

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

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

May 2024

Lee Edition - Monthly

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 **FREE**

**MAY IS SKIN
CANCER
AWARENESS
MONTH**

**HOW YOUR
SEX HORMONES**

Can Support (or Hinder)
Your Weight Loss Journey

**ALIGNMENT
MATTERS**

Joints Deserve to be Happy

**SCULPTING YOUR
IDEAL BODY**

The Power of Body Contouring

**MANAGING
ARTHRITIS
SYMPTOMS
THROUGH
DIET, EXERCISE,
& INNOVATIVE
THERAPIES**

EUROTHREADS

The Lunchtime Facelift

**CONNECTING
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OLDER ADULTS**



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John Nobile

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Spring Into Action

Free Memory Screening
Event for Adults 50+

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- May 24 @ 4:30pm- Club Pilates
Cape Coral West: 2390 Surfside Blvd
(239-291-9090)
- May 30 @ 6pm- Club Pilates
Ft. Myers Central: 6891 Daniels Parkway,
Suite #145 (239-603-7222)



Shannon Willits
Master Pilates Educator

- Club Pilates Ft. Myers West**
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MAY IS BETTER HEARING AND SPEECH MONTH

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

May is a special month in the United States for those who care about communication and the senses. It is designated as Better Hearing and Speech Month, which provides an opportunity to raise awareness about communication disorders and the importance of speech and hearing health. This month-long celebration is a great opportunity to educate people about communication disorders, promote hearing and speech health, and support individuals with communication challenges.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) established Better Speech and Hearing Month in 1927 to raise awareness about communication disorders and the importance of early detection and intervention. Since then, it has become a popular annual event that promotes education, awareness, and advocacy for individuals with speech, language, and hearing disorders.

Communication disorders affect millions of Americans, both young and old. They can range from mild to severe and can significantly impact an individual's quality of life. Communication disorders can manifest in different ways, including difficulty with speech production, stuttering, difficulty understanding or using language, voice disorders, and hearing loss.

Hearing loss is one of the most common communication disorders and affects about 48 million Americans, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD). Hearing loss can be caused by various factors, including aging, exposure to loud noise, genetics, certain medications, and illnesses. If left untreated, hearing loss can lead to social isolation, depression, and cognitive decline. That's why early detection and intervention are critical in managing hearing loss and preventing further damage.

Speech and language disorders can also have a significant impact on an individual's ability to communicate effectively. These disorders can affect a person's ability to produce or understand speech, use and comprehend language, and engage in social interactions. Speech and language disorders can be caused by various factors, including neurological conditions, developmental delays, trauma,



and environmental factors. Early detection and intervention are also crucial in managing speech and language disorders and improving communication skills.

Better Hearing and Speech Month provides an opportunity to raise awareness about these communication disorders and promote hearing and speech health. It is a time to celebrate the successes of individuals with communication challenges and to support their ongoing journey to better communication.

There are several ways to get involved in Better Hearing and Speech Month. Here are a few ideas:

- 1. Spread the word:** Use social media to share information about Better Speech and Hearing Month, including facts and resources about communication disorders, hearing and speech health, and early detection and intervention.
- 2. Get screened:** Encourage family and friends to get screened for hearing and speech disorders. Many healthcare providers offer free or low-cost screenings during Better Speech and Hearing Month.
- 3. Support advocacy efforts:** Contact your elected officials and urge them to support legislation that improves access to hearing and speech services, particularly for underserved populations.
- 4. Educate others:** Host a workshop or webinar to educate others about communication disorders and the importance of hearing and speech health.
- 5. Donate to a hearing and speech organization:** Consider donating to a hearing and speech organization that supports research, advocacy, and services for individuals with communication disorders.

Better Hearing and Speech Month is a great opportunity to raise awareness about communication disorders and promote hearing and speech health. By working together, we can improve access to early detection and intervention services, support individuals with communication challenges, and empower them to communicate effectively and confidently.

If you or a loved one are struggling to hear clearly, we can help! We are located in Cape Coral and Fort Myers, FL., with our 5-star-rated hearing care. Call Nobile Hearing Aids today at 239-323-7389 for more information.

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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SCULPTING YOUR IDEAL BODY

The Power of Body Contouring

RALPH R. GARRAMONE, MD, FACS

In the pursuit of a healthy and fit body, diet and exercise are undoubtedly crucial factors. However, there are instances when persistent areas defy even the most disciplined lifestyle choices. At Garramone Plastic Surgery, we proudly offer a range of body contouring procedures designed to help you achieve the body of your dreams.

Body contouring encompasses a variety of procedures, addressing different areas of the body. While many parts respond well to healthy living, there are those resilient areas that resist improvement through exercise and diet alone. Body contouring surgery becomes an invaluable option for individuals whose skin and underlying tissues have lost natural elasticity due to factors such as significant weight loss, pregnancy, aging, sun damage, genetics, or other reasons.

If certain areas of your body have been affected by age or drastic weight loss, Dr. Garramone's body contouring procedures provide a potential solution. Our options can eliminate excess, loose, or sagging skin, along with stubborn fat deposits, creating more even body contours.

Body contouring not only enhances the tone of underlying tissues but also addresses cellulite, providing a smoother and more even skin appearance. It effectively targets areas prone to sagging or drooping, ultimately contributing to a more sculpted and youthful physique.

TYPES OF BODY CONTOURING:

SmartLipo:

Utilizing advanced laser technology, SmartLipo targets and eliminates stubborn fat deposits with precision, promoting a more contoured appearance.

Zwave Cellulite Treatment:

This innovative treatment tackles cellulite, reducing its appearance and leaving the skin smoother and more toned.

Sculptra:

A non-surgical option, Sculptra stimulates collagen production, helping to restore volume and improve skin texture over time.

CoolSculpting:

FDA-cleared for various body areas, CoolSculpting offers a non-invasive approach to fat reduction, allowing for targeted treatment without surgery.

Evolve Body Contouring:

A comprehensive body contouring solution, Evolve combines different technologies to sculpt and tighten the body.

Breast Augmentation:

For those seeking enhancement in the chest area, Dr. Garramone specializes in breast augmentation procedures.



Crafting Your Custom Treatment Plan:

During your consultation with Dr. Garramone, we will discuss your specific concerns, goals, and desired outcomes. Depending on your individual needs, a tailored treatment plan may include one or more of the mentioned procedures. While some cases may require a single session, multiple sessions could be recommended based on factors such as overall health, procedure types, and desired outcomes.

Dr. Garramone will guide you through every aspect of your treatment plan, ensuring that you are fully informed and comfortable at each step of the process.

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ALIGNMENT MATTERS: JOINTS DESERVE TO BE HAPPY

By Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

A Life with Joint Pain

As the pain pandemic continues more joints everywhere are losing their mojo. Over 500 million people are impacted by osteoarthritis (OA) worldwide. Joint pain changes the way people feel and act. Luckily there is plenty of support outside of medication.

Sometimes the thought of exercising while in pain seems counterproductive. However, "exercise plays the most important role as the first line of treatment for OA, (Professor Helen French, *Inflammation Nation*, S3 E2)" The widespread saying, "motion is lotion" is a mantra to be shared amongst everyone, especially those with joint pain. Exercise has proven to be just as effective as over-the-counter pain relievers and has a more positive long-term impact.

Consider the relationship between posture and OA. Both significantly impact the other. "Joint misalignment due to arthritis frequently coincides with muscle imbalance creating additional stress on involved joints," explains occupational therapist Carole Dodge. Luckily with proper movement training programs muscular imbalances are quickly improved.

From the other end, physical therapist Dr. Kelly Ruther states, "Your arthritis isn't what is causing your pain. Your body's misalignment, and muscular imbalance resulting in joint compression is. Just because you have arthritis doesn't mean you have to live with discomfort. If we can reduce compression in your joint by improving your body's alignment and muscular balance we can reduce inflammation, and ultimately reduce pain!"

Pilates for OA

Enter the power of Pilates. Pilates is more than a method for joint pain, it is a lifestyle capable of reducing chronic pain and inflammation starting with alignment, breathing and core stability. This trio weaves a supportive path for the joints.

Easy as A, B, C

• **Alignment:** In the Pilates method there is a primary focus to harmonize muscles through postural stretches and resistance training. Every exercise begins, ends, and is performed with corrective alignment to balance the muscles groups. As the muscles begin to balance, joint compression naturally decreases and joints can begin to move more freely.

• **Breathing:** Breathwork not only facilitates better posture and stability but it can also decrease inflammation. Studies have shown that breathwork combined with a deepening of mind-body training will significantly lower inflammation (Dr. Will Cole, *How Breathwork can Help Heal Trauma & Reduce Physical Inflammation*, 2017). The guided breathwork performed in Pilates aims to connect awareness within the body to every movement.

• **Core:** The Pilates method demonstrates how stability begins with a resilient core. Meaning Pilates goes beyond improving core strength to train the core in dynamic and functional movements. Directly this reduces load on the spine and hips. A great Pilates session includes functional core challenges like rotation and lateral training.

Support that Brings Joy to Joints

Pilates goes a step further than being nurturing joints. Pilates uses equipment to support the body's optimal movement pattern. This allows play back into movement and a chance to move like care-free kids.

Reformer - An entire warmup is masterly crafted to the lower body called footwork. Footwork on the reformer focuses on ankle, knee, and hip alignment while using resistance in a reclined position. This gently facilitates movement into the most weathered knees.

Chair - The Pilates chair is an ideal apparatus to remove load and play with rotation and side bending. The resistance springs designed within the chair provide feedback to integrate the shoulder girdle to the ribcage and spine. All of this is performed with care to even non-loading joints like the hands.

BOSU - This unstable small piece of equipment provides the additional challenge of training balance. Moves like 'cat' and 'bird dog' are amazing on the BOSU because it provides reactive control which subconsciously contracts the core while stretching the spine and gently challenging balance.

Joints Deserve Happiness Too

Pilates is thoughtfully crafted to keep joints from aches and inflammation. While exercise is the first line of defense for osteoarthritis, Pilates is the game changer that joints deserve. Joints need the Pilates method to stay happy and healthy while Pilates can shine through thoughtful and fun movement. This harmonious relationship even makes the most successful dating algorithms jealous.



PILATES INSTRUCTORS ARE SUPERHEROES

In the Pilates instructor's hands, bodies are taken apart, rebuilt and strung together in ways designed to pluck just the right heartstring. Pilates instructors deliver compassion, happiness and just the right joke when you really need a laugh. Pilates instructors have a solid grasp on language and with just a few well placed cues can transform everyday movement into meaningful movement that can affect a person's life forever.

We do more than just Pilates Teacher Training. We prepare you for a meaningful and successful career with our Master Pilates Educator and apprenticeship program.



Shannon is a Master Pilates Educator with 4 growing local Club Pilates studios. As a career Pilates instructor and functional movement specialist, Shannon has mastered the science and art of her craft. She shares her knowledge by certifying aspiring Pilates instructors. Shannon's unique approach for developing an apprenticeship has grown into a recent launch for Southwest Florida Pilates Academy. Learn more at (786) 708-7601.

In her spare time Shannon has taken a love for playing Pickleball. Combining her Pilates wisdom with Pickleball training Shannon teaches Pilates for Pickleball. Currently you can find her Pilates for Pickleballs tips with Into Pickleball Online Magazine and pilates-pickleball.com.



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UNDERSTANDING THE LINK BETWEEN STROKE AWARENESS, CAROTID ARTERY DISEASE, AND CAROTID ENDARTERECTOMY

In the realm of vascular health, stroke awareness plays a crucial role in preventing and managing one of the leading causes of disability and death globally. Among the various risk factors associated with stroke, carotid artery disease stands out as a significant contributor. Please continue reading to learn more about the intricate relationship between stroke awareness, carotid artery disease, and the surgical intervention known as carotid endarterectomy.

The Importance of Stroke Awareness

Stroke occurs when blood flow to a part of the brain is interrupted or reduced, depriving brain tissue of oxygen and nutrients. This interruption can lead to permanent brain damage or death if not promptly addressed. Recognizing the signs and symptoms of a stroke is critical for timely intervention and improved outcomes.

The acronym FAST (Facial drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulties, Time to call emergency services) serves as a simple yet effective tool for identifying stroke symptoms. Awareness campaigns emphasizing the importance of FAST have helped educate the public, leading to faster recognition of stroke symptoms and reduced time to treatment.

Understanding Carotid Artery Disease

Carotid artery disease occurs when the major arteries in the neck, called the carotid arteries, become narrowed or blocked by a buildup of fatty deposits known as plaque. This narrowing restricts blood flow to the brain, increasing the risk of stroke. While carotid artery disease often develops gradually over time, it can also result from a sudden rupture of plaque, leading to an acute stroke.

Several risk factors contribute to the development of carotid artery disease, including smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and a sedentary lifestyle. Early detection and management of these risk factors are essential for preventing or slowing the progression of the disease.

The Role of Carotid Endarterectomy

Carotid endarterectomy is a surgical procedure designed to remove plaque buildup from the carotid arteries, restoring proper blood flow to the brain and

reducing the risk of stroke. During the procedure, the surgeon makes an incision in the neck, opens the affected artery, and removes the plaque. In some cases, a stent may be inserted to help keep the artery open.

Carotid endarterectomy is typically recommended for individuals with significant carotid artery narrowing who have experienced symptoms such as transient ischemic attacks (TIAs) or minor strokes. However, the decision to undergo surgery depends on various factors, including the individual's overall health and the severity of the blockage.

Advancements in Treatment and Prevention

In addition to carotid endarterectomy, other treatment options are available for managing carotid artery disease, including medications to lower cholesterol and blood pressure, lifestyle modifications such as diet and exercise, and minimally invasive procedures such as Transcarotid Artery Revascularization.

Transcarotid Artery Revascularization (TCAR) is an innovative minimally invasive procedure designed to treat carotid artery disease. During TCAR, a small incision is made in the neck, and a special stent is inserted directly into the carotid artery. Blood flow is temporarily reversed, diverting it away from the brain to a filter to capture any potential debris. This protects the brain while a stent is placed to widen the narrowed artery and restore normal blood flow. TCAR offers a less invasive option compared to traditional surgery, reducing the risk of complications such as stroke, heart attack, and nerve damage, and typically allows for a quicker recovery.

Promoting Awareness and Education

Raising awareness about stroke risk factors, including carotid artery disease, is crucial for empowering individuals to take proactive steps towards prevention and early intervention. Public health campaigns, community outreach programs, and educational initiatives play a vital role in disseminating information about stroke prevention, recognition, and treatment options.

Furthermore, healthcare professionals play a pivotal role in educating patients about their individual risk

factors and guiding them towards appropriate interventions. By promoting a collaborative approach to stroke care, healthcare providers can help reduce the incidence and impact of stroke on individuals and communities.

Stroke awareness, particularly concerning the link between carotid artery disease and stroke risk, is essential for promoting early detection and intervention. By understanding the signs and symptoms of stroke, as well as the risk factors associated with carotid artery disease, individuals can take proactive steps towards maintaining cardiovascular health. Additionally, advancements in treatment options, including TCAR, offer hope for improved outcomes and quality of life for those at risk of stroke. Through continued efforts in education, prevention, and research, we can strive towards a future where stroke incidence is minimized, and the devastating consequences of this condition are mitigated.

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

We focus on diseases of the vascular system that can range from harmless but unattractive spider veins to dangerous conditions such as peripheral artery disease. Our caring and dedicated team will help you identify problems and offer the best treatment options for you.

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NURTURING YOUR EYESIGHT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MAY AS HEALTHY VISION MONTH

Every May, the United States observes Healthy Vision Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of maintaining good eye health. With the prevalence of eye conditions and vision problems on the rise, this annual campaign serves as a reminder for individuals to prioritize their eyesight and take proactive steps towards preserving it. From regular eye exams to lifestyle adjustments, here's why May is a crucial month for nurturing your vision.



The Importance of Healthy Vision

Our eyes play a fundamental role in how we experience the world around us. From appreciating breathtaking landscapes to connecting with loved ones through eye contact, vision is integral to our daily lives. However, many individuals overlook the significance of eye health until they encounter issues or discomfort.

Preventative Care Through Regular Eye Exams

One of the most effective ways to maintain healthy vision is through regular eye examinations. These comprehensive assessments not only evaluate visual acuity but also screen for potential eye diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, and macular degeneration. Detecting these conditions early can significantly improve treatment outcomes and preserve vision.

Understanding Vision Risks

Certain factors can increase the risk of developing vision problems, including age, family history, and lifestyle choices. Older adults are particularly susceptible to age-related eye diseases, highlighting the importance of regular screenings as individuals grow older. Additionally, habits such as smoking, excessive screen time, and poor nutrition can contribute to vision decline over time.

Promoting Eye-Friendly Lifestyles

Healthy Vision Month encourages individuals to adopt habits that support optimal eye health. This includes maintaining a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids, which can benefit both overall health and eye function. Furthermore, practicing good eye hygiene, such as taking breaks from digital devices and protecting eyes from harmful UV rays, can help reduce strain and prevent damage.

Empowering Individuals Through Education

Education plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their eye health. Through community outreach programs, informational resources, and public campaigns, Healthy Vision Month raises awareness about common eye conditions, risk factors, and available treatments. By equipping people with knowledge, they can take proactive steps towards preserving their vision and seeking timely care when needed.

Advancements in Eye Care Technology

Advances in technology continue to revolutionize the field of eye care, offering innovative solutions for diagnosing and treating various eye conditions. From sophisticated imaging techniques to minimally invasive surgical procedures, these advancements enhance the accuracy, safety, and effectiveness of eye care interventions. Healthy Vision Month serves as an opportunity to celebrate these breakthroughs while encouraging individuals to leverage them for their benefit.

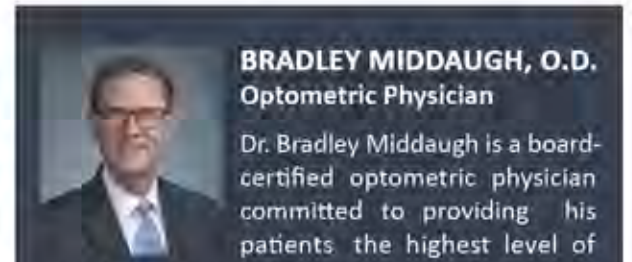
Addressing Disparities in Eye Health

Despite the progress made in eye care, disparities in access to services and treatment persist, particularly among underserved communities. Healthy Vision Month advocates for equitable access to eye care services, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to receive timely screenings, treatment, and vision correction. By addressing these disparities, we can work towards a future where eye health is a priority for all.

Taking Action for Healthy Vision

As Healthy Vision Month unfolds, individuals are encouraged to take proactive steps towards safeguarding their eyesight. Whether it's scheduling a comprehensive eye exam, adopting healthier lifestyle habits, or spreading awareness within their communities, every action contributes to the collective effort of preserving vision for generations to come.

May serves as a reminder of the importance of healthy vision and the proactive steps individuals can take to maintain it. By prioritizing regular eye care, adopting eye-friendly lifestyles, and advocating for equitable access to services, we can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a lifetime of clear, vibrant vision. As we celebrate Healthy Vision Month, let us commit to nurturing our eyesight and embracing a future where healthy vision is within reach for all.



BRADLEY MIDDAGH, O.D.
Optometric Physician

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

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

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

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

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SKIN CANCER ON THE FEET

By Dr. Lori DeBlasi

Skin cancer can develop anywhere on the body, including the ankles and feet. Most skin cancers are painless. Often, there is a history of recurrent cracking, bleeding, or ulceration. On the parts of the body that receive the most sun exposure, the ultraviolet radiation from the sun is the primary cause of skin cancer. Chronic, long-term sun exposure results in genetic changes in skin cells.

Skin cancers of the feet, however, are more often related to viruses, exposure to chemicals (arsenic, industrial tar, coal, paraffin, and certain types of oil), chronic inflammation/irritation and inherited traits.

Unfortunately, the skin of the feet is often overlooked during routine medical examinations, and for this reason, it is important that the feet are checked regularly for abnormalities that might indicate evolving skin cancer.

TYPES AND SYMPTOMS:

Basal Cell Carcinoma: Basal cell carcinoma is considered to be one of the least aggressive cancers. It is frequently seen on sun-exposed skin surfaces. It does not occur often on the feet since your feet get less exposure to the sun. However, living in Southwest Florida, feet are exposed to the sun more since we are at the beach or wearing sandals/flipflops more regularly than other parts of the US. When they do occur on the feet, they resemble non-cancerous growths. They will look like pearly white bumps or patches of bumps. They can ooze or crust over like an open sore.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma: Squamous cell carcinoma is the most common form of cancer on the skin of the feet. Most early types of squamous cell carcinoma stay in the skin and do not spread. When squamous cell cancer gets more advanced, it can become more aggressive and spread throughout the body. On the feet, squamous cell cancer may look like a scaly bump or plaque. A skin plaque is an elevated, solid, superficial lesion that is typically more than 1 centimeter in diameter. It may look a lot like a plantar wart, a fungal infection, callus, eczema, an ulcer, or other common skin conditions of the foot. Sometimes it can crack and bleed. It is usually painless but may be itchy.

Actinic keratosis (also known as solar keratosis or senile keratosis) is a pre-cancerous lesion. These lesions can lead to in situ squamous cell carcinoma or invasive squamous cell carcinoma. Actinic keratosis appears as rough, sandpaper-like, inconspicuous spots. Often, they are recognized by touch rather than sight if they are small. They are flat or slightly raised. Their color ranges from tan, pink or flesh toned. The spots then develop into scaly plaques with a base that has a distinctive reddish color.

Malignant Melanoma: Melanoma is a form of skin cancer that begins in the melanocytes, skin cells that

control the pigment in your skin. It is one of the deadliest skin cancers because of its ability to grow into the deeper layers of the skin. By growing down into the skin, it can reach the blood vessels or lymph system allowing it to spread to other body organs. People of all races and colors get melanoma on their feet. The same number of African Americans and Caucasians develop melanoma on a foot. For people of African or Asian ethnicity, the feet and hands are the most common places for melanoma to appear.

It is extremely important to recognize melanoma early to ensure patient survival. Melanomas may occur on the skin on both the top and bottoms of the feet. Occasionally, melanoma may appear beneath a toenail. Under the nail it can begin as a dark vertical line or lines underneath a nail.

Melanomas may resemble benign moles, blood blisters, ingrown nails, plantar warts, ulcers caused by poor circulation, foreign bodies, or bruises.

Learn the ABCDE's of melanoma. If you notice a mole, bump, or patch on the skin that meets any of the following criteria, see a podiatrist or dermatologist:

- **Asymmetry** - If the lesion is divided in half, the sides don't match.
- **Borders** - Borders look scalloped, uneven, or ragged.
- **Color** - There may be more than one color. These colors may have an uneven distribution.
- **Diameter** - The lesion is wider than a pencil eraser (greater than 6 mm).
- **Evolution** - There is a change in the size, shape, symptoms (such as itching or tenderness), surface (especially bleeding), or color of a mole.

When this skin cancer develops on a foot, you may see the ABCDEs of melanoma, but it's also possible for a melanoma to have different features. Aside from looking like a changing mole, a melanoma on the foot can appear as a:

- Brown or black vertical line under a toenail
- Pinkish-red spot or growth
- New spot or growth where you injured your foot
- Rapidly growing mass on your foot, especially where you once injured your foot
- Non-healing sore on your foot (or a sore that heals and returns)
- Sore that looks like a diabetic ulcer

To detect other types of skin cancer, look for spontaneous ulcers and non-healing sores, bumps that crack or bleed, nodules with rolled or "donut-shaped" edges, or scaly areas.

When to Visit a Podiatrist

Podiatrists are uniquely trained as lower extremity specialists to recognize and treat abnormal conditions on the skin of the lower legs and feet. Skin cancers affecting the feet may have a very different appearance from those arising on the rest of the body. For this reason, a podiatrist's knowledge and clinical training is of extreme importance for patients for the early detection of both benign and malignant skin tumors.

Prevention

Prevention of skin cancer on the feet and ankles is similar to any other body part. Limit sun exposure, and make sure to apply appropriate sunscreen when you are outdoors, and your feet and ankles are exposed.

You can reduce your risk for this disease by:

- Inspecting your feet, toes and between the toes every day. Call us if you notice anything unusual. Know the warning signs of moles that may be cancerous: irregular borders, multi-colored, asymmetrical and diameter of larger than the end of a pencil eraser. Any mole on your foot that is changing—getting larger, crusting over or bleeding, etc. is cause for an examination
- Applying a water-resistant, broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF of at least 30 that protects against UVA and UVB rays when outdoors. Don't forget your feet and ankles. Reapply frequently, especially if you are sweating or swimming.
- Staying out of the sun when it is strongest, usually between 10 am and 4 pm. If you must be outside, keep feet covered or seek shade as much as possible.
- Wearing UV-absorbent sunglasses and a hat with a wide brim for more protection.
- Never use tanning beds! These increase your risk of melanoma dramatically.

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

Lori DeBlasi, DPM

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



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The Healing Power of Journaling: A Journey to Mental and Emotional Wellness

Fara Castillo, M.D.

In the hustle and bustle of everyday life, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, stressed, and disconnected from our inner selves. Amidst this chaos, finding a sanctuary for our thoughts and emotions becomes crucial for maintaining overall well-being. Enter journaling – a simple yet profoundly effective tool that offers many health benefits for the mind, body, and soul.

Mental Clarity and Emotional Release - Journaling serves as a safe space where you can pour out your thoughts, fears, dreams, and frustrations without fear of judgment or repercussion. Putting pen to paper allows you to untangle the web of thoughts swirling in your mind, bringing clarity to your emotions and experiences. By externalizing your internal dialogue, you gain perspective and insight into your own thought patterns and behaviors, empowering you to make positive changes in your life.

Journaling also acts as a form of emotional release, providing an outlet for pent-up feelings and stress. Research has shown that expressing emotions through writing can reduce symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), promoting emotional healing and resilience.

Stress Reduction and Improved Mental Health - In today's fast-paced world, chronic stress has become a pervasive problem that can wreak havoc on our mental and physical health. However, studies have demonstrated that regular journaling can significantly reduce stress levels by lowering cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone.

Furthermore, journaling has been linked to improved mood, self-esteem, and overall mental well-being. By acknowledging and processing your thoughts and feelings on paper, you cultivate greater self-awareness and self-compassion, fostering a sense of acceptance and inner peace.

Enhanced Creativity and Problem-Solving Skills - Journaling isn't just about introspection and self-reflection – it's also a powerful tool for stimulating creativity and innovation. Through free-flowing writing, you unleash your imagination



and tap into your subconscious mind, unlocking new ideas, insights, and perspectives. Whether you're grappling with a creative block or seeking solutions to life's challenges, journaling can serve as a gateway to inspiration and breakthroughs.

Cultivation of Mindfulness and Gratitude - In a world inundated with distractions and obligations, practicing mindfulness and gratitude has become essential for nurturing a sense of inner peace and contentment. Journaling offers a sacred space to cultivate mindfulness by anchoring your awareness in the present moment. Whether you're jotting down sensory observations, recording gratitude lists, or practicing mindful breathing exercises, journaling can deepen your connection to the here and now, fostering a greater sense of serenity and gratitude.

The health benefits of journaling extend far beyond mere pen and paper – it's a transformative journey of self-discovery, healing, and growth.

Feeling overwhelmed or struggling to cope? You don't have to face it alone. Take the first step towards better mental health by scheduling an appointment with a VIPcare primary care provider today. Call 239-747-7202.



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MAY IS SKIN CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Remember the most effective way to prevent the development of skin cancer is through an early examination by your Dermatologist.

Did you know that skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in both men and women in the U.S.?

With an estimated 5 million new skin cancer cases diagnosed annually it far exceeds the total combined number of diagnoses of breast, prostate, lung and colon cancer. In fact, 1 in 5 Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70. On average, one American dies every hour from skin cancer.

However, when caught early, skin cancer is highly treatable. Even melanoma, which is the most fatal form of skin cancer, has a cure rate of almost 100% when treated early.

7 Things You Need To Know About Skin Cancer

1. Sun Exposure increases the risk of skin cancer

Many people consider continuous sun exposure to be harmless because they believe the worst thing that can happen to them is sunburn, which heals after a couple of days. However, what most people don't realize is that ultraviolet radiation (UV rays) from the sun adversely alters their skin cells and greatly increases the risk of cancer in the long run. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) recommends wearing protective clothing in the sun and using a sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.

2. Using sunscreen is not enough

Although applying sunscreen to your skin minimizes the negative effects of the sun, habitually using it doesn't guarantee you won't develop skin cancer. In fact, the sun is only one of the factors associated with developing skin cancer. In addition to UV rays, toxins, cigarettes and a poor diet could also contribute to the development of skin cancer.

3. Any mole can become malignant

Most cases of skin cancer can develop from a spot that begins to grow abnormally. However, in other cases it may arise from a preexisting mole that was invaded by malignant cells. This variety of moles known as melanomas is relatively uncommon but is the most aggressive.

4. Tanning booths can be dangerous

Continuously using tanning booths is a risk factor that should not be ignored. Although it seems like a good alternative to sun exposure the truth is tanning machines also emit some degree of ultraviolet radiation, which can be dangerous. Indoor tanners are 74 percent more likely to develop melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, than those who have never tanned indoors. In fact, more people develop skin cancer because of indoor tanning than develop lung cancer because of smoking. Researchers estimate that indoor tanning may cause upwards of 400,000 new cases of skin cancer in the U.S. each year.

5. An infection can cause skin cancer

Other possible causes of skin cancer are chronic injuries and swelling that occur from severe burns and infections. If the skin that protects the inner part of the body has a serious condition, the risk of developing malignant cells increases significantly.

6. Perform a skin self-exam for early detection

A skin self-exam can help you find skin cancer early when it is most treatable. Examine your body (front and back) in front of a mirror, looking at your elbows, forearms and the back of your upper arms. Closely check your feet, the spaces between your toes and your soles. Lastly, with a hand mirror scan your back, the back of your neck and your buttocks.

7. The "ABCDE" rule to identify skin cancer

The sudden appearance of brown spots on the skin and abnormalities in moles are the most obvious sign of possible skin cancer. However, there's a method that can help you discern whether the moles or spots that appear on your skin are a cause for cancer.



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How To Prepare for Hurricane Season in Florida: A Checklist for Seniors

As the warmer months usher in summer, they also bring the onset of hurricane season.

At The Terraces at Bonita Springs, you can enjoy the changing seasons with a sense of calm, knowing our community is 16 feet above sea level and designed to withstand even the strongest storms. While we take care of home maintenance and many other safety precautions, we understand the importance of individual preparedness.

This checklist for how to prepare for hurricane season in Florida is tailored specifically for seniors. By creating a personalized plan, you'll feel more confident and secure – not only this hurricane season, but in the years to come as well.

1. Water and Nonperishable Food

Ensure an adequate supply of water for drinking and hygiene purposes. Lightly stock up on canned goods, dry foods, and snacks that don't require refrigeration or cooking. Store items that are easy to open and have a long shelf life.

2. Medications

Try to maintain a two-week supply of all medications, including refills well in advance. Keep them in their original containers for proper labeling, and store them in a cool, dry place. Create a medication list for your emergency kit, and make sure to share it with loved ones.

3. Flashlight and Batteries

Have a reliable flashlight (or two) with extra batteries readily available. This will be essential in case of power outages during the storm.

4. First Aid Kit

Make a basic first aid kit, including bandages, anti-septic wipes, pain relievers, and any necessary medical supplies.

5. Important Documents

Keep important documents in a waterproof container or sealed plastic bag. This includes identification papers, insurance policies, medical records, and any other essential documents.

6. Emergency Contacts

Compile a list of emergency contacts, including family members, friends, neighbors, and local authorities. Make sure this contact list is easily accessible, whether it's stored in a phone, written, or both.



7. Stay Informed

Stay up to date with the weather and evacuation orders by tuning in to local news channels, signing up for weather alerts on your smartphone, and/or investing in a weather radio.

8. Family Check-Ins

Establish a plan for regular check-ins with family members or friends before, during and after the storm. This will provide reassurance to your loved ones and ensure that everyone is accounted for.

9. Emergency Alerts

Enable emergency alerts on smartphones to receive notifications from local authorities about evacuation orders, severe weather warnings, and other critical information.

10. Neighborhood Network

Build a support network within the community. Connect with neighbors or join community groups to share information, resources and support during emergencies.

11. Know Your Evacuation Zone

Determine if you live in an evacuation zone, and familiarize yourself with the designated evacuation routes. You can find this information from local authorities or through online resources provided by emergency management agencies.

12. Identify Shelter Options

For those who aren't residents of The Terraces at Bonita Springs, research nearby shelters that accommodate seniors or individuals with special needs. These shelters may offer medical assistance, mobility aids, and other essential services during emergencies.



DISCOVER PEACE OF MIND AND MORE AT THE TERRACES AT BONITA SPRINGS

Hurricanes can be stressful, but at The Terraces at Bonita Springs, we prioritize the well-being of our residents throughout every season. Our commitment to preparedness goes beyond plans – it's woven into the very fabric of our community.

We invite you to experience the peace of mind and sense of belonging that come with being part of our exceptional community. Contact our team online or call 239-204-3469 to learn more about how The Terraces at Bonita Springs can become your haven during any storm, and every day.

JOIN US FOR OUR NEXT EVENT!

**BEST LAID PLANS:
AN OLD HOLLYWOOD WHODUNIT
Wednesday, May 8 | 3 p.m.**

Join us for an afternoon filled with secrets, scandals, and surprises as you become part of a thrilling and fun whodunit experience. Gather clues, interrogate suspects, and unravel the enigma surrounding the untimely demise of our esteemed guests. But beware, danger lurks in every shadow, and trust is a luxury few can afford. Dress to impress, and prepare for an event of high stakes, hidden agendas, and interesting intrigue at The Terraces, a luxury Life Plan Community with a Type A LifeCare contract.

Space is limited. Valet parking will be available.
Please RSVP by Wednesday, May 1.

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
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13. Transportation Arrangements

Plan transportation options with family members, friends, or local authorities for evacuation assistance, especially if you don't have access to personal vehicles.

14. Pack an Evacuation Kit

Prepare an evacuation kit with items such as medications, medical supplies, personal hygiene items, a change of clothes, important documents, and any necessary mobility aids.

15. Communicate Your Plan

Share your evacuation plan with family members, caregivers and neighbors. Make sure everyone knows the plan and understands their roles and responsibilities in case of evacuation.

16. Pet Preparedness

Include them in your evacuation plan by researching pet-friendly shelters or making arrangements with loved ones. Prepare a separate kit with food, water, medications, leashes, and familiar items to keep them comfortable. Ensure their microchip information is current and consider desensitizing them to storm sounds beforehand.

17. Communicate With Health Care Providers

Maintain open communication with health care providers to ensure continuity of care during emergencies. Discuss emergency plans, medication management strategies, and any specific health concerns or needs.

18. Backup Power

If you rely on medical equipment or assistive devices that require electricity, consider investing in a backup power source such as a generator or portable power bank. Ensure that these devices are fully charged and easily accessible during power outages.

19. Emergency Identification

Wear medical identification bracelets or carry emergency medical information cards that clearly state any medical conditions, allergies, or special needs. This information can be crucial for first responders in case of emergencies.

20. Stay Indoors

During the storm, remain indoors and away from windows to avoid injury from flying debris or shattered glass. Seek shelter in an interior room or designated safe area within your residence.

21. Avoid Flooded Areas

Stay away from flooded streets. Water levels can rise rapidly and pose a significant danger, especially to pedestrians and drivers. Follow evacuation orders issued by local authorities and seek higher ground if flooding occurs.

22. Prevent Electrical Hazards

Minimize the risk of electrical hazards by unplugging electronic devices and appliances during power outages. Avoid using candles for lighting and opt for battery-powered flashlights or lanterns instead.

23. Emergency Response Teams

Store local emergency response team contact information in an easy-to-find place. These teams, including firefighters, paramedics, and search and rescue teams, play a crucial role in providing assistance and support during hurricanes and other disasters.

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MEMORY MATTERS

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

Over the past seven years I have had the privilege of working with individuals living with dementia and their care partners. Having the opportunity to provide education and support to many in southwest Florida has been a rewarding and valuable part of my career. When I became a nurse in the 1980s, we did not know much of what we do today. Back then, the terms we used were “hardening of the arteries, senility, or organic brain syndrome.” Things have come a very long way since that time, not only with updated approaches to interact with those living with dementia, but also the ability to identify the different types of dementia through more sophisticated diagnostic approaches.

One thing that has not changed that much are the challenges that can come along with being the care partner, friend or relative of someone living with dementia. In any situation, being a caregiver may bring additional stress. According to the Alzheimer’s Association, caregivers frequently report experiencing high levels of stress. In addition to the feelings of stress, caregivers can be at higher risk for health problems. Caregivers also report decreased participation in preventive health behaviors, and a greater likelihood of smoking, drinking and poor sleeping patterns.

Some of the challenges caregivers experience may result from behavior that is unusual for their loved one. Not only is it not typical, trying to respond effectively can be frustrating for the caregiver. As the disease progresses, changes in one’s ability to communicate, reason, and understand logical explanations is impacted. Here are some examples that may be familiar.

“My husband, Alan, keeps saying he sees his sister and that she is talking to him. He even says he smells her perfume, but she has been dead for 3 years. He insists that it’s real even when I tell him it’s not possible. The other night he said there were ants crawling on him, but I checked and there was nothing there. He just won’t listen to me!”

In this situation, Alan is experiencing hallucinations. These hallucinations are very real to the person experiencing them, and insisting that the hallucinations aren’t real is an approach that will likely not be successful.

Here is another example:

“My mother, Ruth, accuses me of stealing her purse all the time. She also said I wasn’t really her daughter because her daughter is not a thief. I can’t convince her that this is not true, no matter how many times I tell her. And last week she said that the president was in her house, and she talked with him about her moving to Washington, DC. That is just ridiculous. I keep telling her it’s all in her head and just keeps calling me a thief. Where does she get these ideas?”

Ruth is experiencing paranoia and delusions. Trying to convince her that what she is saying and experiencing is not real will not be helpful.

Here is another situation:

“My wife, Juanita will not sit still. I look up and she is pacing in the kitchen and she always seems to be mad at me. She used to be so sweet and agreeable and now she is annoyed all the time. She won’t take her medication even though I explain to her that she has to take it. She snaps at me if I try to help her with anything, and last week she actually screamed at me and called me names. She got so mad at me that she hit me with her purse. I just can’t seem to get her to relax.”

Juanita is experiencing anxiety, agitation and some aggression. Trying to correct her may cause her to be even more upset. As in the other scenarios, using logic to explain the reasons she needs her medication may not work.

If using a logical explanation is not effective, where can you find tips that may work? The Alzheimer’s Association has some excellent recommendations and approaches for caregivers when dealing with some of these situations. Learning new techniques for interacting with those living with Alzheimer’s and other dementias can help in the caregiving journey. Here is a direct link to the information <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/stages-behaviors>. Or contact the Alzheimer’s Association’s 24/7 free helpline at 800-272-3900.

References:
The Alzheimer’s Association: <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/stages-behaviors>



If you are caring for someone or know of someone who may have some of these issues, it is time to get checked out. Talk to your primary care practitioner. Contact us at NPRC 239-939-7777 to see if there are any current or upcoming studies available. If you haven’t had a baseline memory screen, please schedule one at NPRC.

We are having a two day event on Monday, May 20th and Tuesday, May 21st. The memory screens are free, you do not need insurance, so contact us today at 239-939-7777 to schedule your screening, Memories matter!



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14271 Metropolis Avenue., Fort Myers, FL

Overactive Bladder

By Alejandro Miranda-Sousa, M.D.

The bladder's function is to collect urine from the kidneys and expels it when it is full. It acts much like a reservoir for urine. Overactive bladder is characterized by a group of four symptoms: urgency, urinary frequency, nocturia, and urge incontinence. When the bladder is overactive, urgency to empty the bladder may feel overwhelming and more frequent. Most of the time, a person cannot control the strong desire to urinate and the number of times they feel like they must empty their bladder during the day increases. The desire can be so intense, there's not much time to get to the bathroom and urine may leak out uncontrollably. The condition is usually the result of miscommunication between the brain and the bladder. The person's bladder squeezes frequently or without warning and the brain signals to the bladder that it is time to squeeze and empty, but the bladder isn't full. As a result, the bladder starts to contract. This causes a strong urge to urinate.

Some risk factors for overactive bladder include obesity, caffeine, and constipation. Poorly controlled diabetes, poor functional mobility, and chronic pelvic pain may worsen the symptoms. This condition is more common in women, especially when associated with loss of bladder control but it can also occur in men.

The cause of overactive bladder (OAB) is unclear, and multiple causes are associated with this condition. It is often associated with overactivity of the detrusor muscle. It is also possible that the increased contractile nature originates from within the urothelium (the lining of the bladder wall) and lamina propria (also part of the lining) and abnormal contractions in this tissue. Overactive bladder can be categorized into two different variants: "wet" (i.e., an urgent need to urinate with involuntary leakage) or "dry" (i.e., an urgent need to urinate but no involuntary leakage). Wet OAB is more common than dry.

The diagnosis of OAB can be made clinically with a full history from the patient, a bladder voiding diary and urodynamics. Cystoscopy can also aid in the diagnosis to rule out other abnormalities of the



bladder. Additionally, a urine culture may be done to rule out infection which can sometime mimic or increase symptoms of OAB.

Treatment for OAB can start with lifestyle modifications such as fluid restriction, avoidance of caffeine and other bladder irritants, and pelvic floor muscle exercise and physical therapy. Biofeedback is used to reduce the frequency of accidents resulting from poor bladder control. This method is aimed at improving the person's control over the time, place and frequency of urination.

Several anticholinergic medications are frequently used to treat overactive bladder. β_3 adrenergic receptor agonists (e.g., mirabegron), may be used, as well. Within the appropriate setting, both anticholinergic drugs and β_3 adrenergic receptor agonists may be used in combination to improve symptoms of OAB. PTNS (peripheral tibial nerve stimulation), Interstim (sacral nerve stimulation) and Botox (Botulinum toxin A) are also treatment options done when lifestyle modification and oral medication have failed.

Living with OAB can be difficult. For this condition, you're likely to start by seeing your primary doctor. After your initial appointment, you may be referred to a Urologist. Some things to keep in mind prior to seeing and during your urological evaluation is: keeping a bladder diary for a few days,

days, recording when, how much and what kind of fluids you consume. Tell your doctor how long you've had your symptoms and how they affect your day-to-day activities. Note any other symptoms you're experiencing, particularly those related to your bowel function. Let your doctor know if you have diabetes, have a neurological disease, or have had pelvic surgery or radiation treatments. Make a list of all the medications, vitamins or supplements you take. With appropriate diagnosis and treatment, OAB is a common condition that can be mitigated by various options. Every patient's clinical course may be different. Overactive bladder is a common condition but luckily, there are several ways to improve the symptoms for better quality of life.



Alejandro Miranda-Sousa, MD

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Connecting SWFL to Support Older Adults

FGCU's Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging aims to transform opportunities for living well while living long

The Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging is a regional hub to connect Florida Gulf Coast University with community organizations supporting the older adult community in Southwest Florida.

Faculty, staff and students from FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services and from across the university's academic disciplines pursue this mission through education, service, research and advocacy.

"This is going to be transformative for Southwest Florida," says Shawn Felton, dean of Marieb College. "The region has a vast need to enhance services for older adults. FGCU is committed to providing educational services and research for older adults. We are confident this institute will become the hub to connect seniors to all the services they need."

What is positive aging?

Positive aging is about a positive view of aging as a healthy, normal part of life.

A Yale University study looked at the long-term health consequences of ageism on seniors. Researchers determined that age discrimination has the potential power to shorten seniors' lives. Among the study group, seniors with more positive views about aging lived 7.5 years longer than people who perceived aging negatively.

Additional studies indicated that positive thinking could result in an 11-15% longer life span and can increase the likelihood of living to age 85 or beyond.

Investing in eldercare

A group long known for working with older adults made a significant investment in launching this institute. The Shady Rest Foundation, a name synonymous with eldercare in Lee County, pledged \$5 million to Marieb College to aid in the institute's creation and operation. The foundation previously gave \$4.1 million for scholarships to Marieb College undergraduate and graduate students who plan to pursue healthcare careers involving older adults.



Thomas Felke, associate dean of Marieb College and the institute's executive director, says while it won't be a brick-and-mortar center at first, he expects its impact to be palpable.

"Something like this is needed here," he says. "We don't want it to be a place where people are coming to us. We want to be able to meet people where they are."

The longtime FGCU social work professor has been active in community efforts to improve the lives of older residents and individuals experiencing food insecurity and homelessness. Through his many community connections and previous research, he knows this about older people: "Despite being the largest segment of the population, they feel like a forgotten segment and have a hard time finding and accessing services."

An umbrella organization

The Shady Rest Institute will coordinate the many agencies offering help to older adults and aim to form a central clearinghouse through which people can locate and access services. It will also provide educational outreach for those working with older residents or who want to but need additional training; advocate for policies beneficial to this age group; and help develop an adequate workforce to provide services for the burgeoning 65+ population.

The last part is essential since it's expected that this population segment will increase more than 50% in Lee and Collier counties and 37% in Charlotte County by 2040.

Investigating issues critical to older adults

Felke says the institute will also do what FGCU researchers do best: community-impact research. He envisions it as a multidisciplinary entity, much like The Water School at FGCU, where researchers from various disciplines come together to address problems. This makes sense, he says, in a state that leads the nation in the share of people over 65.

He foresees involving Marieb College experts, such as social workers, occupational and physical therapists and nurses, as well as bringing in the college's Exercise is Medicine program. From the Lutgert College of Business, experts in wills, trusts and estate planning would be valuable. U.A. Whitaker College of Engineering experts could focus on home modifications and livable communities. From the College of Arts & Sciences, music therapy and art therapy could be included.

And that's just the beginning. Felke sees many possibilities for the institute, which he is approaching with this mantra: "Aging is not a disease; it is an opportunity."

Learn more

Explore FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services and the Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging at fgcu.edu/marieb.



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Gum Health Can Affect Your Risk of Stroke and Heart Attack

Gum health is very important not only for your teeth but also for the rest of your body.

Your gums should be pink and tight against the teeth. Signs of gum disease (Gingivitis) are bleeding, swollen gums, bad breath (halitosis), metallic taste receding gums and sensitive teeth. Bacteria left untreated settles around the gums and grows. The body reacts by bringing in cells to fight the foreign invader which causes a progression from Gingivitis to Periodontal Disease. The process of inflammation in the mouth over time can cause devastating affects on the teeth, leading to tooth loss. Periodontal Disease is the most common reason for tooth loss. Periodontal Disease is the 6th most common disease affecting the human population world wide.

The affects of the bacteria causing inflammation in the mouth can affect other areas of the body. The bacteria can travel through the bloodstream and settle in other areas of the body.

Research has shown that there is a correlation between gum disease and hardening of the arteries and severe blockage of the large arteries. Bacteria from the mouth has also been found in arteriosclerotic plaques. People with gum disease have two to three times the risk of having a heart attack, stroke, or other serious cardiovascular event.

The good news gum disease can be treated with proper professional treatment.

Gum disease, from the early stage of Gingivitis to disease progression, Periodontal Disease can be managed. Your dentist should be examining your gingival health at every dental visit to determine early signs of gum disease. Dental cleaning treatments can be a prophylaxis (health mouth cleaning), gingivitis prophylaxis (Gingivitis cleaning), scaling and root planing (active Periodontal Disease cleaning) or periodontal cleaning (Periodontal Disease maintenance cleaning). Periodontal Disease needs to be managed with more thorough and more frequent cleanings, every 3 months. This is due to the fact that once bacteria has settled under the gums it can recolonize every



three months. The proper dental cleaning can reduce the bacteria count, lower gingival inflammation and minimize gingival risk factors for heart attack and stroke.



**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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What You Should Know About Long-Term Care

By Carl Zacharia

Research shows that roughly 1 in 7 adults aged 65 or older will need long-term care at some point in their later years. Meanwhile, tens of millions of Baby Boomers in the United States are growing older and living longer. It seems inevitable, then, that the future of long-term care will be undergoing significant changes.

The challenges of providing quality care to an ever-larger senior population are numerous. Policy changes, investments in the health care workforce, technological advancements, and more may all be necessary. To ensure you have a plan in place for your care, it is more important than ever that you connect with an experienced elder law attorney sooner rather than later. Continue reading to understand why attorneys in this legal area are especially suited to assist you.

Challenges Facing Long-Term Care

- **Aging Population** – Projections show that, by 2050, the number of Americans aged 65 or older will reach 82 million.
- **Increasing Demand** – With a growing number of older adults, the need for more long-term care options is greater than ever.
- **Strained Workforce** – There is a shortage of health care workers, from caregivers to nurses and physicians, that may get worse still.
- **Cost** – Most long-term care options are expensive. For many seniors, Medicaid serves as the primary payer for long-term care.
- **Shift to Home-Based Care** – More older adults prefer to receive in home care which requires greater advancements in technology and telehealth to facilitate these kinds of care options.
- **Community-Based Services** – Services such as transportation assistance, meal delivery, and social engagement will all need to expand.
- **Policy and Regulatory Changes** – Lawmakers need to act on initiatives supporting long-term care reform including expanding insurance coverage options, increasing workforce training and support, and implementing quality standards.



• **Caregiver Support** – Recognition and support of family caregivers is essential, including providing resources, and financial assistance.

• **Declining Birth Rate** – Fewer younger people are entering the U.S. workforce and paying into the tax system.

5 Ways Zacharia Brown Elder Law Attorneys Can Help You Plan for Long-Term Care

Elder law attorneys understand the challenges of long-term care planning amidst the shifting care environment. Evaluating costs and developing strategies to pay for long-term care before you actually need it is crucial.

Some planning strategies that we can help with include:

1. Protecting Assets

To protect against long-term care costs depleting your assets, an elder law attorney can use various legal tools to help preserve your wealth. This may include creating trusts or transferring assets so that you can qualify for government assistance programs like Medicaid.

2. Executing Advance Financial and Health Care Directives

Long-term care often involves planning ahead for important health care and financial decisions, too. Your directives should include essential documents such as durable financial and health care powers of attorney and living will.

3. Securing Guardianship

When an individual can no longer make decisions for themselves, an elder law attorney can help initiate guardianship proceedings.

4. Securing Medicaid or Veterans Benefits

If your loved one requires long term care and/or you or a spouse is a military veteran, an experienced elder law attorney can help you to explore and access available benefits to assist with long-term care needs.

The experienced attorneys at Zacharia Brown understand Florida's specific laws and regulations and have the knowledge to provide you with personalized advice based on your unique circumstances.

Proper planning will protect your interests and the sooner you develop a comprehensive long-term care strategy, the better your chance of receiving quality care while protecting your assets.

MAY 2024 EVENTS

Tuesday - May 14 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Probate, Planning & Prosciutto
Gulf Coast Memory Care 22900 Lyden Drive,
Estero, FL, United States
Presenter: Ehren Frey, Esquire
RSVP: Kelsy@ZacBrownLaw.com

Wednesday - May 22 @ 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm
Resources to Protect Your Health & Wealth
AAASWFL 2830 Winkler Ave, Suite 112, Fort
Myers, FL, United States
Presenter: Ehren Frey, Esquire RSVP:
Kelsy@ZacBrownLaw.com

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Managing Arthritis Symptoms Through Diet, Exercise, and Innovative Therapies

Arthritis affects millions worldwide, causing joint pain, stiffness, and inflammation. While there is no cure for arthritis, adopting a holistic approach that includes dietary changes, exercise, and innovative therapies can help alleviate symptoms and improve overall quality of life. Explore evidence-based strategies for managing arthritis symptoms and the potential benefits of incorporating dietary modifications, hyperbaric oxygen treatments, and nutrient IV therapy, including MSM, DMSO, and specialty compounds with Root Causes.

Understanding Arthritis: Arthritis encompasses over 100 types of joint diseases, with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis being the most prevalent. Osteoarthritis, the most common form, occurs when the protective cartilage cushions the ends of bones and wears down over time. Rheumatoid arthritis, on the other hand, is an autoimmune disorder that causes the immune system to attack the joints, leading to inflammation and joint damage.

1. Importance of Diet in Arthritis Management: Diet plays a crucial role in managing arthritis symptoms and promoting joint health. Research suggests that certain foods can either exacerbate inflammation or help reduce it. For example, a study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that the Mediterranean diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats like olive oil, may help reduce inflammation and improve symptoms in individuals with rheumatoid arthritis. Conversely, processed foods, sugary beverages, and excessive consumption of red meat and saturated fats have been associated with increased inflammation and arthritis severity.

2. Exercise and Physical Activity: Regular exercise is essential for maintaining joint flexibility, strength, and range of motion in individuals with arthritis. Low-impact exercises such as swimming, cycling, and walking can help reduce joint pain and stiffness while improving overall physical function. According to the Arthritis Foundation, exercise can also help manage weight, reduce fatigue, and enhance mood, contributing to better arthritis management.



3. Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment (HBOT): Hyperbaric oxygen treatment (HBOT) involves breathing pure oxygen in a pressurized chamber, which increases oxygen delivery to tissues and promotes healing. Research suggests that HBOT may have anti-inflammatory effects and help alleviate symptoms in individuals with inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis.

4. Nutrient IV Therapy: Nutrient IV therapy involves administering intravenously vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients to promote overall health and well-being. In arthritis management, certain nutrients like MSM (Methylsulfonylmethane) and DMSO (Dimethyl sulfoxide) have shown promise in reducing inflammation and relieving joint pain. Additionally, specialty compounds like hyaluronic acid and glucosamine sulfate may help improve joint lubrication and cartilage health.

5. Combining Therapeutic Approaches: While each therapeutic approach offers unique benefits, combining dietary modifications, exercise, and innovative therapies can optimize arthritis management. A holistic approach that addresses inflammation, joint health, and overall well-being is key to improving symptoms and enhancing the quality of life for individuals with arthritis.

Arthritis is a chronic condition that requires comprehensive management to alleviate symptoms and improve quality of life. By incorporating dietary changes, regular exercise, and innovative therapies such as hyperbaric oxygen treatment and nutrient

IV therapy, individuals with arthritis can take proactive steps towards better joint health and overall well-being. It's essential to consult with healthcare professionals to develop a personalized treatment plan tailored to individual needs and preferences. With the right strategies, arthritis sufferers can effectively manage their symptoms and lead fulfilling lives.

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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In Celebration of May as Mental Health Awareness Month

By Margaret Mouracade, MD

May is associated with Maia, the goddess of spring and growth. It is in this spirit that I as a nephrologist wish to write about the topic of Mental Health as May is deemed as National Mental Health Awareness Month. As a physician closing in on her 27th year of practice, I can attest to the need for all health-care providers to appreciate and to grow in their ability to recognize the importance of mental health wellness and to incorporate in their practice a means to address. Mental Health includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how well we handle stress, relate to others and how we make choices. For us in the healthcare field, our ability to engage our patients in partnerships as well as to motivate them to embrace change and to adopt new lifestyle habits relies heavily on the state of their mental health.

Data from 2020 reported by NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Health) showed that in the United States, 1 in 5 adults (21% or 52.9 million people) experience mental illness. Furthermore, 1 in 20 adults (5.6% or 14.2 million) experience serious mental illness. NIH (National Institute of Mental Health) defines serious mental illness as a mental, behavioral or emotional disorder resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities. This is a disease that we find rooted in our youth, noting that data reviewed from 2016 showed that between the ages of 6-17 that 1 in 6 (16.5% or 7.7 million) experienced a mental health disorder. Data reviewed showed that 50% of lifetime mental illness begins by age 14 and 75% by age 24. Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among those aged 10-14. As a physician who also has board certification in addiction medicine, I found it quite noteworthy that 6.7 % (17 million people) were identified as experiencing a co-occurring substance disorder and mental illness. In adults anxiety far leads as the most prevalent mental illness with 19% experiencing (48 million) the next prevalent is depression at 8.4% (21 million) and rounding out the top 3 would be PTSD at 3.6% (9 million).



Raising awareness that mental health illness should be treated like any other chronic disease entity is paramount. Similar to other chronic diseases, mental health illness has genetic propensity as it can be found in families as well as its manifestation in terms of severity often can be related to environmental factors as well as coexistence of other illness/conditions. Like other chronic diseases there can be periods of stability /dormancy and then flares can occur if triggered. Its treatment, like most other chronic diseases, is best appreciated when an integrative approach is taken with a combination of optimization of self -care, therapeutic endeavors and/or pharmacologic interventions. NAMI reports that the average delay between onset of mental illness and treatment is 11 years. In 2020, 46.2 % of US adults with mental illness received treatment while 64.5% of those with serious mental illness were treated. Data reviewed from 2016 showed that 50.6% of youths aged 6-17 with mental illness received treatment.

The impact of mental illness can be appreciated in that depression raises the risk of developing cardiovascular and metabolic diseases by more than 40% than the general population. Depression has been recognized as a leading cause of disability worldwide. Substance use disorder has been identified in 32% of those with mental illness. High school students with significant symptoms of depression

are more than twice as likely to drop out compared to their peers. Some data collected from the Department of Corrections show that 37% of adults incarcerated have a diagnosed mental illness and that 70% of youth in the juvenile justice system have mental illness. Mood disorders are the most common cause of hospitalization for those under 45 years of age in the US excluding pregnancy and birth.

It is my hope that I have helped raise awareness of the need to address Mental Health and to appreciate the need to seek treatment and care like any other health issue. Treatment must be provided in a holistic, integrative and respectful manner. A state of wellness can be attained when an individual is provided a nurturing and restorative environment in which the skills and knowledge can be learned and gained to navigate through life and its challenges.

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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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How Your Sex Hormones Can Support (or Hinder) Your Weight Loss Journey

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

Are you aware of the role your sex hormones play in regulating glucose and promoting weight loss? While thyroid hormone plays a role in regulating the metabolism and how the body burns calories, sex hormones play a role in distribution of fat stores and water retention.

Have you ever put in all the effort to lose weight—modifying your diet, adding in exercise—only to have the numbers on the scale stay the same? It can be aggravating to feel as though all your efforts are going to waste, but it may not be because you're not doing enough; it could be because your hormones are unbalanced, causing your body to hold onto glucose.

With high blood sugar leaving your body in a perpetual state of fat-storing instead of fat-burning, it's no wonder why weight loss becomes exceptionally challenging.

Let's further explore the role some crucial hormones have in blood sugar management and weight loss and what the key is to finally seeing those numbers on the scale go down.

Estrogen: A Glucose Reducer

Estrogen, the female hormone known for regulating the menstrual cycle and promoting the development of female characteristics, also plays a crucial role in directing glucose to the right areas of your body. Namely, estrogen encourages muscle cells to take in glucose.

Estrogen accomplishes this by stimulating the cells lining your blood vessels to deliver insulin to muscles, with insulin then encouraging the muscle to take in glucose and use it. The result? Thanks to estrogen, your blood sugar level lowers.

Researchers have long known the protection offered by estrogen against Type 2 diabetes, a disease where insulin becomes less effective in the body organs responsible for controlling blood sugar, resulting in high blood sugar. They've seen that women undergoing menopause have a significantly higher risk of Type 2 diabetes, meaning Type 2 diabetes risk increases when estrogen levels



decrease. Additionally, it's been shown that this risk of diabetes becomes less drastic when menopausal women are given hormone replacement therapy to restore their estrogen levels.

While women have more estrogen circulating through their bodies, men still require this hormone, and its declining numbers can also increase their risk of insulin resistance.

In short, it's clear that estrogen is crucial for regulating glucose levels in the body.

However, these benefits of estrogen can reverse if the amounts are too high. Some research has found that high concentrations of estradiol, a form of estrogen, can cause insulin resistance, which can cause blood sugar levels to rise.

Progesterone: An Insulin Inhibitor

While estrogen is crucial for helping your body deliver insulin where needed and increase glucose uptake—lowering blood sugar levels—progesterone does the opposite.

Progesterone, a hormone that supports menstruation and, if a woman is pregnant, supports the pregnancy, can also affect insulin signaling in a type of fat

cell, 3T3-L1 adipocytes. This can lead to higher blood sugar levels because progesterone keeps these cells from up taking glucose, which then allows the glucose to continue circulating in the blood.

Progesterone increases significantly during pregnancy, and given its influence over insulin, this increase in progesterone may be what contributes to gestational diabetes in pregnant women.

Everything is about balance in the body and progesterone is the counterbalance to the negative side effects of estrogen. When estrogen is in excess it may also lead to insulin resistance and in turn weight gain. Progesterone is also a natural diuretic and keeps both estrogen and testosterone in check when maintained within the right levels.

Testosterone: The Baby Bear of Hormones

Do you know how, in the fairy tale, Baby Bear has everything that is “just right?” This is how testosterone levels need to be, with studies showing that both high and low testosterone are associated with insulin resistance. This data shows the importance of finding the ideal target range for each person and keeping hormones within these personalized bounds to ensure the other parts of the body work as needed.

Additionally, testosterone regulation and its influence can vary based on gender. Studies have shown that increased testosterone levels in males (if they are low) can cause a more favorable metabolism of glucose, lowering glucose levels and improving insulin sensitivity. However, increased testosterone was not shown to influence glucose metabolism in women.

Hormone replacement therapy has traditionally taken a very cookie cutter approach, and everyone is treated as if they are the same. This evidence showcases the importance of a customized approach to hormonal management, as not everybody will respond in the same way or need the same alterations.

Blood Sugar And Weight Loss: How Are They Connected?

We've spent a lot of time discussing how various hormones affect our body's ability to manage blood sugar levels, but how does blood sugar influence our weight loss journey? It's simple: your blood sugar levels can either make it easier or harder to lose weight, and it's all because of how your body signals within itself.

If your insulin levels are high, your body never receives a signal to run through glycogen (a form of glucose and a primary energy source) and then burn fat stores for energy. Instead, your body will remain in fat-storing instead of fat-burning mode. As you can expect, this makes weight loss challenging—not impossible, but much harder than it could otherwise be.

Insulin is what unlocks the insulin receptors on your cells. They're like a gate; once it's open, your cells can let in glucose and convert it into energy. If the gate remains shut, though, which can occur if your blood sugar is too high, the cells don't open, and glucose stays in the bloodstream, making your blood sugar rise even more. This phenomenon is referred to as insulin resistance.

When insulin resistance occurs, your body produces more insulin to try and unlock the cells, but it only makes matters worse. So, the key to making fat-burning possible is to ensure your body has stable sugar levels and that insulin never goes into overdrive; otherwise, those gates will stay shut.

Hormone Optimization: A Necessary Element of Weight Loss

Society places diet and exercise as the two key components of losing weight, but there's a hidden factor

that many people don't consider despite it making all the difference for your weight loss journey: your hormonal balance.

The most current and hottest weight loss trend are peptide injections of Semaglutide (Ozempic®/Wegovy®/Rybelsus®) and Tirzepatide (Mounjaro®/Zepbound™). While these therapies are effective and individuals will lose weight, once the weight loss goals are met and the medication is discontinued the weight lost will return if the hormones are not optimized.

Blood sugar levels that are too high, or insulin that is not receptive enough, can cause your body to stay in fat-storing mode, and the culprit of these high blood sugar levels and insulin sensitivity may be your hormones.

So, even if you revamp your diet or add in an exercise routine, if your hormones are imbalanced and affecting your blood sugar, your body will fight to hold on to its fat stores. This means that the numbers on the scale might not change or will change very slowly, no matter how many healthy habits you adopt.

Ultimately, the key to weight loss is ensuring your hormones are properly balanced. This not only means that your hormone levels, individually, should be within your body's ideal range—which can be different from the standard recommendations—but your hormones need to be balanced with each other. For instance, blood sugar levels are best managed when your estrogen is higher than your progesterone, so you need to check the levels of each hormone, how they compare to each other, and which ratio produces the best results.

This is a challenging balance to find, which is why working with a hormone specialist is so crucial—they can find the balance that helps you regain control of your hormones and encourages your body to finally release its hold on glucose and fat.

Can Weight Loss Medications Replace the Need for Hormone Optimization?

Even if you take medication for weight loss, you still need hormonal balance if you want to maintain your weight loss.

To better understand why, we need to look at how blood sugar levels become fat.

Your body requires energy from food to complete all its processes, but if you eat more than your body needs, glucose will be left floating around in your bloodstream. When your body has excess glucose, it stores it as fat, leading to weight gain.

Weight loss medication often suppresses your appetite, which lowers blood glucose levels and encourages your body to instead break down fat for energy. However, once you come off the medication, your blood sugar can once again rise if your hormones are imbalanced, causing the excess glucose to once again become fat.

When your hormones are optimized, though, your body will use glucose more efficiently, which can keep your blood sugar levels normal. This puts you in the right place to maintain your weight loss even when you stop taking medication.

If you're looking to lose weight, diet and exercise are crucial components of any healthy lifestyle, but to truly see success, you need to take a closer look at your hormones and ensure that they're setting your body up for success.

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
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What Does An Otolaryngologist Do?

What is an Otolaryngologist?

Otolaryngology is the oldest medical specialty in the United States. Otolaryngologists are physicians trained in the medical and surgical management and treatment of patients with diseases and disorders of the ear, nose, throat (ENT), allergy, and related structures of the head and neck. They are commonly referred to as ENT physicians.

Otolaryngologists are ready to start practicing medicine after completing up to 15 years of college and post-graduate training.

What types of medical problems do otolaryngologists treat?

The Ears – Otolaryngologists are trained in both the medical and surgical treatment of hearing loss, ear infections, balance disorders, ear noise (tinnitus), nerve pain, and facial and cranial nerve disorders.

The Nose – Care of the nasal cavity and sinuses is one of the primary skills of otolaryngologists including sinus disease, allergies, nosebleeds, and nasal deformities (both functional and cosmetic).

The Throat – Otolaryngologists manage tonsils and adenoid infections, diseases of the larynx (voice box) and esophagus including voice and swallowing disorders, airway problems including obstructive sleep apnea and snoring.

The Head and Neck – Otolaryngologists are trained to treat infectious diseases of the head and neck area, both benign and malignant (cancerous) tumors including the thyroid, facial trauma, and deformities of the face (both cosmetic and reconstructive).

EAR

The ear is a very sophisticated organ. It not only provides us with the ability to hear but it is also integrally involved in our balance system.

Hearing loss and dizziness affect millions of lives every year, significantly impacting their quality of life. With specialized training in otology and neuro-otology, our physicians treat a wide array of diseases affecting the ear.

DIAGNOSTIC, TREATMENT, SURGICAL AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES PROVIDED:

- Adult and Pediatric Ear Disorders
- Vertigo & Balance Disorders
- Ear Infections
- Ear Tubes

- Hearing Loss
- Implantable Hearing Devices
- Hearing Aids
- Tinnitus/Ringing in the Ears
- Tumors and Skin Cysts
- Middle Ear Problems and Prosthesis
- Perforated Ear Drums
- Otosclerosis and Laser Stapedotomy
- Sudden Sensorineural Hearing loss

We offer advanced diagnostic testing and treatment for all types of hearing loss including sensorineural hearing loss, conductive hearing loss, mixed hearing loss, sudden hearing loss and unilateral hearing loss.

Imbalance, dizziness and vertigo can be very complex problems. That's why we here at Price Sonkarley, MD understand the importance of a complete, thorough medical evaluation and in-depth diagnostic testing for your dizziness issues. Let our team of highly trained professionals be a resource for you. Don't let your life be diminished by dizziness, poor balance or hearing loss.

We have one of the largest selection of hearing aids available for people with hearing loss. Our hearing rehabilitation specialists will help you select the type of hearing device that is right for you. We have hearing aids to fit every budget and lifestyle. Financing and special programs are available.

HEARING

We offer advanced diagnostic testing and treatment for all types of hearing loss including sensorineural hearing loss, conductive hearing loss, mixed hearing loss, sudden hearing loss and unilateral hearing loss.

Imbalance, dizziness and vertigo can be very complex problems. That's why we here at Price Sonkarley, MD understand the importance of a complete, thorough medical evaluation and in-depth diagnostic testing for your dizziness issues. Let our team of highly trained professionals be a resource for you. Don't let your life be diminished by dizziness, poor balance or hearing loss.

Patients with hearing loss can count on our highly skilled audiology staff to provide comprehensive diagnostic evaluations for hearing as well as rehabilitative technology and services that are unmatched by other area providers.

We have one of the largest selection of hearing aids available for people with hearing loss. We offer a variety of state-of-the-art and cosmetically appealing hearing aids. Our hearing rehabilitation specialists will help you select the type of hearing device that is right for you. We have hearing aids to fit every budget and lifestyle. Financing and special programs are available. We also provide digital programming, repairs, maintenance and accessories onsite.

BALANCE & DIZZINESS

Our specialists perform an advanced comprehensive evaluation, and spend extra time educating patients on the specific nature of their complaints. Our patients leave the office with a complete understanding of their underlying problem. The patients are comfortable with the treatment options utilized to manage these distressing symptoms. Here their problem and the treatment options are analyzed in a comprehensive manner, and delivered by caring and knowledgeable physicians and professionals.

- Vertigo
- Meniere's
- Dizziness
- Inner Ear Infections/Labyrinthitis
- Vestibular Disorders

Hearing Aids & Assistive Listening Devices

You can discuss hearing aid options with the doctors and the audiologist to determine which model might be right for you. Click on appropriate model to read more about the advantages, disadvantages and suitability of each model. You can also discuss surgery to correct hearing loss and assistive devices in the home with the doctors.

- Behind-The-Ear (BTE)
- In-The-Ear (ITE)
- In-The-Canal (ITC)
- Completely-In-The-Canal (CIC)
- Receiver in the Canal (RIC)
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NOSE - SINUS & BREATHING

Our physicians are board certified and fellowship trained in Rhinology and Advanced Sinus Surgery and perform Balloon Sinuplasty™, the least invasive and most comfortable method for performing sinus surgery. We provide testing and treatment for a wide range of sinus and nasal diseases.

- Disease of the Sinuses & Nose
- Allergies
- Acute & Chronic Sinusitis

- Bacterial Infections
- Nosebleeds
- Nasal Obstruction/Deviated Septums
- Snoring
- Allergic Fungal Sinusitis
- Sinonasal Tumors/Masses
- Nasal Polyps
- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Balloon Sinuplasty™
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- Sinonasal Trauma
- Sinonasal Tumors/Polyps/Masses
- Smell/Taste Problems

ALLERGIES & ASTHMA

Our physicians are board certified and fellowship trained in ear, nose and throat-related allergy problems, including food allergies and allergies of the eyes and skin. We provide testing and treatment for a wide range of allergic diseases.

TESTING, TREATMENT AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES FOR:

- Adult & Pediatric Allergies & Hay Fever Symptoms
- Seasonal Allergies to Pollens, Dust Mites, & Molds
- Allergens, Pollen, Dust, Dust Mites & Mold Spores
- Animal Allergies
- Food Allergies – including Gluten & Casein Allergy
- Animal Allergies
- Skin Allergies/Eczema
- Hives
- Anaphylaxis & Angioedema
- Allergy Shots
- Xolair
- Allergic Asthma
- Allergic Reactions to Insects

BALLOON SINUPLASTY

What is Balloon Sinuplasty?

- Balloon Sinuplasty (BSP) is a safe and effective procedure for many patients seeking relief from uncomfortable and painful sinusitis symptoms.
- If you have been diagnosed with chronic sinusitis and are not responding well to medication, or if you have recurrent acute rhinosinusitis, you may be a candidate for sinus surgery. There is now a less invasive technology used by ENT doctors to treat patients with chronic and recurrent acute sinusitis.
- With Balloon Sinuplasty, ENT doctors open inflamed sinuses in the same way that heart surgeons open up blocked arteries during balloon angioplasty. The procedure is less invasive than traditional sinus surgery, and effective at relieving symptoms of chronic

sinusitis. Balloon Sinuplasty allows patients to return to normal activities quickly. Unlike conventional sinus surgery, it does not include removal of bone or tissue from the nose. And, Balloon Sinuplasty is now offered by some doctors in their office under local anesthesia, so that there is no need to go to an operating room or undergo general anesthesia.

THROAT

Problems of the throat are quite common. The staff of Florida Gulf Coast Ear, Nose and Throat is highly skilled and experienced.

We have treated thousands of patients suffering from a variety of acute and chronic throat or pharyngeal illnesses and disorders.

DIAGNOSTIC, TREATMENT AND SURGICAL SERVICES PROVIDED:

- Tonsils & Adenoids
- Strep Throat
- Chronic Sore Throats
- Throat Surgery
- Somnoplasty Post Nasal Drip/Phlegm in Throat
- Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease – GERD
- Epiglottitis
- Laryngitis
- Swallowing Disorders
- Voice Disorders including Botox for Spasmodic Dysphonia
- Vocal Cord Disorders
- Vocal Cord Polyps and Nodules
- Soft Palate
- Snoring & Sleep Apnea

LARYNGOLOGY TREATMENT AND SURGICAL SERVICES

Voice Disorders:

- Vocal fold paralysis
- Vocal fold nodules and polyps
- Vocal fold cysts and granulomas
- Early laryngeal cancer and precancerous lesions of the larynx
- Reinke's Edema
- Laryngeal papillomatosis
- Laryngeal Dystonia/Spasmodic Dysphonia
- Neurologic conditions affecting voice
- Voice Gender Dysphoria

Airway Disorders:

- Tracheal diseases
- Airway obstruction
- Sleep apnea syndrome
- Chronic cough
- Laryngeal cancer
- Tracheal stenosis
- Subglottic stenosis

Swallowing Disorders:

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- Cricopharyngeal Hypertrophy
- Cervical esophageal narrowing
- Inability to burp or belch (R-CPD)
- Laryngopharyngeal reflux

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Dr. Price Sonkarley is a Board Certified Otolaryngologist Head and Neck Surgeon and will be continuing Dr. Montgomery's practice providing excellent care to all patients. He will be performing both medical and surgical aspects of the specialty and is accepting new patients.

Dr. Sonkarley grew up in the Midwest and received his Doctorate from the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine. He completed his Otolaryngology Residency at the University of Oklahoma. He served in the US Marine Corps for 5 years and was awarded the Joint Services Achievement Medal after his tour in Iraq.



Kathleen Rocuant, Au.D FAAA received her Doctorate from the Arizona School of Health Sciences and is Board Certified by the American Board of Audiology. She specializes in Hearing Evaluations

Hearing Aids and Hearing Solutions. She is a Fellow American Academy of Audiology and a member of the American Academy of Audiology and the Florida Academy of Audiology.



Carly Treibits, PA-C is a graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University and is a Board Certified Physician Assistant. She is a member of the Florida Academy of Physician Assistants and the American Academy of Physician Assistants.

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ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE?

When it comes to urinary incontinence, you have many choices and treatment options, but you must be honest with yourself in order to finally get long-lasting medical help. If you answer yes to one or more of the following questions, it's time to see a specialist.

Yes or No:

- Do you often have an uncomfortable or uncontrollable urge to urinate?
- Do you have frequent urination during the day?
- When you get the urge to go, do you make it to the bathroom on time?
- Do you wake up to urinate more than once per night?
- Does urine leak when you cough, sneeze, laugh, jump, exercise, or lift heavy objects?
- To help your symptoms, have you tried wearing pads or briefs, drinking less, doing Kegel exercises, rearranging your daily routine?

THE TRUTH: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

#1 It's important that you don't just see someone claiming to be a pelvic floor specialist.

A modern subspecialty called Female Pelvic Medicine & Reproductive Surgery (a.k.a. Urogynecology) was developed to harness this knowledge to benefit women of all ages. A Urogynecologist has advanced training in treating these disorders that a gynecologist and a urologist may not have. A gynecologist specializes in the female reproductive system (vagina, uterus, and ovaries) and a urologist specializes in the urinary tract of both men and women. A urogynecologist blends the knowledge of a gynecologist and urologist to give women the best possible outcomes for disorders that affect these two closely integrated systems.

The Florida Bladder Institute, based in Naples Florida, is one of the country's first urogynecology practices. Typically, a woman would have to see a gynecologist for one problem, a urologist for another and a gastroenterologist for another. Dr. Joseph Gauta explains, "A Urogynecologist has the skill and experience to assess the entire pelvic region including the uterus, bladder, vagina and rectum as well as the muscles, ligaments, connective tissue and nerves that support those systems." He added, "This means a thorough evaluation is done of your urinary, lower gastrointestinal and reproductive systems as a whole to ensure you receive the best possible treatment and outcome in the most efficient and cost-effective manner."



#2 It's not cookie-cutter. Your treatment should depend on the type and severity of your disorder.

"Urinary incontinence" is a general term and symptoms can range from mild leaking to uncontrollable wetting. It can happen to anyone, but it becomes more common with age. There are many types of urinary incontinence, and sometimes a woman may have more than one of the following types:

- Stress
- OAB
- Urgency
- Mixed incontinence (i.e., stress and urgency can occur together)

Your treatment should be custom-tailored to the specific cause of your incontinence, your medical and surgical history, your overall health, age, and goals.

#3 It's not always incontinence.

Sometimes there are other conditions that may feel like an incontinence problem or cause unusual pain. The Florida Bladder Institute is well-prepared to evaluate and treat related problems of the urinary system that may be causing your discomfort.

The Florida Bladder Institute can offer several options used in combination or individually depending on your needs. They may include medications, diet modification, bladder retraining and Kegel exercises to strengthen the pelvic muscles.

#4 There are numerous incontinence treatment options.

The good news is that virtually all types of incontinence are treatable. The Florida Bladder Institute's expert team is dedicated to helping you achieve the highest level of health and quality of life.

The clinical staff of the Florida Bladder Institute is well-versed and experienced in using a variety of techniques including medication, rehabilitation, minimally invasive surgical intervention, and life-style education to improve your overall health and help you regain control and reclaim your freedom.

The Florida Bladder Institute's Innovative Techniques and Treatment Options:

- Bladder Retraining
- Emsella (Kegel chair)
- Pelvic Floor Rehabilitation including Kegel Exercises, physical therapy and electrical stimulation
- Laser and Muscle Therapy
- Biofeedback
- Botox Bladder Injections
- Pessary Vaginal Device
- Injections including Botox and bulking procedures
- Outpatient Surgery
- Surgery for Organ Prolapse / Dropped Bladder Repair
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At the Florida Bladder Institute, you will experience a thorough approach to the evaluation and treatment of pelvic organ prolapse, bladder and lower urinary tract disorders, bowel and gas incontinence, bleeding, pelvic pain and menopause. Our compassionate and expertly trained team will guide you along the way using state-of-the-art technology in our comfortable and private setting.



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EUROTHREADS: THE LUNCHTIME FACELIFT

By Dr. Andrew Kontos

EuroThreads, or PDO (polydioxanone) threads, are a minimally invasive cosmetic procedure used to lift and tighten sagging skin on the face and body. These threads, made from biodegradable materials, are inserted beneath the skin to stimulate collagen production, and create a lifting effect.

BENEFITS OF EUROTHREADS:

1. Non-Surgical Alternative: EuroThreads offer a non-surgical alternative to traditional facelift procedures, making them appealing to individuals who want to achieve a more youthful appearance without undergoing surgery.

2. Immediate Results: Patients may notice an immediate improvement in skin laxity and tightness following EuroThread treatment, which will continue to enhance over time as collagen production is stimulated.

3. Minimal Downtime: Compared to surgical facelifts, EuroThreads typically involve minimal downtime and recovery. Patients can usually resume their normal activities shortly after treatment, although temporary swelling or bruising may occur.

4. Customizable Treatment: EuroThreads can be customized to target specific areas of concern, such as the cheeks, jawline, neck, or brows. This allows personalized treatment plans tailored to each patient's unique needs and goals.

5. Long-Lasting Results: While individual results may vary, the effects of EuroThreads can last any-



where from 6 months to 2 years, depending on factors such as the patient's age, skin condition, and lifestyle habits.

OPTIONS FOR EUROTHREADS:

- **Thread Length and Thickness:** EuroThreads come in various lengths and thicknesses to accommodate different treatment areas and desired outcomes. Longer and thicker threads may be used for deeper lifting and structural support, while shorter and finer threads may be used for superficial tightening and rejuvenation.

- **Number of Threads:** The number of threads used during treatment can vary depending on the extent of correction needed and the patient's aesthetic goals. A skilled provider will assess the patient's anatomy and recommend the appropriate number of threads to achieve optimal results.

EuroThreads offer a safe and effective solution for individuals seeking to improve skin laxity and achieve a youthful appearance without surgery. With their customizable options and minimal downtime, EuroThreads have become popular for patients looking for natural-looking results and long-lasting benefits.

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. Committed to providing high-quality skin care, Dr. Kontos stays current in medical advancements to continue offering the best care available for his patients. Compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence guide his patient-centered model of delivering positive outcomes. Dr. Kontos has been trained in the EuroThread Lift procedure since 2018 and recently received Advanced Threadlifting Certification.



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

Prime Health Urgent Care's Weight Management Services:

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

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

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

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

Some studies suggest that semaglutide drugs may have additional cardiovascular benefits beyond weight loss. This can be particularly relevant for



individuals with obesity who may also have cardiovascular risk factors. For some individuals, starting a prescribed medication for weight management can serve as a motivating factor. Knowing that they have a medical intervention and support from healthcare providers may encourage adherence to lifestyle changes.

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

1. Wegovy (Semaglutide Injection 2.4 mg):

CLINICAL TRIALS:

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

Glycemic Control:

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

Administration and Adherence:

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

2. Mounjaro (Weekly Injection):

Clinical studies have supported its effectiveness in promoting weight loss and improving glycemic control.

Real-World Data:

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

Gastrointestinal Effects:

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

Wegovy and Mounjaro are all semaglutide drugs that have shown efficacy in weight management and, in some cases, glycemic control. Individual responses may vary, and the choice between these medications should be made in consultation with a healthcare provider. Please see our website to schedule an appointment and see our other services.



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HARNESSING THE POWER OF NAD IV THERAPY: Promoting Mental Health During Mental Health Month

BY Kasey Cook, RN, Owner

May marks Mental Health Month, a time to raise awareness about mental health and the importance of seeking support and treatment. In recent years, Intravenous (IV) Therapy has gained traction as a supplementary treatment for various health conditions, including mental health disorders. In particular, Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide (NAD) IV Therapy has emerged as a promising avenue for promoting mental wellness.

NAD is a coenzyme found in all living cells and is essential for cellular energy production. Beyond its role in energy metabolism, NAD is involved in various biological processes, including DNA repair, gene expression, and cellular signaling. Research has shown that NAD levels decline with age, which has been implicated in the development of age-related neurocognitive disorders such as Parkinson's disease, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease.

One of the key benefits of NAD IV Therapy is its potential to support brain health and function. Studies have suggested that NAD may help protect neurons from damage, reduce inflammation, and improve mitochondrial function in the brain. These effects could have profound implications for individuals with neurocognitive disorders, potentially slowing disease progression and preserving cognitive function.



Moreover, NAD IV Therapy has shown promise in the treatment of depression and anxiety, two common mental health conditions that affect millions of people worldwide. Depression and anxiety are often associated with imbalances in neurotransmitters such as serotonin and dopamine, as well as oxidative stress and inflammation in the brain. By replenishing NAD levels and supporting cellular function, NAD IV Therapy may help restore balance in the brain and alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety.

It's important to note that NAD IV Therapy is not a standalone treatment for mental health disorders but can be used in conjunction with other therapies to promote overall mental wellness. Integrative approaches that combine NAD IV Therapy with counseling, medication, and lifestyle interventions may offer a comprehensive solution for individuals struggling with mental health challenges.

Furthermore, NAD IV Therapy is generally well-tolerated with minimal side effects, making it a safe option for many individuals. However, like any medical intervention, it's essential to consult with a qualified healthcare provider before undergoing NAD IV Therapy to ensure it's appropriate for your individual needs and circumstances.

As we observe Mental Health Month, let us recognize the potential of NAD IV Therapy in promoting mental wellness and supporting individuals on their journey to recovery. By harnessing the power of NAD, we can take proactive steps towards improving brain health, enhancing cognitive function, and alleviating the burden of mental illness. Together, let's prioritize mental health and explore innovative approaches to holistic healing.

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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."



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.

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.

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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CBD: A Promising Treatment for Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a chronic autoimmune disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. It causes inflammation and swelling in the joints, which can lead to pain, stiffness, and difficulty in mobility. There is no known cure for RA, and traditional treatments often come with unpleasant side effects. However, CBD, a compound found in the cannabis plant, has shown promise in the treatment of RA.

CBD is a non-psychoactive compound that interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system (ECS). The ECS is a complex system of receptors and neurotransmitters that regulate many physiological functions, including pain and inflammation. CBD binds to these receptors, reducing inflammation and pain signals in the body.

Studies have shown that CBD can be effective in the treatment of RA. A 2006 study found that CBD could reduce inflammation and pain in animal models of arthritis. Another study from 2015 found that CBD could reduce joint inflammation and improve mobility in human subjects with RA. These findings suggest that CBD could be a promising treatment option for RA patients.

One of the benefits of CBD is its lack of serious side effects. Unlike traditional RA medications, which can cause liver damage, gastrointestinal problems, and other serious side effects, CBD is generally well-tolerated. This makes it a safe and attractive treatment option for RA patients who may be wary of traditional medications.



CBD also has the advantage of being available in many different forms. Patients can choose to take CBD in the form of oils, capsules, or topicals. Topicals are particularly useful for treating RA, as they can be applied directly to the affected joints for localized relief.

However, it's important to note that CBD is not a cure for RA. While it can be effective in reducing inflammation and pain, it does not address the underlying cause of the disease. RA patients should always work with their healthcare provider to develop a comprehensive treatment plan that includes both traditional medications and alternative therapies like CBD.

There are also some potential drawbacks to using CBD for RA. First, it can be expensive, as it is not typically covered by insurance. Second, the quality and purity of CBD products can vary widely, making it difficult for patients to know what they're getting. Third, CBD can interact with some medications, so it's important for patients to consult with their healthcare provider before adding CBD to their treatment regimen.

CBD shows promise as a safe and effective treatment option for RA. It can reduce inflammation and pain without the serious side effects associated with traditional medications. However, it's important for RA patients to work closely with their healthcare provider to develop a comprehensive treatment plan that includes both traditional medications and alternative therapies like CBD. Patients should also be aware of the potential drawbacks of using CBD, including cost, quality concerns, and possible drug interactions. With careful consideration and guidance from their healthcare provider, RA patients can determine whether CBD is a viable treatment option for them.

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.

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

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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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Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine in Mental Health

By Dr. Mary Lambert, AP, DOM

In recent years, traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) has garnered increasing attention for its potential role in mental health treatment. Acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine, two major components of TCM, offer promising avenues for managing many mental illnesses. This article explores the therapeutic benefits of acupuncture and herbal medicine in addressing mental health conditions, shedding light on their mechanisms and efficacy.

Acupuncture involves the insertion of fine hairlike needles into specific points on the body to stimulate energy flow or Qi. This stimulation helps to regulate neurotransmitter levels, reducing inflammation, and regulating hormones, promoting a sense of well-being and psychological balance. Research shows that acupuncture may alleviate symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental health disorders.

In clinical practice, combining acupuncture and herbal medicine can synergistically enhance treatment outcomes for individuals with mental health disorders. By addressing both the physical and emotional aspects of health, this integrative approach aims to restore harmony within the body and mind. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, when treating an individual, the practitioner treats the body as a whole. Emotions directly affect the body's organs, so treating mental health also directly impacts physical health.

Several studies have demonstrated the efficacy of acupuncture in treating depression. Acupuncture sessions can increase the release of endorphins and serotonin, the brain's happy chemicals, while also reducing levels of cortisol, the stress hormone. Moreover, acupuncture may enhance the effectiveness of antidepressant medications and mitigate their adverse effects.

Similarly, acupuncture shows promise in managing anxiety disorders. By targeting specific acupuncture points related to relaxation and stress reduction, acupuncture sessions can induce a calming effect and alleviate anxiety symptoms. Moreover, acupuncture may enhance gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) activity, a neurotransmitter that promotes relaxation and reduces anxiety.

Chinese herbal medicine, another integral component of TCM, employs natural substances such as herbs, roots, and minerals to restore balance and harmony within the body. Chinese herbal formulas are tailored to individual patient needs and complement acupuncture treatments in managing mental health conditions.

Herbal medicine offers a holistic approach to mental health by addressing underlying imbalances in the body. For instance, herbal formulas containing specific adaptogenic (non-toxic) herbs can help regulate the body's response to stress, thereby reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. They have also demonstrated antidepressant effects by modulating neurotransmitter levels and improving cerebral blood flow.



In a 2018 study by Yan Sun et al, traditional Chinese herbal medication exhibited benefits in addressing depression, particularly post-stroke and post-partum depression. In this study, traditional Chinese herbal medications were also shown to enhance the effects of Western medication for depression and mental illnesses. It is important to say that prescribed medications should continue to be taken and herbal medications can be used in conjunction to enhance the effects.

Traditional Chinese medicine has also been found to treat depression in patients with Parkinson's disease. Depression is a common symptom of the disease, and in a 2021 study by Si-Tong Feng et al, it was found that TCM and Western medicine in conjunction helped patients with Parkinson's related depression by 95%.

Acupuncture and herbal medicine offer a safe and effective adjunctive therapy for mental illness, either as standalone treatments or in conjunction with conventional, western medications. It is important to note that you should not stop taking prescribed medication for mental health disorders unless directed by your licensed mental health practitioner. It is also essential to consult a qualified licensed Chinese Medicine practitioner when seeking alternative or conjunctive treatments who can provide personalized plans tailored to the individual's needs.

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Compassionate Home Health: Excellence in Promoting, Maintaining, and Restoring Health

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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Slowing the Pace of Your Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Apostle Paul said this about contentment. ***1**I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. **2**I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **3**I can do everything through him who gives me strength.* Philippians 4:11-13

If you're going to slow down your life, you have to learn contentment. Paul also said this about contentment: ***4**But godliness with contentment is great gain. **7**For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* 1 Tim. 6:6-7

What he is saying in these passages is that we need to understand that life isn't about things.

Contentment means this: I don't need more in order to be happy.

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

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

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

If you find yourself making statements like this:

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

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

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



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