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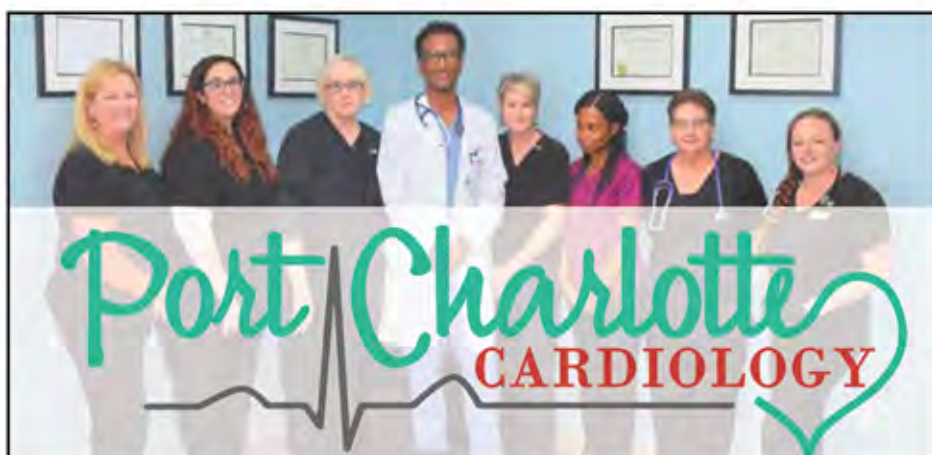
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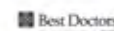
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# Varicose Veins vs. Spider Veins

By Dr. Lackey

**V**aricose veins are large, swollen, protruding blood vessels that twist and turn beneath the surface of your skin. Because they're raised and large, they're clearly visible. They will often cause swelling making your legs feel heavy or uncomfortable. They can also lead to more severe health conditions, like blood clots and leg ulcers.

Several patients who suffer from varicose veins often complain of a cramping or aching sensation near the veins. Other typical symptoms include fatigue, itching, throbbing, cramping, burning, and tingling.

Varicose veins, however, shouldn't be confused with spider veins. Spider veins are the much earlier, gentler version of varicose veins. They're best described as tiny, blue, red, or purple vessels near the surface of the skin. Like varicose veins, spider veins also twist and turn, but they don't bulge or swell. Generally, spider veins aren't painful, and they are not associated with blood clots.

While it's possible to have both spider and varicose veins, it's not necessarily true that spider veins will indefinitely lead to varicose veins. However, having varicose veins and spider veins indicates the presence of underlying vein disease, also known as chronic venous insufficiency.

## How Varicose and Spider Veins Develop

Varicose and spider veins develop naturally when blood flow issues are present. A healthy vein will carry blood to the heart through valves that allow blood to flow in only one direction keeping the blood moving through the right pathways and preventing backflow. These healthy veins do their job by effectively delivering blood from superficial veins to deeper ones that eventually lead to the heart.

However, when veins don't function properly, it can cause blood to collect inside your veins. When this happens, the blood pushes



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up against the walls within your vein, creating pressure weakening the vessel wall. Ultimately, this pressure is what causes veins to twist and bulge.

Depending on how large the vein is and how swollen it gets, it will result in spider veins or varicose veins.

## Treatment Options for Vein Disease

If you're eager to rid your legs of varicose and spider veins and regain your quality of life, there are several proven medical treatments for you to consider.

**Polidocanol Injectable Foam (Varithena®)** is a minimally invasive, nonsurgical treatment doesn't require incisions. The injection site is usually numbed, but no additional anesthesia is required. A catheter is inserted into the malfunctioning vein or sometimes a direct injection is used. The foam fills up the targeted part of the vein, and the diseased vein collapses. (For smaller branches with vein reflux, foam is injected directly into the vein to eliminate it.) Blood flow shifts to healthier veins nearby.

**The VenaSeal™ Closure System** uses an advanced medical adhesive to close and seal varicose veins. VenaSeal™ treatment minimizes patient discomfort and reduces recovery time, making it a good choice for many people. It's the only procedure approved for use in the United States that doesn't use heat, tumescent local anesthesia, or a sclerosant. Instead, VenaSeal™ uses a medical grade "glue" to shut down diseased veins.

**Thermal Ablation**, with this procedure, a small catheter is placed into the problematic vein, usually longer and larger veins. This catheter delivers radiofrequency into the vein wall, causing it to grow hot, collapse and close. It is an outpatient procedure that requires the administration of local anesthesia.

Ultimately, remember that vein disease is progressive and will get worse without treatment, so when you see signs of it, seek treatment.

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## AMERICAN HEART AWARENESS MONTH

# Unlocking Heart Health: The Crucial Role of Coronary Artery Disease Screening

By Dr. Aneley Yegezu Hundae, M.D., FACC

**S**creening for coronary artery disease (CAD) is crucial for early detection and prevention of heart-related issues. During American Heart Awareness month, it becomes even more significant to shed light on the importance of identifying individuals who should undergo CAD screening and the methods employed in the process.

Individuals with risk factors such as age, family history of heart disease, smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and a sedentary lifestyle are prime candidates for CAD screening. Age plays a pivotal role, as the risk of CAD increases with advancing years. Family history provides valuable insights into genetic predispositions, while lifestyle factors contribute significantly to an individual's overall cardiovascular health.

Medical professionals use a variety of methods to screen for CAD. Non-invasive tests like electrocardiograms (ECG or EKG) measure the heart's electrical activity, identifying irregularities that could indicate CAD. Stress tests, which involve monitoring the heart's response to physical activity, help uncover potential issues that may not be apparent at rest. Additionally, coronary calcium scoring, a specialized CT scan, measures the amount of calcium in the coronary arteries, providing an assessment of potential plaque buildup.

Furthermore, advanced imaging techniques such as coronary CT angiography (CCTA) or magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) offer detailed pictures of the coronary arteries, aiding in the visualization of any blockages or abnormalities. Blood tests to measure cholesterol levels and inflammatory markers also play a crucial role in CAD screening.

During American Heart Awareness month, heightened efforts are made to raise awareness about CAD and the importance of early detection. Public health campaigns encourage individuals, especially those in high-risk categories, to undergo screenings and adopt heart-healthy lifestyles. Educational initiatives aim to inform the public about the risk factors associated with CAD, emphasizing the need for regular check-ups and preventive measures.



Primary care physicians often play a central role in identifying individuals who should be screened for CAD. Regular health check-ups enable healthcare providers to assess risk factors, recommend appropriate screenings, and provide guidance on lifestyle modifications. Patients with symptoms such as chest pain, shortness of breath, or palpitations may also be referred for CAD screening to rule out potential cardiac issues.

In addition to individual screenings, community-based initiatives during American Heart Awareness month often offer free or discounted CAD screenings. These events aim to reach a broader audience and make screening more accessible, particularly for those who may not regularly seek medical attention. Mobile health units and community clinics contribute to extending these services to underserved populations, addressing healthcare disparities in CAD detection.

In conclusion, screening for coronary artery disease is a vital component of cardiovascular health, and American Heart Awareness month serves as a timely reminder of its significance.

Identifying individuals at risk through a combination of risk factor assessment and various screening methods enables early intervention, potentially preventing adverse cardiac events. Collaborative efforts between healthcare providers, public health campaigns, and community initiatives contribute to creating a culture of proactive heart health, ultimately reducing the burden of CAD on individuals and society.



**Dr. Aneley Yegezu Hundae, M.D., FACC**  
INVASIVE CARDIOLOGY  
AND ADVANCED HEART  
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Dr. Hundae received his Premedical and Doctor of Medicine Degree from Jimma University School of Medicine. He completed his Internal medicine Residency at Mercer University School of Medicine. His Heart Failure/Heart Transplant fellowship at the University of Miami Cardiovascular Fellowship Program. Cardiovascular fellowship at Baylor University Medical Center.

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# DIABETIC FOOT INFECTIONS AND PREVENTING AMPUTATION

By Dr. Isin Mustafa, DPM, MSHS, DABPM, FACPM

**T**he prevalence of diabetes in the United States continues rising at an alarming rate. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) an estimated 30.3 million people have been diagnosed with diabetes with another 7.2 million adults undiagnosed in the United States. By 2030, the CDC expects there to be over half a billion diabetics in the U.S ("National Diabetes Statistics", 2017). An increase in the prevalence of diabetes, unfortunately, leads to a rise in lower extremity amputations. The good news, the majority of lower extremity amputations are preventable if patients take the appropriate care.

The first step: diagnosis of diabetes. Once diagnosed with diabetes, routine follow up with your PCP is imperative to get your blood sugar under control. Next, find a podiatrist for routine care who can also educate you on preventative measures. Regular foot screenings can be lifesaving and limb saving for the diabetic population. Your Podiatrist will also screen for other risk factors that can contribute to the development of diabetic foot infections and/or amputations. If the proper health and lifestyles changes are made, many of the potential health risks are preventable or controllable. Some common risk factors include high blood sugars, high blood pressure, smoking, calluses/corns, foot deformity, poor blood flow, history of ulcers or previous amputations, vision loss, kidney disease and neuropathy. Working together with you, your PCP and other medical professionals, can significantly reduce your risk of amputation.

Ulcers are a primary cause of developing complicated foot infections, hospitalization, or amputation. Many ulcers start as a simple callous. As a diabetic with some degree of neuropathy, you may not feel a callous progressing into an open wound, missing the early signs of an infection. Without prompt treatment, this unnoticed wound or infection could quickly extend to the bone or progress to a limb threatening infection that will likely require hospitalization and amputation. This is why routine foot screenings are so important for the diabetic population.

**References:**  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Diabetes Statistics Report, 2017. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2017.



In addition to routine foot screenings, self-inspection should be performed daily. Check your feet daily for blisters, cuts, sores, redness, swelling or any other abnormal changes. Make sure to also look between your toes. Many podiatrists recommend the use of white socks to their patients. White socks make it easier to notice blood or drainage coming from the foot. Patients should wear socks that pull moisture away from the skin like cotton or special acrylic fibers, avoiding nylon. Avoid socks with seams that irritate your skin. If you can't reach your feet, ask someone for assistance or try using a foot mirror. Do not try to remove calluses or other foot lesions yourself and avoid walking barefoot. Other suggested recommendations include: avoiding worn down shoes, shoes that are too small or too narrow for your foot, and quit smoking. If you notice any abnormalities, contact your podiatrist or medical provider right away.

Together, we can change lives by saving limbs.

**Isin Mustafa, DPM, MSHS, DABPM, FACPM**

Isin Mustafa, DPM, is a Podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Centers in Port Charlotte, FL. She is a Fellow of the American College of Foot & Ankle Surgeons. Call 239-430-3668 or visit [www.NaplesPodiatrist.com](http://www.NaplesPodiatrist.com) to make an appointment. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](http://FootHealthFacts.org) to learn more about foot and ankle conditions.



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## Emerging Treatments for Age-Related Macular Degeneration: A Beacon of Hope for Adults Over 50

*Jesse T. McCann, M.D., Ph.D.*

**A**ge-related macular degeneration (AMD) remains a prevalent concern for individuals over 50, affecting their vision and quality of life. This progressive eye condition gradually damages the macula, the central portion of the retina, leading to blurred or distorted vision and, in severe cases, vision loss. The impact of AMD on daily life can be profound, affecting activities like reading, driving, and recognizing faces.

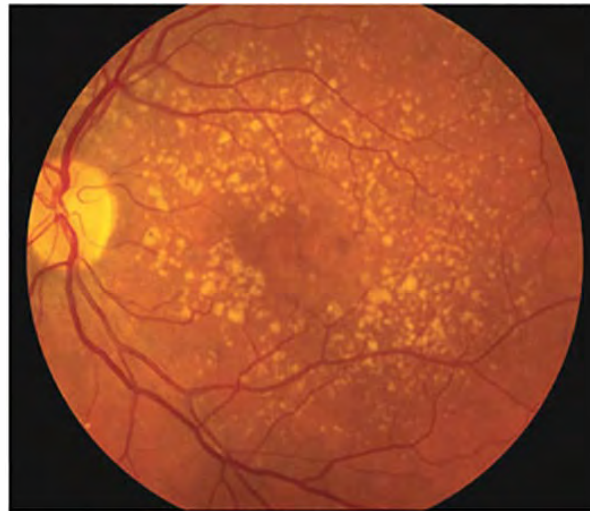
However, in recent years, significant advancements in treatment options have sparked hope for those grappling with AMD. Traditional treatments, such as anti-VEGF injections, remain crucial in managing AMD. These injections target the abnormal blood vessel growth that characterizes the more severe form of the disease, known as "wet" AMD. They have been successful in slowing down vision loss and, in some cases, even restoring vision.

Yet, the landscape of AMD treatments is evolving rapidly, offering new avenues beyond the conventional approaches. One such promising development involves the use of gene therapy. This cutting-edge treatment aims to address the underlying genetic factors contributing to AMD, potentially offering more targeted and long-term solutions.

Another groundbreaking area is stem cell therapy. While still in the experimental stage, researchers are exploring the potential of stem cells to replace damaged cells in the retina, thereby restoring vision. Although this avenue requires further extensive research, it holds immense promise for revolutionizing AMD treatment in the future.

Furthermore, innovative drug therapies are under investigation to supplement or even replace current treatments. These therapies focus on different aspects of the disease, such as inflammation or oxidative stress, offering a multi-pronged approach to combating AMD and potentially reducing the frequency of invasive treatments.

In addition to these medical interventions, lifestyle modifications and nutritional supplements are gaining attention for their role in managing AMD progression. A diet rich in antioxidants, omega-3



fatty acids, and specific vitamins and minerals has been associated with a reduced risk of AMD advancement. Furthermore, lifestyle changes like quitting smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, and protecting the eyes from harmful UV rays may contribute to slowing the disease's progression.

While these advancements are promising, it's important to note that not all treatments might be suitable for everyone, and their effectiveness can vary from person to person. Consulting with an eye care professional is crucial for proper diagnosis and personalized treatment plans.

Moreover, the cost and accessibility of these emerging treatments remain important considerations. As these innovative therapies continue to evolve, ensuring their availability and affordability to a broader population becomes a significant concern for healthcare systems worldwide.

In conclusion, the landscape of AMD treatment is witnessing a remarkable transformation, offering newfound hope for individuals over 50 facing this debilitating condition. From gene therapy and stem cell research to innovative drug therapies and lifestyle modifications, the spectrum of options for managing AMD is expanding. While these advancements hold immense promise, continued research, accessibility, and personalized care are essential to harness the full potential of these emerging treatments and improve the lives of those affected by AMD.

**Jesse T. McCann, M.D., Ph.D.**

Originally from New York, Dr. McCann trained as a materials chemist with an undergraduate degree in chemistry from Dartmouth College followed by a Ph.D. from the University of Washington in materials chemistry. In graduate school, he worked on designing advanced nanoscale materials used in the aerospace and biomedical fields. He completed his medical degree (Alpha Omega Alpha) from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx and residency training in ophthalmology at New York University. His interest in ophthalmology was cemented after volunteering to help prevent night blindness caused by Vitamin A insufficiency in the Thar Desert region of India.

Dr. McCann is currently an active member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the European Society of Retina Specialists, and the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society.

Since becoming a retina specialist, Dr. McCann has volunteered internationally to expand eye care and diabetic retinopathy care in Bolivia with Retina Global. In his free time, Dr. McCann enjoys kayaking, swimming, rescuing parrots, and spending time outdoors in the Florida sunshine.

**Education:** Dartmouth College, University of Washington, Albert Einstein College of Medicine (Alpha Omega Alpha), Greenwich-Yale New Haven Health, New York University, Manhattan Eye, Ear, and Throat Hospitals, Columbia University

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If you are experiencing any changes in your eye health, whether it is blurry vision, pain, impaired vision, or any other visual irregularities, you should see an ophthalmologist right away. The earlier a disease is detected, the better the outcome and treatment options are for you. You will find a friendly and warm environment at Retina Group of Florida.

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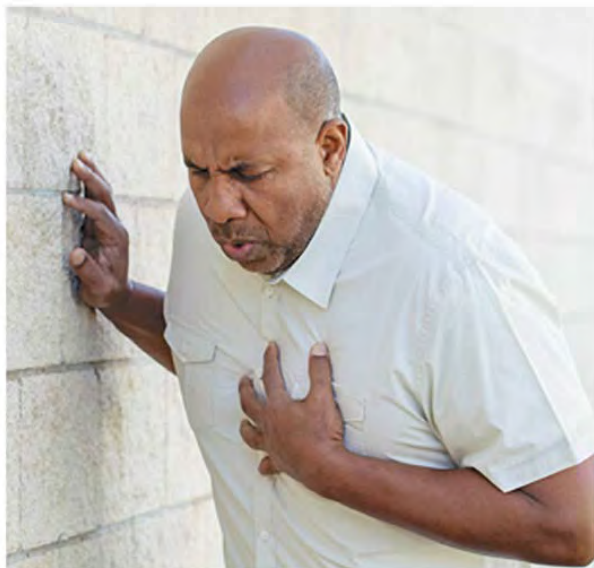


# Heart Disease in Seniors: Understanding the Silent Threat

**H**eat disease is the leading cause of death for all genders, races, and ethnicities in the United States. According to the CDC, it claims a life every 34 seconds. That makes it so that roughly one out of every five deaths is a direct result of heart disease. That's a statistic that's hard to swallow. Are you at risk?

With the advancement of modern-day medicine, doctors can look at various known risk factors and determine with some degree of accuracy what your odds of developing heart disease will be. Heart attacks and strokes can be catastrophic, but 80 percent of premature heart disease is preventable. That's why it's important to know and understand your risk.

Heart disease is a significant health concern for people of all ages, but it poses an even greater risk to seniors. As we age, our cardiovascular system undergoes various changes that can contribute to heart disease. Arteries can become less flexible, leading to atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), and blood vessels may lose their elasticity. The heart's pumping efficiency may decrease, which can result in reduced blood flow. These age-related changes can raise the risk of heart disease, such as coronary artery disease, heart failure, and arrhythmias.



In addition to an aging heart, older adults often have a higher prevalence of heart disease risk factors, including hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity. Additionally, lifestyle factors like a sedentary lifestyle, poor diet, and smoking can exacerbate the risk of heart disease in seniors.

While heart disease is a significant concern for older adults, several strategies can help prevent or manage the condition.

**Regular Medical Check-ups:** You should schedule regular check-ups with your healthcare providers. These visits can help identify risk factors and early signs of heart disease, allowing for prompt intervention.

**Healthy Lifestyle:** Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is crucial. This includes a balanced diet, regular exercise, and avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

**Medication Management:** Seniors with established heart disease may need medications to manage their condition. It's essential to follow the prescribed treatment plan and monitor any potential side effects.

**Stress Management:** High stress levels can contribute to heart disease. You should explore stress-reduction techniques like meditation, yoga, or counseling.

Heart disease is a critical health issue that demands attention and proactive management. You can reduce your risk through healthy living and regular medical care. Understanding the unique challenges and strategies for prevention and management is key to ensuring a longer and healthier life. Take action now and get on the road to Better Health and a healthier heart.

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# ORTHOPEDIC SPECIALISTS RESPOND TO PICKLEBALL INTEREST

## PREVENTION IS KEY | EXPERT CARE IS ESSENTIAL

**D**id you know that pickleball has become the fastest growing sport in the U.S.? It's a fun sport that requires low-impact aerobic exercise, and the fact that it requires four players makes it an enjoyable, social event. However, with all of this fun-filled activity, injuries are bound to happen. Orthopedic surgeons and sports medicine physicians often report that pickleball and other racket sports result in numerous injuries.

### SOME OF THE MOST COMMON INJURIES ARE:

#### Wrist Injuries

Due to the constant torquing of the arm and wrist in pickleball, wrist injuries are common. Often these are tendonitis issues, which is where the tendons become inflamed and swell.

A wrist sprain happens when stretching or tearing of the ligament occurs. The wrist ligaments are strong bands of connective tissue that connect the end of the hand and wrist bones. Your wrist ligaments stabilize and support the joints. When injured in sports such as pickleball, the sport should be halted and avoided until you are healed. Stabilization, rest and anti-inflammatory medications often help patients recover within a few weeks.

#### Shoulder Injury

With pickleball, the shoulder is under a great deal of stress. Often, shoulder pain is due to small tears that occur in the rotator cuff. These tears can progress and may require conservative or surgical treatment. Overuse or injury that might dislocate the humerus bone from the socket can be a more severe diagnosis. With overuse or trauma, fractures or hairline fractures can occur in the bones that make up the shoulder. These will typically need to be stabilized in order to heal correctly. Arthritis can also exacerbate shoulder injury and pain.

#### Ankle Injuries

Ankle injuries are very common in individuals who play pickleball due to the ballistic motions and torquing in the ankle that cause instability and tears. Achilles's tendon tears and ruptures are an example of this type of injury.

#### Achilles Tendon Rupture

Although the Achilles tendon can withstand great stresses from running, twisting, and jumping, it is extremely vulnerable to injury. A rupture of the tendon is a tearing and separation of the tendon fibers, so that the tendon can no longer perform its normal function. It is a painful injury and often patients describe hearing a popping sound when it happens.



The Achilles tendon is the largest tendon in the body and connected to both the calf muscle and the heel bone and is a fibrous tissue that somewhat resembles twine. It is used when you walk, run, stand, jump, and is especially stressed when you move quickly from side to side. A rupture of the tendon is a tearing and separation of the tendon fibers, so that the tendon can no longer perform its normal function.

#### Knee Pain

We put constant strain on our knees daily. If you weigh 180 pounds, then 540 pounds of pressure are on your knee joints with every step. When you're doing ballistic or jumping movements the weight and wear and tear on the knees is exacerbated and can lead to pain, injury and osteoarthritis. If you have knee pain, take a break, and give your knees a rest. Wear knee braces or kinesiology tape if necessary, and if your knee pain doesn't get better, you need to see an orthopedic surgeon to alleviate any progressive injuries or wear and tear.

When the feet, ankles, and knees are injured, it's not uncommon for hip and back pain to follow due to the body's misalignment. Don't ignore your pain. Seek help from experienced, board certified and fellowship trained orthopedic surgeons and sports medicine physicians.

### PREVENTING PICKLEBALL INJURIES:

#### Warm Up

Warming up your ankles, knees, hips, wrists, and shoulders is essential before playing pickleball. Taking a pre-pickleball walk is a great way to get your muscles warm. Additionally, doing a few gentle ballistic movements, such as jumping side to side and front to back, or doing an invisible jump rope for a few seconds before stretching can help.

#### Stretching

Doing rotational exercises and stretching will help to prevent injuries as well. After you are properly warmed up, stretching from your feet up to your neck are critical to avoid injury. Rotating the ankles, hips, wrists, and shoulders is helpful, as are deep runners stretches and side stretches to name a few.

#### Hydrate

Drinking plenty of water throughout the day is imperative to stay hydrated. If you are thirsty or parched during pickleball or any exercise, you were most likely dehydrated beforehand. Drinking before and after is essential to replenish fluids and electrolytes. Sports drinks and electrolyte enhanced water is important after sweating.

#### Protective Gear

Wearing supportive gear and clothing such as the correct footwear with good arch support and ankle support. Wearing back supports, knee or wrist braces are also especially important if you have any injuries or need to protect certain areas from reinjury.

To alleviate your pain and get you back to doing what you love, Dr. Sforzo, Dr. Christopher Dillingham, Dr. Charles Stewart, and Dr. Philip Meinhardt specialize in both non-surgical and surgical treatment for the shoulders, hand, wrists, elbows, hips, knees, ankles spine and neck. This includes unparalleled expertise in fracture care, sports injuries, tendonitis, arthritis, bursitis, joint replacement, rotator cuff repair, carpal tunnel syndrome, reverse shoulder replacement, ACL reconstruction, reconstruction of spinal deformities, fusion procedures, knee replacement, total hip replacement both traditional and anterior approach. Additionally, the doctors offer the latest in regenerative treatments helping many patients eliminate the need for surgery.

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# EMBRACING SELF-LOVE:

## Thoughtful Self-Care Gifts for a Blissful Valentine's Day

**V**alentine's Day is often associated with romantic gestures and expressions of love towards others. But here's a thought. In addition to expressing your love and appreciation for others, you should also celebrate the most important relationship of all – the one with yourself. Embracing self-love is a powerful and empowering act, and what better way to do it than by giving yourself thoughtful self-care gifts?

Below, we've highlighted some Valentine's Day gift ideas for you and your loved ones to pamper the mind, body, and soul.



**A Relaxing Spa Day at Home:** Enjoy a self-care moment by creating a spa-like atmosphere from the comfort of home. Try aromatic bath salts, scented candles, and luxurious body oils. Treat yourself or someone you love to a long, relaxing bath, and let the stress of daily life melt away. This simple yet indulgent self-care ritual can be a perfect way to unwind and relax.



**Mindfulness and Meditation Tools:** Gift yourself and your loved ones the tools to cultivate mindfulness and inner peace. Consider items like a meditation cushion, a guided meditation app subscription, or a beautiful journal for reflective writing. Engaging in mindfulness practices can help someone connect internally, reduce stress, and promote a sense of overall well-being.

**Comfortable Loungewear or Pajamas:** There's something undeniably comforting about slipping into cozy loungewear or pajamas. Treat yourself or special someone to a set of high-quality, comfortable clothing to feel pampered and relaxed. This simple act can make a significant difference by encouraging restfulness and peace.

**Nourishing Skin Care:** Show your skin (or theirs) some love with nourishing, natural skin care products. Invest in a good quality face mask, moisturizer, and serums that cater to specific skin needs like wrinkle-care, acne prevention or sensitive skin. Taking care of the skin is not only a physical self-care practice but can also contribute to a boost in confidence and self-esteem.

**Fitness and Wellness Accessories:** Prioritize physical well-being by purchasing fitness and wellness accessories. This could include a new yoga mat, resistance bands, or a fitness tracker. Regular exercise is not only beneficial for the physical body, but it also has positive effects on mental health.

**A Good Book or Personal Development Course:** Feed the mind with knowledge and inspiration. Give yourself or a friend a captivating book or enroll in a personal development course that aligns with your (or their) interests. Continuous learning and personal growth are essential aspects of self-care, contributing to a sense of fulfillment and purpose.

**Mind-Body Practices:** Consider activities that integrate both the mind and body, such as yoga, tai chi or pilates. These practices not only enhance physical flexibility but also promote mental clarity and emotional balance. Investing time in mind-body activities can be a holistic approach to happiness and joy.



This Valentine's Day, let's skip the traditional chocolates and roses and focus on self care. Whether it's a spa day at home, mindfulness tools, comfortable loungewear, skin care products, fitness accessories, a good book, or mind-body practices, the options for creating and gifting self-love are limitless. Remember, self care is not a luxury. Go ahead and shower yourself and your loved ones with thoughtful self-care gifts. Happy Valentine's Day!



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# Show your heart some love this Valentine's Day by quitting smoking!

**W**e only have one heart, so we need to treat it with all the love, care, and attention we can. Quitting smoking will improve the health of your heart for many years to come.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the U.S. and can harm every organ and cell in the body. With over 7,000 toxic chemicals per cigarette, cigarette smoke damages one of the most vital parts of the body: the heart.<sup>1</sup>

When you breathe air in, the lungs take the oxygen and deliver it to the heart, which then pumps the oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body. When you breathe in cigarette smoke, the blood that is delivered to the rest of the body is heavily concentrated with carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide decreases the blood's ability to carry oxygen which requires the heart to work much harder to pump oxygen through the body. The extra stress on the heart can cause damage to the heart and blood vessels and can lead to cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD is responsible for 800,000 deaths annually and, consequently, is the leading cause of all deaths in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to causing damage to the heart and blood vessels directly, cigarette smoke can also cause CVD by changing the blood's chemistry, which results in thickened blood and plaque build-up in the walls of arteries. When this happens, it becomes difficult for blood to flow through the arteries and for blood vessels to get to the vital organs, such as your heart or brain, which can result in blood clots and ultimately lead to a heart attack or stroke.<sup>1</sup>

The best way to protect your heart from smoking-related disease and death is to never start using cigarettes, but if you are a smoker, the earlier you quit, the better. Quitting smoking benefits your heart and your cardiovascular system now and in the future:

- Twenty minutes after you quit smoking, your heart rate drops.
- Just 12 hours after quitting smoking, the carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal, allowing more oxygen to vital organs like your heart.
- Within four years of quitting, your risk of stroke drops to that of lifetime nonsmokers.<sup>1</sup>

Although quitting smoking is difficult, it is certainly achievable, and cessation aids such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) may be able to help you on your quit journey. Many addicted smokers find that NRT helps them get through the hardest parts of quitting by lessening cravings and symptoms of withdrawal.<sup>1</sup> Gulfcoast South Area Education Center (GSAHEC) provides NRT for free to every individual who attends a tobacco cessation class (if medically appropriate and while supplies last).



If you are a smoker and you are concerned about your heart health, contact GSAHEC today! GSAHEC, as part of the Group Quit option of Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way program—offers free group quit sessions to help someone quit all forms of tobacco. These group sessions held virtually and in-person, provide information about the benefits of quitting, managing stress and triggers, and will assist you with developing your own customized quit plan. Free nicotine replacement therapy in the form of patches, gum, or lozenges (*if medically appropriate and while supplies last*) is provided with the session. Attendees will also receive a participant workbook, quit kit materials, and follow up support from a trained tobacco treatment specialist.

Contact us today at 866-534-7909 or visit  
[www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/groupquitcalendar](http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/groupquitcalendar) to schedule a class or learn more about the program!

Reference:

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/health-information/how-smoking-affects-heart-health>



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# UNLOCKING RELIEF:

## Botox Injections for Neck Tension in Easing TMJ, Tinnitus, and Headaches

By Dr. Jai Grewal

In today's fast-paced world, stress is often held in our bodies, particularly in the neck and shoulders. But what if there was a surprising solution to alleviate not just neck tension but also its ripple effects on common issues like TMJ, tinnitus, and headaches? Enter Botox, typically associated with cosmetic enhancements, now proving to be a game-changer in therapeutic relief.

The neck, a junction of intricate muscles, is a hotspot for tension accumulation. Stress, poor posture, or even physical injury can tighten these muscles, leading to chronic discomfort and triggering various related conditions. However, recent medical studies have uncovered the profound benefits of Botox injections in addressing these issues.

Botox, known for its ability to relax muscles by temporarily blocking nerve signals, has gained attention beyond its cosmetic realm. By strategically injecting Botox into specific points of the neck muscles, practitioners can alleviate tension and offer relief from conditions such as TMJ (temporomandibular joint disorder), tinnitus (ringing in the ears), and headaches, including migraines.

TMJ, often caused by jaw tension or misalignment, can be excruciating, affecting one's ability to chew, speak, or even open the mouth comfortably. Surprisingly, Botox injections into the neck muscles surrounding the jaw have shown promising results in easing TMJ symptoms by releasing the tension responsible for this discomfort, providing welcome relief for sufferers.

Moreover, tinnitus, characterized by persistent ringing or buzzing in the ears, can be associated with muscle tension in the neck. Botox injections, by relaxing these muscles, have displayed potential in reducing the severity or frequency of tinnitus symptoms, improving the overall quality of life for those affected.

The correlation between neck tension and headaches, particularly migraines, has long been acknowledged. Many migraine sufferers experience relief after receiving Botox injections targeted at the neck muscles. This treatment not



only alleviates existing pain but also diminishes the frequency and intensity of future migraines, offering a more sustainable solution than conventional medications.

However, as with any medical procedure, the efficacy and suitability of Botox injections for neck tension-related conditions should be discussed with a qualified healthcare professional. Individual responses to treatment may vary, and thorough evaluation by a specialist is crucial to determine the best approach for each patient.

It's essential to highlight that while Botox injections for neck tension-related issues show promise, they are not a cure-all. Lifestyle changes, physical therapy, and other complementary treatments may be recommended alongside or instead of Botox, depending on the individual's specific condition and needs.

In conclusion, the application of Botox beyond cosmetic enhancements has emerged as a beacon of hope for those battling neck tension-related ailments like TMJ, tinnitus, and headaches. Its ability to relax targeted muscles offers relief and improved quality of life for many, paving the way for a more holistic approach to addressing these common yet debilitating conditions. Consulting with healthcare professionals knowledgeable in this therapy can be a crucial step towards unlocking the relief and reclaiming comfort and well-being.

### About Dr. Grewal

Dr. Jai Grewal is a board-certified neurologist specializing in the use of botulinum toxins (such as Botox®) for therapeutic and cosmetic uses. Dr. Grewal completed his neurology residency at the University of Texas, Southwestern in Dallas. He completed his fellowship in cancer neurology at the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. As Dr. Grewal was training in therapeutic uses of Botox, he fell in love with the therapy because he noticed that it was helping patients with their mood and improving how patients felt about themselves. He has been using Botox for over 20 years for a range of FDA approved uses. He has administered over 250,000 units across various indications, and is considered one of the most experienced injectors in the area. He has experience with most botulinum toxins including Botox, Dysport®, Xeomin®, and Myobloc®. When appropriate, Dr. Grewal incorporates cutting edge technology such as infrared vein locators, ultrasound guidance, and EMG guidance to optimize patient outcomes and minimize side-effects and avoid bruising. Precision is at the core of Dr. Grewal's technique. Dr. Grewal also injects dermal filler (Juvederm and Restylane), Kybella for excess fat under the chin, as well as biostimulators (Sculptra and Radiesse). In addition to expertise in standard of care therapies, Dr. Grewal is an experienced researcher and has participated in over 40 clinical trials for various neurological conditions, and has authored over 50 publications. Dr. Grewal has held faculty appointments as an Assistant Professor of Neurology at Stony Brook University and at Hofstra University.

### About the Clear Aesthetics Team

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# Consider CBD For Your Heart and Your Sweetheart

**L**ove is in the air and if you are looking for a special gift for your sweetheart consider CBD. For couples it should be valentines every day, not just one day of the year. We all get so busy with work and life stresses that we do not often consider what it is doing not only to our relationships but also our overall health. Stress can lead to different health issues such as high blood pressure, insomnia, depressed immune response and yes heart problems... pun intended. CBD can have positive effects on health leading to benefits in improving your relationship. Improving your health can trickle down other aspects of your life so you feel like doing small things together that make a big difference even just taking a walk.

Women and men alike are affected by stress although it can manifest in different ways. Stress can cause anxiety and lack of sleep and even cause physical pain in the body. All of these can decrease desire for intimacy and further damage our relationships. Lack of sleep, pain, feelings of rejection or inadequacy continue to exacerbate the issues and in turn continue to snowball to performance issues leading to further withdrawal from your partner. It is a downward spiral of chain reactions caused by external stresses our body and mind fail to handle appropriately. It is rarely a lack of love or concern for each other that is the cause of this type of heart problem. The heart is an organ but also symbolizes love and passion, so it makes sense that our emotional, mental, spiritual, and relational well-being can affect the physical organ. Women are particularly affected emotionally; it is a known fact that our ability as women to enjoy intimacy is tied to our emotional state. It is sometimes difficult for both men and women to turn off our minds and put away the cares of the day and just be present with our partner in the moment. We get in our heads about it; negative thinking, we are not loved, we are inadequate or at fault for our failing relationships.

## How Can CBD Help?

Well, CBD can help in several different ways. CBD can help relieve stress and anxiety giving us the ability to put the stresses that are overwhelming us into perspective. It produces a calming effect by triggering our body to make anandamide which is known as the bliss molecule. Anandamide plays on the reward center of the brain

just like serotonin or dopamine giving you a sense of peace, calm and relaxation. CBD works to regulate all the systems of your body including circulation, digestion, hormones, sleep, anxiety, blood pressure, pain and they are all connected. When you relax you lower your blood pressure and increase circulation which some studies have shown CBD can have a protective effect on the heart and in turn can improve heart health again pun intended.

Increased circulation can help with issues of ED through vasodilation. Cannabis is a vasodilator as well as anti-inflammatory. Depression, anxiety, and blood pressure are also other contributing factors of ED that CBD may be able to improve. You should always talk to your doctor before starting a CBD regimen especially if you are on medications such as blood thinners and anti-depressants which are a few types of medications that can also contribute to ED in men and lack of desire in women. It is important to talk to your partner about the possibilities and find solutions together. Having the difficult and sometimes uncomfortable conversations can also be a step in building the deep intimacy we crave.



## DID YOU KNOW?

***Cannabis has been used in many cultures throughout history as far back as 3000 years ago to enhance sexual experiences and increase libido. In a study done in 2023 on Cannabis effects on sexual functioning and satisfaction confirmed the benefits of this natural plant by relaxing muscles, increasing lubrication, stimulating arousal by increasing sensory response to touch and taste in both men and women.***

Sources:

<https://jcnanobisresearch.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s42238-022-00169-2>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6460372/#:~:text=Several%20studies%20demonstrate%20that%20anandamide,animal%20models%20of%20drug%20abuse.>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7641267/>



There are different ways to use or consume cannabis products for health. 1st and foremost, ingestion of CBD is how we activate our endocannabinoid system the (ECS) to bring about homeostasis systemically. 2nd, topical application is also helpful. Although topically it is not going to activate the ECS it will help in localized areas to help reduce inflammation and pain. One of my favorite topicals is CBD massage oil. It is the gift that keeps on giving in our home. My husband and I take turns giving each other massages. Massage is important because touch is vital to our physical, mental, and relational health. Massage can help relax the body and the mind, relieve aching muscles, and stimulate blood flow and circulation. Don't underestimate the power of massage in cultivating intimacy with your sweetheart this Valentine's Day and every other day throughout the year.

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# Non-Surgical Innovations for Osteoarthritis and Joint Regeneration

By Physicians Rehabilitation

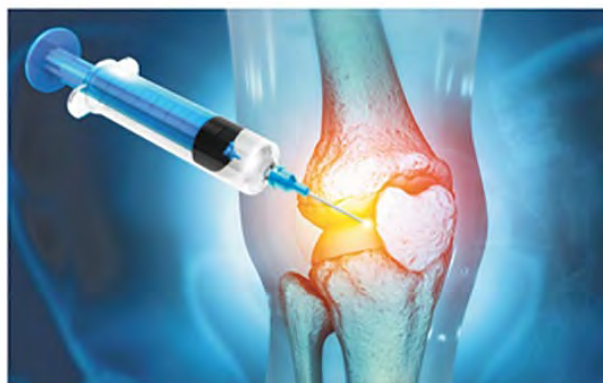
In recent years, the landscape of knee osteoarthritis (OA) treatment has undergone a transformative shift, steering away from traditional surgical interventions towards non-invasive alternatives that prioritize joint preservation and regeneration. Among these groundbreaking approaches, Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy and cutting-edge compounds derived from Amniotic and Wharton's Jelly have emerged as promising solutions, offering patients renewed hope and the potential to avoid invasive procedures such as knee replacements.

Osteoarthritis, a degenerative joint disease characterized by the breakdown of cartilage, has long been a prevalent concern, particularly among aging populations. Traditional treatments often involve pain management, physical therapy, and in severe cases, surgical options like knee replacements. However, the advent of non-surgical alternatives has opened up new possibilities for patients seeking relief without resorting to major surgery.

Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy stands at the forefront of non-surgical interventions for knee OA. This innovative treatment involves extracting a small amount of the patient's blood, processing it to concentrate platelets, growth factors, and other bioactive proteins, and then injecting this enriched solution directly into the affected joint. The therapeutic components of PRP work synergistically to stimulate the body's natural healing processes, promoting tissue repair and regeneration.

What sets PRP apart is its ability to target the root cause of knee osteoarthritis – the deterioration of cartilage. The concentrated growth factors in PRP promote the regeneration of cartilage, reducing pain and improving joint function. Many patients have experienced significant relief and restored mobility, delaying or even avoiding the need for more invasive interventions.

In addition to PRP therapy, cutting-edge compounds derived from Amniotic and Wharton's Jelly have emerged as exciting prospects in the field of regenerative medicine. Amniotic fluid and Wharton's Jelly, sourced from the umbilical cord, contain a rich array of growth factors, cytokines, and hyaluronic acid – all essential elements for tissue repair and regeneration.



These compounds are processed into injectable forms that can be administered directly into the affected joint. The regenerative properties of Amniotic and Wharton's Jelly compounds go beyond cartilage repair, addressing inflammation and promoting overall joint health. Patients undergoing these treatments have reported not only pain reduction but also improvements in joint function and flexibility.

One of the key advantages of these non-surgical treatments is their minimally invasive nature. Unlike traditional knee replacement surgeries, PRP therapy and regenerative compounds offer patients a quicker recovery time, reduced risk of complications, and the convenience of outpatient procedures. This is particularly appealing to individuals who wish to avoid the lengthy rehabilitation associated with major surgeries.

Furthermore, the potential to sidestep knee replacement surgeries is a significant benefit for patients. Knee replacements, while effective in relieving pain, are associated with inherent risks and limitations. Non-surgical alternatives provide a viable option for those who may not be suitable candidates for or wish to postpone such invasive procedures.



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As with any medical treatment, it is crucial to consult with healthcare professionals to determine the most suitable approach based on individual needs and conditions. However, the increasing success stories and ongoing research in the realm of non-surgical treatments for knee osteoarthritis signal a promising future for those seeking alternatives to conventional interventions.

In conclusion, the era of non-surgical innovation in knee osteoarthritis treatment is here, offering patients a range of options that prioritize joint preservation and regeneration. PRP therapy and cutting-edge compounds from Amniotic and Wharton's Jelly have demonstrated remarkable success in alleviating pain, improving joint function, and, importantly, preventing or delaying the need for knee replacement surgeries. As these non-surgical treatments continue to evolve, they pave the way for a more patient-centric and minimally invasive approach to managing knee osteoarthritis.

**VaxD Spinal Decompression – a groundbreaking non-surgical solution for cervical and lumbar spine pain. Specifically designed to address common issues such as herniated discs, bulging discs, sciatic pain, Degenerative Disc Disease (DDD), and chronic neck and low back pain, VaxD offers patients a transformative alternative to traditional interventions. This innovative treatment utilizes advanced decompression technology to gently and precisely target affected areas, relieving pressure on spinal discs and facilitating the body's natural healing processes. By creating a controlled environment for disc rehydration and repair, VaxD aids in reducing pain, improving mobility, and restoring overall spinal health. Emphasizing a patient-centric approach, VaxD spinal decompression stands as a beacon of hope for those seeking relief from debilitating spine conditions without resorting to surgery, offering a non-invasive path to renewed well-being and a pain-free life.**

## Physicians Rehabilitation

We are a leading provider of nonsurgical orthopedic solutions in the Florida. We cater to patients of all ages and lifestyles who are at their wit's end with symptoms of osteoarthritis and other debilitating joint conditions. If you're ready to find meaningful relief from your knee pain, we encourage you to consult with our board-certified physicians about your nonsurgical treatment options – even if other doctors have told you that surgery is the only answer.



# Cleerly Heart Scan Analysis

For more than half a century, the cardiology field has primarily operated as "sick-care," concentrating on addressing symptoms of heart disease rather than delving into the core issue—atherosclerosis. Remarkably, over a decade of clinical trial data has underscored the paramount importance of the type of atherosclerotic plaque buildup in understanding and managing cardiovascular health. The prevailing approach of waiting for signs of reduced blood flow or blockages is being redefined. It is imperative to take a proactive stance, assess the underlying disease precisely, and pioneer a new era of cardiovascular care that targets the root cause before symptoms manifest. This paradigm shift brings forth the transformative potential of technologies like the Cleerly heart scan, enabling a more comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to heart health assessment and management.

The Cleerly heart scan represents a groundbreaking advancement in cardiovascular imaging technology, offering unprecedented insight into the intricacies of atherosclerotic plaque composition. Unlike traditional methods focusing solely on identifying blockages, this innovative scan provides a detailed analysis of the type of plaque in the arteries. By characterizing plaques based on their composition and vulnerability, medical professionals can tailor interventions more precisely, addressing the specific nature of the atherosclerotic disease. This shift from a symptom-centric to a disease-focused approach marks a significant leap forward in cardiac care, empowering healthcare providers and patients with the knowledge needed to initiate targeted and proactive treatment strategies.

Cleerly goes beyond conventional cardiovascular assessments by furnishing your physician with a comprehensive analysis of your heart scan, delivering a profound understanding of your specific heart disease and individual risk factors. This invaluable insight equips your heart care team with the knowledge to make informed decisions tailored to your unique condition. By guiding them toward a more effective and personalized treatment plan, Cleerly transforms the landscape of heart health management. The innovative Track Your Plaque™ feature enables physicians to monitor the progression of the disease over time, facilitating a dynamic and adaptive approach to care.



Moreover, Cleerly recognizes the significance of empowering individuals in their journey to heart health. The Cleerly Patient Report is a user-friendly resource, offering straightforward educational materials about heart disease and presenting analysis results in understandable language. This accessible platform ensures that you receive the correct information at the right time, aiding you in adhering to the treatment plan crafted by your physician. Cleerly's commitment to patient-centric care is reflected in its ability to demystify complex medical data, fostering a collaborative and informed approach to managing heart health.

The rationale behind embracing the Cleerly heart scan is rooted in compelling statistics that underscore the limitations of traditional methods in identifying and preventing heart attacks. Shockingly, 50% of individuals who suffer a heart attack do so without exhibiting any prior symptoms, emphasizing the elusive nature of cardiovascular risks that may go undetected. Moreover, a staggering 70% of heart attack victims are categorized as low risk by conventional methods of assessing heart disease, highlighting the inadequacy of existing risk evaluation strategies.

Traditional stress testing methods also face significant shortcomings, as 75% of lesions responsible for heart attacks only result in a mild narrowing of the arteries, making them easily overlooked. This critical insight underscores the importance of adopting a more sophisticated and precise approach to cardiovascular assessment.

In response to these challenges, Cleerly offers rapid reporting of non-invasive Coronary Computed Tomography Angiography (CCTA) with turnaround times of less than one hour, available 24 hours a day. This unprecedented efficiency makes crucial diagnostic information accessible, enabling timely interventions and personalized treatment plans. Cleerly's commitment to providing rapid and accurate insights directly addresses the limitations of traditional methods, offering a transformative solution to enhance the early detection and management of heart disease.

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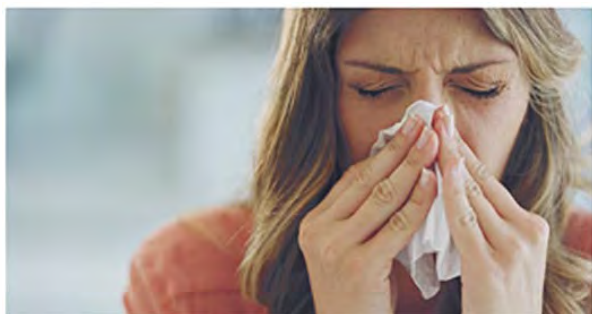
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# Protect Yourself from the Flu and Covid-19 with these TIPS

By Alfonso L. Espinel, MD

Influenza viruses travel through the air in droplets when someone with the infection coughs, sneezes or talks. You can inhale the droplets directly, or you can pick up the germs from an object — such as a telephone or computer keyboard — and then transfer them to your eyes, nose, or mouth.



People with the flu virus are likely contagious from about a day before symptoms appear until about five days after they start. Children and people with weakened immune systems may be contagious for a slightly longer time. If you're young and healthy, the flu usually isn't serious. Although you may feel miserable while you have it, the flu usually goes away in a week or two with no lasting effects. But children and adults at high risk may develop complications. Pneumonia is one of the most serious complications. For older adults and people with a chronic illness, pneumonia can be deadly.

Influenza viruses are constantly changing, with new strains appearing regularly. If you've had influenza in the past, your body has already made antibodies to fight that specific strain of the virus. If future influenza viruses are like those you've encountered before, either by having the disease or by getting vaccinated, those antibodies may prevent infection or lessen its severity. But antibody levels may decline over time. Also, antibodies against influenza viruses you've encountered in the past may not protect you from new influenza strains that can be very different viruses from what you had before.

At first, the flu may seem like a common cold with a runny nose, sneezing, and sore throat. But colds usually develop slowly, whereas the flu tends to come on suddenly. And although a cold can be a bother, you usually feel much worse with the flu.

## Common signs and symptoms of the flu include:

- Fever
- Aching muscles
- Chills and sweats
- Headache
- Dry, persistent cough
- Shortness of breath
- Tiredness and weakness
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Sore throat
- Eye pain
- Vomiting and diarrhea, but this is more common in children than adults

If you have flu symptoms and are at risk of complications, see your doctor right away. Taking antiviral drugs may reduce the length of your illness and help prevent more-serious problems. If you have emergency signs and symptoms of the flu, get medical care right away. For adults, emergency signs and symptoms can include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Ongoing dizziness
- Seizures
- Worsening of existing medical conditions
- Severe weakness or muscle pain

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone age 6 months or older. The flu vaccine can reduce your risk of the flu and its severity and lower the risk of having serious illness from the flu and needing to stay in the hospital. Flu vaccination is especially important this season because the flu and coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cause similar symptoms. Flu vaccination could reduce symptoms that might be confused with those caused by COVID-19. Preventing the flu and reducing the severity of flu illness and hospitalizations could also lessen the number of people needing to stay in the hospital. This year's seasonal flu vaccine protects from the four influenza viruses that are expected to be the most common during the year's flu season. This year, the vaccine will be available as an injection and as a nasal spray.

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## Alfonso L. Espinel, MD

*Dr. Espinel is certified by the American Board of Family Medicine. He attended the Catholic University in Ecuador and the University of Miami - Jackson-Memorial Hospital followed by a preliminary General Surgery residency at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, NY and Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, CT. Dr. Espinel completed his Family Medicine residency in Montgomery, AL and has practiced emergency medicine for over 10 years.*

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

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



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# The Unseen Connection:

## Exploring the Link Between Hearing Loss and Heart Health

By Dr. Noël Crosby, Au.D.

In a world filled with constant noise and distractions, the significance of maintaining our sensory health often takes a back seat. While hearing loss is commonly associated with aging or exposure to loud environments, recent research has unveiled a surprising connection between hearing loss and heart health. This intricate relationship sheds light on the importance of holistic well-being and prompts us to reconsider how we perceive and address these seemingly unrelated aspects of our health.

As we delve into the complex interplay between hearing loss and heart health, it becomes evident that the two are more connected than meets the ear. Numerous studies have indicated that individuals with cardiovascular issues may have an increased risk of developing hearing impairment. Conversely, those with hearing loss may face a higher likelihood of experiencing heart-related problems. The question arises: What ties these seemingly distinct conditions together?

One key factor in this connection is blood flow. The inner ear is highly sensitive to changes in blood flow, and a healthy cardiovascular system plays a crucial role in maintaining optimal blood circulation. Conditions like high blood pressure and atherosclerosis can restrict blood flow to the inner ear, leading to damage and eventual hearing loss. This revelation emphasizes the ripple effect that heart health can have on our entire body, reaching even the intricate structures responsible for our auditory senses.



Moreover, the relationship between hearing loss and heart health extends beyond mere physiological connections. Lifestyle factors that contribute to heart issues, such as a sedentary lifestyle, poor diet, and smoking, can also impact hearing health. By adopting heart-healthy habits, individuals may inadvertently be safeguarding their hearing as well. This dual benefit reinforces the idea that our lifestyle choices have far-reaching consequences on various aspects of our well-being.

The role of inflammation cannot be overlooked in understanding the correlation between these health conditions. Chronic inflammation, often associated with heart problems, may contribute to the degeneration of auditory cells and structures. Recognizing and addressing inflammation early on may not only benefit the heart but could also play a preventive role in preserving hearing abilities.

As we navigate this intricate web of connections, it becomes clear that a comprehensive approach to health is imperative. Regular check-ups that encompass both cardiovascular and auditory assessments

can provide a holistic view of an individual's well-being. This integrated approach allows for early detection of potential issues, enabling proactive measures to maintain or improve both heart and hearing health.

In conclusion, the link between hearing loss and heart health highlights the intricate nature of our physiological well-being. Beyond the surface, our body's systems are interconnected, and addressing one aspect can have positive repercussions on others. This newfound understanding emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to health—one that considers the intricate dance between the heart and the ears. By recognizing and acting upon this connection, we empower ourselves to cultivate a life of well-rounded health, where the symphony of our body functions harmoniously for a fulfilling and vibrant existence.

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# Promoting Vision Health:

## Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month in Home Healthcare

**A**ge-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is a prevalent eye condition that affects millions of individuals worldwide, particularly as they age. In an effort to raise awareness and promote proactive eye care, the month of February has been designated as Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month. For home healthcare providers, this observance serves as a crucial opportunity to educate, support, and empower individuals in their homes.

AMD is a progressive eye disease that primarily impacts the macula, the central part of the retina responsible for sharp, central vision. As the population ages, the incidence of AMD rises, making it essential for home healthcare professionals to play a proactive role in its prevention and management.

In the home healthcare setting, the focus extends beyond traditional medical care. It involves creating an environment that fosters eye health awareness and offers practical strategies for maintaining good vision. One key aspect is education—informing both patients and their families about the risk factors associated with AMD and the importance of regular eye examinations.

Regular eye check-ups are crucial for early detection of AMD, enabling timely intervention to slow its progression. Home healthcare providers can facilitate these examinations, ensuring that individuals receive comprehensive eye care without the need to leave the comfort of their homes. By incorporating preventive measures, such as promoting a healthy diet rich in vitamins and antioxidants, home healthcare professionals contribute significantly to AMD management.

In addition to clinical care, emotional support plays a vital role in addressing the challenges associated with AMD. Vision loss can significantly impact an individual's quality of life, and home healthcare providers are uniquely positioned to offer empathetic support. This may include assisting with adaptive technologies, coordinating support groups, or providing resources that enhance independence and well-being.



Beyond the immediate care of those affected, home healthcare professionals can advocate for AMD awareness at a broader level. Collaborating with community organizations, participating in outreach programs, and utilizing digital platforms for educational campaigns are effective ways to amplify the importance of vision health during AMD Awareness Month.

Moreover, embracing technological advancements in telehealth allows home healthcare providers to extend their reach and deliver specialized eye care services. Through virtual consultations and remote monitoring, they can ensure that individuals with AMD receive ongoing care, fostering a holistic approach to managing this condition.

In conclusion, Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month serves as an opportunity for home healthcare providers to shine a spotlight on vision health. By combining education, preventive care, emotional support, and technological innovation, these professionals play a pivotal role in enhancing the lives of individuals affected by AMD. This month-long observance is not only a reminder to prioritize eye health but also a call to action for home healthcare to be at the forefront of promoting comprehensive care for those at risk of or living with AMD.

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By Dr. Joseph Farag

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In days gone by, you may have needed to visit the dentist two or three times to have a quality, white ceramic restoration. The dentist would need to take a special impression to make a plaster model for the dental laboratory to generate an extra replica of your tooth in order to hand-make your porcelain restoration. The craftsmanship of the laboratory technician is highly regarded, but generally requires a minimum turn-around time of two weeks, leaving you to function with a temporary, generally plastic, restoration.

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CEREC is an acronym for Chairside Economical Restoration of Esthetic Ceramics. Translated, it means that a dentist can economically restore damaged teeth in a single appointment using high-quality ceramic material that matches. CEREC uses the latest Computer-Aided Design and Manufacture (CAD-CAM) technology incorporating a camera, computer and milling machine in one instrument to give you perfect, white fillings, veneers or crowns, all in a fraction of the time it used to take.



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You can then watch your dentist design your new restoration on a computer screen, right beside the dental chair using the 3D image created by the camera. The virtual filling is then transferred into reality, again using CEREC. A solid block of porcelain ceramic is inserted into the CEREC milling unit. Special tools then sculpt your restoration to the finest detail based on the restoration designed on the CEREC computer.

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# RECLAIMING JOY:

## CELEBRATING VALENTINE'S DAY ON YOUR TERMS

**C**rafting your own unique celebration on Valentine's Day allows you to redefine the occasion, emphasizing self-love, cherishing connections with friends and family, or relishing precious moments alone. Instead of succumbing to traditional expectations, consider establishing your own rituals that resonate with your values and preferences.

Valentine's Day is often associated with romantic love, but the concept of love extends far beyond romantic relationships. Start by embracing self-love as a cornerstone of your celebration. This could involve pampering yourself with a spa day, indulging in your favorite meal, or simply taking a day to focus on activities that bring you joy and fulfillment. By prioritizing your well-being, you lay the foundation for a celebration that revolves around self-appreciation.

In the spirit of alternative celebrations, consider dedicating Valentine's Day to acts of kindness and gratitude. Reach out to friends, family, or even strangers with gestures that spread love and joy. Write heartfelt notes, create handmade gifts, or volunteer your time to contribute positively to your community. Shifting the focus from receiving to giving can bring a sense of fulfillment and purpose, turning Valentine's Day into a celebration of compassion and generosity.

Gather your friends and family for a non-traditional Valentine's Day gathering. Whether it's a game night, movie marathon, or a potluck dinner, creating shared memories with loved ones fosters a sense of connection. Celebrating friendship and familial bonds can be just as meaningful, if not more, than a conventional romantic dinner. Choose activities that resonate with your group and create traditions that strengthen your relationships.

For those who prefer solitude, celebrating Valentine's Day alone can be a liberating experience. Take this opportunity to engage in activities that bring you happiness and tranquility. It could be reading a favorite book, exploring nature, or pursuing a creative hobby. By embracing solitude,



you empower yourself to enjoy your own company and appreciate the simple pleasures of life without relying on external validation.

Exploring alternative ways to celebrate also opens the door to mindfulness and self-reflection. Consider practicing gratitude by reflecting on the positive aspects of your life and expressing thanks for the relationships and experiences that have shaped you. Engage in activities that promote personal growth, such as journaling, meditation, or setting intentions for the coming year. Valentine's Day becomes a moment to connect with yourself on a deeper level and appreciate the journey you're on.

Culminating in a celebration that is uniquely yours, Valentine's Day can be a canvas for self-expression and personal fulfillment. Break free from societal expectations and societal norms, and forge your own path to joy. Whether you're surrounded by friends and family, engaged in acts of kindness, or relishing solitude, the key is to align the celebration with your values and priorities.

In conclusion, celebrating Valentine's Day on your terms provides an opportunity for genuine self-love and meaningful connections. By establishing your own traditions, focusing on acts of kindness, and finding joy in the company of friends, family, or yourself, you create a celebration that reflects your authentic desires and values. So, this February 14th, step away from convention and embrace a Valentine's Day that brings you true happiness and fulfillment.

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# LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANY (LLC) OPERATING AGREEMENTS

By James W. Mallonee

It generally takes a law suit to bring about some recognition regarding a need when it comes to planning a business operation. Consider the Limited Liability Company and its progeny which provides the average citizen the ability to own a company and have their personal property protected against losing those assets creditors.

Historically, the idea of an LLC started about 50 years ago out West, and has evolved in almost every state of the union. The State statutes recognizing an LLC was established in Wyoming in 1977, followed by Florida in 1982. It generally affords protection to a person's personal assets against law suits while not requiring double taxation to the government. The size of the company can be a single individual to multiple members and millions of dollars in assets. Setting up an LLC is just as simple, register with the State, get an EIN number from the government and open an account with a bank (which is not absolutely required).

The key to having a successful LLC is the preparation of an operating agreement where there are two or more members; however, you can also have single member LLC's and receive the same protections as a multi-member LLC. In Florida, LLC organizations are treated very similar to partnerships. One of the major exceptions is when it comes to single member LLCs because there is no such thing as a single member partnership. Unlike a corporation, the individuals who are part of an LLC are called members.



Each member owes a duty to the other members. The duty owed gives each member the right to sue any other members when they breach some requirements contained in the Operating Agreement or fail to protect the company. The right to file suit against other members can be done directly as opposed to derivatively. A derivative action is one where an individual files suit on behalf of the company as opposed to themselves personally.

LLC's generally follow the Business Judgment Rule when determining if a member misuses the authority they are granted by the operating agreement or by statute. The Business Judgment Rule affords a great deal of latitude when it comes to decision making. When a decision is made concerning the outcome of how a business will act is made without the benefit of any information, the member who makes such decision is vulnerable to being sued and held accountable for any losses. However, members are

protected when making decisions when relying on information and opinions presented by others, including employees, committees, legal counsel and accountants.

An operating agreement gives each member a basis of understanding how the entity will operate. It will also provide each member with the rules the company will operate under including what profits will be shared among the members. This includes profits, losses, transferability and distribution of expenses.

If you are considering filing with the State for recognition of an LLC organization, consider contacting the lawyer of your choice to assist you in preparing an Operating Agreement. What you don't want to have happen is to find out someone in the organization is not pulling their weight or worse is sabotaging the company with no recourse to protect you or the company. An Operating Agreement sets out the means by which the company will operate, profits distributed and who is in charge when final decisions need to be made.

*This article is intended for informational use only and is not for purposes of providing legal advice or association of a lawyer – client relationship.*

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# What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

**W**eight-watchers. Nutrisystem. Mediterranean diet. Paleo. Living healthy has become a craze, although obesity in our country, rather legitimizes it. For many people it is about looking and feeling better, living longer, stronger and disease-free. These are all important reasons for eating clean, exercising, and learning to rest our bodies sufficiently.

For Christians, however, trying to maintain healthy habits finds its motivation in more than adopting diet fads to longevity and better quality of life. Taking care of our bodies is stewardship. That is, it is a reflection of our recognition of having been created by God, and how our lives can be instruments in his hands to serve and honor him on earth. Of course, God can use both the healthy and the unfit for his purposes, including the sick, feeble, and dying. Human worth and value is not in question.

The reality is that our earthly lives are only a speck in the sands of eternity. However, Christ followers understand that life doesn't belong to them. It is a gift from a Good Father who entrusted them with a brief span of years that should be invested in loving others and making our world a better place. For those who have believed in Christ and experienced God's forgiveness of sin, the reason for taking care of their bodies goes beyond living longer and healthier. It's about honoring Jesus Christ with all of life, including the way they take care of their bodies.

In his book, *"The Unknown God: Searching for spiritual fulfillment,"* Oxford University professor, Alister McGrath, describes the parable of Plato's Cave, a story about people enslaved inside the cave oblivious to the reality that existed on the outside beyond the flickering shadows which they knew. That is, until the day someone was able to find their way out and discover a world beyond description, a world of beauty and splendor. McGrath writes, "Our desires have become attached to things that are little more than shadows, when they are meant to be attached to something which cannot decay or disappoint" (32).



How does this relate to healthy living? Focusing on living healthier and longer, like any other pursuit we might obsess about, really reveals a spiritual longing in our souls for something more: *eternity*. Whether it is longing for a "perfect" relationship that often disenchant, earthly riches that can quickly vanish, or a healthy and strong body that is suddenly brought to a standstill due to an unexpected medical report, our hearts are longing for something beyond what this world can provide.

McGrath probes us to consider this question: "Suppose our longing for fulfillment points to something we have yet to discover? What if our yearning is a clue to the meaning of the universe?" (10). Taking care of your body and staying healthy

is a good thing, but it isn't everything. The truth of the matter is, whatever we pursue in life has a way to deceive us to think that by attaining "it" our lives will be complete. They're not. Deep inside a voice continues to remind us that our longings for fulfillment are like signposts in the sky pointing us to something beyond ourselves. Could that something (Someone) be our Creator?

May you achieve physical well-being and wholeness. But may you also discover the gift of eternal life which Jesus promises to all who believe and trust in him alone. "...I have come that they may have life, and have it in abundance" (John 10:10). I would enjoy exploring with you the meaning of life and God.

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healed  
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Do you suffer from any  
of the following leg  
symptoms?

☐

Varicose Veins

☐

Discoloration

☐

Achy Legs

☐

Spider Veins

☐

Bruising

☐

Fatigue

☐

Swelling

☐

Ulcers

☐

Restless Legs

If you said **“YES”** to any of the above, you may have vein disease.



**FLORIDA LAKES**  
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