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Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

February 2024

Lee Edition - Monthly

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**A GUIDE TO
COUPLES HEALTH**

HEART DISEASE IN SENIORS

**UNDERSTANDING THE
SILENT THREAT**

RECLAIMING JOY

**CELEBRATING VALENTINE'S DAY
ON YOUR TERMS**

THE PLEASURE OF A HEALTHY PELVIC FLOOR

RELIEF FOR CHRONIC NERVE PAIN

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

**PREPARING FOR
AGING SYMPOSIUMS**

February 21, 2024

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM THE FLU AND COVID-19 TIPS

**It's Never Too Late
To Improve Your
HEART HEALTH**

Catherine Law, M.D., FACC
CARDIOLOGIST

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2/7 - 1pm	2/6 - 11am	2/3 - 10am	2/8 - 1pm
2/10 - 1pm	2/7 - 6:30pm	2/6 - 6:30pm	2/10 - 11am
2/14 - 1pm	2/13 - 11am	2/9 - 11am	2/14 - 6:30pm
2/21 - 1pm	2/17 - 11am	2/16 - 11am	2/15 - 1pm
2/24 - 1pm	2/20 - 11am	2/17 - 10am	2/22 - 1pm
2/27 - 6:30pm	2/21 - 6:30pm	2/20 - 6:30pm	2/24 - 11am
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CARDIOLOGIST CATHERINE LAW, M.D., SAYS IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO IMPROVE YOUR HEART HEALTH

Every 33 seconds in the United States, a person dies from cardiovascular disease, making focusing on our heart health more important than ever.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a disease of the heart or blood vessels. Often, reduced blood flow to the heart, brain or body is caused by fatty deposits inside an artery, which hardens and narrows the passageway. CVD is the leading cause of death for men and women worldwide, killing an estimated 17.3 million people annually. CVD is also projected to remain the leading cause of death until 2030.

With heart health and disease prevention in mind, Physicians Regional Medical Group is excited to welcome Dr. Catherine Law, M.D., FACC.

"I find the heart fascinating—especially the mechanisms of how the heart functions and the pathology. Small aberrations in the mechanics and pathways within the heart can ultimately lead to significant physical changes throughout the body," says Law.

Dr. Law is board certified in cardiovascular disease and echocardiography, and she specializes in general cardiology, valvular heart disease, coronary artery disease, heart failure and arrhythmias and preventive medicine. Her specialty interests include women's health, cardiac imaging, coronary artery disease screening, and the evaluation of hypertension and lipid levels.

You may have never considered your heart health before, but Dr. Law says it's never too late to start. Some ways to lower your risk include limiting alcohol use (one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men) and getting 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of strenuous exercise weekly.

It's also important to monitor your blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels, as well as your BMI. High blood pressure strains your heart and blood



vessels, while excess weight, high cholesterol and elevated glucose levels can lead to inflammation and plaque buildup in arteries. Together, these factors can raise the likelihood of heart attacks, strokes and other heart-related problems.

If you're worried about your cardiovascular disease risk factors, Dr. Law can help.

She received her medical degree from Wright State University's Boonshoft School of Medicine in Dayton, OH, before completing her residency and fellowship at the University of South Florida in Tampa.

Before joining Physicians Regional Medical Group, Dr. Law was a non-invasive cardiologist at Lee Health and Florida Heart Associates. She wants her patients to know she is compassionate, an effective communicator and a patient-oriented physician.

"I like to empower my patients through teaching. Outcomes are better if patients understand their particular disease or structural defects. Knowledge equals power, and patients are encouraged and motivated to make better choices and lifestyle changes when they understand their particular condition," she says.

Dr. Law is accepting new patients at Physicians Regional Founders Square. For more information, call 239-348-4120 or schedule an appointment online.

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Heartfelt Recipes for Vascular Health: VALENTINE'S DAY EDITION

Valentine's Day is often associated with indulgent treats and romantic dinners. While it's a time to celebrate love, it's also an opportunity to show love for your vascular health. Incorporating heart-healthy ingredients into your Valentine's Day menu not only adds a thoughtful touch but also contributes to overall well-being, especially for those managing conditions like Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD). In this special Valentine's Day edition, we explore delicious recipes designed to nourish your heart and circulatory system.

1. Salmon Romance with Lemon Dill Sauce:

Begin your romantic evening with a heart-healthy twist on a classic dish. Salmon, rich in omega-3 fatty acids, is known for its cardiovascular benefits. Bake or grill a salmon fillet to perfection and top it with a zesty lemon dill sauce. The omega-3s in salmon help reduce inflammation and support vascular health.

2. Quinoa Love Salad:

Create a vibrant and nutrient-packed salad with the goodness of quinoa. Quinoa is a whole grain that offers fiber, protein, and essential nutrients. Toss cooked quinoa with colorful vegetables like cherry tomatoes, spinach, and bell peppers. Drizzle with a light olive oil vinaigrette for a refreshing side dish that supports heart health.

3. Berry Bliss Smoothie Bowl:

Start your Valentine's Day with a heart-healthy breakfast by preparing a berry-filled smoothie bowl. Berries, such as strawberries and blueberries, are rich in antioxidants that promote blood flow and reduce oxidative stress. Blend them with Greek yogurt and a sprinkle of chia seeds for a delicious and nourishing treat.

4. Sweet Potato Love Fries:

Swap traditional fries for sweet potato fries to add a heart-healthy twist to your Valentine's Day meal. Sweet potatoes are a great source of potassium, which helps regulate blood pressure. Roast sweet potato wedges with a hint of olive oil and your favorite spices for a tasty and nutritious side dish.



5. Dark Chocolate Fondue Delight:

Indulge your sweet tooth with a dark chocolate fondue featuring heart-healthy dark chocolate. Dark chocolate contains flavonoids that may contribute to improved vascular function. Dip strawberries, bananas, or other favorite fruits into melted dark chocolate for a decadent yet health-conscious dessert.

This Valentine's Day, prioritize your vascular health by incorporating these heartfelt recipes into your celebration. From omega-3-rich salmon to antioxidant-packed berries and heart-healthy dark chocolate, these dishes not only express love but also contribute to overall well-being. Whether you're managing PAD or simply aiming for a healthier lifestyle, these recipes offer a delicious way to celebrate love and health on this special day. Cheers to a Valentine's Day filled with love, flavor, and a happy heart!

Vascular and Vein Center at Gulfcoast Surgeons has been one of the most respected vein clinics in Southwest Florida for over 30 years. Our surgeons, Dr. Abraham Sadighi, Dr. Johan Escribano, and Dr. Vijayakumar Tanjavur have performed thousands of vascular and vein surgeries with consistently positive outcomes.

We focus on diseases of the vascular system that can range from harmless but unattractive spider veins to dangerous conditions such as peripheral artery disease.

Our caring and dedicated team will help you identify problems and offer the best treatment options for you.



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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 JAFESPORTSMEDICINE.COM.



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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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NAVIGATING THE SHADOWS:

Understanding and Confronting Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AMD) poses a growing threat to the aging population, casting shadows on the clarity of vision and altering the landscape of countless lives. This degenerative eye condition, affecting the macula – the central part of the retina responsible for sharp, detailed vision – demands our attention and understanding as we explore its intricacies and potential avenues for intervention.

The Silent Onset: Unveiling the Progression of AMD

AMD often begins its subtle assault without overt symptoms, leading to a silent progression that catches many by surprise. As we age, the cellular structure of the macula undergoes changes, contributing to the onset of AMD. Two main types, dry AMD and wet AMD, present distinct challenges. Dry AMD typically advances slowly, marked by the accumulation of drusen, small yellow deposits beneath the retina. In contrast, wet AMD involves abnormal blood vessel growth beneath the macula, leading to faster and more severe vision loss.

The Aging Factor: Unraveling the Demographics of AMD

Understanding the demographics of AMD reveals a stark reality – this condition predominantly affects the elderly. As our global population ages, the prevalence of AMD is on the rise, with individuals over the age of 50 facing an increased risk. Environmental factors, genetics, and lifestyle choices contribute to this complex interplay, underscoring the importance of a multifaceted approach to tackle the root causes of AMD.

The Battle for Sight: Current Treatment Landscape

While a complete cure for AMD remains elusive, advancements in research and medical technology offer hope for managing the condition. Treatments vary based on the type of AMD diagnosed. Anti-VEGF medications, injections that inhibit abnormal blood vessel growth, have become a cornerstone in managing wet AMD. Additionally, lifestyle modifications, including a diet rich in antioxidants and protective eyewear, play a crucial role in mitigating the progression of AMD.



The Role of Genetics: Unveiling the Genetic Puzzle of AMD

Unveiling an individual's susceptibility to AMD. Identifying specific genetic markers associated with AMD enables a more personalized and targeted approach to diagnosis and treatment. As the field of genetic research expands, it opens new avenues for precision medicine, offering tailored interventions based on an individual's unique genetic makeup.

Breaking Barriers: Emerging Technologies in AMD Research

Cutting-edge technologies are reshaping the landscape of AMD research and treatment. Artificial intelligence (AI) is making strides in early detection through the analysis of retinal images, providing a faster and more accurate diagnosis. Stem cell therapy and gene editing techniques are also emerging as promising frontiers, offering potential avenues to restore damaged retinal tissue and address the root causes of AMD.

Vision for the Future: A Call to Action Against AMD

The fight against AMD extends beyond the realms of medicine and science – it calls for a collective effort to raise awareness, promote early detection, and support research initiatives. By fostering a culture of eye health and advocating for regular eye check-ups, we can collectively contribute to the prevention and early intervention of AMD, ensuring a clearer and brighter future for generations to come.

In conclusion, Age-Related Macular Degeneration casts a significant shadow on the aging population, affecting millions worldwide. As we unravel the complexities of AMD, from its silent onset to the forefront of genetic research and emerging technologies, the imperative is clear – to confront this condition head-on, armed with knowledge, awareness, and a united commitment to preserving the gift of sight.



BRADLEY MIDDAGH, O.D.
Optometric Physician

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

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

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

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

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By Joe Altepeter, DPM

OVERUSE INJURIES

A new year is upon us and the fitness centers are full. As we push towards our goals and resolutions this year, we need to be mindful of our potential for overuse injuries and prevention measures we can take. Largely simplified, Wolff's law suggests that bones will respond to stresses applied and increase density accordingly. In a similar manner, Davis's law applies to the muscles and other soft tissue structures, suggesting that intermittently applied stretch will result in hypertrophy. Along with improvement in overall health or fat loss, these are goals if not inevitable in achieving the goals many of us make at the beginning of a new year. If pursued appropriately this can be done without having to take a detour along the way. However, with rapid, or in some cases even gradual, increase in activities requiring repetitive motion or trauma, an overuse injury may occur, and could create a potentially significant roadblock in achieving your goals.

There are a few ways to decrease your risk of suffering an overuse injury. Start at a reasonable and realistic level by not over exerting yourself from the start. Give yourself time to recover from your workouts, especially if you are trying new exercises or ramping up mileage and reps. When you are increasing mileage or reps, try to keep increases at less than ten percent each week. Consider implementing different exercises or activities rather than sticking with the same set of exercises from day to day. Ensure your body is prepared for each workout with appropriate dynamic warm up prior to, and a sufficient cool down after. And be mindful of your shoe gear by using exercise specific gear and retiring that gear at least once or twice per year. Not only will these ideas help lower chances of suffering an overuse injury, but they can also help maintain enjoyment and motivation in the pursuit of your goals.

While everyone is at risk of suffering this type of injury, factors that may increase risk include age, previous injury, higher body mass index, and issues with training via technique or progression. When it comes to the foot and ankle, there is potential for almost all bone and soft tissue to be overused, with some injuries being far more prevalent than others.



Among the more common overuse injuries that may involve the foot and/or ankle are metatarsal stress fractures, achilles tendinitis, posterior tibial tendinitis, peroneal tendinitis, and shin splints to name a few. These various pathologies can affect the lower extremity in relatively unique ways, so it is important to be evaluated to differentiate between them and manage them appropriately.

If concerned about an overuse injury, the first thing you need to do is listen to your body. If you start experiencing swelling and tenderness that would be out of the ordinary for standard soreness, this is a sign that you need to slow down and let your body recover. If these discomforts linger, or even before they have a chance to linger, seeking medical treatment as soon as possible is imperative for a more predictable and speedy recovery. When consulting a healthcare professional, be transparent about recent changes that have been made in your routine. Depending upon the severity of an overuse injury, treatment could range, decreasing

or stopping aggravating activities, bracing, immobilization, and physical therapy could all be part of the process to get back on track as quickly as possible.

Disclaimer: This content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health care provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

Joe Altepeter, DPM, AACFAS

Joe Altepeter, DPM, AACFAS, is a Podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Centers in Fort Myers FL. He is a Fellow of the American College of Foot & Ankle Surgeons. Call 239-430-3668 or visit www.NaplesPodiatrist.com to make an appointment. Visit FootHealthFacts.org to learn more about foot and ankle conditions.



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In the golden years of life, embracing wellness becomes paramount for older adults seeking longevity and an enhanced quality of life.

Recognizing the importance of a wellness-focused lifestyle in retirement, The Terraces at Bonita Springs has curated an exclusive Vitality Program to ensure residents enjoy an active and fulfilling retirement.

According to the Wellness Coordinator at The Terraces, Cheri Helmink, "The Vitality Program is a comprehensive Wellness program designed to keep active adults active. It places a thoughtful emphasis on the 8 Dimensions of Wellness, including Spiritual, Emotional, Financial, Intellectual, Environmental, Occupational, Physical and Social. We find that focusing on the different Dimensions of Wellness allows us to provide well-rounded programming throughout the year, throughout the entire continuum of care."

The All-Inclusive Approach

The Vitality Program at The Terraces goes beyond traditional senior living fitness and exercise programs. It is a holistic senior wellness initiative designed to address the multifaceted aspects of aging, including physical activity, mental stimulation, safety, and independence across the entire continuum of care.



Promoting an Active Retirement

The community at The Terraces offers a plethora of programs to promote both physical and mental well-being. These include:

- Daily check-ins and personal help buttons, providing residents with the assurance that assistance is always within reach
- A personalized vitality assessment and wellness plan for each resident, ensuring a tailored approach to staying active physically, mentally, and spiritually



"Our comprehensive plan includes important facets such as daily check-in, fitness assessments, incident, hospitalization, and rehabilitation services, plus the program covers emergency information updates to families when an issue arises. We also focus on a wide array of activities that cover support groups, community-wide events, and resident-led events. Residents can pick and choose which event meets their physical, social, and mental needs and desires," said Cheri.

Ensuring Comprehensive Health Care

The Terraces takes a proactive approach to health care, staying on top of residents' well-being through incident, hospital, and rehabilitation center follow-ups.

Emergency information updates are promptly communicated to designated family members, fostering a sense of security and community support.

Community Engagement and Resources

Residents are introduced to a wide array of activities and events, ranging from support groups to community-wide gatherings and resident-led initiatives.

Our robust activities calendar includes something for everyone:

- Chair yoga
- Cardio drumming
- Bridge
- Group crosswords
- Fitness center activities

JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT EVENT!

In the Mood for Love: A Valentine's Celebration
Starring Whitney Grace

Tuesday, February 13

- 3 p.m. Cocktail Hour With Light
Hors d'Oeuvres

- 4 p.m. Dancing and Live Performance
by Whitney Grace

Don your dancing shoes, grab your favorite partner, and join us for a celebration of love. Dance and be entertained as Whitney Grace performs her favorite love songs and interacts with the audience during this fun, informal, and festive event. Experience the uplifting lifestyle of The Terraces, a Life Plan Community offering a Type A LifeCare contract.

Space is limited. Valet parking will be available.
Please RSVP by February 6.

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





Residents also get to enjoy wine tasting to relax, socialize, and try some delicious drinks.

Cheri added, "The residents love the variety of events that are offered. We listen to the concerns and wants of the residents and act on them in a timely manner. Our primary goal is always an attentive response to the community's needs."

Fitness Center and Group Exercise

The Vitality Program places a significant emphasis on physical well-being, offering fitness programs, classes, and strength training sessions. This commitment to physical activity is a testament to The Terraces' dedication to promoting an active and vibrant lifestyle for its residents.

Wellness Education and Programs

Residents benefit from ongoing wellness education initiatives, providing valuable health information to support them in living their best lives.

Cheri said, "We offer lectures of all kinds and social outings to a variety of local destinations that appeal to all. When it comes to physical fitness, our one-of-a-kind fitness program is always evolving and changing; we never have the same workout session!"

The commitment to senior wellness is evident in the diverse offerings of the Vitality Program, tailored to meet the unique needs and preferences of each resident.

At The Terraces at Bonita Springs, the Vitality Program stands as a testament to the community's dedication to senior wellness.

With endless opportunities to live well and stay vital, residents can enjoy a retirement filled with purpose, engagement, and a robust sense of community.

"We look forward to seeing how the program can grow and evolve in 2024," said Cheri.

Vitality Program at The Terraces at Bonita Springs

If enjoying healthy and active golden years is a priority for your retirement, The Terraces is the right place for you. Give us a call at 239-204-3469 to schedule a personalized tour of our community.

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

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

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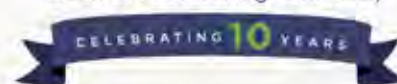


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Unveil Your Radiance: Valentine's Day 20% off Cosmetic Sale

By Joseph Onorato, MD, FAAD

Valentine's Day is not just about expressing love for others; it's also an opportunity to indulge in self-love and pamper your skin. This year, South West Florida Dermatology Plastic Surgery and Laser Center in Naples, Florida, invites you to embrace a new confidence level with exclusive discounts on three transformative treatments. Treat yourself or surprise your significant other with the gift of rejuvenation. Let's explore the medical and aesthetic benefits of the **Brown Spot Treatment with Laser**, **Botox Injections**, and **Glycolic Peels**, each designed to enhance your natural beauty and instill renewed confidence in your face. The treatments involve Brown Spots, Botox and Glycolic Peels.

Brown Spot Treatment with Laser: Bid farewell to unwanted brown spots and uneven skin tone with our advanced laser treatment. Beyond the aesthetic improvements, this treatment offers medical benefits by targeting pigmentation irregularities. The laser breaks down melanin, leading to a more even complexion. Scientific studies have shown that laser treatments effectively reduce hyperpigmentation, creating healthier and more radiant skin. Imagine the joy of presenting your loved one, or yourself, with a complexion free from blemishes, instilling newfound confidence in your appearance and minimal downtime.

Say goodbye to uneven skin tone and embrace the clarity of a flawless complexion with our Brown Spot Treatment using advanced laser technology. This treatment targets pigmentation irregularities caused by sun exposure or aging. The procedure is relatively quick, usually lasting around 30 minutes, making it an ideal choice for those with busy schedules. While some may see immediate results, optimal outcomes typically require several sessions spaced several weeks apart. An annual maintenance session is recommended to keep your skin looking luminous for long-lasting results.

Botox Injections: Rediscover the joy of a youthful and revitalized appearance with our Botox Injections for facial lines and wrinkles. Botox reigns supreme in providing visible aesthetic benefits, offering smoother skin lasting approximately three to four months. Beyond its cosmetic advantages, Botox has been clinically proven to alleviate certain medical conditions, such as chronic migraines and excessive sweating with minimal downtime.



By gifting yourself or your partner with the rejuvenating effects of Botox, you not only enhance your facial aesthetics but potentially improve your overall well-being.

The injection of botulinum toxin into specific facial muscles temporarily relaxes them, leading to cumulative benefits that slow the formation of new wrinkles. Many clients find that scheduling Botox injections every three to four months helps maintain their desired results, allowing them to turn back the hands of time confidently.

Glycolic Peels: Unlock the secrets of smoother, more radiant skin with our Glycolic Peels, designed to exfoliate and rejuvenate with no downtime. The medical benefits extend beyond the surface, as glycolic acid has been shown to stimulate collagen production. Collagen is crucial for maintaining skin elasticity and firmness, contributing to a youthful complexion. A Glycolic Peel addresses aesthetic concerns like fine lines and texture and promotes long-term skin health. Gift yourself or your loved one the experience of unveiling a more confident and radiant version of yourself this Valentine's Day.

Experience the rejuvenating power of Glycolic Peels, designed to exfoliate and revitalize your skin. The treatment involves applying a glycolic acid solution to remove dead skin cells, revealing a brighter complexion. Glycolic Peels are generally well-tolerated and can be customized to suit individual skin types. The duration of the treatment varies but typically takes around 30 to 60 minutes.

A series of peels spaced two to four weeks apart is recommended for optimal results. Maintenance peels every three to six months help sustain the benefits and promote ongoing skin health.

Additional options for gifting your loved one are available. We Carry a full line of *Neostrata skincare*, *Elta MD skincare*, and *Regimen Skin Care products for both men and women*.

Schedule a cosmetic appointment by February 29, 2024, present this coupon at checkout the day of the appointment, and receive 20% off.

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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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The Pleasure of a Healthy Pelvic Floor

By Shannon Willits

We often think of pelvic floor health exclusively as a woman's health issue when in reality pelvic floor health is critical for a well-functioning body for both men and women.

I've worked with many men that have spent their careers sitting. When they show up in the Pilates studio it is easy to see the postural distortions due to the adaptation of this repetitive posture. Postural distortions are a "use" issue, ie. overuse, underuse, misuse, abuse, etc. You get the idea. Sitting is an underuse/overuse dichotomy that is considered a life-threatening behavior. According to the NIH, *Sedentary death syndrome (SeDS) is a major public health burden due to its causing multiple chronic diseases and millions of premature deaths each year.*

Women present many similarities but often quite different, especially if they've had children. Whether vaginal or cesarean delivery, the pelvic floor function is not optimal and requires intervention to restore function.

Posture Matters

Posture is the position in which you hold your body upright against gravity while standing, sitting, lying down and walking. Your posture is the main reason pelvic floor damage happens. When you maintain good posture, the pressure is put on your bones, and your pelvic floor muscles can actually get stronger. When you're seated for too long with poor posture, the pressure shifts and is put on your muscles. This is more prominent in individuals with poor posture, such as those with a rounded back or who slouch. Sitting for too long can compress your organs, adding additional pressure to the pelvic floor. Essentially, if you're sitting for too long, your core and pelvic muscles can become strained, which eventually causes damage.



Pelvic Floor Recruitment and the Pilates Method

The pelvic floor is a set of muscles that supports the pelvic organs and hips for spinal stabilization support, applying

intra-abdominal resistance and pelvic pressuring during coughing or lifting, housing the pelvic organs, and providing sensation in the pelvic floor (including genitals). These muscles are considered voluntary, meaning they can be contracted and also relaxed through conscious control.

Changes in recruitment of the pelvic floor muscles (PFM) can occur as a result of chronic stress, poor movement patterns, excessive sitting, trauma, surgery or childbirth. This altered recruitment often results in over activation of some muscles and under activation of others creating a series of imbalances. These imbalances usually do not spontaneously recover and can lead to other issues like chronic low back and pelvic pain, hip pain and even neck and shoulder pain.

A primary focus of the Pilates Method recognizes the pelvic floor as an integral part of "the core" and includes the PFM during training. Every Pilates exercise focuses on length and strength simultaneously making it a very efficient exercise method for men and women alike. Exercises like bridges, squats and biceps curls all focus on alignment, breathing and proper recruitment of the core, including the pelvic floor.

Beyond Kegals, The Pilates Method 3-Dimensional Diaphragmatic Breathing Techniques

Try this technique at home. Focus and maintain a 3-dimensional inhale breath throughout this exercise. In other words, expand the front, back and sides of your lower rib cage and lower belly on the inhale being mindful of neck and shoulder tension and then gently contract the abdominals on the exhale with a *Shhh* sound being mindful not to excessively force the exhale.

When contracting the PFM, a deep sense of drawing up from the pelvic floor (vaginal for women and perineum for men) and a gentle corseting of the abdominal wall. You should NOT feel your buttocks tighten, legs rotate out, movement of your spine or pelvis.

Now place your hands on the outside of your ribs. This time when contracting the PFM, a deep connection in the abdomen (under your hands) ideally is felt. *Again, DO NOT squeeze the buttocks tighten, rotate the legs out, or move the spine or pelvis.* If you feel a bearing down and out of the abdomen, butt gripping or spinal movement, you are not successfully connecting the PFM. Always remember, less is more.

Pilates is for Everybody

Pilates caters for everyone, from beginner to advanced. The health benefits of Pilates are almost endless, but some of the most popular include: improved flexibility, improved posture, improved dynamic strength and tone of the core, restoring muscular balance to the PFM, injury prevention, and less pain! You can perform exercises using your own body weight, or with the help of various pieces of apparatus.

A typical Pilates workout includes a number of exercises and stretches. Each exercise is performed with attention to diaphragmatic breathing techniques to dynamically recruit the PFM and abdominals. To gain the maximum benefit, Pilates should be done at least two or three times per week.

Pilates is great to do with your partner. Practicing Pilates together brings you more in tune with your own and each other's body. You will understand range of motion better and can assist in light spotting techniques to get more out of practicing together than by yourself.

Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

Shannon is a trained movement specialist holding prestigious certifications in STOTT Pilates, a fellowship in Applied Functional Science (FAFS) and is a Functional Golf Specialist. She has been studying various movement methods with an emphasis on healing for decades in order to keep her own body healthy. While Shannon has always been strong and flexible, her body was still fighting aches and pains. After her first Pilates class she felt a profound sense of well-being, and her aches and pains began to disappear. Trading her pantyhose and high heels for leggings and grip socks Shannon has had the privilege of bringing "Pilates for Everybody" to her community and creating an academy where she mentors aspiring Pilates instructors. Furthermore, Shannon is a master trainer for Club Pilates, Barre Above and Relief Through Rolling, which focuses on self-myofascial release. She is also certified in other movement modalities including TRX, the MELT Method, BOSU, Gyrotonic and more.



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Knowledge is Power!

Educate yourself today for the resources you or someone you love may need tomorrow.

EDUCATE - ENGAGE - PLAN

Are you proactive or reactive when planning for life's next chapters? When considering your options or a loved one's, it is essential to know the benefits of advance planning before a crisis occurs.

Aging can bring challenges, but being proactive by doing your homework in advance can make this process much smoother. Taking a proactive approach and not waiting until a crisis occurs reduces stress for you and those that you love.

To help educate people about their many options, Seniors Blue Book is hosting its **12th Annual Preparing for Aging Symposiums** on **February 21, 2024, 9am-2pm** at Marion Hall by Saint Cecilia (5698 Sunrise Dr., Fort Myers 33919).

At our upcoming symposiums, aging seniors, their family and caregivers will enjoy a variety of educational panels from area experts and visit over 70 exhibitor tables with valuable information to share.

The day will consist of four panel discussions. Panel one, *Dotting Your I's and Crossing Your T's*, will feature D. Gates Wealth Management, Fuller Metz Cremation & Funeral Services, Comfort Keepers, Kelly Fayer, P.A and Florida Senior Consulting. Panel Two, *Medicare / Medicaid 101* will feature Safe Harbor Law Firm and Logical Insurance Solutions. Panel Three, our medical panel, will feature FYZICAL, Millennium Physician Group, Neuropsychiatric Research Center of Southwest Florida and Doctors Hearing. Panel Four, *Senior Living Options*, will feature Discovery Village at The Forum, Arden Courts Fort Myers, Shell Point Retirement Community and Cypress Cove.

EVENT IS FREE and will feature a **complimentary continental breakfast and delicious lunch - HOWEVER RSVP IS REQUIRED - 239-776-7353.**



Learn how you can make the best decisions to ensure comfort, safety and opportunities for enriched lifestyles. For example, come discover if your legal and financial affairs are set in place as you age, and if not, learn the right steps that need to be done! Or maybe you're at the point where you or a loved one may require outside assistance to help you age in your own home. Come and discover the many options available in our area, and what makes each one different. And who knows, maybe you'll discover that the best choice may be moving into one of the many beautiful senior housing communities in our area. No matter where you are in the aging process, our symposium is crafted specifically for you.



The goal of our annual symposiums is so that in one day our elders, their families and caregivers can get answers they need, discover the best options available, and be set to age well!

Please register early, space is limited. RSVP is required, call 239-776-7353.



What is Seniors Blue Book?

The Seniors Blue Book is a user-friendly resource offering educational articles and information about local aging services, senior housing and health-at-home options. We believe it is our responsibility to compile accurate information in a concise format and keep it current for all seniors and their families. We've been doing just that for more than 40 years by publishing this comprehensive senior directory used by professionals, seniors, their families, and caregivers - often referred to as "My Senior Bible!"

Our guides are free and can be found at more than 1,700 locations across Lee & Collier counties. You can request a free copy be mailed directly to you by calling 239-776-7353.

Visit www.SeniorsBlueBook.com to learn more.


Seniors Blue Book

For more symposium information and registration, please call 239-776-7353.

What is Seniors Blue Book (SBB) University

Aging, a natural part of life's journey, often brings with it a range of considerations and challenges. Being prepared and informed can significantly ease this transition. Seniors Blue Book recognizes the importance of proactive planning when it comes to aging gracefully and it offers a program called **Seniors Blue Book Universities** throughout all Southwest Florida. These events are FREE with a complementary lunch and held monthly at various locations.

Why should you join? Proactivity in planning for aging isn't solely about addressing imminent concerns; it's about creating a foundation for a smoother, more enriched journey through life's later chapters. Seniors Blue Book embodies this philosophy by offering a wealth of educational events year-round by esteemed local experts. These events cover a myriad of topics, from legal and financial considerations to healthcare options and senior living arrangements. Attendees will have the opportunity to absorb insights, ask questions, and get 1:1 time with the presenting experts (if needed).

Seniors Blue Book firmly believes that it's never too late—or too early—to equip oneself with knowledge. Whether you're planning for your own aging process or assisting a loved one on their journey, our educational events offer a free opportunity to gain insights that can transform the way you approach aging. What sets Seniors Blue Book Universities apart is their dedication to providing a diverse curriculum that covers a spectrum of topics crucial to navigating the aging process. From financial planning and legal considerations to healthcare options, lifestyle adjustments, and emotional well-being, each session is meticulously crafted to equip attendees with insights and tools for a smoother journey through life's later chapters.

Imagine the relief of knowing that you've taken steps to prepare, reducing stress not only for yourself but also for those you hold dear. Our educational series aren't just events; they're gateways to empowerment, offering tools and insights that pave the way for informed decisions and a more secure future.

What sets Seniors Blue Book Universities apart is a diverse curriculum that covers a spectrum of topics crucial to navigating the aging process. From financial planning and legal considerations to healthcare options, lifestyle adjustments, and emotional well-being, each session is meticulously planned to provide attendees with insights and tools for a smoother journey through life's later chapters. Not only curriculum, but the programs are accessible and inclusive. Held at various locations across Southwest Florida every month (12 events a month on average) these free sessions invite seniors, their families, and caregivers to partake in a day of learning, engagement, and community building.

By attending, you'll join a community of like-minded individuals—individuals dedicated to enhancing their understanding of aging, equipped with the knowledge to make informed choices. It's more than a mere free event; it's a commitment to self-empowerment, a pledge to navigate the complexities of aging with confidence and grace.

Join Seniors Blue Book at our many Seniors Blue Book University Events, and discover how preparedness, education, and proactive planning can unlock a future filled with opportunities, comfort, and enriched lifestyles.

To learn more, please call us at 239-776-7353.

Or visit <https://www.SeniorsBlueBook.com/events>.

Or visit our exact calendar of SBBU events found at

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/seniors-blue-book-17207823442>.

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RESOURCES FOR AGING WELL

SpaceOAR Hydrogel for Prostate Cancer Radiation Therapy—Reduces Side Effects of Bowel, Bladder and Sexual Dysfunction

Prostate cancer treatment can vary depending on the severity, patient's health and prior medical history. Radiation therapy is now an extremely precise procedure utilizing strategic techniques; however, some high doses of radiation can still cause damage to the rectal wall, contributing to adverse side effects. An innovative procedure can be done before radiation therapy to create a protective space between the posterior prostate and the rectal wall. SpaceOAR utilizes a hydrogel that creates about a 10 to 13 millimeter space (1/2 inch), allowing ample room for treatment and avoiding side effects like bowel, bladder and sexual dysfunction.

Radiation therapy typically takes place over several months, and SpaceOAR hydrogel stays in position for several months before it is safely absorbed by the body and removed through the urine. In a clinical study, SpaceOAR Hydrogel was shown to help minimize the impact on urinary, sexual and bowel quality of life for prostate cancer patients undergoing radiation therapy.¹

Creating more space, means fewer bowel, bladder, and sexual complications, which leads to a better quality of life. After radiotherapy was complete, control patients experienced a clinically significant (1X MID) decline in bowel, urinary and sexual quality of life 8 times more often than SpaceOAR Hydrogel patients.¹ More than 50,000 patients worldwide have been treated with SpaceOAR Hydrogel.¹

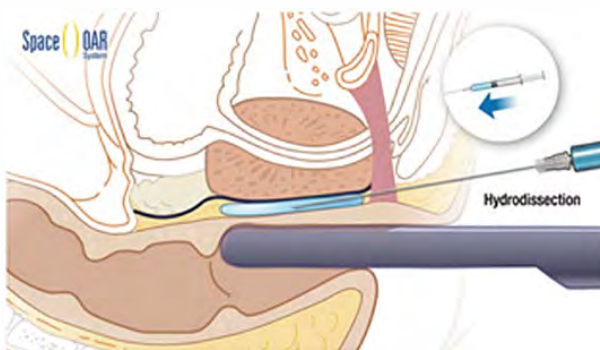
SpaceOAR FAQ:

Why Should I Have SpaceOAR Hydrogel?

By pushing the prostate farther from the rectum, the radiation dose delivered to the rectum is reduced, which may lessen damage to the rectum. With SpaceOAR Hydrogel in place, a doctor can complement the patient's radiation treatment to better target their cancer while preserving healthy tissue to help maintain quality of life.¹

Is it Safe?

SpaceOAR Hydrogel was FDA-cleared in April 2015 and is intended to temporarily position the anterior rectal wall away from the prostate during radiotherapy for prostate cancer. In creating this space, it is the intent of SpaceOAR Hydrogel to reduce the radiation dose delivered to the anterior rectum. The SpaceOAR



Hydrogel is composed of biodegradable material and maintains space for the entire course of prostate radiotherapy treatment and is completely absorbed by the patient's body over time.¹

What Is The Procedure Like And How Long Will It Stay In My Body?

SpaceOAR Hydrogel is injected as a liquid through a needle inserted between the rectum and the prostate. It can be implanted via a local anesthetic that will numb the injection area or under general anesthesia that will put a patient to sleep during the procedure. SpaceOAR Hydrogel stays in place for about three months and is naturally absorbed into the body and removed through urine in about 6 months. SpaceOAR Hydrogel can be implanted during an outpatient procedure in a hospital, surgery center, outpatient clinic or doctor's office prior to the start of radiation treatment. It is typically not a lengthy procedure – usually about 30 minutes.¹

What Are The Risks?

As with any medical treatment, there are some risks involved with the use of SpaceOAR Hydrogel. Potential complications associated with SpaceOAR Hydrogel include, but are not limited to: pain associated with SpaceOAR hydrogel injection; pain or discomfort associated with SpaceOAR Hydrogel; needle penetration of the bladder, prostate, rectal wall, rectum, or urethra; injection of SpaceOAR Hydrogel into the bladder, prostate, rectal wall, rectum, or urethra; local inflammatory reactions; infection; injection of air, fluid or SpaceOAR Hydrogel intravascularly; urinary retention; rectal mucosal damage, ulcers, necrosis; bleeding; constipation; and rectal urgency.¹

Source:
<https://www.spaceoar.com>

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.

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UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TINNITUS AWARENESS MONTH

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

Tinnitus Awareness Month sheds light on the persistent ringing, buzzing, or hissing sounds that millions around the world grapple with daily. Beyond the noise lies a silent struggle that often goes unnoticed, making it crucial to dedicate a month to raising awareness and fostering understanding.*

The Impact of Tinnitus

Tinnitus, characterized by the perception of noise in the absence of an external sound source, can take a toll on one's mental and emotional well-being. For those living with it, the constant ringing or buzzing can lead to stress, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating. Tinnitus Awareness Month aims to unravel the layers of this condition and underscore its impact on individuals' quality of life.

Raising Awareness

Creating awareness about tinnitus is a pivotal step toward fostering empathy and support. Initiatives during this month include educational campaigns, outreach programs, and online resources. These efforts aim not only to inform the public about the prevalence of tinnitus but also to debunk myths and misconceptions surrounding the condition.

Available Treatments

While tinnitus may not have a one-size-fits-all cure, awareness month serves as a platform to explore available treatments and management strategies. From therapeutic interventions and counseling to sound therapy and innovative technologies, individuals with tinnitus can discover options that suit their unique needs. Promoting awareness extends beyond understanding the condition itself; it involves recognizing the diverse range of solutions that can make a significant difference in the lives of those affected.

The Importance of Support

Tinnitus Awareness Month is not just about disseminating information but also about building a supportive community. Friends, family, and colleagues can play a crucial role in the well-being of



someone with tinnitus. Understanding the challenges they face and offering empathy can contribute to a more compassionate society that recognizes the importance of mental health.

Personal Stories

Highlighting personal stories of individuals living with tinnitus humanizes the experience. Sharing narratives of resilience, adaptation, and triumph over adversity brings a face to the condition. This storytelling aspect can inspire others facing similar challenges and promote a sense of solidarity within the community.

Advocacy and Research

Advocacy efforts during Tinnitus Awareness Month aim to influence policies that support individuals with tinnitus. Additionally, the month serves as a catalyst for increased research funding, fostering a deeper understanding of the condition and advancing innovative treatments. By advocating for tinnitus research, we can contribute to the collective efforts aimed at improving the lives of those affected.

Conclusion

As we navigate through Tinnitus Awareness Month, it is crucial to recognize the multifaceted nature of this condition and the importance of creating a supportive environment. By amplifying the silence that tinnitus sufferers endure, we can contribute to a world that is not only aware of the challenges posed by this condition but actively works towards alleviating its impact. Let us use this month as an opportunity to listen, learn, and lend a helping hand to those silently battling the persistent sounds that only they can hear.

John Nobile, HAS, BC-HIS, ACA is

a licensed hearing aid specialist and an ACA-certified audioprosthetologist who is also board-certified in hearing instrument sciences. With over 55 years of experience, he has transformed thousands of lives in Cape Coral

and Fort Myers, FL, by providing his patients with the gift of sound. He is also a former veteran committed to providing all veterans with free services.



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RECLAIMING JOY:

CELEBRATING VALENTINE'S DAY ON YOUR TERMS

Crafting 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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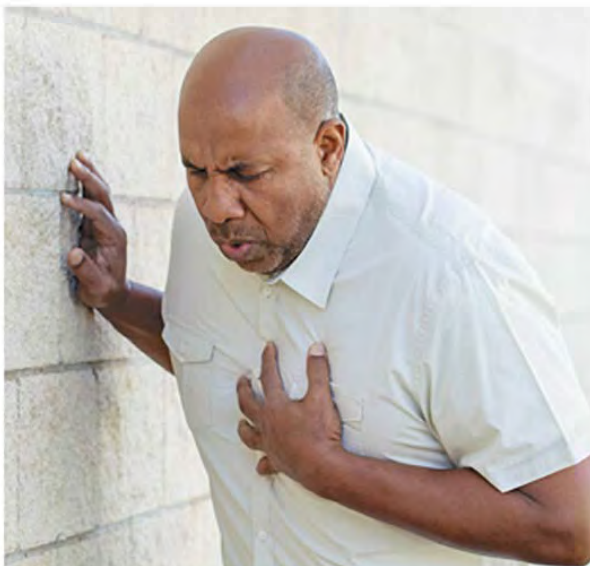
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Heart Disease in Seniors: Understanding the Silent Threat

Heat 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.

VIPcare stands out for our commitment to delivering personalized care that goes beyond traditional healthcare models. Our key initiative and mission is prioritizing preventative care to improve overall health outcomes. By offering comprehensive wellness checks, screenings, and preventative measures, we focus on identifying potential health issues before they escalate. This proactive approach not only reduces healthcare costs in the long run but also significantly improves your quality of life. Schedule your VIPcare appointment today! Call 239-747-7202 or visit www.getvipcare.com.



Fara Castillo, M.D.

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Unveiling the Heart: A Holistic Approach to Heart Health

At Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine, our commitment to your well-being goes beyond alleviating symptoms we strive to uncover the root causes of health issues and guide you toward optimal wellness. Embracing a holistic perspective, we view every patient as an entwined complex puzzle, addressing lifestyle factors, nutrition, and natural therapies to promote balance and well-being. As we head into February, recognized as Heart Health Month, we embark on a journey to explore the profound impact of holistic practices on cardiovascular health, including a spotlight on the groundbreaking TACT-2 study and the benefits of chelation in promoting heart health.

The TACT-2 Study: Unlocking the Power of Chelation Therapy

Historical Context: The TACT-2 (Trial to Assess Chelation Therapy) study builds upon the foundation laid by the original TACT study, initiated in 2003. TACT aimed to explore the potential benefits of chelation therapy, a process designed to remove heavy metals, in individuals with coronary artery disease.

- **Motivation Behind the Study:** Recognizing that heavy metals like lead and cadmium may contribute to vascular damage and play a role in cardiovascular diseases, the TACT study delved into the potential cardiovascular benefits of chelation therapy. This treatment, already known for addressing heavy metal poisoning, became a subject of interest for its potential to benefit cardiovascular health.

- **TACT-2: Advancing Scientific Understanding:** Building on the insights gained from the TACT study, TACT-2 seeks to further our understanding of chelation therapy in the realm of cardiovascular health. Specifically, the study investigates whether chelation, combined with high-dose oral vitamins, can reduce the risk of major adverse cardiovascular events in individuals with a history of myocardial infarction.

- **Randomized Controlled Trial:** TACT-2 adheres to a robust randomized controlled trial design, recognized as the gold standard in clinical research.

This design allows for a rigorous comparison of outcomes between the group receiving chelation therapy and the group receiving a placebo.

- **Inclusion Criteria:** Participants in the TACT-2 study are individuals who have previously experienced a heart attack and are at risk for subsequent cardiovascular events. This focused selection aims to evaluate the potential benefits of chelation therapy in a specific high-risk population.

- **Holistic Integration:** Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine integrates evidence-based practices, including chelation therapy, into its approach to cardiovascular health. The goal is to empower individuals with holistic solutions that complement traditional medical interventions, recognizing the potential of chelation therapy as part of a comprehensive strategy for heart health.

Holistic Heart Health Practices: Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine advocates for a comprehensive approach to heart health beyond conventional treatments. Here are the critical components of our holistic strategy:

- **Lifestyle Management:** Empowering individuals to make sustainable lifestyle choices, such as regular physical activity, stress management, and adequate sleep, forms the foundation of our holistic heart health approach.

- **Nutrition:** A well-balanced and heart-healthy diet is paramount. We guide individuals in making nutritional choices that support cardiovascular health, emphasizing whole foods and nutrient-dense options.

- **Naturally Occurring Compounds and Therapies:** Root Causes explores the benefits of naturally occurring compounds and therapies to enhance heart health. Our approach includes evidence-based interventions that align with the principles of holistic medicine.

As we navigate Heart Health Month 2024, Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine is a beacon of holistic care, addressing the root causes of cardiovascular issues. The TACT-2 study sheds light on

the potential benefits of chelation therapy, and our commitment to balance and wellness is evident in our holistic heart health practices. Let us embark on a journey toward heart health together, embracing the power of holistic approaches to achieve optimal well-being.

Root Causes Holistic Health & Medicine

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



Doreen DeStefano, NhD, APRN, DNP

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

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

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



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Health Insurance – Important Dates!

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

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?

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

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 directly with the insurance carrier, so why would you not seek free professional help with an agent that sells all or most of the companies in your area?

Travel Insurance – Did you know that most health insurance does NOT cover you outside of the country and that includes a cruise, in international waters (4 miles out). Travel insurance is not just about trip cancellation but most importantly what if you got sick or had an accident on your trip. Medical Trip Insurance is very important and most of the time not very costly when you weigh the benefits.

Pet Insurance – Your 4-legged family members need insurance as well, especially for the big sudden emergency room services. The younger the pet the less the cost of insurance and there are unlimited benefits as well.

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EMBRACING SELF-LOVE:

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

Valentine'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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Fara Castillo, M.D.

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LONG COVID AND ITS EFFECT ON ESTROGEN AND PROGESTERONE LEVELS

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

C OVID-19 is most notably known for its effects on the respiratory system, specifically the cough it can cause and how some people experience shortness of breath. However, less well-known is that it can also influence your hormone levels and, in some cases, last weeks or months after your infection. This condition is termed long COVID, and it is becoming a topic of greater discussion as people connect their new or lingering symptoms with previous COVID-19 infection.

What Is Long COVID?

Long COVID is a term coined to describe the side effects that last after someone has been infected by COVID-19. It may also be referred to as long-haul COVID or post-COVID conditions as it relates to the new, returning, or ongoing health problems that those infected by SARS-CoV-2 can experience for weeks or even months after infection.

The timeline for COVID-19 looks like this for most people: they are infected by SARS-CoV-2, develop COVID-19, and then, after a couple of weeks, recover and feel better. For those with long COVID, though, symptoms may linger, or, in some cases, entirely new symptoms can develop.

Some of the most common symptoms associated with long COVID include fatigue and brain fog, although other symptoms can include:

- changes in taste and smell
- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- insomnia
- dizziness
- anxiety
- depression

Causes of Long COVID

The interesting thing about long COVID is that it can affect anyone, no matter how severe their COVID-19 infection. For instance, some people with a mild infection experience long COVID, while others with severe infections requiring hospitalization do not.



As such, there is no known cause of long COVID, but there are some speculations. Some scientists hypothesize that long COVID results when the virus or viral remnants, such as viral RNA or protein, linger in tissues and cause chronic inflammation. Others cite how acute respiratory infections can induce autoimmune conditions, which may be the cause of long COVID symptoms. Finally, there is speculation that some long COVID symptoms come from a dys-regulated gut microbiome, which can result from infection.

While the cause of long COVID remains uncertain, research has shown that it can have lasting effects that extend further than expected, and this includes its impact on your hormones.

How Does Long COVID Affect Estrogen and Progesterone?

Considering how instrumental balance is for hormone production, it should come as minimal surprise that something as disrupting as COVID-19 can also affect your hormones. However, not only

can it affect your hormones, but the sex hormones in your body (or lack thereof) may also influence whether or not you are more likely to develop long COVID.

Long COVID has been shown to be more common in women compared to men, and women between the ages of 40-60, in particular, are at the highest risk of long COVID. Period changes are a common symptom reported by women who have long COVID, and one study found that one-third of their surveyed women reported changes in their periods that began after their COVID infection. These changes included how frequently their periods occurred, their length, and the heaviness of their flow. In some women, their periods stopped entirely.

Furthermore, the study revealed that 77% of women notice their symptoms of long COVID worsen right before their period. Of note, this is the time of the menstrual cycle when the estrogen levels are at their lowest.

These discoveries have caused researchers to question if there is a link between female hormones and long COVID, but when looking into this connection, it is helpful to understand the mechanism of action of SARS-CoV-2.

The COVID-19 virus binds to angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) receptors, and it is this binding that allows the virus to enter the cell. While COVID-19 is most well-known for affecting the respiratory system, there are also ACE2 receptors in the ovaries. When the virus enters the cells in the ovaries, this impedes the ovary's ability to work at its full functionality, and the result may be a lower production of hormones, particularly estrogen. This may explain why women experience more severe menopausal symptoms when infected with COVID-19.

Interestingly, research has shown that progesterone may offer some protection from COVID-19, which could also explain why men fare worse off than women. In particular, it is the anti-inflammatory properties of progesterone which show promise.

However, it has also been shown that hypoxia, or low blood oxygen levels common in COVID-19, can decrease progesterone synthesis. Low progesterone synthesis could then lead to greater inflammation in the body, which could incite long COVID symptoms.

Another Gender-Based Difference

As previously discussed, researchers have three hypotheses for how long COVID occurs, and the autoimmune hypothesis may explain the higher incidence of long COVID in men compared to women. This is because women have a higher immune response, making autoimmune reactions more frequent.

This could also explain why men are more likely to have a severe COVID-19 infection (their immune system is weaker), but women are more likely to develop long COVID (they are more likely to have autoimmune reactions).

How To Combat Hormone Imbalance from Long COVID

When it comes to low hormone levels due to the lasting damage of COVID-19, they tend to persist because the ovaries become vulnerable and less likely to recover from infection. This creates a cycle where the ovaries cannot produce enough estrogen and then continue to be vulnerable.

However, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) can help to break this cycle by giving women the correct amount of hormones and returning their estrogen and progesterone levels to normal. With the female hormones back in balance, the ovaries can finally heal.

In many cases, it can be helpful to start HRT as soon as a woman experiences COVID-19 infection not only because it can help reduce mortality by more than 70% but also because it can help determine which symptoms are due to low hormone levels and which require an alternative method of treatment.

Recovering from Long COVID

In addition to the use of HRT to combat the hormonal deficiencies that can arise during long COVID, there are other steps you can take to help mitigate your symptoms and feel better.

Focus On Your Sleep

Sleep is crucial for allowing your body to fight illnesses, repair itself, and feel better. Unfortunately, sleep problems can be common in those with long COVID, which can make symptoms such as brain fog, fatigue, and anxiety worse. Because of this, it's critical that you focus on getting enough good, quality sleep.

To improve your sleep, it's best to focus on your sleep hygiene, or the habits you complete to help promote a good night of sleep. These include following a sleep schedule, getting physical exercise during the day, and avoiding caffeine before bedtime.

Help Your Gut

Your gut houses trillions of bacteria, some good and some bad. However, the most important thing for this microbiome is the balance between the two, namely that the good bacteria outweigh the bad.

The beneficial bacteria in your gut have many vital roles, including their aid in digestion, the absorption of nutrients, and the immune system. Their influence is wide-reaching, so a disruption to your gut microbiome can have significant consequences.

Research into COVID-19 has shown that it can affect the gut microbiome by reducing the number of good bacteria and increasing the number of bad bacteria. This can lead to symptoms such as bloating and diarrhea. Furthermore, this bacterial imbalance can also cause inflammation throughout the body.

If you're recovering from COVID, it's often best to focus on a diet that promotes gut health. This includes eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, seeds, and nuts along with fermented foods (e.g., kimchi, sauerkraut) as they are rich in probiotics.

Other Hormones Affected by COVID-19

It's not just estrogen and progesterone that relate to long COVID; other hormones can also factor in.

For example, men may experience low testosterone levels. In some cases, low testosterone precedes COVID-19 infection and is what increases the risk of infection, while in other cases, it can develop as a result of the virus's effect on the body.

Research has also shown that those with long COVID have lower cortisol levels than those without. While cortisol is the body's stress hormone, and it's good to keep it from getting too high, there can be consequences of having it low as well, including headaches, weakness, and low blood pressure.

While research into long COVID is ongoing, the findings already made show just how much this virus can disrupt your hormonal balance, and the side effects that can result.

Navigating the Hormonal Implications of Long COVID Having COVID-19 is no longer the sole object of our concerns; for some people, the implications of this infection linger weeks or even months afterward, severely declining their quality of life.

Women, in particular, are more susceptible to long COVID, and research suggests that this is because of their hormones and the way that COVID-19 affects them. Namely, COVID-19 can cause a decline in estrogen levels and, should hypoxia occur, in progesterone. Unfortunately, these imbalances don't tend to fix themselves, and temporary HRT is often needed to correct them.

Other hormones can also be influenced by COVID-19, including testosterone and cortisol. Furthermore, these hormonal imbalances may share symptoms with other complications of COVID-19, making it difficult to ascertain the true cause of the symptoms. As such, the best way to treat your long COVID and get your health back on track is by meeting with a hormone specialist to determine if you are experiencing any hormonal imbalances and what can be done to correct them.

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MEMORY MATTERS

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

February is American Heart month. Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. The American Heart Association is a wonderful source of information and resources and is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Over the past fifty years, death rates from heart disease are declining, due in part to healthier habits of Americans as well as new treatments, medication and approaches to heart health.

Here in our monthly column, we focus on brain health and other brain related issues. So why are we even bringing up heart health? Did you know that heart and brain health are closely related? If you do things that are good for your heart, it will also help your brain! It is a two for one benefit. Let's dig into the heart/brain connection a bit more.

As the Alzheimer's Association points out, more evidence is supporting a close link between our hearts and our brains. The brain has a vast network of blood vessels, and with each heartbeat, approximately 20 – 25 % of the blood is pumped to the head. The brain needs this oxygen rich blood to function normally. The average resting heart rate is between 60 and 100 beats per minute. So, the brain is taking between one fifth and one fourth of each heartbeat to stay nourished and to function effectively.

The Association goes on to report that some autopsy studies show that as many as 80 percent of individuals with Alzheimer's disease also have cardiovascular disease. In addition, the National Institute of Health (NIH) reported in a 2017 article that problems in the cardiovascular system may contribute to the development of dementia. It was also found that diabetes, hypertension, prehypertension and smoking during midlife increased the risk of developing dementia.

In a study originally published in June of 2023, researchers found that cognitive impairment, which includes difficulty remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or decision making is common in individuals with cardiovascular disease. It's estimated that one in three individuals who present at a cardiology clinic have some degree of cognitive impairment. With the data reflecting the connection between our heart and our brain, we need to focus on keeping both healthy.



The great news is that many things that you can do to keep your heart healthy, also keep your brain healthy! Here are some things that many of us may already know and hopefully practice to keep our hearts healthy. The CDC has some tips for heart health.

Choose healthy food and drink. Eliminating foods high in saturated and trans-fat, as well as limiting your salt (sodium) intake are good approaches. Eat foods that are high in fiber, low in saturated fats and trans fats and cholesterol. Processed foods are best avoided. If it comes in a package, it's likely processed. Fresh fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts and legumes are a better bet.

Stay hydrated by drinking 8 glasses or bottles of water a day. Alcohol should be used in moderation, no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two drinks a day for men. Too much alcohol can lead to high blood pressure among other health issues and high blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease.

Don't smoke, or quit smoking. The hazards of smoking have been well researched, and if you don't smoke, don't start. Your healthcare practitioner can provide you with information and resources on how to stop smoking.

Manage any other medical conditions with your health care provider. Conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes are all risks for heart disease and are not good for your brain. With appropriate intervention, these conditions can be managed effectively, and doing so helps your heart and your brain.

Keeping a healthy weight and getting regular exercise are also ways to love your heart and brain. The US Surgeon General recommends two hours and thirty minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week. That is the equivalent of 30 minutes of exercise, five times a week. Brisk walking, bicycling and other activities that get your heart pumping are ways to get started. Be sure to discuss any new exercise with your health care provider.

By practicing approaches that are good for your heart, you are helping your brain! Add in just a few more activities and you have both your heart and brain covered. Making sure you are getting adequate sleep, staying connected to family and friends, learning new things and protecting your head by wearing a bike helmet and using your seat belt, when added to your heart health strategy, will go a long way to having a well loved heart and brain.

February is also Valentine's day and we are offering free memory screens in our office on February 12th and 13th at no cost to you. See our ad in this month's edition, click on the QR code or call us at 239-939-7777 to schedule your appointment for your free memory screen. Make it an event, grab your sweetie, do a memory screen and then enjoy some lunch or early dinner to celebrate.



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UNVEILING THE THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL: The Benefits of Medical Marijuana for Cancer Patients

This month is National Cancer Prevention Month and in recent years, the landscape of cancer treatment has witnessed a paradigm shift, with researchers exploring alternative therapeutic avenues to alleviate the physical and psychological burden on patients. Among these emerging options, medical marijuana has garnered attention for its potential benefits in managing symptoms and side effects associated with cancer and its treatment. While the debate surrounding the use of marijuana persists, accumulating scientific evidence suggests that its medicinal properties could play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life for cancer patients.

Alleviation of Chemotherapy-induced Symptoms

One of the most debilitating aspects of cancer treatment is the aggressive nature of chemotherapy, which often induces severe side effects such as nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite. Medical marijuana, particularly its active compounds like THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and CBD (cannabidiol), has shown promise in alleviating these symptoms. Studies have demonstrated that cannabinoids interact with the endocannabinoid system, modulating neurotransmitter release and providing relief from chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.

Moreover, the appetite-stimulating properties of medical cannabis can counteract cancer-related anorexia, promoting weight gain and improving overall nutritional status. This is particularly crucial for cancer patients undergoing treatment, as maintaining a healthy weight is often associated with better treatment outcomes and reduced complications.

Pain Management

Cancer-related pain is a pervasive and challenging aspect of the disease, affecting patients both during and after treatment. Traditional pain medications, such as opioids, carry the risk of addiction and numerous side effects. Medical marijuana, however, offers a potentially safer alternative. The cannabinoids in marijuana interact with pain receptors in the brain and peripheral tissues, providing analgesic effects.



Several clinical studies have demonstrated the efficacy of medical marijuana in managing cancer-related pain. The combination of THC and CBD has been found to be particularly effective in reducing pain intensity and improving the overall pain experience for cancer patients. This not only enhances the quality of life but also reduces the reliance on potentially addictive opioid medications.

Anxiety and Depression

A cancer diagnosis and the subsequent treatment journey often lead to heightened levels of anxiety and depression among patients. The psychological toll of facing a life-threatening illness, coupled with the physical challenges of treatment, can significantly impact mental well-being. Medical marijuana has shown promise in alleviating symptoms of anxiety and depression, offering patients a potential tool to cope with the emotional challenges of cancer.

CBD, a non-psychoactive component of marijuana, has been the focus of much research in this area. It interacts with serotonin receptors in the brain, influencing mood and promoting a sense of calm. Some studies suggest that CBD may have antidepressant and anxiolytic effects without the adverse side effects associated with traditional psychiatric medications.

Anti-inflammatory and Anti-cancer Properties

Beyond symptom management, cannabinoids found in medical marijuana have demonstrated potential anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. These cannabinoids exert their effects by interacting with the endocannabinoid system, which plays a crucial role in regulating inflammation and immune responses. Some studies have suggested that cannabinoids may inhibit the growth of cancer cells and induce apoptosis, the programmed cell death that helps control abnormal cell proliferation.

While more research is needed to fully understand the anti-cancer potential of medical marijuana, preliminary findings are promising. Additionally, the anti-inflammatory properties of cannabinoids can contribute to the overall well-being of cancer patients by reducing inflammation associated with the disease and its treatment.

Conclusion

The benefits of medical marijuana for cancer patients extend beyond mere symptom relief. From alleviating the side effects of chemotherapy to managing pain and improving mental health, the therapeutic potential of cannabinoids is increasingly recognized in the medical community. As the scientific understanding of marijuana's mechanisms of action continues to evolve, it is crucial to approach its use in cancer care with an open mind and a commitment to evidence-based medicine. The integration of medical marijuana into comprehensive cancer care plans holds the promise of enhancing the quality of life for patients and providing them with more holistic and personalized treatment options.



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Ladies, If You Are Looking for a New Urologist, Consider a Urogynecologist

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

What is Urogynecology?

Many women experience problems that overlap between the fields of gynecology and urology, and they often bounce back and forth between the two specialties. Urogynecology bridges that gap and allows for both of these issues to be addressed by one physician. The field of Urogynecology is a subspecialty within Obstetrics and Gynecology and is dedicated to the study and treatment of pelvic floor disorders in women. Female Pelvic Medicine and Reconstructive Surgery (a.k.a. Urogynecology) is a subspecialty that incorporates the tremendous advancements made in the last decade in the diagnosis and treatment of female pelvic floor disorders. If you suffer from any of the following symptoms, you may benefit from a consultation with a Urogynecologist.

Expert treatment for the following symptoms:

- **Incontinence:** Loss of bladder or bowel control (accidental loss of urine or stool).
- **Prolapse:** Displacement of the pelvic organs (uterus, bladder and rectum) beyond the normal position of the vaginal walls. Symptoms include a visible bulge and pelvic pressure. These conditions are sometimes referred to as a "dropped bladder", "dropped uterus" or "dropped rectum".
- **Overactive bladder symptoms:** Frequent need to urinate, urgency, incontinence and night-time frequency.
- **Emptying Disorders:** Difficulty urinating or moving bowels.
- **Pelvic (or bladder) Pain:** Discomfort, burning or spasm within the bladder, urethra or vagina. May also manifest as pain with sexual intercourse.
- **Bowel Control Conditions:** Constipation and bowel control issues/incontinence.
- **Recurrent urinary tract infections.**

Board certification means that a Urogynecologist has obtained training and experience beyond that of a general OB/Gyn or Urologist. Urogynecologists deal only with the evaluation and treatment of conditions that affect the female pelvic organs, nerves,



muscles and connective tissue that support these organs. The additional training focuses on the surgical and non-surgical treatment of noncancerous gynecologic problems.

When Should I See a Urogynecologist?

If you're struggling with pelvic floor dysfunction, pain, or incontinence, you should seek treatment immediately. Consulting with a Urogynecologist can help to achieve an accurate diagnosis of your condition and provide information on the full spectrum of treatment options available. Specialized training enables a Urogynecologist to blend elements of gynecology, urology and gastroenterology to treat the entire pelvic floor.

Treatments may include conservative (non-surgical) or outpatient surgical therapy to cure or relieve your symptoms. While your primary care physician, Urologist or OB/Gyn may have knowledge about these problems, a Urogynecologist can manage all these pelvic floor conditions simultaneously.

Urogynecology Treatment Options

A Urogynecologist can recommend a variety of therapies to cure or relieve symptoms of prolapse, urinary, gas or fecal incontinence, or other pelvic floor dysfunction symptoms. He may advise treatments based on your personal needs and lifestyle, the severity of your condition and your general health. Conservative options include medications, pelvic exercises, behavioral and/or dietary modifications and vaginal devices (also called pessaries).

Biofeedback and Electrical Stimulation are two newer treatment modalities that your Urogynecologist may recommend. Safe and effective outpatient surgical procedures are also utilized by the Urogynecologist to treat incontinence and prolapse. A Urogynecologist will discuss all of the options that are available to treat your specific problem(s) before you are asked to make any treatment decisions.

It's easy to become embarrassed by pelvic and bladder disorders, but you do not have to suffer with these problems or associated pain. Florida Bladder Institute provides compassionate, thorough urogynecological care for all women. Whether you face pelvic issues as a result of aging, delivering babies, illness, or trauma, we can provide proper treatment and counseling so you can enjoy an active, healthy life-style.

Call 239-449-7979 today to schedule an appointment with Joseph Gauta M.D. to learn how proper urogynecological care can benefit you. Don't suffer in silence any longer; there is help available.



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Nurturing Love: A Guide to Couples Health

In the intricate dance of relationships, couples find myriad ways to connect, building a tapestry of shared experiences and support. Let's delve into the realm of Couples Health, exploring how partners navigate life's journey together.

SHARING THE TAPESTRY OF LOVE

1. Cherishing Moments: Couples weave their unique tapestry by cherishing special moments, creating a mosaic of shared memories and inside jokes that form the backbone of their connection.

2. Parenting as Partners: Embracing parenthood together, couples share the intricate roles of raising children, forming a strong foundation that shapes the future of their family.

3. Mutual Support: Through life's challenges, be it work, relationships, or personal struggles, couples stand as pillars for each other, offering unwavering support and understanding.

4. Celebrating Milestones: Weddings, births, achievements – these milestones become shared victories, reinforcing the bond between partners and creating a tapestry rich with shared joy.

THE LANGUAGE OF LOVE

Couples often develop a unique language, with special phrases or even a single word encapsulating something profound. This shared lexicon becomes a testament to the depth of their connection.

NAVIGATING INDIVIDUAL PATHS

How do couples support each other in personal triumphs and tribulations? The answer lies in the delicate balance of understanding and encouragement.

FACING THE UNEXPECTED: PARKINSON'S DISEASE AND RELATIONSHIPS

How does a couple navigate the unexpected? If you are living with a neurodegenerative disorder, such as Parkinson's Disease, how has this impacted your relationship with your partner?

- It's possible that if you are in a committed relationship, your partner is the first person you told when you learned of your diagnosis. It's also probable that receiving the diagnosis became a significant factor within your relationship and much of your combined energies needed to be directed toward managing this disease.



- Parkinson's includes multiple possible symptoms that impact both the person living with the disorder and significant others. Some of these symptoms are directly related to challenges in communication, movement, daily activities and emotional/mental well-being. In other words, impacting and the quality of time spent together. These challenges include activities of daily living/planning and overall health.

- Couples often share a desire to focus on the things necessary to have a continued positive quality of life while managing the disorder. Couples may seek support from others who are coping with these challenges (such as support groups), as well as sharing in approaching new recommendations for living with the disease, such as trying new activities that support maintaining and improving balance, movement, memory and a shared lifestyle.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COUPLES HEALTH

Consider these recommendations to cultivate a positive quality of life while managing health challenges:

- Medical Involvement:** Attend medical visits and informational events together, ensuring mutual understanding and shared responsibility.

- Holistic Activities:** Explore new activities that promote physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, contributing to a shared sense of vitality.

- Preserving Shared Moments:** Continue participating in activities enjoyed together, reinforcing the connection that forms the foundation of the relationship.

- Expert Guidance:** In the face of communication difficulties arising from neurodegenerative diseases, consult experts such as speech therapists, physical therapists, and mental health counselors.

LOVE CONQUERS ALL

In the midst of disease-related difficulties, love and the profound bond between partners emerge as powerful forces, surprising and sustaining even in the face of adversity. Celebrate February as Couples Health Month, a time to cherish and nurture the enduring power of love. After all, who doesn't want more of that?



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Promoting Heart Health: Facts, Infusions, and Lifestyle Tips

February is National Heart Health month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about cardiovascular well-being. At Paragon Healthcare, we are committed to providing you with crucial information to help you prioritize your heart health. As February unfolds, we embark on a journey to prioritize heart health during National Heart Health Month. In the United States, the stakes are high, with cardiovascular diseases claiming a staggering number of lives each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), heart disease remains the leading cause of death, responsible for approximately 697,000 deaths annually. These statistics underscore the urgent need for awareness and action. At Paragon Healthcare, we stand at the forefront of the battle against heart disease, arming you with essential facts, innovative treatments like Evkeeza and Leqvio injections, and empowering lifestyle tips to fortify your heart against the challenges it may face. Join us in this vital crusade for heart health.

FACTS AND STATISTICS:

1. Prevalence of Heart Disease:

- Heart disease remains a leading cause of mortality globally.
- According to the World Health Organization, an estimated 17.9 million deaths occur annually due to cardiovascular diseases.

2. Cholesterol and Heart Health:

- Elevated cholesterol levels are a major risk factor for heart disease.
- Evkeeza and Leqvio injections are cutting-edge treatments designed to lower cholesterol effectively.

Evkeeza Infusions: Evkeeza is a groundbreaking medication designed to address high cholesterol, specifically in patients with homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia (HoFH).

1. Mechanism of Action:

- Evkeeza works by blocking an enzyme called ANGPTL3, which plays a crucial role in lipid metabolism.
- By inhibiting this enzyme, Evkeeza helps lower LDL cholesterol levels, reducing the risk of cardiovascular events.



2. Clinical Efficacy:

- Clinical trials have demonstrated the effectiveness of Evkeeza in significantly reducing LDL cholesterol levels in patients with HoFH.

Leqvio Injections: Leqvio is another innovative injection therapy designed to lower cholesterol levels. It belongs to a class of medications known as PCSK9 inhibitors. Here's what you need to know about Leqvio:

1. PCSK9 Inhibition:

- Leqvio works by inhibiting the PCSK9 protein, a key regulator of LDL cholesterol receptors.
- By blocking PCSK9, Leqvio enhances the liver's ability to remove LDL cholesterol from the bloodstream.

2. Reducing Cardiovascular Risk:

- Clinical studies have shown that Leqvio effectively reduces the risk of cardiovascular events in patients with hypercholesterolemia.

Heart-Healthy Lifestyle Tips: In addition to advanced medical treatments, a heart-healthy lifestyle is crucial for overall cardiovascular well-being. Consider incorporating the following habits into your daily routine:

1. Balanced Diet:

- Consume a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Limit the intake of saturated and trans fats and added sugars.

2. Regular Exercise:

- Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise per week.
- Include strength training exercises to improve overall cardiovascular fitness.

3. Manage Stress:

- Practice stress-reducing techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, or yoga.
- Prioritize adequate sleep to support overall mental and physical well-being.

4. Quit Smoking:

- Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease. Seek support to quit smoking and improve heart health.

As we observe National Heart Health month, Paragon Healthcare is dedicated to providing you with the tools and information needed to prioritize your cardiovascular well-being. From innovative infusions like Evkeeza and Leqvio injections to heart-healthy lifestyle tips, taking proactive steps towards a healthier heart is within reach. Always consult your healthcare provider for personalized advice tailored to your unique health needs.

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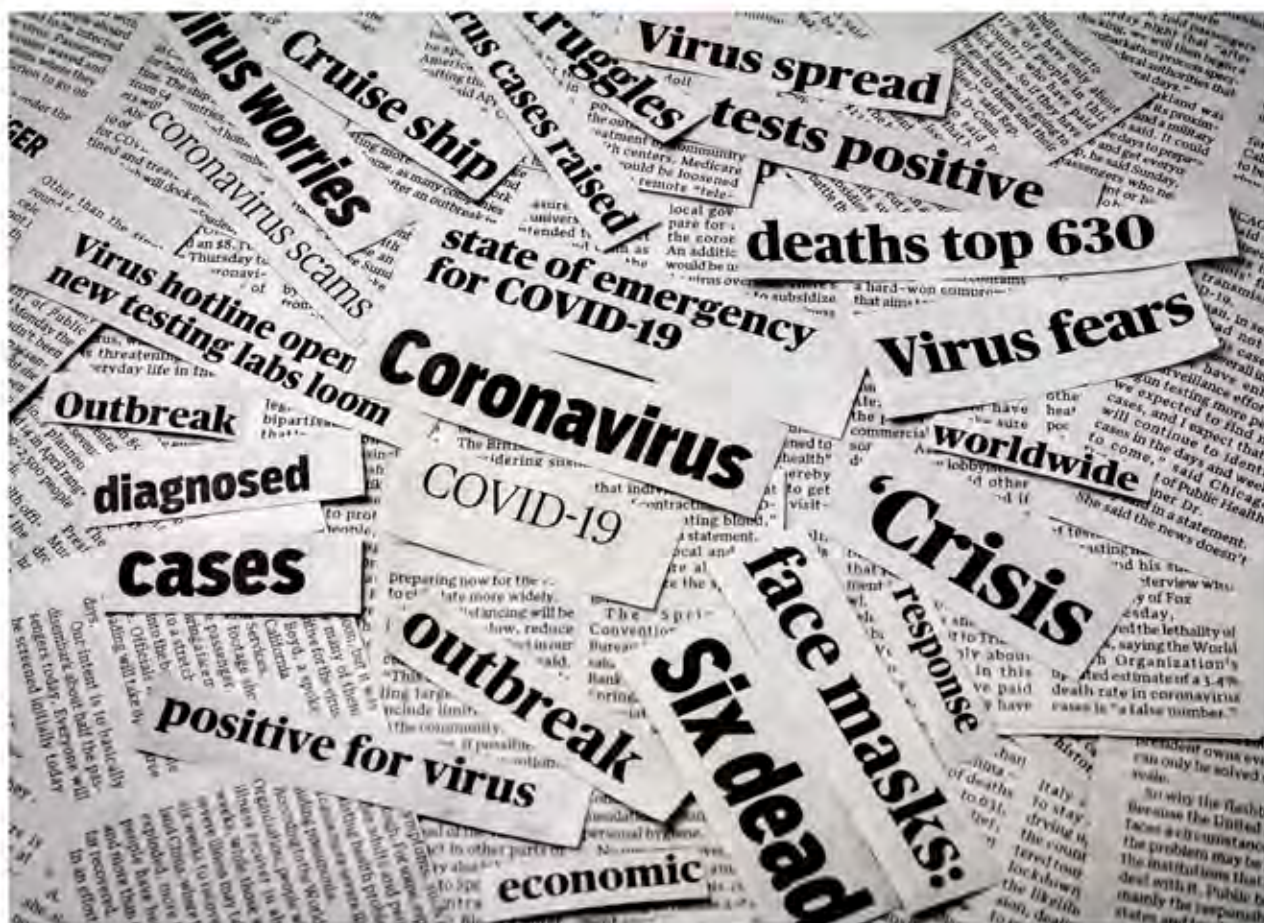
By Neetu Malhotra, MD

Stress Management

Have you ever felt overwhelmed? Are you feeling stressed out? The holidays can sometimes be quite stressful, whether it be making the house ready, making sure you have gotten all the presents for your loved ones/friends, but you might want to take some time for yourself too. In fact, the holidays are known to bring out all sorts of ailments and health problems, more than any time of year. The stress of the holidays is real and not something to be ignored and brushed under the rug. Stress Management is truly something we all have to deal with at one point or another. Not all stress is bad, but when you start to feel overwhelmed and feel a loss of control, that's when stress can wreak havoc in your life.

The first part in managing your stress is to identify the stressor, for example-whether it be certain negative people, going through a divorce, being told of a new diagnosis or fear of losing your job. Whatever that stressor is, it's important to identify it, talk it over with a close friend/relative or perhaps write it in a stress journal. It is crucial to not keep the feelings/emotions bottled up because that in itself is truly, I believe the heart of many health problems. Stress has been linked to heart disease, depression/mental illnesses, inflammatory conditions (ie arthritis, autoimmune illnesses, etc) and even some forms of cancer.

The second part of stress management is coming up with a plan or solution to dealing with the problem that is creating the stress/turmoil in your life. This is where taking a step back for a moment can often help. Sometimes, taking a deep breath and talking out loud is all that may be needed. I also believe it is extremely important to have outlets or hobbies in your life. Some people find getting up early and meditating is a way to relax and recharge your mind. Others may find playing an instrument, listening to a Ted talk, gardening or reading a book keeps them relaxed and content. The point is, you have to find some activity that makes you happy and feel relaxed. This in itself, helps you think of the solution as a third party and coming up with a new perspective on the problem/situation creating the stress in your life.



I think it is important to have general lifestyle principles and routines embedded in your life such as the 5 steps below:

1. It is important to stay positive and surround yourself with people that will bring positivity in your life as well.
2. Exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet also helps with keeping the stress levels manageable.
3. Staying well hydrated and avoiding excessive consumption of caffeinated and alcoholic beverages also help you manage your stress.
4. Learn also how to say "no" to unnecessary requests. You need to know your limits and stick to them. It is important to know the difference between the "shoulds" and the "musts" and when needed to say "no" to taking on too much, whether

it be in your personal or professional life. Taking on too much is indeed a recipe for disaster and the root of stress for most people.

5. Lastly, getting enough sleep is also vital to stress management. Most of us are not getting the recommended 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night.

In the end, it is always important to ask oneself, "Is this going to make a difference in the grand scheme of things?" "Is it really worth getting upset over?"

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HARMONY FOR THE HEART:

Celebrating Valentine's Day with a Plant-Based Lifestyle and Dark Chocolate Delight

By Lisa Brown, Plant-based Chef & Educator

A heart-healthy lifestyle is a gift that keeps on giving, and what better time to celebrate it than Valentine's Day? Embracing a plant-based diet is a sweet gesture towards your heart, and when paired with the indulgence of dark chocolate, it becomes a perfect harmony for cardiovascular well-being.

Plant-based diets, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes, have been extensively studied for their positive impact on heart health. These diets are typically low in saturated fats and cholesterol, which are known contributors to heart diseases. Instead, they are abundant in nutrients like fiber, antioxidants, and phytochemicals, all of which play pivotal roles in maintaining a healthy heart.

According to scientific research, a plant-based diet can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease. The American Heart Association states, "Plant-based diets, defined as diets that emphasize minimally processed foods from plants, are associated with lower risks of heart disease." The incorporation of plant-based foods has been linked to lower blood pressure, improved cholesterol levels, and a decreased likelihood of developing atherosclerosis – a condition where arteries become narrowed due to the accumulation of plaque.

Now, let's connect this heart-healthy choice to Valentine's Day and the beloved treat of dark chocolate. Dark chocolate, when consumed in moderation and with a high cocoa content, is known to have cardiovascular benefits. It contains flavonoids, which have antioxidant properties and may contribute to heart health by improving blood flow, reducing blood pressure, and preventing clot formation.

Pairing a plant-based diet with dark chocolate on Valentine's Day is not only a delightful way to celebrate but also a conscious decision for heart well-being. Instead of traditional indulgences that may be high in saturated fats and sugars, choosing plant-based options and dark chocolate can be a thoughtful expression of love for yourself and your loved ones.



In conclusion, making the switch to a plant-based diet is a heart-smart decision that aligns perfectly with the sentiment of Valentine's Day. By incorporating nutrient-rich plant foods and savoring the goodness of dark chocolate, you're not just celebrating love but also nurturing your cardiovascular health. As you relish the flavors of this heart-healthy combination, you can be confident that you're giving your heart the care it deserves.

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Meet Chef Lisa Plant-based Chef & Lifestyle Coach

Hi! I'm Lisa Brown, founder of Free Flowing Health, a premium service-based personal chef and coaching business located in SWFL. I LOVE helping people improve their health and achieve their wellness goals. I received my culinary education from the Natural Gourmet Institute in NYC and am a certified Institute for Integrative Nutrition Health Coach, and 500 hour Registered Yoga teacher.

After overcoming many health issues and adversities of my own, starting at a young age, I set out on a journey of self-discovery and transformation to heal my mind, body and spirit. My quest for knowledge, passion for healthy living, and deep desire to be of service to others became insatiable.

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3. Pay for your service and get started!

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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, Monatee County Medical Society, Parrish Civic Association, Monatee 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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Promoting Vision Health:

Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month in Home Healthcare

Age-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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Non-Surgical Innovations for Osteoarthritis and Joint Regeneration

By Physicians Rehabilitation

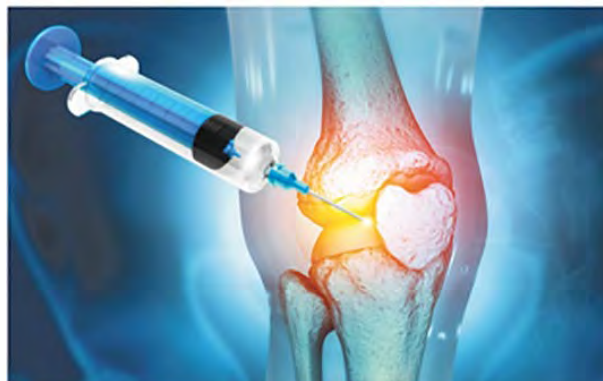
In recent years, the landscape of knee osteoarthritis (OA) treatment has undergone a transformative shift, steering away from traditional surgical interventions towards non-invasive alternatives that prioritize joint preservation and regeneration. Among these groundbreaking approaches, Platelet-Rich 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.

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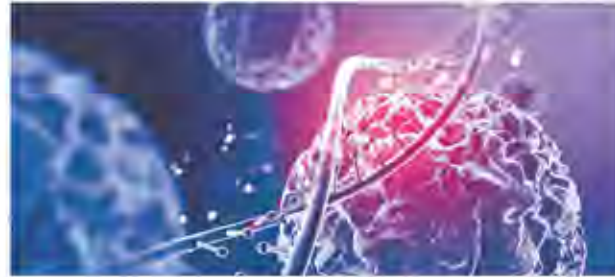
EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL OF CBD IN CANCER CARE

Cannabidiol (CBD), a non-psychoactive compound derived from the cannabis plant, has garnered significant attention for its potential therapeutic benefits. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in exploring how CBD might play a role in alleviating symptoms and supporting cancer patients during their treatment journey.

Research on CBD's interaction with cancer cells is still in its early stages, but preliminary studies suggest that CBD may have anti-inflammatory and anti-tumor properties. These properties have led to increased curiosity about the potential of CBD in cancer care.

One key area where CBD shows promise is in managing cancer-related symptoms and treatment side effects. Many cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation therapy experience nausea, vomiting, and loss of appetite. CBD has been studied for its anti-nausea and anti-emetic effects, offering a potential natural alternative to traditional anti-nausea medications.

Moreover, CBD's analgesic (pain-relieving) properties have sparked interest in its ability to help cancer patients cope with pain, which can be a significant challenge during treatment. Some studies suggest that CBD may work by interacting with the endocannabinoid system, which plays a role in pain perception and inflammation.



Beyond symptom management, there is ongoing research into whether CBD could enhance the effectiveness of conventional cancer treatments. Some studies suggest that CBD may enhance the effects of certain chemotherapy drugs while mitigating their side effects. However, it's crucial to note that more research is needed to fully understand these potential interactions and their implications for cancer care.

The potential anti-tumor properties of CBD have also fueled interest in its role in inhibiting cancer cell growth. While early studies in animals and cells have shown promise, it is essential to approach these findings with caution. Clinical trials are necessary to determine the safety and efficacy of CBD in humans for cancer treatment.

Despite the promising aspects, it's vital to acknowledge that CBD is not a cure for cancer. It should be viewed as a complementary approach to traditional cancer treatments, guided by healthcare professionals. Patients should always consult with their oncologists before incorporating CBD into their cancer care regimen.

In terms of safety, CBD is generally well-tolerated, with few reported side effects. However, it's crucial to ensure the quality and purity of CBD products, as the market is flooded with various formulations. Patients should opt for reputable sources and discuss their CBD use with their healthcare team.

In conclusion, the exploration of CBD in cancer care is a fascinating and evolving field. While research is underway to unlock its full potential, it's essential to approach CBD as a supportive element in conjunction with conventional cancer treatments. As the scientific community delves deeper into understanding the mechanisms and benefits of CBD, it holds promise for contributing to a more holistic approach to cancer care in the future.

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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.

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5 Common Spinal Injuries Related to Pickleball

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

Pickleball is increasingly recognized for its health benefits and social aspects. However, as with any physical activity, it carries risks, particularly to the spine. A notable concern is compression fracture, a severe injury requiring heightened awareness among pickleball enthusiasts. Pickleball's court size and play style require agility, quick reflexes, and frequent directional changes. These movements, while part of the sport's appeal, can place significant stress on the player's spinal column. The potential for injury, especially in the unprepared, is substantial.

COMMON SPINAL INJURIES IN PICKLEBALL

1. Compression Fractures: Often occurring in the lower back, these fractures result when the vertebral bone collapses. They are more common in older adults, particularly postmenopausal women and those with osteoporosis. Symptoms include sudden, severe back pain that worsens with twisting or bending. The seriousness of these injuries lies in their ability to cause lasting pain and significant changes in lifestyle.

2. Muscle Strains and Ligament Sprains: These injuries are prevalent due to the sport's stop-start nature. They can range from mild discomfort to severe, debilitating pain and can occur in any part of the spine. Proper warm-up routines and stretching are crucial in preventing these injuries.

3. Herniated Discs: This injury is characterized by a disc protruding out between the vertebrae and pressing on a nerve. Symptoms include localized back pain with radiating, shooting leg pain. Herniated discs in pickleball can result from sudden twists or poor posture during play.

4. Spondylolisthesis: This condition, where a vertebra slips out of place onto the bone below it, can be exacerbated by the sport's repetitive twisting and bending motions. It can cause lower back pain, muscle tightness, and nerve pain in the legs.

5. Spinal Stenosis: Typically seen in older players, this condition involves the narrowing of the spinal canal, which can lead to nerve pain and numbness in the arms and/or legs. The repetitive motions in pickleball can aggravate this condition.

RISK FACTORS

A deeper look into the factors increasing the risk of spinal injuries in pickleball players:

- **Age-Related Changes:** As players age, the spine naturally degenerates, losing flexibility and bone density.

This biological process makes the spine more susceptible to injuries.

- **Previous Spinal Conditions:** Individuals with a history of back problems, such as previous injuries, surgeries, or chronic conditions like arthritis, have a heightened risk. The weakened structures in the spine are more prone to re-injury, especially under the physical demands of pickleball.

- **Inadequate Physical Preparation:** Proper preparation goes beyond simple warm-ups. It includes maintaining overall physical fitness, ensuring flexibility, and building core strength. Lack of preparation leaves the spine vulnerable to strains and other injuries.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

The following concepts help to effectively minimize the risk of spinal injuries:

- **Prioritizing Bone Health:** For older players, focusing on bone health is crucial. This includes adequate calcium and vitamin D intake, possibly through supplements, and engaging in weight-bearing exercises to maintain bone density. Avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption also plays a significant role in bone health. Patients should consult with their primary care physicians about regular bone density scans and treatment for osteoporosis if necessary.

- **Mastering Proper Techniques:** Correct playing techniques can significantly reduce the strain on the spine. This includes learning the right way to twist, bend, and strike the ball. Working with a coach or taking lessons can be beneficial in mastering these techniques.

- **Regular Physical Fitness Routines:** Engaging in a regular fitness regimen that includes exercises for flexibility, core stability, and overall muscle conditioning is vital. Activities like yoga, pilates, and targeted strength training can enhance spinal stability and reduce injury risk.

- **Utilizing Appropriate Equipment:** Shoes designed for court sports provide better grip and support, reducing the risk of falls and awkward movements that can lead to injury.

TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT

- **Immediate Care for Minor Injuries:** For less severe injuries like strains and sprains, the first line of treatment often involves rest, ice, over-the-counter pain medications, and bracing. This conservative approach is usually effective for minor soft tissue injuries.

- **Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation:** For injuries that are more severe but non-surgical, physical therapy plays a crucial role. Tailored exercise programs help in strengthening the back muscles, improving flexibility, and restoring range of motion.

- **Pain Management:** Chronic pain from spinal injuries may require medical interventions like pain relievers, anti-inflammatory medications, and muscle relaxants. In some cases, corticosteroid injections may be administered to reduce inflammation and pain.

MINIMALLY INVASIVE SURGICAL PROCEDURES

- **Kyphoplasty:** This is particularly effective for treating compression fractures. In kyphoplasty, a balloon-like device is used to gently elevate the fractured vertebra to return it to the correct position. Bone cement is then injected to stabilize the fracture. This procedure not only helps in relieving pain but also restores height and spinal alignment.

- **Other Minimally Invasive Procedures:** Depending on the nature and location of the injury, other minimally invasive surgeries like microdiscectomy or laminectomy may be considered. These procedures aim to relieve pressure on spinal nerves while minimizing damage to surrounding tissues.

CONCLUSION

Pickleball players must be aware of the potential spinal injuries associated with the sport, particularly compression fractures and herniated discs. By understanding these risks and employing prevention strategies, players can enjoy the benefits of pickleball while safeguarding their spinal health. Should injuries occur, prompt and appropriate treatment is key to a successful recovery.

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



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MAGNESIUM'S VITAL ROLE IN HEART HEALTH

BY Kasey Cook, RN, Owner

Magnesium, often hailed as a powerhouse mineral, stands as a key player in maintaining optimal heart health. This essential nutrient is garnering increasing attention, particularly for its profound impact on blood flow and cardiovascular well-being. As medical advancements continue to shed light on the intricate connections within our bodies, the significance of magnesium in sustaining a healthy heart cannot be overstated.

At the core of its cardiovascular prowess lies magnesium's ability to regulate blood pressure. Numerous studies have demonstrated that magnesium plays a pivotal role in dilating blood vessels, thus contributing to lower blood pressure levels. By promoting vasodilation, magnesium helps reduce the strain on the heart, fostering an environment conducive to overall cardiovascular wellness.

Furthermore, magnesium is intricately involved in maintaining a steady heartbeat. The heart's rhythmic contractions, orchestrated by the intricate dance of minerals and electrolytes, rely on magnesium for precision. Insufficient magnesium levels may lead to irregular heartbeats, a condition known as arrhythmia. Through its influence on ion channels, magnesium ensures the smooth flow of electrical impulses, allowing the heart to beat in a coordinated and efficient manner.



In the realm of blood clotting, magnesium emerges as a silent guardian. Adequate magnesium levels prevent excessive platelet aggregation, reducing the risk of clot formation. Uncontrolled blood clotting poses a substantial threat to heart health, potentially leading to serious conditions such as heart attacks or strokes. By maintaining a delicate balance, magnesium acts as a natural safeguard against these cardiovascular perils.

Beyond its direct impact on the heart, magnesium exhibits anti-inflammatory properties that contribute to overall cardiovascular well-being. Chronic inflammation is recognized as a significant factor in the development of heart disease. Magnesium, with its anti-inflammatory attributes, helps mitigate inflammation, thereby mitigating the risk of atherosclerosis and related cardiovascular complications.

In the medical field, magnesium has gained prominence as a crucial component of intravenous (IV) vitamin and mineral therapies. Its role in heart health has led to the widespread use of magnesium in such

treatments, aiming to address deficiencies and support cardiovascular function. The popularity of magnesium IV therapy underscores the recognition of this mineral's pivotal role in promoting heart health.

Incorporating magnesium-rich foods into one's diet is a proactive step toward maintaining optimal heart health. Dark leafy greens, nuts, seeds, and whole grains stand out as excellent dietary sources of magnesium. However, in certain cases, dietary intake may not suffice, leading to the consideration of supplements or IV therapies under medical supervision.

As we unravel the intricate tapestry of the human body, magnesium emerges as a linchpin in the symphony of cardiovascular health. Its multifaceted contributions, from regulating blood pressure to preventing irregular heartbeats and countering inflammation, underscore the indispensability of this mineral. Embracing a holistic approach that includes magnesium-rich foods and, when necessary, supplementation, can pave the way for a heart-healthy lifestyle, promoting longevity and well-being.

SWFL Health & Hydration provides services to help boost your immune system and will guide each client on the usages and benefits of IV therapy during the appointment.



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Am I a Candidate for Dental Implants?

Ricardo S. Bocanegra, D.D.S.

Generally speaking, if you have lost teeth you are a candidate for dental implants. It is important that you are in good health, however, as there are some conditions and diseases that can affect whether dental implants are right for you. For example, uncontrolled diabetes, cancer, radiation to the jaws, smoking, alcoholism, or uncontrolled periodontal (gum) disease may affect whether dental implants will fuse to your bone. It is important to let your dental surgeon know all about your medical status (past and present) together with all medications you are taking, whether prescribed, alternative (herbal) or over-the-counter.

Where and how implants are placed requires a detailed assessment of your overall stomato-gnathic system ("stoma" – mouth; "gnathic" – jaws), within which the teeth function. This will necessitate compiling records that include study models of your mouth and bite, and specialized radiographs (x-rays), which may include 3D scans known as computerized tomograms (CT scans). Planning with the help of computer imaging ensures that dental implants can be placed in exactly the right position in the bone.

How and why is bone lost when teeth are lost?

Bone needs stimulation to maintain its form and density. In the case of alveolar (sac-like) bone that surrounds and supports teeth, the necessary stimulation comes from the teeth themselves.

When a tooth is lost, the lack of stimulation causes loss of alveolar bone. There is a 25% decrease in width of bone during the first year after tooth loss and an overall decrease in height over the next few years.

The more teeth lost, the more function lost. This leads to some particularly serious aesthetic and functional problems, particularly in people who have lost all of their teeth. And it doesn't stop there. After alveolar bone is lost, the bone beneath it, basal bone — the jawbone proper — also begins to resorb (melt away).

How can bone be preserved or re-grown to support dental implants?

Grafting bone into the extraction sockets at the time of tooth loss or removal can help preserve bone volume needed for implant placement. Surgical techniques are also available to regenerate (re-grow) bone that has been lost, to provide the necessary bone substance for anchoring implants. In fact, a primary reason to consider dental implants to replace missing teeth is the maintenance of jawbone.

Bone needs stimulation to stay healthy. Because dental implants fuse to the bone, they stabilize it and prevent further bone loss. Resorption is a normal and inevitable process in which bone is lost when it is no longer supporting or connected to teeth. Only dental implants can stop this process and preserve the bone.



How are dental implants placed and who places them?

It takes a dental team to assess and plan dental implant placement and restoration — the fabrication of the crowns, bridgework or dentures that attach atop the implants and are visible in your mouth. The dental team consists of a dental surgical specialist — a periodontist, oral surgeon, or a general dentist with advanced training in implant surgery; a restorative dentist, who plans and places the tooth restorations; and a dental laboratory technician who fabricates them.

Placing dental implants requires a surgical procedure in which precision channels are created in the jawbone, often using a surgical guide. The implants are then fitted into the sites so that they are in intimate contact with the bone. They generally require two to six months to fuse to the bone before they can have tooth restorations attached to them to complete the process.

Doctor Ricardo Bocanegra is a Fellow of the International Academy of Oral Implantologists and has been servicing the dental needs of his patients since 1992. For a consultation you may contact him at 239-482-8806.



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What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

Weight-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 is it 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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