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Health & Wellness MAGAZINE

January 2024

Lee Edition - Monthly

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Facial Rejuvenation

Garramone Plastic Surgery turns up the heat on non-invasive facial rejuvenation procedures.

RALPH R. GARRAMONE, MD, FACS

Plastic Surgery has a unique perspective on enhancing appearances. Although Dr. Garramone's expertise is facial, breast, and body contouring surgery, he also provides preventative solutions for skin issues such as wrinkles, age spots, and loss of elasticity. Having treated thousands of patients since the early 2000s, he helps people look and feel their best.

"Less invasive procedures can provide excellent results for those experiencing early signs of aging," Dr. Garramone says. "I perform just as many non-surgical facial rejuvenation procedures as surgical ones."

Leveraging his extensive technical expertise, he performs a variety of inventive, noninvasive facial rejuvenation techniques that cater to the fast-paced lives of patients who don't have time for an extended recovery.

Dr. Garramone says these non-invasive treatments can be used with injectable fillers for even more impressive results. One such offering is Sofwave™, which employs ultrasound energy to promote collagen production and to lift and tighten skin anywhere on the body. There's also Morpheus8, which combines microneedling and radio-frequency technology, and a thread lift, which



involves placing sutures to lift and elevate the brow, face, and neck using local anesthesia.

"Each treatment is tailored to the individual and based on age, gender, skin type, and color," explains Dr. Garramone. "I want to see the patient, feel their skin, and understand what bothers them." He also prioritizes patient comfort to ensure maximum results, so his treatments may include a topical anesthetic, relaxant medication, cold air, or a coolant tip to counteract the heat.

LIFE HAPPENS

No one is immune to the visible signs of aging.

Beginning in their 40s, patients may see a loss of collagen and skin elasticity at the cellular level, which eventually causes drooping of skin on the cheeks and neck. Elasticity depletion from smiling and other facial expressions also results in fine lines and wrinkles. As people age, Dr. Garramone says, collagen restoration becomes more difficult. Administering heat or injury, such as the fine needle holes from Morpheus8 to the skin, starts collagen healing, akin to getting a finger cut.

"As patients reach the point where minimally invasive procedures no longer provide the desired improvements, they may become candidates for surgical procedures, like facelifts or necklifts," says Dr. Garramone, who was named one of America's Best Plastic Surgeon for Breast Augmentation and Rhinoplasty by *Newsweek* in 2023.

Often performed together as the two areas age in tandem, face, and neck lifts can help remedy volume loss through fat transfer. Additionally, Dr. Garramone may combine more minor ancillary procedures with more extensive ones, like upper or lower eyelid surgery and brow or lip lifts, which shorten the length of the upper lip and rejuvenate the mouth.

"Patients have a wide range of options for treatment that will fit not only their desire to look younger but also their lifestyle," he says. "It's a privilege to serve them."

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The Intersection of Diet, Nutrition, and Vascular Health: Nourishing Arteries and Veins for Vitality

A healthy diet and proper nutrition serve as cornerstone elements not just for overall well-being but also for the intricate network of arteries and veins within the body. The impact of what we consume extends far beyond physical appearance, significantly influencing the health and resilience of our cardiovascular system. Understanding this connection sheds light on the critical role diet and nutrition play in preserving vascular health.

The Role of Diet in Vascular Health

A diet rich in nutrients, particularly antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, acts as a shield against oxidative stress and inflammation. These elements form the backbone of a diet that supports vascular health. Foods high in antioxidants, such as berries, leafy greens, and nuts, combat free radicals, reducing the risk of vascular damage and promoting optimal vein function.

Nutritional Choices and Vein Integrity

The intricate web of veins throughout our bodies demands specific nutrients for maintenance. Essential vitamins like C and E aid in collagen synthesis, essential for vascular elasticity and strength. Omega-3 fatty acids found in fish or flax-seeds contribute to reducing inflammation, thus supporting vein health by decreasing the risk of clot formation.

The Culprits: Poor Diet and Vascular Damage

Conversely, a poor diet high in processed foods, saturated fats, and excess sugars can provoke inflammation and oxidative stress, contributing to endothelial dysfunction—the initial stage of vascular damage. This dysfunction compromises vein elasticity and function, paving the way for conditions like varicose veins or even more severe complications like deep vein thrombosis.

Balancing Act: Crafting a Vascular-Friendly Diet

Crafting a vascular-friendly diet involves a delicate balance. A Mediterranean-style diet, abundant in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins, offers a blueprint for supporting vascular health. Incorporating foods rich in flavonoids, such as citrus fruits, dark chocolate, and green tea, further fortifies arteries and veins by enhancing blood flow and reducing inflammation.



Hydration and Vascular Health

Beyond solid foods, hydration plays a pivotal role in arterial health. Water consumption ensures proper blood viscosity, aiding in smooth circulation and reducing the strain on arteries. Additionally, limiting alcohol and caffeine intake helps maintain hydration levels and prevents dehydration, a factor that can stress the vascular system.

Lifestyle Synergy: Exercise and Nutrition

Physical activity complements a nutritious diet by enhancing blood flow, thereby reducing the risk of venous issues. Coupled with proper nutrition, regular exercise supports optimal weight management, reducing undue pressure on veins and preventing venous insufficiency.

The Impact of Specific Diets on Vein Health

Several popular diets influence vascular health differently. For instance, the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet emphasizes nutrient-dense foods, benefiting overall cardiovascular health, including arteries. Similarly, the plant-based diet, rich in plant foods and low in processed items, fosters an environment conducive to healthy arteries.

Practical Steps Towards Vascular-Friendly Eating

Implementing changes in dietary habits doesn't have to be overwhelming. Simple steps, such as swapping processed snacks for nuts and fruits,

incorporating leafy greens into meals, and opting for whole grains over refined carbohydrates, gradually steer one toward a vascular-friendly diet.

Conclusion: Nurturing Veins for Lifelong Health

Diet and nutrition wield immense power in shaping vascular health. Embracing a balanced diet comprising nutrient-rich foods, adequate hydration, and mindful eating habits offers a roadmap toward preserving arterial and venous integrity and reducing the risk of vascular issues. Through informed dietary choices and a holistic approach to nutrition, we pave the way for resilient, vibrant veins, ensuring a healthier, more fulfilling life.



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WHY PRIORITIZING A HEARING SCREENING IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR WELL-BEING

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

As the calendar turns anew, embracing the opportunities of a fresh year often involves setting resolutions focused on health and wellness. Among the crucial yet overlooked aspects of well-being, the importance of a hearing screening stands out significantly.

In a world that constantly bombards us with sounds, our hearing health can easily be taken for granted. Yet, the significance of ensuring optimal hearing capability cannot be overstated. It's not merely about the ability to detect sounds but encompasses our overall mental, emotional, and social well-being.

Starting the new year with a hearing screening can be a proactive step towards preserving and improving our auditory abilities. Many are unaware that hearing loss often occurs gradually, and its signs might not be immediately noticeable. This makes regular screenings essential, especially for individuals above 50, as age-related hearing loss is common. However, even younger individuals can be affected by various factors like exposure to loud noises, genetic predispositions, or underlying health conditions.

The impact of untreated hearing loss extends far beyond difficulty in hearing. It can lead to social isolation, affecting relationships, job performance, and mental health. Research suggests a strong correlation between untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline, including conditions like dementia. By addressing hearing issues early through screenings, one can mitigate these potential risks and maintain a higher quality of life.

Moreover, the technological advancements in hearing aids and assistive devices have revolutionized the way individuals manage hearing loss. Early detection through screenings enables timely interventions, facilitating access to these cutting-edge solutions. Modern hearing devices are discreet, equipped with innovative features that enhance sound quality, and can be tailored to individual needs, providing a renewed sense of confidence and connection to the world.



However, the societal stigma surrounding hearing loss often deters individuals from seeking screenings or utilizing assistive technologies. Embracing a culture of proactive hearing care can break down these barriers, encouraging people to prioritize their auditory health just as they do their vision or dental care. Normalizing routine hearing screenings as part of an annual health check-up can significantly contribute to this cultural shift.

Furthermore, businesses and workplaces play a pivotal role in fostering a hearing-friendly environment. Encouraging and facilitating employee screenings can enhance productivity and foster inclusivity, creating a more supportive workplace for individuals with hearing impairments.

This new year, amidst setting fitness goals and career aspirations, let's not overlook the significance of our auditory health. Making a resolution

to prioritize a hearing screening can be the gateway to a world of improved communication, enhanced cognitive abilities, and enriched relationships.

In conclusion, a hearing screening isn't just a check-up; it's a gateway to a world of improved communication, enhanced cognitive abilities, and enriched relationships. As the new year dawns, let's prioritize our auditory health and embrace the possibilities that come with hearing the world more clearly.

John Nobile, HAS, BC-HIS, ACA is a licensed hearing aid specialist and an ACA-certified audioprosthologist 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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REDISCOVER YOUR YOUTH: THE POWER OF HAIR RESTORATION

In the pursuit of a more youthful appearance, there's a game-changer you don't want to miss: plant stem cell hair restoration at Tribe Med Spa. It's not just about getting your hair back; it's about gaining confidence and feeling youthful again.

Understanding Plant Stem Cell Hair Restoration:

As we age, our hair tends to thin out. Enter plant stem cell hair restoration, a simple yet powerful solution offered at Tribe Med Spa. By using the regenerative abilities of plant stem cells, this treatment promotes thicker, denser hair, helping you look and feel younger.

The Science Behind Plant Stem Cells:

Plant stem cells are like nature's repair crew. They can transform into different cell types, and when applied to hair, they wake up sleepy hair follicles, making your hair not only healthier but also fuller.

Benefits of Plant Stem Cell Hair Restoration:

1. Fuller Hair, More Confidence: Plant stem cell treatments at Tribe Med Spa result in not just thicker but fuller hair. Picture that – a full head of hair can do wonders for your confidence, making you feel vibrant and youthful.

2. Say Goodbye to Grays: These treatments can even help bring back your natural hair color by reviving the cells responsible for it. Goodbye, grays; hello, natural vibrancy!

3. Radiant Skin, Thanks to Collagen Boost: Plant stem cells don't stop at the hair; they also stimulate collagen production, making your skin firmer and more elastic. It's a win-win for a youthful look!

Tribe Med Spa isn't just a spa; it's your destination for confidence and youthfulness. With their expertise in plant stem cell hair restoration, each session is tailored just for you, ensuring the best results.

Conclusion:

Plant stem cell hair restoration is more than a treatment; it's a confidence booster. Imagine the joy of having fuller hair, looking, and feeling younger. Tribe Med Spa is your go-to place to turn this dream into reality. It's where science meets beauty, and you rediscover the confidence that comes with a full head of youthful hair.



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RELIEF FOR CHRONIC NERVE PAIN

If you're struggling with persistent pain, especially in your legs and feet, the cause could be NEUROPATHY. Peripheral nerve damage is a condition that often goes unnoticed, and individuals may endure prolonged pain without understanding the root cause. Neuropathy is a condition that affects millions of Americans which often leads to symptoms such as tingling, numbness, and loss of balance

Causes of Peripheral neuropathy can include: (but not limited to)

- 1. Diabetes:** Elevated blood sugar levels over time can damage nerves.
- 2. Trauma or Injury:** Physical injuries, accidents, or trauma can lead to nerve damage.
- 3. Infections:** Certain infections, such as shingles or Lyme disease, may affect the peripheral nerves.
- 4. Toxins:** Exposure to certain toxins, like those found in some medications or environmental substances, can cause neuropathy.
- 5. Autoimmune Diseases:** Conditions where the immune system attacks the body's own tissues may lead to nerve damage.
- 6. Genetics:** Some individuals may be genetically predisposed to peripheral neuropathy.

How do you know if you have Neuropathy?

Peripheral neuropathy can manifest with a variety of symptoms that can significantly impact an individual's well-being and overall quality of life. Patients often report sensations of tingling or numbness, akin to experiencing "pins and needles" in the affected areas, numbness, pain when walking, difficulty sleeping due to foot discomfort, muscle weakness and even sensitivity to touch. All affect quality of life- starting out gradually and gradually getting worse if not treated.

Furthermore, nerve damage can affect coordination and balance, leading to challenges in maintaining stability. These diverse symptoms underscore the complexity of peripheral neuropathy and highlight the importance of seeking professional medical evaluation for an accurate diagnosis and tailored treatment plan. It is crucial



for individuals to be vigilant about any changes in sensation, movement, or pain, and to promptly consult with a healthcare provider for comprehensive assessment and treatment options.

Treatments:

There are traditional treatments for Neuropathy limited to a narrow range of pain medications. Often these only provide temporary relief and can contribute to further complications.

At Jaffe Sports Medicine, our innovative all-inclusive approach to treating pain combines various therapeutic techniques with advanced treatments to reduce pain and inflammation associated with peripheral nerve damage. What sets our Clinics apart is the comprehensive treatment approach consisting of Interventional Pain Management, Physical Therapy, Sports Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery. In addition, nerve testing and procedures play an important part of your care along with IV Vitamin Infusion Therapy and Acupuncture. Customized Vitamin infusions and Acupuncture treatments are based on individual needs and level of pain and are an excellent complement to your medical treatments. Our program's primary goal is to alleviate pain and numbness and actively work towards restoring, and rebuilding your overall quality of life. Our Physician-led team understands pain can impact various aspects of your life, from daily activities to your emotional well-being. The goal at Jaffe Sports Medicine is for you to Live, Work & Play Pain Free! Our team is here to support you on your journey to living a fulfilling life.

We currently accept new patients at our three Southwest Florida locations conveniently located in Cape Coral, North Naples, and Downtown Naples. Most major insurances, including Medicare and many HMO plans, cover treatment at Jaffe Sports Medicine, making our comprehensive care accessible to a broader spectrum of individuals.

It's crucial to understand that while our treatments aim to alleviate discomfort, the information provided here is for informational purposes only and should not be considered a substitute for professional medical advice. Every individual's situation is unique, and consulting with your healthcare provider is paramount for personalized guidance and recommendations for living a pain free life.

To learn more about our services and schedule an appointment, visit our website at JAFFESPORTSMEDICINE.COM.



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DIABETIC PATIENTS - DON'T DELAY GETTING FOOT PROBLEMS CHECKED!

By Dr. Lori DeBlasi

The prevalence of diabetes has significantly increased in the United States for adults 18 or older. From 2001-2021, approximately 38.4 million people have diabetes, reflecting 11.6% of the United States population. However, it is estimated that 8.7 million of these diabetics have not been diagnosed or know that they have it. It is essential to have preventative care visits with an established family practitioner to monitor the necessary blood tests on a regular basis. Diagnosis and treatment is key.

The lifetime risk of a foot ulcer for patient with diabetes is as high as 34%.

The overall mortality from a diabetic foot infection is estimated at nearly 50% mortality within 5 years. Associated factors included cardiovascular disease and infection as the 2 leading causes of death associated with these diabetic foot ulcerations. A frequent complication from soft tissue infections in a diabetic is sepsis which causes the body to go into shock. This is a life and death situation when this occurs.

The underlying causes associated with diabetic foot infections and resultant diabetic foot ulcers include poor control of blood sugar, callus/corn formation, foot deformities, improper shoes, ill fitting shoes, underlying peripheral neuropathy (nerve loss) and poor circulation. It is estimated that up to 60% of all diabetics will develop neuropathy, eventually leading to a foot ulceration.

If a diabetic patient gets any type of an open lesion, whether it is a scratch, blister or other lesion, the recommendation is to seek medical attention sooner than later. There are times when this is not possible and the areas should be cleansed properly with soap and water followed by some type of an antibiotic cream or ointment and a bandage. It is important to keep this bandaged as any open lesion is an open door into the body that can lead to more serious infections, such as sepsis. Even a small wound, scratch or blister can lead to a life or limb threatening condition.

Having good control of blood sugar levels is critical in cases of infection. When the hemoglobin A1c, a 3-month indicator of blood sugar, is greater than 7%, this is associated with inefficiency of the white blood cells to fight off infections.



Another factor, is having adequate circulation to the feet and the toes. If there is inadequate blood flow, the healing factors within our blood are unable to reach the area that they are needed. This also affects antibiotics ability to get to where the infection is, as well.

The best time to see a podiatrist is before there is a problem. Having an established relationship with a podiatrist, so baseline foot concerns are noted in the chart and even addressed if there are issues, is critical in the long-term treatment plan for a diabetic patient. Preventative measures attempt to reduce the risk of foot issues in Diabetic patients. It is recommended every person with Diabetes have a yearly foot exam by a Podiatrist. Preventative care is a key component – make your appointment TODAY!

Lori DeBlasi, DPM

Dr. Lori DeBlasi is certified by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®. Dr. DeBlasi works at Family Foot & Leg Center at the Estero office. She is accepting new patients. To make an appointment, call 239-430-3668 or visit www.NaplesPodiatrist.com.



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Great Hobbies for Retired Men

When you're enjoying retirement, you have endless opportunities to try new activities, dive deeper into your interests, and embrace this exciting new chapter of your life. As you're branching out into new hobbies, you may not know where to start.

These great hobbies for retired men are popular, fun, and can provide hours of engaging entertainment.

Indoor Hobbies for Retired Men

There are so many types of indoor activities that you can get involved in – and they're perfect for a relaxed or rainy day. Take a look to see which ones stand out to you!

Card Games and Board Games

Engage in friendly competition by playing card games like bridge, poker, or solitaire. Board games like chess, Scrabble, or even more social games like bingo can also be great options for mental stimulation and social interaction.

Book Clubs and Reading Groups

Join or start a book club with fellow residents to discuss and share your thoughts on a wide range of literature. It's a great way to stay mentally engaged and connect with others over a shared interest.

Arts and Crafts Classes

Many senior living communities offer arts and crafts classes. Whether it's painting, pottery, or other crafts, these classes provide an opportunity to unleash your creativity and develop new skills.

Gentle Exercise Classes

Participate in low-impact exercise classes specifically designed for seniors. Activities like chair yoga, tai chi, or gentle stretching can help maintain flexibility and mobility.

Cooking and Baking Classes

Learn new culinary skills or share your favorite recipes with others in cooking or baking classes. It's a wonderful way to bond over food and create delicious meals together.

Social Hours

Connect with others during scheduled social hours while enjoying various entertainment.



The most important thing is to find activities that bring you joy and a sense of fulfillment. Don't be afraid to try out different hobbies to see which ones resonate with you the most.

Outdoor Hobbies for Retired Men

If you love getting outside in the fresh air, then you should definitely look at all the outdoor activities you can join. These activities typically include exercise, which will benefit your physical health while you're having a great time in the great outdoors.

Bocce Ball and Tennis

Enjoy a game of bocce ball or tennis. These are fantastic ways to stay active and socialize with others.

Photography

Take up photography as a way to capture the beauty of your surroundings. Whether it's landscapes, wildlife, or candid shots of fellow residents, photography is a creative outlet that encourages exploration and observation.

When trying out new hobbies or pursuing favorite ones, remember that perfectionism has no place here. This is all for your enjoyment and your journey, spending your free time doing the things you love.

Social Hobbies

While many hobbies can be done solo or introduce you to other like-minded people, these social hobbies can help you establish new friendships in no time.

Community Service and Volunteering

Engaging in community service or volunteering activities can be incredibly fulfilling. It's an opportunity to give back, make a positive impact, and connect with others who share a passion for helping their community.

Sports Leagues or Clubs

Joining a sports league or club that focuses on low-impact activities like lawn bowling, bocce ball, or even walking groups can be a great way to stay active while enjoying the camaraderie of fellow enthusiasts.

Travel Groups

Joining a travel group tailored for older adults allows you to explore new destinations with like-minded individuals. It provides opportunities for shared experiences and the chance to make lasting memories together.

Educational Lectures

Learning about new topics can be stimulating. Joining a lecture allows you to interact with others while also keeping your mind active and engaged.

JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT EVENT!

Wednesday, January 17 | 3 p.m.

Join us for a curated experience with an expert sommelier. Enjoy live entertainment from the "Tropical Cowboy" Jerry Pellegrino, and let the velvety notes of delicious wines dance on your taste buds, paired with artisanal cheeses and mouthwatering charcuterie. You'll also learn how The Terraces at Bonita Springs is synonymous with luxury retirement in Southwest Florida. As a Life Plan Community with a Type A LifeCare contract, we ensure your peace of mind with a comprehensive approach to senior living.

Space is limited. Valet parking will be available. Please RSVP by Wednesday, January 10.

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





Technology and Computer Groups

Joining a group focused on technology and computers can be a great way to learn new skills, stay updated with current trends, and connect with others who share an interest in the digital world.

Find hobbies that align with your interests and offer opportunities for social interaction. Whether it's a shared passion for literature, sports, or creative pursuits, engaging in social hobbies can lead to fulfilling experiences and meaningful connections.

Online Hobbies for Seniors

Technology gives you access to a wealth of information, entertainment, and plenty of new hobbies to try. Here are some online hobbies that may interest you.

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Online Courses and Workshops

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Virtual Reality (VR) Experiences

Dive into the world of virtual reality and explore immersive experiences, from gaming to educational simulations and beyond.

Remember, the key is to find online hobbies that align with your interests and offer a sense of enjoyment and fulfillment. These hobbies also provide opportunities for social interaction and can lead to new connections with people who share similar passions. Happy exploring!

Find Your Favorite Hobby at The Terraces at Bonita Springs

When you live at The Terraces at Bonita Springs, there are plenty of opportunities to learn a hobby or try something new. Call us at 239-208-6963 to schedule a tour and see how our residents maintain an active and engaged lifestyle.



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SHEDDING LIGHT ON NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma, often referred to as the "silent thief of sight," silently robs millions of individuals of their vision worldwide. January marks National Glaucoma Awareness Month, a crucial time to educate and raise awareness about this prevalent eye condition that affects over 70 million individuals worldwide.

Glaucoma is not just one eye disease but a group of conditions that damage the optic nerve, often caused by increased pressure within the eye. The danger lies in its asymptomatic nature during the early stages, gradually stealing peripheral vision and, if left undiagnosed and untreated, progressing to blindness.

This observance month aims to highlight the importance of regular eye check-ups, as early detection is fundamental in managing and preventing irreversible vision loss. Vision screenings and comprehensive eye exams can catch glaucoma before noticeable symptoms develop, allowing for timely intervention and treatment to preserve sight.

Understanding the risk factors is crucial. Age, family history, certain medical conditions like diabetes, and even race (African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians are at higher risk) can contribute to an increased likelihood of developing glaucoma. However, anyone can be affected, making awareness and proactive eye care vital for everyone.

The two primary forms, open-angle and closed-angle glaucoma, present distinct mechanisms affecting the drainage of aqueous humor within the eye. Open-angle glaucoma involves resistance in the trabecular meshwork, leading to increased intraocular pressure. Conversely, closed-angle glaucoma results from blockages in both the uveoscleral drains and the trabecular meshwork, often due to an impaired iris.

Recognizing symptoms is crucial. While early stage glaucoma may not manifest noticeable signs, eventual symptoms can include reduced vision, peripheral vision loss, and eye redness, particularly acute in closed-angle glaucoma cases. However, the absence of symptoms doesn't confirm the absence of the condition, emphasizing the necessity of regular eye exams.

Diagnosing glaucoma involves a comprehensive eye examination, including visual field tests, tonometry to measure intraocular pressure, and a dilated eye exam. Advanced techniques like optical coherence tomography aid in objectively assessing optic nerve fiber loss.

Treatment primarily aims at reducing intraocular pressure. Hypotensive eye drops, particularly prostaglandin analogs, serve as the frontline treatment, improving fluid drainage. Second-line drugs and procedures like selective laser trabeculoplasty or trabeculectomy are also employed to manage pressure and facilitate better drainage.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for glaucoma, underscoring the importance of early detection and consistent management. Lifetime monitoring remains crucial, but advancements in treatments, including laser procedures and surgeries, offer hope in mitigating its impact on vision loss.

Prevention is anchored in regular eye check-ups. Early detection drastically improves prognosis, making annual eye exams, especially for those over 40, an integral part of glaucoma prevention.

While lifestyle adjustments may offer some protection, they aren't foolproof against glaucoma. However, adopting a healthy lifestyle in conjunction with regular eye screenings serves as a proactive approach in managing this sight-threatening condition.

In conclusion, understanding the differences between open-angle and closed-angle glaucoma, recognizing their symptoms, and engaging in routine eye exams are fundamental in managing this condition and preserving vision health. As advancements continue, early diagnosis and vigilant management remain the best defense against the progression of glaucoma-induced vision impairment.

Remember, sight is a precious gift, and preserving it starts with awareness and regular eye examinations. Let's shine a light on glaucoma this January and beyond, ensuring that sight-saving knowledge reaches everyone, everywhere.



BRIAN MARHUE, O.D.
OPTOMETRIC PHYSICIAN

Dr. Marhue is a board-certified optometric physician that provides a wide variety of primary eye care to patients.

He completed his bachelor's degree and Doctor of Optometry degrees at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He completed externships at Omega Eye Care Center, Piedmont Medical Center, Birmingham V.A. Medical Center and the Sparks Center for Developmental Vision Clinic.

Dr. Marhue's present and past memberships include Students of Optometry Serving Humanity, the Trinidad and Tobago Optometrists Association, Florida Surgical Eye Expeditions, the American Optometric Association, the Florida Optometric Association and the Southwest Florida Optometric Association.

He served as the president of the Southwest Florida Optometric Association for over four years and has participated in multiple eye mission trips to Trinidad, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Born in Trinidad, he completed high school and started college in Toronto and completed his last years of undergraduate and professional training at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He served as the Director of Optometry at the Eye Centers of Florida for 14 years before joining Southwest Florida Eye Care as a partner which is now part of Center For Sight.

Dr. Marhue has lived in Fort Myers since 1991. He loves spending any time he gets with his two wonderful adult children, Aaron and Brittne. He and his wife Tricia enjoy their families, hiking, cycling, soccer and fishing.



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Start the New Year with a Full Body Exam

By Joseph Onorato, MD, FAAD

Did you know that melanomas can proliferate very quickly? In just six weeks, they can become life-threatening. In our practice, it's not uncommon to see patients that have melanomas on their scalp, ears, bottom of the feet and other hard to detect areas of the body. You might think that you don't see any new or unusual lesions or moles, but are you 100% certain?

Dermascope: Detailed Diagnoses

We use a dermascope, which is a handheld magnification device that allows dermatologists to see beneath the outermost layer of skin, which is called the epidermis. This enables us to see deep within the layer of the skin to decipher whether your mole or lesion is of concern, or if it's within normal limits.

Under the dermascope, a mole that may appear normal to the naked eye, may show signs of abnormality, such as having irregular borders. On the contrary, a mole that may have appeared to be irregular to the naked eye may show to be completely normal under the scope and alleviate the need for an unnecessary biopsy.

Getting your screening now at the beginning of 2022, will allow you to rest assured for the remainder of the year. If we do spot a sign of skin cancer, melanoma, or other skin conditions, we take assurance in knowing that if it is caught early, your treatment and outcomes will be ideal.

Don't wait to schedule

With the "season" nearly fully upon us, and the influx of new residents and snowbirds, now is the time to call to schedule your full body exam. Don't wait to schedule, call for your appointment today.

SWFL Dermatology Plastic Surgery & Laser Center
Whether you want to focus on antiaging and esthetic procedures or medical dermatology for the health of your skin, or a combination of both, SWFL Dermatology Plastic Surgery & Laser Center has the most comprehensive options. Not only are there numerous services, but you can trust that you are in the best hands with the most experienced practitioners.



SWFL Dermatology Plastic Surgery & Laser Center is a privately owned, all-inclusive dermatology practice specializing in adult and pediatric general dermatology and Mohs surgery for skin cancer. The team provides care to patients of all ages experiencing embarrassing, unwanted, and potentially life-threatening skin conditions.

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The expert and dedicated team offers specialized and individualized treatment options for skin conditions such as acne, alopecia, contact dermatitis, eczema, rosacea, shingles, sunburn, and urticaria.

SWFL Dermatology is an extension of All Island Dermatology Plastic Surgery, MedSpa and Laser Center which has serviced patients in the greater Garden City and Glen Cove communities in Long Island, New York since 1995.

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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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Glaucoma: What You Need to Know

January is Glaucoma Awareness Month, the perfect time to raise awareness for this sight-stealing disease. Nearly all of us begin to experience some vision changes as we age, even if it's just having to rely on a cheap pair of readers from the grocery store. In order to remain independent as we get older, we need to know about age-related changes that could potentially affect our day-to-day lives. And vision loss – primarily glaucoma – is one of those changes.

What is Glaucoma?

According to the CDC, more than 3 million Americans have glaucoma, but only half actually know it. It is the second leading cause of blindness worldwide. Glaucoma is a group of diseases that damage the eye's optic nerve due to increased pressure inside the eye. The progression of the disease is usually gradual. However, once glaucoma has caused damage resulting in vision loss, the damage is permanent and irreparable.

Early Glaucoma Symptoms

Because vision loss caused by glaucoma cannot be restored, it's important that seniors watch out for signs and symptoms that could be an indication they have the eye disease. If caught early, glaucoma's progression can be slowed by various treatment methods, including surgery.

Some of the early signs of glaucoma include:

- Loss of side vision
- Inability to adjust to darkened rooms
- Blurred or foggy vision, especially when awakening
- Eye pain
- Severe headaches

Who's at Risk for Developing Glaucoma?

While anyone can get glaucoma, the risk is higher in people over the age of 60. Others with an increased risk of getting glaucoma include African Americans over the age of 40 and people who have diabetes. Glaucoma is also hereditary, so it's important to know your family history. According to the Glaucoma Research Foundation, your risk of developing primary open-angle glaucoma is up to nine times higher than average if one of your parents or siblings has the disease.



Other possible risk factors include:

- High myopia (nearsightedness)
- Hypertension
- Central corneal thickness less than .5 mm

Take Action to Prevent Glaucoma

Vision loss and glaucoma aren't a given just because you get older. There are steps you can take to protect your eyes and lower your risk of getting glaucoma. When it comes to this progressive eye disease, early detection and prevention are key.

Whether you fall into a high-risk category or not, make sure you're getting routine comprehensive dilated eye exams. These exams help to catch glaucoma and other eye diseases early when they are most treatable. Your eye care specialist will instruct you on how frequently you need to receive these exams. However, Medicare covers a glaucoma test once a year for people in high-risk groups, so be sure you take advantage of this benefit.

In addition to getting your eyes checked, you should try to do the following steps to help prevent glaucoma:

Exercise – Regular physical activity can help to lower intraocular pressure (IOP).

Maintain a stable weight – A high Body Mass Index (BMI) causes pressure in the eyes, while a low BMI can cause the optic nerve to press inward.

Stop smoking – Smoking causes thinning of the retinal nerve fiber layer, a symptom of glaucoma.

Monitor your blood pressure – Increased blood pressure results in increased eye pressure.

Glaucoma Treatment Options

Early onset of glaucoma usually affects your peripheral vision first – what you can see on the side of your head when looking ahead. If not treated in time and effectively, your central vision – vision used to see objects clearly – will also begin to be affected.

Early treatment intervention is vital to preserving your eyesight. Glaucoma is treated with eye drops, oral medication, and surgery. Treatment methods may be combined depending on your specific needs. The goal of treatment is to reduce the pressure in your eye.

You should always follow any specific directions given by your healthcare professional, whether it be your primary care provider or your eyecare specialist. Glaucoma is a highly detectable disease and one that can be managed properly. Make your eye health a priority. Schedule an appointment with a VIPcare provider to discuss your risk and what preventative measures you can take to protect your eyesight. Call **239-747-7202**.



Fara Castillo, M.D.

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Do You Have A Weakened or Tight Pelvic Floor?

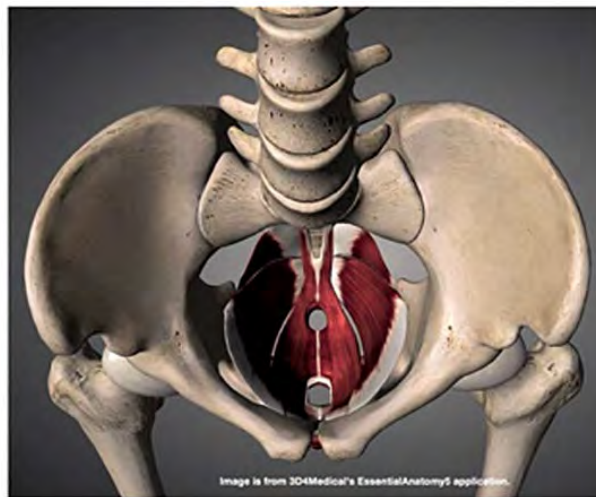
What You Should Know

By Alejandro Miranda-Sousa, M.D.

The muscles of the pelvic floor are a group of muscles that support the pelvic organs. These muscles support the bladder, rectum, prostate in men, and vagina and uterus in women. As we age, our muscles tend to weaken or get too tight. Conditions that involve this chronic pelvic pain in both men and women are often caused by muscle tightness. When these muscles don't behave appropriately, they can enter into a spasm or a cramp and this could mimic other conditions. Because of this, the organs supported by these muscles do not work properly and can cause urinary and/or fecal incontinence and sexual dysfunction in men and women along with many other symptoms.

This condition is frequently underdiagnosed and can greatly affect your quality of life. Many people suffering from pelvic floor dysfunction do not want to leave their home due to their symptoms and can have frequent unnecessary visits to the emergency room. Many of our patients even suffer in their personal relationships due to their symptoms. There are many reasons why these muscles do not work correctly including a fall, trauma, surgery or stress. Stress can cause you to unknowingly clench your pelvic floor muscles, which can lead to knots or trigger points in the muscle and cause pain or discomfort.

Fortunately, we have a minimally invasive treatment available to treat the muscles thereby improving your quality of life. You can expect to see a 70-80% or more improvement in symptoms.



If you suffer from any of the following symptoms, pelvic floor therapy might be the right treatment for you:

- Stress Incontinence- leaking urine with coughing, sneezing, heavy lifting, or laughing
- Urge Incontinence- leaking urine when you get a strong desire to urinate
- Urinary Frequency- getting the desire to urinate many times during the day
- Nocturia- getting a strong desire to urinate many times at night
- Frequent urinary tract infections
- Fecal Incontinence- leaking of stool
- Constipation/Diarrhea
- Incomplete bladder emptying
- Vaginal Pain
- Penile Pain
- Pain with intercourse

Alejandro Miranda-Sousa, MD



Dr. Miranda-Sousa is a board certified urologist. He is an author and co-author of multiple research and clinical peer-reviewed medical articles. He received Best Abstract from the

American Urological Association in 2007 and is Fellowship Trained in Urodynamics and Neurourology.

Our providers are highly-qualified, skilled experts in the area of urinary and bladder disorders, pelvic floor prolapse, prostate cancer, along with many other related disorders. Dr. Miranda-Sousa and his staff are ready to answer any of your urological questions and concerns, as they treat all of their patients with the utmost of care.

For more information, please visit our website www.UrologyExperts.com or call Urology Experts today at (239) 226-2727 or email info@UrologyExperts.com to schedule your consultation!

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Infusion Therapy

An Effective Treatment Option for Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a condition that weakens the bones, making them fragile and prone to fractures. It affects millions of people worldwide, with women being more susceptible to it than men. The condition often develops slowly over the years and may go unnoticed until a bone fracture occurs. However, with the advancements in medical technology, various treatment options are available for managing osteoporosis. One such option is infusion therapy, which involves the administration of medications directly into the bloodstream.

Paragon Healthcare is a leading provider of infusion therapy services for 20+ years, and they offer several medications to help treat osteoporosis. These medications include Prolia, Zoledronic Acid, Evenity, and Boniva. These drugs work by increasing bone density, reducing the risk of fractures, and improving overall bone health.

Prolia is an injectable medication that belongs to a class of drugs known as monoclonal antibodies. It works by inhibiting the activity of osteoclasts, which are cells that break down bone tissue. By reducing the number and activity of osteoclasts, Prolia can increase bone density and reduce the risk of fractures. The medication is administered once every six months and is suitable for postmenopausal women with osteoporosis.

Zoledronic Acid is another infusion therapy medication that is used to treat osteoporosis. It belongs to a class of drugs known as bisphosphonates, which work by inhibiting bone breakdown. Zoledronic Acid is administered once a year and can significantly reduce the risk of fractures in patients with osteoporosis.

Evenity is a newer medication that is used to treat osteoporosis in postmenopausal women. It works by increasing bone formation and reducing bone resorption. Evenity is administered as a subcutaneous injection once a month for twelve months. Clinical trials have shown that Evenity can significantly increase bone density and reduce the risk of fractures in patients with osteoporosis.

Boniva is another bisphosphonate medication that is used to treat osteoporosis. It works by slowing down the breakdown of bone tissue and increasing



NORMAL BONE DENSITY



OSTEOPOROSIS

bone density. Boniva is administered as a once-a-month tablet or as an injection every three months. It is an effective medication for preventing fractures in patients with osteoporosis.

Infusion therapy offers several advantages over other treatment options for osteoporosis. For example, infusion therapy medications are administered directly into the bloodstream, which allows for rapid and efficient delivery to the bones. This means that patients can experience faster results and may require fewer doses than they would with oral medications. Additionally, infusion therapy medications are often more potent than oral medications, which can lead to better outcomes for patients.

Another advantage of infusion therapy is that it is generally well-tolerated by patients. While some patients may experience side effects such as fever, headache, or muscle pain, these side effects are typically mild and short-lived. Infusion therapy also allows for more consistent dosing, which can help to ensure that patients receive the proper amount of medication each time.

In conclusion, infusion therapy is a highly effective treatment option for osteoporosis. Paragon Healthcare offers several infusion therapy medications, including Prolia, Zoledronic Acid, Evenity, and Boniva, that can significantly improve bone density, reduce the risk of fractures, and improve overall bone health. Infusion therapy offers several advantages over other treatment options, including more efficient delivery to the bones, more consistent dosing, and fewer side effects. If you or a loved one is living with osteoporosis, consider speaking with a healthcare provider about whether infusion therapy may be a suitable treatment option.



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EMBRACING CHANGE

Ketamine Therapy and New Year's Resolutions for Overcoming Unproductive Patterns and Triggers

The start of a new year often heralds a period of reflection and resolution. It's a time when many of us embark on a journey of self-improvement, setting goals aimed at overcoming unproductive patterns and navigating triggers that impede our progress. This year, a novel approach to this pursuit of personal growth emerges with the integration of Ketamine therapy—a groundbreaking treatment showing promise in revolutionizing mental health care.

Ketamine, once predominantly known as an anesthetic, has stepped into the limelight for its transformative potential in addressing mental health disorders like depression, anxiety, PTSD, and chronic pain. Unlike traditional antidepressants, which may take weeks to show effects, Ketamine therapy offers rapid relief, often within hours. Its mechanism of action involves modulating certain neurotransmitters in the brain, leading to a profound impact on mood regulation and cognitive processes.

Pairing the therapeutic benefits of Ketamine with New Year's resolutions can offer a powerful strategy for individuals looking to break free from unproductive cycles and cope with triggers more effectively. Resolutions, when backed by the support of Ketamine therapy, can serve as catalysts for genuine and lasting change.

The first step towards personal growth often involves acknowledging unproductive patterns that hold us back. Whether it's procrastination, negative self-talk, or self-sabotage, these behaviors can hinder progress. Ketamine therapy, with its ability to potentially disrupt entrenched thought patterns and depressive cycles, can provide a window of opportunity to confront and modify these behaviors. Through introspection and therapy, individuals can develop strategies to replace unproductive habits with healthier alternatives.

Furthermore, the management of triggers—those stimuli that evoke negative emotions or behaviors—is an integral part of personal development. For many, New Year's resolutions include a commitment to handle triggers more constructively. Ketamine therapy, in conjunction with therapy sessions, equips individuals with a strengthened emotional toolkit to better manage these triggers. It aids in building resilience and providing a clearer mindset to navigate challenging situations.

However, it's important to note that while Ketamine therapy shows promise, it's not a standalone solution. It should ideally complement traditional therapy and holistic lifestyle changes. Resolutions to incorporate mindfulness practices, regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and a strong support network can significantly augment the benefits of Ketamine therapy.

As individuals embark on this dual journey of Ketamine therapy and New Year's resolutions, it's essential to approach it with patience and commitment. Progress might not always be linear, and setbacks may occur. Yet, the combination of therapeutic intervention and personal determination can lead to transformative growth and an enhanced quality of life.

In conclusion, the fusion of Ketamine therapy with New Year's resolutions geared towards confronting unproductive patterns and managing triggers presents a dynamic approach to personal evolution. By harnessing the therapeutic potential of Ketamine alongside proactive efforts to address ingrained behaviors, individuals can embark on a path towards lasting positive change, fostering resilience, and unlocking their full potential in the year ahead.

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.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmTvhURAUzIs>

With years of medical experience, knowledge, and prior ketamine application, our team of qualified medical experts can provide patients with life-changing, holistic treatments.

***Ketamine Health Centers** is affiliated with Irwin Naturals Emergence as a mental health and chronic pain provider. We are collaborating with the nutritional supplements company to address the mind-gut connection.



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.



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The human brain is a marvel of nature, possessing incredible abilities that continue to astound scientists and researchers. Its remarkable complexity and versatility enables us to perceive, think, reason, remember, and create. Despite the casual use of words like "awesome" and "amazing" by some, they are entirely appropriate when discussing the brain. Its true wonder lies in its capacity to regulate and coordinate countless physiological and cognitive processes in our bodies.

"Most of the medical society would tell you we know very little about the inner brain," stated Charles Lindsey McAlpine, CEO and COO of LASENE, Naples. "It's only through recent technological advances that we can look to ways of helping the brain achieve even its simplest needs of sleep and memory."

The company, LASENE, provides laser technology and proprietary advanced treatments for fostering functional improvement in patient's living with Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, brain trauma, and other neurological degenerative ailments. They bridge the gap between the world's finest laser technology and advanced treatment protocols to improve quality-of-life by reducing the many complications of these diseases.

"In coming years, we will all live longer, which is great, but the HOW we live is just as important," McAlpine said. No one really wants to live long and not properly function, do they? So being involved with a therapy that allows for the best quality of life, and clearer thinking is very exciting.

"I went through my original program over a year ago. I recently went to my neurologist and my Doctor continues to see the improvement I saw throughout my treatment and after. I would highly recommend LASENE to anyone seeking a better quality of life." -Patient Karen



The company's 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 people back to a more active and productive life.

"I have found a treatment that has really helped me, LASENE. They have improved my Quality of Life and I am back to doing what I love....I highly recommend it, go do it."

— Patient Judy

Watching the aging process with my own father, who suffered with dementia and early stages of Alzheimer's, was sad to witness. It was tough seeing a bright, happy, articulate person lose those functions," McAlpine said. Being involved with the solutions that LASENE offers would have certainly benefited him, but now the ability to share those positive results with others is a gift.

LASENE does not promise a cure for degenerative complications. However, over a typically six-month care program, the company can provide laser technology and methodology to rehabilitate areas of nerve, muscle and skeletal systems that are affected

by these neurological ailments. Through the company's proprietary methodology, a patient can experience a significant reduction or remission in a variety of quality of life symptoms specific to their condition.

"Results are what the overwhelming majority of the patients who come to LASENE experience," McAlpine said. "We see hugely positive results that quickly resonate into all parts of their lives. The individual therapy itself is noninvasive, painless, and brief. Most patients say 'I had some initial fear, but wow I wish I'd have done this sooner.'"

"I was diagnosed with advanced symptoms of Parkinson's disease in 2015. Symptoms included shuffling gate, severe forward posture, muscle rigidity, loss of voice projection and volume, tongue and mouth tremors, whole body tremors, right hand severe tremors, constipation, insomnia, nightmares, low energy, decreased libido and erectile dysfunction, and brain fog. I began Lasene in June 2022. Light changes began to surface during the first 30 days. Now I have normal gate and posture, no mouth tremors, no body shaking, only a slight right-hand tremor that occurs a couple of times a day, restored sleep, no nightmares, normal bowel movements, restored libido and sexual function, voice projection restored, no more brain fog." Dr. DL

"Sleep is the most impressive and consistent progress patients report. Their sleep patterns and quality of sleep. We measure this both objectively through sleep tracking devices and subjectively through interviews and medical observation." We have many patients that also see a reduction in their tremors, an improvement in their walk/gait, and an improvement to their mood and cognitive ability.

Working with the amazing and awesome human brain brings rewards to those at LASENE and the patients they work with.

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Health Insurance – Important Dates!

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

MARKETPLACE - Obama Care/Affordable Care Act – open enrollment IT'S NOT TO LATE. December 16th to January 16th will have February 1st, 2024, effective.

The website is [HealthCare.gov](https://www.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. The cost is the same as going direct with the insurance carrier, so why would you not seek free professional help with an agent that sells all of the companies?

MEDICARE Open Enrollment Period January 1st- March 31st, effective the 1st of the following month. Medicare Advantage – Part C

If you change/enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan Part C if you are not happy with the one you have. You can make a 1 time change from one Advantage Plan to another, you can go back to Original Medicare and buy a standalone drug plan. I personally don't feel you should have Original Medicare without a Medicare Supplement because your financial exposure is unlimited. Medicare Supplements are NOT guaranteed to accept you, there are a few exceptions. But in general, you need to pass medical underwriting. There are Medicare Supplements Letters A-N, each pays in conjunction with Original Medicare. There are a lot of companies and plans that you need to understand the plans and the differences in companies, it's not just about the price today.

Most of the plans in your area have made many changes for 2024 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?

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THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF OXYTOCIN SUPPLEMENTS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

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

Hugs, music, exercise. What do all three of these things share? They all release the hormone oxytocin, more commonly known as the love hormone.

We're not talking only about romantic love. Oxytocin is released when a parent looks at their child or even when you look at your dog—it's the love of deep relationships and complete comfort. That's not to say that romantic partners don't trigger a release of oxytocin, but it's not solely limited to these relationships. Oxytocin goes deeper than attraction, cementing feelings of pure connection.

When the hypothalamus produces oxytocin and spreads it into the bloodstream, thanks to the pituitary gland, you'll experience a promotion of empathy, trust, and bonding. The impact of oxytocin doesn't stop there, either, with it also improving your cardiac health and increasing your resilience against stress. In short, oxytocin production can significantly improve both your mental and physical health.

The Process of Oxytocin Release

Positive social connections and stressful conditions trigger oxytocin release. The former is a way to further the bond, and the latter (speculatively) motivates those under stress to reach out for help. So, the next time you feel stressed and want to ask for help, know that it's your body telling you that you should.

Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus, also known as the brain's control center. Once the hypothalamus signals for oxytocin production, it is released to other parts of the brain and spinal cord or into the bloodstream. From there, it binds to oxytocin receptors, and the "feel-good" benefits of oxytocin are triggered.

Oxytocin is involved in many life-affirming activities, including:

- reproduction
- social bonding
- raising children
- building relationships
- childbirth
- breastfeeding

In the past, oxytocin was thought to be a hormone only found in women because of its ties to childbirth and breastfeeding. However, research has since shown that both men and women require oxytocin. For instance, oxytocin helps with male and female production, affects the metabolism of both genders, and influences immune health. While women complete more activities that use and produce oxytocin, it is crucial in those of both genders.

The Benefits of Oxytocin

The benefits of oxytocin are numerous, spanning both your physical and mental health—there's a reason why this feel-good hormone is so important.

Reduces Anxiety and Depression

One of the quintessential elements of being a human being is an innate desire to have a group that we connect with and belong to. We can't help it; we're pack creatures and like to know that we're not alone, no matter what group we may fit into.

Oxytocin helps to promote these feelings of trust, connectedness, and intimacy, further helping you benefit from the sense of belonging.

The impact of oxytocin levels on your mental health is significant, with studies showing that low oxytocin is linked to anxiety and depression. So, supplementing oxytocin can help you feel more secure in your family or friend group, lessening the anxiety and/or depression you would otherwise feel from believing you don't belong.

Reduces Stress Hormones

When the body perceives a stressful situation, it releases the hormone cortisol, which puts your body into a fight-or-flight mode. While it would be good if a lion were chasing you, it's not a great reaction to the everyday stresses our busy lives subject us to. Even more, those with chronic stress have continually high cortisol levels, which can increase blood pressure, suppress your immune system, and increase the risk of diseases such as diabetes or atherosclerosis.

Oxytocin has been shown to reduce cortisol levels, helping your body better manage stress and leaving you more relaxed and with a lower risk of these hazards of chronic stress.

Improves Cardiovascular Health

As the love hormone, it should come as no surprise that oxytocin supplements can improve your heart health, but perhaps not in the way you would think.

Oxytocin has been shown to lower blood pressure and heart rate, helping to keep your heart from being overworked. High blood pressure, in particular, is commonly referred to as "the silent killer" because of the role it plays in the development of many life-limiting diseases. If you want to keep your health high, managing your blood pressure is a great place to start, and oxytocin can help.

Induces Labor

Oxytocin helps to strengthen the labor contractions during childbirth while also facilitating the production of prostaglandins. These are chemicals that help increase contractions and move labor along. In addition, oxytocin helps with controlling bleeding after childbirth so that your body can start the healing process.

Supports Breastfeeding

A 2018 study highlighted that one of oxytocin's primary functions is to support breastfeeding, which is also why it was initially considered only a female hormone (something we now know isn't true).

When a baby nurses from their mother's breast, nerves in the nipple send signals to the pituitary gland that trigger the production oxytocin. This release then causes the tiny muscles around the nipple to contract, releasing milk.

Oxytocin Supplements

While the benefits of oxytocin are numerous, oxytocin supplements are generally believed to focus primarily on relieving social and emotional problems, such as:

- social anxiety
- autism
- depression
- schizophrenia

Additionally, a synthetic version of oxytocin (Pitocin) can be given intravenously to induce labor.

As of this time, oxytocin supplements are only available as injections or nasal sprays, as it is otherwise destroyed by the gastrointestinal tract.

Risks of Oxytocin Supplements

The most significant risk of oxytocin supplements is simply a lack of knowledge about their long-term impact. By this, we mean that it isn't entirely known how effective oxytocin supplements can be if used long-term. Furthermore, more research is still needed to determine how different people react to oxytocin supplements based on their genetics or underlying psychiatric disorders.

Some research has shown that some people may experience increased envy, prejudice, and dishonesty when taking oxytocin supplements. In other cases, taking too much oxytocin can cause watery eyes, a runny nose, or more severe complications, including seizures or uterine bleeding.

As for Pitocin, the oxytocin supplement injected to induce labor, it can have side effects that include digestive issues or increased pain. If taken in high doses, it may cause arrhythmia or other cardiovascular symptoms.

Still, many of these risks can be managed by ensuring you only take as much oxytocin as you need, which your doctor can help you with.

Ways to Naturally Boost Your Oxytocin

Oxytocin supplements are not the only way to boost the levels of this calming hormone. If you're feeling more stressed than usual, give the following a try and help increase your oxytocin levels.

Physical Contact

The number one thing associated with oxytocin is physical contact, but few people realize that it relates to any type of physical contact, with massages, hugs, handshakes, sexual activities, and breastfeeding all releasing oxytocin. Even more, whether you're connecting with a friend, lover, child, or parent, physical contact in any form will help increase your oxytocin.

Laugh

Laughter truly is one of life's greatest medicines. Watch a funny movie, get together with friends and share funny stories, read a humorous book; whatever gets you laughing will also help boost your oxytocin levels.

Give Your Pet Some Love

Spending some time each day giving extra attention to your pet will not only help to raise your oxytocin levels, but this can also help increase the bond you share with them.



Share The Love

Cook dinner for someone else, give a gift, or volunteer your time. All of these actions help to raise your oxytocin levels while also making you feel better for doing something for someone else.

Actions may speak louder than words, but saying "I love you" can also raise your oxytocin levels and those of the person you share the sentiment with. So, don't be afraid to share your feelings, and often.

Exercise

Going for a walk or some other form of exercise you like is a great way to boost your oxytocin levels while also improving your physical health. Want to boost your oxytocin even more? Try exercising with someone else.

Feel the Love: Oxytocin and Oxytocin Supplements

Oxytocin is the "love hormone" produced when you're surrounded by friends, family, or a significant other. It lowers your stress levels while also increasing trust, empathy, and contentment. Its benefits are wide-reaching, reducing anxiety and depression, improving cardiovascular health, and aiding in maternal tasks such as childbirth and breastfeeding.

With how vital oxytocin is for these tasks, it's natural to look into supplementation to boost oxytocin levels and see these benefits. However, as of right now, oxytocin supplements are primarily prescribed to aid the labor process or relieve social and emotional problems. There are some risks associated with oxytocin supplements, but your healthcare provider can help you weigh the risks versus the benefits.

Luckily, for those in need of a quick pick-me-up, there are many ways to naturally boost oxytocin levels that you can begin implementing immediately. They are especially useful for those under stress or looking to further improve their relationships.

Give oxytocin a boost and experience the benefits of love (hormones) on your mind and body.

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MEMORY MATTERS

By Amy Hoffmann Schenk, RN, BSN, MS Ed, Community Engagement Lead Neuropsychiatric Research Center of SW Florida

"Why is my wife so mean to me?" "My grandfather got downright ornery, wouldn't do anything we asked, and he yells all the time." "My mother is always so nervous and fidgety. When I tell her to relax, she says unkind things to me."

Are any of these situations familiar? For individuals living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, sometimes it may seem like your loved one is being difficult. As a caregiver, this can be very frustrating. One of the best phrases to remember goes like this: *a person with dementia is not giving you a hard time they are having a hard time*. What does that mean exactly?

Alzheimer's disease is a brain disease that impacts everything the brain controls. Memory, speech, logical thinking, reasoning, executive functioning, and expressions, are just some of the things that can be impacted. And while it may seem that someone is behaving in a hateful, ornery, or unkind manner, it can be helpful to realize that what is being seen and experienced is likely a result of the impact of the disease on the person. Some of the behavioral expressions may be a result of an underlying unmet need.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, the individual with the disease is experiencing a biologically profound loss of their ability to negotiate new information and stimulus. This is due to disease, versus their personality. This can be difficult to understand for those who do not have the cognitive impact of this disease. To make things more challenging, sometimes the behavior observed is different from day to day, even hour to hour.

It is estimated that between 30 to 50% of individuals with Alzheimer's disease experience agitation and irritability at some time during the course of their illness. What we may see is restlessness, nervousness, short temperedness, expressions of frustration and lack of cooperation. Some individuals may pace, some may perform repetitive motions, others may be quicker to argue and raise their voice and may appear to be in total denial of the facts we present to them.

What looks like denial in someone with the disease may be related to the changes in the brain which impact cognition and awareness. As a result, approaches to address our observations and concerns may not be effective or achieve the response desired. Having a factual, logic based response many times is not effective.

What approaches and techniques can work? Unfortunately, it is true that responses that can be effective with one person may not work with another. As many caregivers know, the same approach used with the same individual may have a different response on a day to day and even on an hour to hour basis. Having some general considerations can be helpful. Here's an acronym to help: **CARE**

C: Consistently Calm: That may seem impossible some days, and that is to be expected. Doing your best to respond to what you are seeing in a calm, nonjudgmental and caring manner can help.

A: Appropriate Activities: Many times, when individuals are bored or don't have structure, some challenging behavioral expressions may present themselves. Many things can be considered an activity and it's important that the chosen activity is appropriate for the individual and tailored to their interests as much as possible.

Another important consideration is time of day, length of activity and inviting someone to participate versus insisting on participation. A saying that can reflect interacting with someone with Alzheimer's disease is "the more you insist, the more they will resist." None of us like to be told what to do and being invited or asked to do something, versus being told may be more successful.

R: Regular Routine: Keeping a consistent routine, based on your loved one's habits can help decrease anxiety and preserve independence. The Alzheimer's Association suggests considering the person's likes, dislikes, strengths, and abilities when developing the routine. Knowing the times of day that the person functions best and allowing ample time for activities is essential. While a consistent schedule is helpful, building in flexibility and going with the flow is also an important consideration.



E: Engagement and Empathy: Include the person in everyday activities and let them help, even if they don't do things exactly the way you hope they would. Include them in things they enjoy. Participating in your faith community, helping in the garden, running errands, having a meal are all ways to engage. Being empathetic and understanding are also tools that can be valuable. It can be challenging to be a caregiver, and recognizing that it must also be difficult for the person with the disease as well provides perspective.

Have you noticed subtle changes in your loved one's memory? It's not uncommon for memory lapses to occur as we age, but when they start impacting daily life, it's essential to take action.

Connect with the experienced team at the Neuropsychiatric Research Center at 239-939-7777, where we have a proven track record of helping individuals and families navigate memory related challenges. Remember, you're not alone on this journey. #MemoriesMatter

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Integrative Medicine:

What Kind of Hippie Dippie Stuff is That?

Integrative medicine is a partnership between a health care professional and a person seeking optimal health and wellness. The two parties work together to achieve optimal health for body, mind and spirit. There is active discourse aimed at achieving the goals decided upon. The patient is very active in the process, and ultimately achieves much more than the absence of disease. He or she achieves optimal health.

As health care costs rise, and insurance covers less, we must maintain our health as much as possible. We must decrease our need to enter the medical system. One way to do that is by achieving optimal health and reducing dependence on prescription medication. Dr. Doreen DeStefano, DNP, NHD can help you do just that. Check out her approach in the vignette below.

Interviewer: So I guess we'll start with the basics: What's your name?

Doreen: Oh good, an easy question! My name is Doreen DeStefano, NHD, APRN, DNP

Interviewer: That's a lot of letters after your name. What do they all mean?

Doreen: Haha, yes I know. They mean that I am a Nurse Practitioner with a Doctorate in natural health. I also have a Master's in Public Business Administration, Doctorate of Nursing, and of course, a Masters in Nursing.

Interviewer: So what does that mean, exactly?

Doreen: I am a fully licensed medical practitioner. I can order diagnostic studies, make a diagnosis and prescribe treatment, including medication. However, I believe in partnering with my clients and asking them to participate to a large degree in their health. I don't like to go straight to pharmaceutical support if we can use patient behavior, and naturally occurring things to accomplish the desired goal.

I like to use natural means to repair the body whenever possible. For example, if a patient has high cholesterol we are going to really work with nutrition, exercise, and nutrient supplementation

before we use pharmaceuticals to reduce cholesterol. Of course, it's patient specific. We always do what is in the best interest of the patient.

Interviewer: OK, so say I had high cholesterol I'm already taking medication for it. What would you do?

Doreen: First we would get a full health history, we would do a full physical exam, and I would look at your labs. I would do some of my own testing, like a Cleveland Heart Lab. We know that 50% of heart attacks occur in people with "normal" cholesterol levels. Research shows us that the inflammation of the blood vessel wall is a very important factor that we must measure, and if it's high, we need to lower it. Also, there are different types of cholesterol, some "good" and some "bad". Even within the good and bad cholesterol, there are subtypes that are "good" and "bad". Standard cholesterol testing doesn't tell us all that.

Interviewer: What do you do with all that information?

Doreen: Well, it's different for everyone. But in brief, we can teach our patients how to eat to lower inflammation and decrease "bad" cholesterol and increase "good" cholesterol. We find ways for the patient to move regularly. We find something that they like and can be consistent with. Even gardening is good exercise. We figure it out. We provide lifestyle modification options to create a healthier lifestyle, like maybe eating less red meat, or smoking cessation. We also have natural supplements that the patient can take at home to help decrease inflammation, lower bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. We have in office treatments like hyperbaric oxygen and intravenous vitamins and minerals that help to optimize patient health. If the patient ultimately needs a prescription medication, then we use them. But we find that motivated people can usually decrease their cholesterol and inflammation to healthy levels. Then they can reduce or eliminate the need for medication.

Interviewer: It sounds difficult. Is it?



Dr. Doreen DeStefano, NHD, ARNP, DNP

Doreen: Well honestly, integrative medicine isn't for everyone. It's a partnership in health. The patient actually does more work than the practitioner. Diet and lifestyle change isn't easy. Some people don't want to do it. But some people really enjoy it. There are challenges, but the spectacular way that you feel when you optimize your health is beyond comparison.

Interviewer: So essentially, you help people get healthier without drugs as much as possible.

Doreen: Yes. I find I am very much a teacher and a coach. It's a holistic approach. We don't look at anything all by itself. We look at people as part of several environments, their own internal and external environments, and the environment in which they live. Each of those things effects the other. We strive to integrate all those pieces into optimal health.

Interviewer: What is optimal health?

Doreen: That is the state in which you look your best and feel your best physically, emotionally, and spiritually. You are simply your best you.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MEDICAL MARIJUANA ON GLAUCOMA

January is National Glaucoma Awareness Month, where we recognize the disease responsible for a large amount of vision loss. Glaucoma is a medical condition where the eye's intraocular pressure (IOP) increases to dangerously high levels. Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of vision loss and blindness in the United States. There are roughly 3 million Americans who suffer from this condition, along with another 57 million worldwide. Previous research studies suggest that marijuana may not suit everyone; however, it might be worth considering if you are among those who struggle and suffer from glaucoma.

Medical marijuana has historically been used to relieve various medical conditions, from cancer to chronic pain. Old and new studies infer that marijuana may effectively treat glaucoma by significantly decreasing pressure within the eye. Multiple studies discovered that cannabinoids found in marijuana help reduce eye pressure levels regardless of the method of consumption. Research focusing on various consumption methods showed equal benefits whether taken orally or inhaled. Surprisingly, however, when researchers placed cannabinoids onto the eye directly, little to no effect was identified.



It Has Potential To Lower Intraocular Pressure

With the ability to lower intraocular pressure, marijuana has been studied as a therapy for glaucoma. Patients interested in using cannabis for glaucoma relief will learn what form and how much to take when consulting with the proper healthcare provider. These answers may vary according to individual factors such as eye strain or duration of exposure time. In most trials, a single dose of marijuana or cannabinoid was shown to maintain the desired effect and lasted three to four hours. However, to effectively control optic nerve damage resulting from glaucoma, an individual would need between six and eight doses per day for effective management.



While marijuana lowers IOP, it has some drawbacks and is not risk-free. Since the lower IOP is not long term, most patients still require prescription drops for extended pressure control.

It Helps a Debilitating Condition

Glaucoma is a debilitating medical condition classified into three types – open-angle, angle-closure, and normal-tension.

Open-angle glaucoma occurs when the drainage duct gets clogged. Open-angle glaucoma (OAG) is the most common of the types and affects roughly 90% of patients. Healthcare providers can treat OAG with FDA-approved eye drops that work well if taken as prescribed to maintain visual health!

Angle-closure glaucoma, aka closed-angle glaucoma, can occur suddenly (acute angle-closure) or gradually (chronic angle-closure). In acute angle-closure glaucoma, the drainage duct suddenly becomes fully occluded, and this occlusion prevents fluid outflow from the eye, leading to dangerously high IOP. Acute closed-angle glaucoma is a true medical emergency resulting in permanent blindness if not treated soon enough. These patients will experience severe eye pain, headache, and vision loss due to the elevated IOP. This condition will require timely surgical intervention for relief.

Normal-tension glaucoma is a unique form of glaucoma that is not fully understood. Normal-tension glaucoma results in damage to the optic nerve despite normal IOP. It is thought to occur due to either increased nerve sensitivity or alterations in blood flow. Sometimes, these patients are treated with medicated eye drops that lower the IOP below the normal range.

Treatment With Marijuana

Several different drugs are effective at managing glaucoma and IOP. New research studies on medical marijuana usage and glaucoma have documented improvement in some patients. Still, due to the requirement to manage pressure 24 hours a day, Medical Marijuana is usually not a standalone solution for glaucoma.

There is still no FDA-approved form for medical use in America. Scientists and researchers can't say what ingredients might trigger reactions differently among individual patients.

Various options exist to lower IOP, such as prescription eye drops, laser treatment, and surgery such as trabeculectomy. Trabeculectomy involves removing pieces of tissue from inside the eye and inserting an artificial tube called a shunt into the drainage channel.

The Positive & Negative Aspects

Medical marijuana can control the pressure in your eyes to reduce damage to the optic nerve. Studies have shown that cannabis can lower IOP for glaucoma patients and those without glaucoma. Experts aren't sure how this works yet. No evidence suggests daily use will help prevent or slow down the progression of disease-related vision loss such as age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The good news is scientists continue to research and study the benefits that medical marijuana may hold.

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)

The benefit of medical marijuana in glaucoma sufferers is related to the endocannabinoid system, cannabinoids, and delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). THC contains high concentrations of various cannabinoids that have effectively lowered IOP.

Although glaucoma is a qualifying condition in Florida for Medical Marijuana usage, it is important to note that not all researchers agree with the findings. Many insist more long-term testing needs to be conducted before we can say anything definitive about how cannabis might affect one's vision over time.



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KIDNEY CANCER: Are You at Risk?

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

The kidneys are a major part of our detoxifying system. These two small bean-shaped organs clean the blood and filter waste products and toxins from the body through the urine. Kidney cancer is one of the ten most prevalent cancers. The lifetime risk for developing kidney cancer is about 1 in 46 in men and 1 in 82 in women.¹

The symptoms of kidney cancer often go unnoticed or don't begin to show until the tumor(s) has grown. However, some of the key indicators are as follows:

- Blood in the urine
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Fever or infection
- Swollen abdomen
- Lump on the side of the abdomen (with or without pain)
- Anemia
- Swollen legs and ankles
- Chronic inflammation
- High blood pressure
- Shortness of breath

If you have symptoms or your physician finds a lump during a physical examination, they will order diagnostic testing such as a renal arteriogram, MRI, CT Scan, blood and urine analysis, and a needle biopsy may be necessary.

There are some increased risk factors, which make some individuals more susceptible to renal cancer. The risks factors included:

- Being over the age of 40
- Being male
- Being black
- Smoking
- Obese
- Overuse of NSAIDs and other prescription medications
- Family History
- Chemical Exposures
- Kidney disease

Most kidney cancer appears first in the tubules of the kidneys. When the malignant cells form a tumor(s) the growth rate is typically slow, so the

likelihood of an early diagnosis is increased, and the treatment can usually be performed before the tumor has metastasized into any other organs.

Treatment

Depending on the stage and size of the tumor(s), your physician will develop a specific treatment plan tailored to your needs.

Typically, performing a nephrectomy treats kidney cancer. There are three main types of this surgical option. The first is a Partial nephrectomy, which removes the tumor and some of the surrounding tissue. The second is a Simple nephrectomy, which removes the entire kidney, and the third treatment method is a Radical nephrectomy, which removes the kidney, adrenal glands, lymph nodes, and any questionable surrounding tissue margins. These procedures can usually be done laparoscopically. Some patients may also require radiation or chemotherapy treatments.

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.

Source:

1. https://www.nfcr.org/cancer-types/kidney-cancer/?gclid=CjwKCAIAYc2BBhAaEiwA44-wW9qTM7gXbIKsBU1dxNN-rM7OKwmgG3j43bZni6h175MIIQCzwNsKORoCE5QQAvD_BwE

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
- Injections of Aranesp for Anemia related to Kidney Disease
- 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 education 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.

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CAN A HIGH-TECH CHAIR CURE INCONTINENCE?

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

Do you wear urinary pads or diapers? Do you leak when you exercise or sneeze? Aging, childbirth, and menopause can all lead to incontinence. There are many treatments such as surgical procedures, pessary devices, and medications to help cure or reduce incontinence.

There is a new device by BTL called Emsella that makes incontinence treatment as simple as sitting in a chair! The Emsella is a unique chair that patients can simply sit and relax in (fully clothed) and have their pelvic floor significantly strengthened during a 28 minute treatment.

The Emsella chair is being touted as the Kegel throne. Each treatment provides the equivalent of doing over 10,000 kegel exercises. It produces high-frequency vibrations with thousands of contractions per session that tighten the pelvic floor muscles and the bladder. Results can often be noticed as quickly as the first treatment. Most women and men will undergo just six sessions in a full three-week program to restore their pelvic muscle strength. The best part is, 67% of treated patients totally eliminated or decreased the use of hygienic pads, and 95% of treated patients improved quality of life.

Who Is The Right Candidate For BTL Emsella?

BTL EMSELLA™ is a great option for patients of any age who desire solution for urinary incontinence and improvement in their quality of life.

How Long Is The Treatment?

How Many Sessions Do I Need?

Your provider will tailor a treatment plan for you. A typical treatment takes 28 minutes and you will need about 6 sessions, scheduled twice a week.

What Does The Procedure Feel Like?

Is It Painful?

You will experience tingling and pelvic floor muscle contractions during the procedure. The treatment is painless and you may resume daily activities immediately after the treatment.



The following patients should not seek Emsella treatment.

1. Subject is pregnant, planning to get pregnant or within 3 months postpartum;
2. Subject has a pacemaker;
3. Subject has an implant or IUD containing metal (e.g. copper 7);
4. Subject has piercing between the waist and knees and is not willing to remove it before each treatment

How Fast Will I See Results?

You may observe improvement after a single session. The results will typically continue to improve over the next few weeks.¹

This progressive treatment is helping numerous men and women find their freedom, confidence, and get their life back without having to worry about urinary incontinence. Emsella has been featured on the Doctors and in various news and media outlets.

References:

1. Body by BTL, A Breakthrough Treatment For Incontinence And Confidence, 2019 Btl Industries Inc.



Some comments from local users:

- I don't have to worry about peeing when I sneeze anymore
- My husband definitely notices the difference
- I just feel lighter down there.

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Joseph Gauta, MD



Nicole Houser, PA-C


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Navigating Weight Management:

Prime Health Urgent Care's Medically Supervised Services

Many individuals use medically supervised weight management services to pursue a healthier lifestyle. Prime Health Urgent Care stands at the forefront, offering comprehensive programs overseen by board-certified providers. Let's explore the benefits of Prime Health's services and compare semaglutide drugs—Wegovy, Ozempic, and Mounjaro.

Prime Health Urgent Care's Weight Management Services:

Prime Health Urgent Care prioritizes your well-being, providing tailored weight management services. These services are supervised by experienced and certified healthcare providers, ensuring a personalized approach to achieving your health goals. The program combines medical expertise with lifestyle adjustments, fostering a holistic and sustainable approach to weight management.

Individuals may consider semaglutide options, such as Wegovy, Ozempic, or Mounjaro, for weight management for various reasons, backed by clinical evidence. One significant factor is the observed significant weight loss demonstrated in clinical trials. This can be particularly appealing for individuals struggling with obesity or overweight conditions.

Semaglutide drugs, including Wegovy and Ozempic, have received approval for both weight management and glycemic control in individuals with type 2 diabetes. For those managing both conditions, these medications offer a dual benefit. The convenience of once-weekly injections (Wegovy and Ozempic) or oral capsules (Mounjaro) may be attractive to individuals seeking a weight management solution with a less frequent dosing schedule.

These medications are often used in conjunction with lifestyle modifications, emphasizing a holistic approach to weight management. This may include dietary changes, increased physical activity, and behavioral strategies. Moreover, semaglutide drugs have undergone rigorous clinical testing, and their efficacy in promoting weight loss is supported by scientific evidence, providing individuals with confidence in the potential success of their weight management journey.

Some studies suggest that semaglutide drugs may have additional cardiovascular benefits beyond weight loss. This can be particularly relevant for individuals with obesity who may also have cardiovascular risk factors. For some individuals, starting

a prescribed medication for weight management can serve as a motivating factor. Knowing that they have a medical intervention and support from healthcare providers may encourage adherence to lifestyle changes.

Healthcare providers can tailor the use of semaglutide drugs to an individual's specific health profile, ensuring that the chosen medication aligns with the person's overall health needs and goals. The decision to use semaglutide for weight management should be made in consultation with a healthcare provider. They can assess individual health status, consider potential contraindications, and provide personalized recommendations based on the person's unique circumstances.

1. Wegovy (Semaglutide Injection 2.4 mg):

CLINICAL TRIALS:

In clinical trials, Wegovy demonstrated remarkable efficacy in promoting weight loss. Participants experienced a statistically significant reduction in body weight compared to a control group. Approximately 75% of participants achieved weight loss of 5% or more, and over 50% achieved weight loss of 10% or more.

Glycemic Control:

Wegovy has also shown benefits in improving glycemic control, making it a valuable option for individuals with type 2 diabetes. Clinical studies reported reductions in HbA1c levels, contributing to better overall blood sugar management.

Administration and Adherence:

One of Wegovy's notable features is its once-weekly injection, enhancing user convenience. However, adherence is essential, and users should be aware of potential gastrointestinal side effects, including nausea and diarrhea.

2. Ozempic (Semaglutide Injection 1 mg):

WEIGHT LOSS EFFICACY:

Ozempic has demonstrated efficacy in promoting weight loss. Clinical trials revealed a significant reduction in body weight compared to a placebo group. A notable percentage of participants achieved clinically meaningful weight loss, reinforcing Ozempic's effectiveness.

DUAL APPROVAL:

Ozempic has received approval for weight management and glycemic control in individuals with type 2 diabetes. This dual approval makes Ozempic a versatile option for those addressing weight and diabetes management.

Convenience and Side Effects:

Ozempic is administered once a week, providing a convenient dosing schedule. Gastrointestinal side effects, such as nausea and diarrhea, are potential considerations, and users should be vigilant about their impact on adherence.

3. Mounjaro (Semaglutide Oral Capsules):

ORAL ALTERNATIVE:

Mounjaro stands out as an oral alternative to injectable semaglutide, offering a different administration method for individuals who may prefer capsules over injections. Clinical studies have supported its effectiveness in promoting weight loss and improving glycemic control.

Real-World Data:

While Mounjaro has demonstrated efficacy in clinical trials, its real-world performance is an ongoing study area. Limited real-world data is available compared to the more established injectable semaglutide options.

Gastrointestinal Effects:

Gastrointestinal side effects, a common theme among semaglutide drugs, may also be observed with Mounjaro.

Wegovy, Ozempic, and Mounjaro are all semaglutide drugs that have shown efficacy in weight management and, in some cases, glycemic control. Individual responses may vary, and the choice between these medications should be made in consultation with a healthcare provider.

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7 COMMON CAUSES OF LOW BACK PAIN, THE LEADING CAUSE OF DISABILITY WORLDWIDE

By Amanda N. Sacino, MD-PhD • Neurosurgeon and Managing Partner

Back pain is a widespread ailment affecting millions worldwide. A recent peer-reviewed study published in *Lancet Rheumatology* found that back pain is the leading cause of disability worldwide and is projected to affect almost 1 billion people by 2050 (1). While it can arise from various factors, certain conditions are more commonly responsible for this discomfort. This article delves into seven prevalent causes: spinal stenosis, spondylolisthesis, herniated disc, synovial cyst, compression fracture, muscle strain, and excessive sitting.

1. Spinal Stenosis

Spinal stenosis occurs when the spaces within your spine narrow, putting pressure on the nerves traveling through the spine. This condition is most often seen in adults over 50 years old. Symptoms vary depending on the location of the stenosis and can include back pain, numbness, weakness, and cramping or pain in the legs. The narrowing is typically caused by wear-and-tear changes in the spine related to osteoarthritis. Management typically involves non-opioid analgesic medications, physical therapy, targeted epidural steroid injections, and, as a last resort, surgery to create additional space for the spinal cord or nerves.

2. Spondylolisthesis

Spondylolisthesis is a condition where one of the vertebrae slips out of place onto the bone below it. This is often due to a fracture or a defect in the pars interarticularis, part of the vertebra. While it can occur in athletes who engage in sports that put stress on the back, it can also occur as people age and their discs become less spongy. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and include lower back pain, stiffness, muscle tightness, and nerve pain. Treatment options include physical therapy, medications, corticosteroid injections, bracing, and in some cases, surgery.

3. Herniated Disc

A herniated disc, also known as a slipped or ruptured disc, occurs when the soft inner portion of the disc protrudes through a tear in the tougher exterior. This herniation can irritate nearby nerves, resulting in pain, numbness, or weakness in an arm or leg. While a herniated disc can occur anywhere in the spine, it most frequently appears in the lower back. Treatments for a herniated disc range from rest, bracing, and pain relief medications to physical therapy, corticosteroid injections, and, in severe cases, surgery.



4. Synovial Cyst

Synovial cysts are fluid-filled sacs that can develop in the spine because of degeneration. These cysts are commonly found in the lumbar spine and can cause back pain, sciatica, or spinal stenosis. While these cysts are generally benign, they can become problematic if they grow large enough to compress nerve roots. Treatment may involve anti-inflammatory medications, corticosteroid injections, or surgical removal, depending on the severity of symptoms.

5. Compression Fracture

A compression fracture occurs when one of the vertebrae in the spine collapses. This is most commonly due to osteoporosis, especially in older adults, but can also result from injury or trauma. Symptoms include sudden, severe back pain, loss of height, or spinal deformity. Treatment focuses on pain relief, bracing, treating the osteoporosis to prevent further fractures, and in some cases, a surgical procedure like kyphoplasty can help to stabilize the fractured vertebra.

6. Muscle Strain

Muscle strain, though less severe than other causes, is one of the most common causes of back pain. It can occur due to sudden heavy lifting, awkward movements, or chronic overuse, leading to stretched or torn muscles or tendons. Symptoms include pain that worsens with movement, muscle spasms, and decreased range of motion. Treatment typically involves rest, ice or heat application, over-the-counter pain relievers, gentle stretching, and bracing. Most strains heal within a few weeks.

7. Excessive Sitting

In today's increasingly sedentary lifestyle, excessive sitting has emerged as a significant contributor to back pain. Prolonged sitting can lead to poor posture, increased stress on the back, and muscle imbalances, resulting in discomfort and pain. To mitigate these effects, it's recommended to take regular breaks to stand and stretch, maintain good posture, and engage in regular exercise.

Conclusion

Back pain can significantly impact daily life, but understanding its common causes is the first step towards effective treatment. While some conditions are more severe and may require medical and surgical intervention, many cases of back pain can be managed with self-care and lifestyle changes including exercise and walking. It's important to consult a healthcare professional if you experience persistent or severe back pain to determine the underlying cause and appropriate treatment.

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1. GBD 2021 Low Back Pain Collaborators. Global, regional, and national burden of low back pain, 1990-2020, its attributable risk factors, and projections to 2050: a systematic analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study 2021. *Lancet Rheumatol.* 2023;5(6):e316-e329.

About Amanda Sacino, MD, PhD

Dr. Sacino was born and raised on the east coast of Florida. After securing her undergraduate degree at Boston University, she returned to her home state and attended the University of Florida, where she obtained her medical and post-doctorate degrees.

Her PhD work focused on proteinopathies, mainly Parkinsonism. But her mentors recognized her surgical precision skills, and so Dr. Sacino pursued extensive training in cranial, spine, and peripheral nerve surgery at Johns Hopkins Hospital. From there, she completed two spine fellowships at Johns Hopkins Hospital and the Swedish Neuroscience Institute. Her surgical spine training includes experience with degenerative diseases, congenital diseases, deformity, oncology, and trauma.

Dr. Sacino trained under Dr. Nicholas Theodore, the inventor of the Globus ExcelsusGPS robot. She was present during the first robotic surgery at Johns Hopkins and trained extensively for five years with the robot during both spine and cranial cases.

Dr. Sacino's high standards and pursuit of quality has led her to become well-respected by her mentors and peers. Her goal is to provide patients with case-specific solutions so they have all the information and options they need to make informed decisions.



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REVAMP YOUR HEALTH: Essential Diet and Nutrition **TIPS** for a Vibrant New Year

As the new year dawns, many of us embrace the opportunity for a fresh start, especially when it comes to our health. Making subtle yet impactful changes to our diet and nutrition habits can pave the way for a vibrant and healthier lifestyle. Here are some tips to kickstart your journey towards a balanced and nourishing year ahead.

1. Mindful Eating: Start by fostering a mindful approach to eating. Slow down, savor each bite, and pay attention to hunger cues. Engaging your senses while eating helps you appreciate food more and prevents overeating.

2. Prioritize Whole Foods: Base your meals around whole, unprocessed foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. These nutrient-dense foods provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants necessary for optimal health.

3. Hydration is Key: Hydrate your body consistently throughout the day. Water not only quenches thirst but also aids digestion, supports metabolism, and enhances overall energy levels. Aim for at least 8-10 cups of water daily.

4. Balanced Plate Approach: Practice portion control and create balanced meals by incorporating various food groups. Fill half your plate with vegetables and fruits, one-quarter with lean proteins, and the remaining quarter with whole grains or healthy carbohydrates.

5. Snack Smartly: Opt for nutritious snacks like nuts, yogurt, fruits, or veggies with hummus to keep energy levels steady between meals. Avoid highly processed snacks high in added sugars and unhealthy fats.

6. Limit Added Sugars and Refined Carbs: Minimize the intake of added sugars and refined carbohydrates found in sugary beverages, sweets, and processed snacks. Instead, choose natural sweeteners like honey or opt for whole fruits to satisfy your sweet tooth.



7. Be Mindful of Portions: Pay attention to portion sizes. Even healthy foods can contribute to weight gain if consumed excessively. Use smaller plates, bowls, and utensils to help control portion sizes.

8. Include Healthy Fats: Incorporate sources of healthy fats, such as avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil, into your diet. These fats support heart health, improve nutrient absorption, and aid in maintaining healthy skin.

9. Read Food Labels: Develop the habit of reading food labels to understand what ingredients are in the products you consume. Look out for hidden sugars, unhealthy fats, and artificial additives.

10. Practice Consistency, Not Perfection: Embrace a realistic approach to nutrition. Consistency in making healthy choices over time is more beneficial than striving for perfection. Allow yourself occasional indulgences without guilt.

11. Plan and Prep Meals: Plan your meals ahead of time and prep whenever possible. Having nutritious meals readily available can help you avoid unhealthy food choices during busy days.

12. Seek Professional Guidance: When in doubt, consult a registered dietitian or nutritionist. They can provide personalized advice and guidance tailored to your specific health needs and goals.

As you embark on this journey toward a healthier lifestyle, remember that small, sustainable changes yield significant results. Embrace these diet and nutrition tips as stepping stones toward a more vibrant, energized, and healthier you in the coming year. Cheers to a nourishing and fulfilling new chapter in your health journey!



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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HARNESSING CBD'S POTENTIAL: Empowering Pain Management and Relief

In a world where chronic pain affects millions, the quest for effective relief remains a paramount concern. Among various remedies, cannabidiol (CBD) emerges as a beacon of hope, offering a natural alternative for those seeking respite from pain. As the conversation around CBD continues to evolve, its potential as a pain management solution gains traction, prompting a closer examination of its effects, applications, and implications.

Pain, whether acute or chronic, profoundly impacts daily life, often leading to reduced mobility, mental distress, and diminished quality of life. Traditional pharmaceutical options may carry side effects or dependency risks, prompting individuals to explore alternative approaches. CBD, derived from the cannabis plant, presents itself as a promising avenue due to its purported analgesic and anti-inflammatory properties without inducing the psychoactive effects associated with its counterpart, THC.

Research into CBD's efficacy for pain management reveals encouraging findings. Studies suggest that CBD interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system, influencing receptors responsible for pain modulation and inflammation. This interaction potentially alleviates discomfort associated with conditions such as arthritis, neuropathic pain, migraines, and even post-surgery recovery. However, while anecdotal evidence and some research suggest positive outcomes, further comprehensive clinical trials are needed to substantiate CBD's effectiveness across various types and intensities of pain.



Moreover, the versatility of CBD extends beyond oral consumption. Topical applications, such as creams and oils, offer localized relief for joint pain or muscle soreness, allowing individuals to target specific areas of discomfort. This targeted approach presents a non-invasive option, particularly appealing to those averse to systemic medication or seeking complementary therapies.

Despite its promising potential, navigating the landscape of CBD for pain management requires informed decision-making. Factors like dosage, quality of products, and individual variations in response necessitate caution and consultation with healthcare professionals. Understanding the legality, sourcing, and reputable brands becomes crucial in ensuring safe and effective use.

Empowering individuals with comprehensive information about CBD for pain management remains pivotal. Education campaigns, healthcare provider

training, and continued scientific inquiry play vital roles in demystifying misconceptions, addressing concerns, and fostering a nuanced understanding of CBD's potential benefits and limitations.

In conclusion, CBD's emergence as a potential ally in the realm of pain management signifies a promising frontier. While research continues to unravel its mechanisms and efficacy, its growing popularity underscores the need for informed decisions, transparent discourse, and a concerted effort to leverage its benefits responsibly. As society navigates this evolving landscape, collaboration between stakeholders—scientists, regulators, healthcare professionals, and consumers—remains integral in harnessing CBD's potential as a viable option for those seeking relief from the burden of pain.

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.

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Compassionate Home Health:

Excellence in Promoting, Maintaining, and Restoring Health

In the sphere of home health, a profound dedication to compassion intertwines seamlessly with the pursuit of excellence. It's not merely about administering care; it's a heartfelt commitment to promoting, maintaining, and restoring health for those entrusted to our care. Within this compassionate paradigm lies an unwavering passion for excellence, shaping the very essence of how we serve.

At the core of compassionate home health lies the understanding that each individual's journey toward wellness is unique. It's about recognizing the person beyond the ailment and establishing a profound connection built on empathy and understanding. This approach transcends the mere clinical routine; it cultivates a sense of trust, fostering an environment where individuals feel heard and cared for on a deeper level.

To promote health in the home setting requires a holistic view that extends beyond just physical wellness. It encompasses emotional support, mental resilience, and nurturing an environment that encourages overall well-being. It's about empowering individuals to take charge of their health while providing the necessary guidance and support to navigate the intricacies of their wellness journey.

Maintaining health within the confines of one's home demands a harmonious blend of expertise and personalized care. It involves meticulous planning, where every aspect of care is tailored to suit the unique needs of each individual. Whether it's managing medications, assisting with daily activities, or offering companionship, the goal remains unwavering – to maintain the highest standard of health and comfort.

However, the true essence of compassionate home health shines when restoration becomes imperative. It's during these challenging times that the dedication to excellence truly becomes palpable. Restoring health isn't just about addressing the physical symptoms; it's about instilling hope, inspiring resilience, and guiding individuals through the process of healing with unwavering support and encouragement.



A passion for excellence becomes the cornerstone in every facet of our service. It drives continuous improvement in the quality of care provided, propelling us to seek innovative approaches, staying abreast of the latest advancements in healthcare, and fostering an environment where learning and development are constant companions.

Moreover, this passion transcends individual roles; it becomes a collective commitment ingrained in the ethos of every caregiver, nurse, and therapist member. It's the unwavering dedication to going above and beyond, to not just meet but exceed expectations, ensuring that those we serve receive nothing short of exemplary care.

In the pursuit of excellence, compassion becomes the guiding light that illuminates every decision made and action taken. It's the willingness to listen intently, to hold hands during difficult times, and to celebrate victories – big or small. Excellence isn't just a standard; it's a way of life that echoes in every interaction, every treatment, and every smile shared.

Compassionate home health, driven by a passion for excellence, isn't merely a profession; it's a calling. It's a commitment to humanity, a dedication to making a tangible difference in the lives of those we serve. It's about transforming healthcare into an experience imbued with empathy, respect, and a relentless pursuit of the highest quality care.

In conclusion, the heart of compassionate home health beats in rhythm with the passion for excellence. It's a symphony where empathy, dedication, and expertise harmonize to create a melody of healing and hope. This compassionate pursuit of excellence defines our commitment to promoting, maintaining, and restoring health for those whose lives we touch, leaving an indelible mark of care and compassion.

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EMBRACING NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS: Prioritizing Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Recovery

As the calendar turns a fresh page, the arrival of a new year heralds a wave of resolutions and aspirations. Among the plethora of goals set, there is an overarching opportunity that deserves spotlighting: the importance of prioritizing mental health and the journey of substance use disorder recovery. It is not just a chance for personal growth but also for societal progress.

The tradition of New Year's resolutions often involves commitments to physical fitness, career advancements and/or lifestyle changes. However, the realm of mental health and substance use disorder recovery is equally, if not more, vital. It is a terrain that is often neglected or misunderstood, yet it forms the foundation of overall well-being. Let us all include resolutions that lead to overall wellness with taking an inventory of our own mental health and whether or not we may have a substance use disorder. In looking inwards and taking a self-inventory, we often are able to accept and acknowledge those who are battling mental health and substance use disorders on a daily basis.

Setting resolutions related to mental health and recovery from substance use disorders can encompass multifaceted goals. It might involve a commitment to seek professional help, engage in therapy or counseling, prioritize self-care routines as well as form and strengthen personal relationships. These resolutions not only help the individual but will help families as well as the community/society at large function in a positive and optimistic manner further contributing to overall resilience.

Mental health, often relegated to the shadows of stigma resulting in shame and negativity, is finally starting to gain the attention and recognition that it deserves and must have for progress to be made. Understanding the nuances of mental well-being, acknowledging its significance, and having open discussions, will contribute to creating a more compassionate society. A society that may be more open to prioritizing and promoting programs and resources towards providing access to care as well as to help provide support so that care can be received and initiated. Resolution setting not only becomes a tool for personal growth but also a way to enhance collective awareness.

In a similar vein, the journey of recovery from substance use disorders requires a resilient commitment. It is a path for many that is not linear and often laden with challenges but at its root is based on hope and transformation. Setting resolutions in this domain might involve commitment to ongoing sobriety, engaging in support groups or rekindling lost passions and pursuits that aid in sustaining recovery.

Creating a supportive environment for those embracing mental health resolutions or embarking on the path of recovery from substance use disorders is fundamental. Encouragement, empathy and understanding go a long way in fortifying resolutions and ensuring individuals feel empowered in their journey. Furthermore, efforts to educate and provide support for not only those who experience and suffer from disorders of mental health and substance use disorder but more importantly for the family, friends and loved ones of

those with the disease is paramount. These diseases have a ripple effect in that society at large tends to be affected and also for most it is generational; the significance of the need to accept and identify mental health and substance use disorder as disease processes that are amenable to treatment is paramount. By doing so, the cycle of stigma/shame leading to delay as well as to no care received can be broken and we as a society can move towards helping ease the pain and suffering. Additionally educating, promoting and incorporating self-care practices such as optimizing nutrition, prioritizing and promoting attention to the value of sleep to include quality, physical movement and stress reducing activities can complement these resolutions. Taking small but consistent steps towards improving mental well being and recovery fosters resilience and provides ongoing positive feedback to continue to work towards sustained wellness in general.

In essence the New Year symbolizes not just a change in dates but an opportunity for personal and collective renewal. By placing mental health and substance use disorder recovery at the forefront of our resolutions, we pave the way for a society that values well-being, empathy, and support for all its members. It's a transformative journey that begins with a resolution—a commitment that truly matters: our mental health and the journey towards recovery.

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Navigating Weight Loss with Ozempic/Semaglutide: IMPACT ON JOINT AND BACK PAIN TREATMENTS

By Physicians Rehabilitation

Weight loss and its connection to joint and back pain treatments have been areas of significant interest for those exploring the benefits of medications like Ozempic/Semaglutide. The correlation between weight reduction and pain management holds promise, but understanding their intricate relationship is crucial.

Ozempic/Semaglutide, known for its effectiveness in aiding weight loss by regulating appetite and reducing calorie intake, has drawn attention not only for its weight-reduction abilities but also for its potential impact on joint and back pain. Research suggests that obesity significantly contributes to joint and back pain due to added stress on weight-bearing joints and strain on the back muscles. Therefore, the weight loss achieved through medications like Ozempic/Semaglutide might alleviate these issues.

The mechanism behind this relationship lies in the reduction of excess weight. As individuals shed pounds while on Ozempic/Semaglutide, the pressure on joints lessens, potentially resulting in decreased joint pain. Moreover, weight loss can alleviate strain on the back, relieving discomfort and improving mobility for those suffering from chronic back pain.

However, it's essential to approach this connection with a nuanced perspective. Weight loss, although beneficial, might initially exacerbate joint and back pain for some individuals. Rapid weight reduction can lead to temporary changes in muscle structure and joint alignment, causing discomfort until the body adjusts to the new weight.

Additionally, Ozempic/Semaglutide might interact with certain pain medications commonly used for joint and back pain. Understanding these interactions is vital to ensure optimal pain management while undergoing a weight loss regimen. Consulting healthcare providers becomes imperative to navigate potential medication adjustments or considerations for alternative pain management strategies.



Incorporating a holistic approach that combines weight loss strategies with targeted exercises aimed at strengthening muscles supporting joints and the back can further enhance the positive outcomes. Physical therapy, low-impact exercises, and adopting ergonomic practices in daily activities play crucial roles in managing joint and back pain while on a weight loss journey with Ozempic/Semaglutide.

Nevertheless, individual responses to Ozempic/Semaglutide and its influence on joint and back pain treatments can vary. Some may experience significant relief, while others might notice moderate improvements or even initial discomfort before benefits manifest. Monitoring one's body, staying in touch with healthcare professionals, and maintaining open communication about experiences are pivotal during this process.

Furthermore, lifestyle modifications beyond medication play a pivotal role in achieving sustainable weight loss and managing joint and back pain.

Healthy dietary choices, adequate hydration, stress management techniques, and sufficient sleep complement the effects of Ozempic/Semaglutide, fostering an overall healthier lifestyle conducive to weight loss and pain management.



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In conclusion, Ozempic/Semaglutide's role in weight loss holds promise for positively impacting joint and back pain. While the connection between weight reduction and pain management is notable, it's essential to approach it with a comprehensive understanding of individual responses, potential interactions, and the need for a holistic approach combining medication, lifestyle adjustments, and targeted exercises. Ultimately, navigating weight loss with Ozempic/Semaglutide while addressing joint and back pain requires personalized strategies tailored to individual needs, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between patients and healthcare providers.

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!

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UNVEILING THE HIDDEN IMPACT OF PROCESSED FOODS

BY Kasey Cook, RN, Owner

In today's fast-paced world, convenience often outweighs consideration for nutritional value. Processed foods, with their allure of quick preparation and prolonged shelf life, have become staples in many diets. However, behind their convenience lies a hidden reality that often goes unnoticed: the depletion of essential minerals and the adverse impact on overall nutrition.

Minerals play a crucial role in maintaining various bodily functions, from bone health and immune system support to nerve function and energy production. Unfortunately, the processing of foods often strips them of these vital nutrients. The refining and manufacturing processes involved in creating processed foods remove or diminish minerals like magnesium, potassium, calcium, and zinc, which are essential for our well-being.

Take, for instance, the journey of grains. Whole grains, such as brown rice or whole wheat, contain valuable minerals in their natural form. However, the refining process to create white flour eliminates a significant portion of these minerals, leaving behind a product that lacks the nutritional punch of its unprocessed counterpart. Similar depletion occurs in the transformation of natural fruits and vegetables into sugary snacks or canned goods, where vital nutrients are lost in the processing stages.



This mineral depletion doesn't only affect the nutritional quality of processed foods; it also leads to potential health issues. Mineral deficiencies have been linked to various health problems, including weakened immune systems, bone disorders like osteoporosis, muscle cramps, fatigue, and even cardiovascular issues. These deficiencies, often exacerbated by diets high in processed foods, contribute to a growing public health concern.

What exacerbates this problem is the typical Western diet's reliance on processed foods. The convenience and ubiquity of these products make them difficult to avoid. However, as awareness grows about their nutritional shortcomings, there's a growing movement toward advocating for whole, unprocessed foods.

One way to counter mineral depletion and improve nutritional intake is to prioritize whole foods in our diets. Incorporating fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats can significantly boost our mineral intake while providing a wide array of essential nutrients.

Furthermore, education plays a pivotal role in addressing this issue. Empowering individuals with knowledge about the impact of processed foods on mineral depletion and overall nutrition can drive informed dietary choices. Governments, health organizations, and communities can collaborate to promote nutritional literacy and emphasize the importance of whole foods in maintaining optimal health.

In conclusion, while processed foods offer convenience, their contribution to mineral depletion and compromised nutrition cannot be ignored. Understanding the hidden costs of these dietary choices empowers individuals to make informed decisions that prioritize health. By embracing whole, unprocessed foods and advocating for nutritional education, we can pave the way toward a healthier, mineral-rich future.

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10 Questions to Ask Your Doctor Before a Total Knee Replacement

If you're considering a total knee replacement, you should know a few things first. A total knee replacement is a surgical procedure where the damaged parts of your knee are replaced with artificial components. While it is an effective way to reduce pain and improve mobility, it is a major surgery that requires careful consideration before embarking on the journey.

Having an honest dialogue with your doctor is an essential part of preparing for any surgery. That's why we've put together a list of 10 questions you should ask your doctor before your total knee replacement:

1. What Are The Risks?

One of the most important things you could ask your doctor is about the risks of the operation. Like any surgery, total knee replacements can come with the risk of infection and other complications.

2. How Long Will It Take To Recover?

While this can vary based on your condition, your doctor can give you the best estimate of how long your recovery should take. If a lengthy recovery is involved, preparing for that period ahead of time can help you avoid unnecessary stress.

3. What Rehabilitation Will I Need?

You will want to know what kind of rehabilitation will be required after your procedure. Make sure you are comfortable with your doctor's plan, and ask for more details about it, if needed.

4. Is Pain Relief Available?

Pain relief is an essential factor when it comes to total knee replacements. Ask your doctor what level of pain you might expect after the surgery and how long it will last. You can also ask whether pain relief medications will be prescribed.

5. What Lifestyle Changes Do I Need To Make Before or After My Surgery?

This is an essential question, as you'll want to follow your doctor's instructions both pre- and post-operation. Ask your doctor what is expected of you before and after your treatment to ensure you're on the right track to recovery.

6. How Soon Can I Return To My Normal Activities?

Knowing when you can return to your normal activities is important. Ask your doctor what timeline you should expect for returning to work or your regular hobbies and interests. If the timeline doesn't work for you, that is a factor you must consider.

7. Will I Need Assistance During My Recovery?

Depending on the severity of your condition, you may need assistance with daily activities after the operation. Ask your doctor what level of help you may need during the recovery process. Not only does this prepare you for what to expect, but it allows your friend or family member to prepare, too.

8. How Will My Mobility Be Affected?

It's important to know what kind of mobility restrictions you may have following your surgery. Ask your

doctor about any limitations to expect following the procedure and how long they may last. You can also ask how your mobility will improve once you have recovered.

9. What Is The Success Rate For This Surgery?

The success rate for total knee replacement is high, at over 90%. Feel free to ask for a second opinion if you have any doubts about the results you can expect.

10. Are There Any Alternatives I Should Consider?

Finally, it is important to always explore all your options before committing to surgery. Ask your doctor what other treatments or therapies you could consider before undergoing a total knee replacement. This will allow you to make an informed decision and select the best treatment for your condition.

These are all important questions that should be asked before committing to any kind of surgery. By asking these questions, you can ensure you have all the information you need to make an informed decision and have a successful outcome from your total knee replacement surgery. Discuss all options with your doctor and listen carefully to their advice.

If you are considering a total knee replacement, or if you have suffered any kind of injury, visit the Orthopedic Specialists of Southwest Florida. Our team of experienced professionals can help you get the best outcome possible with a customized treatment plan tailored to your needs and goals. Contact us today to learn how we can help you get back to living pain-free.

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NAVIGATING INFLUENZA A AND B: TAMIFLU, TIMING, AND PROPHYLACTIC MEASURES

By Dr. Michel Saaloukeh - MD, FAAP, IBCLC

Influenza A and B viruses are perennial challenges in healthcare, causing seasonal outbreaks worldwide. Understanding the nuances of treatment with antiviral medications like Tamiflu (oseltamivir), the criticality of timing and dosage, as well as proactive prophylactic measures, is pivotal in managing and containing these infections.

Both Influenza A and B share commonalities in symptoms, ranging from fever, cough, and sore throat to more severe complications such as pneumonia. However, their genetic structures differ, affecting their susceptibility to antiviral drugs. Tamiflu, a neuraminidase inhibitor, stands as a frontline defense, effective against both strains by impeding the virus's ability to spread within the body.

The timing of Tamiflu administration is paramount. Initiating treatment within the first 48 hours of symptom onset significantly reduces the duration and severity of the illness. While the drug remains beneficial beyond this window, its efficacy diminishes as the virus progresses. Physicians often recommend a five-day course, yet individual cases might necessitate adjustments based on the patient's health status and response.

Dosage precision is equally critical. Typically administered orally, Tamiflu dosing varies based on age, weight, and severity of symptoms. Children, adults,



and high-risk individuals may require different dosages, emphasizing the importance of medical consultation before medication intake.

Beyond treatment, preventive strategies play a pivotal role. Vaccination stands as the most effective measure against influenza. Annual flu vaccines are designed to target prevalent strains, bolstering the immune system and reducing the risk and severity of infection. Moreover, maintaining good hygiene practices—regular handwashing, covering coughs and sneezes, and avoiding close contact with infected individuals—proves instrumental in curbing the spread of the virus.

In high-risk scenarios, such as influenza outbreaks in closed communities or households with infected individuals, prophylactic use of Tamiflu can be considered. This preemptive approach involves administering Tamiflu to individuals who have been in close contact with infected persons, aiming to prevent the onset of symptoms or mitigate their severity. However, this strategy necessitates careful assessment by healthcare professionals to balance benefits and potential side effects.

While Tamiflu remains a cornerstone in influenza management, emerging strains and variations in viral susceptibility necessitate ongoing research and vigilance. The dynamic nature of influenza viruses underscores the importance of continued surveillance, swift diagnosis, and adherence to evolving treatment guidelines.

In conclusion, navigating the complexities of influenza A and B infections involves a multi-pronged approach. Timely administration and precise dosing of Tamiflu can significantly mitigate the impact of the illness, especially when complemented by vaccination and stringent preventive measures. Healthcare providers play a pivotal role in guiding treatment decisions, underscoring the significance of collaborative efforts in combating these seasonal adversaries.

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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New Year's Resolutions for A Healthy Smile

By Dr. Ricardo S. Bocanegra, DDS

A new Year, new you! There's no better way to solve dental issues by avoiding them in the first place so why not include your oral health in your list of resolutions for this new year. After all, with the cost of dental care on the rise, prevention is key to savings!

The New Year is an opportunity to make positive changes in your life and your dental health is no exception. Establishing a habit of visiting the dentist for regular check ups and periodontal cleanings will benefit your overall health. By enhancing your oral care routine, avoiding harmful behaviors, and making balanced dietary choices, you'll be making a huge impact on your long-term dental health.

Helpful tip: Consistency is key when it comes to establishing new habits.

Power Up Your Habits

With practice as part of your normal routine, a widely-avoided activity like flossing your teeth can evolve from a low point in your day to something you enjoy. As you clean between your teeth and brush regularly, you may surprise yourself by observing that your gums become less sensitive, you bleed less, and you enjoy the unique feeling of a fresh smile.

Proper dental care is easier than you may imagine because the simple choices you make can cause profound changes to your oral health. Here are a few habits that are beneficial:

- Gently brush for two minutes twice a day using a soft-bristled toothbrush to avoid damaging your enamel.
- When using a toothbrush, hold it at a 45-degree angle to your gumline and clean each surface of your teeth.
- Use a toothpaste with fluoride to help keep your teeth healthy.
- Thoroughly clean between your teeth once a day.
- You can use a flossing device, floss, or an interdental brush—whatever you feel most comfortable using!
- Rinse using mouthwash or an antiseptic mouthrinse after brushing.



Practicing your oral care routine twice a day will have a profound effect on your mouth's health. However, there are a few more important steps to take to ensure your oral care isn't suffering in other areas. Keep reading below for more ideas for other changes you can make.

Healthier Dietary Choices

Your diet is crucial when it comes to keeping your smile in top shape. What you eat can become food for bacteria in your mouth and potentially contribute to cavities, gum disease, and other conditions.

Steps to choose a healthier diet may include:

- Limit your consumption of sugary or acidic foods and beverages
- Reduce snacking between meals
- Rinse with water after meals or sugary drinks
- Aim to eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and other items packed with nutrients
- Talk to your dental or medical professional to ensure your diet includes enough vitamins and nutrients to keep your teeth strong

Dental Restorations and Orthodontics

Today is the perfect time to address any dental problems requiring your attention, like an improper bite, damaged tooth, or cavity. Your dental professional can recommend the appropriate restoration to potentially treat the underlying cause of your concern, prevent future problems, and improve your smile's appearance at the same time!

Say No To Dry Mouth

Your saliva has a vital function in maintaining the health of your teeth, gums, and mouth. It provides the enamel of your teeth with minerals, neutralizes the pH level (also known as acidity), and helps wash away food matter and debris. Dry mouth leads to many oral health problems.

You can reduce dry mouth by incorporating these practices:

- Chew sugar-free gum to promote saliva production
- Consume milk or dairy products to increase saliva production
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption or using illegal drugs that can cause dry mouth
- Ask your medical or dental professional if any over-the-counter or prescription medications you're taking may be associated with decreased saliva production
- Stay hydrated by drinking water regularly, especially before bed
- Quit Tobacco Products
- Tobacco stains your teeth and increase your risk of many dental problems.

Routine Dental Visits

We recommend visiting your dental professional at least twice a year or every six months. The best way to prevent dental issues in their tracks is to detect them early or stop them from happening in the first place. Regular visits to your dentist will help ensure that no dental issues go unnoticed or worsen to something more serious and more costly.

A positive step is to budget for regular dental visits and save money if any unforeseen injuries or dental visits occur. A small cost of maintenance and regular visits upfront will help prevent issues that can be far more expensive in the long run. Our office offers a dental Saving plan that helps you save money in preventative and restorative services. Call our office at 239-482-8806 for more information on how we can make your new year's resolution affordable and get you up to date with your oral health!

Porto Fino Dental

6805 Porto Fino Cir., Fort Myers, FL 33912

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www.portofinodental.org

Nourishing Companions: Unveiling the Vitality of Diet and Nutrition for Pets

Our furry, feathery, and scaly friends are not just pets; they are beloved companions who deserve the utmost care and attention, especially when it comes to their diet and nutrition. Just like us, their human counterparts, animals thrive when provided with a balanced and nourishing diet. The importance of diet and nutrition for pets cannot be overstated; it serves as the cornerstone for their overall well-being and longevity.

Adequate nutrition forms the bedrock of a pet's health. Essential nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals are vital for their growth, energy, and immune system. Each species and breed have specific dietary needs, and meeting these requirements ensures their bodies function optimally. For instance, carnivorous pets like cats need high protein diets to support their muscle maintenance and overall health, while herbivorous animals such as rabbits require a diet rich in fiber to maintain healthy digestion.

The quality and source of pet food are pivotal. Opting for high-quality, well-balanced commercial pet food or preparing homemade meals under veterinary guidance can significantly impact an animal's health. Quality food choices can prevent common health issues like obesity, dental problems, and skin conditions. Moreover, specialized diets can cater to specific health conditions like allergies, diabetes, or renal issues, enhancing the pet's quality of life.



Beyond physical health, nutrition influences a pet's behavior and mental well-being. A nutrient-rich diet can foster better cognition, improved mood, and reduced stress levels. Behavioral problems in pets can often be linked to inadequate nutrition, highlighting the intricate connection between diet and mental health.

However, navigating the realm of pet nutrition can be challenging amidst the vast array of options available. Consulting a veterinarian or a certified animal nutritionist is paramount to tailor a diet suitable for an individual pet's needs. They can provide guidance on portion sizes, dietary restrictions, and the appropriate balance of nutrients, ensuring that pets receive a diet aligned with their specific requirements.

In recent years, the trend of holistic and natural diets for pets has gained momentum. Owners are increasingly recognizing the significance of whole, unprocessed foods and organic ingredients for their furry companions. While these options can be beneficial, it's crucial to ensure they meet the nutritional standards necessary for the pet's health.

Ultimately, the significance of diet and nutrition for pets transcends mere sustenance; it directly influences their quality and longevity of life. Responsible pet ownership involves providing not just love and shelter but also a well-rounded, nutritious diet that caters to their individual needs. As guardians of these cherished beings, it's our responsibility to ensure they receive the best possible nutrition, enriching their lives and fostering a stronger bond between pets and their human counterparts.

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Slowing the Pace of Your Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

Remember the old merry-go-rounds on the playground when you were a kid? You would spin in circles until you felt like you were going to fly off. That's how life can feel if you don't make some necessary changes.

You live a much faster lifestyle than your parents did. Your children will live an even faster lifestyle than you did. As we enter a new year, perhaps it is a good time to evaluate the pace of your life and make some necessary adjustments. The Psalmist tells us:

2In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.
Psalm 127:2

If you are getting up early and staying up late but still don't feel like you can get everything done... you are probably trying to do too much.

Living at a hectic pace comes at a price. You end up feeling more stressed because you are trying to cram too many things into your day. You end up having no margin in your life. As the margins get tighter the stress goes higher.

You have to take time to recharge your batteries. Here's a lesson I learned years ago: You have just enough time to do the will of God. If you can't get everything done on your "to do" list, maybe there are things on the list you shouldn't be doing.

I want to share with you two simple strategies to help you slow down the pace of your life so that you can enjoy life.

The first strategy is to learn to be content. If you're serious about slowing down, you don't start with your schedule—you start with your heart.

The Apostle Paul said this about contentment. *"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."*

Philippians 4:11-13

If you're going to slow down your life, you have to learn contentment. Paul also said this about contentment: *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it."* 1 Tim. 6:6-7

What he is saying in these passages is that we need to understand that life isn't about things. Contentment means this: I don't need more in order to be happy.

I'm not waiting for *more* in order to be happy. I'm happy right now. I have dreams and I have goals but I don't need *more* in order to be happy. That's contentment.

Contentment will come easier when you realize two things: life is not a competition with other people and having *more* will not make you happier. This is not the message promoted by our culture, but it is true.

Jesus said it like this, *"Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.'" Luke 12:15*

If you find yourself making statements like this:



- My life is a rat race.
- I don't know how I'm going to get it all done.
- I am just so exhausted.
- I don't know how much more of this I can take.
- I just want to escape.

These phrases are all warning signs that you are on the road to burn out. You need to slow down the pace. Perhaps as we begin this new year, taking an honest evaluation of your life and determine if some changes are necessary. Are you content in your life right now?

As the merry-go-round spins faster it is only a matter of time before you either get sick, or fall off. Or, better yet, just slow down, be content, and enjoy the ride.



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Tim Neptune is the lead pastor of Venture Church in Naples, Florida. Venture Church meets on the campus of FSW State College on Lely Cultural Blvd. in East Naples. For times and directions, visit www.venturenaples.com.

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