

S O U T H W E S T F L O R I D A ' S

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

April 2024

Lee Edition - Monthly

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PERSONALIZED & INNOVATIVE TREATMENTS FOR CHRONIC PAIN

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Medical Assistant, Clinical Manager

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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.

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THE LINK BETWEEN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND HEARING LOSS

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

Alzheimer's Disease and hearing loss are two prevalent health issues that affect millions of people worldwide. While they may seem unrelated at first glance, recent research has uncovered a surprising connection between the two conditions. Understanding this link is crucial for early detection, intervention, and improved quality of life for those affected.

Alzheimer's Disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disorder, primarily affects memory, thinking skills, and behavior. It is the most common cause of dementia, accounting for approximately 60-80% of cases. Symptoms typically develop slowly and worsen over time, eventually interfering with daily tasks and functioning. While the exact cause of Alzheimer's remains unknown, various factors, including genetics, lifestyle, and environmental factors, are believed to contribute to its onset and progression.

On the other hand, hearing loss is a prevalent sensory impairment, particularly among older adults. It can result from age-related changes in the inner ear, exposure to loud noise, genetic predisposition, or medical conditions such as diabetes or cardiovascular disease. Hearing loss can significantly impact communication, social interaction, and overall quality of life if left untreated.

While Alzheimer's Disease and hearing loss may appear unrelated, emerging evidence suggests a potential connection between the two. Several studies have found that individuals with untreated hearing loss may have a higher risk of developing cognitive decline and dementia, including Alzheimer's Disease. One theory is that the brain's increased cognitive effort to process degraded auditory signals may contribute to cognitive decline over time, leading to conditions like Alzheimer's.

Furthermore, researchers have identified common underlying mechanisms that could link hearing loss and Alzheimer's Disease. These include vascular factors, inflammation, and structural changes in the brain. For instance, both conditions



have been associated with reduced blood flow to certain areas of the brain, which may exacerbate neuronal damage and cognitive impairment.

Moreover, social isolation and decreased engagement in cognitively stimulating activities due to hearing loss could also contribute to the development of Alzheimer's Disease. Communication difficulties resulting from hearing loss may lead to feelings of frustration, loneliness, and withdrawal from social interactions, all of which are known risk factors for cognitive decline and dementia.

Recognizing the potential link between Alzheimer's Disease and hearing loss highlights the importance of early detection and intervention for both conditions. Regular hearing screenings, particularly among older adults, can help identify hearing loss early on and facilitate appropriate management, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants. By addressing hearing loss promptly, individuals may mitigate its potential impact on cognitive function and reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's Disease.

Additionally, promoting cognitive health through activities such as social engagement, physical exercise, and lifelong learning may help mitigate the risk of Alzheimer's Disease, especially in individuals with hearing loss. Maintaining a healthy

lifestyle, managing chronic conditions, and staying mentally and socially active are essential strategies for preserving cognitive function and overall well-being.

In conclusion, while Alzheimer's Disease and hearing loss are distinct conditions, they share intriguing connections that warrant further investigation. Understanding and addressing the interplay between these two health issues could have significant implications for early detection, prevention, and management strategies. By integrating hearing health into holistic approaches to brain health, we can potentially improve outcomes and quality of life for millions of individuals affected by Alzheimer's Disease and hearing loss.

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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Crafting Your Custom Treatment Plan:

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Understanding the Link Between Alcohol Overconsumption and Vascular Disease

Alcohol consumption is deeply ingrained in many cultures worldwide, often associated with socializing, celebration, and relaxation. While moderate alcohol consumption may have certain health benefits, excessive intake can lead to a myriad of health issues, including vascular disease. Vascular disease encompasses a range of conditions that affect the blood vessels, such as atherosclerosis, hypertension, and peripheral artery disease. Understanding the connection between alcohol overconsumption and vascular disease is crucial for promoting awareness and encouraging responsible drinking habits.

Atherosclerosis, commonly known as hardening of the arteries, is a significant contributor to vascular disease. It occurs when fatty deposits, cholesterol, and other substances build up on the inner walls of arteries, forming plaque. This buildup restricts blood flow and can lead to various cardiovascular complications, including heart attacks and strokes. Alcohol consumption, particularly excessive or binge drinking, can exacerbate atherosclerosis by promoting the accumulation of plaque in the arteries.

Research indicates that heavy alcohol consumption can elevate levels of triglycerides, a type of fat found in the blood. Elevated triglyceride levels are a known risk factor for atherosclerosis and other vascular conditions. Moreover, excessive alcohol intake can raise blood pressure, another key factor contributing to the development of vascular disease. High blood pressure places added stress on the walls of blood vessels, increasing the likelihood of damage and narrowing.

Chronic heavy drinking also impacts the function of the endothelium, the inner lining of blood vessels. Normally, the endothelium helps regulate vascular tone and blood flow by releasing substances such as nitric oxide. However, alcohol abuse disrupts endothelial function, impairing its ability to dilate blood vessels and maintain proper circulation. This dysfunction contributes to the progression of vascular disease and raises the risk of cardiovascular events.



Furthermore, alcohol consumption can interfere with the body's ability to metabolize fats, leading to an imbalance in lipid levels and promoting the formation of atherosclerotic plaques. Excessive alcohol intake also triggers inflammation within the arterial walls, exacerbating the damage caused by plaque buildup and increasing the risk of complications such as thrombosis (blood clot formation) and arterial stiffness.

It's essential to recognize that the relationship between alcohol and vascular disease is complex and influenced by various factors, including the type of alcohol consumed, genetic predisposition, overall health status, and drinking patterns. While moderate alcohol consumption, particularly of red wine, has been associated with potential cardiovascular benefits due to its antioxidant properties, these benefits must be weighed against the risks, especially for individuals with a history of vascular disease or other health concerns.

Education and awareness are key components of addressing alcohol-related vascular disease. Healthcare professionals play a crucial role in educating the public about the potential risks associated with excessive alcohol consumption and promoting healthy drinking habits. Screening tools and interventions can help identify individuals at risk of alcohol-related vascular complications and provide them with the necessary support and resources to reduce their alcohol intake.

Public health campaigns aimed at raising awareness about the dangers of alcohol abuse and its impact on vascular health can help shift societal norms and behaviors surrounding alcohol consumption. Encouraging responsible drinking practices, such as moderation, pacing, and alternating alcoholic beverages with water, can significantly reduce the risk of vascular disease and its associated complications.

In conclusion, alcohol overconsumption poses significant risks to vascular health and contributes to the development and progression of vascular disease. Understanding the relationship between alcohol intake and vascular health is essential for promoting awareness, encouraging responsible drinking habits, and ultimately reducing the burden of vascular disease on individuals and society as a whole. By fostering a culture of moderation and prioritizing vascular health, we can strive towards a healthier future for all.

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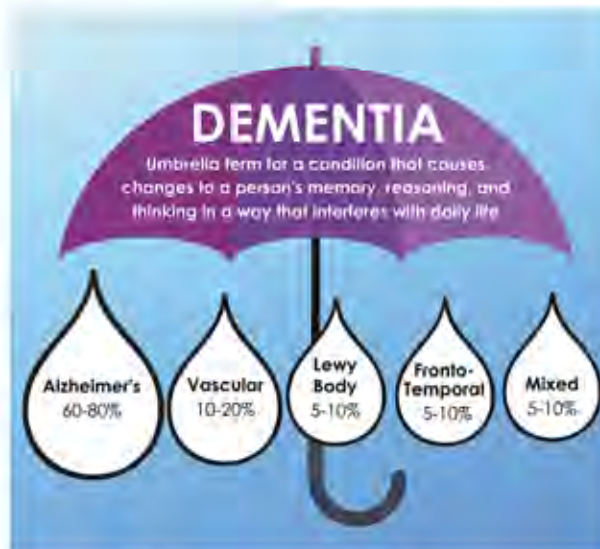
By Amy Hoffmann Schenk, RN, BSN, MS Ed, Community Engagement Lead Neuropsychiatric Research Center of SW Florida

Wow, it is already April! How many of you remember the saying “April showers bring May flowers”? It was always important to have your umbrella handy. That is not necessarily true here in Florida, but I remember it distinctly growing up in NW Ohio. We needed a little pep talk to get through the gray, rainy and cloudy days of April with the promise that in May, our gardens would be blooming with the beauty of spring. Lilacs, lilies of the valley, the later blooming tulips all put on a gorgeous show in NW Ohio in May. After a long, cold and sometimes snowy winter, May’s flowers bring hope and happiness.

How do showers and flowers relate to this month’s article? We are going to explore in more detail the topic of dementia, and how it serves as an umbrella term for different types of dementia. The beauty of May’s flowers bring hope, just like research can bring hope to those who are living with Alzheimer’s disease.

Let’s look at the term “dementia” in a bit more detail. The national institute of Aging describes dementia as the loss of cognitive functioning, thinking remembering and reasoning to such an extent that is interferes with a person’s daily life and routine. Personality changes can also be part of the dementia experience. Dementia is not a specific disease, but more of a general term. The Alzheimer’s Association notes that dementia can be thought of as a general term for loss of memory, language, problem solving and other thinking abilities that interfere with daily life.

How does this connect to an umbrella? Dementia can be thought of as an “umbrella” term, where there are many different types of conditions that fall under the umbrella. There are likely over 100 different types of forms of dementia, and the most well known type is Alzheimer’s disease.



Here is a quick overview of the most common types of dementia from the National Institute

Alzheimer’s Disease

Alzheimer’s disease is the most common type of dementia with an estimated 60 – 80% of dementia being of the Alzheimer’s type. In Alzheimer’s disease abnormal deposits of proteins form amyloid plaques and tau tangles throughout the brain. Symptoms include repetitive questions, getting lost in familiar places and as the disease progresses, problems recognizing friends and family, along with impulsive behavior and significant communication issues. Alzheimer’s disease typically impacts individuals in their mid 60s and older, although there are instances of individuals with younger onset Alzheimer’s (occurring before age 65).

Frontotemporal Dementia

In Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD), abnormal amounts or forms of tau and TDP-43 proteins accumulate inside neurons in the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain. Two types of FTD are Primary Progressive Aphasia and the Behavioral variant. There can be difficulty planning and organizing, impulsive behavior, changes in personality as well as apathy. In primary progressive aphasia, there are language challenges such as issues with both verbal communication and understanding speech. This type of dementia is typically diagnosed at a younger age, between mid 40s and 65.

References:
Alzheimer’s Association | Alzheimer’s Disease & Dementia Help-
Understanding Different Types of Dementia | National Institute on Aging
(nii.gov)

Lewy Body Dementia

In Lewy Body dementia, abnormal deposits of a protein called alpha-synuclein, also called “Lewy bodies” impact the brain’s chemical messengers. Difficulty concentrating, illogical ideas, visual hallucinations, sleep disorders, including vivid nightmares, and challenges with movement can be part of Lewy Body dementia, which typically impacts individuals over the age of 50.

Vascular Dementia

Vascular dementia is a result of damage to the blood vessels in the brain which disrupts blood flow. Symptoms can vary depending on the area of the brain impacted due to the impaired blood flow. Some common symptoms can include confusion, problems with concentration, difficulty with planning, organization and difficulty following directions and learning new information. Hallucinations may be a symptom along with poor judgment. This type of dementia is more common over the age of 65.

Mixed Dementia

Individuals may have more than one type of dementia. In those cases, the person is considered to have mixed dementia.

If you or someone you know is experiencing one or more of these symptoms, it is time to get checked out. We can help! Knowing your cognitive status via an easy and free memory screen is a service we provide to the community. In May, we have two entire days dedicated to conducting free memory screens, on Monday May 20th and Tuesday May 21st. See our ad to learn more. We also offer free memory screens at other times if that is more convenient. Just call us at 239 939 7777.

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ALIGNMENT MATTERS:

Alcohol's Influence on Muscle & Metabolism

By Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

Arguably, one of the best benefits of building muscle mass is an improved metabolism. The more muscle you have, the more calories your body burns at rest to keep it functioning! This means that you can eat more without gaining weight.

Alcohol makes your metabolism less efficient, which can lead to weight gain. Alcohol slows down the chemical reactions that break down fat. Alcohol distracts your metabolism and makes it less productive. While your body is busy breaking down alcohol, other chemical reactions take a back seat and slow down.

Having more muscle mass burns more calories because they require energy to contract and relax. Meaning when you're not exercising, muscle cells are burning calories. Basal metabolic rate (BMR) accounts for 60% of our body's energy expenditure. A higher percentage of this energy comes from lean muscle mass than fat. This means the more muscle mass in your body the higher your total energy expenditure, which is good for losing or maintaining a healthy weight. If you want to increase your BMR, resistance training is a great way to do it!

The Process of Muscle Growth

When you engage in resistance training, you create tiny, microscopic tears in the muscle fibers. This damage isn't harmful; instead, it sets off a trigger of muscle repair and growth. This response activates satellite cells to multiply and move toward the "injured" areas and merge with the muscle fibers increasing the density and number of "myofibrils" leading to muscle growth.

Key Factors Affecting Muscle Growth:

- **Nutrition** - Proper nutrition is critical for quality muscle growth. Furthermore, consuming adequate protein is essential for the growth and repair process.
- **Hormones** - Testosterone, growth hormone and insulin-like growth factors are important for muscle growth and BMR
- **Exercise** - Resistance training (which is a form of strength training) is what stimulates muscle development.
- **Recovery** - Sleep is when most muscle repair and growth happens.



Alcohol Impacts Nutrient Absorption and Protein Synthesis

Alcohol can interfere with nutrient absorption by damaging the cells lining your stomach and intestines, impairing their ability to absorb nutrients, including protein. Protein is the main ingredient in muscle repair. Alcohol is high in empty calories which can lead to malnutrition.

Alcohol can affect muscle growth in many ways, from decreasing protein synthesis and hormonal balance, causing dehydration and hindering nutrient absorption. In one study that looked at the effects of alcohol consumption in physically active people, there was a whopping 37% reduction in muscle protein synthesis when alcohol was consumed after exercise.

Alcohol and Hormones

Testosterone stimulates protein synthesis and inhibits protein breakdown. Studies suggest that alcohol lowers testosterone levels, negatively impacting muscle development.

Growth hormone also stimulates protein synthesis and promotes the use of fats for energy. Alcohol inhibits secretion of growth hormone, disrupting the beneficial effects in muscle development.

Alcohol Inhibits Muscle Development when Exercising
Muscle tissue is in a constant flux of building and breakdown. To build muscle, the process includes stimulating muscles by resistance training. When we drink alcohol, it inhibits the pathways that build muscle.

Alcohol impedes signals to build proteins which activate the molecules responsible for muscle repair. Drinking alcohol also induces insulin resistance. Insulin is a potent muscle growth stimulator.

Alcohol and Recovery

After a challenging workout your body needs time to recover. It is during recovery that most muscle repair and growth occurs. Recovery after resistance training

is the time to repair damage, restore fluids, replenish nutrients and build new muscle.

As discussed, earlier alcohol disrupts protein synthesis, a crucial part of muscle repair. Alcohol also increases inflammation, prolonging recovery after resistance training.

Good sleep is important for muscle growth and recovery. It is during sleep that our body releases growth hormones to repair and develop muscles. Alcohol decreases the deep restorative sleep phase when most muscle recovery and growth occurs.

In essence, alcohol is a terrible trifecta when it comes to muscle growth by impairing your strength, causing havoc on your hormones and disrupting your post-workout recovery process.

Kia Stork an avid tennis player and former social drinker stated, "after I stopped drinking altogether my muscle recovery was faster and I was less achy after my matches."

Strategies for Building Muscles at Home

Strength and/or Resistance training is ideally done in a fitness facility or Pilates studio to add load to the muscles. However, there are many body weight exercises that can easily be performed at home. Squats, Lunges, Planks and Push-Ups can develop large muscle groups when performed 3-5x per week.

The Pilates studio is an ideal environment for resistance training because the Pilates Method focuses on alignment, breathing and core strength, what I call the ABCs of Pilates. A common misconception is that Pilates is all stretching, however very different from yoga, using Pilates apparatus focuses on strength and flexibility simultaneously. Many of the twisting exercises like Spine Twist and Saw are detoxifying because of the torso rotation.

Tips for Minimizing the Negative Effects of Alcohol
Drinking in moderation is crucial. Being strategic and giving your body time to recover after heavier drinking allows your body to rehydrate and restore its balance of nutrients and hormones. Staying hydrated is especially important if you're drinking alcohol after a workout.

Shannon is a Master Pilates Educator for Club Pilates and a Functional Movement Specialist.



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The Top 13 Benefits of Chair Yoga for Seniors

As we age, maintaining an active lifestyle becomes increasingly important, yet it can also present unique challenges. Join us as we explore the incredible power of chair yoga.

From increasing flexibility and strength to promoting balance and relaxation, chair yoga offers a holistic approach to wellness that all can enjoy. Join us as we delve into the top 13 benefits of chair yoga for seniors and learn how it can enrich your retirement lifestyle. Plus, discover five beginner tips to start your practice.

1. Increased flexibility and range of motion

Chair yoga poses help you gently stretch and lengthen your muscles, improving flexibility and range of motion, which can make daily activities easier.

2. Improved balance and stability

Many chair yoga poses challenge your balance, strengthening your core and leg muscles, which can help prevent falls, a common concern for seniors.

3. More social connections

Many senior living communities, like The Terraces at Bonita Springs, offer chair yoga classes, which can be a great way to meet new people and have fun while getting exercise.

4. Reduced pain and stiffness

Yoga movements can help loosen tight muscles and joints, reducing the pain and stiffness you might experience.

5. Enhanced strength and endurance

Chair yoga poses engage various muscle groups, building strength and improving your endurance for daily activities.

6. Improved posture

Chair yoga encourages proper alignment and posture by strengthening the muscles that support your back and neck.

7. Improved mood and reduced stress

The gentle movement and focused breathing in chair yoga stimulate the release of endorphins, the body's natural mood boosters. This can help combat feelings of depression, loneliness, and isolation, fostering a more positive outlook and sense of well-being.

8. Enhanced sleep quality

Regular chair yoga practice can significantly improve sleep quality. The relaxation techniques and stress reduction benefits translate to reduced nighttime restlessness and promote deeper, more restful sleep.



9. Improved cognitive function

Studies suggest that yoga, including chair yoga, can positively affect cognitive function and memory in older adults. The focused movements and mindful breathing may help stimulate brain plasticity and improve cognitive performance.

10. Accessibility

Chair yoga doesn't require getting down on the floor or holding complex poses, making it accessible for people with limited mobility or flexibility.

11. Gentle on the body

Chair yoga poses are low impact and easy on the joints, making them ideal for people with arthritis or other conditions that might make traditional yoga challenging.

12. Budget-Friendly Exercise

Unlike many exercise routines, chair yoga requires minimal equipment, often just a sturdy chair with a back. You can use a dining chair, office chair or even a folding chair from home. This eliminates the need for expensive gym memberships and specialized equipment purchases.

13. Increased Self-Confidence and Body Awareness

As you gain strength and flexibility through chair yoga, you'll likely experience a renewed sense of control over your body, boosting self-confidence and self-esteem.

5 Beginner Tips To Start Chair Yoga for Seniors

1. **Talk to your doctor:** Before starting any new exercise program, it's important to talk to your doctor to make sure it's safe for you.

2. **Find a class:** The Terraces offers chair yoga a couple of times throughout the week.

3. **Start slowly:** Don't try to do too much too soon. Begin with a few simple poses and gradually increase the difficulty as you get stronger and more comfortable.

4. **Listen to your body:** If you feel any pain, stop the pose and rest. It's important to modify the poses as needed to fit your individual needs and abilities.

5. **Relax and have fun!** Chair yoga is a great way to stay active and improve your overall well-being. Focus on enjoying the practice and the benefits it brings.

We're Saving a Seat for You at The Terraces at Bonita Springs

Chair yoga is just one of the many activities we offer at The Terraces at Bonita Springs. Explore our amenities and services on a personalized tour, and browse our calendar to learn more about life at our senior living community in Bonita Springs, FL! Call our team at 239-204-3469 or contact us online to schedule your visit.

JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT EVENT!

Wednesday, April 17

3 p.m. Cocktail Hour

4 p.m. Resident and Leadership Panel

Join us for a fun, relaxed, and informal afternoon of cocktails and conversation. Hear the stories from those who know The Terraces at Bonita Springs best – the residents! They have so many tales to tell about life here. Discover luxury retirement living and unmatched hospitality and service you won't find anywhere else in Southwest Florida.

Space is limited. Valet parking will be available.

Please RSVP by Wednesday, April 10.

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

The Terraces
— at Bonita Springs
A SantaFe Senior Living Community



ENHANCING VISION BEYOND SURGERY:

Center For Sight Now Offering RxSight Light Adjustable Lens™

The field of ophthalmology has taken a remarkable leap forward with the introduction of the RXSIGHT™ Light Adjustable Lens (LAL). As a groundbreaking addition to premium lens technology, this innovative solution is redefining the post-cataract surgery experience for patients seeking optimal vision outcomes.

Traditionally, cataract surgery has provided patients with improved vision by replacing the clouded natural lens with an intraocular lens (IOL). However, the journey to achieving the clearest vision doesn't always end with the surgical procedure. Factors such as healing time, individual eye characteristics, and lifestyle preferences can influence visual acuity post-surgery. This is where the Light Adjustable Lens shines.

Offered in select markets by leading eye care providers like Center For Sight, the Light Adjustable Lens empowers surgeons to tailor vision correction even after the initial cataract surgery. Unlike conventional intraocular lenses, which are fixed in power and cannot be altered once implanted, the LAL allows for personalized adjustments to be made through a series of non-invasive, painless light treatment procedures.

The key to the Light Adjustable Lens lies in its adaptability. By harnessing the power of light-sensitive material embedded within the lens, ophthalmologists can fine-tune the refractive properties to suit each patient's unique visual needs. This customization process occurs over multiple sessions, giving patients the opportunity to preview and refine their vision until it reaches an optimal level of clarity and comfort.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Light Adjustable Lens is its versatility. While it is particularly beneficial for individuals with a history of laser or corneal surgeries, its applications extend to a wide range of patients seeking precise vision correction.

The patient experience with the Light Adjustable Lens is characterized by convenience and control. The LAL streamlines the process into brief, manageable sessions performed in the comfort of the doctor's office. This minimally invasive approach ensures minimal disruption to daily routines while maximizing the potential for exceptional visual outcomes.



The RXSIGHT™ Light Adjustable Lens heralds a new era of precision and personalization in cataract surgery and vision correction. Its ability to refine visual outcomes beyond the operating room underscores its significance as a transformative tool with this innovative technology, the future of clear, customizable vision looks brighter than ever before.

About Center For Sight

Center For Sight is a leading multi-specialty eye care practice in Florida. The practice offers patients convenient access to nationally renowned surgeons, highly trained, compassionate staff members and cutting-edge technology. Center For Sight is a member practice of US Eye, a patient-centric network of premium eye care practices with 64 locations in the Southeastern United States. US Eye is a patient-first, physician-led, vertically integrated multi-specialty eye care practice group with a mission to become the country's most admired brand in eye care. For additional information and locations, visit CenterForSightSWFL.com.

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www.centerforsightswfl.com

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JON R. BERLIE, M.D.
Laser Cataract & Premium
Lens Replacement Surgeon

Dr. Berlie is a board-certified ophthalmologist who specializes in LASIK and premium lens cataract surgery. He has been serving the Naples community for over 20 years. Dr. Berlie achieves superior visual outcomes for his cataract patients by utilizing the latest lens technology combined with state of the art equipment. His expertise in this area has led the Center For Sight Naples office to be recognized as the "Best Eye Center" in Naples, FL for the past 15 years. In addition to laser cataract surgery, Dr. Berlie performs vision correction procedures including Epi-LASEK and Refractive Lens Exchange (RLE). He is also skilled in reconstructive and cosmetic eyelid surgery. He has been honored as one of America's "Top Doctors" by the prestigious Top Doctors list, published annually by Castle Connolly Medical, Ltd.

Dr. Berlie completed his undergraduate training at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada and the California State University of San Bernardino where he received the California State University of San Bernardino Research Scholarship Award. He then attended Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska where he graduated Cum Laude, was elected as Class President, and received the Senior of the Year Award. He completed his internship in internal medicine also at Creighton University Medical Center.

Dr. Berlie continued his education at the University of Nebraska Medical Center where he completed his ophthalmology residency and received the awards of Chief Resident and the Resident of the Year Award. Dr. Berlie then went on to Saint Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City to complete his fellowship training in Oculoplastic and Aesthetic Laser Surgery.

The Role of Alcohol and Kidney Health: What You Need to Know

Alcohol consumption has been a part of human civilization for centuries, serving various cultural, social, and even medicinal purposes. However, while moderate alcohol consumption may have some potential health benefits, excessive or chronic use can wreak havoc on several organ systems, including the kidneys. The kidneys play a crucial role in filtering waste products from the blood and maintaining fluid balance in the body, thus making understanding the relationship between alcohol and kidney health so paramount for maintaining overall well-being.

The Basics of Kidney Function

Before going into the effects of alcohol on kidney health, it's essential to understand the basic functions of these vital organs. The kidneys are responsible for filtering waste products and excess fluids from the bloodstream, which are then excreted as urine. Additionally, they help regulate electrolyte levels, blood pressure, and the production of red blood cells. The part of the kidneys that does the work is called the nephron. It is a complex structure consisting of a glomerulus and a tubule, where filtration, reabsorption, and secretion processes occur.

Alcohol Consumption and Kidney Function

The impact of alcohol on kidney function depends largely on the amount and duration of consumption. Moderate alcohol consumption, defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men, may not significantly affect kidney health in healthy individuals. In fact, some studies suggest that moderate alcohol intake, particularly red wine, may have protective effects on the cardiovascular system due to its antioxidant properties.

However, excessive alcohol consumption, or binge drinking, can lead to acute and chronic kidney injury. One of the primary ways alcohol harms the kidneys is through dehydration. Alcohol is a diuretic, meaning it increases urine production and can lead to dehydration if not counteracted by adequate fluid intake. Dehydration reduces blood flow to the kidneys, impeding their ability to filter waste products effectively.



Chronic alcohol abuse can also cause structural and functional changes in the kidneys, leading to conditions such as alcoholic nephropathy. This condition is characterized by inflammation, fibrosis, and impaired kidney function, ultimately increasing the risk of kidney failure. Additionally, alcohol abuse is a leading cause of hypertension (high blood pressure), which is a significant risk factor for chronic kidney disease (CKD).

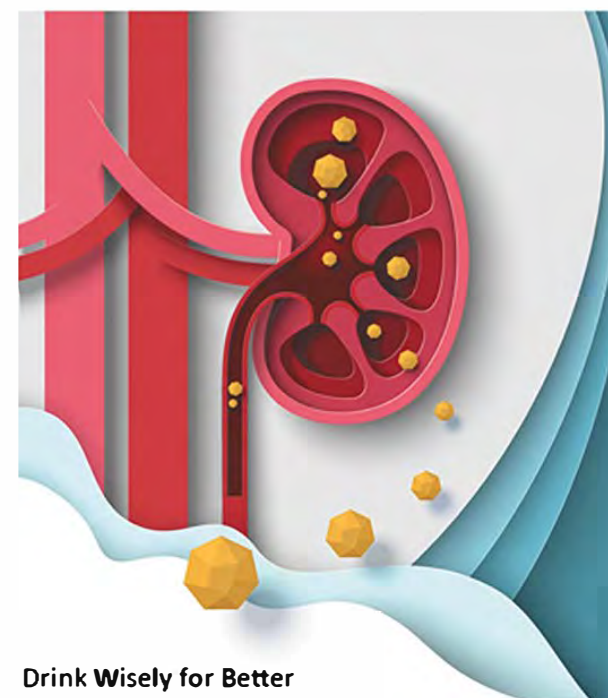
Other Risk Factors for Kidney Disease

It's essential to recognize that alcohol consumption rarely occurs in isolation and often coexists with other risk factors for kidney disease. For example, heavy drinkers are more likely to smoke, have poor dietary habits, and engage in sedentary lifestyles, all of which contribute to poor kidney health. It's also important to note that alcohol interacts with various medications, including those used to treat hypertension and other comorbidities, potentially exacerbating kidney damage.

Protecting Your Kidneys

If you choose to consume alcohol, it's crucial to do so in moderation and with consideration for your overall health. Here are some tips for protecting kidney health while consuming alcohol:

- Stick to recommended guidelines for alcohol consumption to minimize the risk of kidney damage.
- Drink plenty of water before, during, and after consuming alcohol to counteract its diuretic effects and maintain adequate hydration.
- Maintain a balanced diet, engage in regular physical activity, and avoid smoking to reduce the burden on your kidneys.
- If you have risk factors for kidney disease or a history of heavy alcohol consumption, consider regular check-ups with your healthcare provider to monitor kidney function.



Drink Wisely for Better Kidney Health

While moderate alcohol consumption may not pose significant risks to kidney health in healthy individuals, excessive or chronic use can lead to several side effects, including kidney disease. Understanding the relationship between alcohol and kidney health is essential for making informed choices about alcohol consumption and prioritizing kidney health. By practicing moderation and following the other precautionary tips, you can mitigate the potential adverse effects of alcohol on your kidneys and overall well-being.

Take charge of your kidney health today! Don't delay—take the first step towards a healthier future by calling VIPcare today. Call 239-747-7202 to schedule your appointment.



Fara Castillo, M.D.

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Peyronie's Disease

It is hard to spend time watching television or reading a magazine lately, without seeing or hearing about a condition called Peyronie's disease (PD). The strange name actually comes from the surname of the first surgeon of an old French king. Descriptions ranging from "crooked stick" to "bent carrot" are certainly effective in raising interest in this very sensitive and still poorly understood condition.

The development of PD is related to the way a man's penis responds to tissue injury, where trauma to the penis can cause scar-like (plaque) tissue to develop. This can happen in a dramatic way, when in a single event, the penis is forcibly bent or even ruptured. This can result in the sudden onset of pain and swelling. More commonly, less intense episodes of discomfort and microscopic injury occur over time, and ultimately result in the same type of scarring, or plaque formation. These plaques form in the erectile tissues of the penis, and are very different than plaques which form in arteries or blood vessels, like occur with heart disease. In fact, they commonly occur in young, sexually active men.

These penile plaques can initially be painful, but normally the pain subsides over time. They can also cause the penis to change shape. This can be noticed as a curve, like a "bent carrot", or sometimes an indentation, like an "hourglass". Because of these changes, shortening of the penis is a common complaint. In some cases, these changes can make it difficult, or even impossible for a man to have successful intercourse.

It is imperative that any patient who experiences these changes sees or talks to a urologist who specializes in treating this unique condition. Not all urologists are trained in the procedures and techniques associated with treating this condition. In general, the sooner a patient gets treated, the better the outcome in the long run.

PD occurs in two distinct phases.

1) Acute (active) phase - This is when most of the changes in the penis occur, within the first 12 months after onset. It is when pain typically occurs. Pain with erections can sometimes be intense, and is caused by inflammation in the area of the developing plaques.



2) Chronic (Stable) phase - After 12-18 months of the onset of symptoms, the scarring and curvature, if present, will stabilize, and not become noticeably worse. Unfortunately, most of the time, they will not get better either. In a small percentage of cases, around 15%, the condition does spontaneously resolve. This is the period of time when erections may become more difficult to obtain.

How is Peyronie's Disease Diagnosed?

Most of the time, the condition is diagnosed by patient history and physical examination. Often, ultrasound testing is performed to evaluate the penile tissues further to evaluate the scarring and presence of plaque tissue. It can be associated with other connective tissue disorders, like Dupuytren's contractures.

How is Peyronie's Disease (PD) Treated?

Men with very small plaque, or no plaque, no curvature, no pain, and no problems obtaining erections may not require any treatment at all. If the condition involves any of the above, there are treatment options.

Oral Medications

Despite being prescribed for years, there has never been any proven benefit to using any oral medications for PD. In the past these have included Vitamin-E, Potaba, anti-oxidants, L-carnitine, pentoxifylline, and Co-Q-10.

Penile Traction Therapy

The use of penile straightening devices has evolved over the past few years, and numerous studies have shown that the regular use of these straighteners on a daily basis can be very effective and when used correctly, can improve curvature, pain, and erectile quality. They offer an inexpensive, non-invasive method for treatment.

Penile Injections

Injecting a medication directly into the plaque tissue of PD offers a way of breaking down the scar tissue, and ultimately results in softening of the plaque and straightening of the penis. The currently available medication known as Xiaflex, or collagenase is the most commonly used agent.

Surgery

Depending on the degree of curvature, the presence of indentations, and the presence of erectile dysfunction, there are a number of different surgical options available. Doctors will usually wait until symptoms are stable and there has been no worsening of curvature for at least 12 months.

Importantly, patients should know that PD is a common condition that affects many men, and many couples, and that it can be diagnosed and treated very effectively in most cases, with or without surgery.

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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SOLE SUPPORT: THE ROLE OF PODIATRY IN ENHANCING THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM

By Patrick Bartholomew Jr., DPM, AACFAS

Podiatry is the branch of medicine that focuses on the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of diseases and disorders of the foot and ankle. Our field has a significant impact on the overall health and well-being of individuals, including those with autism. Autism is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by social and communication difficulties, repetitive behaviors, and sensory sensitivities. These individuals often have unique challenges when it comes to medical care, including foot health. Podiatrists play a crucial role in providing specialized care and support for autistic patients, helping to improve their quality of life and overall functioning.

One of the key ways in which podiatry relates to autistic patients is through addressing sensory sensitivities. Many individuals with autism have heightened sensitivity to touch, sound, and other sensory stimuli, which can make medical procedures, such as foot examinations and treatments, challenging. Podiatrists who work with autistic patients are trained to recognize and accommodate these sensitivities, taking steps to minimize discomfort and create a sensory-friendly environment in the clinic. This can help to make the experience more positive and less stressful for the patient, leading to better outcomes and improved compliance with treatment plans.

In addition to addressing sensory sensitivities, podiatrists also play a vital role in managing the unique foot-related issues that can arise in individuals with autism. Some common foot problems in this population include gait abnormalities, toe-walking, and foot pain related to repetitive behaviors. Podiatrists work closely with patients and their families to develop individualized treatment plans that address these issues, which may include orthotics, physical therapy, or surgical interventions. By addressing these foot problems early and effectively, podiatrists can help to prevent further complications and improve the overall mobility and function of autistic patients.

Furthermore, podiatry can also help to promote overall health and well-being in individuals with autism by addressing the link between foot health and physical activity. Many individuals with autism



may struggle with motor skills and coordination, making it challenging to engage in physical activities that support their overall health and fitness. Podiatrists can provide guidance and support to help patients find appropriate footwear, orthotics, and exercise programs that promote healthy foot function and encourage physical activity. By promoting an active lifestyle and supporting foot health, podiatrists can help to improve the physical and mental well-being of autistic patients.

Podiatrists who work with autistic patients must also possess strong communication and interpersonal skills to build trust and rapport with their patients. Effective communication is key to establishing a positive relationship with autistic individuals, as well as their families, and ensuring that patients feel comfortable and supported during their treatment. Podiatrists who work with this population must be patient, empathetic, and understanding of the unique communication preferences and needs of their patients, adapting their approach to best meet the individual needs of each patient.

Podiatry plays a crucial role in supporting the overall health and well-being of individuals with autism by addressing sensory sensitivities, managing foot-

related issues, promoting physical activity, and fostering effective communication. By providing specialized care and support for autistic patients, podiatrists can help to improve their quality of life, enhance their mobility and function, and promote overall health and well-being. Through continued research and education, podiatrists can further enhance their understanding of the unique foot health needs of individuals with autism and develop innovative approaches to care that support the diverse needs of this population.

Patrick Bartholomew Jr., DPM, AACFAS

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

To make an appointment, call 239-430-3668 or visit www.NaplesPodiatrist.com.



530 SE 16th Place, Suite A
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UNRAVELING THE LINK BETWEEN ANXIETY AND ALCOHOL USE: A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

In today's fast-paced world, where stress and pressure seem to be constant companions, many individuals turn to alcohol as a means of coping with their anxiety. However, what may initially seem like a solution to soothe their worries often spirals into a cycle of dependency, exacerbating both anxiety and alcohol use. Understanding the intricate connection between anxiety and alcohol consumption is crucial for developing effective interventions that promote holistic well-being and sustainable recovery.

Anxiety, a pervasive mental health condition characterized by excessive worry and fear, affects millions of people worldwide. It can manifest in various forms, including generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and phobias. Individuals with anxiety may experience intense physical and psychological symptoms, such as rapid heartbeat, sweating, trembling, and intrusive thoughts, which can significantly impair their daily functioning and quality of life.

In an attempt to alleviate their symptoms and escape from the grip of anxiety, many individuals turn to alcohol as a form of self-medication. Alcohol's sedative effects can provide temporary relief from feelings of tension and apprehension, offering a fleeting sense of relaxation and euphoria. However, this relief is short-lived, and the long-term consequences of excessive alcohol consumption can be devastating.

The relationship between anxiety and alcohol use is complex and multifaceted, involving both biological and psychological factors. Neurochemical imbalances in the brain, genetic predispositions, traumatic experiences, and environmental stressors can all contribute to the development of both anxiety disorders and alcohol use disorders. Moreover, individuals with anxiety may be more susceptible to the reinforcing effects of alcohol, as it provides a temporary escape from their distressing symptoms.

Furthermore, the cycle of anxiety and alcohol use can become self-perpetuating, as alcohol consumption can disrupt normal brain function and exacerbate anxiety symptoms. Chronic alcohol abuse can lead to tolerance, dependence, and withdrawal, further fueling feelings of anxiety and perpetuating a vicious cycle of substance use and mental health issues.

To effectively address the interconnected nature of anxiety and alcohol use, a holistic approach is essential. This approach acknowledges the interplay between biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors and recognizes that treating one aspect in isolation is unlikely to lead to lasting recovery. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of addressing both anxiety and alcohol use simultaneously through integrated interventions that target the root causes of these issues.

One key component of a holistic approach is comprehensive assessment and diagnosis, which involves evaluating the individual's physical health, mental health, substance use patterns, and psychosocial functioning. This enables healthcare professionals to tailor treatment plans to the unique needs and circumstances of each individual, ensuring a personalized and effective approach to recovery.

Psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and mindfulness-based interventions, can be particularly beneficial in treating co-occurring anxiety and alcohol use disorders. These approaches help individuals develop coping skills, manage stress, challenge negative thought patterns, and cultivate greater self-awareness, thereby reducing reliance on alcohol as a coping mechanism and promoting healthier ways of managing anxiety.

In addition to therapy, holistic treatment may also incorporate pharmacotherapy, peer support groups, lifestyle modifications, and complementary therapies such as yoga, acupuncture, and meditation. By addressing the underlying factors contributing to anxiety and alcohol use from multiple angles, individuals can achieve greater insight, resilience, and long-term recovery.

Moreover, holistic approaches recognize the importance of addressing the social determinants of health, such as socioeconomic status, access to healthcare, housing stability, and social support networks. Creating a supportive and nurturing environment that fosters connection, belonging, and purpose can significantly enhance recovery outcomes and reduce the risk of relapse.

In conclusion, understanding the intricate connection between anxiety and alcohol use is essential for developing effective interventions that promote holistic well-being and sustainable recovery. By adopting a comprehensive and integrated approach that considers the interconnectedness of mental health and substance use, individuals can break free from the cycle of anxiety and alcohol dependency and embark on a journey toward lasting health and happiness.

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UNVEILING THE HIDDEN COMPLEXITIES: Unique Estate Planning Challenges in Florida

By Carl Zacharia

In my 30 years as a Florida attorney, I have experienced disbelief in my clients when they learn that they are legally unable to serve as Personal Representative (PR) under a valid Will, even though they were named as such. Even though their loved one had executed a Will and named them as PR, due to specific requirements for PRs in Florida, they aren't legally allowed to serve.

In the State of Florida, the person named as the Executor or PR must either be related by blood OR a resident of Florida. Consequently, if you name a friend or trusted advisor who resides in another state as your PR, he or she will not be permitted to serve. Section 733.304 of the Florida Statutes sets forth this law, however, there are exceptions. Your spouse is not related by blood but is permitted to be your PR even if he or she is not a Florida Resident. A child of your spouse, who is not your child, can also be your PR, even if they are not a Florida resident. However, the brother or sister of your spouse cannot be your PR.

So, what happens if your named PR cannot legally serve. First, we will look to any person named as an alternate PR in the Will. If one of them is legally eligible to act as PR, they may do so. If there is no one named who can act, then the heirs will typically hire an attorney who resides in Florida to be the PR.

In addition to the requirement of relationship by blood or Florida residency, the named PR in Florida also must be 18 or over, mentally and physically capable of serving, and not have a disqualifying criminal record.

The requirements for a Revocable Living Trust are different than a Will. Neither residency nor blood relationship is required of a Trust and the PR equivalent is the Trustee. Trusts are private and not filed with the Courts, and for this reason, along with probate being time consuming, many seek to 'avoid probate' by utilizing a trust. However, probate is a judicial process, and without oversight (as would be the case with a trust), it is much easier for a person with nefarious intentions to circumvent the estate plan in their favor and shortchange the others. If your heirs and family enjoy a harmonious relationship, a Trust may be a better tool in Florida.



If not, the creation of a probate estate may be a better choice.

There are other estate laws peculiar to Florida which create unintended consequences, including Homestead. Florida Homestead law is extremely complex and one of the most litigated areas in Florida estate law.

Consider the example of a couple on their second marriage who both live in Florida. They agree that his name alone would be on the deed to their Florida home and pass to his children, and her name would be on her prior home's deed in another state and would pass to her children. The husband dies and his widow's children decide that she needs additional money to pay for her needs. They file a demand for one half of the value of the Florida Homestead as hers. Can they do that?

The answer is very likely yes. Therefore, if you are in a second marriage and intend to have your home pass to your own children upon your death, you need to seek legal advice on how to accomplish this.

Many people get a Will or Trust online believing that they are saving money. However, the real value an attorney provides can be found in the questions and discussions they have with a client to identify potential problems and address them before any harm is done.

Nothing covered in this article constitutes an attorney-client relationship. This is a very complicated area of law and mistakes in attempting to plan on your own can be extremely costly.

APRIL 2024 EVENTS

**Thursday, April 4th - Medicaid 101:
Eligibility, Planning, & Asset Protection**
12:45pm-1:45pm

Hope Lutheran Church
25999 Old 41 Rd, Bonita Springs, FL 34135
Presenter: Christine Brown and
Ehren Frey, Esquire
RSVP: 952-457-0493, sheila@hopebonita.com

**Monday, April 8th - Funch Bunch:
Estate Planning and Elder Law**
12:00pm-1:30pm
Hope Lutheran Church
25999 Old 41 Rd, Bonita Springs, FL 34135
Presenter: Ehren Frey, Esquire
RSVP: 952-457-0493, sheila@hopebonita.com

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Don't Let Dental Anxiety Keep You Away from the Dentist

In 2024 with all of the advances in dentistry, any people still have anxiety about dental treatment. Advances that make your experience more pleasant include digital radiographs (more efficient, less radiation and less chair time), digital 3 dimensional scans (no more messy impressions), topical anesthetic (less feeling with local anesthetic injection), and numbing gels (used for dental cleaning if needed), just to name a few.

Dental anxiety may have come from childhood experiences, discussions between family/friends or general negativity from movies, comedians or social media. It can also be from fear of the unknown.

Dentists are well equipped today with many aides to help ease your mind and have a more pleasant experience. First, you should find an experienced, confident, efficient dentist who has the time to discuss your dental needs as well as your dental anxiety. In my practice, I start with an initial consultation which includes a comprehensive examination and radiographs. There are times that a dental cleaning causes anxiety and must be addressed first.

Your dental experience can be more comfortable today in a relaxing dental environment with plenty of time to voice your concerns so the doctor can develop a personalized comprehensive oral health plan. Once an oral health plan is developed the visits are often listed in order of the patients needs. Environmental aides that help: good communication with your dental provider, listening to relaxing music, deep breathing, watching relaxing videos, pillows and blankets. There are also medical aides such as prescription medication for the dental visit, nitrous oxide or IV Sedation. In my office, if you are an animal lover, you can request our service dog to stay beside you. The most important thing is you must be able to talk to your provider and feel comfortable with your dental team.



**KELLY M. DAINIAK, DMD,
GENERAL DENTIST**

Dr. Kelly M. Dainiak provides all services mentioned in article. Dr. Dainiak graduated from The University of Connecticut School of Dental Medicine in 1995 and went on to finish a Hospital Residency at The University Hospital in Stonybrook, NY in 1996. She has been practicing in Southwest Florida since 2001, having her own solo practice since 2005.



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Exploring the Synergy of Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment and Nutrients in Biohacking

In the realm of biohacking, where individuals seek to optimize their physical and cognitive performance through lifestyle interventions, the integration of innovative therapies and nutrients has gained considerable attention. Among these, hyperbaric oxygen treatment (HBOT) is promising, particularly when combined with specific nutrients like Methylene Blue, Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide (NAD), and Phosphatidylcholine. Let's delve into the synergistic potential of these elements in the pursuit of enhanced well-being.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment (HBOT): Enhancing Cellular Oxygenation

HBOT involves breathing pure oxygen in a pressurized environment, typically within a hyperbaric chamber. This therapy aims to increase the oxygen supply to body tissues, promoting healing, reducing inflammation, and enhancing overall cellular function. Research suggests that HBOT may have various applications, including wound healing, neurological conditions, and sports recovery.

Methylene Blue: A Mitochondrial Powerhouse

Methylene Blue, a synthetic dye with antioxidant properties, has garnered attention for its potential role in biohacking. Studies have indicated its ability to enhance mitochondrial function, the powerhouse of our cells responsible for producing energy. Methylene Blue can optimize ATP production by acting as an electron carrier in the electron transport chain, thereby boosting cellular energy levels and supporting cognitive function.

Moreover, Methylene Blue has neuroprotective effects, making it a promising candidate for conditions like Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline. Its antioxidant properties help combat oxidative stress, a common feature of aging and neurodegenerative disorders.

Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide (NAD): Fueling Cellular Metabolism

NAD is a coenzyme found in all living cells, playing a crucial role in cellular metabolism and

energy production. As we age, NAD levels decline, impacting various physiological processes, including DNA repair, cellular communication, and energy metabolism.

Supplementation with NAD precursors like nicotinamide riboside (NR) or nicotinamide mononucleotide (NMN) has emerged to replenish NAD levels and potentially mitigate age-related decline. NAD optimization may enhance vitality and longevity by supporting mitochondrial function and cellular repair mechanisms.

Phosphatidylcholine: Building Blocks for Cellular Membranes

Phosphatidylcholine, a phospholipid found in cell membranes, is integral to cellular structure and function. It is a precursor for acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter essential for cognitive function and memory.

Supplementation with phosphatidylcholine has been linked to improved cognitive performance, liver health, and lipid metabolism. Additionally, phosphatidylcholine plays a role in emulsifying fats and aiding in their transport and metabolism, making it relevant for individuals pursuing weight management and metabolic optimization.

The Synergy of HBOT and Nutrients: Optimizing Biohacking Strategies

Combining HBOT with targeted nutrient interventions like Methylene Blue, NAD, and Phosphatidylcholine holds promise for synergistic health benefits. By enhancing cellular oxygenation, mitochondrial function, and cellular integrity, this integrative approach may support cognitive performance, physical recovery, and overall well-being.

It's important to note that while preliminary research is promising, further studies are needed to fully elucidate the mechanisms and long-term effects of these interventions. Additionally, individual responses to biohacking strategies may vary, highlighting the importance of personalized approaches and consultation with healthcare professionals.

Integrating hyperbaric oxygen treatment and specific nutrients represents a novel frontier in biohacking, offering potential avenues for optimizing health and performance. As research in this field continues to evolve, individuals are encouraged to explore these strategies under the guidance of qualified practitioners, prioritizing safety, and evidence-based practices in their quest for vitality and longevity.

Call us at 239-425-2900 to learn more about these innovative approaches and how they may contribute to improving your health and well-being.



Doreen DeStefano, PhD, APRN, DNP

Dr. DeStefano is also a lifelong student. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing and another in exercise physiology. She has a Master's (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 attends educational seminars in integrative and functional medicine twice yearly to stay abreast of the most recent, cutting-edge therapies available.

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

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Unraveling the Complexity of Brain Diseases

The human brain is an intricate organ that governs our thoughts, emotions, and actions. However, within this complexity lies a vulnerability to various disorders that can profoundly impact an individual's quality of life. Brain diseases encompass a wide range of neurological disorders, each with its unique characteristics and challenges. This article will shed light on some of the most prevalent brain diseases, exploring their causes, symptoms, and potential treatment avenues, while emphasizing the importance of ongoing research in this field.

Alzheimer's Disease: Alzheimer's disease, a progressive neurodegenerative disorder, is one of the most common forms of dementia. It is characterized by memory loss, cognitive decline, and behavioral changes. Researchers have identified certain genetic factors, such as mutations in the amyloid precursor protein (APP) and presenilin genes, as potential contributors to the development of Alzheimer's disease.¹ Additionally, the accumulation of amyloid-beta plaques and tau protein tangles in the brain has been linked to the pathology of this disease.² Although there is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, ongoing research focuses on developing interventions to slow down its progression and improve patients' quality of life.

Parkinson's Disease: Parkinson's disease is a chronic, progressive movement disorder that affects millions worldwide. It is primarily caused by the loss of dopamine-producing cells in the substantia nigra region of the brain. Genetic mutations, exposure to environmental toxins, and oxidative stress have been implicated in the development of Parkinson's disease.³ Tremors, rigidity, bradykinesia, and postural instability are hallmark symptoms of this condition. Treatment options include medications to manage symptoms, deep brain stimulation, and physical therapy.⁴

Multiple Sclerosis: Multiple sclerosis (MS) is an autoimmune disease characterized by the immune system mistakenly attacking the protective covering of nerve fibers, known as myelin, in the central nervous system. The exact cause of MS remains unknown, but it is believed to involve a combination of genetic and environmental factors.⁵ MS presents with a wide range of symptoms,

including fatigue, impaired coordination, muscle weakness, and cognitive difficulties. Disease-modifying therapies, rehabilitation programs, and symptom management strategies are the current approaches in managing MS.⁶

Autoimmune Encephalitis: Autoimmune encephalitis is a relatively rare but increasingly recognized group of brain diseases characterized by inflammation of the brain due to an autoimmune response. It occurs when the immune system mistakenly targets proteins within the brain, leading to neurological symptoms. Antibodies targeting specific proteins, such as NMDA receptors, LGI1, and GABAB receptors, have been identified in different forms of autoimmune encephalitis.⁷ Symptoms can range from psychiatric manifestations, such as psychosis and mood changes, to neurological symptoms, including seizures, memory problems, and movement disorders. Treatment typically involves immunotherapy, such as corticosteroids, intravenous immunoglobulins, and plasma exchange, to suppress the autoimmune response and reduce inflammation.⁸

Conclusion: Brain diseases continue to present significant challenges in the medical field, impacting the lives of millions of individuals worldwide. Understanding the underlying causes, symptoms, and available treatment options is crucial in advancing research and developing effective interventions. Ongoing research aims to unravel the intricate mechanisms involved in these brain diseases, ultimately leading to improved diagnostic tools, more targeted therapies, and the possibility of finding cures. By supporting scientific endeavors and raising awareness, we can foster progress in the battle against these complex neurological disorders, offering hope for individuals and their families facing these challenges.



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Some of the medication Paragon administers to treat the brain diseases described above, as well as others, include:

- Aduhelm
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- Briumvi
- Immunoglobulin both SCIG and IVIG
- Lemtrada
- Leqembi
- Migraine Therapy
- Ocrevus
- Onpattro
- Radicava
- Rituxan (including biosimilar's)
- Soliris
- Solu Medrol
- Tysabri
- Ultomiris
- Uplizna
- Vyapti
- Vyvgart

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IN OFFICE HYSTEROSCOPY

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

What is a hysteroscopy?

Hysteroscopy is a procedure that can be used to both diagnose and treat causes of abnormal bleeding. The procedure allows your doctor to look inside your uterus with a tool called a hysteroscope. This is a thin, lighted tube that is inserted into the vagina to examine the cervix and inside of the uterus. Hysteroscopy can be a part of the diagnosis process or an operative procedure.

What is diagnostic hysteroscopy?

Dr. Gauta normally performs a diagnostic hysteroscopy in the office. The patient receives analgesia so they will be comfortable during the test. It is used to diagnose conditions such as abnormal uterine bleeding, adhesions, fibroids, polyps or to locate displaced intrauterine devices IUDs.

One of the newest technologies he uses in the office and in conjunction with the hysteroscope is RESECTR™. RESECTR allows Dr. Gauta to gently remove and eliminate intrauterine fibroids without the need to remove or even cut the uterus and without harming your uterine lining. This is especially important if you want to have children in the future. The procedure is performed under local analgesia and most patients experience only mild to moderate cramping. Patients go home the same day and on average, a 3 cm fibroid (about the size of a grape) can be removed in approximately 10 minutes.

What is operative hysteroscopy?

Operative hysteroscopy is used to correct an abnormal condition that has been detected during a diagnostic hysteroscopy. If an abnormal condition was detected during the diagnostic hysteroscopy, an operative hysteroscopy can often be performed. Many conditions can be treated in the office using advanced technologies such as RESECTR which eliminates the need for a second visit and is a cost savings to the patient.

The time it takes to perform a hysteroscopy can range from less than five minutes to more than an hour depending on your specific condition. If an operative hysteroscopy is required Dr. Gauta will determine if it should be done in the office or surgery center. The choice is yours however where you would like your procedure done.



When is operative hysteroscopy used?

Your doctor may perform a hysteroscopy to correct the following uterine conditions:

- **Polyps and fibroids:** Hysteroscopy is used to remove these non-cancerous growths found in the uterus.
- **Adhesions:** Also known as Asherman's Syndrome, uterine adhesions are bands of scar tissue that can form in the uterus and may lead to changes in menstrual flow as well as infertility. Hysteroscopy can help your doctor locate and remove the adhesions.
- **Septums:** Hysteroscopy can help determine whether you have a uterine septum, a malformation (defect) of the uterus that is present from birth.
- **Abnormal bleeding:** Hysteroscopy can help identify the cause of heavy or lengthy menstrual flow, as well as bleeding between periods or after menopause. Endometrial ablation is one procedure in which the hysteroscope, along with other instruments, is used to destroy the uterine lining in order to treat some causes of heavy bleeding.

When should hysteroscopy be performed?

Your doctor may recommend scheduling the hysteroscopy for the first week after your menstrual period. This timing will provide the doctor with the best view of the inside of your uterus. Hysteroscopy is also performed to determine the cause of unexplained bleeding or spotting in postmenopausal women.

How is hysteroscopy performed?

Prior to the procedure, your doctor may prescribe a sedative to help you relax. You will then be given analgesia appropriate for where you are having the procedure done. The procedure itself takes place in the following order:

- The doctor will dilate (widen) your cervix to allow the hysteroscope to be inserted.
- The hysteroscope is inserted through your vagina and cervix into the uterus.
- Carbon dioxide gas or a liquid solution is then inserted into the uterus, through the hysteroscope, to expand it and to clear away any blood or mucus.
- Next, a light shone through the hysteroscope allows your doctor to see your uterus and the openings of the fallopian tubes into the uterine cavity.
- Finally, if surgery needs to be performed, small instruments are inserted into the uterus through the hysteroscope.

What can I expect after a hysteroscopy?

Most patients require nothing more than tylenol or ibuprofen to help with mild cramping.



Joseph Gauta, MD



Nicole Houser, PA-C



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APRIL IS ROSACEA AWARENESS MONTH

By Joseph Onorato, MD, FAAD

What is rosacea?

Rosacea is a common skin condition that occurs on the face. It causes redness and small bumps that are similar to acne.

Symptoms of rosacea?

The first sign of rosacea often is redness. It may appear like a blush or sunburn across your nose, cheeks, forehead, or chin. Other symptoms include red or pus-filled bumps and small blood vessels. For some people, the skin of their nose may become red, thick, and swollen. This is caused by excess tissue and called rhinophyma. Rosacea also can affect your eyes, making them red or watery. It may irritate and inflame your eyelids and the white part of your eye. This is called conjunctivitis.

Who Gets Rosacea?

Rosacea is common. According to the U.S. government, more than 14 million people are living with rosacea. Most people who get rosacea are:

- Between 30 and 50 years of age
- Fair-skinned, and often have blonde hair and blue eyes
- From Celtic or Scandinavian ancestry
- Likely to have someone in their family tree with rosacea or severe acne
- Likely to have had lots of acne — or acne cysts and/or nodules

Women are a bit more likely than men to get rosacea. Women, however, are not as likely as men to get severe rosacea. People of all colors and ages can get rosacea.

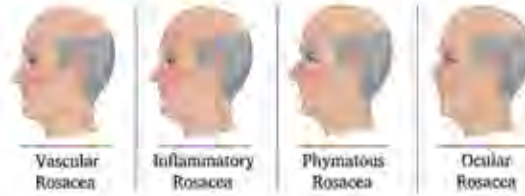
What Causes It?

Doctors don't know exactly what causes rosacea. A few things that may play a role are:

Your genes. Rosacea often runs in families.

Blood vessel trouble. The redness on your skin might be due to problems with blood vessels in your face. Sun damage could cause them to get wider, making them more visible.

Mites. They're tiny insects. A type called *Demodex folliculorum* normally lives on your skin and usually isn't harmful. Some people, though, have a heightened sensitivity to the mites, or more of these bugs than usual. Too many mites could irritate your skin.



Bacteria. A type called *H. pylori* normally lives in your gut. Some studies suggest this germ can raise the amount of a digestive hormone called gastrin, which might cause your skin to look flushed.

Can rosacea be prevented or avoided?

Since the cause of rosacea is unknown, you cannot prevent it. However, there are things you can do to avoid flare-ups. These include changes to your lifestyle and environment. Triggers vary by person and may take time to identify. Common triggers include:

- Direct or indirect heat, such as the sun or hot baths
- Weather, such as hot or freezing temperatures and strong winds
- Harsh skin care products
- Exercise or sweating
- Stress or anxiety
- Alcohol
- Certain foods
- Menopause
- Other skin or health conditions

Rosacea treatment

Medicine is the most common form of treatment for rosacea. The type of medicine your doctor recommends will depend on your symptoms. Medicines may include special antibiotics in the form of pills, gel, or cream. These work well at improving pimples and bumps. Skin redness is harder to treat.

It may take 2 months or more for treatment to work. As your symptoms improve, the amount of medicine you take may be cut down or stopped. It is hard to know how long you will need treatment for rosacea. Each person's skin is different, and your doctor may want to adjust your treatment.

For severe cases of rosacea, surgery may be an option. It is most often done to treat rhinophyma. Enlarged blood vessels on your face can sometimes be removed with a fine electric needle or laser surgery.

Living with rosacea

Rosacea cannot be cured, but treatment can help relieve symptoms and improve skin appearance. Remember to always wear sunscreen. Avoid known triggers to prevent flare-ups. If left untreated, rosacea

can get worse over time. This can have emotional and social effects. Some people lose self-esteem and don't like to be seen in public because of the way they look. It is important to work with your doctor to treat symptoms and improve your quality of life.

Questions to ask your doctor

- How do I know if I have rosacea?
- What treatment is best for me and how does it work?
- How long does treatment last?
- Is it possible that my rosacea will go away on its own?
- How do I keep my symptoms from flaring up?
- What skin care routine is best for me?
- Will I always have rosacea?

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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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- **April 14 at 10:30am - Support Your Sport: Pilates for Runners at Fleet Feet:** FREE Pilates mat class with shopping event before store opens. Special sales and discounts to participants with refreshments provided.
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The Relationship Between Hormones and Mental Health

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

Mental health is crucial for a good quality of life, and declining mental health can cause individuals to withdraw from the activities they once enjoyed. In other cases, someone may feel too tired or anxious to care for themselves and nurture their needs, impacting their emotional well-being.

Many factors can affect mental health, but hormones remain a driving force. Despite this, hormone dysregulation is often overlooked when it comes to identifying and treating mental health conditions. This is because many traditional doctors only consider the physical implications of hormone dysfunction and not the emotional toll that can occur.

The relationship between hormone levels and mental health is complex, which is why we have broken it down into the many different components, such as the different hormones influencing mental health and the direct and indirect ways they can do this.

HORMONES AFFECTING MENTAL HEALTH

Listed below are some of the different hormones that can affect mental health and their roles in the body.

Cortisol

Also known as the stress hormone, cortisol is produced by the adrenal glands and causes someone to feel stressed due to its role in the body's fight-or-flight response.

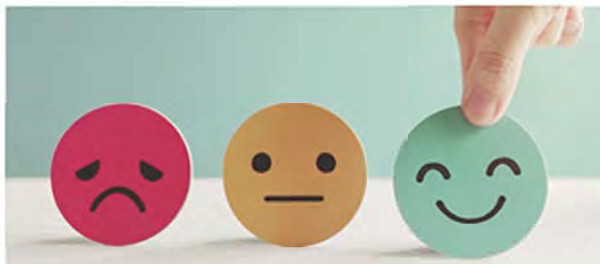
Actions controlled by cortisol include:

- sugar levels in the bloodstream
- metabolism regulation
- blood pressure regulation
- the body's sleep-wake cycle

Estrogen

While estrogen is most commonly known as a female sex hormone, responsible for producing female secondary sex characteristics and regulating a woman's menstrual cycle, it can also impact mental health by increasing anxiousness and irritability when it declines.

The role of estrogen in mental health lies in its role in regulating neurotransmitters such as dopamine, serotonin, norepinephrine, and epinephrine, which all play a role in mood regulation. In particular, estrogen



increases the production of serotonin, which is the "feel good" chemical, while also increasing the activity of serotonin receptors in the brain.

Estrogen also plays a role in regulating endorphins, another type of hormone that brings a rush of happiness when released.

Progesterone

Yet another female sex hormone is progesterone, which is predominantly found at higher levels during the second part of a woman's menstrual cycle following ovulation. However, this rise in progesterone may also lead to increases in depressive thoughts or an overall lowered mood.

The general role of progesterone is to prepare the endometrium for a potential pregnancy after ovulation. It does this by thickening the lining of the uterus and preventing muscle contractions in the uterus that can cause the body to reject the egg.

If the body conceives, progesterone levels remain high, stimulating the blood vessels in the endometrium to feed the growing fetus and prepare the breasts for milk production.

DHEA

Dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) is a precursor to other hormones in the body, including testosterone and estrogen. It is a hormone produced in the adrenal gland, and its levels typically peak in early adulthood and then gradually decline with age.

T3 and T4

Two hormones released by the thyroid, T3 and T4, affect metabolic rate, impacting our emotions and energy levels.

Melatonin

Produced in time with your circadian rhythm and light/dark cycles, melatonin increases sleepiness, helping your body prepare for bed.

How Hormones Affect Mental Health

Responsible for regulating actions within the body, hormones also significantly affect mood and mental health. When too much or too little of these hormones are produced, mental health symptoms can worsen.

HORMONES CAN AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

Increases Mood Disorders

Specific hormone-related conditions have a higher rate of anxiety and depression. For example, those with PCOS are 3 times more likely to be affected by anxiety or depression. Additionally, a study on endometriosis patients found that 87.5% of the patients presented with anxiety symptoms and 86.5% with depressive symptoms.

Hormone imbalances unrelated to specific conditions can also increase the risk of mood disorders. For example, those with significantly high levels of cortisol can often develop anxiety disorders.

Additionally, while high estrogen levels are typically associated with a better mood, if estrogen levels are overly high while progesterone levels are low, a condition called estrogen dominance can occur, with symptoms of depression and irritability. In some cases, estrogen dominance may also cause anxiety.

Mental health problems can also occur when progesterone is too high, as this is associated with increased amygdala sensitivity. The amygdala is a part of the brain responsible for the body's fight or flight response, so amygdala sensitivity can lead to a greater likelihood of anxiety, depression, or just feeling off.

Depression has also been reported in those with low levels of DHEA. A study even found that treating older patients with depression through DHEA supplements helped address their depressive symptoms.

Impacts Sleep

Many hormones, such as estrogen, melatonin, and cortisol, can make it hard to fall or stay asleep, depending on their levels. When the body does not get enough sleep, your mental health can suffer; this has been proven by research showing that brain activity during sleep significantly affects someone's emotional and mental health.

In particular, REM sleep aids the brain in processing emotional information, and a lack of sleep can impact how much positive emotional content is consolidated. This has been shown to increase the risk of suicidal thoughts or behaviors.

Sleep and mental health share a connection in both directions, meaning lack of sleep can increase the risk of mental health disorders, but sleep may also suffer from existing mental health problems, further worsening symptoms.

Based on this evidence, it is clear that hormonal imbalances affecting the body's ability to fall or stay asleep can then have detrimental effects on mental health.

Causes Mood Swings

One complication of too little estrogen is mood swings, which is why they are a common symptom of women going through menopause. With this stage of life, the amount of estrogen a woman's body produces significantly declines, sometimes resulting in mood swings. This symptom is especially common at the beginning of menopause, when estrogen levels fluctuate.

Lowers Self Esteem

Besides the direct effect of hormones on our mental health, they can also indirectly influence mental health through the way that they change the body. For example, hormonal imbalances can cause physical transformations such as hair thinning, weight gain, acne, and unwanted hair growth. These factors can contribute to your body image and may diminish your self-esteem.

Many doctors overlook how much the physical changes from hormonal imbalance can influence your self-esteem and emotional well-being, which is why seeing a doctor who specializes in hormones, and understands how drastically they affect the body, is essential.

Increases Stress

Besides cortisol, other hormonal imbalances can cause stress to the body in other, less direct ways.

When there is a hormonal imbalance, the body senses it through the insular cortex, a part of the brain that can sense the body's internal state. When hormone levels are incorrect, the insular cortex perceives it, resulting in physiological stress.

Essentially, when your hormones are out of balance, your body "feels off," which can influence your mental well-being.

Affects Fertility

Specific hormones such as estrogen, DHEA, and progesterone can also affect fertility when they are imbalanced. For couples looking to start or grow their family, an inability to do so can significantly affect their emotional well-being.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

There are many actions you can take to help improve your mental health, such as:

Exercise Regularly

Exercising regularly can be good for more than just your physical health; it can also improve your mental health by helping to regulate hormones.

Cortisol, in particular, can become high and build up in the body without regular exercise. By exercising, your body is able to use up some of the cortisol, leaving less behind.

Endorphins such as dopamine also increase when exercising, further improving your mood.

Improve Sleep Hygiene

While hormones can affect your sleep, you can also take action to improve your sleep hygiene and increase your chances of falling and staying asleep.

Some ways to improve sleep hygiene include:

- doing calming activities before bed
- limiting screen time in the hour before bed
- going to sleep and waking up around the same time
- sleeping in a cool, dark, and quiet room

Improving your sleep hygiene helps to regulate your circadian rhythm, which then influences hormone levels.

Correct Imbalanced Hormones

While the above actions can help bolster your mental health, if your mental health decline is due to hormone dysfunction, the most crucial step will be to correct these imbalances.

Hormonal supplements can significantly improve your mental health. For example, a study on depression and thyroid function found that supplementing T3 significantly reduced depressive symptoms in the participants, even relieving some participants of depression entirely.

Many hormones are available in a supplement form and can be found in a pill, tablet, or cream, depending on the hormone being supplemented. Meeting with a physician specializing in hormones is an important step in identifying hormonal imbalances and receiving the correct treatment to correct them.

Receive Help for Your Mental Health Struggle

Mental health issues are not uncommon, and it is estimated that 1 in 4 adults struggle with a mental health condition at some point in their life. When it comes to correcting mental health conditions, it is often most helpful to correct the underlying cause, which is often hormonal.

If you are struggling with symptoms of anxiety, depression, or insomnia or are experiencing irritability, difficulty concentrating, or problems with weight or appetite, you may be experiencing a hormonal imbalance.

Hormonal imbalances can dramatically affect many parts of your health and well-being. However, that also means that identifying and remedying the imbalance can return peace to your life.

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IS IT POSSIBLE TO OVERDOSE ON THC?

One of the most common questions among medical marijuana patients and their loved ones is *can you overdose on THC?* Below, you'll discover everything you need to know when consuming too much medical marijuana.

Is it Possible to Overdose on THC?

It is *theoretically* possible to consume enough THC, the primary psychoactive component in cannabis, to cause an overdose, but it is *highly* unlikely.

A study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that the THC necessary to overdose is around 1,500 pounds of marijuana consumed within about fifteen minutes. This is significantly more than any person could consume in such a short period of time and is far beyond the levels of THC that are typically found in marijuana. Additionally, the symptoms of a THC overdose are primarily psychological and do not pose significant physical risks. These symptoms include anxiety, paranoia, and hallucinations. Therefore, it is practically impossible to overdose on medical marijuana and THC.

Is it Possible to Reduce or Counteract the Effects of THC?

CBD, also known as cannabidiol, is a non-psychoactive compound found in cannabis that can counteract some of the effects of THC, the primary psychoactive component in cannabis.

CBD can counteract the anxiety and paranoia that high levels of THC can cause by increasing the levels of a neurotransmitter called GABA in the brain. GABA is responsible for regulating the activity of neurons and is known to have an inhibitory effect on neurotransmission, which can help to calm the nervous system.

Additionally, CBD can also interact with other receptors in the body, such as the CB1 receptors, which are responsible for the psychoactive effects of THC, and modulate their activity, which can reduce the overall psychoactive effects of THC.

It is important to note that while CBD and THC have different effects, they both have therapeutic potential and can enhance each other's effects when used in a balanced ratio, commonly known as the entourage effect.



How to Counteract the Effects of THC Naturally

Consuming too much THC can produce effects that can scare beginners and seasoned medical marijuana patients. Although it's practically impossible to overdose, most people want to avoid unwanted consequences.

There are a few natural ways that may help to decrease the intensity of the effects of THC:

- 1. Hydration:** Drinking water can help to alleviate dry mouth and eyes, which are common side effects of THC.
- 2. Sleep:** Getting enough can help reduce fatigue and disorientation, which are also common side effects of THC.
- 3. Food:** Eating a balanced diet can help to reduce the intensity of the "munchies" and other side effects of THC.
- 4. Exercise:** Light exercise or yoga can help to reduce anxiety and paranoia, which high levels of THC can cause.
- 5. CBD:** As previously discussed, CBD, a non-psychoactive compound found in cannabis, can counteract some of the effects of THC by increasing the levels of GABA in the brain and modulating the activity of the CB1 receptors.
- 6. Time:** The effects of THC will decrease over time as the body metabolizes the compound.

It's important to remember that these methods may not work for everyone, and the effects of THC can vary depending on the individual, the dose, and the method of consumption.

What are the Side Effects of Consuming Too Much Medical Marijuana?

The side effects of THC-dominant medical marijuana can vary depending on the individual, the dose, and the method of consumption. Common side effects can include:

- Increased appetite, often referred to as "the munchies"
- Dry mouth and eyes
- Increased heart rate
- Coordination and balance problems
- Short-term memory impairment
- Anxiety, paranoia, or other psychological distress in some people, particularly those prone to these conditions or consuming high doses.

It's worth noting that the side effects of THC can be more pronounced if consumed in large amounts, if ingested by people who are not used to it, or by those with a history of mental health issues.

Enjoy Medical Marijuana Safely in Florida With an MMJ Card

Now that you understand that it's nearly impossible to overdose on THC — it's time to get in touch with a medical marijuana doctor in Florida.

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Through extensive research and development, Lasene has become an integral part of a series of evidence-based protocols focused on pain management and neurological restoration. These protocols aim to provide safe, affordable, and effective care to those seeking relief.

As the creators of Lasene, our primary objective is to integrate the finest technologies and treatment strategies to alleviate the challenges faced by individuals with neurodegenerative and neuromusculoskeletal disorders. Our goal is to empower our patients, enabling them to regain an active and productive lifestyle.

What Does Lasene Do?

Loss of normal nerve function can arise from various factors such as trauma, malnutrition, vascular compromise, aging, toxicity, diseases, and, to a lesser extent, genetics. These compromises in neurological function can affect different areas of the nervous system, including peripheral, spinal, and cranial neurology.

LASENE Programs offer a powerful solution for addressing neural deficits associated with specific

conditions such as Parkinson's disease, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and sleep dysfunction. These programs target not only the conditions themselves but also the symptoms related to them, such as chronic pain, tremors, digestion issues, balance problems, gait abnormalities, mood disturbances, anxiety, memory impairments, and more.

The implementation of LASENE Programs has the potential to reduce long-term suffering by improving quality-of-life metrics for individuals with compromised neurology. This approach offers significant benefits without the side effects, adverse events, contraindications, or modifications to traditional treatment methods.

The utilization of LASENE Programs opens up expanded treatment capabilities and new opportunities to help patients with neurological conditions. These programs can be integrated into a healthcare practice, allowing staff members to deliver care while doctors oversee the treatment of other patients. The ease of integration and compatibility with current practices and staff, including comprehensive training, makes it a convenient option.

Our LASENE Programs support both the clinical and business aspects of addressing patients' neurological needs. They facilitate an efficient workflow, provide necessary equipment, offer training, enable the creation of individualized and dynamic patient treatment plans, ensure HIPAA compliance in patient processing and records, and encompass other essential aspects required for successful treatment.

Brand Partnership Benefits

The brand partnership opportunity for Lasene offers numerous benefits that set it apart from other options in the market. It provides advanced solutions that are not available anywhere else, delivering life-changing results to patients. The brand partnership package includes a turnkey solution with all the necessary equipment, systems, and training, ensuring a smooth implementation process. Brand partnership can expect a fast and significant return on investment (ROI) due to the high demand for the unique Lasene treatments. Furthermore, there is a vast untapped market share, allowing the brand partners to leverage their current patient base and attract new clients easily. The high patient referral rate further contributes to the potential for success and growth. Additionally, the brand partnership is easily expandable, allowing partners to scale their operations as desired.

The Lasene Proprietary System is a comprehensive management tool that guides the patient's journey from intake to treatment completion. Implementing this system is straightforward and efficient. It dynamically generates individual treatment maps and progress graphs, ensuring personalized care for each patient. The treatment sessions are delivered by trained staff members, optimizing the efficient use of staff and clinicians' time. This approach also simplifies the delivery of treatment for the providers themselves. Importantly, all patients purchase and commit to full treatment programs, eliminating the need for billing, insurance, or collections processes.

Lasene stands out from the competition for several reasons. It has a strong foundation in data-driven patient outcomes, with predictability, dependability, and reproducibility rates of 95%. This reliability instills confidence in both franchisees and patients. Moreover, Lasene has broader applications beyond traditional healthcare approaches, offering non-invasive and non-pharmaceutical solutions. This positions Lasene as a low-risk option for patients seeking alternative treatment methods, further enhancing its appeal and market potential.

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Stress Management

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

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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The Healing Power of Nutrition: Best Fruits and Vegetables for Managing Parkinson's Disease

By Lisa Brown, Plant-based Chef & Educator

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive neurological disorder that affects movement. While there is no cure for Parkinson's, managing symptoms and improving overall quality of life can be supported by various lifestyle factors, including nutrition. Fruits and vegetables, rich in essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, play a crucial role in promoting brain health and potentially alleviating symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease. In this article, we explore some of the best fruits and vegetables for individuals living with Parkinson's.

1. Berries

Berries, such as blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries, are packed with antioxidants like flavonoids and anthocyanins. These compounds possess neuroprotective properties that may help reduce inflammation and oxidative stress in the brain, which are believed to contribute to the progression of Parkinson's disease. Including a variety of berries in your diet can provide a tasty and nutritious way to support brain health.

2. Leafy Greens

Leafy green vegetables like spinach, kale, Swiss chard, and collard greens are rich in folate, vitamins C and K, and various antioxidants. Folate plays a crucial role in neurotransmitter synthesis, including dopamine, which is depleted in individuals with Parkinson's disease. Moreover, the abundance of antioxidants in leafy greens can help combat oxidative stress and inflammation, potentially slowing down the progression of the disease.

3. Cruciferous Vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables, including broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and cabbage, are renowned for their high content of sulforaphane, a compound with anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties. Research suggests that sulforaphane may help protect brain cells from damage and reduce inflammation associated with neurodegenerative disorders like Parkinson's disease. Incorporating these vegetables into your meals can provide a powerful nutritional boost.



4. Citrus Fruits

Citrus fruits such as oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruits are excellent sources of vitamin C, a potent antioxidant that supports immune function and reduces oxidative stress. Vitamin C may also enhance the absorption of levodopa, a medication commonly prescribed to manage motor symptoms in Parkinson's disease. Including citrus fruits in your diet can help maintain overall health and improve medication effectiveness.

5. Apples

Apples are rich in quercetin, a flavonoid with anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective properties. Quercetin has been studied for its potential to mitigate neurodegeneration and alleviate symptoms associated with Parkinson's disease. Additionally, apples are high in fiber, which supports digestive health—a common concern for individuals with Parkinson's due to gastrointestinal complications.

6. Tomatoes

Tomatoes are a major dietary source of lycopene, a powerful antioxidant that may help protect brain cells from oxidative damage. Some research suggests that lycopene may have neuroprotective effects and could potentially reduce the risk of developing Parkinson's disease. Consuming tomatoes, whether fresh or cooked, can be beneficial for overall brain health.



Conclusion

While there is no one-size-fits-all diet for Parkinson's disease, incorporating a variety of fruits and vegetables into your meals can provide essential nutrients and antioxidants that support brain health and potentially alleviate symptoms. Alongside a balanced diet, it's essential to stay hydrated, limit processed foods and sugar, and consult with a healthcare professional or a registered dietitian to tailor nutritional recommendations to individual needs and medication interactions. By making informed dietary choices, individuals with Parkinson's disease can enhance their overall well-being and quality of life.

Remember, nutrition is just one aspect of managing Parkinson's disease. It's crucial to complement dietary changes with regular exercise, adequate sleep, stress management, and adherence to prescribed medications for comprehensive symptom management and optimal health outcomes.



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Empowering Parkinson's Patients:

Coastal Breeze Home Health's LSVT BIG Exercise Program

Parkinson's Awareness Month is a crucial time to shed light on innovative approaches to managing this neurodegenerative condition. Among the many interventions available, Coastal Breeze Home Health stands out for its dedication to providing comprehensive care, including the LSVT BIG exercise program. This specialized regimen offers hope and improved quality of life to individuals living with Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's disease affects millions worldwide, causing tremors, stiffness, and impaired movement. While there's no cure, effective management strategies can alleviate symptoms and enhance mobility. LSVT BIG, an evidence-based program developed specifically for Parkinson's patients, focuses on enhancing movements, balance, and overall function.

Coastal Breeze Home Health recognizes the importance of personalized care for Parkinson's patients. Through the LSVT BIG program, their team of skilled therapists delivers tailored exercises designed to address each patient's unique needs. These exercises emphasize amplitude, encouraging patients to make bigger, more controlled movements to counteract the effects of Parkinson's rigidity and bradykinesia.

One of the hallmarks of LSVT BIG is its intensive nature. Patients undergo sessions multiple times a week for several weeks, allowing for concentrated practice and skill acquisition. Coastal Breeze Home Health's therapists guide patients through exercises that target everyday activities like walking, reaching, and getting up from a chair. By practicing these movements in therapy, patients can transfer their newfound skills to real-life situations, improving independence and confidence.

Moreover, the LSVT BIG program extends beyond physical exercises. It incorporates cognitive components to enhance attention, problem-solving, and multitasking abilities—skills often impaired in Parkinson's patients. Coastal Breeze Home Health's holistic approach ensures that patients receive comprehensive support to address both motor and non-motor symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

Parkinson's Awareness Month serves as an opportune time to highlight the transformative impact of the LSVT BIG program. By participating in this specialized exercise regimen, patients experience tangible improvements in their mobility and overall well-being. Enhanced movement capabilities translate to greater freedom and a higher quality of life for individuals living with Parkinson's disease.

Coastal Breeze Home Health's commitment to Parkinson's care extends beyond the therapy sessions. They provide education and support to patients and their families, empowering them with the knowledge and tools to navigate the challenges associated with Parkinson's disease. By fostering a collaborative and compassionate environment, Coastal Breeze Home Health ensures that patients feel supported every step of their journey.

Furthermore, Coastal Breeze Home Health leverages technology to enhance the delivery of LSVT BIG exercises. Through telehealth platforms, patients can access therapy sessions from the comfort of their homes, eliminating barriers to care and increasing accessibility for those with mobility limitations. This innovative approach ensures continuity of care and promotes adherence to the exercise program, ultimately leading to better outcomes for patients.

As Parkinson's Awareness Month unfolds, Coastal Breeze Home Health continues to advocate for the importance of early intervention and comprehensive care in managing Parkinson's disease. Through their dedication to the LSVT BIG program, they empower patients to reclaim control over their lives and pursue meaningful activities with confidence.

In conclusion, Parkinson's Awareness Month serves as a reminder of the resilience and determination of individuals living with Parkinson's disease. With programs like LSVT BIG offered by Coastal Breeze Home Health, there is hope for a brighter future. By prioritizing personalized care, education, and innovation, Coastal Breeze Home Health remains at the forefront of Parkinson's care, enriching the lives of patients and their families across communities.

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UNVEILING THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH: PLATELET-RICH PLASMA

The Secret to Younger-Looking Skin and Hair Regrowth

By Dr. Andrew and Teresa Kontos

In the quest for eternal youth and radiant beauty, advancements in medical science have led to the discovery of platelet-rich plasma (PRP) as a revolutionary treatment. This natural and innovative therapy has gained immense popularity for its remarkable ability to enhance skin rejuvenation and stimulate hair regrowth.

Platelet-rich plasma is derived from the patient's own blood, making it a safe and autologous treatment. The process involves drawing a small amount of blood and then using a centrifuge to separate the platelets, growth factors, and other bioactive proteins from the rest of the blood components. This concentrated plasma is then strategically applied to target areas, providing a powerful boost for both skin and hair.

One of the key benefits of PRP therapy is its ability to stimulate collagen production in the skin. Collagen, a protein responsible for maintaining skin's elasticity and firmness, naturally diminishes with age. By introducing PRP into the skin, the growth factors prompt the production of new collagen, resulting in a smoother, tighter, and more youthful complexion. This process is particularly effective in reducing fine lines, wrinkles, and acne scars, making PRP a sought-after treatment in the field of aesthetic medicine.

Moreover, PRP is not limited to facial rejuvenation; it has shown remarkable success in addressing hair loss and promoting hair regrowth. Hair follicles are nourished and stimulated by the growth factors present in PRP, which can lead to thicker, healthier hair. This has been a game-changer for individuals experiencing hair thinning or balding, providing a non-surgical alternative that taps into the body's natural healing mechanisms.

The versatility of PRP extends beyond its cosmetic applications. Orthopedic and sports medicine have embraced this therapy for its ability to accelerate healing and reduce inflammation in injured tissues. Athletes, in particular, have turned to PRP injections to aid in the recovery of joint injuries and promote faster tissue regeneration.

As with any medical procedure, it's essential to consult with a qualified healthcare professional before undergoing PRP therapy. A thorough assessment of the individual's health, medical history, and specific concerns is crucial to determine the suitability of the treatment.



In conclusion, platelet-rich plasma stands as a groundbreaking solution in the pursuit of younger-looking skin and hair regrowth. Harnessing the body's natural healing capabilities, PRP therapy offers a safe and effective option for those seeking non-invasive yet transformative results. Whether used for facial rejuvenation, hair restoration, or in the realm of sports medicine, the applications of PRP continue to expand, unlocking the potential to turn back the hands of time and reveal a more vibrant, confident self.

Soluna Medical Aesthetics is a luxury medical spa in Bonita Springs, FL. Our core belief is that reducing stress and tension is crucial for improving our clients' well-being. Our treatments are designed to benefit the entire body and are administered by expert staff in body treatments, aesthetics, and skincare, including services like acne treatment, anti-aging procedures, and cosmetic treatments. In addition, we focus on enhancing both mental as well as physical rejuvenation through methods like meditation and energy healing.

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Teresa Kontos

Teresa Kontos is the co-owner and Human Resources Director of Innovative Dermatology and Mohs Surgery Center for the past 8 years. The company has grown into two locations, and both are thriving and successful. Mrs. Kontos has a master's degree in social work and in Human Resources. Mrs. Kontos has over 20 years of experience working in social work. She has been a Director of Foster Care, Clinical Director in a Juvenile Delinquency facility, therapist and caseworker in both foster care and hospice. She has two business certifications from International Association of Professions Career College, Spa Owner Certificate and Metaphysical Shop Owner Certificate. Mrs. Kontos is certified in many areas of Wellness as well. She has experience in Energy/Sound/Crystal healings, mediation, life coach and many other areas of metaphysical treatments.

Mrs. Kontos is a wife of 20 years and mother of 3 children. Her hobbies include reading, scuba diving (including coral restoration projects and dive against debris projects), cooking, walking and taking care of her animals.

Dr. Andrew Kontos

Dr. Andrew Kontos is a highly regarded board-certified dermatologist and fellowship-trained and board-certified Mohs micrographic and cutaneous oncology surgeon. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and a master's and medical degrees from Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan with an internship at William Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak, Michigan. Thereafter, he completed residency and extensive training with fellowships in clinical research and phototherapy and epidermolysis bullosa within the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, Michigan. Advancing his skills and credentials, Dr. Kontos obtained fellowship-training in Mohs micrographic surgery and cutaneous oncology in Tampa, Florida.

Following his education and training, Dr. Kontos moved to Southwest Florida in 2007 to devote his training and expertise in advanced dermatology to the Greater Fort Myers and Naples communities. An esteemed physician and surgeon, he began Innovative Dermatology and Mohs Surgery in 2015 to provide attentive and individualized medical care, specializing in general and complex skin conditions with a primary focus on detecting and preventing skin cancer. A fellowship-trained expert in Mohs micrographic surgery and cutaneous oncology, Dr. Kontos precisely identifies and removes skin cancer with minimal potential for scarring and the lowest chance of re-growth. This technique is considered the most effective skin cancer treatment with a 99% cure rate and performed in the office for comfort and convenience.

Committed to providing high-quality skin care, Dr. Kontos remains up to date in medical advancements to continue offering the best care available for his patients. The values that guide his patient-centered model of delivering positive outcomes are compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence.

Dr. Kontos is a dedicated husband of 20 years and father of three. He is fluent in the Greek language. His personal hobbies include traveling, astronomy, classical studies, and scuba diving.



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Urgent Care vs. Emergency Room for School and Sports-Related Injuries

By Alfonso L. Espinel, MD

In the realm of healthcare, understanding when to seek urgent care versus heading to the emergency room can make a significant difference in receiving prompt and appropriate treatment. This is particularly true when it comes to school and sports-related injuries, ranging from physical examinations to handling deep cuts, fractures, and more.

Understanding the Basics: Urgent Care and Emergency Room

Before delving into specific scenarios, it's crucial to distinguish between urgent care and the emergency room. Urgent care facilities are designed to handle non-life-threatening conditions that require immediate attention but fall short of being emergencies. On the other hand, emergency rooms are equipped to deal with severe, life-threatening situations.

Routine Physical Examinations: Urgent Care's Domain

For routine physical examinations, such as school or sports physicals, urgent care is often the more suitable option. These facilities are adept at providing quick and thorough exams, ensuring that students and athletes meet the necessary health criteria for participation. Urgent care offers convenience and timely service without the prolonged waits associated with emergency rooms.

Sports Injuries: Urgent Care First, Emergency Room for Severe Cases

In the case of sports injuries, the severity of the injury often dictates where to seek medical attention. Urgent care is well-equipped to handle common sports injuries like minor sprains, strains,

and contusions. However, if the injury involves severe pain, dislocations, or signs of a more significant issue, heading to the emergency room is imperative. Prompt intervention in these cases can prevent further complications and expedite the recovery process.

Addressing Deep Cuts and Stitches: Urgent Care Expertise

When it comes to deep cuts and the need for stitches, urgent care is usually the optimal choice.

Urgent care centers have the resources to assess and treat lacerations promptly. From cleaning and disinfecting wounds to administering stitches, these facilities ensure a swift response. It's important to note that if the cut is excessively deep, affecting vital structures, or is associated with severe bleeding, heading to the emergency room becomes necessary for comprehensive care.

Fractures and Sprains: A Tale of Urgent Care and Emergency Room

Fractures and sprains often leave individuals grappling with the decision of where to seek medical attention. Urgent care is proficient in diagnosing and managing minor fractures and sprains, providing necessary splints or braces. However, if the injury involves a visible deformity, severe pain, or the potential for complications, the emergency room is the more appropriate choice. Emergency rooms can conduct comprehensive imaging studies and offer immediate interventions for complex fractures.

X-rays with Immediate Results: A Boon in Urgent Care
One notable advantage of urgent care facilities is their capability to conduct X-rays with immediate

results. This proves invaluable in cases of suspected fractures or injuries requiring quick diagnostic confirmation. The swift availability of X-ray results at urgent care centers facilitates prompt decision-making, allowing for timely initiation of the appropriate treatment.

EKG Testing: Emergency Room for Critical Cases
Electrocardiogram (EKG) testing is exclusively conducted in the emergency room for critical situations related to the heart. Nevertheless, our urgent care facilities offer this service for college athletes undergoing sports physicals and for individuals experiencing symptoms like chest discomfort, rapid heart rate, or other relevant physical issues where an EKG aids in accurate diagnosis. In cases of a suspected heart attack or true cardiac emergency, seeking care in an emergency room is the most appropriate course of action.

In conclusion, understanding when to opt for urgent care versus the emergency room is crucial for timely and effective healthcare. For routine physical examinations, sports injuries, and minor cuts or fractures, urgent care stands as a convenient and efficient choice. However, in cases of severe trauma, deep cuts, or suspected cardiac issues necessitating EKG testing, the emergency room is the definitive destination. Making informed decisions based on the nature and severity of the condition ensures that individuals receive the most appropriate care tailored to their specific needs.

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Combining Traditional Herbal Medicine with Acupuncture Provides Comprehensive Allergy and Asthma Relief

By Dr. Mary Lambert, AP, DOM

If you are among the roughly 25 million Americans affected by asthma, you know very well how difficult this disorder can be. Asthma is a chronic respiratory condition characterized by inflammation and constriction of the airways, leading to difficulty breathing. Symptoms like wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. Triggers can vary from person to person and may include allergens, exercise, cold air, and respiratory infections. While some may confuse asthma with allergies, they are quite different. Allergies are immune system reactions to normally harmless substances including pollen, dust mites, pet dander, certain foods, and medications. When someone with allergies encounters these allergens, their immune system overacts, leading to symptoms like sneezing, itching, and difficulty breathing. People with asthma might have life-threatening reactions to these allergens.

Conventional asthma medications may not completely manage symptoms, and potential side effects are also a concern. This is where acupuncture and herbal prescriptions are available to help manage symptoms. Acupuncture has shown promise in alleviating allergy symptoms by regulating the immune system and reducing inflammation. By inserting fine hairlike needles into specific points on the body, acupuncture stimulates the release of natural pain-relieving chemicals and neurotransmitters, which can help mitigate the body's allergic response. Additionally, acupuncture may promote better circulation and balance energy flow (Qi) throughout the body, which can help address underlying imbalances

contributing to allergic reactions. Some studies have suggested that acupuncture may reduce the severity and frequency of allergy symptoms, providing relief to individuals suffering from allergies. In a meta-analysis published in 2019, Jiang et al concluded that acupuncture with conventional therapies showed significant benefits for asthma symptoms in adults and children.

Acupuncture is known to help minimize inflammatory responses in patients who receive treatment. Because asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition, and acupuncture reduces inflammation, this therapy is a great way to treat some of the symptoms. Acupuncture also regulates the immune system, which can help reduce the chances of getting seasonal allergies, or at least make the symptoms milder.

While some individuals may experience noticeable improvements in their asthma or allergy symptoms in just a few acupuncture treatments, others may take several sessions to see or feel a difference. Recent research conducted in 2020 indicates that undergoing one acupuncture session per week over 6 weeks often yielded positive outcomes across numerous studies, with the majority of these studies utilizing no more than 15 treatments.

Acupuncture alone will help minimize symptoms of allergies and asthma, but the addition of prescribed Chinese herbs to your routine could become a game changer. Many Chinese herbal formulas have had multiple studies on their efficacy in treating symptoms of asthma and allergies and the results were amazing. In the clinical analysis published in 2022, Liu et al found that Yu-Pingfeng San regulates the inflammatory response to alleviate the symptoms of allergic

rhinitis. Additionally, a study published in 2021 by Jason Metal, shows that Ding Chuan Tang improves lung function, reducing airway hyper-responsiveness.

Combining traditional herbal medicine with acupuncture provides comprehensive allergy and asthma relief. Traditional Chinese herbs address underlying imbalances and respiratory symptoms while helping to regulate the immune response, reducing inflammation and allergic reactions. When used in conjunction with acupuncture, the effects further enhance immune function, and improve circulation and energy flow, further supporting the body's natural healing process. Together, these modalities offer synergistic benefits for allergy management.

Individuals considering acupuncture for allergy relief and other health concerns should consult a licensed acupuncturist. A licensed acupuncturist possesses the necessary training, expertise, and experience to provide safe and effective treatments tailored to the individual's needs. In addition, a licensed acupuncturist will assess symptoms, health status, and treatment goals to create a personalized plan and regimen for those health concerns. Proper dosing, monitoring, and potential interactions with other medications will be considered to ensure safe and effective treatment. Don't wait and suffer with allergy or asthma symptoms for longer than you need to. Contact our office now to book your consultation.

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Exploring the Potential of CBD in Managing Parkinson's Disease Symptoms

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological disorder that affects movement, causing tremors, stiffness, and difficulty with balance and coordination. While there is no cure for Parkinson's disease, various treatments aim to manage its symptoms and improve the quality of life for patients. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the potential therapeutic effects of cannabidiol (CBD), a compound derived from the cannabis plant, in managing Parkinson's disease symptoms.

CBD is one of over a hundred cannabinoids found in cannabis. Unlike tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), another well-known cannabinoid, CBD does not produce psychoactive effects. Instead, it is believed to interact with the body's endocannabinoid system, which plays a role in regulating functions such as mood, sleep, appetite, and pain sensation.

Research into the potential benefits of CBD for Parkinson's disease is still in its early stages, but preliminary studies and anecdotal evidence suggest that it may offer some relief for certain symptoms of the condition.

One of the most common symptoms of Parkinson's disease is tremors, involuntary shaking of the hands, arms, legs, jaw, or tongue. Some studies have suggested that CBD may help reduce tremors and improve motor function in Parkinson's patients. A study published in the Journal of Psychopharmacology found that CBD significantly reduced both the frequency and severity of tremors in Parkinson's patients



compared to a placebo. However, more research is needed to confirm these findings and understand the mechanisms underlying CBD's effects on tremors.

In addition to tremors, Parkinson's disease can cause muscle stiffness and rigidity, making it difficult for patients to move freely. CBD's potential muscle relaxant properties may offer relief for these symptoms. A study published in the European Journal of Pain found that CBD applied topically reduced muscle stiffness and improved mobility in rats with arthritis, suggesting that it may have similar effects in Parkinson's patients. Further clinical trials are needed to determine the optimal dosage and delivery method of CBD for managing muscle stiffness in Parkinson's disease.

Furthermore, Parkinson's disease can have a significant impact on mood and mental well-being. Depression and anxiety are common among Parkinson's patients, partly due to changes in brain chemistry caused by the disease. CBD has been studied for its potential antidepressant and anxiolytic properties, with promising results in both animal and human studies. By modulating the endocannabinoid system and interacting with serotonin receptors in the brain, CBD may help alleviate symptoms of depression and

anxiety in Parkinson's patients. However, more research is needed to determine the long-term effects and safety of CBD for managing mood disorders in this population.

It's important to note that while CBD shows promise as a potential treatment for Parkinson's disease symptoms, it is not a cure, and it may not work for everyone. Additionally, CBD can interact with certain medications commonly prescribed to Parkinson's patients, so it's essential to consult with a healthcare professional before incorporating CBD into your treatment regimen.

In conclusion, while more research is needed to fully understand the effects of CBD on Parkinson's disease, early evidence suggests that it may offer relief for symptoms such as tremors, muscle stiffness, and mood disorders. As scientists continue to explore the therapeutic potential of CBD, it holds promise as a complementary treatment option for Parkinson's patients seeking relief from the debilitating symptoms of the disease.

About Hemp Joi

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

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

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Health Insurance

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

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

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

When you turn 65 you are eligible for Medicare, once you have worked 40 quarters roughly 10 years there is no cost for Medicare Part "A". Part A covers Hospitals, Skilled Nursing, Home Health & Hospice. Medicare Part B you can choose to take at 65 or you can hold off if you are still working and have credible coverage. If you do not have group health insurance that is considered qualified, and then you want it you would have a late enrollment penalty for each month you did not have Part B & Part D and that penalty will last for the rest of your life. Part B covers doctors, imaging, blood work, ambulance, durable medical equipment, etc. Part D is a Medicare Drug Plan and covers medications. During your initial enrollment period it is especially important to understand your options! Medicare Supplements/Medigap Plans are NOT guaranteed issue you may need to medically qualify. You can purchase a Medigap Plan during your 1st 6-month on Medicare Part B without medical underwriting. There are a lot of things you need to know. Again, work with an agent you can trust! **Especially important:** when you move you need to know your options. Can you keep the same plan? Do you need to make a change and what does that look like?



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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 from 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.

Life Insurance – You are never too young to have life insurance and many types offer living benefits. As an example, I purchase life insurance for my grandchildren almost as soon as they are born. Their policy continues to build cash value that they can use during their lives, for maybe education, wedding or even a 1st home purchase. The younger you are the lower the cost.

Long Term Care Insurance – Overall, 48.7% of older adults with ADL difficulties (or an estimated 3 million persons aged 70 and older) reported needing some sort of personal assistance with one or more ADLs, and, of those individuals with need, 20.7% (or an estimated 629,000 persons) had an unmet need. Long Term Care Insurance helps pay for in home, or facility-based needs, such as assistance with acts of daily living or help with paying for a facility. Start shopping for this insurance in your 40's, but it's never too late to try. Your overall health will pay a major roll in the cost of the plan's premium. The sooner than later for affordability. Remember Medicare is NOT meant for Nursing Home Care/Skilled Nursing.

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IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME (IBS) AND ITS CONNECTION TO GLUTATHIONE LEVELS & HYDRATION

BY Kasey Cook, RN, Owner

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) is a common gastrointestinal disorder affecting millions of people worldwide. Characterized by symptoms such as abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, and constipation, IBS can significantly impact an individual's quality of life. While the exact cause of IBS remains elusive, research suggests a multifactorial etiology involving genetic predisposition, environmental factors, gut microbiota dysbiosis, and alterations in gut motility and visceral hypersensitivity.

One intriguing aspect of IBS research is the role of glutathione, a powerful antioxidant found in every cell of the body. Glutathione plays a crucial role in detoxification, immune function, and maintaining cellular redox balance. Studies have shown that individuals with IBS may have lower levels of glutathione, leading to increased oxidative stress and inflammation in the gut. This oxidative stress can contribute to intestinal epithelial barrier dysfunction, allowing toxins and bacteria to penetrate the intestinal wall and trigger immune responses, further exacerbating IBS symptoms.

Furthermore, glutathione deficiency may impair the function of certain enzymes involved in the metabolism of dietary components and xenobiotics, potentially disrupting gut microbiota composition and function. Imbalances in gut microbiota, characterized by a decrease in beneficial bacteria and an overgrowth of pathogenic species, have been implicated in the pathogenesis of IBS.

Therefore, optimizing glutathione levels through dietary interventions, supplementation, and lifestyle modifications may hold promise in managing IBS symptoms and promoting gut health.

In addition to addressing glutathione levels, proper hydration is crucial for individuals experiencing bouts of gastrointestinal illness, including IBS flare-ups. Dehydration can exacerbate symptoms such as constipation and abdominal pain, as well as compromise overall gastrointestinal function. Maintaining adequate hydration helps support normal bowel movements, facilitates the passage of stool, and aids in the elimination of toxins and waste products from the body.

During episodes of diarrhea, excessive fluid loss can lead to dehydration and electrolyte imbalances, which may worsen symptoms and prolong recovery. Replenishing lost fluids and electrolytes through oral rehydration solutions or electrolyte-rich beverages is essential to prevent dehydration and promote faster healing. However, individuals with IBS should be cautious of certain beverages, such as those containing caffeine or artificial sweeteners, which may exacerbate symptoms in some cases.

Moreover, incorporating hydrating foods with high water content, such as fruits, vegetables, and soups, into the diet can contribute to overall hydration status and provide essential nutrients and fiber to support digestive health. Monitoring fluid intake,

paying attention to thirst cues, and spreading fluid consumption throughout the day can help individuals with IBS maintain optimal hydration levels and alleviate symptoms.

In conclusion, Irritable Bowel Syndrome is a complex gastrointestinal disorder with various contributing factors, including oxidative stress, gut dysbiosis, and altered gut motility. Glutathione, as a critical antioxidant, may play a significant role in modulating inflammation and oxidative damage in the gut, offering potential avenues for therapeutic intervention. Additionally, prioritizing hydration is essential for managing IBS symptoms and supporting gastrointestinal health during flare-ups. By addressing both glutathione levels and hydration status, individuals with IBS can take proactive steps towards improving their well-being and quality of life.

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PARKINSON'S DISEASE: Understanding Symptoms, Diagnosis, and Holistic Approaches to Management

Parkinson's disease is a complex neurodegenerative disorder that affects millions of individuals worldwide.

It is estimated by Parkinson's Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that approximately one million people in the United States are living with Parkinson's disease. And on average, around 60,000 new cases of Parkinson's disease are diagnosed in the United States annually.

Characterized by the progressive loss of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain, Parkinson's disease can lead to a wide range of motor and non-motor symptoms that significantly impact quality of life.

Symptoms and Diagnosis

Parkinson's disease manifests through a combination of motor and non-motor symptoms.

Motor symptoms include tremor, slowness of movement, muscle rigidity, and postural instability. These symptoms can affect coordination, balance, and mobility, making everyday tasks challenging.

Individuals with Parkinson's disease may experience a range of non-motor symptoms that impact individuals with Parkinson's disease. These symptoms include cognition, mood, sleep, and autonomic nervous system function. These can result in slowness of thought processes, depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and autonomic dysfunction (such as orthostatic hypotension and constipation).

Diagnosing Parkinson's disease involves a comprehensive evaluation by a healthcare professional, typically a neurologist or movement disorder specialist. The diagnostic process includes a thorough medical history, physical examination, assessment of symptoms, neurological testing, and, in some cases, imaging studies. While there is no single definitive test for Parkinson's disease, diagnosis relies on the presence of characteristic symptoms, response to dopaminergic medication, and the exclusion of other conditions that may mimic Parkinson's disease.

Causes of Parkinson's Disease

While the exact cause of Parkinson's disease is not fully understood, several potential factors have been identified: Genetic Factors (about 10% from total amount of diagnosed individuals and seen more in cultures with inbreeding) which can be activated by the epigenetic factors such as environmental toxins and chemicals, such as pesticides, herbicides, and

heavy metals; oxidative stress; chronic inflammation in the brain and elsewhere in the body; impaired mitochondrial function; abnormal protein aggregates, such as alpha-synuclein, in the brain; gut dysbiosis; excess stress, leading to insomnia, depression and anxiety may speed the progression of the disease.

Allopathic Treatment of Parkinson's Disease

The main conventional medical treatments focus on managing symptoms and improving quality of life and include medications (Levodopa, Dopamine agonists, MAO-B inhibitors, COMT inhibitors, Anticholinergics, Neuroprotectors); Deep Brain Stimulation (Transcranial electromagnetic stimulation, Electrophoresis, Implanted neurostimulators)

Holistic Approaches to Parkinson's Disease Management

In addition to conventional medical treatments, many individuals with Parkinson's disease explore holistic approaches to manage their symptoms and improve overall well-being. These holistic modalities focus on finding and addressing underlying imbalances in the body, supporting natural healing processes, and promoting optimal health.

• Nutrition and Dietary Therapy

Avoid Sugar, Alcohol, Caffeine, Highly Processed Foods, aged cheeses and cured meats. Eat balanced diet rich in low glycemic fruits, vegetables, cooked whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats that can provide essential nutrients that support brain health and overall well-being.

It is beneficial to take dietary supplements such as Coenzyme Q10, Omega-3 fatty acids, Creatine, Curcumin, Antioxidants and Bioflavonoids, Vitamins B-6, B-12, E and D, Magnesium, N-Acetylcysteine (NAC), Green Tea Extract, Ashwagandha, Ginkgo biloba, Chinese Individualized Herbal Formulas, pro- and pre-biotics and regulatory peptides, which have been studied for their potential neuroprotective effects.

• Holistic Modalities

Oxygen Therapy, like CellGym, Molecular Hydrogen Therapy, SCENAR Therapy, Acupuncture, Bio-Informational Frequency Therapy, Massage Therapy can help alleviate pain and muscle stiffness, reduce inflammation, enhance lymphatic drainage, and promote healing by stimulating the body's natural self-regulatory mechanisms.

• Exercise and Movement Therapies

Regular exercise is essential for maintaining mobility, flexibility, and strength in individuals with Parkinson's

disease. Activities such as tai chi, yoga, qigong, and dance therapy can improve balance, coordination, and motor function while also promoting relaxation and stress reduction.

• Reduce Stress and Anxiety, Improve Sleep

Aromatherapy through Inhalation or nebulizing of following essential oils are beneficial for combating the fatigue and cognitive challenges, help reduce anxiety and promote relaxation: Lavender, Peppermint, Lemon, Bergamot, Frankincense.

Increasing dopamine levels naturally can help improve mood, motivation, and overall well-being. Sunlight exposure helps regulate dopamine levels by influencing the production of serotonin, a neurotransmitter precursor to dopamine. Aim to spend time outdoors in natural sunlight each day to support healthy dopamine levels.

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Holistic multi-targeted therapeutic approach to management offer hope for improving quality of life and promoting overall well-being. By addressing underlying imbalances in the body, supporting natural healing processes, individuals with Parkinson's disease can optimize their treatment outcomes and enhance their quality of life.

I welcome you to the Vitalgate Health.





Rheumatoid Arthritis and Gum Disease: What You Need to Know

By Dr. Ricardo S. Bocanegra, DDS

Why do rheumatoid arthritis and gum disease often go hand in hand? Learn about the significance of the connection and what you can do to protect your overall health.

Fast Facts

People living with rheumatoid arthritis are more likely to develop gum disease compared to people who do not have RA. Inflammation related to gum disease or periodontitis may play a role in rheumatoid arthritis disease activity.

Controlling gum disease inflammation may help improve rheumatoid arthritis symptoms.

When you're living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), brushing, flossing, and seeing your dentist regularly are especially important. Studies show a strong connection between RA and gum disease, an inflammatory condition that can lead to tooth loss and other health complications, such as heart disease.

At this point, experts aren't sure which health issue is the chicken and which is the egg. A German study published in June 2008 in the Journal of Periodontology showed that people with RA had eight times the odds of developing gum disease as compared with people without RA. A study out of the University of Louisville in Kentucky published in September 2013 found that the bacterium that causes periodontal disease, Porphyromonas gingivalis, increases the severity of rheumatoid arthritis, leads to an earlier onset of the disease, and causes symptoms to progress more quickly. And a Swedish study published

in March 2016 in the journal Arthritis & Rheumatology suggests that P. gingivalis may be a possible trigger for autoimmune disease in a subset of RA patients. "The connection is confusing," says Terrance Griffin, DMD, chair of the department of periodontology at the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine in Boston. "There are so many factors that can come into play, like oral hygiene. RA can cause you to lose some dexterity, which may mean you can't clean your teeth as well. But that may only partially account for this relationship."

Gum Disease and Rheumatoid Arthritis: The Inflammation Link

Doctors may not know for sure how gum disease and RA are linked, but both diseases have inflammation in common, which may explain the connection. Inflammation is a protective immune system response to foreign bodies like viruses and bacteria. But with autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, the immune system mistakenly triggers inflammation even though there are no viruses or bacteria to fight off. It's possible that the immune system is stimulated by mouth inflammation and infection; therefore, setting off a cascade of events where inflammation develops at the site of joints or arthritis. Dr. Bocanegra strongly believes that controlling the inflammation through better dental care could play a role in reducing the incidence and severity of RA.

Treating One Condition May Improve the Other

People with a severe form of rheumatoid arthritis that have successfully treated their gum disease, have seen their pain and other arthritis symptoms get better. In addition, patients who have been treated with drugs for both gum disease and rheumatoid arthritis fared better than those who received RA medication alone. Dr. Bocanegra recommends that people who have both gum disease and RA should have an informed care team comprised of a physician, a dentist and a periodontist. Brushing and flossing can be challenging for those with RA, and you should work with your doctors to find out what works best for you. And if you don't have a periodontist, get an evaluation from your dentist every year to monitor the status of your gums, since you are more likely to get it.

Dental Care for People With Rheumatoid Arthritis

Gum disease ranges from gingivitis, a mild form that causes swollen, tender gums, to more serious forms like periodontitis, in which inflammation affects the tissue and bone supporting the teeth. Some people with RA also develop Sjögren's syndrome or sicca syndrome, an autoimmune disease of the glands, which causes dry mouth and increased tooth decay. If you have gingivitis, it can be reversed with twice-yearly dental cleanings and good at-home care.

Brushing and flossing can be challenging for those with RA, and you should work with your doctors to find out what works best for you. And if you don't have a dentist, call Dr. Bocanegra at 239-482-8806 for an evaluation to monitor the status of your gums, since you are more likely to develop gum disease.

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Recurrent UTIs: Addressing the Risk of Antibiotic Resistance

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are common bacterial infections that affect millions of individuals worldwide each year. While typically treated with antibiotics, the rising prevalence of antibiotic resistance poses a significant challenge in managing recurrent UTIs effectively. In this article, we'll explore the importance of addressing recurrent UTIs and strategies to mitigate the risk of antibiotic resistance, focusing on Utiva Cranberry PACs as a clinically effective prevention.

1. Overview of Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs):

Urinary tract infections (UTIs) occur when bacteria enter the urinary tract and multiply, leading to frequent urination, burning sensation during urination, and pelvic discomfort. UTIs can affect various parts of the urinary tract, including the bladder (cystitis), urethra (urethritis), and kidneys (pyelonephritis).

2. Importance of Addressing Recurrent UTIs:

Recurrent UTIs, defined as two or more infections within six months or three or more within one year, pose significant health risks and can profoundly impact quality of life. Individuals who experience recurrent UTIs often face frequent discomfort, disruption of daily activities, and an increased risk of complications such as kidney damage and sepsis.

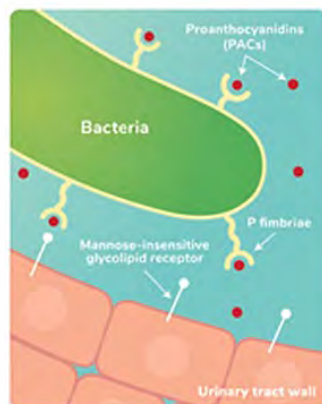
3. The Growing Concern of Antibiotic Resistance:

Antibiotic resistance has emerged as a global health threat, compromising the effectiveness of antibiotics in treating bacterial infections. Recurrent UTIs present a particularly challenging scenario, as they often result in repeated antibiotic courses, contributing to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. A 2019 study published in the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI) found alarming rates of antibiotic resistance among UTI-causing bacteria, with more than 92 percent resistant to at least one common antibiotic and almost 80 percent to at least two.

(Source: NCBI Study)

4. UTI Prevention: Strategies to Avoid Unnecessary Antibiotic Use:

Given the risks associated with antibiotic resistance, it's essential to explore preventive strategies to reduce the reliance on antibiotics for recurrent UTIs. Healthcare providers emphasize the importance of adopting lifestyle modifications and hygiene practices, such as staying hydrated, urinating after intercourse, and



practicing proper genital hygiene to prevent UTIs. Additionally, avoiding unnecessary antibiotic use for non-severe UTIs and considering alternative approaches for prevention are crucial in combating antibiotic resistance.

5. Utiva Cranberry PACs: A Clinically Effective Prevention:

Utiva Cranberry PACs offer a promising solution for UTI prevention without contributing to antibiotic resistance. Cranberry proanthocyanidins (PACs) have been extensively studied for their ability to inhibit bacterial adhesion to the urinary tract, preventing the colonization and proliferation of UTI-causing bacteria. A urogynecologist, Dr. Emily Rutledge emphasizes, "There is a lot of evidence that cranberry supplements are safe and effective. You can find all sorts of cranberry supplements but if they don't have that 36 mg PAC and are measured by DMAC/A2 then they are a waste of money." Utiva Cranberry PACs, with a standardized dose of 36 mg PACs measured by DMAC/A2, provide a clinically effective option for individuals seeking to reduce their risk of recurrent UTIs.

Recurrent UTIs pose a significant health concern, exacerbated by the growing threat of antibiotic resistance. Healthcare providers and patients play a vital role in addressing this challenge by adopting preventive strategies and exploring alternative approaches to UTI management. Dr. Colleen McDermott, another urogynecologist, recommends,

"Antibiotics are the first-line treatment, but there are clinically proven options to help prevent. When considering cranberry supplements, I recommend my patients select a product with 36 mg of PACs." Utiva Cranberry PACs offer a safe, evidence-based option for UTI prevention, empowering individuals to take proactive steps towards better urinary health and reduced reliance on antibiotics.

Sources:

- https://www.utivahealth.ca/blogs/resources/antibiotics-resistance?_pos=1&_sid=51bf18b74&_ss=r
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6436442/>



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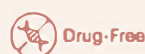
Recurrent UTIs can be a constant battle in the clinic. In an attempt to minimize the use of antibiotics, I always consider natural options to help reduce the frequency of UTIs in my patients. Utiva is a trusted brand which provides a great, clean cranberry product which has been very effective in preventing UTIs in many of my patients. ”

Dr. Yana Barbalet
Urologist, Lahey Health, Massachusetts



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When You Are At Your Wits End

Have you ever been at your wits' end? Have you ever been so confused that you didn't really know which way was up? Have you ever had the feeling, "I know I need to do something...but I don't know what 'something' to do."

The Bible tells the story of a group of sailors who went out to sea and encountered a huge storm that almost killed them:

²³Others went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters. ²⁴They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep. ²⁵For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. ²⁶They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. ²⁷They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end. ²⁸Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. ²⁹He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed. ³⁰They were glad when it grew calm, and he guided them to their desired haven. ³¹Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men. Psalm 107:23-31

Can you relate to this group of sailors? Maybe the circumstances in your life have caused your courage to melt away. Perhaps you are going through a storm of your own. You may find yourself at your wits' end without any clear direction as to what to do next. If so, follow the example of the sailors in the Bible.

There first thing they did was cry out to the LORD in their trouble. Don't underestimate the power of prayer. An old gospel song says, "when God is all you have, you'll find He's all you need." God responded to the sailor's prayer by bringing them out of their distress. In fact, it says he stilled the storm to a whisper and the waves of the sea were hushed. God can do that in your life and in your situation as well. Call out to him. His timing is not always as quick as we may like but He knows what is best for each of us.

When the storm was over, the text says that God guided the sailors to their desired haven. They found their place of rest and peace. Storms don't last forever... and neither will yours. Keep your faith in God. Cry out to Him in your pain. Trust that He knows what's best and keep praying and seeking your desired haven... it may be just around the corner.

And then, don't forget to thank God when He does bring you through the storm. The story concludes by saying, "Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men."

Storms, crises, pain and problems are an unfortunate reality of life. We grow through the pain and learn valuable lessons during these times. Don't give up, give in, or quit. When you find yourself at your wits' end...hang on, cry out to God, and look for His deliverance.



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



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