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# Health & Wellness<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

December 2024

Lee Edition - Monthly

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## ESSENTIAL WINTER WELLNESS TIPS FOR SENIORS

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## THE HEALING POWER OF HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

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# This New Hearing Treatment Technology Just Restored My Ability to Hear Well in Noise!

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2. Reduce my Risk of Cognitive Decline so I can keep working and living
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# Revolutionizing Functional Wellness: BUILD MUSCLE FOR FORM & FUNCTION WITHOUT EXERCISE

By Ivan R. Bracic, D.C.

As we age, maintaining stability, balance, and joint health becomes increasingly critical for an active, independent life. For individuals aged 45 to 75, functional wellness isn't just about feeling better—it's about thriving. In Southwest Florida, Dr. Ivan Bracic is leading the charge with a groundbreaking, FDA-cleared technology that improves joint health, builds muscle, and restores mobility—without surgery or downtime.

### A New Era in Joint and Muscle Health

Functional wellness hinges on preserving the integrity of muscles and joints. However, traditional approaches like medication or invasive surgery may come with risks and extended recovery times. That's why the latest advancement in high-intensity focused electromagnetic (HIFEM) and radiofrequency (RF) technology is so exciting. This innovative treatment not only relieves joint discomfort but also rebuilds muscle strength and enhances mobility—results that are vital for a pain-free and active lifestyle.

### The Evidence: Clinical Results That Speak Volumes

The effectiveness of this revolutionary technology is supported by clinical research. In a 31-patient study, participants aged 23 to 78 with musculoskeletal and joint issues underwent four 30-minute treatments over four weeks. At a one-month follow-up, the results were remarkable:

- 83% of patients reported increased range of motion.
- 91% experienced reduced joint discomfort.
- 78% noted improved mobility in the treated area.



These outcomes were mirrored in individual cases, like a 73-year-old woman with post-surgical quadriceps weakness who reported a 30.7% increase in muscle strength, improved flexibility, and a return to golf within a month. Similarly, a 40-year-old marathon runner with chronic knee pain saw dramatic improvements in pain, stiffness, and mobility after just a few sessions.

### How It Works

This non-invasive, 30-minute treatment combines advanced RF technology with HIFEM to deliver therapeutic benefits. The RF energy heats muscles and surrounding tissues, while HIFEM stimulates deep muscle contractions. This combination not only strengthens muscles but also improves circulation, range of motion, and overall joint functionality.

### Among its many benefits:

- Muscle re-education and spasm relaxation.
- Improved blood circulation and prevention of atrophy.
- Increased mobility and reduced stiffness.

The quick, comfortable treatment complements physical therapy and is ideal for individuals recovering from injury or surgery—or anyone looking to enhance their physical health and longevity.

### Why Functional Wellness Matters

Functional wellness goes beyond symptom management, focusing on holistic, sustainable health. Improved joint and muscle function promotes balance and stability, reducing the risk of falls and enabling everyday activities with ease. This is especially important for aging adults who want to maintain their independence and quality of life.



Enhance Muscle Function and Boost Recovery  
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*"I suffered with reduced mobility for years trying all types of physical therapy without success. Emsculpt NEO changed my life. I can do activities that I completely forgot about..."*

- Sara, 48



Non-Invasive.  
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Quick  
Procedure

**Dr. Ivan Bracic: Southwest Florida's Premier Provider**  
With over 30 years of experience, Dr. Ivan Bracic is renowned for his expertise in spine and joint health. He combines cutting-edge technology with personalized care to achieve exceptional outcomes.

Now is the time to invest in your functional wellness. Call 239-579-4444 for your complimentary consultation with Dr. Bracic and discover how this revolutionary technology can transform your life. Located in Summerlin Crossings Shopping Center, next to Publix, and in Lehigh Towne Center in Lehigh, Acre. Dr. Ivan is ready to help you feel stronger, move better, and live fully.

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### WHAT IT TREATS

- Tingling
- Numbness
- Pins & Needles
- Burning
- Aching
- Limb Weakness
- Difficulty with Balance
- Muscle Cramps or Spasms
- Increased or Decreased Sensitivity

Peripheral neuropathy is a neurological disorder characterized by damage to the peripheral nervous system, which connects the brain and spinal cord to the rest of the body. This condition can result in a range of symptoms, including numbness, tingling, burning sensations, and weakness, typically affecting the hands and feet. Common causes include diabetes, chemotherapy, autoimmune diseases, and certain medications. The chronic pain associated with peripheral neuropathy can significantly impact a patient's quality of life, often proving challenging to treat effectively with conventional methods.

In recent years, innovative technologies have emerged to address the limitations of traditional treatments for neuropathic pain. One such advancement is the neoGEN-series system, a cutting-edge approach to managing peripheral neuropathy symptoms. This technology utilizes a form of electrical stimulation that goes beyond conventional transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) or electrical muscle stimulation (EMS) methods.

Initial clinical studies and patient reports suggest that the neoGEN-series system may offer significant pain relief and improved sensation for many individuals suffering from peripheral neuropathy. Some users have reported reduced reliance on pain medications and enhanced overall function in daily activities. However, as with any medical treatment, results can vary among individuals, and the effectiveness of the neoGEN-series system may depend on factors such as the underlying cause and severity of the neuropathy.

While promising, it's important to note that more extensive research is needed to fully establish the long-term efficacy and safety profile of the neoGEN-series system. Patients considering this treatment option should consult with their healthcare providers to determine if it's appropriate for their specific condition and to develop a comprehensive management plan.

*I have been a patient of Dr. Larry Johnson for over ten years for different low back and various joint pains. However, last year I started to suffer with pain and tingling in both of my legs and feet that would keep me from sleeping. Dr. Johnson explained to me that I was dealing with neuropathy and he could help to resolve my pain with a new technology called E-NERVESTIM. He has used this therapy on several patients with great success. After six treatments, my pain was starting to go away and was finally gone after a few more treatments. I have always relied on Dr. Johnson to help me for any problems I have encountered over the years and I have always recommended him to my family and friends. - Shirley W.*

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# For the Holidays: A Gift That Could Save Your Life

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

**A**s a sleep medicine specialist, I am often asked about the role of wearables (Fitbit, Apple Watch and Aura Ring) in the identification and management of sleep disorders, and until recently, my answer had been the same: "Their role is limited to individuals with healthy sleep, and they cannot be used for the diagnosis and/or treatment of sleep disorders in the clinical setting."

In recent years, wearable technology has dramatically transformed from simple fitness and sleep trackers to sophisticated health monitoring devices that offer unprecedented insights into our personal well-being.

## The Health Revolution on Your Wrist

Modern wearables represent a remarkable convergence of technology and healthcare, empowering users to take a proactive approach to their health. The latest innovations go well beyond basic activity tracking, now providing complex health diagnostics that were once exclusively the domain of medical professionals.

For many years now, devices like apple watch can detect heart rhythm abnormalities like atrial fibrillation, protect our hearing by tracking exposure to loud noises and can offer insight into our balance, telling us weather we are at risk of fall/injury. But one of the most significant recent developments is the ability to detect moderate to severe sleep apnea.

Sleep apnea is a potentially dangerous sleep disorder characterized by repeated interruptions in breathing during sleep, which can lead to serious health complications if left untreated such as heart disease, strokes, dementia and mood disorders (such as depression or anxiety).

Many of us have a loved one in whom we suspect may have sleep apnea. Most patients don't suspect having obstructive sleep apnea themselves, and in most instances the concern is reported by loved ones, or by primary care physicians when they assess for risk factors.

To complicate matters more, most patients have unfounded concerns about the treatments and avoid visiting the sleep doctor.

While sleep apnea detection is groundbreaking, it is just a tool that could help you or your loved ones make a decision to see a doctor about a suspected problem. It should never be used alone.

Another tool to help us identify sleep apnea is called the **STOP-BANG** questionnaire, which can be used to determine if there is a risk:

- Snoring
- Tiredness or Sleepiness
- Observed Apneas
- High Blood Pressure (even if treated with medications)
- Body Mass Index >35 (obesity)
- Age >50
- Neck >16"
- Male Gender.

If you or someone you know has 3 or more of the risk factors above, they are at risk of obstructive sleep apnea and may benefit from a sleep evaluation. If you can't convince them to see the sleep doctor, you may now be able to "gift" some help.

## Sleep Apnea Detection:

### A Breakthrough in Wearable Technology

Recent advancements in wearable technology along with strong collaboration with sleep medicine professionals have made it possible to detect potentially dangerous sleep apnea using sophisticated sensors and advanced algorithms. Devices like the newer Apple Watch and Some Samsung Galaxy watches can now detect cases of moderate to severe sleep apnea with exceptional accuracy.

The Apple Watch, for instance, has FDA clearance for several medical-grade features including sleep apnea detection, blurring the lines between consumer electronics and medical devices.

As an example, Apple has provided research and validating trials information demonstrating that if the Apple Watch suggests someone has obstructive sleep apnea, it is in agreement with a home sleep test more than 98% of the time. However, this technology has limitations, as it may miss 1 in 3 patients for whom it does not suggest the disease. Therefore, it is always recommended you see a sleep professional if sleep apnea is suspected.



## Conclusion

As we shop gifts for our loved ones this holiday season, wearables with sleep apnea detection may offer a way to help our loved ones identify this potentially serious disease. Although it is always best to just go and see your local doctor, these devices can help in identifying these problems in those reluctant to visit a sleep doctor's clinic.

## About Sleep & Apnea Institute of Florida

The Sleep and Apnea Institute of Florida's goal is to bring the best in service quality, speed, and technology to our community for the evaluation and management of sleep disorders.

To provide context, most sleep medicine services in the area have been using the same technology over the past 20 years to diagnose (and to treat) obstructive sleep apnea. SAIF will bring sleep medicine up to date with current and developing technologies to improve access, speed and accuracy of the diagnostic and treatment options available to our community today.

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# UNDERSTANDING HEARING LOSS AND CELEBRATING HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES

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

**T**he holiday season brings joyous celebrations and gatherings with family and friends. However, for those with hearing loss, these occasions can present unique challenges that often go unnoticed. As the laughter, music, and conversations fill the air, individuals with hearing impairment might feel isolated or struggle to actively participate.

One of the primary issues faced by those with hearing loss during holiday gatherings is the increased background noise. Festive environments often involve bustling activities, music, and overlapping conversations, making it arduous for individuals with hearing impairments to discern speech. Background noise can overwhelm the senses, making it difficult to focus on a single conversation or voice.

Moreover, the holiday season typically involves larger gatherings, which can exacerbate the communication hurdles. Crowded spaces and multiple conversations happening simultaneously can be particularly challenging for individuals with hearing loss. They may find it hard to follow conversations or fully engage in social interactions, leading to feelings of isolation or exclusion.

Family and friends can play a pivotal role in ensuring that individuals with hearing loss feel included and comfortable during holiday festivities. Simple yet impactful measures can make a significant difference. Consider arranging seating in a way that facilitates clearer communication, ensuring better visibility and proximity between speakers. Additionally, maintaining well-lit spaces can aid those who rely on lip-reading or visual cues.

Encouraging the use of assistive listening devices, if available, can enhance the experience for those with hearing impairments. These devices, such as hearing aids or personal amplifiers, can help amplify sounds and make it easier for individuals to follow conversations amid the noise and commotion of holiday gatherings.

Communication strategies can also play a crucial role in ensuring inclusive celebrations. Encourage family members and friends to speak clearly and



face the individual with hearing loss when conversing. Emphasize the importance of taking turns while speaking and avoiding interrupting or talking over one another, allowing everyone to participate more actively in discussions.

Furthermore, incorporating visual cues or gestures can aid in communication. Simple hand gestures or utilizing writing pads can bridge communication gaps, ensuring that individuals with hearing loss remain engaged and involved in the festivities.

For hosts organizing holiday gatherings, being mindful of the auditory environment can significantly benefit guests with hearing impairments. Consider controlling background noise by lowering the volume of music or selecting quieter areas for conversations. Creating designated quiet spaces where individuals can retreat for more intimate conversations can also be immensely helpful.

It's crucial to foster a supportive and understanding atmosphere where individuals with hearing loss feel comfortable expressing their needs. Encourage open communication and empathy among all guests to ensure that everyone can partake in the holiday joy.

In conclusion, while holiday gatherings can pose challenges for individuals with hearing loss, simple accommodations and thoughtful considerations can create a more inclusive and enjoyable experience for everyone. By embracing inclusive practices and fostering a supportive environment, we can ensure that the festive season remains a time of joy, connection, and celebration for all.

**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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# ADVANCED INTRAOCULAR LENSES: Give Yourself the Gift of Clear Sight

By Albert Smolyar, M.D.

The landscape of cataract surgery has been transformed by remarkable advances in intraocular lens (IOL) technology. These sophisticated artificial lenses, which replace the eye's clouded natural lens during cataract surgery, now offer patients unprecedented visual quality and reduced dependency on glasses.

## PREMIUM IOL OPTIONS

### Multifocal IOLs

These innovative lenses feature multiple focal points, enabling clear vision at various distances. Using concentric rings or zones of different powers, multifocal IOLs allow patients to see clearly up close while reading, at intermediate distances while working on computers, and far away while driving. The latest generation of these lenses minimizes the glare and halos that were common in earlier versions.

### Accommodating IOLs

Designed to work with the eye's natural muscles, accommodating IOLs can shift position or change shape within the eye. This movement allows for a more natural focusing process, similar to how the eye's natural lens functions. These lenses excel at providing seamless transitions between different viewing distances.

### Toric IOLs

For patients with astigmatism, toric IOLs offer a specialized solution. These lenses feature different powers in different meridians of the lens, effectively correcting the irregular corneal curvature that causes astigmatism. This advancement eliminates the need for additional surgical procedures or specialized glasses after cataract surgery.

### Extended Depth of Focus (EDOF) IOLs

The newest category of premium IOLs, EDOF lenses, uses innovative optical principles to create a continuous range of vision. Unlike traditional multifocal lenses that have distinct focal points, EDOF lenses provide a seamless transition across distances, reducing visual disturbances and improving contrast sensitivity.



## TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS

### Light-Adjustable Lenses

These revolutionary lenses can be fine-tuned after implantation using UV light treatments, allowing surgeons to optimize visual outcomes based on each patient's healing and visual needs.

### Enhanced Materials

Modern IOLs utilize advanced materials that reduce inflammation, prevent posterior capsule opacification, and filter harmful light wavelengths. Some incorporate blue-light filtering properties to protect the retina and potentially improve sleep patterns.

### Choosing the Right IOL

The selection of an appropriate IOL depends on various factors:

- Patient lifestyle and visual needs
- Occupation and hobbies
- Existing eye conditions
- Budget considerations
- Willingness to adapt to new visual experiences

### Future Prospects

Research continues into even more advanced IOL technologies, including smart IOLs that can automatically adjust to different lighting conditions, lenses incorporating drug-delivery systems, and IOLs with enhanced contrast sensitivity for night vision. These technological advances represent a significant milestone in ophthalmology, offering cataract patients unprecedented visual quality and freedom from glasses.



### Albert Smolyar M.D.

LASIK, Cataract & Lens

Replacement Surgeon

Dr. Smolyar is a board-certified cataract and refractive surgeon with over 25 years of experience.

He received his medical degree from Kursk State Medical University in the former Soviet Union. He completed an ophthalmology residency at the University of Louisville and a fellowship in Neuro-Ophthalmology at Michigan State University. He completed another ophthalmology residency at Ben Gurion University in Israel prior to coming to the United States.

Dr. Smolyar specializes in premium cataract and lens replacement surgery, as well as laser vision correction with LASIK, photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) and phototherapeutic keratectomy (PTK). He also has significant expertise in cosmetic and reconstructive eyelid surgery. Dr. Smolyar is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology. He was in private practice in Louisville, Kentucky for many years where he also served as a clinical Associate Professor at University of Louisville Department of Ophthalmology.

He has been living in Fort Myers since 2018 with his wife and dogs; they have raised three children together. In his spare time, Dr. Smolyar enjoys swimming, scuba diving, kayaking and fishing. He has dedicated time to providing free surgical eye care in underserved countries and considers that to be one of his passions.



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# The Healing Power of Holiday Traditions

Lisa Mattingly, M.D.

**T**he holiday season is a time of celebration, warmth, and connection. Beyond the festive decorations, delicious treats, and gift-giving, holiday traditions have a profound impact on our emotional and physical well-being. For many, they provide a sense of continuity, comfort, and joy that can be incredibly healing.

## The Joy of Familiar Rituals

Whether it's decorating the tree with family ornaments or baking your favorite holiday cookies, the familiarity of these rituals brings a sense of comfort and security. Holiday traditions often bring people together, creating special moments with loved ones that reinforce emotional bonds. These shared experiences help reduce feelings of loneliness or stress, promoting mental health and emotional resilience.

## Stress Relief Through Fun and Creativity

The holidays are also a time to let go and have fun. Whether you're hanging up holiday lights, listening to your favorite holiday tunes, or crafting homemade gifts, these activities can reduce stress and spark creativity. Engaging in playful, low-pressure activities can give you a break from the daily grind and improve your mood.

These festive moments don't just benefit your mental health. Participating in holiday traditions can lower cortisol levels, helping to reduce stress and its harmful effects on the body. Activities like decorating, cooking, and gift-wrapping allow you to be present in the moment, providing a mental break and boosting overall well-being.

## Reflecting on Gratitude and Giving

Holiday traditions often encourage us to reflect on the past year and express gratitude for the people and blessings in our lives. This practice of gratitude can have powerful benefits for both mental and physical health. Studies have shown that people who regularly practice gratitude experience lower blood pressure, improved immune function, and better sleep.

Traditions that focus on giving, such as volunteering or exchanging thoughtful gifts, can also foster a sense of purpose and joy. Acts of kindness, whether



big or small, have been shown to reduce stress, increase happiness, and even boost life expectancy. The holiday season reminds us that giving is often just as rewarding as receiving.

## A Sense of Continuity and Comfort

For many, holiday traditions offer a sense of continuity, providing comfort through their familiarity. No matter how much life changes, these rituals remain, grounding us in what really matters—family, friends, and love. These traditions become the threads that connect generations, preserving memories and creating new ones.

Even simple traditions like watching holiday movies, going caroling, or visiting a local tree farm can anchor us during the often hectic holiday season, reminding us to pause and enjoy the present moment.

As you embrace the joy and healing power of holiday traditions this season, don't forget to prioritize your health. At VIPcare, we are committed to helping you feel your best all year long. Schedule an appointment with your local VIPcare provider today by calling 239-747-7202 and take the first step toward a healthier, happier you this holiday season!

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# ESSENTIAL WINTER WELLNESS TIPS FOR SENIORS

## How To Stay Healthy and Happy All Season

**W**inter can be a challenging season for seniors, requiring extra attention to health and well-being. Even in the warmer climates of Florida, seniors can still benefit from adopting essential wellness practices to boost their physical and mental health. Looking for some ideas for staying healthy this winter? Here are easy winter wellness tips to help you or your loved ones thrive during the cooler months, focusing on staying active, eating healthy meals, boosting immunity, and maintaining mental well-being.

### 1. Stay Physically Active Indoors or Out!

Maintaining physical activity is crucial for overall health and managing stress, especially this time of year when outdoor activities may be limited due to cold weather. When the temperature is agreeable and sidewalks are free of ice or snow, walking is a great way to get exercise and fresh air. Prefer to stay indoors? Low-impact exercises, such as chair yoga, stretching or indoor walking, are excellent ways to stay active without straining joints. These gentle routines can help improve:

- Flexibility
- Strength
- Balance

Consider joining community classes, a local gym or following online workout sessions specifically designed for seniors to ensure a safe and effective exercise routine.

### 2. Boost Immunity With a Balanced Diet

Enjoy nutritious, comforting winter foods. Warm meals can bring comfort and nourishment during the winter months. Consider preparing hearty soups, stews, and casseroles that incorporate seasonal vegetables rich in vitamins and minerals, including:

- Squash
- Carrots
- Sweet potatoes



These meals not only warm the body but also provide essential nutrients needed for optimal health. Experimenting with new recipes can also add excitement to your winter dining experience.

A well-balanced diet plays a vital role in supporting the immune system, particularly during winter. Incorporating foods rich in vitamins and minerals can help fend off seasonal illnesses. Focus on including vitamin C-rich foods, such as:

- Citrus fruits
- Leafy greens
- Bell peppers

Emphasizing whole grains, lean proteins, and plenty of vegetables can keep your body energized and healthy throughout the season.

### 3. Stay Hydrated

Hydration is just as important during the winter as it is in the summer, though many people forget to drink enough water in cooler weather. Seniors are

especially at risk of dehydration, so it's vital to maintain regular fluid intake. Aim for at least 6–8 glasses of water a day, and remember that herbal teas, soups, and water-rich fruits like oranges and melons can also contribute to hydration. Staying hydrated helps support energy levels, improves digestion, and keeps skin healthy during the drier months.

**Are you interested in learning more about The Terraces at Bonita Springs?**

Schedule a community tour today by calling 239-204-3469 or take a virtual tour right now! Please join us for our next event!

**The Terraces**  
at Bonita Springs





**4. Dress Warmly and Prevent Falls**

Even in warmer climates, seniors should dress appropriately for cooler temperatures. Wearing layers allows for easy adjustments to temperature changes throughout the day. Proper footwear is also essential; non-slip shoes can significantly reduce the risk of falls, especially on potentially slippery surfaces. Taking proactive measures to enhance home safety—such as installing grab bars in bathrooms or using slip-resistant rugs—can further help prevent accidents during the winter months.

**5. Stay Mentally Engaged**

The winter months, with their shorter days, can sometimes lead to feelings of isolation or the "winter blues," particularly if you find yourself spending more time indoors. Staying mentally engaged is critical for emotional well-being. Activities like reading, puzzles or the creative arts can keep your mind sharp and stimulated. Equally important is maintaining social connections. Engaging with family, friends or community groups can uplift your spirits and combat loneliness. Consider participating in local events or joining clubs to foster new friendships and connections.

**6. Reduce the Spread of Germs**

Winter is cold and flu season, so reducing the spread of germs is key to staying healthy. Washing your hands frequently, using hand sanitizer, and regularly disinfecting surfaces can help prevent illness. An effective means of preventing the spread of viruses can be as easy as not touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Seniors should also avoid crowded areas during peak flu season and consider getting a flu vaccine to protect themselves. Encouraging social interaction is important for mental well-being, but it's wise to limit exposure to anyone showing symptoms of illness and maintain proper hygiene practices. If you do become ill, remember to cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.

**7. Get Plenty of Rest**

Rest and recovery are essential for overall health, especially during winter when your body may be working harder to fight off germs. Seniors should aim for 7–9 hours of sleep each night to support immune function and cognitive health. Establishing a relaxing nighttime routine, such as reading or listening to calming music, can help you unwind, improve sleep quality and maintain a regular sleep schedule. Prioritizing rest also boosts mood and energy, helping to combat winter fatigue.

**Prioritize Your Wellness All Year Long**

Staying healthy and happy during the winter months is achievable with intentional actions. By incorporating these wellness tips for staying healthy into your routine, you can enhance your physical and mental well-being throughout the season.

For seniors looking for comprehensive support in maintaining their health and wellness, communities like The Terraces at Bonita Springs, a luxury Life Plan Community in Bonita Springs, Florida, offer year-round wellness programs, nutritious dining options, and a variety of social activities designed to foster a fulfilling lifestyle. Embrace the season with confidence, knowing small changes can lead to significant improvements in your overall well-being.

Prioritize your wellness—and happiness—all year long at The Terraces. Call 239-208-6963 or contact us online to schedule a personalized visit and experience our brand of living well.

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# MEMORY MATTERS

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

**H**oliday season is here! Holidays in Florida may look a little different for those of us originally from a northern state. For example, no snow, holiday lights on palm trees and not evergreens, but the spirit and joyfulness of the season transcends location. We also know that for many, along with the traditions, food and connections, anxiety and depression may occur during holiday time. Loss of loved ones, changes in one's financial situation and the pressure to have the mythical "perfect holiday" can be overwhelming and stressful.

For those who are caring for someone with memory issues, some of those challenging feelings can be intensified. Caregiving can be a 24/7 job. With the additional expectations of traditions, gift giving, festive meals and other celebrations, it may feel too much to achieve. Many times, we unknowingly add stress to our plates by setting expectations that would be impossible, even without our caregiving responsibilities. Although our rational mind knows that holidays do not have to be perfect, how many of us have the perfect Hallmark Channel holiday vision in our heads? If we think about it, was there ever a "perfect" holiday experience in our lives? If you can answer "yes," remember those times with appreciation and gratitude. Reframing the concept of "perfect" to "memorable" may be more realistic. Let's face it, perfection is overrated.

Take a deep breath and let those dreams of perfection float away like a feather. Let's explore some ways to have a memorable holiday when you are caring for someone with memory challenges. Do an honest assessment of your loved one's current condition. Examine the holiday traditions that are non-negotiable. The concept of less is more can be helpful in this situation. Let's start by assessing your loved one. Ask yourself these questions:

- What are the activities that they can partake in?
- What are the best times of day for my loved one?
- Do they get upset or frustrated with too much going on?
- How do they do when their routine is changed?
- What type of situations cause my loved one to get upset or agitated?
- How do they react with others, including family?



After you have done the evaluation of your loved one, take an objective look at your holiday events, celebrations, and traditions. Be candid in your assessment and know that everything can be changed if it needs to be. Questions to consider:

- What are the holiday traditions that mean the most to both of us?
- What are the activities that personally bring me joy and not stress? Keep them on the list!
- Is my loved one able to travel across town or across the country? Will the change in routine, particularly with longer travel times, have a negative effect on my loved one?
- Who can help me with some of the essential holiday tasks?
- Can someone else spend some time with my loved one regularly so that I can personally do some of the holiday activities I enjoy?

Of course, there is not one perfect solution all situations. We know perfection is unattainable. Celebrating at home or elsewhere. Christine LoConte, Executive Director of the Dubin Center has some suggestions as well. For caregivers, the holidays can be challenging, but simplifying traditions, setting realistic expectations, and preparing family can help. Focus on a few meaningful activities rather than trying to do everything. Inform visiting family members about the type of dementia your loved one has, so they're prepared and can interact with greater understanding and patience. Don't hesitate to ask for specific

help, like running errands or spending time with your loved one so you can take a break. Small adjustments like these can make the season more manageable and enjoyable for everyone.

The Dubin Center provides valuable support for caregivers during the holidays so that no one faces dementia alone. With a range of resources tailored to dementia care, the Center offers access to support groups, educational resources, and personalized consultations that help caregivers navigate holiday stress and challenges. Caregivers can reach out for guidance on simplifying holiday activities, managing family visits, and creating a comfortable environment for their loved ones. The Dubin Center can also connect caregivers with respite resources, allowing them to take much-needed breaks and enjoy time for themselves. Whether online or in person, the Center's compassionate support can make a meaningful difference during the holiday season. <https://dubincenter.com/> | 239-437-3007

If you or your loved ones seem to be forgetting a bit more, give the gift of peace of mind and schedule a free memory screen at NPRC by calling 239-939-7777. No insurance needed. Memories matter!



**Contact NPRC at 239-939-7777  
today for your free memory screen.**





# DRINK RESPONSIBLY OR YOU COULD BE IN A PICKLE

By Joe Altepeter, DPM

**A**s temperatures are cooling off in Southwest Florida, the competition on the pickleball court is heating up. And as the intensity of the match grows, so does the risk of injury. Despite the pickleball court being considerably smaller than a tennis court, the sport can require a significant amount of quick lateral movements and plyometrics, putting your feet and ankles in vulnerable positions. While the majority of afflictions occur from the waist up, more than a quarter of all pickleball-induced ailments involve the lower extremities.

Arguably the most commonly injured structure would be the Achilles tendon and its associated musculature, this is particularly true for male participants. The Achilles tendon is the strongest and largest tendon in the body and attaches two to three important muscles in the calf to the back of the heel bone, the calcaneus. Sudden or progressively excessive stretch placed on the muscle group can be seen with lunges or falls (among other mechanisms), and can cause damage at a few different levels to varying degrees. The muscle, the tendon, their interface with each other (aponeurosis) and their connection with bone can all be affected. Symptoms can vary from sudden onset of a cramping or bruising sensations, swelling, and difficulty bearing weight. To a more serious degree the structures may tear more significantly or even completely, resulting in sudden onset of considerable sharp pain in the back of the calf or heel, that can be associated with an audible pop or snap. Some have described this sensation as comparable to being kicked or shot. With a complete rupture of the tendon we would see significant difficulty walking and inability to point the foot downwards.

Another relatively common lower extremity injury that can occur with a misstep or a fall would be an ankle sprain. Just as the Achilles can involve damage at different levels, the lateral ankle can involve damage to different structures. The weakest ligament in the ankle connects the outside of the ankle to the top of the foot. When there is sudden inversion stress placed on the foot, or inward twisting of the ankle, this structure can be damaged, resulting in a low ankle sprain.

Depending on the degree of damage, there could be fairly immediate swelling over the front ankle joint, pinpoint tenderness over the ankle joint, and difficulty



difficulty putting weight on the foot. With the more advanced injuries there can even be damage to the joint surfaces within the ankle.

With a similar mechanism of injury, particularly if there is low density or weakness, the bones could take the brunt of the force, resulting in fracture of the fifth metatarsal on the outside of the foot and/or of the fibula on the outside of the ankle. Either of these injuries would make it exceedingly uncomfortable to bear weight on the foot.

A few preventative measures can be key for decreasing the likelihood of incurring an injury on the court. First, it is important to be prepared from a gear standpoint. Proper supportive shoes can help stabilize the feet and reduce certain injuries. Second, preparation from a physical standpoint is important. Ensuring appropriate dynamic stretching and warm up exercises are done before play, and saving the static stretches for after the match, are valuable tips for performance and recovery. Diversifying and gradually increasing demands of exercise regimens leading up to competitive seasons can help negate overuse injuries. And finally, being realistic with the level of competition can prevent overexertion and accidents on the court.

These or any other pickleball related injuries experienced can have lasting effects. Soft tissue injuries have a tendency to linger and/or recur if they are not treated appropriately, and bony injuries increase the potential for arthritic changes within the afflicted joints. Seeking medical treatment as soon as possible is imperative for a more predictable and speedy recovery.

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

## Joe Altepeter, DPM, AACFAS

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



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# ALIGNMENT MATTERS:

## From Stress to Strength, Pilates for Mental Resilience

By Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

While Pilates is widely known for its physical benefits—stronger muscles, better posture, improved flexibility, and injury prevention—it also offers significant mental health advantages that are often overlooked. Research and personal experience demonstrate that Pilates improves mental well-being by reducing stress, improving focus, and fostering emotional resilience.

### Mind-Body Integration: The Core of Pilates

At the heart of Pilates is the principle of mind-body integration, emphasizing the connection between movement and emotional well-being. Todd Hargrove's research highlights how intentional physical activity, like Pilates, can reshape neural pathways, making the brain more adaptable and resilient. Pilates, focusing on controlled, mindful movements, improves brain plasticity, which is crucial for cognitive function, learning, and emotional regulation.

Pilates, a movement-focused practice, aligns with Hargrove's research by helping practitioners achieve mental clarity and emotional resilience. Unlike more intense forms of exercise that are often mind-less, Pilates centers around mindful movement, making it ideal for fostering long-term mental well-being.

### Moving Meditation

Pilates practitioners engage their minds and bodies, strengthening the connection between motor functions and neural processes. This heightened awareness of breath and movement stimulates the brain, fostering the creation of new neural connections. Additionally, Pilates requires practitioners to focus on alignment, muscle engagement, and breath control, transforming the practice into a moving meditation. Many practitioners report feeling more centered and calm after a session, thanks to the practice's focus on mindfulness and presence.

### An Antidote to Stress on and off the Mat

Pilates has the physical influence to reduce stress. Chronic stress can take a heavy toll on the mind and body, contributing to anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders. Pilates provides a powerful antidote to stress by emphasizing breath control, a core pillar of the practice. This breath-focused approach activates the parasympathetic nervous system, responsible for rest and relaxation.

Pilates practitioners flow through exercises with rhythmic breathing patterns, regulating cortisol levels (the stress hormone) and guiding their bodies into a relaxed state. Not only does this practice lower stress levels during the session, but it also arms practitioners with a tool they can use off the mat. The



breath awareness cultivated in Pilates can be applied during stressful moments in everyday life, promoting calmness and reducing feelings of anxiety.

### Movement Challenges Improve Cognitive Flexibility and Mental Clarity

Finding focus and mental clarity can be challenging in a world of distractions. Pilates helps improve concentration by requiring practitioners to fully engage their minds in coordinating body movements. Each Pilates exercise demands precision and control, training the brain to focus on one task at a time. This concentrated attention fosters cognitive function and promotes mental sharpness.

Research supports the idea that mind-body exercises like Pilates can positively impact cognitive performance, including memory and concentration. During Pilates, the brain forms new neural connections where the mind and body work harmoniously. Again, Hargrove often notes that movement challenges involving balance, coordination, and mindfulness stimulate the brain, promoting cognitive flexibility. Pilates fits this framework perfectly, offering physical and mental benefits that enhance focus and clarity.

### Emotional Resilience and Mood Improvement

Physical activity is well-known for boosting mood by releasing endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Pilates is no exception, but it goes beyond just an endorphin boost. The intentional, slow-paced movements in Pilates foster a sense of accomplishment, enhancing self-esteem and emotional resilience.

Pilates also helps release physical tension stored in the body, which often manifests as emotional stress. For example, neck, shoulder, and back tension are frequently linked to emotional strain. Pilates stretches, strengthens, and improves mobility in these areas, helping to alleviate physical and emotional stress. Additionally, by promoting better posture, balance, and alignment, Pilates fosters a sense of groundedness and inner strength, boosting self-confidence and emotional stability.

### A Sense of Community and Support

Though Pilates is often practiced individually, it is frequently done in group settings, fostering a sense of community and support. Connecting with instructors and fellow participants helps create a sense of belonging, which can reduce feelings of isolation or loneliness. Social support is a critical component of mental health, and participating in group Pilates classes can foster a supportive network of encouragement and motivation. Whether practicing virtually or in a studio, this shared experience bolsters emotional well-being and provides additional support for those facing difficult times.

### Improving Sleep Quality

One of Pilates' lesser-known benefits is its positive impact on sleep quality. Sleep disturbances are common symptoms of stress, anxiety, and mental health issues. Pilates helps regulate sleep patterns by promoting relaxation, reducing anxiety, and improving physical comfort. When practiced in the evening, its calming effect prepares both body and mind for restful sleep.

By incorporating Pilates into a routine, individuals can help regulate their circadian rhythms—the body's internal clock—leading to deeper, more restorative sleep. Pilates offers a holistic solution to improving sleep quality by addressing physical and mental stress.

### More than a Pretty Exercise

Pilates offers far more than physical benefits; it's a powerful tool for enhancing mental health. Pilates addresses both body and mind holistically, from reducing stress and promoting mindfulness to improving focus, emotional resilience, and sleep quality. In a world where mental health challenges are on the rise, these forgotten benefits of Pilates should not be overlooked.

Integrating mindful movement, breath control, and community support, Pilates provides a pathway to physical strength, mental clarity, and emotional balance. Whether new to Pilates or a seasoned practitioner, embracing these often-overlooked mental health benefits can lead to a more balanced and fulfilling life.

### Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

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

[WWW.CLUBPILATES.COM](http://WWW.CLUBPILATES.COM)



# NEOWAVES - FINALLY You Can Say Goodbye to ED

**O**ur office specializes in the treatment of Erectile Dysfunction through the use of low-intensity shock wave therapy. Our method is a scientifically proven, non-invasive procedure that uses focused sound waves to increase blood flow to the penis, optimizing erections, sensitivity and sexual performance.

## What Are Some of the Causes of Erectile Dysfunction?

Most men who suffer from ED have vascular issues that affect blood flow to the penis. By utilizing low-intensity focused sound waves, our method can repair aged blood vessels, stimulate the growth of new blood vessels and remove decades of micro-plaque that's been built up over time.

## Are There Any Side Effects or Pain Associated with the Treatment?

There are no side effects from our treatment. More importantly, it is completely painless, and non-invasive as well. Patients can resume their normal activities, including sexual activity following each treatment session.

## How Many Sessions Are Required for a Patient to Achieve Optimal Results?

Our office follows European protocol and guidelines, which based on a series of clinical studies and trials recommends a total of 6 sessions, over the course of six weeks. On average, patients will start noticing results after the third or fourth treatment.

## Is there a Difference Between Radial and Focused Shock Waves?

Absolutely. Radial Shock Waves are released into the tissue and radiate within, affecting a larger area than a Focused Shock Wave does, yet not penetrating as deeply as a Focused Shock Wave. As a result, Radial Wave therapy is more beneficial for treating superficial injuries and areas that benefit from tissue stimulation such as muscles



and backs. On the other hand, the energy delivery of a Focused Shock Wave is precisely controlled, the focal size is constant and penetrates a lot deeper than Radial Shock Waves do. Due to the purpose of our treatment being able to remove decades of micro-plaque, we must use a machine that uses high-frequency, focused energy that will do precisely that.

## How Does it Work and How Long Will the Benefits Last?

The Neowaves procedure breaks up plaque formation in blood vessels and stimulates the growth of new blood vessels in the penis. This process, called neurogenesis, increases blood flow to the penis, improves sexual function and enhances sensitivity in the penis. In addition, our procedure activates the growth of new nerve tissue in the penis. Effects from the treatment have been scientifically proven to last at least 2-3 years, although this can vary dependent of individual health and lifestyle habits.

## Is Your Equipment FDA Approved?

Yes! Our machine is FDA approved and uses state-of-the-art technology. More importantly, it is a multi-purpose device that has been tested and proven to work in several other medical fields, including orthopedic medicine, urology, anti-aging treatments and wound healing.

Visit [www.neowaves.com](http://www.neowaves.com) or call us at (239) 226-2727 to learn more.



**Alejandro Miranda-Sousa, MD & Michael Binner, MD**

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# MRI vs EMG

## WHICH IS MORE ACCURATE?

By Dr. Scott Bradley PT, DPT, ECS

**A**n electromyography (EMG) is a diagnostic test used to detect the nerve impulses sent to the muscles and sensory input to the skin. EMG is done by physicians, neurologists and physical therapists with a electromyograph. The electromyograph tool picks up the specific action potential of the nerve by inserting

### Review of Literature

Electroneuromyography has long been considered the “gold standard” test to determine nerve injury and function. In recent years, it has become more and more popular to attempt to predict nerve injury by the use of MRI. This paper reviews the published literature to compare the abilities of MRI and ENMG in predicting several common nerve injuries.

### Radiculopathies

In 1993, Buirski et al. used magnetic resonance imaging to evaluate abnormal lumbar disc’s in 115 symptomatic patients and 63 symptom-free control patients. This study tried to determine which abnormal disc’s would be painful using MRI. Results showed no significant difference between the two groups. In 1998, Saifuddin et al. tried to determine the sensitivity of MRI to painful annular tears. They found that MRI had a specificity of 95.2%, however, showed only 26.7% sensitivity to painful annular tears. Toyokura et al. found EMG/NCS to have 70% sensitivity to radiculopathies, but no specificity was mentioned. Additional studies, with Ito et al. and Horton et al. (8) further stated that MRI is a poor predictor of cause for patient’s symptoms.

### Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Jarvik et al. showed that MRI had a sensitivity of 96% for determining carpal tunnel syndrome, however demonstrated a specificity of only 33 to 38%. Deryani et al. found a 33% sensitivity of MRI in predicting carpal tunnel syndrome. No specificity was mentioned. This group determined that MRI was most helpful in determining cases of suspicious clinical and electrophysiological diagnoses. Stevens published a paper in 1998 in which he determined conventional nerve studies had approximately a 90% sensitivity and a 90% specificity for predicting carpal tunnel syndrome. In 2003, Chang et al. evaluated the sensitivities of the most commonly used nerve conduction tests. They determined the sensitivity for median to ulnar motor



comparison to be 70%. Additionally, they found sensitivities of 68.8% for median motor distal latency, 73.8% for median sensory distal latency, and 77.5% for second lumbrical to second dorsal interosseous comparison. Furthermore, they determined that a combination of these tests increased the sensitivity for predicting carpal tunnel syndrome to 91.9%.

### Cubital Tunnel

Grant et al. performed a small pilot study in 2002 evaluating 21 ulnar nerves. They found that MRI had a 100% sensitivity in determining cubital tunnel however did not determine specificity. They also determined that standard nerve conduction studies provided a sensitivity to cubital tunnel syndrome of 71% preoperatively and 90% sensitivity intraoperatively. Many other studies have reported electrophysiological testing sensitivities of 20% to 100% for determining ulnar neuropathy at the elbow.

### The Future of MRI and Nerve Injury

Bendszus et al. determined that MRI can detect changes in denervated muscle within 24 hours post injury. Aagaard et al. demonstrated the potential of MRI to noninvasively differentiate between axonotmetic and neurotmetic nerve injuries.

### Conclusions

While MRI has made significant inroads with its ability to identify peripheral nerve injury, electrophysiological testing continues to be the “gold standard.” MRI is a relatively new area of medicine and has been used clinically in medicine for only two and a half decades. As further research is conducted and improved techniques for evaluating anatomical structures are developed, MRI will become more commonly used for evaluating nerve injuries because of its noninvasive nature. Perhaps the defining limitation for MRI in evaluating peripheral nerve injury is its inability to provide more than a visual image of anatomical structures and cannot truly evaluate nerve function.



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# SMOOTH SKIN, SIMPLIFIED: THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO LASER HAIR REMOVAL

In the world of aesthetic treatments, laser hair removal has revolutionized the way we approach unwanted hair, offering a long-lasting solution that goes beyond traditional hair removal methods. Our state-of-the-art laser technology provides a comprehensive, personalized approach to achieving smooth, hair-free skin for all skin types.

## Cutting-Edge Technology: Precision and Versatility

At the heart of our laser hair removal service are two advanced laser systems that set us apart in the industry:

### 1064 ND:YAG Laser

The 1064 ND:YAG laser is a powerful and versatile technology specifically designed to effectively treat a wide range of skin tones. Its unique wavelength penetrates deeper into the skin, making it particularly effective for individuals with darker skin tones who have traditionally struggled to find safe and effective hair removal options.

### 810 Diode Laser

Our 810 diode laser offers precision and efficiency, targeting hair follicles with remarkable accuracy. This technology is renowned for its ability to provide quick treatments with minimal discomfort, making it a popular choice for those seeking effective hair reduction.

## Inclusive Treatment: Celebrating All Skin Types

One of our most significant advantages is our ability to treat all skin types. Unlike many traditional hair removal methods that work best on specific skin tones, our advanced laser systems are engineered to provide safe, effective treatments for everyone. Whether you have fair, olive, or dark skin, our technology can help you achieve the smooth, hair-free skin you desire.

## Membership Program: Affordable Luxury, Convenient Results

We understand that consistent hair removal can be an investment, which is why we've designed a membership program that makes smooth skin accessible and affordable:

### Membership Benefits

- **Base Membership: \$100 per Month**
  - Includes treatment of one selected area
  - Professional, personalized service
  - Access to our cutting-edge laser technology



### • Flexible Add-On Options

- **Additional Areas: \$75 per Session**
- Customize your treatment
- Target multiple areas in a single visit
- Flexibility to address your specific hair removal needs

### How Laser Hair Removal Works

The process is simple yet sophisticated. Our lasers emit concentrated light that is absorbed by the pigment in hair follicles. This light energy is converted to heat, which damages the hair follicles, inhibiting future hair growth. Over a series of treatments, we can significantly reduce hair growth, leaving your skin smoother and more refined.

### What to Expect

- **Consultation:** A thorough assessment of your skin and hair type
- **Customized Treatment Plan:** Tailored specifically to your needs
- **Quick Sessions:** Most treatments take just minutes
- **Minimal Discomfort:** Advanced cooling technologies ensure a comfortable experience
- **Gradual, Effective Results:** Noticeable reduction in hair growth after each session

### Benefits Beyond Hair Removal

- Laser hair removal offers more than just aesthetic improvements:
- Reduces ingrown hairs
  - Eliminates the need for frequent shaving or waxing
  - Saves time and money in the long run
  - Boosts confidence and skin smoothness

## Your Journey to Smooth Skin Starts Here

Ready to say goodbye to unwanted hair? Our membership program provides an affordable, convenient path to achieving the smooth skin you've always wanted. With our advanced technology and personalized approach, we're committed to helping you look and feel your best.

Schedule your consultation today and take the first step towards confident, hair-free skin!

**Hideout Boutique** is your all-inclusive medical spa in Fort Myers, FL, where results and relaxation collide. At Hideout, we offer a wide range of services, from skin care and lashes, to permanent makeup, lasers, injectables and skin tightening. Our professional team provides personalized treatments tailored to your unique needs, ensuring exceptional results with every visit. We specialize in acne and anti-aging by providing the highest quality cosmetic and aesthetic injectables, including Lasers, Botox/Jeuveau/Xeomin, Filler, Sculptra, PRP, Peels, Microneedling and PDO threading. Our providers at Hideout also specialize in helping our clients achieve their ultimate skin health by utilizing proper medical-grade products and integrating appropriate and evidence-based skin health procedures.

We prioritize safety, natural results and client relationships, so your journey begins with a consultation and mutual decisions based on individual needs. Your providers will then create a customized anti-aging/skin health plan for you. At Hideout, education and safety is our top priority. Our medical cosmetic treatments are performed by our highly trained and experienced medical providers, nurses and aestheticians.



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# FGCU addresses growing demands of medical device industry

With micro-credentials and digital badges, students and working professionals can now elevate their career prospects

The demand for specialized skills in the medical device field is growing rapidly due to significant expansion of the global market for these products. According to Fortune Business Insights, the market was valued at \$518 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach \$886 billion by 2032. This growth is driven by an increase in chronic diseases like cancer and diabetes, leading to more diagnostic and surgical procedures. The U.S. medical devices market alone is expected to reach \$314 billion by 2032, fueled by research and development investments and innovation.

With the rising prevalence of chronic conditions and advancements in medical technology, there is a clear demand for professionals with specialized skills to develop, manage and operate these advanced devices. Florida Gulf Coast University offers two digital badges to equip students for careers in this field: the Fundamentals of Medical Device Industry badge and the Medical Device Professional Sales badge. Developed in collaboration with Arthrex, a medical device company that specializes in orthopedics and minimally invasive surgery, these courses prepare students with in-demand skills for the industry.



Digital badges at FGCU are micro-credentials that enhance an individual's resume by verifying to employers that they have the skills wanted in the workplace.

By fostering strong partnerships with leading companies like Arthrex, FGCU ensures students gain practical skills that are directly applicable to their future careers. This collaboration enhances the students' learning experience and benefits Southwest Florida by preparing a skilled workforce ready to meet the needs of area employers.



## Fundamentals of Medical Device Industry Badge

Launched in 2020, this digital badge immerses students in the industry, from the healthcare marketplace to product development and management and to the needs of healthcare and medical providers. With 36 graduates, this program offers a hands-on learning approach, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Open to all majors, it includes a guaranteed interview with Arthrex, making it a direct pathway to a career in the medical device sector.

Students gain a deep understanding of the healthcare marketplace, including health systems, healthcare payers and federal healthcare policy. They apply concepts and theories in product development and management specifically to the medical device industry, covering the entire product lifecycle, from concept to post-market. Additionally, students explore the critical aspects of clinical and regulatory compliance, including medical device quality system regulations, which are essential for staying competitive and reducing time to market. The badge also focuses on orthopedic research and the fundamentals of medical education, ensuring that students have the specialized knowledge necessary for success in the industry. Finally, they hone their communication skills, enabling them to effectively engage with healthcare providers, administrators and patients.

## Medical Device Professional Sales Badge

Introduced in 2024, this badge focuses on essential sales competencies within the medical device industry. Designed by FGCU faculty in collaboration with Arthrex experts, the course equips students

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## Why Choose FGCU's Digital Badges?

These digital badges enhance credentials and provide a strategic advantage in a competitive job market. With the healthcare industry continuously evolving, professionals with specialized skills are increasingly in demand. FGCU's partnership with Arthrex ensures that students are not just learning theory but also gaining practical, real-world experience that employers value. Earning one of these badges is a significant step toward a rewarding career in the medical device industry.

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# Holiday Conversations That Matter:

## Talking to Aging Loved Ones About Estate and Long-Term Care Planning

By Carl Zacharia

**A**s the holiday season approaches, many of us will be making plans to gather with our family and loved ones. Oftentimes, these visits can be a wake-up call for families who may not have seen their loved ones in quite a while. They may discover that their parent or loved one is showing the accelerated effects of normal aging, dealing with some cognitive decline or experiencing a full-on crisis.

Talking about estate and long-term care planning can be extremely difficult and emotional, but it is an essential conversation that every family should have. The holiday season offers a unique opportunity to connect with our family and loved ones. It can also present an ideal time to discuss important topics such as wills, healthcare directives, asset protection and long-term care options in a way that fosters understanding and cooperation. By planning ahead, you can help your family and loved ones to feel more secure and prepared for the future, while also strengthening family bonds during the holidays.

To get things moving, Zacharia Brown offers the following tips to help initiate a thorough and respectful discussion to prepare you for the road ahead.

### 1. Plan What You Can

Discussing one's estate plan and all that it entails is not something that should happen without advance planning. You should make a list of topics and questions, and then share specific areas that you would like to discuss with your loved ones. Use language that is respectful and supportive, and if needed, take a breather when emotions are running high or the stress of the discussion becomes overwhelming.

### 2. Identify Key People

There are several key people who will have important information to consider for estate planning conversations. It will be helpful to ask your parents or loved one for the names and contact details of their attorney (if they have one), financial advisor, CPA and any insurance brokers.

### 3. Address the Topic of a Will/Trust

You should determine whether your parent(s) or loved one has an existing Will or Trust in place, and if so, whether that document is up to date. Also ask



where important documents are kept and confirm who your parent(s) or loved one has appointed as their personal representative under their Will or trustee under their Trust.

### 4. Talk About Powers of Attorney

Determine if your parent(s)/loved one has appointed someone to manage their financial and health care affairs should they become incapacitated. This is one of the most IMPORTANT documents that a person can have. If they haven't given someone power of attorney yet, strongly suggest that they do this as soon as possible. POA documents protect them if something unexpected should occur.

### 5. Discuss End-of-Life Wishes

Even though the subject may be uncomfortable, you should discuss your parents' end-of-life wishes as their estate plan will be incomplete without these directives. Wishes regarding the withdrawal or termination of life support and any specific funeral wishes or burial concerns should also be discussed.

### 6. Ask About Insurance Policies

Talk about the type of insurance policies in place (i.e. health, life, disability and long-term care insurance) and ask about any older life insurance policies that may have been in place since their childhood.

### 7. Discuss Other Financial Matters

In addition to the aforementioned, ask your loved ones to make a list of all of their accounts – bank, financial, retirement, mutual fund, and credit accounts and keep them somewhere safe. Even if they aren't willing to disclose account balances, having financial institution names and types of accounts will be extremely valuable.

Starting a conversation with your parents or loved ones about estate planning and long-term care may feel daunting, but it is an essential step toward ensuring their future security and peace of mind. Remember, these discussions are not just about legal documents or financial plans—they are about protecting your parents' legacy, honoring their values, and easing the burden on loved ones. Taking the time to have these conversations now can provide clarity and comfort for your entire family, setting the stage for a more secure and prepared future.

Once your family has had these discussions, please reach out to Zacharia Brown at 239.345.4545 to help you and your loved ones create and implement a plan.



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Dr. Dainiak spent one year after dental school in a General Practice Residency at University Hospital at Stony Brook, New York. The residency was in a Level I Trauma Center and consisted of outpatient treatment of medically compromised patients, an Emergency Room rotation, an Anesthesia Rotation, and in-house treatment of hospitalized patients. When it comes to dental infection and dental trauma, most area hospitals in Southwest Florida do not have a dentist on staff in the hospital emergency room to properly assess the teeth.

Treatment that can be provided by Dr. Dainiak includes diagnostic treatment, palliative treatment, repairing tooth fractures, stabilizing loose teeth, treatment for dental infections, incision and drainage, sutures, and proper referrals when necessary. Dr. Dainiak takes dental emergencies seriously and consults on dental emergencies the same day.



**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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**See a problem. Solve a problem.** I suffered from psoriasis and eczema for much of my life. My daughter was born with eczema as well. I tried many prescriptions and over-the-counter products on the market to relieve our itchy skin, but none were effective.

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people in the U.S. have **psoriasis**

**31 million**  
Americans have  
some form  
of **eczema**

**16 million**  
suffer from the signs  
and symptoms  
of **rosacea**

**millions**  
of people are just  
like Deanna



Deanna Wallin,  
Founder & CEO

As a former Registered Nurse with a background in healthcare and wound care, I started researching what we were putting on our skin that could be causing our skin irritations. I read product labels and researched ingredients used in many beauty products. It was a real eye opener. I was shocked to learn about the negative effects of ingredients like propylene glycol, parabens, hardening agents, phthalates and much more.

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Years &  
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I knew there had to be a better alternative, so I started experimenting with natural skin care products made with coconut oil, shea butter and olive oil. Soon after, my daughter and I started to see real results. I was on to something life-changing and decided to use my skin care journey to help others as well.

In 2009, I opened Naples Soap Company in a 300 sq. foot shop in Naples, Florida. I created my own line-up of products for people just like me with sensitive skin.

*Deanna*

Sincerely,  
Deanna Wallin  
Founder & CEO, Naples Soap Company







# IF YOU HAVE STIFF ANKLES THIS ARTICLE IS FOR YOU!

By Dr. Scott Bradley PT, DPT, ECS

**T**he ankle (Talocrural) is one of, if not THE most complex joint in our body. If you do not have enough dorsiflexion motion in the ankle (bringing the foot up towards your face) then you will have to compensate when squatting down by sticking your butt out, increasing the lordosis or arch in your low back, and flexing forward at the hips!

These compensations will cause more load to be put through the low back and knees. This improper direction of forces through the low back and knee joints can cause early degenerative changes (osteoarthritis, meniscal fraying, disc herniation, stenosis etc.).



## HOW TO FIX

**1. Short term** - Place a small weight plate or on an incline when squatting. If you have ever looked at a weightlifter's shoe you will notice that they have a bigger heel. This assists them in getting low during their lifts.



The raised heel will allow you to reach 90 degrees or even go past 90 degrees when squatting but be advised that it will increase the amount of force through the knee! We advise squatting with low weight when elevating the heels due to this increased force on the knees.

**"Remember the best way to increase motion in any joint is to actively move and load that joint."**

## LONG TERM

Easy at home ankle mobility exercises:

### 1. Eccentric heel raises

This exercise increases the strength and the length of the calf muscles which are the culprits of limited ankle movement. Simply stand up on your toes, lifting one leg up, so you are standing on the tight

ankle, then slowly lower your heel back down to the floor for a count of 5 seconds. Repeat this for 30 repetitions.

### 2. Standing straight calf stretch

This exercise targets the big calf muscle that you see called the gastrocnemius. Stand with arms against a wall in a tandem stance with the ankle to be stretched in the rear. Keep the rear foot flat and the rear



knee straight. Slowly sink your hips forward and flatten your rear foot into the floor. This stretch should be felt in the meat of your calf muscle. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds for a count of 3.



### 3. Standing bent leg calf stretch

This exercise targets a muscle deeper in the leg that in most cases is the main culprit of limited ankle motion called the soleus. This is the same as the

exercise above but with the back knee bent. This stretch should be felt at the base of the heel. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds for a count of 3.

### 4. Kneeling ankle pulses with a towel

This is a self mobilization exercise for the ankle joint. This exercise is simple yet effective! Begin by kneeling on the ground with the tight ankle in front. Wrap a towel around the front of the



ankle (make sure the towel is between the two bones on either side of your ankle). Pull the towel towards your butt so the towel is pulling on the front of your ankle. Then slowly shift your body weight forward and backward keeping the front heel down.

We recommend pulsating back and forth with no hold. It is more effective if this is done with the front ankle on a step or a 5-7 inch elevated surface as this will better target the ankle joint! Complete for 30 repetitions.



### 5. Big toe and bent knee stretch

This exercise will stretch the plantar fascia and the Soleus muscle at the same time! Everyone forgets about the importance of not only first toe mobility in normal ambulation but also the importance it has on limited ankle motion and Achilles tendinopathy.

The plantar fascia connects indirectly to the Achilles tendon through fascial lines and is one of the main contributors to ankle stiffness. Begin by placing the toes of the stiff ankle on the wall, bend the front knee and lean forward into the wall, a stretch should be felt in the sole of the foot and the base of the heel. Hold the stretch for 30 seconds for a count of 3.



These are exercises that can be easily done at home while watching TV. The ankle joint is the strongest joint biomechanically in our body. Just think, it can lift your whole body weight up with relatively small muscles! If the ankle is too stiff to move the body, the body will adapt and those forces will be applied elsewhere to other joints; that are not as well equipped to deal with the load applied to them.

If you have any questions or these exercises are too difficult/painful to perform do not hesitate to email us. We are here to help you feel better through movement!



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# The Importance of Progesterone Replacement in Both Men and Women

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

Of the many hormones in the body, a select few are typically categorized as being for one gender or for the other. Many people are often surprised to learn, though, that despite these hormones being more prominent in one gender, they are essential for proper body functioning in both.

One example of these hormones is progesterone, which is often considered for women, although it has many essential roles in men. However, progesterone can decline in both genders for a number of reasons, including with age or due to health conditions. When progesterone levels fall, unpleasant symptoms can occur, which is why progesterone replacement is a crucial treatment for those with unbalanced hormones.

## What Is Progesterone?

Progesterone is a hormone most often known to be released by the corpus luteum after a woman has ovulated. Also referred to as the “pregnancy hormone,” progesterone prepares the uterus for pregnancy by thickening the lining and preventing muscle contractions that would expel an egg.

Despite its primary role in preparing the female body for pregnancy, though, progesterone is also vital for men, albeit with different roles.

Let’s further discuss the role of progesterone in both genders and why it is crucial for men and women to have balanced progesterone levels.

## The Role of Progesterone in Women

Progesterone varies considerably through a woman’s menstrual cycle, with it being produced in low levels during the first half but rising considerably following ovulation. If a woman becomes pregnant, progesterone remains high throughout the pregnancy and aids in breast milk production upon delivery of the baby.

While the ovaries initially produce progesterone, the placenta begins producing progesterone at a higher rate after 8 or 10 weeks of pregnancy. This increase in progesterone keeps the body from releasing more eggs and prepares the breasts to produce milk.



Despite the role of progesterone in pregnancy, it can also be used to prevent pregnancy. In fact, progesterone is often used by itself or in combination with estrogen in hormonal contraceptives. When in this format, it helps the cervical mucus thicken, making it difficult for sperm to reach and fertilize an egg. It can also cause the uterine lining to thin, or it may stop ovulation entirely.

Because of these extremes in the body, promoting an ideal amount of progesterone is critical for healthy fertility, if pregnancy is a woman’s goal.

## Signs Of Low Progesterone in Women

Some signs of low progesterone in women include:

- missing periods or having abnormal periods
- uterine bleeding
- repeated miscarriages
- spotting and pain while pregnant
- infertility

Progesterone and estrogen are also closely related, so if progesterone is too low, it may cause estrogen levels to become high, which can cause weight gain, headaches, or mood swings.

## The Role of Progesterone in Men

Despite being considered the “pregnancy hormone,” progesterone is also an essential hormone in men.

In men, progesterone plays a vital role in mood regulation and keeping the mind calm. It also impacts libido and promotes fertility from the man’s side. This is because progesterone influences spermiogenesis, or the creation of sperm; if the amount of progesterone in a man is too low, the body might not be able to produce as much sperm, which can influence a couple’s ability to conceive.

Progesterone is also crucial for the biosynthesis of testosterone, otherwise known as the male sex hormone, which is responsible for the development of secondary sex characteristics such as body hair, muscle growth, and a deeper voice.

Progesterone also plays an essential role in the male body regarding counteracting the effects of estrogen, which can cause testosterone levels to decline. Proper progesterone levels ensure that these sex hormones are in the correct balance.

## Signs Of Low Progesterone in Men

Some of the signs of low progesterone in men include:

- hair loss
- low libido
- fatigue
- weight gain
- depression
- breast growth
- muscle loss
- bone loss
- erectile dysfunction

Low progesterone levels can also increase the risk of certain health conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, prostate cancer, and prostatism.

## Estrogen Dominance and Progesterone

Progesterone is an antagonist to estrogen, giving it an important role in keeping estrogen levels in check. However, this also means that if progesterone levels are too low, estrogen levels can become high without anything to keep them in the correct range, a condition called estrogen dominance.

While estrogen dominance is most often referred to in women, it can affect men as well, with both genders having shared and also different symptoms.

Women with estrogen dominance may have symptoms that include:

- swelling and tenderness in the breasts
- low libido
- bloating
- weight gain
- mood swings
- headaches
- increase premenstrual syndrome symptoms
- fatigue
- cold hands or feet
- memory problems
- anxiety and panic attacks



Men can share some of the above symptoms in addition to experiencing infertility issues, breast tissue growth, or erectile dysfunction.

Normal estrogen levels in adult, menopausal women range from 15 – 350 pg/ml. In adult men, estrogen levels should range from 10 - 40 pg/ml. Estrogen counts higher than these ranges may signify low progesterone.

#### What Causes Low Progesterone?

There are many causes of low progesterone, some due to a temporary situation, whereas others may be more chronic.

#### Hypothyroidism

Many of the hormones in the body interact, which is evident between the thyroid hormones, T3 and T4, and progesterone. With hypothyroidism, the thyroid does not produce enough hormones, and since the thyroid is responsible for regulating the endocrine system, this can then influence how well the body is able to produce progesterone.

It is also possible for low progesterone to lead to hypothyroidism, so this connection is bi-directional.

#### Low Cholesterol

Cholesterol is needed by the body in order to make progesterone. So, if your cholesterol is low, your body does not have enough of the building blocks required to produce enough progesterone.

#### Stress

Stress contributes to many health conditions, and low progesterone is one of them. This is because the hormone secreted by the body when in a perceived stressful situation, cortisol, utilizes the resources needed to make progesterone.

Essentially, when the body is stressed, it halts progesterone production in order to increase the amount of cortisol produced. For those experiencing chronic stress, this means that cortisol continually interferes with progesterone production.

#### Anovulatory Cycle

An anovulatory cycle is a menstrual cycle where ovulation does not occur. Since a rise in progesterone is triggered by the release of an egg and the empty follicle it leaves behind called the corpus luteum, an anovulatory cycle results in no increase in progesterone.

Anovulatory cycles are common in those on certain types of birth control or with PCOS.

#### Abnormal Bodyweight

Your body weight can play a prominent role in progesterone production because of its impact on the menstrual cycle. This is because women need a certain amount of body fat in order to have a regular cycle, which leads to ovulation and a rise in progesterone. Because of this, low body weight may impede ovulation, leading to no progesterone production.

Problems can occur at the other end of the spectrum as well, though. This is because fat cells produce estrogen, so high body fat can result in an overproduction of estrogen, which can lead to low progesterone. Studies have shown this correlation between obesity and low progesterone in men as well.

#### Prolactin Disorder

Prolactin is a hormone produced by the pituitary, and it negatively affects the production of sex hormone precursors. Those with hyperprolactinemia produce too much prolactin, which can disrupt the menstrual cycle, keeping progesterone from being produced.

#### Correcting Low Progesterone

Progesterone replacement therapy involves progestins, which are synthetic compounds mimicking the effects of progesterone on the body.

Some reasons why someone may be treated with progesterone hormone therapy are to:

- correct a low amount of progesterone due to underproduction
- bring on menstruation
- reverse low progesterone resulting from certain medications
- replace progesterone that is limited due to specific medical procedures

There are many different forms of progesterone hormone therapy, such as:

- injections
- oral capsules
- vaginal gels
- vaginal inserts
- vaginal suppositories

The ideal method of progesterone replacement will depend on gender, symptoms, and personal preferences.

#### The Importance of Progesterone Replacement

Besides helping to address problems with fertility, progesterone replacement can also be essential for a healthy pregnancy in women. For example, women who are pregnant, but have low progesterone, may be at a greater risk of preterm delivery or miscarriage. Replacing progesterone can help prevent these complications from occurring.



Progesterone replacement produces similar benefits in men regarding improving fertility due to its role in spermatogenesis and the fact that low progesterone can lead to erectile dysfunction.

Progesterone can also help with other symptoms affecting well-being, including those that appear in men with low progesterone. These benefits can include an improvement in mood, better sleep, and stronger bones.

Some cases of low progesterone are temporary, but for those suffering significantly from low progesterone, it is likely due to a chronic cause, and the only way to find relief is by addressing the hormonal imbalance.

Progesterone can be supplemented in many forms, such as injections, pills, or creams, which help raise progesterone levels and assist the body in functioning correctly, reversing unpleasant symptoms. Working with a doctor who specializes in hormones can also ensure that you get just the right amount of progesterone, as too much can also cause problems, especially for those looking to conceive.

By adequately balancing progesterone, all other hormones in the body can work in balance again, significantly improving your quality of life.

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# Understanding Polycystic Kidney Disease

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

**C**hronic Kidney Disease (CKD) means that the kidneys have become damaged. The common causes of CKD are diabetes mellitus, hypertension, inherited diseases, and nephritis.

Polycystic kidney disease is the fourth leading cause of kidney failure and 600,000 people in the United States have the disorder. Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) affects the kidneys with cysts that grow and are filled with fluid. These cysts can damage the kidneys, and essentially take over the kidney's ability to work properly, especially if there are numerous cysts growing at one time. These cysts can severely reduce kidney function.

Poly cystic kidney disease can also affect other organs in the body including the spleen, ovaries, liver, pancreas, bowels, brain, and heart. Most people don't develop PKD until middle age, and the symptoms can range from mild to severe.

## The primary symptoms of PKD are as follows:

- High blood pressure
- Back or side pain
- Swollen abdomen
- Blood in the urine
- Frequent bladder and/or kidney infections
- Fluttering or pounding chest
- Chest pain
- Headaches

50 to 60 percent of individuals with PKD will develop kidney failure.

## PKD Treatment

Individuals with PKD will need dialysis and a possible kidney transplant. There are also medications that can help treat the disorder and certain diets that will help to prevent the growth of the cysts, which can stop the progression of the disease. PKD can be genetic, so it's best to speak to your physician about your children's health or any planned pregnancies.

## How Can the Progression of Kidney Disease Be Delayed?

1. Keeping blood pressure under 130/80 or if you have diabetes or protein in the urine, under 125/75.
2. Taking certain types of medications called ACE-Inhibitors or angiotensin receptor blockers.

3. If you are diabetic, keeping blood sugars tightly controlled (HbA1c less than 7.0).
4. Avoiding medications that harm your kidneys such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. (NSAIDs). Examples are Motrin, ibuprofen, Aleve, Advil, Naprosyn. A Cox-2 inhibitor called Celebrex is also harmful.
5. Avoiding, if possible, IV contrast dye used for CT scans and heart catheterizations and gadolinium used in MRIs.
6. Controlling your cholesterol.
7. Quit smoking.
8. If overweight, losing weight.
9. Treating anemia if present.
10. Avoiding Fleet phospho-soda (oral) and Fleet enemas for patients in Stage 4 and 5 chronic kidney disease.

## Associates in Nephrology

Associates in Nephrology has been providing comprehensive kidney care and transplant services in Southwest Florida since 1984. Our team of nephrologists, nurse practitioners, and medical assistants are engaged in all aspects of providing the most advanced services for kidney disease and kidney transplants.

## Chronic Kidney Disease Program

Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) means that the kidneys have become damaged. The common causes of CKD are diabetes mellitus, hypertension, inherited diseases, and nephritis.

The purpose of the CKD program is to slow the progression of damage to the kidneys and treat associated complications such as hypertension, anemia, and bone disease. If we are unable to arrest the disease process and the kidney damage progresses to end stage renal disease (ESRD), our plan is to manage these complications while preparing patients for renal (kidney) replacement therapy. This therapy can consist of peritoneal dialysis, hemodialysis, home hemodialysis, or kidney transplantation.

Managing these complications and preparing patients for renal replacement therapy is a complex process of visits, treatment, and teaching sessions. Our medical team consists of nephrologists (kidney doctors), nurse practitioners, registered dietitians, nurses, and medical assistants.

## Services Provided

Associates in Nephrology provides treatment for many kidney related conditions, as well as kidney transplant services.

- All forms of Dialysis – Hemodialysis and Peritoneal
- Diabetic Kidney Disorder
- Dietitian Services for Kidney Patients
- Disorders of Blood Chemistry
- Electrolyte Disorders
- Fluid Overload, Edema (swelling)
- Glomerulonephritis
- Hypertension
- Kidney Transplant Services: Patient and Donor Evaluations, Post-Transplant Follow-up Care
- Lupus Nephritis
- Nephrotic Syndrome
- Pyelonephritis
- Polycystic Kidney Disease
- Recurring kidney stones
- Renal Failure
- Renal Insufficiency

We work collaboratively with a patient's primary care physician and specialists to slow the progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD) and prevent or manage complications such as hypertension, anemia, and bone disease. Additionally, our multidisciplinary team of professionals can assist you in arranging a wide array of supportive services and educational programs for patients in all stages of CKD. For patients with end-stage renal disease (ESRD), our nephrologists can prepare them for all renal replacement therapies: in-center or home hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and kidney transplant.

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Dr. Eusebio is a renowned sleep specialist, board certified, fellowship trained, and the founder of The Sleep & Apnea Institute of Florida. With over 20 years of experience in the field, he has dedicated his career to helping patients achieve their best sleep.

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# Mistletoe: It's not just for kissing under

**R**oot Causes is proud to announce that we are now offering Mistletoe injections and IV's to address various conditions Like Lyme and Epstein Barr, cancer treatment side effects, and several other conditions.

There is a lot of research on the effectiveness of mistletoe and various conditions and illnesses. We are working with Believe Big and we are excited to offer this therapy that is very well established in Europe and in integrative medicine in the US, and it is now becoming mainstream.

*The following information is provided by The American Cancer Society:*

## What is mistletoe?

Mistletoe is a semiparasitic plant that grows on trees, such as apple, oak, maple, elm, pine, and birch. It has been used for hundreds of years to treat medical conditions such as epilepsy, hypertension, headaches, menopausal symptoms, infertility, arthritis, and rheumatism.

Mistletoe is one of the most widely studied complementary and alternative medicine therapies for cancer. In Europe, mistletoe extracts are among the most prescribed therapies for cancer patients.

## Immunity Issues

With issues like Epstein Barr, Rheumatoid arthritis, and other autoimmune disorders, mistletoe helps to calm the immune system.

## Immunity Details

Adaptive and innate immunity are essential to how your body protects you against foreign invaders. Your adaptive immunity is within your tissues and has memory as to how it fought off infections and illnesses from the past. Your innate immunity is how well your body fights off a new infection by utilizing antimicrobial and host defense peptides. T Cells are lymphocyte immune cells or white blood cells that originate from our bone marrow and help fight off pathogens. These T Cells work directly with B cells to create y-shaped antibodies (immunoglobulin) that connect to the pathogen and destroy it. The problem is that many people have a weakened immune system that is not able to fight



off these pathogens. The other issue is that many of us are in a hyper-state of inflammation and our own antibodies start attacking our healthy organs and tissue. This is the basis of autoimmune dysfunction. 1

Cytokines are a diverse group of small proteins that are secreted by cells for the purpose of intercellular signaling and communication. Specific cytokines have autocrine, paracrine, and/or endocrine activity and, through receptor binding, can elicit a variety of responses, depending upon the cytokine and the target cell. Among the many functions of cytokines are the control of cell proliferation and differentiation and the regulation of angiogenesis and immune and inflammatory responses. 2

## How are mistletoe extracts given?

At Root Causes Holistic Health & Medicine, mistletoe extracts are usually given by intravenous or IV Injection.

*If you are interested in mistletoe injections or other IV nutrients, please call us today at (239) 347-9234.*

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## Root Causes Holistic Health & Medicine

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



## Doreen DeStefano, NHD, APRN, DNP

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

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

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



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# CONFRONTED WITH A NON-HEALING WOUND?

**A** chronic wound is a type of wound that fails to heal in a timely manner, typically lasting for more than 12 weeks despite appropriate and consistent treatment. Chronic wounds can occur for various reasons, such as diabetes, venous insufficiency, arterial insufficiency, pressure ulcers, and other underlying conditions. These wounds often result from a disruption in the normal healing process due to factors such as poor blood circulation, inflammation, infection, and impaired immune response. The key characteristic of chronic wounds is the body's inability to progress through the normal stages of wound healing, including hemostasis, inflammation, proliferation, and remodeling.

This delay in healing is often caused by a combination of factors, such as impaired blood flow, excessive inflammation, bacterial infection, and tissue necrosis. Chronic wounds are typically classified based on their underlying causes, with the most common types being diabetic ulcers, pressure ulcers, venous ulcers, and arterial ulcers. To prevent chronic wounds from developing, it is essential to address the underlying risk factors and promote optimal wound healing.

This includes maintaining good hygiene, managing underlying health conditions such as diabetes and vascular diseases, avoiding prolonged pressure on vulnerable areas, ensuring adequate nutrition, and implementing appropriate wound care techniques. Additionally, regular monitoring and prompt intervention are crucial in preventing acute wounds from progressing into chronic wounds. In recent years, advancements in medical technology have revolutionized the treatment of chronic wounds, with amniotic technology emerging as a promising approach.

Amniotic technology utilizes the human amniotic membrane, a biological material derived from the placenta, to promote wound healing and tissue regeneration. The amniotic membrane is rich in growth factors, cytokines, and extracellular matrix proteins that have been shown to enhance the healing process and reduce inflammation. One of



the key benefits of amniotic technology is its ability to modulate the inflammatory response, reduce pain, promote angiogenesis, and stimulate tissue regeneration.

By applying amniotic membrane products to chronic wounds, healthcare providers can create a conducive environment for healing and accelerate the closure of non-healing wounds. Clinical studies have demonstrated the efficacy of amniotic technology in treating various types of chronic wounds, including diabetic ulcers, venous ulcers, and pressure ulcers. These products can be applied topically to the wound site or used in conjunction with other therapies to enhance their effectiveness.

In-home wound care is becoming more popular because it is a cost-effective and convenient way to treat chronic wounds. This method allows trained healthcare professionals to provide care in the patient's home. There are many advantages to in-home care, including a lower chance of infections from hospitals, increased comfort for patients, and a better quality of life for those with chronic wounds. Additionally, recent modifications to Medicare eligibility allow seniors to access amniotic technology and enjoy the benefits of these advanced wound care solutions from the convenience of their own homes.

## About RxWound

Founded in 2015, RxWound is a team of dedicated wound care professionals serving seniors with advanced care solutions across all 50 states.

The company mission is to improve the outcomes of wound healing and elevate the quality of life for each patient, while respecting the precious gift of donated human tissue. RxWound offers an impressive range of tissue alternatives and tailored treatment plans that cater to the unique needs of each wound and patient. As a result, 95% of patients achieve full wound closure in less than 6 weeks.

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# Revolutionary Weight Loss: THE FUTURE OF BODY TRANSFORMATION

In the ever-evolving world of weight loss and body sculpting, a groundbreaking program has emerged, combining cutting-edge pharmaceutical interventions with state-of-the-art technology. This innovative approach integrates GLP-1 receptor agonists like semaglutide and tirzepatide, 3D body scanning, and advanced light therapy to offer a comprehensive solution for those seeking to shed pounds and transform their physique.

## The Power of GLP-1 Receptor Agonists

At the heart of this revolutionary program are GLP-1 receptor agonists, specifically semaglutide and tirzepatide. These medications, originally developed for type 2 diabetes management, have shown remarkable efficacy in promoting weight loss.

Semaglutide, marketed under brand names like Wegovy for weight loss, works by mimicking a hormone called glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1). This hormone plays a crucial role in regulating appetite and food intake. By activating GLP-1 receptors, semaglutide helps individuals feel fuller for longer periods, naturally reducing calorie intake.

Tirzepatide, a newer entry in this class of medications, goes a step further. It acts as a dual GIP (glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide) and GLP-1 receptor agonist. This dual-action approach not only suppresses appetite but also enhances metabolic function, potentially leading to even more significant weight loss results.

## Precision Tracking with 3D Body Scanning

To complement the pharmaceutical approach, this program incorporates cutting-edge 3D body scanning technology. This non-invasive imaging technique provides a detailed, three-dimensional representation of an individual's body composition.

The 3D scanner captures hundreds of measurements in just seconds, offering a level of precision that far surpasses traditional methods like calipers or tape measures. This technology allows participants to:

1. Visualize their progress in vivid detail
2. Track changes in body composition, including muscle mass and fat distribution
3. Set more precise, personalized goals based on their unique body structure

By providing such detailed insights, the 3D body scanner serves as a powerful motivational tool, helping individuals stay committed to their weight loss journey.



## The Magic of Light: Red Light Therapy and Invisa-RED

To further enhance body contouring and skin tightening, the program incorporates advanced light therapy techniques:

### Red Light Therapy

Red light therapy, also known as low-level laser therapy (LLLT), uses low-wavelength red light to treat various skin issues and promote overall skin health. In the context of weight loss, red light therapy offers several benefits:

1. Increased cellular energy production, potentially boosting metabolism
2. Reduced inflammation, which can aid in recovery from workouts
3. Improved circulation, enhancing the delivery of nutrients to skin cells

### Invisa-RED Technology

Invisa-RED takes light therapy to the next level. This non-invasive treatment combines multiple wavelengths of light with gentle electrical stimulation to:

1. Target and shrink fat cells
2. Tighten and tone skin
3. Reduce the appearance of cellulite

The Invisa-RED system is particularly effective for spot reduction and body contouring, helping to refine areas that may be resistant to diet and exercise alone.

## A Holistic Approach to Body Transformation

What sets this program apart is its comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to weight loss and body sculpting. By combining the appetite-suppressing

and metabolic effects of GLP-1 receptor agonists with the precise tracking of 3D body scanning and the toning benefits of light therapy, participants can achieve remarkable results.

The program doesn't just focus on weight loss; it's designed to reshape the body, improve skin texture, and boost overall confidence. Participants benefit from:

1. Significant and sustainable weight loss through medication-assisted appetite control
2. Precise progress tracking and goal-setting with 3D body scanning
3. Enhanced skin tightening and body contouring through advanced light therapies
4. A more comprehensive understanding of their body composition and how it changes over time

As with any medical intervention, it's crucial for individuals to consult with healthcare professionals before starting this program. The use of GLP-1 receptor agonists should be carefully monitored, and the entire regimen should be tailored to each participant's unique needs and health status.

In conclusion, this innovative weight loss program represents a paradigm shift in how we approach body transformation. By harnessing the power of cutting-edge pharmaceuticals, precise imaging technology, and advanced light therapies, it offers a holistic solution for those seeking not just to lose weight, but to comprehensively reshape their bodies and boost their confidence.

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# Shopping for the Best Incontinence Underwear?

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**Do you experience accidental bladder leaks before making it to the restroom? Are you on the search for the best incontinence underwear?**

**A**lthough incontinence underwear may help conceal leaks you experience or prevent leaking to your clothes, it does not treat your underlying symptoms. If you struggle with bladder control or leaks, this may be a sign that you have overactive bladder.

## What is Overactive Bladder?

Overactive bladder is an umbrella term that includes the frequent and urgent need to empty your bladder. One of the most common symptoms of overactive bladder is a sudden urge to urinate, resulting in unintentional urine loss which is referred to as incontinence.

Overactive bladder can affect 1 in 3 people in the United States over the age of 40.<sup>1,2</sup> Though this bladder control issue may occur more often as people get older, it is not a normal part of aging.

You may be suffering from overactive bladder if:

- **Urgency** - You experience a sudden or compelling need to urinate with inability to hold urine or control it
- **Urgency Incontinence** - You experience an urgent need to urinate and have urinary leakage accidents or trouble holding urine before making it to the restroom
- **Frequency** - You go to the restroom to urinate so often that it disrupts your life—typically 8 or more times a day
- **Nocturia** - You wake up more than 1 time per night because you need to urinate

The good news, there are treatment options available to help regain control of your bladder. The Florida

Bladder Institute is now offering Axonics® Therapy, a long-lasting solution that is clinically proven to help regain bladder control and deliver clinically meaningful improvements in quality of life\*.

## What is Axonics Therapy?

Axonics Therapy is an advanced treatment option that works by providing gentle stimulation to the nerves that control the bladder and bowel, which can help restore normal control and result in symptom improvement.

If you and your doctor believe you are a candidate for Axonics Therapy, you will first try the therapy for a brief test period that allows you and your doctor to see if the therapy provides satisfactory reduction of your symptoms. If it is determined that the therapy is right for you, you will have an outpatient procedure where a miniaturized Axonics implant is placed just beneath the skin in the upper part of your buttock.

## What are the benefits of Axonics Therapy?

Axonics Therapy provides the possibility of saying goodbye to bladder leaks!

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- **93%** of treated patients achieved clinically significant improvements\* at 2-years<sup>3</sup>
- **94%** of patients were satisfied with their therapy<sup>3</sup>

Important Safety Information: Implantation and use of the Axonics System incurs risk beyond those normally associated with surgery, some of which may necessitate surgical intervention. Results and experiences may vary and are unique to each patient. No promise or guarantee is made about specific results or experiences. For more information about safety and potential risks, go to: [www.axonics.com/isi](http://www.axonics.com/isi). Caution: Federal law (USA) restricts this device to sale and use by, or on the order of, a physician.  
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\*50% or greater reduction in symptoms

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# NeuroStar® TMS

## A BREAKTHROUGH IN DEPRESSION TREATMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS & ADULTS

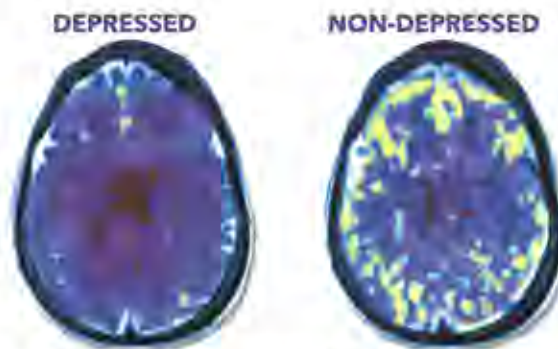
In a significant development for mental health treatment, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has expanded the approval of NeuroStar Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) therapy to include patients aged 15 and up for the treatment of major depressive disorder (MDD). This groundbreaking decision marks a crucial step forward in addressing the growing concern of adolescent depression while continuing to provide effective treatment options for adults.

NeuroStar TMS, developed by Neuronetics, Inc., is a non-invasive treatment that uses magnetic fields to stimulate specific areas of the brain associated with mood regulation. The therapy has been FDA-approved for adult depression since 2008, but this recent expansion to include younger patients opens up new possibilities for treating depression in adolescents who may not have responded well to traditional treatments.

The decision to extend the approval to patients as young as 15 comes after rigorous clinical trials demonstrated the safety and efficacy of NeuroStar TMS in adolescent populations. These studies showed promising results, with many young patients experiencing significant improvement in their depressive symptoms and overall quality of life.

Depression among teenagers has been on the rise in recent years, with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating the issue. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, an estimated 3.8 million adolescents aged 12-17 in the United States had at least one major depressive episode in 2021. The approval of NeuroStar TMS for this age group provides a much-needed alternative for those who have not found relief through traditional treatments such as psychotherapy and medication.

One of the key advantages of NeuroStar TMS is its non-invasive nature and relatively mild side effect profile compared to some pharmaceutical interventions. The treatment involves the patient sitting comfortably in a chair while a magnetic coil is placed against their head. The coil delivers magnetic pulses to stimulate nerve cells in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain



PET scan images show adult brain activity.  
Source: Mark George, MD, Biological Psychiatry Branch,  
Division of Intramural Research Programs, NIMH 1993.

involved in mood regulation. Each session typically lasts about 20-30 minutes, and a full course of treatment usually consists of 5 sessions per week for 4-6 weeks.

Parents and healthcare providers alike have expressed enthusiasm about this new option for adolescent depression treatment. Dr. Sarah Thompson, a child and adolescent psychiatrist, commented, "Having NeuroStar TMS available for our younger patients is a game-changer. It offers hope to those who haven't responded well to other treatments and can be a crucial tool in preventing the long-term impacts of untreated depression in adolescents."

The expansion of NeuroStar TMS to younger age groups also highlights the importance of early intervention in mental health treatment. Addressing depression in adolescence can potentially prevent more severe mental health issues in adulthood and improve overall life outcomes. By offering an effective treatment option earlier in life, healthcare providers can help set young patients on a path toward better mental health and well-being.

However, it's important to note that while NeuroStar TMS has shown promising results, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. The treatment is typically recommended for patients who have not achieved satisfactory improvement from antidepressant medications. As with any medical treatment, the decision to use NeuroStar TMS should be made in consultation with a qualified healthcare provider, taking into account the individual patient's medical history, symptoms, and overall treatment plan.

The approval of NeuroStar TMS for ages 15 and up also underscores the evolving landscape of mental health treatment. As our understanding of the brain and its functions continues to grow, new technologies and approaches are being developed to address mental health disorders more effectively. This progress offers hope to millions of people struggling with depression and other mental health conditions.

As the medical community continues to embrace innovative treatments like NeuroStar TMS, it's likely that we'll see further advancements in the field of mental health care. The expansion of this treatment to younger age groups is just one step in the ongoing effort to improve mental health outcomes for people of all ages.

In conclusion, the FDA's approval of NeuroStar TMS for patients aged 15 and up represents a significant milestone in the treatment of depression. By offering a non-invasive, effective option for both adolescents and adults, this therapy has the potential to transform lives and contribute to better mental health outcomes for millions of individuals struggling with depression. As research continues and technology advances, we can look forward to even more innovative and effective treatments in the future, bringing hope to those affected by mental health disorders.

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# 2025 Annual Enrollment is Here!

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

**M**edicare Annual Enrollment is October 15-December 7th for January 1st, 2025, effective. What can be changed at this time is Medicare Part D Drug Plans and Medicare Advantage Plans. You should have received your Notification of Change from your current insurance plan. This outlines the current year to the new year changes, as an example if your specialist provider cost \$20 now it might say \$35 in 2025 (no correlation just an example).

**Substantial changes to Medicare Part D**, stand-alone drug plans as well as Advantage Plans, won't have to pay more than \$2,000 in out-of-pocket costs, which include deductibles, co-pays, coinsurance. It is especially important to check your plans formulary as medication must be in formulary to be capped. 2025 RX deductibles will be capped at \$590.00. As a reminder the cost of the plan is not as important as the cost plus your medications, that is what you look at, the total cost. It is important to know what the medication is used for to determine if it is covered by the plan. Example Wycovy may be covered but in order to be covered it must be used for certain heart conditions or diabetes, Medicare does not cover weight loose medications at this time. Many carriers are consolidating Part D plans or eliminating them completely. As a reminder if you choose NOT to ENROLL in a Part D drug plan and in later years you will have to wait for Annual Enrollment and then you will assed a penalty for every month you did not have a drug plan, that penalty will last for the REST OF YOUR LIFE! Careful not choosing a drug plan.

**Medicare Part C / Advantage Plans** annually Medicare Advantage Plans make changes. They must include all the same features as Original Medicare but not at the same cost share. They can have a premium, Medical and or Prescription deductible, copays and coinsurance can change. Extra Value such as Vision, Dental, Over the Counter, Part B Give Back, transportation, etc. can all change or be eliminated. Medicare sets the annual in-network out of pocket maximum, in 2024 it is \$8,850 and \$13,300 for in-network and out-of-network services combined. However, individual insurance plans may set lower limits. These limits apply to Part A and B services only, and do not apply to Part D cost share.



The old saying if it is not broken do not fix it DOES NOT apply to Annual Enrollment. Every year I see many people that have not checked/compared their current plan to what is new. I have saved so many people hundreds and in many cases thousands of dollars. You should be working with a broker that represents many insurance companies. Make sure you check them out, especially if you are going to allow someone in your house. I recommend meeting in their office. For myself we represent most carriers in our area and to carry all their literature with me is almost impossible. We use three large screens so that our clients can clearly see and compare the differences between the plans. The minimum information always needed is all your doctors, medications: names, milligrams, and dosage. We load your current plan and then compare it to all the other companies in your area. What companies have all your doctors, the price for your medication normally makes a significant difference. Then the Extra Value what is most important to you. We do NOT CHARGE for our review and if warranted to change your insurance plan. Ethics is most important and if you are on the best plan we will tell you, plus you can see for yourself.

As a reminder it is illegal for an insurance agent to contact you unless you give them permission. There are specific forms that you should sign, such as a Scope of Appointment which outlines what you want to talk about. This form should be signed at least 48 hours prior to your meeting or if you walk into their office, prior to speaking about Medicare.

Medicare Seminar's they are good for general information. A one-to-one appointment where you can dive into your doctors and medication is best, plus you can then compare other companies in one place.

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

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# Senior Driving: Navigating the Road Ahead

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

inevitably, there comes a time when roles reverse, and we find ourselves concerned about the well-being of our aging parents, particularly when it comes to their ability to drive safely. Addressing this issue is often as challenging as it is necessary. AARP, a trusted resource for individuals aged 50 and above, notes, "Driving is often linked to independence for seniors, but there may come a time when it's no longer safe." This acknowledgment is a crucial starting point for the conversation about senior driving. To help you discern whether your loved one may be reaching a point where driving is no longer safe, consider the following:

## Observe for Possible Changes

### • Changes in Driving Habits

Watch for alterations in your loved one's driving habits. Frequent close calls, increased traffic violations, unexplained scratches on the car, or a noticeable decline in overall driving skills may indicate a need for further evaluation.

### • Diminished Executive Functions

Executive functions are cognitive processes which enable us to regulate, control, and manage our thoughts and actions. These functions are critical for safe driving, as they involve decision-making, adapting to changes, and staying focused on the task at hand. As we age, executive functioning naturally declines, and in cases of dementia, this decline can be more pronounced. When executive functioning is diminished drivers' often lack the ability to make quick decisions on the road.

### • Memory Concerns

Memory lapses or forgetfulness can be red flags. If your loved one struggles to remember familiar routes, becomes disoriented while driving, or forgets the purpose of a trip, it's time to consider the impact on their driving abilities.

As you can imagine, any conversation about driving is not just about the act of driving or giving up a set of car keys. It is about addressing cognitive and physical changes that impact a person's ability to operate a vehicle safely. But it is also about a loss of independence for the driver

and additional responsibility for whomever will provide transportation. Realization may make broaching the subject even more daunting.

Approaching this conversation with empathy and sensitivity is crucial. Here are three ways to initiate the dialogue with your loved one.

### 1. Express Concerns from a Place of Love

Begin by expressing your love and concern for their well-being. Share specific instances that have raised worries about their safety on the road. Emphasize that the goal is to ensure their continued well-being and independence.

### 2. Highlight Alternative Transportation Options

Instead of framing the conversation solely around giving up driving, focus on alternative transportation options available in your family or your community. Highlight the convenience of rideshare services, public transportation, or family and friends willing to assist with transportation needs.

### 3. Involve a Neutral Third Party

Sometimes, having a professional guide the conversation can be beneficial. Consider involving a doctor, a driving specialist, or a member of the Beyond Driving with Dignity program to provide an objective assessment and recommendations.

### Introducing Beyond Driving with Dignity

Beyond Driving with Dignity is a program that offers a comprehensive approach to addressing concerns about senior driving. Developed by Matt Gurwell, a retired Ohio State Trooper, this program equips families with tools for early intervention, identifies signs of decline, and suggests lifestyle changes to enhance safety. This one-hour self-assessment program covers the role of dementia, memory, and executive functioning in older driver safety. It sheds light on the importance of addressing cognitive decline for the well-being of our senior drivers. Beyond Driving with Dignity aims to save lives while preserving the dignity and independence of older drivers.



**Should you Consider Beyond Driving with Dignity?** If you answer yes to more than one of these questions, please reach out to us for a free consultation.

- Do you live away from your loved-one and aren't completely sure of his or her ability to continue driving safely?
- Could you use some help and direction plotting the future of your loved one's safe driving career?
- Are you unsure of how to address the issue with your loved one, or confused about how to initiate "the talk"?
- Not sure what resources are available to you?
- Do you want a skilled and experienced professional to help bring or maintain calm and stability to what can be a very complex and sensitive family issue?
- Are you looking for a program that will help further your loved one's ability to remain a safe driver, and to continue to monitor their skills as they progress through the aging process?

Conversations about senior driving are delicate yet necessary. By recognizing signs of decline, understanding the impact of diminished executive functioning, and approaching the topic with empathy, you can navigate this transition with care and consideration. The Beyond Driving with Dignity program stands as a valuable resource, offering guidance and support to families as they address the complexities of senior driving.

For more information please call (239) 330-2133 or email [cynthia@seniorcareauthority.com](mailto:cynthia@seniorcareauthority.com).



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# SLEEP SOLUTIONS: How Your Pharmacist Can Help You Achieve Better Rest

By Justin Ceravolo, PharmD

**D**ecember is Better Sleep Month, a crucial time to focus on one of the most fundamental aspects of our health—quality sleep. In our fast-paced, always-connected world, achieving restful and consistent sleep has become increasingly challenging for many individuals. Fortunately, your local pharmacist can be an invaluable partner in your journey towards improved sleep hygiene and overall well-being.

Sleep is not merely a luxury but a critical component of health maintenance. Chronic sleep deprivation can lead to numerous health complications, including increased risk of cardiovascular disease, weakened immune function, mental health challenges, and decreased cognitive performance. Recognizing the importance of addressing sleep issues, pharmacists have evolved from being medication dispensers to comprehensive health consultants.

One of the primary ways pharmacists can assist you is through personalized medication reviews. Many individuals are unaware that certain medications, including over-the-counter drugs, can significantly impact sleep patterns. Your pharmacist can conduct a thorough review of your current medications, identifying potential sleep disruptors and suggesting alternatives or complementary approaches to minimize nighttime disturbances.

For those struggling with occasional or chronic insomnia, pharmacists can recommend appropriate over-the-counter sleep aids. They can guide you through



various options, explaining the pros and cons of different products, potential side effects, and proper usage. Whether you're considering melatonin supplements, herbal remedies like valerian root, or temporary sleep medications, a pharmacist can provide expert advice tailored to your specific needs.

Beyond medication, pharmacists can offer comprehensive lifestyle and sleep hygiene recommendations. They can provide practical strategies for establishing consistent sleep routines, creating optimal sleep environments, and managing stress—all crucial elements in achieving restorative sleep. From suggesting relaxation techniques to recommending sleep-tracking apps, their guidance extends far beyond pharmaceutical interventions.

For individuals with underlying health conditions that affect sleep, such as sleep apnea, anxiety, or chronic pain, pharmacists can be instrumental in developing holistic management strategies. They can collaborate with your healthcare providers, help you understand potential interactions between sleep medications and other treatments, and offer insights into managing multiple health concerns simultaneously.

Many pharmacists are also trained to recognize when sleep issues might indicate more serious health problems. They can help you determine whether your sleep challenges warrant further medical investigation and provide referrals to appropriate health-care specialists.

This Better Sleep Month, take a proactive approach to your sleep health. Schedule a consultation with your local pharmacist, view them as a trusted health ally, and work together to develop a comprehensive strategy for achieving the restorative sleep your body and mind deserve.

Remember, quality sleep is not a luxury—it's a fundamental pillar of good health. Your pharmacist is ready to help you unlock the secrets to better, more restful nights.

**Justin Ceravolo, PharmD - Owner & Pharmacist**  
Justin Ceravolo, also known as J.T., earned his Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Florida A&M University's College of Pharmacy in 2012. That same year, Justin began working in Florida's Panhandle before becoming a new member of the Cypress Wellness Pharmacy family in October of 2012. Cypress Wellness Pharmacy believes that each patient, whether he or she is a human or pet, should be given their own special attention and service. In 2024 Justin became the owner of Cypress Wellness Pharmacy and is committed to advancing the pharmacy's phenomenal reputation for personalized service with a focus on education and well-being for all patients and customers. Whether you need your medication in another compounded form or you simply need advice, Justin and his team will ensure fast and efficient service that goes above and beyond your average pharmacy.

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# Digital Dental X-ray Exams Lower Radiation Exposure

By Dr. Ricardo S. Bocanegra, DDS

Computers are a part of daily life. They also play an important role in our dental office. We use computers to track your appointments, treatment details and insurance records. We also use them to capture, store and transmit your dental x-ray images.

Many diseases of the oral cavity (which includes the teeth and surrounding tissues and bone) cannot be seen by the eye alone when the dentist visually examines your mouth. An x-ray exam may help the dentist see what is happening in areas that the eye can't see, such as:

- small areas of decay between the teeth or below fillings
- bone damage from a tooth infection (such as an abscess) or a cyst
- bone loss due to periodontal (gum) disease
- developmental defects
- some types of tumors
- the effects of trauma
- the position of unerupted teeth in children and adults

Finding and treating dental problems at an early stage can save time, money and unneeded discomfort and help prevent more serious health problems. X-ray images may be able to help the dentist detect damage and disease not visible during a regular dental exam.

Our practice uses digital x-rays because they have many benefits over film x-rays. Digital x-ray images can be simpler to make, provide enhanced pictures and can save time for the dental team. They also make it easier for us to show these images to you, our patient.

Digital imaging uses an x-ray machine like that used for traditional dental x-ray images made with film. But instead of using film in a plastic holder, digital images are made using a small electronic sensor that is placed in your mouth to capture the x-ray image.



## There are many benefits to using digital dental x-ray images.

- Digital x-ray images may require less radiation. Even though conventional dental x-rays required a small amount of radiation, digital x-rays use even smaller amounts making them safer and more appealing to those patients concerned with radiation exposure.
- When the digital x-ray image is exposed, it can be sent directly to a computer and viewed right away. For x-ray film to be exposed, a staff member must process it in special chemicals. This takes longer than simply viewing the x-ray on a computer screen.
- Digital x-ray images can be enlarged on the computer screen. This makes it much easier for you and the dentist to see the pictures. Traditional x-ray films are viewed actual size.
- Digital x-ray images can often be corrected without having to make another x-ray exposure.
- The dental office can print or copy your digital x-ray images. They can also be sent electronically to insurance companies, which may help claims get processed faster.
- Digital x-rays are environmentally friendly. They eliminate the need for film and film processing chemicals.

## Dental X-rays and Safety Concerns

The main concern about being exposed to radiation is the risk of getting cancer years later. Dental x-ray exams require very low levels of radiation exposure, which makes the risk of potentially harmful effects very small. Dental X-ray exams have radiation levels equal to 2 to 3 days of naturally occurring background radiation. For example, a set of bitewing x-ray images creates only a small fraction of the radiation you are exposed to when flying on an airplane. Chest and spine x-rays and CT scans have much higher levels of radiation.

Digital dental x-ray tools and techniques are designed to limit the body's exposure to radiation. Dental practices limit the area exposed during a dental x-ray exam by limiting the size of the x-ray beam to the size of the film or sensor being used and by using a leaded apron and thyroid shield that x-rays cannot pass through.

Our office is committed to the safety of our patients and their oral health. We invest in the latest digital x-ray technology to minimize the exposure of radiation to our patients. Dental x-ray exams are an important part of your oral health care, don't put them off because of unwarranted safety concerns. If you have any questions concerning how often dental x-rays exams should be performed or would like more information regarding the safety and benefits of digital x-rays please contact our office at 239-482-8806.

\*source: American Dental Association



Ricardo S. Bocanegra, D.D.S.

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# THE NATURAL PATH TO BETTER SLEEP: HOW CBD CAN HELP IMPROVE YOUR NIGHTLY REST

In our fast-paced, stress-laden world, a good night's sleep has become increasingly elusive. Millions of adults struggle with sleep disorders, insomnia, and restless nights. Enter CBD (cannabidiol), a natural compound that is gaining significant attention for its potential to revolutionize sleep health and provide a holistic approach to rest and recovery.

CBD, derived from the hemp plant, offers a promising alternative to traditional sleep medications. Unlike pharmaceutical sleep aids that often come with a range of side effects and potential dependency issues, CBD presents a more gentle and natural solution. Research suggests that CBD interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system, which plays a crucial role in regulating sleep patterns, mood, and overall homeostasis.

One of the primary ways CBD supports better sleep is by addressing underlying factors that typically disrupt rest. Anxiety and stress are major contributors to sleep difficulties, and CBD has demonstrated remarkable potential in reducing these psychological barriers. By helping to calm the mind and lower cortisol levels, CBD can create an environment more conducive to falling and staying asleep.

Clinical studies have shown promising results regarding CBD's impact on sleep quality. Participants in various research trials reported not only falling asleep faster but also experiencing more stable and restorative sleep cycles. The compound



appears to potentially increase overall sleep duration and reduce instances of mid-night awakenings, which are common problems for many individuals.

Furthermore, CBD may help address specific sleep disorders. For individuals suffering from REM sleep behavior disorder, preliminary research indicates that CBD could help reduce the occurrence of sleep disruptions. People with chronic pain, another significant barrier to quality sleep, may also benefit from CBD's potential anti-inflammatory and pain-reducing properties.

It's important to note that while CBD shows tremendous promise, individual experiences can vary. Factors such as dosage, individual body chemistry, and the quality of the CBD product all play crucial roles in its effectiveness. Consumers are advised to consult healthcare professionals and choose high-quality, third-party tested CBD products from reputable sources.

As research continues to evolve, CBD represents an exciting frontier in natural sleep solutions. By offering a potentially safer, non-addictive alternative to traditional sleep medications, it provides hope for those seeking a more balanced approach to achieving restful, rejuvenating sleep.

### About Hemp Joi

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

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

We felt this was a great and underserved need, so we began our search for the most natural most authentic CBD oils and lotions.

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# UNDERSTANDING DIZZINESS, VERTIGO & BALANCE DISORDERS

## What Is a Balance Disorder?

Your sense of balance is critically important to help prevent falls and injury.

A balance disorder affects your body's ability to hold an upright, safe position and is often experienced as dizziness and vertigo. Dizziness is a feeling of being unsteady or having a distorted sense of your body in the space in the space around it. Vertigo involves a sense a movement, as if you or the environment around you is spinning. Dizziness and vertigo can be accompanied by light-headedness, blurred vision, confusion, disorientation, nausea, and vomiting. Dizziness and vertigo are symptoms of numerous conditions, including anxiety, dehydration, circulation issues, nervous system and brain conditions, medication side effects, and inner ear disorders.

An ENT can help you determine if your dizziness or vertigo is caused by an inner ear disorder.

## Balance and the Inner Ear

Your sense of balance is guided by signals from your eyes, ears, and sensory receptors to your brain.

The part of your ears involved in balance is called the vestibular system, a structure of bone and soft tissue located in your inner ear. Within this structure are loopshaped canals that contain fluid hairlike sensors. When you move your head, the fluid in the vestibular system causes the hairlike sensors to bend, sending a signal to your brain that your head has changed position. With this information, your brain can send signals to other parts of the body, such as your eyes and muscles, to move your body's position and visual focus to help maintain your sense of balance.

When any part of the vestibular system is injured or malfunctioning, proper signals to your brain can be disrupted, causing you to feel imbalanced. When the vestibular system is the cause of your sense of imbalance, it is called a vestibular disorder.

## Common Vestibular Disorders

### Autoimmune Inner Ear Disease (AIED)

Autoimmune Inner Ear Disease is caused by a malfunctioning immune system that attacks healthy ear tissue. It affects both ears and causes hearing



loss and balance issues. Once symptoms are present, they typically progress quickly. AIED is rare, affecting 15 out of 100,000 people, and is most common in middle-aged women. It commonly occurs with other autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, scleroderma, and ulcerative colitis.

### Acoustic Neuroma

Acoustic neuroma is a benign (non-cancerous) tumor that grows on the nerves in the inner ear that are responsible for hearing and balance. The pressure on the nerve from the tumor may cause hearing loss and imbalance.

### Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)

Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo (BPPV) is one of the most common vestibular disorders. The structures in your ear that monitor your head's movements crystals that make you sensitive to gravity. These crystals can become dislodged for several reasons, such as serious trauma to the head or even minor trauma such as a violent sneeze or bumping your head into something. When the crystals become dislodged, they can move into the canals of the vestibular system and create a fall signal of head movement, causing dizziness. Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo can occur at any age but is most common in people over the age of 50.

### Mal de Debarquement Syndrome (MdDS)

Mal de Debarquement Syndrome is a rare condition that causes a severe and often debilitating feeling of swaying or bobbing, much like motion sickness but without motion. It often follows boat or ship travel but can persist for months or longer. While it is a neurological condition rather than a vestibular condition as it does not involve the inner ear, patients often see ENT physicians for a diagnosis.

### Ménière's Disease

Ménière's disease causes severe vertigo, ringing in the ears, hearing loss, and a feeling of fullness or congestion in the ear. In Ménière's disease, a buildup of fluid in the inner ear interferes with the vestibular nerve's ability to send signals that regulate balance to the brain. Ménière's disease usually affects only one ear but over time can progress to affect both ears.

### Vestibular Neuritis

Vestibular neuritis, or vestibular neuronitis, is characterized by inflammation of the vestibular nerve in the inner ear. It causes a sudden case of severe vertigo, dizziness, balance problems, nausea and vomiting that can last for minutes or prolonged over several days. Vestibular neuritis is typically caused by a virus either in the ear or elsewhere in the body.



**Perilymph Fistula**

A perilymph fistula is a tear or defect in the membrane that separates the air-filled middle ear and the fluid-filled inner ear. This tear allows fluid from the inner ear to flow into the middle ear, causing a change in the ear pressure of the middle ear. This change in ear pressure can stimulate the balance structures in the inner ear. Sudden pressure changes, head trauma, or injury to the ear are common causes.

**Diagnosing Vestibular Disorders**

Price Sonkarley, MD and the audiologists are trained to performed diagnostic tests for vestibular function. Tests they may perform include:

- Hearing tests – To evaluate hearing functionality
- Electrocochleography (ECoG) – Measures inner ear fluid pressure
- Electronystagmography (ENG) or Videonystagmography (VNG) — Measures eye movement and the muscles that control them
- Head movement testing – Evaluates the effect of tilting your head
- Rotational chair testing – Measures eye movements while you sit in a computerized chair that moves
- Posturography – Measures your ability to maintain proper posture under different test conditions
- Subjective visual vertical test (SVV) – Measures how your inner ear senses gravity
- Vestibular evoked myogenic potential (VEMP) – Evaluates the functionality of the inner ear and vestibular nerve
- Blood tests – To check for infections



Your otolaryngologist may consult with other physicians such as neurologists to assess neurological conditions, and cardiologists to assess circulatory conditions.

**Treating Vestibular Disorders**

Your treatment plan will depend on which type of vestibular disorder you have. Options may include:

- Medications to treat an infection
- Medications to prevent vertigo and nausea
- Treatment of underlying conditions
- Surgery to repair inner ear function
- Dietary changes
- Activity changes
- Physical or occupational therapy

**Be Safe When Feeling Dizzy**

Dizziness and vertigo increase the risk of falling and injuries. To minimize this potential, consider taking these safety precautions:

- Minimize driving
- Minimize going up and down the stairs
- Walk with a cane or walker
- Install “grab bars” in the bathroom
- Wear low-heeled shoes

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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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# ELEVATE YOUR WELL-BEING: ENHANCE YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM WITH AIT AND ACUPUNCTURE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

By Dr. Mary Lambert, AP, DOM

The holiday season is a time of joy, celebration, and connection with loved ones. However, amidst all the festivities, family gatherings, and travel plans, it's crucial to prioritize your health and well-being. As the colder weather and increased exposure to colds, flu, and other illnesses loom, keeping your immune system strong becomes paramount. Fortunately, natural therapies like acupuncture and Acupuncture Injection Therapy (AIT) can serve as powerful allies in supporting your health during this busy and demanding time.

## The Immune System Unveiled:

Your immune system acts as your body's frontline defense against harmful pathogens such as viruses and bacteria. When operating optimally, it identifies and eliminates invaders, safeguarding your health. Yet, various factors like stress, inadequate sleep, and nutrient deficiencies—common occurrences during the holiday season—can compromise immune function, leaving you vulnerable to illnesses.

Research has shown that holistic therapies like acupuncture possess the capacity to bolster immunity by modulating immune responses, mitigating stress, and fostering overall balance in the body. A study published in Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine revealed that acupuncture can stimulate the production of immune cells like T-cells and white blood cells, thereby enhancing the body's ability to combat infections.

## The Magic of Acupuncture Injection Therapy:

Acupuncture Injection Therapy (AIT) represents a modern approach that melds traditional acupuncture with the targeted delivery of natural substances—such as vitamins, minerals, herbal extracts, and ultra-high dilution medicines—into specific acupuncture points. This dual technique amplifies the benefits of acupuncture while ensuring that vital nutrients reach the areas where they are most

## A Dynamic Duo: Acupuncture and AIT in Immune Health:

**1. Strengthens the Immune System:** Acupuncture can balance the immune system by regulating cytokine levels, while AIT can deliver immune-boosting substances directly to enhance immunity further

**2. Reduces Stress:** Acupuncture is known to lower cortisol levels, a stress hormone that impairs immune function, thereby alleviating stress and promoting overall well-being.

**3. Combats Fatigue:** AIT combined with B-complex vitamins or magnesium can replenish energy stores and reduce fatigue, providing you with the vigor to navigate the demands of the holiday season.

**4. Addresses Health Concerns:** From allergies and respiratory issues to digestive challenges, acupuncture and AIT can target underlying health issues, fostering overall health and creating a robust foundation for immunity.

## Unveiling the Potency of Glutathione Injections:

Glutathione is a potent antioxidant naturally produced by the liver, essential for detoxifying harmful toxins, chemicals, and free radicals. Given that our bodies deplete glutathione faster than they produce it, injections offer a swifter and more effective method to replenish levels compared to oral supplementation.

## The Wealth of Health Benefits from Glutathione Injections:

Glutathione injections bestow a myriad of health benefits, particularly in detoxifying the liver and cells, neutralizing harmful free radicals, toxins, and heavy metals, reducing inflammation, and fortifying the immune system. This antioxidant prowess of glutathione also shields cells from oxidative damage, augments the body's resistance to infections, and bolsters overall immune function.

Glutathione also aids in managing chronic conditions like asthma, diabetes, and Parkinson's disease by regulating blood sugar levels, enhancing respiratory function, and alleviating symptoms.

In terms of skin health, glutathione can help lighten uneven skin tone, reduce hyperpigmentation, smooth wrinkles, sunspots, and acne, and foster glowing, youthful skin by improving hydration, minimizing oxidative damage, and promoting cellular repair.

## Practical Strategies for a Healthy Holiday Season:

In conjunction with acupuncture and AIT, integrating healthy lifestyle practices can optimize your immune system:

- Nourish your body with nutrient-dense foods, focusing on fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and immune-boosting ingredients like garlic, ginger, and citrus.
- Stay adequately hydrated, as proper hydration supports lymphatic drainage and detoxification processes.
- Prioritize sleep, aiming for 7 to 8 hours of quality rest each night to support immune function and overall well-being.
- Embrace stress management techniques like mindfulness, yoga, or meditation to cultivate inner peace and resilience during the holiday whirlwind.

## Embark on Your Immune-Boosting Journey:

At Lambert Wellness, we are committed to empowering you to thrive and flourish during the holiday season. Our holistic treatments, including acupuncture and AIT, are personalized to cater to your unique needs, nurturing immunity, alleviating stress, and reinstating equilibrium.

Don't wait for illness to strike—take proactive steps to safeguard your health and well-being. By scheduling a wellness session with us, you can embark on a transformative journey towards feeling strong, calm, and energized during the holiday season and beyond.

Now is the time to take charge of your health and well-being. Elevate your immune system naturally with the potent combination of acupuncture and AIT. Don't let the holiday hustle compromise your health—schedule your wellness session at Lambert Wellness today and step into the season feeling empowered and revitalized. Call or text us at 239-776-4055 to secure your consultation and start your journey towards a vibrant and fulfilling holiday season and jump start your new year!



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Transform your body, mind, and spirit with our holistic approach. Call 239-776-4055 today or visit us online at [www.LambertWellnessCenter.com](http://www.LambertWellnessCenter.com)!



# It's A Wonderful Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

**E**very year around this time the old classic Christmas movies start coming on television. It is easy to start a conversation at work by simply asking, "So, what's your favorite Christmas movie?" Mine is Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*.

Some of you might be able to relate to George Bailey this holiday season—lost, confused, stressed out, or at the end of your rope. Perhaps you are even thinking that it would be much easier to die than to go on living as you are.

Perhaps for you life isn't a joy right now. Maybe the debts are high and funds are low. It might even be difficult for you to even enjoy your family as you know you should. You may be wondering, "Is it really possible to live a wonderful life?"

I think the idea of a wonderful life is not that you can attain a wonderful life, but that it is an attitude that results from having certain issues settled in your life.

Truthfully, no one's life is wonderful—even Christ's life was filled with pain, hurt, loneliness, rejection, and sorrow. It is your attitude that determines how you "feel" about your life. You are the one responsible for settling the issues in your life and having an attitude of wonderment. So, what are the issues that need to be settled?

The first issue is to determine **what you are going to love**. To have a wonderful life, you start by having an

attitude of love toward God and others. I say this first because where you choose to direct your love is going to affect every other area of your life. Love is a decision we make to place a high value on someone or something.

God loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Jesus died to prove how much He loved us. God desires more than anything else to have a loving relationship with His creation. We were created to love God and other people. Maybe this Christmas it would be good for you to find a person or family in need and help them by buying some food or gifts. If you want to feel loved... start by loving others.

The second issue to settle is... **how am I going to live?** To have a wonderful life, you need an attitude of joy. This attitude deals with how you look at life. Are you a positive person or a negative person? If you are a person with joy, it simply means that you are cheerful. Over 350 times the Bible talks about us having a spirit of joy or rejoicing.

Joy isn't a feeling that is produced only when good things happen. Joy is the attitude by which we look at the things that happen to us and then respond in a way that lets everyone know we are trusting in God's grace in spite of our circumstances. Remember the disciples in the Bible... they had many negative things happen to them, yet in spite of it all, they had joy.

I've heard it said that you don't feel your way into an action but rather act your way into a feeling. If you want to be a joyful person... start acting joyful around others and you will most likely begin to genuinely feel joyful.

The third issue to settle is...**who are you going to help?** If you want to have a wonderful life, you've got to get beyond serving yourself, and start serving others. Isn't that the lesson that George Bailey learned? His life was wonderful because of all the people he was able to help in his lifetime.

When Clarence showed him what life would have been like had he never been born he realized that he really was making a difference in the world! His life did have purpose! Mr. Potter only cared about making money. Violet only cared about pleasure. But George understood a greater truth: life is better when you are working to make other people's lives better.

Understanding these things can make all the difference in the world. You are not here to fall in love with money and things—you're here to love God. You're not here to point out all the things that are wrong with the world—you're here to spread the joy that God has placed in your heart. You're not here to serve yourself—you're here to serve God and others—thus making a huge difference in the world.



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*Tim Neptune is the lead pastor of Venture Church Naples, located on the campus of Florida South Western State College in Naples, FL. For church times and other information, visit [www.venturenaples.com](http://www.venturenaples.com) or call (239) 775-5323.*




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