Pentasa releases mesalamine throughout the entire gastrointestinal tract, targeting inflammation in various parts of the digestive system.

### 6. Skyrizi (Risankizumab)

Skyrizi, originally developed for psoriasis, is being explored as a potential treatment for Crohn's Disease. It works by targeting interleukin-23 (IL-23), a cytokine involved in the inflammatory process. Research on its efficacy and safety in Crohn's Disease is ongoing.

## NAVIGATING TREATMENT PLANS

Effectively managing Crohn's Disease involves collaboration between patients and healthcare providers to create personalized treatment plans. Factors such as the location and severity of inflammation, previous treatment responses, and potential side effects guide the decision-making process.

Regular communication with healthcare professionals is crucial to monitor treatment efficacy and adjust plans as needed. In some cases, a combination of medications or a switch to a different treatment may be recommended to optimize outcomes.

## CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS

While these medications offer significant relief for many individuals, challenges may arise. Possible side effects, the need for regular monitoring, and

the potential for developing antibodies to certain biologics are factors that necessitate careful consideration and ongoing dialogue between patients and healthcare providers.

In the realm of Crohn's Disease management, a tailored and informed approach is key. By understanding the nuances of medications like Cimzia, Delzicol, Entyvio, Humira, Pentasa, and Skyrizi, individuals living with Crohn's can actively engage in their healthcare journey. Regular communication with healthcare professionals, a commitment to treatment adherence, and a holistic approach to well-being empower individuals to navigate the challenges of Crohn's Disease with resilience and hope.

Prescription Hope is a national prescription drug benefit program that offers 1,500 Brand-Name medications at \$60 per medication per month no matter the retail cost.

CHRON'S			
DRUG NAME	Retail Cost	Prescription Hope	Total Savings
Cimzia	\$5,193.00	\$60.00	\$5,133.00
Delzicol	\$192.00	\$60.00	\$132.00
Entyvio	\$7,854.00	\$60.00	\$7,794.00
Humira	\$6,654.00	\$60.00	\$6,594.00
Pentasa	\$103.00	\$60.00	\$43.00
Skyrizi	\$18,953.00	\$60.00	\$18,893.00

 **Prescription Hope**  
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Visit, [www.PrescriptionHope.com](http://www.PrescriptionHope.com) today to see if you qualify.







# Understanding Polycystic Kidney Disease

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

**C**hronic Kidney Disease (CKD) means that the kidneys have become damaged. The common causes of CKD are diabetes mellitus, hypertension, inherited diseases, and nephritis.

Polycystic kidney disease is the fourth leading cause of kidney failure and 600,000 people in the United States have the disorder. Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) affects the kidneys with cysts that grow and are filled with fluid. These cysts can damage the kidneys, and essentially take over the kidney's ability to work properly, especially if there are numerous cysts growing at one time. These cysts can severely reduce kidney function.

Poly cystic kidney disease can also affect other organs in the body including the spleen, ovaries, liver, pancreas, bowels, brain, and heart. Most people don't develop PKD until middle age, and the symptoms can range from mild to severe.

## The primary symptoms of PKD are as follows:

- High blood pressure
- Back or side pain
- Swollen abdomen
- Blood in the urine
- Frequent bladder and/or kidney infections
- Fluttering or pounding chest
- Chest pain
- Headaches

50 to 60 percent of individuals with PKD will develop kidney failure.

## PKD Treatment

Individuals with PKD will need dialysis and a possible kidney transplant. There are also medications that can help treat the disorder and certain diets that will help to prevent the growth of the cysts, which can stop the progression of the disease. PKD can be genetic, so it's best to speak to your physician about your children's health or any planned pregnancies.

## How Can the Progression of Kidney Disease Be Delayed?

1. Keeping blood pressure under 130/80 or if you have diabetes or protein in the urine, under 125/75.
2. Taking certain types of medications called ACE-Inhibitors or angiotensin receptor blockers.

3. If you are diabetic, keeping blood sugars tightly controlled (HbA1c less than 7.0).
4. Avoiding medications that harm your kidneys such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. (NSAIDs). Examples are Motrin, ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil, Naprosyn. A Cox-2 inhibitor called Celebrex is also harmful.
5. Avoiding, if possible, IV contrast dye used for CT scans and heart catheterizations and gadolinium used in MRIs.
6. Controlling your cholesterol.
7. Quit smoking.
8. If overweight, losing weight.
9. Treating anemia if present.
10. Avoiding Fleet phospho-soda (oral) and Fleet enemas for patients in Stage 4 and 5 chronic kidney disease.

## Associates in Nephrology

Associates in Nephrology has been providing comprehensive kidney care and transplant services in Southwest Florida since 1984. Our team of nephrologists, nurse practitioners, and medical assistants are engaged in all aspects of providing the most advanced services for kidney disease and kidney transplants.

## Chronic Kidney Disease Program

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) means that the kidneys have become damaged. The common causes of CKD are diabetes mellitus, hypertension, inherited diseases, and nephritis.

The purpose of the CKD program is to slow the progression of damage to the kidneys and treat associated complications such as hypertension, anemia, and bone disease. If we are unable to arrest the disease process and the kidney damage progresses to end stage renal disease (ESRD), our plan is to manage these complications while preparing patients for renal (kidney) replacement therapy. This therapy can consist of peritoneal dialysis, hemodialysis, home hemodialysis, or kidney transplantation.

Managing these complications and preparing patients for renal replacement therapy is a complex process of visits, treatment, and teaching sessions. Our medical team consists of nephrologists (kidney doctors), nurse practitioners, registered dietitians, nurses, and medical assistants.

## Services Provided

Associates in Nephrology provides treatment for many kidney related conditions, as well as kidney transplant services.

- All forms of Dialysis – Hemodialysis and Peritoneal
- Diabetic Kidney Disorder
- Dietitian Services for Kidney Patients
- Disorders of Blood Chemistry
- Electrolyte Disorders
- Fluid Overload, Edema (swelling)
- Glomerulonephritis
- Hypertension
- Kidney Transplant Services: Patient and Donor Evaluations, Post-Transplant Follow-up Care
- Lupus Nephritis
- Nephrotic Syndrome
- Pyelonephritis
- Polycystic Kidney Disease
- Recurring kidney stones
- Renal Failure
- Renal Insufficiency

We work collaboratively with a patient's primary care physician and specialists to slow the progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD) and prevent or manage complications such as hypertension, anemia, and bone disease. Additionally, our multidisciplinary team of professionals can assist you in arranging a wide array of supportive services and educational programs for patients in all stages of CKD. For patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD), our nephrologists can prepare them for all renal replacement therapies: in-center or home hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and kidney transplant.

## ASSOCIATES IN NEPHROLOGY

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# GUARDING YOUR HEALTH:

## Proven Strategies to Keep the Flu and Cold Viruses at Bay This Season

**A**s the seasons change and temperatures drop, so does our immunity to common viruses like the flu and cold. Protecting yourself becomes paramount, and adopting effective strategies can make a significant difference in keeping these illnesses at bay.

One fundamental practice is maintaining good hygiene. Regular handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds can drastically reduce the risk of viral infections. Incorporating hand sanitizers into your routine, especially in high-traffic public areas, provides an additional layer of defense.

Another key aspect is bolstering your immune system through a balanced diet rich in vitamins and minerals. Foods high in vitamin C, such as citrus fruits, strawberries, and bell peppers, can help support immune function. Additionally, adequate hydration supports overall health and aids in flushing out toxins.

Ensuring sufficient rest is crucial, as fatigue weakens the immune system. Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night to allow your body to recover and rejuvenate. A well-rested body is better equipped to fend off viruses.

Regular exercise contributes not only to overall well-being but also to a robust immune system. Physical activity stimulates the production of immune cells, providing an added layer of protection against viral invaders.

Minimizing stress is another key factor. Chronic stress can suppress the immune system, making you more susceptible to infections. Incorporate stress-relieving activities into your routine, such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or hobbies that bring joy.

Wearing masks in crowded or enclosed spaces can be an effective measure to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. This practice not only protects you but also those around you, particularly in situations where social distancing may be challenging.



Maintaining proper ventilation in indoor spaces is essential. Fresh air helps disperse airborne particles, reducing the concentration of viruses in enclosed environments. Open windows when possible and use air purifiers to enhance indoor air quality.

Stay informed about vaccination opportunities. Getting vaccinated against the flu is a proactive step in preventing its spread. Consult with healthcare professionals to ensure you are up to date on recommended vaccinations.

Practicing good respiratory etiquette is crucial. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your elbow when coughing or sneezing, and dispose of tissues properly. This simple habit can prevent the transmission of viruses through respiratory droplets.

Lastly, stay home when feeling unwell. Avoiding contact with others when you are sick helps prevent the spread of viruses. Take the time to rest and recover, and return to your regular activities once you are no longer contagious.

By incorporating these strategies into your daily routine, you can fortify your defenses against the flu and cold viruses. Consistency is key, and a combination of these practices provides a comprehensive approach to safeguarding your health during the challenging cold and flu season.



**Daniel Stanciu, MD**

Dr. Stanciu is certified in Internal Medicine by the American Board of Physician Specialties as well as the American Board of Internal Medicine and has been practicing medicine since 2003. Dr. Stanciu earned his medical degree from the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Timisoara, Romania. He completed his resident training in internal medicine at Wyckoff Heights Medical Center in Brooklyn New York.

Prior to coming to Axel Health Primary Care, Dr. Stanciu practiced as an internal medicine hospitalist. He is passionate about providing comprehensive, holistic, integrative care. By providing concierge services, Dr. Stanciu has the opportunity to spend an unlimited amount of time with each client to ensure an individualized plan of care that meets each clients' healthcare goals. He is currently working on his functional medicine certification. Dr. Stanciu enjoys educating each client regarding the best approach to health screenings, risk assessments, early treatment, and appropriate interventions. In his free time, Dr. Stanciu is athletic and enjoys multiple sports and spending time with his family.



**Joel Pelissier, MD**

Dr. Pelissier is certified in Internal Medicine by the American Board of Internal Medicine and has been practicing medicine since 1996. Dr. Pelissier completed his residency training at Brookdale University Hospital and Medical Center. He also had the opportunity to study abroad receiving further training in France and Spain. He has been providing medical services to the Fort Myers Community for over 10 years and is passionate about providing comprehensive, integrative care and working with patients to ensure they obtain their healthcare goals. Dr. Pelissier is also a Certified Medical Examiner for the Department of Transportation (DOT). He is passionate about medical education and is a board review question writer for the Society of Hospital Medicine. Dr. Pelissier is fluent in Haitian Creole, French, English, and Spanish. He is also conversational in Portuguese. In his free time Dr. Pelissier enjoys spending time with his daughter, his family, exercising, and reading.



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# Navigating the Festive Season: CBD'S ROLE IN EASING HOLIDAY ANXIETY

**T**he holiday season, filled with joy and celebration, can also bring about heightened stress and anxiety for many. As individuals navigate through the whirlwind of social gatherings, gift shopping, and family obligations, it's not uncommon to feel overwhelmed. Fortunately, an increasingly popular natural remedy, CBD (cannabidiol), has shown promise in helping to manage holiday-related anxiety.

CBD is a non-psychoactive compound derived from the cannabis plant, renowned for its therapeutic properties without inducing a "high." Research suggests that CBD interacts with the endocannabinoid system, a complex network of receptors in the body that plays a crucial role in regulating various physiological processes, including stress and mood.

One of the primary ways CBD aids in alleviating holiday anxiety is through its anxiolytic effects. Studies have indicated that CBD may interact with serotonin receptors in the brain, influencing the release of this neurotransmitter associated with mood regulation. This interaction may contribute to a sense of calm and well-being, providing relief for individuals grappling with the pressures of the holiday season.

Moreover, CBD's anti-inflammatory properties may play a role in managing physical symptoms of stress and anxiety, such as muscle tension and headaches.

By promoting relaxation and reducing inflammation, CBD offers a holistic approach to addressing both the mental and physical aspects of holiday-related stress.

The versatility of CBD products also makes it an accessible option for individuals seeking relief. From tinctures and capsules to gummies and topicals, there are various consumption methods catering to different preferences. These products allow users to incorporate CBD seamlessly into their daily routines, offering a convenient way to manage stress during the hustle and bustle of the holidays.

It's essential to note that while CBD shows promise in supporting anxiety management, individuals should consult with healthcare professionals before incorporating it into their wellness regimen, especially if they are taking other medications. The efficacy of CBD can vary from person to person, and a personalized approach is crucial for achieving optimal results.

As the holiday season approaches, many are turning to CBD as a natural ally in their quest for tranquility. By harnessing the therapeutic potential of this compound, individuals may find a welcome respite from the stressors that often accompany festive gatherings. Whether it's a few drops of CBD oil before a family dinner or a discreet CBD-infused treat during a hectic shopping spree, incorporating CBD into holiday routines could be the key to a more relaxed and enjoyable season for many.



## About Hemp Joi

It all started back in 2019, we set out to change the way the world deals with chronic aches and pains. Having a background in functional medicine and a passion for entrepreneurship, we set out to bring quality products to the greater SW Florida area and beyond.

We were inspired by family members, in the massage therapy industry, that kept getting requests from clients to use CBD oils because of their natural healing properties.

We felt this was a great and underserved need, so we began our search for the most natural most authentic CBD oils and lotions.

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# Digital Dental X-ray Exams Lower Radiation Exposure

By Dr. Ricardo S. Bocanegra, DDS

Computers are a part of daily life. They also play an important role in our dental office. We use computers to track your appointments, treatment details and insurance records. We also use them to capture, store and transmit your dental x-ray images.

Many diseases of the oral cavity (which includes the teeth and surrounding tissues and bone) cannot be seen by the eye alone when the dentist visually examines your mouth. An x-ray exam may help the dentist see what is happening in areas that the eye can't see, such as:

- small areas of decay between the teeth or below fillings
- bone damage from a tooth infection (such as an abscess) or a cyst
- bone loss due to periodontal (gum) disease
- developmental defects
- some types of tumors
- the effects of trauma
- the position of unerupted teeth in children and adults

Finding and treating dental problems at an early stage can save time, money and unneeded discomfort and help prevent more serious health problems. X-ray images may be able to help the dentist detect damage and disease not visible during a regular dental exam.

Our practice uses digital x-rays because they have many benefits over film x-rays. Digital x-ray images can be simpler to make, provide enhanced pictures and can save time for the dental team. They also make it easier for us to show these images to you, our patient.

Digital imaging uses an x-ray machine like that used for traditional dental x-ray images made with film. But instead of using film in a plastic holder, digital images are made using a small electronic sensor that is placed in your mouth to capture the x-ray image.



## There are many benefits to using digital dental x-ray images.

- Digital x-ray images may require less radiation. Even though conventional dental x-rays required a small amount of radiation, digital x-rays use even smaller amounts making them safer and more appealing to those patients concerned with radiation exposure.
- When the digital x-ray image is exposed, it can be sent directly to a computer and viewed right away. For x-ray film to be exposed, a staff member must process it in special chemicals. This takes longer than simply viewing the x-ray on a computer screen.
- Digital x-ray images can be enlarged on the computer screen. This makes it much easier for you and the dentist to see the pictures. Traditional x-ray films are viewed actual size.
- Digital x-ray images can often be corrected without having to make another x-ray exposure.
- The dental office can print or copy your digital x-ray images. They can also be sent electronically to insurance companies, which may help claims get processed faster.
- Digital x-rays are environmentally friendly. They eliminate the need for film and film processing chemicals.

## Dental X-rays and Safety Concerns

The main concern about being exposed to radiation is the risk of getting cancer years later. Dental x-ray exams require very low levels of radiation exposure, which makes the risk of potentially harmful effects very small. Dental X-ray exams have radiation levels equal to 2 to 3 days of naturally occurring background radiation. For example, a set of bitewing x-ray images creates only a small fraction of the radiation you are exposed to when flying on an airplane. Chest and spine x-rays and CT scans have much higher levels of radiation.

Digital dental x-ray tools and techniques are designed to limit the body's exposure to radiation. Dental practices limit the area exposed during a dental x-ray exam by limiting the size of the x-ray beam to the size of the film or sensor being used and by using a leaded apron and thyroid shield that x-rays cannot pass through.

Our office is committed to the safety of our patients and their oral health. We invest in the latest digital x-ray technology to minimize the exposure of radiation to our patients. Dental x-ray exams are an important part of your oral health care, don't put them off because of unwarranted safety concerns. If you have any questions concerning how often dental x-rays exams should be performed or would like more information regarding the safety and benefits of digital x-rays please contact our office at 239-482-8806.

\*source: American Dental Association



Ricardo S. Bocanegra, D.D.S.

## Porto Fino Dental

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# UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF NUTRIENTS IN FLU AND COLD AWARENESS

BY Kasey Cook, RN, Owner

In the realm of wellness, awareness becomes the first line of defense against the seasonal adversaries – flu and cold. As winter approaches, it's essential to recognize the pivotal role that nutrients like vitamin C, zinc, glutathione, and B vitamins play in fortifying the immune system against these common ailments. This knowledge is especially crucial for individuals with chronic autoimmune disorders, where a proactive approach to immune health becomes paramount.

Vitamin C, hailed as the superhero of the immune system, takes center stage in the battle against flu and cold. This antioxidant powerhouse not only supports the production and function of immune cells but also acts as a shield against oxidative stress. Incorporating vitamin C-rich foods like citrus fruits, strawberries, and bell peppers into the diet becomes a tasty strategy for bolstering the body's defenses.

Zinc, another immune-boosting ally, plays a vital role in the development and function of immune cells. Found in foods like meat, nuts, and legumes, zinc contributes to the body's ability to ward off infections. The strategic inclusion of zinc-rich foods in the diet enhances the immune response and aids in the prevention of colds and flu.

Glutathione, often referred to as the body's master antioxidant, is a lesser-known hero in immune support. This tripeptide, naturally produced by the body, helps neutralize free radicals and supports the optimal functioning of immune cells. Foods like



broccoli, spinach, and garlic contribute to glutathione production, promoting a robust immune system.

B vitamins, including B12, play a crucial role in energy metabolism and immune function. Ensuring an adequate intake of B vitamins through a well-balanced diet or supplements contributes to the production of immune cells and antibodies. Fortified cereals, lean meats, and leafy greens are excellent sources of B vitamins, enhancing the body's resilience against seasonal challenges.

For individuals with chronic autoimmune disorders, maintaining a vigilant immune system is of utmost importance. These conditions often involve an overactive or dysfunctional immune response, making them more susceptible to infections. Consulting with healthcare professionals to develop a personalized nutrition plan that addresses specific nutrient needs can be instrumental in managing immune health for those with autoimmune disorders.

Enter **vitamin IV therapy** – a promising avenue for boosting immune responses in individuals with chronic autoimmune disorders. This intravenous approach delivers a potent combination of vitamins

directly into the bloodstream, ensuring optimal absorption and effectiveness. This targeted therapy can be tailored to address the unique nutritional requirements of individuals with autoimmune disorders, providing a boost to their immune system and supporting overall well-being.

In conclusion, flu and cold awareness extend beyond recognizing symptoms and preventive measures. Understanding the role of essential nutrients like vitamin C, zinc, glutathione, and B vitamins equips individuals with proactive tools to fortify their immune systems. This knowledge is especially crucial for those with chronic autoimmune disorders, where a nuanced approach to immune health is essential. The advent of vitamin IV therapy further opens doors to personalized and effective immune support, ushering in a new era of holistic well-being.

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# VERTEBRAL COMPRESSION FRACTURES:

## Understanding Their Impact on Health

By Gregory Cannarsa, MD, Fellowship-Trained Neurosurgeon

**V**ertebral compression fractures (VCFs) are a prevalent yet often overlooked health issue affecting more than 700,000 Americans yearly, especially the elderly population. These fractures occur when the vertebral body in the spine collapses due to weakness in the bone, which can lead to severe back pain, reduced mobility, and a significant decline in quality of life. Understanding the impact of VCFs is crucial for effective management and prevention of long-term complications.

### The Nature of Vertebral Compression Fractures

VCFs are most commonly caused by osteoporosis, a disease characterized by decreased bone density and strength. They can also result from traumatic injuries or metastatic diseases. The spine's vertebrae become so porous and weak that they can fracture under the normal pressure of daily activities, sometimes with minimal or no apparent cause.

### Symptoms and Diagnosis

The primary symptom of a VCF is sharp, sudden back pain. It may be exacerbated by standing or walking and relieved by lying down. Other symptoms include height loss, deformity, and limited spinal mobility. Diagnosis typically involves a thorough medical history, physical examination, and imaging tests like X-rays, CT scans, and MRIs to confirm the presence and extent of the fracture.

### Impact on Physical Health

- **Chronic Pain and Disability:** The most immediate impact of a VCF is pain, which can become chronic and debilitating. This pain significantly limits mobility and interferes with daily activities, often leading to disability.
- **Spinal Deformity:** Multiple VCFs can cause changes in the shape of the spine, such as a stooped posture or kyphosis. This deformity can further exacerbate pain and impair function.
- **Height Loss:** VCFs can cause a loss in body height due to the collapse of the vertebral bodies. This physical change can impact self-esteem and body image.
- **Reduced Lung Function:** Severe spinal deformity can compress the abdomen and thorax, reducing lung capacity and leading to breathing difficulties.

### Impact on Mental and Emotional Health

The chronic pain and physical limitations associated with VCFs can lead to significant mental and emotional distress. Patients often experience depression, anxiety, and a sense of isolation due to their reduced ability to engage in social activities and maintain independence.

### Increased Risk of Further Fractures

Once a vertebral compression fracture occurs, the risk of subsequent fractures significantly increases. Each additional fracture can lead to a worsening spiral of pain, disability, and further decline in overall health. This risk escalation can be attributed to several factors:

- **Structural Compromise:** A VCF inherently weakens the structural integrity of the spine. Once one vertebra has fractured, the biomechanical load is redistributed to adjacent vertebrae, increasing their vulnerability to fractures.
- **Decreased Mobility and Muscle Weakness:** Following a VCF, patients often experience decreased mobility and muscle weakness due to pain and fear of movement. This reduction in physical activity can lead to further weakening of the spinal muscles and bones, compounding the risk of additional fractures.
- **Impact of Chronic Pain:** Chronic pain from a VCF can lead to a sedentary lifestyle, further exacerbating osteoporosis and muscle weakness. Additionally, the use of pain medications, particularly opioids, can affect balance and coordination, increasing the risk of falls and subsequent fractures.
- **Psychological Factors:** The fear of experiencing another fracture can lead to a condition known as "fracture anxiety". This anxiety may cause patients to limit their activities, which, while intended to protect the spine, can actually weaken it further due to lack of exercise and movement.

### Economic and Healthcare Burden

VCFs pose a substantial economic burden, both for the individuals affected and the healthcare system. The costs include medical treatment for the fractures, need for multiple repeat imaging studies, long-term pain management, and indirect costs related to lost productivity and the need for caregiving.

### Treatment Approaches

- **Conservative Management:** This includes pain medication, bed rest, and physical therapy. While conservative management can help relieve symptoms, it does not address the underlying vertebral collapse. As well, pain medications such as opioids can have significant side effects if taken over a long period.
- **Procedural Intervention:** Procedures like kyphoplasty are minimally invasive, stabilize the fracture, alleviate pain, and can be performed in the office setting in less than an hour. These procedures involve injecting bone cement into the fractured vertebra to restore its height, stabilize the fracture, and relieve pain.

**Osteoporosis Management:** Treating the underlying osteoporosis is crucial to prevent further fractures. This can involve medications, dietary changes, and lifestyle modifications to strengthen bones.

### Prevention and Awareness

Prevention of VCFs involves managing osteoporosis and reducing fall risks, especially in the elderly. Regular bone density tests, calcium and vitamin D supplementation, and exercises to improve strength and balance are essential preventive measures.

### Conclusion

Vertebral compression fractures significantly impact an individual's health, leading to chronic pain, physical deformity, and a decline in mental well-being. These fractures also pose a significant economic burden. Effective management involves not only treating the fracture with minimally invasive kyphoplasty but also addressing the underlying causes, such as osteoporosis, to prevent future fractures. Raising awareness about VCFs, their impact, and the importance of preventive measures is crucial for improving patient outcomes and quality of life.

The **Compression Fracture Clinic**, a service of Apex Brain & Spine, was specifically created and designed for the specialized care and treatment of vertebral compression fractures. Focused on minimally-invasive kyphoplasty, the Compression Fracture Clinic is certified and licensed by the Florida Department of Health. Patients are able to come into a comfortable office setting, have their fracture treated while under moderate sedation, recover in a private room, and go home within an hour of the procedure being completed. To learn more or to schedule an appointment for you or your loved one with a compression fracture, call 239-422-2739.



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# The Polyvagal Approach: A Holistic Pathway in Treating Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder

**W**hile attending the Global Exchange Health Conference in Orlando recently, a recurrent theme centered around the body's response to trauma. What caught my attention was how trauma was broadly defined as events, whether "major/life-threatening or an accumulation of everyday occurrences," ultimately resulting in one feeling unsafe. The body's response leads to various manifestations encompassing the mind, body, and soul. I've found that trauma, understood in this sense, is often at the core of most mental health and substance use disorders.

Listening to sections of talks brought me back to my days as a medical student studying physiology and anatomy. The focus on the 10th cranial nerve, the vagus nerve, was particularly engaging. I found it enlightening to "relearn" the functional application of the body's response to trauma through this nerve's reactions to various stimuli.

The vagus nerve is often referred to as "the information highway" of the body, running from the brainstem and connecting to virtually every organ. It plays a significant role in the autonomic nervous system, comprising the sympathetic system, which reacts to perceived danger, and the parasympathetic system, which restores the body to a state of calmness or baseline.

Trauma deeply impacts the body's parasympathetic response, disrupting the intricate balance of the autonomic nervous system. In instances of trauma, the body's natural response, governed by the parasympathetic

nervous system, can become dysregulated. This dysregulation often leads to hyperarousal or dissociation, manifesting as anxiety, panic attacks, and/or numbing responses.

At its core, Polyvagal Theory, proposed by Dr. Stephen Porges, elucidates the complex interplay between the autonomic nervous system, social behavior, and emotional regulation. Porges proposed that individuals' bodies automatically and subconsciously read and interpret signals for potential dangers. If the body perceives an ongoing dangerous or unsafe setting, maladaptations occur for survival. This theory highlights three evolutionary stages of the nerve's function, delineating how these stages correlate with different states of social engagement, fight-or-flight responses, and shutdown responses. Focusing on the role of the vagus nerve in regulating physiological states and its impact on our emotional and behavioral patterns helps in understanding and treating various mental health issues, stress responses, and trauma-related experiences.

Polyvagal theory-based exercises aim to optimize the regulation of the body's physiological state. One main goal is to shift the body's learned response from protective/survival mode to one that allows mobilization and openness to social engagement. Creating a feeling of safety and security allows a person to return to homeostasis and balance within their surroundings and life. Many exercises are based on methods to "strengthen the vagus nerve," enhancing the body's automatic response and enabling a quicker return to a

state of calm following an unfamiliar or stressful situation. Techniques include deep breathing, controlled exhalation, applying cold water to the body, mindful physical activity, vocalization, recalling pleasant memories, engaging in playful experiences, being in a calm and soothing environment, and safe and sound protocol sessions.

As a self-proclaimed forever student, it was a wonderful "treat" for me to immerse myself in a conference that recognized the significance of mental health, wellness, and addiction. Recently released data from SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) underscores the intricate connection between mental health and substance use disorders, noting that in 2022, approximately 9.5 million adults had both a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder in the United States. Holistic treatment approaches, combined with evidence-based therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), offer a comprehensive pathway to healing and recovery. These approaches are well respected in the therapeutic community to address target symptoms. However, with an appreciation for the holistic nature of the disease process, the inclusion of approaches such as Polyvagal Theory provides an opportunity to address the underlying nervous system dysregulation, often hindering recovery and contributing to the suffering and pain that many experience.

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# WHAT IS THE MIND DIET?

In this article we focus specifically on the impact a potentially revolutionary nutrition plan called the MIND diet can have on Alzheimer's prevention for seniors.

The possibility of losing our cognitive abilities can be even scarier than the loss of physical abilities as we age. There are an estimated 5.5 million Americans with Alzheimer's, affecting millions more people caregiving for loved ones affected by the devastating disease, with no cure at the present moment. Therefore, many seniors and their families are wondering what they can do to be proactive and prevent the onset of Alzheimer's.

For the purposes of this article, we're going to focus specifically on the impact a potentially revolutionary nutrition plan called the MIND diet can have on Alzheimer's prevention for seniors.

The name MIND diet surprisingly isn't in reference to the diet's supposed ability to improve cognitive functioning. Rather, it stands for Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay. The MIND diet meal plan is essentially a combination of two popular diets, the Mediterranean and DASH, with an emphasis on brain foods shown to improve cognitive functioning.

## HISTORY OF THE MIND DIET

Dr. Martha Clare Morris, an expert in nutritional epidemiology at Rush University Medical Center in Chicago, introduced the MIND diet meal plan in 2015. Her studies on the diet tested and compared the effects

of the Mediterranean, DASH, and MIND diets in adults aged 58-98 years. The study found that diligently sticking to all three diets was associated with a reduced risk for Alzheimer's disease, but only the MIND diet showed lower risk even with moderate adherence. Another study showed that participants who stuck to the MIND diet lowered their risk for Alzheimer's by 54%. In addition to the MIND diet's effect on Alzheimer's prevention, Dr. Morris and her colleagues recently studied the diet's effect on the cognitive decline of stroke survivors.

Those in the study who were highly adherent to the MIND diet had substantially slower rates of cognitive decline than people who didn't follow the diet.

Given the newness of the MIND diet meal plan and relatively few scientific studies conducted, scientists still need to do more research, but the early results are certainly very promising. Some have even coined the phrase "Alzheimer's diet" when referencing the MIND diet meal plan, and US News and World Report ranked the MIND diet #5 in its list of Best Diets in 2018.

## FOODS TO EMPHASIZE

If you choose to follow the MIND diet for yourself or integrate it into the meal plan of a senior loved one, here are the brain foods you'll want to emphasize and recommended number of servings/week:

**Leafy greens (spinach, mixed greens, kale):** aim for at least 6 servings of leafy greens per week. In addition to cognitive benefits, leafy greens are high in vitamin K and many other essential nutrients.

**Other veggies:** in addition to leafy greens, try to eat one additional serving of vegetables per day.

**Berries:** aim for two or more servings a week. Smoothies are great for seniors to get their weekly servings of berries.

**Nuts:** at least five servings per week. Nuts are also a great source of protein and healthy fats.

**Wholegrains:** three or more servings a day. Common wholegrains include brown rice and whole-wheat pasta.

**Oliveoil:** replace butter with olive oil, and use it as your primary oil for cooking. Keep in mind that when sautéing, it's better to use standard olive oil than extra virgin olive oil.

**Wine:** a glass of wine, particularly red, a day has been proven to have cognitive benefits.

**Fish:** at least one serving per week. Salmon is especially beneficial and is loaded with Omega-3 fatty acids.

## FOODS TO AVOID

Some foods to avoid include:

**Red meat:** aim for less than four servings per week, and choose leaner cuts. Think tenderloin, not rib eye.

**Butter and margarine:** less than a tablespoon daily.

**Cheese:** less than one serving per week.

**Added sugar:** avoid or limit unhealthy desserts, no more than five servings per week. Instead of pastries and ice cream, try dark chocolate.

**Fast food:** it's best to eliminate fast food altogether because it's typically loaded with sugar and sodium.

One of the big benefits of the MIND diet meal plan is that it's not a "fad diet" and doesn't require you to eliminate lots of foods from your diet. Rather, it calls for moderation of unhealthy foods and emphasizing healthy brain foods. This makes the MIND diet easier to follow for seniors than more extreme nutrition plans like the Paleo diet or Vegan diet.

For any questions, please contact your local Chefs For Seniors Office:

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# Why Physical Therapy is an Important Part of Orthopedic Care

**A**fter surgery or a traumatic, degenerative or over-use injury to a bone, muscle, joint, ligament or tendon, you need to recover flexibility, mobility, and strength.

Absent a medical emergency and depending upon the nature of the problem, your orthopedic physician or surgeon may recommend a course of physical therapy to help you recover more quickly and improve function.

Physical therapy as a profession is responsible for restoring function and improving your quality of life in the home and community. Physical therapists and physical therapist assistants who specialize in orthopedic medicine, such as those who work with the orthopedic surgeons at Orthopedic Specialists of SW Florida, are especially well-suited to guide you through the recovery process.

## Moving Forward

While there are many different techniques, one of the most important steps in the healing process is to get you moving again as soon as possible.

When patients experience an orthopedic injury, key elements of their musculoskeletal system are disrupted, which can result in pain and ultimately limit their ability to perform even basic daily tasks.

Much of the physical therapy we prescribe is targeted at "re-balancing" your musculoskeletal system to help you better perform functions that matter to you.



We always look at the most conservative treatment available to help our patients. That may include medications, injections, splinting and physical or occupational therapy. Only then do we consider other options such as surgery.

## Taking that First Step

Your physical therapist will perform a comprehensive evaluation and get the most detailed information available on the underlying cause of your presenting complaint. It's also important to hear, in your words how your problem impacts your daily life.

Your physical therapist will then develop a treatment plan based on these findings, which will be modified as you respond to treatment. This usually consists of specific exercises, hands-on manual treatments, and the control of inflammation and pain.

Physical therapy is discontinued once a) your goals have been met; b) you have reached a plateau or the maximum medical improvement; or c) your condition does not improve. Typically, you will go back to

see your Orthopedic physicians or surgeon after finishing a course of treatment, so further care plans may be developed if necessary.

For patients who undergo orthopedic surgery, it's highly likely physical therapy will be a part of your post-operative recovery. Physical therapy also has its place before a major orthopedic surgery such as hip and knee replacements.

Once we've "fixed" your issue surgically, your physical therapist will help ensure you are progressing as expected while protecting the healing process.

Orthopedic Specialists of SW Florida strives to provide exceptional quality of care to patients with musculoskeletal needs. Our staff of fellowship-trained physicians remains at the forefront of orthopedic medicine, and serves as an educational resource for the Southwest Florida community.



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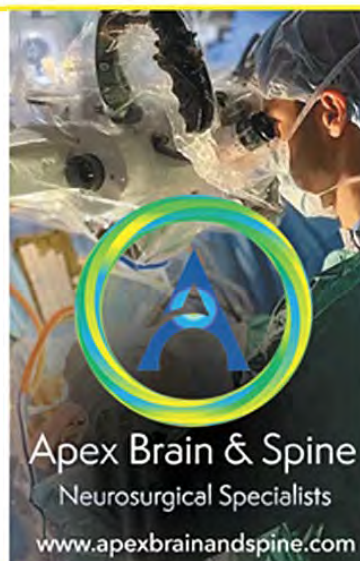
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# Liver Health and Therapeutic Agents

By Dr. Eric Pearson, Chief Medical Officer, Vetirus Pharmaceuticals

**Y**our liver health may not be top of mind, but the minute it malfunctioned there wouldn't be much else on your mind. Cirrhosis, in which liver cells are replaced with scar tissue, can prevent your liver from doing its critical jobs. So can nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, a fast-growing epidemic among the obese, which can lead to cirrhosis. If your liver stopped working, toxins would accumulate, you couldn't digest your food and medications would never leave your body.

In fact — you can't live a week without your liver. "It's an organ you could easily trash if you don't take good care of it," says Rohit Satoskar, MD, of the MedStar Georgetown Transplant Institute. "And once you trash it, it's gone." Your liver is about the size of a football and sits under your lower ribcage on the right side. It has several important things to do. It helps clean your blood by getting rid of harmful chemicals that your body makes. It makes a liquid called bile, which helps you break down fat from food. And it also stores sugar called glucose, which gives you a quick energy boost when you need it.

There's nothing tricky about keeping your liver in good shape. It's all about a healthy lifestyle, says Ray Chung, MD, medical director of the liver transplant program at Massachusetts General Hospital. "Taking care of your liver is far more about avoiding what's bad than it is about eating or drinking things that are particularly nourishing to the liver," he says.

The liver is your body's largest internal organ, weighing between 3 and 5 pounds. Your liver is located on the right side of your upper body, below the lungs, taking up most of the space in your rib cage. The gallbladder, which stores bile made in the liver, is found tucked under your liver. Your liver is made up of two separate sections, or lobes: the larger right lobe and the smaller left lobe. These two lobes are separated by tissue which anchors your liver in place.

Unlike the lungs or heart, we cannot feel our liver working. Your liver is an incredibly hard-working organ with more than 500 different vital functions. Only your brain has more functions than the liver. Many of the liver's functions are related to your metabolism. These metabolic functions allow you to convert food to energy, break down food to basic building blocks needed by your body and eliminate waste.



## The liver...

- Produces bile
- Produces proteins for blood plasma
- Produces cholesterol and special proteins to help carry fats through the body
- Converts unused glucose into glycogen for storage
- Regulates levels of amino acids in blood
- Stores iron processed from hemoglobin
- Converts poisonous ammonia, made during digestion, to urea
- Processes drugs and other poisonous substances to your body
- Regulates blood clotting (or our ability to stop bleeding)
- Fights infections by making immune factors and removing bacteria from the bloodstream
- Removes bilirubin from red blood cells

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is one of the most common chronic liver diseases. Astaxanthin, the active ingredient in Mitopak is a carotenoid, and beneficial effects of astaxanthin, including anti-oxidative, anti-inflammatory, and anti-tumor activity, have been identified.

Studies have shown that most carotenes have anti-aging, free radical scavenging, antioxidant, and anti-cancer effects, and have been widely used in the fields of medicine, food, cosmetics, and feed. Astaxanthin is the only carotenoid to penetrate the blood-brain and retinal barriers. It is frequently used as an antioxidant to treat brain injury and cardiovascular diseases and has been extensively studied in clinical practice. In addition, astaxanthin has shown anti-cancer effects in many cancers, including liver cancer, colon cancer, bladder cancer, oral cancer, and leukemia. In addition, many animal experiments have proved that astaxanthin plays an important role in regulating sugar metabolism, improving immunity and improving motor function.

## The Role of Astaxanthin in Liver Diseases

Astaxanthin has been used in the prevention and treatment of a variety of systemic diseases in vivo due to its various biological activities. In recent years, researchers have confirmed that astaxanthin plays an important role in preventing acute liver injury, alleviating insulin resistance and NAFLD, liver fibrosis and liver cancer.

## Liver Fibrosis

Liver fibrosis is a key link in the deterioration of chronic liver diseases such as viral hepatitis and fatty liver. Without effective intervention, 75–80% of these diseases can develop into cirrhosis, which seriously endangers human health. The reversibility of these factors also provides an important research target for the reversal of hepatic fibrosis. The mechanism of liver fibrosis is complex, involving the regulation of histopathology, cytology, cytokines, and their molecular levels. Mitopak can potentially prevent and treat liver diseases by inhibiting inflammation and improving glycolipid metabolism at the mitochondrial level.

*Vetirus Pharmaceuticals is based in Naples, Florida and London, England and are focused on searching the world for developing Natural Biologics to advance their mission of changing the way we age in both human and veterinary medicine with purity and precision.*

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# DEFENDING FRAGILE BEGINNINGS: RSV Infections in Newborns, the Crucial Role of Nirsevimab and Synagis, and Maternal Vaccines for a Safer Start

By Dr. Michel Saaloukeh - MD, FAAP, IBCLC

**R**espiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) poses a substantial risk to the health of newborns and infants, with premature infants being particularly vulnerable to its effects. Understanding the impact of RSV on these delicate lives is vital, and recent medical breakthroughs provide hope through preventive measures such as Nirsevimab (Beyfortus) and Synagis. Additionally, the administration of vaccines to pregnant mothers between 32 and 36 weeks of gestational age (GA) emerges as a proactive strategy to shield babies from RSV-related complications in their early months of life.

## The Menace of RSV in Newborns and Premature Infants

RSV is a pervasive respiratory virus that often causes mild symptoms in adults but can lead to severe respiratory distress in infants. Premature infants, born before completing the full term, face a higher risk of complications due to their underdeveloped immune and respiratory systems. RSV infections in these tiny warriors can result in bronchiolitis and pneumonia, putting their lives in jeopardy.

## Nirsevimab (Beyfortus) - A Revolutionary Shield

In the quest to protect premature infants from RSV, Nirsevimab emerges as a groundbreaking preventive measure. This long-acting antibody offers a paradigm shift in RSV prophylaxis. Administered as a single injection, Nirsevimab provides

extended protection against severe lower respiratory tract infections caused by RSV. Clinical trials have showcased its effectiveness in reducing the risk of RSV-associated complications, marking it as a promising advancement in safeguarding the health of premature infants.

## Synagis - A Tried and True Guardian

While Nirsevimab brings innovation to the forefront, Synagis has long been a stalwart in RSV prevention for premature infants. This antibody preparation is administered monthly during the RSV season, acting as a shield against the virus. Synagis has proven efficacy in reducing the severity of RSV-related illnesses, providing a well-established defense for premature infants during their most vulnerable period.

## Maternal Vaccination: Paving the Way for Early Immunity

The defense against RSV doesn't start after birth; it begins before a baby takes its first breath. Pregnant mothers can play a pivotal role in protecting their infants by receiving RSV vaccinations between 32 and 36 weeks of gestational age. These vaccinations contribute to the transfer of protective antibodies from the mother to the unborn child, enhancing the infant's immune defenses against RSV during the crucial early months of life.

## A Comprehensive Approach to Early Protection

The synergy between Nirsevimab, Synagis, and maternal vaccinations creates a comprehensive approach to shield newborns from the potentially devastating effects of RSV. Nirsevimab's revolutionary single-dose administration offers prolonged protection, potentially reducing the need for frequent interventions. Synagis, with its established track record, continues to be a reliable ally in the fight against RSV. Simultaneously, maternal vaccinations lay the groundwork for a robust immune system in infants right from the start.

In the evolving landscape of neonatal care, the battle against RSV infections in newborns, especially premature infants, is witnessing significant strides. Nirsevimab and Synagis provide valuable tools in this fight, offering both immediate and extended protection. The inclusion of maternal vaccinations adds a proactive layer to the defense, underscoring the importance of prenatal care in shaping a resilient start for infants. As these preventive measures continue to advance, they promise a safer and healthier beginning for the most vulnerable members of our society.

*Dr. Michel Saaloukeh, MD, FAAP, IBCLC, is board certified in Pediatrics, Neonatology and lactation. Trained at University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre UPMC, has been practicing for over 15 years in the field of Pediatrics and Neonatology. Dr. Saaloukeh is the medical director of a general pediatrics practice, Comprehensive Pediatric and Neonatal Clinic in Southwest Florida. He is IBCLC certified and is committed to providing breast feeding support to mothers and infants after discharge home from the hospital. With a focus on infants who graduate from the NICU, and their special needs, he is dedicated in providing support following discharge home.*

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# It's A Wonderful Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

**E**very year around this time the old classic Christmas movies start coming on television. It is easy to start a conversation at work by simply asking, "So, what's your favorite Christmas movie?" Mine is Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*.

Some of you might be able to relate to George Bailey this holiday season—lost, confused, stressed out, or at the end of your rope. Perhaps you are even thinking that it would be much easier to die than to go on living as you are.

Perhaps for you life isn't a joy right now. Maybe the debts are high and funds are low. It might even be difficult for you to even enjoy your family as you know you should. You may be wondering, "Is it really possible to live a wonderful life?"

I think the idea of a wonderful life is not that you can attain a wonderful life, but that it is an attitude that results from having certain issues settled in your life.

Truthfully, no one's life is wonderful—even Christ's life was filled with pain, hurt, loneliness, rejection, and sorrow. It is your attitude that determines how you "feel" about your life. You are the one responsible for settling the issues in your life and having an attitude of wonderment. So, what are the issues that need to be settled?

The first issue is to determine **what you are going to love**. To have a wonderful life, you start by having an

attitude of love toward God and others. I say this first because where you choose to direct your love is going to affect every other area of your life. Love is a decision we make to place a high value on someone or something.

God loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Jesus died to prove how much He loved us. God desires more than anything else to have a loving relationship with His creation. We were created to love God and other people. Maybe this Christmas it would be good for you to find a person or family in need and help them by buying some food or gifts. If you want to feel loved... start by loving others.

The second issue to settle is... **how am I going to live?** To have a wonderful life, you need an attitude of joy. This attitude deals with how you look at life. Are you a positive person or a negative person? If you are a person with joy, it simply means that you are cheerful. Over 350 times the Bible talks about us having a spirit of joy or rejoicing.

Joy isn't a feeling that is produced only when good things happen. Joy is the attitude by which we look at the things that happen to us and then respond in a way that lets everyone know we are trusting in God's grace in spite of our circumstances. Remember the disciples in the Bible... they had many negative things happen to them, yet in spite of it all, they had joy.

I've heard it said that you don't feel your way into an action but rather act your way into a feeling. If you want to be a joyful person... start acting joyful around others and you will most likely begin to genuinely feel joyful.

The third issue to settle is... **who are you going to help?** If you want to have a wonderful life, you've got to get beyond serving yourself, and start serving others. Isn't that the lesson that George Bailey learned? His life was wonderful because of all the people he was able to help in his lifetime.

When Clarence showed him what life would have been like had he never been born he realized that he really was making a difference in the world! His life did have purpose! Mr. Potter only cared about making money. Violet only cared about pleasure. But George understood a greater truth: life is better when you are working to make other people's lives better.

Understanding these things can make all the difference in the world. You are not here to fall in love with money and things—you're here to love God. You're not here to point out all the things that are wrong with the world—you're here to spread the joy that God has placed in your heart. You're not here to serve yourself—you're here to serve God and others—thus making a huge difference in the world.



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*Tim Neptune is the lead pastor of Venture Church Naples, located on the campus of Florida South Western State College in Naples, FL.*

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