

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

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

January 2025

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THE WELLNESS CONNECTION

How Diet and Exercise Shape Healthy Smiles

UNDERSTANDING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DNA

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BEYOND THE PILL BOTTLE

Why Compounding is the Future of Pharmacy

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JO ORTIZ, PMHNP-BC



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- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Fear and Stress-Related Disorder
- Bipolar Disorders
- Substance Abuse/Addiction/Alcohol Use Disorder
- Personality Disorders
- Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Alzheimer's Disease
- Eating Disorders



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The Wellness Connection: How Diet and Exercise Shape Healthy Smiles

In this interview, Dr. Hetienne Macedo will share her journey as a dentist, exploring how her passion for dental care extends beyond the clinic. "I believe that true health is achieved through a combination of excellent dental care, a balanced diet, and regular exercise. These elements work together to create a foundation for overall wellbeing."

Tell us a bit about your background and how you came to practice dentistry in the US.

I worked as a dentist in Brazil for over 15 years before deciding to expand my knowledge and experience. I moved to the U.S. to do an Advanced Education in General Dentistry residency in New York, which helped me grow as a dentist and gave me the chance to learn new skills in a different environment.

How has your background influenced your approach to dentistry?

My background has deeply influenced my philosophy of care, especially my focus on whole-body health. Over the years, I've developed a strong belief that a healthy diet is foundational to overall well-being, including oral health. I encourage my patients to see the connection between what they eat and the condition of their teeth and gums.

By combining my dental expertise with an emphasis on nutrition and lifestyle, I take a holistic approach to care. I focus not only on treating dental issues but also on helping patients adopt habits that support their oral and overall health. This perspective helps me build strong relationships with my patients, providing personalized care that benefits them in the long term.

What drew you to join Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry, and how has your experience been so far? I was drawn to Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry because their focus on high-quality, patient-centred care matched my own values. Since joining, I've felt so supported by the team and inspired by our shared dedication to helping patients. It's been a wonderful experience, and I'm proud to be part of such a caring and professional group.

How has your approach to dentistry changed since joining Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry?

Working here has helped me look at patient care in a more complete way. I've learned to focus not just on fixing problems but also on improving my patients' overall health and well-being. This has allowed me to offer more personalized and thoughtful care.



Dr. Hetienne Macedo

What are your "5 Things You Need to Create a Successful Career as a Dentist"?

Love what you do: Passion is what keeps you going, even on tough days. Keep learning: Dentistry is always changing, so it's important to keep improving your skills. Find a mentor: Learn from someone you admire — it can save you time and mistakes. Give back: Share your knowledge and inspire others. It helps you grow as a person and a professional. Focus on care, not money: Do your best for your patients and team, and success will follow naturally.

WHAT ARE YOUR TOP THREE ORAL HYGIENE TIPS?

Use an electric toothbrush: It cleans better than a regular one. **Brush before bed:** Bacteria grow in your mouth while you sleep, so nighttime brushing is key. **Floss daily:** If your gums bleed, it's a sign they need more cleaning and care.

How do you balance your professional and personal life, and what do you enjoy doing outside of work? I balance work and life by spending quality time with my family and making time for things I enjoy. I love exploring new places and staying active. I'm also preparing for the Naples Half Marathon, which has been an exciting and rewarding challenge.

If you could start a movement to help people live healthier lives, what would it be?

I would focus on eating clean, exercising daily, and taking care of both the body and mind. I'd encourage everyone to enjoy whole, unprocessed foods and get active every day — whether it's a walk, run, yoga, tennis, golf, or a more intense workout. Small, consistent changes lead to better health, and a healthy lifestyle supports not only your body but your smile.

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Comprehensive Advances in Breast Cancer:

Empowering Prevention, Enhancing Survivorship, and Embracing Comprehensive Care

Breast cancer research has made significant strides, not only in cutting-edge treatments but also in the realms of prevention and survivorship. This holistic approach, coupled with comprehensive care offered by Magnolia Breast Centers, plays a pivotal role in reshaping the breast cancer landscape.

Prevention: A Pillar of Progress

Recent advancements underscore the importance of prevention strategies in mitigating breast cancer risks. Technologies like the Breast Cancer Risk Calculator, funded by NCI, aid in estimating a woman's risk, allowing for personalized decisions regarding screening, especially among diverse populations.

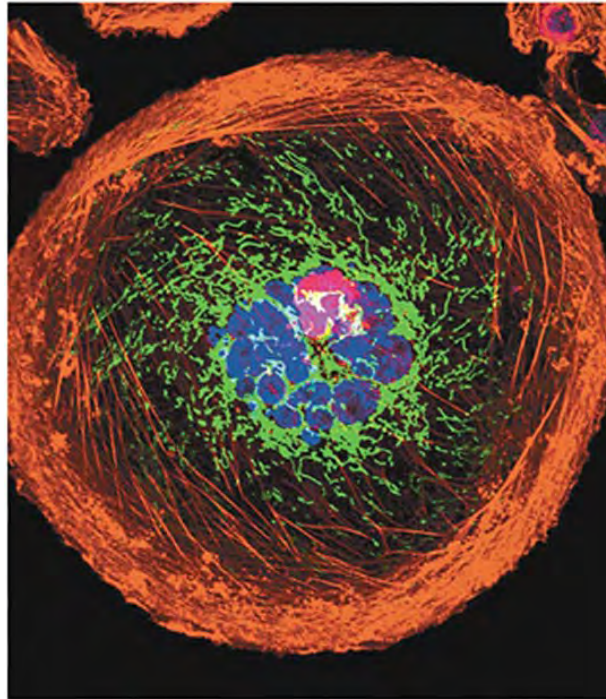
The emphasis on research programs like the Cancer Biomarkers Research Group and the Early Detection Research Network (EDRN) underscores the relentless pursuit of early detection biomarkers. These initiatives pave the way for proactive measures, enhancing early diagnosis, and potentially preventing the development of aggressive forms of breast cancer.

Survivorship: Nurturing Beyond Treatment

Survivorship is a crucial aspect of breast cancer care. Studies backed by the Office of Cancer Survivorship delve into post-treatment challenges, ranging from physical and emotional well-being to cognitive health. This holistic approach addresses the diverse needs of survivors, including financial impacts, support for caregivers, and tackling racial disparities in healthcare access.

Magnolia Breast Center: Pioneering Comprehensive Care

In the landscape of breast cancer care, Magnolia Breast Center stands out as a beacon of comprehensive care. As a comprehensive breast center, Magnolia Breast Center champions a unified approach, offering a continuum of care from prevention through survivorship. By integrating various aspects of breast health under one roof, Magnolia Breast Center ensures a seamless journey for patients, reducing fragmentation in healthcare.



A polyloid giant cancer cell (PGCC) from triple-negative breast cancer. Credit: National Cancer Institute

Their commitment to providing a range of self-assessment tools and resources for patients empowers individuals to take charge of their breast health. This proactive stance aligns with the evolving landscape of breast cancer care, emphasizing early detection and personalized preventive measures.

Conclusion: Uniting Progress and Patient-Centric Care

The advances in breast cancer research are not solely confined to groundbreaking treatments but extend to encompassing prevention strategies and holistic survivorship care. Centers like Magnolia, with their comprehensive approach, epitomize the amalgamation of progress and patient-centric care, reshaping the narrative around breast cancer treatment.

In conclusion, the journey towards conquering breast cancer thrives not just on pioneering treatments but on a comprehensive, patient-focused continuum of care—empowering prevention, nurturing survivorship, and exemplifying excellence through centers like Magnolia Breast Center.

Source: <https://www.cancer.gov/types/breast/research>

Magnolia Breast Center – The Trusted Choice for Breast Cancer Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment in Southwest Florida

Breast cancer is a serious, life-threatening disease that must be detected and treated as soon as possible. Whether you want to know your risk of developing cancer, get yourself checked for cancer, or get treated for cancer, the experts at Magnolia Breast Center can help you.

We have extensive experience in treating breast cancer patients – including highly complicated cases and patients with an advanced stage of cancer. We can determine the severity of your condition, take your unique needs and preferences into account, and devise a customized treatment plan to achieve a positive outcome.

Call our dedicated breast care center today at 239-758-PINK (7465) or contact us online and schedule an appointment with one of our experienced breast surgeons.



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UNDERSTANDING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH DNA: Making Informed New Year's Resolutions Through Genetic Testing

By Jo Ortiz, PMHNP-BC

As another year approaches, many individuals contemplate resolutions focused on mental health and wellbeing. While traditional goals like meditation, therapy, and stress reduction remain valuable, advances in genetic testing are revolutionizing how we approach mental health treatment. This emerging field, known as pharmacogenomics, helps healthcare providers prescribe medications that work best with a patient's unique genetic makeup, potentially transforming the effectiveness of mental health treatment.

The Challenge of Finding the Right Medication

For decades, prescribing psychiatric medications has largely been a process of educated trial and error. Patients often endure months or even years of medication adjustments, dealing with unwanted side effects and inadequate relief before finding an effective treatment. This frustrating journey leads many to abandon their medication altogether, with studies showing that up to 50% of patients discontinue their antidepressants within six months of starting treatment.

How Genetic Testing Works

Genetic testing for mental health medications involves analyzing specific genes that influence how your body processes different drugs. These genes, primarily found in the liver, affect how quickly or slowly medications are metabolized. The testing process is straightforward: a simple cheek swab or blood sample is analyzed to identify genetic variations that could impact medication effectiveness.

The test results provide valuable information about which medications your body is likely to process effectively and which ones might cause adverse reactions. For example, some individuals may be "rapid metabolizers" of certain medications, meaning they process the drugs too quickly for them to be effective at standard doses. Others might be "poor metabolizers," leading to a buildup of medication in their system and increased side effects.

Making Informed Treatment Decisions

Armed with genetic testing results, healthcare providers can make more informed decisions about:

- Which medications are most likely to be effective
- Appropriate starting dosages based on metabolism
- Medications to avoid due to potential adverse reactions
- Combinations of medications that might work best together

This personalized approach can significantly reduce the time spent finding an effective treatment, potentially leading to faster symptom relief and better outcomes.

The Role of Genetic Testing in New Year's Mental Health Goals

As you set mental health goals for the new year, considering genetic testing can be a game-changing first step. Rather than making broad resolutions like "improve my mental health," you can work with your healthcare provider to create a scientifically-informed treatment plan based on your genetic profile.

Practical Steps for Implementation

1. Discuss genetic testing with your healthcare provider to determine if it's appropriate for your situation.
2. Research insurance coverage, as many providers now cover mental health genetic testing.
3. Create a treatment plan that incorporates your genetic testing results.
4. Set realistic timelines for medication adjustments based on your genetic profile.
5. Keep detailed records of your response to medications to share with your healthcare team.

Looking Ahead: The Future of Personalized Mental Health Care

The field of pharmacogenomics continues to evolve, with researchers discovering new genetic markers that influence medication response. This ongoing research promises even more precise treatment recommendations in the future, potentially leading to higher success rates in mental health treatment.

Making Your Resolution Count

When setting mental health resolutions this year, consider making genetic testing part of your strategy. This scientific approach to treatment can provide clarity and direction in your mental health journey, potentially saving months or years of trial and error with medications.

Remember that while genetic testing is a powerful tool, it's just one component of a comprehensive mental health plan. Combining this personalized approach with other evidence-based practices like therapy, lifestyle changes, and stress management techniques can create a robust foundation for mental health improvement in the coming year.

By taking advantage of genetic testing, you're not just making a resolution – you're making a scientifically-informed decision to optimize your mental health treatment. This approach represents a significant step forward in personalizing mental health care and improving outcomes for individuals seeking better mental health in the new year.



Meet Jo Ortiz, PMHNP-BC

Bilingual in Spanish and English, Jo is one of the visionary leaders at Phoenix Behavioral Group. As a board-certified Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, Jo brings a wealth of expertise and a compassionate touch to the forefront of patient care. With unwavering dedication, she strives to empower individuals to reclaim their mental health and lead more fulfilling lives.

Jo is currently accepting the majority of insurances, give us a call to schedule an appointment.



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ACHIEVE YOUR IDEAL SILHOUETTE:

Personalized Tummy Tuck Solutions for a Fresh Start in the New Year

As the new year begins, many individuals seek transformative ways to boost their confidence and improve their physical well-being. For those struggling with abdominal concerns, a tummy tuck (abdominoplasty) offers a comprehensive solution that goes far beyond cosmetic enhancement. This surgical procedure provides both aesthetic and medical benefits that can dramatically improve quality of life.

Understanding Abdominal Challenges

Women, particularly those who have experienced multiple pregnancies, often face significant changes in their abdominal region. Pregnancy can cause the abdominal muscles to weaken and stretch, resulting in loose skin, persistent fat deposits, and a distended appearance that seems resistant to traditional diet and exercise approaches. These changes can persist long after childbirth, affecting both physical appearance and self-confidence.

Dr. Kiran Gill is proud to offer advanced tummy tuck, or abdominoplasty, procedures to patients in Southwest Florida. If you have lost a lot of weight over your lifetime or had multiple pregnancies, you may be left with loose skin and excess fat around your midsection. A tummy tuck is a popular body contouring procedure for both men and women who want a flatter and toned midsection.

COMPREHENSIVE BENEFITS OF ABDOMINOPLASTY

Physical Transformation

A tummy tuck offers a holistic approach to body reshaping. The procedure meticulously removes excess skin and fat while simultaneously tightening underlying abdominal muscles. This results in a slimmer, more contoured lower torso that reflects a more youthful and fit physique. Patients often experience a dramatic improvement in body silhouette, allowing them to feel more comfortable in clothing and swimwear.

Medical and Functional Advantages

Beyond aesthetic improvements, abdominoplasty provides several medical benefits. The muscle repair component can significantly improve posture by realigning and strengthening core muscles. This structural improvement can reduce lower back pain



and enhance overall physical stability. Additionally, the procedure can reduce the risk of hernias by repairing weakened abdominal walls.

Psychological and Lifestyle Impact

The psychological benefits of a tummy tuck are profound. Improved body image translates to increased self-confidence and enhanced quality of life. Many patients report feeling more motivated to maintain a healthy lifestyle, experiencing renewed energy and stamina. The procedure can be particularly empowering for individuals who have struggled with body image concerns despite consistent diet and exercise efforts.

Versatile Surgical Options

Modern abdominoplasty is incredibly versatile. It can be effectively combined with other procedures like liposuction or be part of a comprehensive mommy makeover. This flexibility allows for personalized treatment plans that address individual body contouring goals.

Ideal Candidates

While abdominoplasty offers remarkable benefits, it is most suitable for individuals who:

- Are at a stable, healthy weight
- Have realistic expectations
- Are non-smokers
- Have excess abdominal skin or weakened muscles
- Have not achieved desired results through diet and exercise



Your Tummy Tuck Consultation

Preparing for a tummy tuck surgery is an essential step towards achieving your desired aesthetic goals and ensuring a smooth and successful outcome. As you embark on this transformative journey, Dr. Kiran Gill, a board-certified plastic surgeon and the team at Naples Aesthetic Institute are dedicated to guiding you through a comprehensive pre-operative process. During your consultation, Dr. Gill will perform a physical evaluation of your stomach, as well as a thorough review of your medical history and any previous cosmetic treatments.

Dr. Gill believes that a well-informed client has the best chance at a successful outcome, so she will take the time to answer all your questions in depth. She will respond to inquiries regarding risks and benefits; recovery and downtime; and what you might anticipate in terms of your final results.

Dr. Gill will offer you a chance to look over our before and after photographs of our abdominoplasty patients, so you can see for yourself the wonderful improvements that are possible. You are also welcome to bring in your own photographs that reflect your aesthetic preferences.

As you embrace the new year and its potential for personal transformation, a tummy tuck represents more than a cosmetic procedure. It is a comprehensive approach to physical and emotional renewal, offering a path to increased confidence, improved health, and a rejuvenated sense of self.

Schedule Your Personalized Consultation with Dr. Gill Today.



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THE ULTIMATE PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY RELIEF PROGRAM

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

Peripheral neuropathy is a complex condition. Finding the root cause and the extent of damage and to what types of nerves or blood vessels is how a comprehensive plan is customized to regenerate a patient's nerves cells and tissues. Conventional medicine has no answers. It's either live with it or take addicting medications for the pain, most commonly gabapentin.

Very few physicians are trained to treat the condition. Success ideally involves collaboration of medical personnel, chiropractic and or physical therapy personnel, and functional neurology. At Feel Amazing Institute this is what we offer.

What is the Ultimate Neuropathy Program?

There are several clinics in SWFL that propose a treatment for peripheral neuropathy. There are dozens of treatments that have shown to be beneficial for the diagnosis. Many clinics do one or two of these treatment options but very few can combine and offer dozens of these options.

At Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute, we were the original clinic to create a comprehensive Neuropathy program back in 2006. There was a learning curve and results varied at first. After 16 years of experience, becoming board-certified in functional neurology, and becoming medically integrated, my clinic now has it down to a science. In 2017 my office was one of the first in the country, and I believe still the only in southwest Florida, to offer regenerative medicine and natural biologics as options for peripheral neuropathy. To date this has been the most significant endeavor to enhance results for our clients.

All neuropathies are not the same and require different programs.

Because what works well for one person may not necessarily work well for another, it's never a good idea to depend on just one or two treatments. It is just as easy to combine many types of treatments to improve the chances and the amount of success. Also the treatment must be individualized and specific.

The Ultimate Neuropathy Program should include advanced technologies to be done at a physician's office as well as treatments for self-care at home. It may include vitamin and wellness infusions to



enhance the body's internal environment for healing. It may include light therapies, electrical therapies, sound and pressure wave therapies, Pulsed electro-magnetic field therapies, regenerative medicine options, as well as lifestyle and nutritional recommendations.

Many clinics do a Toronto Clinical Neuropathy assessment and score. Some will do an infrared heat map of the feet. However, without an extensive neurological training, the interpretation of the score and image is what is key.

What to do and what not to do, and when?

Is the neuropathy peripheral or central? Big nerves or small nerves? Motor, sensory, autonomic, or all the above? One nerve or many nerves? How will the treatment differ if it's both feet, both hands, equal damage bilaterally, or worse on one side? How will the treatment differ if there is burning pain, numbness, loss of balance, weakness, or complicated by back pain or stenosis? What if the neuropathy affects the entire body? Is there a treatment for that? Yes, there are several.

Our clinic has a very sophisticated computer analysis that measures peripheral nerve function, peripheral vascular function, and central nerve function with a score for each, and an extensive report breaking down the many physiological and metabolic components. The test can be repeated after a treatment regimen and the improvement measured and quantified.



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What modalities are used for improvement?

These are prescribed on an individual basis after a thorough assessment:

- Five different electrical therapies
- Four possible light therapies
- Four types of vibration therapy
- Class 4 high powered lasers
- Pulsed electromagnetic fields (PEMF)
- Soundwave/Shockwave/pressure waves
- Spinal decompression therapy (often not needed)
- Natural supplementation and/or vitamin-wellness infusions
- Injections or infusions of Stem Cell Natural Biologics including Wharton's Jelly allografts, growth factors, and platelet rich plasma.

What kind of results can be achieved through the ultimate neuropathy treatment program at Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute?

Our patients report that better than 90% have excellent results. Most who undergo the treatment experience the following: reduced pain, reduced tingling and numbness, ability to experience normal touch without pain, reduce cold or burning sensations, improved balance and coordination, lowered dependency on medication, improved sleep, relief of restless legs, reduced swelling and inflammation, improved muscle function.

An important side benefit of the treatment is that it reduces the risk of falls significantly by improving balance and position awareness of the feet.

Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute is equipped to diagnose and help a wide range of conditions that include:

- ✓ Peripheral neuropathy
- ✓ Severe neck and back pain
- ✓ Shoulder, elbow, or wrist pain
- ✓ Hip, knee, ankle, or foot pain
- ✓ Headache, dizziness, vertigo, or balance problems
- ✓ Disc bulge, herniation, sciatica, or stenosis
- ✓ Auto accident, whiplash injuries

If you need a highly experienced, chiropractic neurologist in Naples, Florida, look no further than Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute. For more information, to schedule a free telephone consultation, or for free informational seminar or webinar, call today!



New Year Resolution: Your Best Sleep for Improved Mental Health

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

The Connection Between Sleep and Mental Health

As a sleep specialist, I frequently evaluate patients for particular sleep disorders such as sleep apnea or insomnia and find that there are often associated conditions being treated by other providers at the time of presentation, such as depression, ADHD, dementia, generalized anxiety, or PTSD.

These are often problems that have been diagnosed several years prior to their presentation at the sleep clinic. I often ask myself: what role did my patient's sleep problem play in these other diagnoses? Could we have prevented these problems if the sleep disorder had been identified earlier?

There is a strong connection between poor sleep (or sleep disorders) and mental health problems. I propose our readers consider their sleep quality as they choose their new year's resolutions.

We often sacrifice sleep to meet the demands of school, work, family, and social obligations. This age of entertainment and social media also grabs our attention, sometimes robbing us of our best sleep. Is our anxious/depressed society a result of our disregard for a good night's sleep? Let's discuss sleep and mental health.

The Science Behind Sleep and Mental Health

It is thought that all living organisms, even individual cells, engage in a resting or restorative state (repair cycle) at times. It is best to think of sleep as our brain's own resting/restorative state. With such complex functions as memory, consciousness, behaviors/feelings, and computational abilities, these restorative functions become essential for a healthy mind.

Such maintenance and repair functions can only happen properly when our system is temporarily "off" (asleep). Think of it as a "maintenance reset," in the way we think about preventing errors in a computer system. Sleep also allows restorative functions for the rest of the body, such as muscle repair, cell repair and reproduction, restored immune functions, etc.

The Impact of Sleep Deprivation on Mental Health

Insufficient sleep has a negative impact on all aspects of brain function, resulting in deterioration of our brain's healthy state, with a strong impact on mood and cognition.

1. Mood Disorders: Sleep deprivation is closely linked to depression and anxiety. It can exacerbate these



conditions, which also exacerbate sleep problems, resulting in a vicious cycle of poor sleep and worse mental health.

2. Cognitive Impairment: Lack of sleep impairs cognitive functions such as attention, decision-making, and problem-solving. This cognitive decline can increase stress and decrease the ability to cope with daily challenges, further contributing to feelings of frustration and helplessness.

3. Stress Response: Sleep deprivation may activate the body's stress response system, increasing levels of stress hormones like cortisol. Elevated cortisol levels can negatively impact mood and overall mental well-being, leading to a heightened state of anxiety and agitation.

4. Immune Response: Studies have shown that poor sleep may blunt our immune response to vaccines and infections, resulting in less protection from diseases such as the flu and COVID.

Sleep Disorders and Mental Health

Most, if not all, sleep disorders have been linked to different aspects of mental health, and new research continues to add or strengthen connections between them.

Some of the most common sleep disorders:

1. Insomnia: Characterized by difficulty falling or staying asleep, insomnia is often both a symptom and a cause of mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, often creating a self-perpetuating cycle of exacerbation for all these conditions.

2. Sleep Apnea: Where breathing repeatedly stops and starts during sleep, leads to fragmented sleep and poor sleep quality. Sleep apnea is associated with an increased risk of depression and anxiety, and the lack of restful sleep negatively impacts emotional and cognitive function. Furthermore, recent studies have found an association between sleep apnea and cognitive dysfunction, dementia, and Alzheimer's.

3. Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS): This disorder causes uncomfortable sensations in the legs, leading to an urge to move them, which can significantly disrupt sleep. RLS is often seen in individuals with depression and anxiety.

Strategies for Improving Sleep and Mental Health
Improving your sleep quality can have a profound positive impact on mental health. I have some recommendations that we could all follow to improve our sleep.

1. Establish a Consistent Sleep Routine: We are creatures of habit, and we thrive in predictable environments. A consistent schedule is the intervention that will most likely result in improved sleep.

2. Create a Pro-Sleep Environment: Use your bedroom as a sleep sanctuary. We sleep best in a cool room (close to 68°F), a dark room, and a quiet room. Avoid activities in the room other than sleep and sex, and set the stage half an hour to 2 hours before your bedtime. This allows time to unwind and remind your brain that you are in a safe and quiet environment.

3. Limit Exposure to Screens: Simply put, lights tell our brain it is daytime. Screens often provide information that will not necessarily be conducive to sleep (like war, suffering, drama, etc.). Avoid these at bedtime. Patients sometimes tell me these behaviors help them sleep, and my response is: wouldn't you prefer to be able to just close your eyes and fall asleep without the need for a TV or screen?

4. Engage in Relaxation Techniques: Practice calming activities such as reading, meditation, or deep-breathing exercises before bed to prepare your mind and body for sleep. These relaxation techniques can help reduce stress and promote better sleep.

5. Exercise Regularly: Regular physical activity can improve sleep quality and duration. However, it's important to avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime, as it can have a stimulating effect.

6. Limit Caffeine and Alcohol Intake: Both caffeine and alcohol can disrupt sleep. Avoid consuming them in the hours leading up to bedtime to ensure a restful night's sleep.

7. Make Sleep a Priority: Discuss sleep with your Primary Care Provider and listen to your loved ones when they mention your sleep may not look normal to them. Unfortunately, we can't see ourselves sleep, so we will be the last to see the problem. Make your sleep a health priority.

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A HEALTHY START TO 2025

It's that time of the year once again. Time to put 2024 behind us and look forward to 2025! Many of us have been carrying a lot of weight on our shoulders since 2019. Maybe the pandemic has caused your career to shift, maybe you have damage from the hurricanes or lost a loved one. We have all worked hard to make the holidays cheerful but now is the time to take a deep breath and put all that stress behind you and to think about a new years resolution.

As we all know, New Years is the time to set personal and family goals and resolutions to better yourself and your loved ones. It's also the busiest time of year with the holidays and kids getting back to school. Most usually have a New Years resolution that is related to dieting or exercising. There's no other better way to know how you can improve yourself than to ask your primary care doctor. Your doctor has all your health documents and can easily tell you how you can better yourself. When you are mentally and physically at your best you will spread your happiness to those around you. Here are a few tips to focus on your family's health this New Year:

Eat dinner as a family without devices. Studies have found that device-less dinners gave families time to bond and increased communication which then made them less likely to become overweight. When families eat together at least three times per week, kids tend to eat more fruits and vegetables and less fried foods and sugary drinks.

Snack better. Buying and serving healthier foods and more fruits and vegetables is a great start. Letting your children help pick the foods or select produce at the store can get them excited to eat it. Also, be sure that the portion sizes are correct. While it might be easy to choose that for ourselves, a tablespoon per year old for young children is a good place to start. Some great choices are raisins, yogurt, fruit, reduced-fat cheese, baby carrots and peanut butter. Mom and dad can set a good example by putting down the junk food, too.

Get enough sleep. Some studies found that 30% of American children don't get enough sleep and unfortunately, some adults aren't the best example when it comes to shut-eye. The National Sleep Foundation reports that more than 70% of adults don't get the recommended seven hours of sleep a night. For us, sleep deprivation might present as



brain fog and forgetfulness, but it can also contribute to obesity, insulin resistance, and heart disease, high blood pressure risks. For kids, a lack of sleep can decrease their learning ability, increase tantrums and make them more accident-prone. Children need between eight and 17 hours of sleep per day, depending upon their age, so make sure sleep is a priority.

Play together. Exercise is no fun if it's something you dread doing. Instead, make it a family affair through play. Set specific goals for movement at least five days per week so it's easier to stick to your plan. If something arises, don't cancel—reschedule. Activities you can do together include walking, jumping rope, hula-hooping, playing putt-putt,

riding your bikes or playing basketball. Stuck inside? Try yoga or roll up soft socks into balls and have a "snowball" fight.

These are all great family resolutions, but everyone should have a personal goal as well. Have a goal to visit your Primary Care doctor and see what you can improve on to stay healthy and feel at your very best!

Start the year right and schedule your annual wellness exam to know how to better yourself for 2025! Call 239-920-4503 or visit <https://www.physiciansregionalmedicalgroup.com>





BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE NEW YEAR:

The Undeniable Benefits of Strength Training Over Cardiovascular Exercise

By Ashley Lampkin, Director of Exercise

As the New Year dawns, a myriad of resolutions are forged, each person aspiring to shape their future self with renewed vigor. Among the multitude of goals, a fervent debate arises on the most effective path to physical transformation: the timeless rivalry between strength training and cardiovascular exercise. While both offer distinct benefits, the resolute enthusiast often finds themselves drawn towards the iron and resistance, advocating the superiority of strength training over the rhythmic beat of cardio. In this quest for self-improvement, the clanging of weights becomes a resounding anthem, signaling not just the pursuit of physical prowess, but also a belief in the transformative power that lies within the realms of muscle and might. The New Year unfolds as a canvas, and for those who champion the supremacy of strength training, the brushstrokes of change are etched with resilience, determination, and the promise of a robust, sculpted future.

In the realm of fitness, the perennial debate between cardiovascular exercise and strength training has been ongoing. While cardio workouts undeniably have their merits, an increasing body of evidence supports the notion that strength training holds unique and substantial advantages. In this article, we delve into the reasons why incorporating strength training into your fitness routine may be the key to unlocking a healthier and more resilient body.

Building Lean Muscle Mass

One of the fundamental benefits of strength training lies in its ability to build lean muscle mass. Contrary to common misconceptions, strength training does not equate to bulky muscles; instead, it contributes to a sculpted and toned physique. The website The Healthy Back Bag emphasizes this point, stating that "strength training helps to build muscle, which burns more calories at rest than fat does." This increased muscle mass can lead to a higher basal metabolic rate (BMR), promoting more efficient calorie expenditure even when at rest.

Improved Metabolic Health

Cardiovascular exercise primarily focuses on burning calories during the workout itself, whereas



strength training has a more lasting impact on metabolic health. A study published in the journal *Obesity* found that regular strength training significantly improves insulin sensitivity and glucose metabolism. This is particularly relevant in the context of preventing and managing conditions like type 2 diabetes, making strength training a valuable ally in the fight against metabolic disorders.

One study that is cited on the website, Healthline, measured participants' resting metabolisms during 24 weeks of weight training. In men, weight training led to a 9% increase in resting metabolism. The effects in women were smaller, yet still showed an increase of almost 4%.

Enhanced Fat Burning

The belief that cardio is the ultimate fat-burning exercise has been challenged by research highlighting the effectiveness of strength training in promoting fat loss. According to The Healthy Back Bag, "Cardio doesn't do a lot to help you burn more calories at rest, whereas strength training does." Engaging in resistance exercises elevates your post-exercise oxygen consumption (EPOC), commonly known as the afterburn effect. This means that the body continues to burn calories at an increased rate even after the strength training session has concluded, making it an efficient strategy for long-term fat loss.

Protecting Bone Health

While cardio certainly has its cardiovascular benefits, it often falls short in terms of promoting bone health. Strength training, on the other hand, plays a crucial role in enhancing bone density. Weight-bearing exercises stimulate the production

of osteoblasts, the cells responsible for bone formation. This becomes increasingly important as we age, as maintaining strong bones helps prevent fractures and osteoporosis.

In the ongoing debate between cardio and strength training, the evidence strongly suggests that the latter offers a multitude of benefits that extend beyond the physical realm. By incorporating strength training into your fitness routine, you not only build lean muscle mass, improve metabolic health, and enhance fat burning, but also safeguard your bone health. The bottom line is that a well-rounded approach that includes both cardio and strength training can offer a holistic and sustainable path to overall health and well-being. As we strive for resilience and longevity, let's not overlook the transformative power of strength training in achieving our fitness goals.

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Ashley Lampkin, BS, CSCS

Ashley is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist by the National Strength and Conditioning Association. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science from Florida Gulf Coast University and has more than 15 years' experience training clients in SWFL. With a passion for helping others achieve their personal health and fitness goals, she managed and ran her own fitness company in Naples before becoming the Director at Inspire Exercise Medicine.

SHEDDING LIGHT ON NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING GLAUCOMA

Glaucoma, often referred to as the "silent thief of sight," silently robs millions of individuals of their vision worldwide. January marks National Glaucoma Awareness Month, a crucial time to educate and raise awareness about this prevalent eye condition that affects over 70 million individuals worldwide.

Glaucoma is not just one eye disease but a group of conditions that damage the optic nerve, often caused by increased pressure within the eye. The danger lies in its asymptomatic nature during the early stages, gradually stealing peripheral vision and, if left undiagnosed and untreated, progressing to blindness.

This observance month aims to highlight the importance of regular eye check-ups, as early detection is fundamental in managing and preventing irreversible vision loss. Vision screenings and comprehensive eye exams can catch glaucoma before noticeable symptoms develop, allowing for timely intervention and treatment to preserve sight.

Understanding the risk factors is crucial. Age, family history, certain medical conditions like diabetes, and even race (African Americans, Hispanics, and Asians are at higher risk) can contribute to an increased likelihood of developing glaucoma. However, anyone can be affected, making awareness and proactive eye care vital for everyone.

The two primary forms, open-angle and closed-angle glaucoma, present distinct mechanisms affecting the drainage of aqueous humor within the eye. Open-angle glaucoma involves resistance in the trabecular meshwork, leading to increased intraocular pressure. Conversely, closed-angle glaucoma results from blockages in both the uveoscleral drains and the trabecular meshwork, often due to an impaired iris.

Recognizing symptoms is crucial. While early-stage glaucoma may not manifest noticeable signs, eventual symptoms can include reduced vision, peripheral vision loss, and eye redness, particularly acute in closed-angle glaucoma cases. However, the absence of symptoms doesn't confirm the absence of the condition, emphasizing the necessity of regular eye exams.

Diagnosing glaucoma involves a comprehensive eye examination, including visual field tests, tonometry to measure intraocular pressure, and a dilated eye exam. Advanced techniques like optical coherence tomography aid in objectively assessing optic nerve fiber loss.

Treatment primarily aims at reducing intraocular pressure. Hypotensive eye drops, particularly prostaglandin analogs, serve as the frontline treatment, improving fluid drainage. Second-line drugs and procedures like selective laser trabeculoplasty or trabeculectomy are also employed to manage pressure and facilitate better drainage.

Unfortunately, there is no cure for glaucoma, underscoring the importance of early detection and consistent management. Lifetime monitoring remains crucial, but advancements in treatments, including laser procedures and surgeries, offer hope in mitigating its impact on vision loss.

Prevention is anchored in regular eye check-ups. Early detection drastically improves prognosis, making annual eye exams, especially for those over 40, an integral part of glaucoma prevention.

While lifestyle adjustments may offer some protection, they aren't foolproof against glaucoma. However, adopting a healthy lifestyle in conjunction with regular eye screenings serves as a proactive approach in managing this sight-threatening condition.

In conclusion, understanding the differences between open-angle and closed-angle glaucoma, recognizing their symptoms, and engaging in routine eye exams are fundamental in managing this condition and preserving vision health. As advancements continue, early diagnosis and vigilant management remain the best defense against the progression of glaucoma-induced vision impairment.

Remember, sight is a precious gift, and preserving it starts with awareness and regular eye examinations. Let's shine a light on glaucoma this January and beyond, ensuring that sight-saving knowledge reaches everyone, everywhere.



JULIE A. CARTER, M.D.

Dr. Carter is a board-certified ophthalmologist with fellowship training in the specialty of Glaucoma.

Dr. Carter was born and raised in Sarasota, Florida. She attended Georgia Tech, where she earned a degree in mechanical engineering. After college, Dr. Carter worked for the Kimberly-Clark Corporation, where she contributed to patents on products ranging from baby diapers to surgeon's gowns. During her time at Kimberly-Clark, she realized her passion was in medicine and returned to medical school at the University of South Florida, where she earned the honor of joining the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society.

Dr. Carter completed her ophthalmology residency at the University of South Florida, serving as Chief Resident. She completed an additional year of fellowship training in the specialty of glaucoma at the University of South Florida.

At Center For Sight, Dr. Carter treats general ophthalmology patients, in addition to glaucoma patients. She works closely with her glaucoma patients to develop an effective treatment plan to maintain and protect their eyesight. She feels that one of the most rewarding parts of her career is the opportunity to build long-term relationships with her patients; many of whom now feel like family.

In her free time, she enjoys spending time with her three children, her husband, Jason, and their many pets! She is passionate about healthy living and wellness. She is a member of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the Collier County Medical Society and the Florida Society of Ophthalmology.

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NEW YEAR, NEW BEGINNINGS: WHY SENIOR LIVING IS THE BEST RESOLUTION YOU CAN MAKE

By Jenny Bradley

As the New Year approaches, it's a time to reflect on fresh starts and set goals for a healthier, happier future. For many seniors, this reflection might include exploring how their living arrangements can better support their lifestyle and well-being. Choosing a senior living community like The Carlisle Naples can be the ultimate resolution to start the year off right. Here are five ways senior living can enhance your life in 2025 and beyond:

1. Simplify Life by Downsizing

The New Year is a natural time to declutter and focus on what truly matters. Moving to a senior living community eliminates the stress of maintaining a home. At The Carlisle Naples, residents enjoy spacious, maintenance-free residences where everything—from landscaping to appliance repairs—is handled. Plus, residences are thoughtfully designed to be an extension of residents' homes. For example, there's no need to maintain an extensive library when the community offers a well-stocked library filled with bestsellers and classics. Additionally, private dining rooms are available to host visiting family and friends, ensuring every gathering feels special. Downsizing doesn't mean giving up cherished memories; it means gaining freedom to create new ones.

2. Embrace Wellness with Tailored Programs

If your New Year's resolution includes prioritizing health, a senior living community is a great option. Many offer an on-site fitness center with a variety of classes for all levels – from low-impact yoga to full-body workouts. At The Carlisle Naples, for example, our transformative wellness program appeals to residents' mind, body and soul. Additionally, our signature Dine Your Way initiative focuses on nutritious, chef-prepared meals that cater to diverse dietary needs and include FreshZest selections from a plant-forward menu. With wellness at the core of our community, residents find it easier than ever to stay active and healthy.

3. Expand Your Social Connections

A sense of belonging is essential to overall happiness. The Carlisle Naples offers a monthly calendar filled with life enrichment programming, encouraging residents to be as active or relaxed as they please.



From themed happy hours and book clubs to group outings and cultural events, there's always something happening at a senior living community to bring people together. The Carlisle recently hosted a fun afternoon of mahjong for Community School of Naples students. The intergenerational activity is just one of the many opportunities for social engagement planned by our Zest Director.

4. Discover Hobbies and Passions

The New Year is a perfect time to reignite old passions or discover new ones. At The Carlisle Naples, residents can explore a variety of enriching activities. Our art classes help residents tap into their creativity. Additionally, our technology workshops empower residents to stay connected with family and friends while learning new skills.

5. Secure Peace of Mind for the Future

The greatest gift you can give yourself this year is peace of mind. Many senior living communities offer a continuum of care that ensures support is available as needs evolve. With professional staff available 24/7 and personalized care plans, residents and their families can rest easy knowing that help is always available. The Carlisle Naples offers CARF-accredited independent and assisted living. The community also holds

an extended congregate care (ECC) license, which allows customized in-home assistance tailored to individual needs. Residents can comfortably age in place without requiring a transition to a nursing home.

A New Year, a New You

Moving to a senior living community is not just a resolution; it's an investment in your future. At The Carlisle Naples, our residents find more than just a place to live—they find a vibrant community that enriches their lives in every way. As you reflect on your goals for 2025, consider how a move to a senior living community could help you achieve them.

Located at 6945 Carlisle Court in Naples, The Carlisle offers independent and assisted living lifestyles featuring spacious one-and two-bedroom residences, housekeeping, maintenance, transportation, all utilities except telephone, Zest wellness programming and elevated dining with daily, chef-prepared specials. The community is ECC licensed with an integrated health care clinic and rehabilitative therapies located onsite. The Carlisle Naples is accredited by the National Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), an important distinction that provides residents with the assurance that the highest standards of quality care, services and safeguards are maintained. For more information about the community, please call 239-221-0017 or visit www.TheCarlisleNaples.com.



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Seasons Change - People Change.

By Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

Somehow the title of this popular 80's song felt appropriate for what I had to say in this article today. January is upon us. It may not be obvious when you live in Florida, where beautiful blue skies and lush palm trees can make you feel like you are perpetually in paradise. However, if you have just arrived from the Northeast or the Midwest, you have most definitely seen the foliage, the days getting shorter and the darker rainy skies dominating the picture. Nature is seasonal and so are we. Unfortunately, we often forget that humans are an extension of Nature and tend to ignore Nature's seasonal calendar, and continue living on an autopilot - eating the same things, wearing the same things, and performing the same daily routines. One of the most exciting parts of my holistic medical practice is to educate the patients about the changes that take place inside our bodies as we move from season to season and how to adjust accordingly - to preserve homeostasis with our surroundings. The idea behind this is expressed in various cultures around the world. My personal take on this stems from Ayurvedic wellness philosophy which took its origins in India thousands of years ago.

Ayurveda treats humans as being of energy and aims to classify common expressions of temperament, behavior, and visual characteristics accordingly. There are three main energetic imprints ruling the big picture of our Mind-Body physiology: Pitta, Kapha, and Vata doshas. Pitta runs metabolism, digestion, and passion aspect of what you do. Kapha underlies anatomical and cellular structure, water content, thoughtfulness and loving disposition. Vata rules nervous system, creativity, and detoxification via elimination. Each of these categories has its own associated set of physical characteristics. Pitta will tend to express itself with piercing gaze, thin hair, and mesomorph type of body built. Kapha is usually associated with soft peaceful gaze, heavy or big boned built and lush thick hair. Vata is classically attributed to thin, lanky build, cold hands and feet, and dry skin. There are many physical attributes which tend to be associated with respective Ayurvedic doshas. Most people possess all three, though within one person some are expressed more than others. Each energetic category is associated with temperament characteristics. While Pitta-dominant people tend to be workaholics, Vata-dominant folks are often artists and writers, and Kapha-dominant ones are frequently engaged in physical work and strength-based workouts.



Each energetic category is also classically associated with the set of illnesses to which it is predisposed. If the person leads an unhealthy lifestyle - he or she is more likely to drive their dominant dosha out of balance - and the malady follows. For example, if you find yourself hungry often and have ravenous appetite for food - this is typically associated with Pitta - an energetic blueprint which is an energetic, fiery, and sharp quality. Becoming aware of Pitta qualities in yourself can help you balance them with the world around you. For example, it would be unwise for Pitta-dominant person to eat many hot and spicy foods - he or she would just build more fire in his or her Mind-Body System. As a result, he or she could become prone to developing Pitta-associated diseases such as Gastric Ulcer, Psoriasis, Acne, or inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

Each season in Nature represents a predominance of certain energetic qualities as well. For example, early autumn is characterized by Pitta quality, which is wet and oily. However, late fall is dominated by Vata quality, which is colder, drier, and windier. Ideally, we should try to be aware of this internal clock that we have in order to balance it with the external change of seasons. If the transition is smooth, we feel on top of our game and full of energy. If there is a sharp discrepancy between how I treat my body and mind and the seasonal change, I will feel tired, blue, and listless.

It is not enough to know charts of Ayurvedic doshas and associated disorders. There are plenty of people who exhibit a seemingly classic energetic quality and yet never develop imbalance despite doing all the wrong things. And there are some folks who do all the seemingly right things and yet succumb to maladies characteristic to their energetic predisposition. In the hands of an experienced medical doctor who understands Ayurveda and incorporates it into her medical practice, it becomes more than just lists and associations - it evolves to be an indispensable tool in wellness and prevention, customized to a given patient's unique set of life circumstances.



Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

The author of 'Diet Slove No More!', Svetlana Kagan, MD is a Board-Certified Internal Medicine, Holistic & Functional Medical Doctor with 25 years of experience. She has appeared as a health expert on prime-time TV and radio stations

and has authored hundreds of holistic health articles for internet and print. She moved her Concierge Practice from Manhattan NYC to Naples in 2019. Her Functional Medicine Primary Care Practice is focused on prevention and holistic approach to illness, and longevity.

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THE LIFE-SAVING POWER OF REGULAR SKIN CANCER SCREENINGS: WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

In a world where health consciousness is on the rise, one critical aspect of preventive care often goes overlooked: regular skin cancer screenings. With skin cancer being one of the most common types of cancer worldwide, the importance of early detection through routine check-ups cannot be overstated. This article delves into why staying vigilant about your skin health, particularly in checking for melanomas, could be a life-saving decision.

Understanding Skin Cancer and Melanoma

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells grow abnormally, often due to damage from UV radiation. While there are several types of skin cancer, melanoma is the most dangerous. Melanoma develops in the melanocytes, the cells responsible for producing skin pigment. Although it's less common than other skin cancers, melanoma is far more likely to spread to other parts of the body if not caught early.

The Power of Early Detection

The key to successfully treating skin cancer, especially melanoma, lies in early detection. When caught in its initial stages, the five-year survival rate for melanoma is an impressive 99%. However, this rate drops dramatically to 27% for melanomas that have spread to distant parts of the body. These statistics underscore the critical importance of regular skin checks and professional screenings.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

While professional screenings are crucial, being aware of your own skin and any changes is equally important. The "ABCDE" rule is a helpful guide for identifying potential melanomas:

Asymmetry: One half of the mole doesn't match the other half.

Border: The edges are irregular, ragged, or blurred.

Color: The color is not uniform and may include shades of brown, black, or tan.

Diameter: Melanomas are usually larger than 6mm (about the size of a pencil eraser).

Evolving: The mole changes in size, shape, or color over time.

Any mole or skin growth exhibiting these characteristics warrants immediate medical attention.

The Screening Process

A professional skin cancer screening is a quick, painless procedure that can be performed by a dermatologist or trained healthcare provider. During the screening, the doctor will thoroughly examine your skin, paying close attention to areas frequently exposed to the sun. They may use a dermatoscope, a special magnifying tool, to get a closer look at suspicious spots.

Who Should Get Screened and How Often?

While everyone should be mindful of their skin health, certain factors increase the risk of skin cancer:

- Fair skin
- History of sunburns or excessive sun exposure
- Multiple or atypical moles
- Family history of skin cancer
- Weakened immune system

For those at average risk, an annual skin check is recommended. However, individuals with higher risk factors may need more frequent screenings. It's best to consult with a healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate screening schedule for your specific situation.

Beyond Professional Screenings: The Importance of Self-Checks

In between professional screenings, monthly self-examinations are crucial. These self-checks allow you to become familiar with your skin's normal appearance and help you spot any changes quickly. Use a full-length mirror and a hand mirror to examine your entire body, including hard-to-see areas like your back, scalp, and between your toes.

Prevention: Your First Line of Defense

While regular screenings are vital, prevention remains the best strategy against skin cancer. Protect your skin by:

- Applying broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 daily
- Wearing protective clothing, including wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses
- Seeking shade, especially during peak sun hours (10 am to 4 pm)
- Avoiding tanning beds and sun lamps

The Broader Impact of Regular Screenings


Regular skin cancer screenings don't just benefit individuals; they have a broader societal impact. Early detection reduces the overall burden on healthcare systems by catching cancers when they're most treatable. It also helps raise awareness about skin cancer, encouraging others to prioritize their skin health.

Conclusion: A Small Step for Significant Peace of Mind

In the grand scheme of health maintenance, skin cancer screenings are a relatively small investment of time that can yield enormous benefits. By making these screenings a regular part of your health routine, you're taking a proactive step in protecting yourself against one of the most prevalent forms of cancer. Remember, your skin is your body's largest organ and its first line of defense against the environment. Treating it with the care and attention it deserves isn't just about aesthetics—it's about preserving your overall health and potentially saving your life.

Don't wait for a problem to arise. Schedule a skin cancer screening today and empower yourself with the knowledge and vigilance needed to keep your skin healthy for years to come. Your future self will thank you for this simple yet powerful act of self-care.

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EDUCATE – ENGAGE – PLAN

BY AMANDA BARTON, MANAGING PARTNER

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

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

To help educate people about their many options, Seniors Blue Book is hosting its 12th Annual Preparing for Aging Symposiums on **January 23, 2025**, from 8am-12pm at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church (625 111th Ave N., Naples, 34108) and **February 19, 2025**, 8am-12pm at Marion Hall by Saint Cecilia (5698 Sunrise Dr., Fort Myers 33919).

At our upcoming symposiums, aging seniors, their family and caregivers will enjoy a variety of educational panels from area experts and visit over 70 exhibitor tables with valuable information to share. Topics will include: medical, senior housing, retirement, finances, legal, health & wellness, in home care, medicare, hospice, and much more!



EVENT IS FREE and will feature a **complementary breakfast, door prizes and a grand prize sunset cruise raffle – HOWEVER RSVP IS REQUIRED – 239-776-7353.**



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



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

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



What is Seniors Blue Book?

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

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

Visit www.SeniorsBlueBook.com to learn more.


Seniors Blue Book

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



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

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

To learn more:

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Join us for the upcoming 2025 Seniors Blue Book Symposium. Our annual event is designed to provide information, education and share community resources focused on the process of aging gracefully and being Pro-Active vs Re-Active.

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What is an Ingrown Toenail?

Michael J. Petrocelli, D.P.M., F.A.C.F.A.S., C.W.S.P.
Board Certified Ankle and Foot Surgeon and Board Certified Wound Care Specialist

When a toenail is ingrown, it is curved and grows into the skin, usually at the nail borders (the sides of the nail). This “digging in” of the nail irritates the skin, often creating pain, redness, swelling, and warmth in the toe.

If an ingrown nail causes a break in the skin, bacteria may enter and cause an infection in the area, which is often marked by drainage and a foul odor. However, even if the toe isn't painful, red, swollen, or warm, a nail that curves downward into the skin can progress to an infection.

Causes of ingrown toenails include:

- **Heredity.** In many people, the tendency for ingrown toenails is inherited.
- **Trauma.** Sometimes an ingrown toenail is the result of trauma, such as stubbing your toe, having an object fall on your toe, or engaging in activities that involve repeated pressure on the toes, such as kicking or running.
- **Improper trimming.** The most common cause of ingrown toenails is cutting your nails too short. This encourages the skin next to the nail to fold over the nail.
- **Improperly sized footwear.** Ingrown toenails can result from wearing socks and shoes that are tight or short.
- **Nail Conditions.** Ingrown toenails can be caused by nail problems, such as fungal infections or losing a nail due to trauma.

Treatment

Sometimes initial treatment for ingrown toenails can be safely performed at home. However, home treatment is strongly discouraged if an infection is suspected, or for those who have medical conditions that put feet at high risk, such as diabetes, nerve damage in the foot, or poor circulation.

Home care:

If you don't have an infection or any of the above medical conditions, you can soak your foot in room-temperature water (adding Epsom's salt may be



recommended by your doctor), and gently massage the side of the nail fold to help reduce the inflammation.

Avoid attempting “bathroom surgery.” Repeated cutting of the nail can cause the condition to worsen over time. If your symptoms fail to improve, it's time to see a foot and ankle surgeon.

Physician care:

After examining the toe, the foot and ankle surgeon will select the treatment best suited for you. If an infection is present, an oral antibiotic may be prescribed.

Sometimes a minor surgical procedure, often performed in the office, will ease the pain and remove the offending nail. After applying a local anesthetic, the doctor removes part of the nail's side border. Some nails may become ingrown again, requiring removal of the nail root.

Following the nail procedure, a light bandage will be applied. Most people experience very little pain after surgery and may resume normal activity the next day. If your surgeon has prescribed an oral antibiotic, be sure to take all the medication, even if your symptoms have improved.

Preventing Ingrown Toenails

Many cases of ingrown toenails can be prevented with proper trimming and wearing well-fitted socks and shoes. Cut toenails in a fairly straight line, and don't cut them too short. You should be able to get your fingernail under the sides and end of the nail. Don't wear shoes that are short or tight in the toe area. Avoid shoes that are loose, because they too cause pressure on the toes, especially when running or walking briskly.

What You Should Know About Home Treatment

- **Don't cut a notch in the nail.** Contrary to what some people believe, this does not reduce the tendency for the nail to curve downward.
- **Don't repeatedly trim nail borders.** Repeated trimming does not change the way the nail grows, and can make the condition worse.
- **Don't place cotton under the nail.** Not only does this not relieve the pain, it provides a place for harmful bacteria to grow, resulting in infection.
- **Over-the-counter medications are ineffective.** Topical medications may mask the pain, but they don't correct the underlying problem.

Collier Podiatry

It's important to be evaluated by an experienced podiatric professional if you're experiencing any type of foot pain. At Collier Podiatry, Dr. Michael Petrocelli has been practicing podiatric medicine for well over 20 years. He is an expert in his field and a leader to his peers, he and his staff see a countless number of patients with heel pain and injuries in the Naples area.

Along with bunion treatment, Collier Podiatry will provide you with personalized instructions on the necessary amount of rest, stretching exercises and home care to get you back to doing what you love.

The caring supportive staff at Collier Podiatry is available to answer your questions and make your appointment. Please visit their website at www.collierpodiatry.com, or call them at (239) 775-0019



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CAN A HIGH-TECH CHAIR CURE INCONTINENCE?

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

Do you wear urinary pads or diapers? Do you leak when you exercise or sneeze? Aging, childbirth, and menopause can all lead to incontinence. There are many treatments such as surgical procedures, pessary devices, and medications to help cure or reduce incontinence.

There is a new device by BTL called Emsella that makes incontinence treatment as simple as sitting in a chair! The Emsella is a unique chair that patients can simply sit and relax in (fully clothed) and have their pelvic floor significantly strengthened during a 28 minute treatment.

The Emsella chair is being touted as the Kegel throne. Each treatment provides the equivalent of doing over 10,000 kegel exercises. It produces high-frequency vibrations with thousands of contractions per session that tighten the pelvic floor muscles and the bladder. Results can often be noticed as quickly as the first treatment. Most women and men will undergo just six sessions in a full three-week program to restore their pelvic muscle strength. The best part is, 67% of treated patients totally eliminated or decreased the use of hygienic pads, and 95% of treated patients improved quality of life.

Who Is The Right Candidate For BTL Emsella?
BTL EMSELLA™ is a great option for patients of any age who desire solution for urinary incontinence and improvement in their quality of life.

How Long Is The Treatment?

How Many Sessions Do I Need?

Your provider will tailor a treatment plan for you. A typical treatment takes 28 minutes and you will need about 6 sessions, scheduled twice a week.

What Does The Procedure Feel Like?

Is It Painful?

You will experience tingling and pelvic floor muscle contractions during the procedure. The treatment is painless and you may resume daily activities immediately after the treatment.



The following patients should not seek Emsella treatment.

1. Subject is pregnant, planning to get pregnant or within 3 months postpartum;
2. Subject has a pacemaker;
3. Subject has an implant or IUD containing metal (e.g. copper 7);
4. Subject has piercing between the waist and knees and is not willing to remove it before each treatment

How Fast Will I See Results?

You may observe improvement after a single session. The results will typically continue to improve over the next few weeks.¹

This progressive treatment is helping numerous men and women find their freedom, confidence, and get their life back without having to worry about urinary incontinence. Emsella has been featured on the Doctors and in various news and media outlets.

References:

1. Body by BTL, A Breakthrough Treatment For Incontinence And Confidence, 2019 Btl Industries Inc.



Some comments from local users:

- I don't have to worry about peeing when I sneeze anymore
- My husband definitely notices the difference
- I just feel lighter down there.

To learn more about this technology please go to our website at www.FloridaBladderInstitute.com. Call 239-449-7979 to schedule your Emsella consultation today.



Joseph Gauta, MD



Nicole Houser, PA-C



Amy Goetz, PA-C


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FGCU's Transformative Impact on Community Health

The university's Marieb College prepares resilient professionals and resourceful caregivers for the well-being of Southwest Florida

Rehabilitation science is a multidisciplinary field that studies human function and disability and aims to help people achieve optimal health. It is a field evolving constantly and rapidly, resulting in therapeutic advances that professionals can apply in hospitals, clinics, fitness centers and other healthcare settings.

With that in mind, Florida Gulf Coast University prepares and inspires resilient professionals and resourceful caregivers capable of transforming community health and well-being through the latest best practices and technology in rehabilitation science.

FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services offers highly successful degree programs in exercise science, occupational therapy and physical therapy that instill the kind of solutions-oriented curiosity that makes our students lifelong learners. Intensive fieldwork, community involvement and inter-professional learning guarantee students in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences have everything they need to deliver forward-thinking care — no matter what changes in the industry.

This approach enables our graduates to achieve licensure pass rates well above the statewide average — 100% in most cases — as well as 100% employment rates. Healthcare leaders consider our graduates Florida's best-prepared therapists, trainers and educators.

Occupational therapy: A record of success

Occupational therapists assess, plan and organize rehabilitative programs that help build or restore vocational and daily living skills and general independence to people with disabilities or developmental delays. The first occupational therapy students at FGCU enrolled in 1999, pursuing a bachelor's program that later transitioned to a master of science degree.

After they complete their studies and 24 weeks of fieldwork, graduates participate in a licensure exam hosted by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy. For 10 consecutive years,



Marieb OT graduates have upheld a 100% pass rate for this high-stakes exam. In fact, FGCU was the only state school to achieve that milestone for the most recent exam.

The program's outcomes, paired with FGCU's affordability and student support mechanisms, are truly second to none. The occupational therapy department is well-supported with eight full-time faculty members boasting over 200 years of practice experience combined. They have built a fully-accredited, cohesive curriculum, improved student learning outcomes and built collaborative relationships with practicing therapists in the community.

Physical therapy: Practitioners teaching practitioners

As with occupational therapy, graduates of Marieb College's physical therapy program maintain a 100% pass rate on the National Physical Therapy Examination. All states require physical therapists to be licensed, and a doctor of physical therapy degree like FGCU's is a standard requirement to practice in the field.

Many aspects set Marieb's doctorate apart from other schools. Smaller class sizes mean a better student-to-faculty ratio and more personalized learning. Problem-based learning promotes lifelong active learning skills. Classes are taught by

faculty, rather than teaching assistants or graduate students. And the majority of faculty members are still practicing clinicians, so they bring experience from the field directly into the classroom.

What's more, the college's state-of-the-art labs provide hands-on experience with current technology. Students perfect various therapeutic and diagnostic assessment techniques in cutting-edge sports medicine, human performance, musculoskeletal, neuromuscular and aquatics rehabilitation labs.

As a result, Marieb graduates are exceptionally prepared to help injured or ill people improve movement and manage pain in settings that include hospitals, clinics, private practices, patients' homes and nursing homes.

Exercise science: Promoting lifelong wellness

Exercise science embraces the study of the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of movement. At FGCU, students in this bachelor's degree program learn how the body responds to activity and exercise over the course of one's life and how individuals can attain a higher level of all-around wellness.

Interdisciplinary but strongly based in science, Marieb College's exercise science program emphasizes applied and critical thinking that prepares students for graduate studies in health-related fields or to start careers helping people improve their health and physical capabilities. In the college's human performance laboratory, students learn to use resistance training equipment, body composition analyzers, cardiac stress systems, anti-gravity and underwater treadmills and other state-of-the-art technology.

Graduates sit for national certification exams through the National Strength and Conditioning Association and the American College of Sports Medicine.

For more information about Marieb College's Department of Rehabilitation Sciences or other programs, go to fgcu.edu/mariebcollege.



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LIFE CHANGING THERAPY

By Michael C. Shaffer, D.C., P.A.

Non-surgical spinal decompression is a groundbreaking approach to addressing chronic neck and back pain. This therapy involves gently stretching the spine using a specialized table, creating negative pressure between vertebrae. This negative pressure allows bulging or herniated discs to retract, reducing pressure on surrounding nerves and promoting the flow of nutrients and oxygen to the affected areas. Unlike surgical interventions, spinal decompression is non-invasive, making it an appealing option for individuals seeking relief without the risks and recovery time associated with surgery. Patients often report significant improvement in mobility and a reduction in pain after a series of sessions.

Combining spinal decompression with deep tissue, laser pain management enhances outcomes. By targeting pain with this cutting edge, multi-lock ML7 laser, this integrated approach not only alleviates symptoms but also promotes long-term healing. Personalized pain management techniques ensure that the treatment plan is tailored to each patient's unique needs. This synergy between decompression and pain management creates a comprehensive framework for sustained relief.

Laser therapy further amplifies the benefits of spinal decompression by accelerating tissue repair and reducing inflammation. Low-level laser therapy (LLLT) uses light energy to penetrate deep into tissues, stimulating cellular activity and promoting faster healing. This treatment is particularly effective for spinal conditions involving inflammation, such as sciatica or degenerative disc disease. It is also highly effective for treating other muscle and joint conditions in the arms and legs. When combined with spinal decompression, laser therapy helps patients recover more quickly and experience less discomfort, as it directly addresses the cellular damage contributing to pain. The two therapies work hand in hand to restore spinal health.

The integration of these modalities is a game-changer for individuals with spinal-related problems. Spinal decompression provides structural realignment, pain management offers symptomatic relief and preventive care, and laser therapy accelerates healing at the cellular level.



Together, they create a holistic and comprehensive approach that addresses both the causes and effects of spinal conditions. Patients undergoing this combination of treatments often experience not only pain reduction but also improved quality of life, as they regain mobility and confidence in their physical capabilities.

What sets this approach apart is its adaptability and patient-centered nature. Non-surgical spinal decompression, combined with multi-locked laser pain management, can be customized to meet diverse patient needs. Whether dealing with chronic conditions like herniated discs or recovering from acute injuries, this multi-faceted strategy ensures optimal outcomes with minimal side effects. As awareness of these therapies grows, they are poised to become a cornerstone in the treatment of spinal-related problems, offering hope to those seeking safe, effective, and long-lasting relief.

A Patient Experience

"My experience in the office has been exceptional from start to finish. Kay in the front office is always extremely welcoming and flexible with my crazy schedule. Working with Dr. Shaffer has tremendously improved my mobility and quality of life. As a military veteran with injuries sustained during combat, I consistently dealt with debilitating pain that I believed would never go away. The use of spinal decompression therapy in conjunction with laser therapy has completely changed my life. If you are on the fence of whether or not to try these forms of therapy, I can assure you, you will not be disappointed!"



In our practice we also utilize nonsurgical spinal decompression, an innovative and practical approach to treating disc and degenerative related conditions. This treatment aims to create negative pressure within the discs reducing pressure on the nerve. By relieving pressure in the spine, increased circulation occurs in the disc which is a vital aid in the healing process. Understanding the common causes, recognizing symptoms and exploring advanced treatment options such as spinal decompression and laser therapy can pave the way to a pain-free and healthier life. Experience has shown that when nonsurgical spinal decompression is used in conjunction with laser therapy, our patients experience far better outcomes. If you suffer from neck and spine related conditions, call our office, we are here to help you.

Dr. Shaffer has been serving Collier County since 1981. He specializes in spinal care, chronic and acute musculoskeletal conditions, injury, and rehabilitation. Please call the office for more information. (239)793-3200.



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Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery Focused on Patient's Rapid Recovery

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

Minimally invasive surgery (MIS) has transformed the landscape of spinal care, offering a less disruptive and more efficient alternative to traditional surgical techniques. For individuals suffering from neck and back pain, MIS provides a targeted solution that reduces recovery time, minimizes tissue damage, and alleviates pain. Let's explore the benefits of minimally invasive spine surgery, the conditions it can address, and what patients can expect.

What Is Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery?

Minimally invasive spine surgery involves smaller incisions, specialized instruments, and advanced imaging technology to perform complex spinal procedures with precision. Unlike traditional open surgery, MIS minimizes damage to surrounding muscles and tissues, leading to faster recovery and reduced postoperative discomfort.

Using tools such as tubular retractors and robotic guidance systems, surgeons can access the spine through tiny incisions. This technique allows for the effective treatment of various spinal conditions while preserving the integrity of healthy tissues.

Benefits of Minimally Invasive Surgery

MIS offers several advantages over conventional surgical approaches:

- **Smaller Incisions:** Reduced scarring and less disruption to surrounding tissues.
- **Lower Risk of Infection:** Smaller wounds decrease the likelihood of infection.
- **Faster Recovery:** Patients often experience shorter hospital stays and quicker return to daily activities.
- **Less Blood Loss:** The precision of MIS minimizes bleeding during surgery.
- **Reduced Pain:** Less tissue damage leads to decreased postoperative pain and a lower reliance on pain medications.

Conditions Treated with Minimally Invasive Surgery

Minimally invasive surgery is an effective option for addressing a variety of spinal conditions, including:

1. Herniated Discs

When the soft inner material of a spinal disc pushes out and compresses nearby nerves, it can cause pain, numbness, or weakness. MIS techniques, such as microdiscectomy, can precisely remove the herniated portion of the disc, relieving nerve pressure.

2. Spinal Stenosis

This condition occurs when the spinal canal narrows, putting pressure on the spinal cord or nerves. Minimally invasive laminectomy or decompression surgery can relieve this pressure while preserving spinal stability.

3. Spondylolisthesis

When one vertebra slips forward over another, it can cause instability and nerve compression. MIS techniques like fusion surgery provide stabilization and alleviate symptoms.

4. Sciatica

Sciatica results from nerve compression, often due to a herniated disc or spinal stenosis. MIS procedures can target and decompress the affected nerve with high precision.

5. Spinal Fractures

Trauma or osteoporosis can lead to spinal fractures, causing severe pain and instability. Minimally invasive procedures like kyphoplasty or vertebroplasty can stabilize the fracture and reduce pain.

6. Spinal Tumors

MIS techniques allow for the precise removal of tumors while minimizing damage to surrounding tissues. This approach is especially beneficial for patients with benign or malignant spinal growths.

Use of Robotics in Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery

Robotic systems are revolutionizing minimally invasive spine surgery, enhancing the precision and efficiency of surgical procedures. By combining advanced imaging, navigation, and robotic technology, surgeons can achieve unparalleled accuracy in addressing spinal conditions.

Enhanced Surgical Planning

Robotic systems utilize preoperative imaging, such as CT scans, to create a detailed 3D map of the patient's spine. This allows surgeons to plan the procedure with a high degree of accuracy, identifying the optimal approach and ensuring precise placement of implants or instruments.

Improved Accuracy

During the surgery, robotic arms guide instruments to the exact locations specified in the preoperative plan.

This reduces the margin of error and ensures consistent outcomes, particularly in complex procedures like spinal fusion or deformity correction.

Minimally Invasive Execution

Robotic systems are particularly beneficial in minimally invasive surgeries, where small incisions and limited visibility can pose challenges. The technology's ability to navigate tight spaces with precision minimizes disruption to surrounding tissues and enhances the surgeon's capabilities.

What to Expect During Recovery

Recovery from minimally invasive spine surgery is generally faster and less painful compared to traditional surgery. Here's what patients can typically expect:

- **Shorter Hospital Stays:** Many MIS procedures are performed on an outpatient basis or require only a one- to two-day hospital stay.
- **Quicker Return to Activity:** Most patients resume normal activities within weeks, though heavy lifting and strenuous exercise should be avoided during the initial recovery period.
- **Physical Therapy:** Rehabilitation exercises help strengthen the spine and restore mobility.
- **Reduced Pain:** Patients often report significant pain relief shortly after the procedure.

Conclusion

Minimally invasive surgery offers a modern, effective solution for individuals suffering from neck and back pain. With its many advantages, including smaller incisions, reduced pain, and faster recovery, MIS has become a preferred choice for treating a wide range of spinal conditions. If you're struggling with persistent neck or back pain, consult with the spine specialists at Apex Brain & Spine to determine whether minimally invasive surgery is the right option for you. Early intervention can lead to a better quality of life and lasting relief from pain.



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Breathing Easier in the New Year:

YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO ALLERGY TESTING AND TREATMENT

As we welcome the new year, many individuals are looking to take proactive steps toward better health, and managing allergies is an excellent place to start. Allergy testing and modern treatment options like immunotherapy and sublingual therapy can significantly improve quality of life for those struggling with persistent allergic reactions.

Understanding Allergy Testing: Your First Step to Relief

Allergy testing is a crucial diagnostic tool that helps identify specific substances triggering your immune system's overreaction. There are several methods of allergy testing, each offering unique insights into your body's sensitivities:

1. Skin Prick Test: This is the most common and least invasive method. A healthcare professional will place small amounts of potential allergens on your skin and then lightly prick the skin to allow the substance to enter. After 15-20 minutes, the test site is examined for signs of allergic reactions, such as swelling or redness.

2. Blood Tests: These tests measure your immune system's response to specific allergens by checking the amount of allergy-causing antibodies in your bloodstream. They're particularly useful for individuals who cannot undergo skin tests due to skin conditions or medication interactions.

3. Patch Tests: Typically used to diagnose contact dermatitis, these tests involve applying patches with potential allergens to your skin for 48 hours to detect delayed allergic reactions.

Immunotherapy: A Long-Term Solution to Allergy Management

Once allergies are identified, immunotherapy emerges as a powerful, long-term treatment strategy. This approach gradually desensitizes your immune system to specific allergens, reducing the severity of allergic reactions over time.

Traditional Immunotherapy

Traditionally, immunotherapy involves a series of allergy shots administered in a clinical setting. Patients receive incrementally increasing doses of the allergen, helping the body develop tolerance. While effective, this method requires frequent medical visits and can be time-consuming.

Sublingual Immunotherapy:

A Convenient Alternative

Sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT) offers a more convenient and patient-friendly approach. Instead of injections, patients receive small, daily doses of allergen extracts in the form of tablets or drops placed under the tongue. This method has several advantages:

- Eliminates the need for frequent clinic visits
- Reduces the risk of severe allergic reactions
- Can be self-administered at home
- Particularly effective for environmental allergies like pollen, dust mites, and grass

Preparing for Your Allergy Treatment Journey

Before starting any allergy treatment, consider these important steps:

- Consult with an allergist or immunologist
- Provide a comprehensive medical history
- Discuss potential side effects and treatment expectations
- Develop a personalized treatment plan
- Schedule regular follow-up appointments to monitor progress

The Potential Benefits of Comprehensive Allergy Management

Successful allergy testing and treatment can lead to:

- Reduced allergic symptoms
- Improved respiratory function
- Enhanced quality of life
- Decreased reliance on symptomatic medications
- Better overall health and well-being

Conclusion

The new year presents an excellent opportunity to take control of your allergies. By investing in comprehensive allergy testing and exploring modern treatment options like immunotherapy and sublingual therapy, you can breathe easier and enjoy life to its fullest.

Consult with Dr. Price Sonkarley to determine the most appropriate approach for your specific allergic conditions and start your journey toward better health today.

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*Introducing Price Sonkarley, MD,
the new owner of Mark Montgomery, MD PA*



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

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



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



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

Do you suffer with a chronic cough? Throat irritation? Hearing loss? Nasal congestion? Ear fullness? Allergy sufferers, ask us about our alternative solution to allergy shots.

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Illuminating Vision: Understanding the Miracle of the Retina During National Eye Health Month

Dr. Katia Taba, Board-Certified Ophthalmologist and Retinal Specialist

In the intricate landscape of human biology, few structures are as remarkable and complex as the human eye, with the retina standing as a true marvel of natural engineering. As we observe National Eye Health Month, it's crucial to shed light on this extraordinary tissue that serves as the window to our visual world, transforming light into the vibrant images we perceive daily.

The retina is far more than a simple photographic surface. It is a sophisticated neural network that acts as an extension of our brain, processing visual information with incredible precision. Located at the back of the eye, this thin layer of tissue is approximately the size of a postage stamp but contains over 10 million photoreceptor cells that capture light and convert it into electrical signals our brain can interpret.

These photoreceptor cells, known as rods and cones, play distinctly different roles in our vision. Rods are responsible for low-light and peripheral vision, allowing us to navigate in dimmer environments. Cones, on the other hand, enable color perception and detailed central vision. This intricate system works seamlessly, allowing us to distinguish between subtle color variations, detect motion, and perceive depth with remarkable accuracy.

However, the retina is also vulnerable to numerous conditions that can compromise vision. Diseases like diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, and retinal detachment can significantly impact visual health. These conditions often develop gradually, making regular eye examinations critical for early detection and prevention.

Lifestyle factors play a significant role in maintaining retinal health. Nutrition, for instance, is paramount. Nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, zeaxanthin, and vitamins A, C, and E are essential for supporting retinal function. Foods such as leafy green vegetables, fish, nuts, and colorful fruits can provide these crucial nutrients.



Technological advances have revolutionized our understanding and treatment of retinal conditions. Sophisticated imaging techniques like optical coherence tomography (OCT) now allow physicians to obtain detailed, cross-sectional images of the retina, enabling early diagnosis and precise monitoring of various eye diseases.

Protecting your retinal health extends beyond medical interventions. Simple practices can make a substantial difference. Wearing UV-protective sunglasses, maintaining a balanced diet, staying hydrated, avoiding smoking, and managing chronic conditions like diabetes and hypertension can significantly contribute to preserving retinal integrity.

For individuals with a family history of eye diseases or those experiencing vision changes, proactive medical consultation is crucial. Annual comprehensive eye exams can detect early signs of retinal issues, potentially preventing significant vision loss.

As we commemorate National Eye Health Month, let us celebrate the remarkable complexity of the retina and commit to understanding and protecting this vital sensory organ. Our eyes are not just windows to the world but intricate biological systems that deserve careful attention, respect, and ongoing care.

Vision is a precious gift, and the retina is its masterful curator. By embracing knowledge, practicing preventive care, and seeking timely medical guidance, we can ensure that our visual journey remains clear, vibrant, and full of wonder.



Katia E. Taba, MD, is the board-certified ophthalmologist and retina specialist at Personalized Retina Care of Naples in Naples, Florida. Dr. Taba treats macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, macular holes, eye floaters and flashes, and other serious eye problems that can interfere with sight or steal vision without treatment. Patients know Dr. Taba as an extremely friendly and welcoming care provider who maintains great professionalism at all times.

Dr. Taba is a board-certified ophthalmologist in both her home country of Brazil and in the United States. She earned her medical degree at a leading medical school in Brazil and continued specialized vitreoretinal surgery training in Florida, New York, California, Louisiana, and many other locations in the U.S. Dr. Taba trained under the leading experts in the field of ocular disease.

Dr. Taba's extensive training and experience include many years as both a clinician and academician. She entered solo practice as a way to deliver consistently great care in a world where the environment and health care policies are always changing.

Dr. Taba wants to make sure that patients always get the most accurate diagnosis and most effective treatment, so she uses only the latest, state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment. Dr. Taba is the first retina specialist on the southwest coast of Florida to have wide-angle viewing imaging. Dr. Taba also makes sure that injections and treatments are pain-free so patients can always expect a comfortable experience.

Retina Group of Florida

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

Please call (239) 325-3970 today to schedule your eye exam. When necessary same day appointments can often be accommodated.



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The Connection Between Hearing Loss and Mental Wellness: Prioritizing Hearing Health for Mental Wellness Month

By Sarah Sessler, Au.D. Doctor of Audiology/Ear Nerd

January is Mental Wellness Month, a time to focus on the health of our minds and emotions as we begin a new year. While many people recognize the importance of mental health, the role of hearing health in maintaining overall well-being is often overlooked. Untreated hearing loss can have a significant impact on mental wellness, contributing to social isolation, anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline. As we turn our attention to mental wellness this January, it's essential to understand how addressing hearing loss can support overall mental health.

The Mental Toll of Hearing Loss

Hearing loss affects how we interact with the world. For many, it leads to frustration, loneliness, and stress. Conversations become harder to follow, especially in noisy environments or group settings, and individuals with hearing loss may start to avoid social situations. What may start as an inconvenience can quickly become a source of emotional strain.

Untreated hearing loss can lead to social isolation, which is closely linked to mental health challenges. When individuals feel disconnected from others, they are more likely to experience depression and anxiety. The effort to follow conversations, combined with the fear of miscommunication, can also lead to self-consciousness and withdrawal from social settings. Over time, this isolation can have a significant impact on mental well-being.

Research shows that people with untreated hearing loss are at a greater risk of developing depression. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) found that individuals with hearing loss are more likely to experience depressive symptoms than those with normal hearing. Older adults with hearing loss are especially vulnerable to mental health challenges, as hearing impairment can deepen feelings of loneliness.

Cognitive Decline and Hearing Loss

Another major concern is the link between hearing loss and cognitive decline. When hearing is impaired, the brain must work harder to process sound, using mental resources that are typically dedicated to other cognitive functions, such as memory and thinking. This extra strain can lead to

mental fatigue and contribute to cognitive decline over time. Research shows that untreated hearing loss is associated with an increased risk of dementia and other cognitive disorders.

A Johns Hopkins University study found that individuals with mild hearing loss were twice as likely to develop dementia as those with normal hearing. For those with moderate to severe hearing loss, the risk was even higher. These findings emphasize the importance of treating hearing loss early, not only to preserve hearing but also to protect cognitive health.

Treating hearing loss helps alleviate cognitive strain, allowing the brain to focus on important tasks without working overtime to process sounds.

Emotional Well-Being and Hearing Loss

Untreated hearing loss can also take a toll on emotional well-being. Struggling to hear clearly can lead to frustration for both the individual and their loved ones. Misunderstandings and frequent repetition can strain relationships, leading to stress and emotional distress.

For many, untreated hearing loss can cause a loss of confidence. The anxiety of missing key details or struggling to communicate effectively can make social gatherings uncomfortable. Over time, individuals may avoid social situations, missing out on meaningful connections and experiences.

By addressing hearing loss, people can regain confidence, reduce anxiety, and feel more comfortable in social settings. Improved communication leads to less stress and enhances emotional resilience.

Supporting Mental Wellness by Treating Hearing Loss

Treating hearing loss can significantly improve mental and emotional well-being. Hearing aids and other treatments make communication easier, allowing individuals to stay engaged in conversations and social interactions. Improved hearing reduces mental fatigue, strengthens cognitive function, and promotes emotional well-being.

By staying connected with family, friends, and the community, individuals with hearing aids can reduce the isolation that often accompanies hearing loss. Social engagement is vital for maintaining a healthy mind, particularly in older adults, where the effects of isolation are more pronounced.

Today's hearing aids are designed to be discreet, comfortable, and highly effective. They offer a range of features, such as speech enhancement and background noise reduction, making it easier to hear in various environments. Many modern hearing aids also connect to smartphones and other devices, providing a seamless experience.

A New Year Focus on Mental Wellness

As we observe Mental Wellness Month, now is the perfect time to consider how hearing health affects your mental well-being. If you or a loved one is experiencing hearing loss—such as frequently asking people to repeat themselves or struggling to follow conversations—this is a great time to take action. A hearing evaluation is quick, simple, and effective in assessing hearing ability.

At Decibels Audiology, we are committed to supporting both your hearing and mental health. Our licensed audiologists offer complimentary comprehensive hearing evaluations and personalized treatment plans to ensure you receive the care you need. By addressing hearing loss, you're not only improving your hearing but also investing in your long-term mental well-being.

This January, take the first step toward better mental and emotional health by addressing your hearing loss. Contact us today to schedule a hearing evaluation and discover how improved hearing can support a happier, healthier you.

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RESTORING BALANCE:

The Promise of Bio-Identical Hormone Replacement Therapy for Women

By Dr. Magdalena Kerschner

As women age, hormonal changes can significantly impact their quality of life. Many experience symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings, and decreased libido during menopause and perimenopause. To address these issues, an increasing number of women are turning to bio-identical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) as a potential solution. This approach aims to alleviate symptoms and improve overall well-being by using hormones that are chemically identical to those produced naturally by the body.

Bio-identical hormones are derived from plant sources, typically soy or yams, and are molecularly altered to match human hormones exactly. This similarity allows them to function in the body just like endogenous hormones. Common bio-identical hormones used in therapy include estradiol, progesterone, and testosterone. Unlike traditional hormone replacement therapy, which often uses synthetic or animal-derived hormones, BHRT offers a more personalized and potentially safer alternative.

One of the primary advantages of BHRT is its customizability. Healthcare providers can tailor the hormone blend and dosage to each woman's unique needs based on her symptoms, hormone levels, and medical history. This individualized approach may lead to better symptom relief and fewer side effects compared to one-size-fits-all treatments.

Women seeking BHRT typically undergo comprehensive hormone testing to determine their specific imbalances. This may include blood, saliva, or urine tests to measure levels of estrogen, progesterone, testosterone, and other relevant hormones. Based on these results, a qualified practitioner can create a personalized treatment plan.

Bio-identical hormones come in various forms, including creams, gels, patches, pills, and pellets. The delivery method is chosen based on the patient's preference and medical considerations. For example, transdermal applications like creams or patches may be preferred for women with liver issues, as they bypass first-pass metabolism in the liver.

Many women report significant improvements in their quality of life after starting BHRT. Common benefits include reduced hot flashes and night sweats, improved sleep, increased energy, enhanced



mood, better cognitive function, and improved sexual health. Some studies also suggest that BHRT may offer protection against osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease, though more research is needed to confirm these potential long-term benefits.

Despite its growing popularity, BHRT is not without controversy. The FDA has not approved many bio-identical hormone preparations, particularly those made by compounding pharmacies. Critics argue that there is insufficient long-term data on the safety and efficacy of these treatments. However, proponents of BHRT contend that because these hormones are identical to those naturally produced by the body, they are inherently safer than synthetic alternatives.

As with any medical treatment, BHRT carries potential risks and side effects. These may include bloating, breast tenderness, nausea, and mood swings, especially during the initial adjustment period. There are also concerns about potential increased risks of certain cancers, particularly breast cancer, although the evidence is mixed and often debated among medical professionals.

Women considering BHRT should consult with a healthcare provider who specializes in hormonal health and has experience with bio-identical hormones. A thorough evaluation of medical history, symptoms, and hormone levels is essential to determine if BHRT is appropriate and to develop an effective treatment plan.

In conclusion, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy offers a promising option for women seeking relief from menopausal symptoms and hormonal imbalances. While more research is needed to fully understand its long-term effects, many women find that BHRT significantly improves their quality of life. As with any medical decision, it's crucial to weigh the potential benefits against the risks and work closely with a qualified healthcare provider to make an informed choice about hormone therapy.



Dr. Kerschner

Dr. Magdalena Kerschner is a board-certified Anesthesiologist and board-certified Interventional Pain specialist.

She completed her medical school education at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit Michigan and subsequent anesthesiology residency at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY.

After many years of practicing traditional medicine and treating illness, Dr. Kerschner realized that preventing disease before it starts results in healthier and happier patients.

The concept of preventing illness has awakened in her an interest in weight management and bio-identical hormone replacement therapies as a modern way to promote physical and emotional wellness. Dr. Kerschner holds a certificate of training from Dr. Neal Rouzier – a nationally recognized authority in bio-identical hormone replacement therapies and preventive medicine as well as receiving a Certificate of Continued Medical Education in Wellness at Canyon Ranch.

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The Rejuvenating Power of Ozone IV Therapy and NAD+ at The DRIPBaR

In the complex landscape of modern healthcare, innovative treatments are emerging that offer new hope for individuals struggling with auto-immune disorders. Ozone IV Therapy stands at the forefront of these groundbreaking approaches, presenting a sophisticated method of modulating immune response and promoting cellular healing.

Ozone and Auto-Immune Conditions:

A Deeper Exploration

For individuals battling auto-immune diseases, Ozone IV Therapy offers a unique and promising therapeutic approach. Unlike traditional treatments that often suppress the entire immune system, ozone provides a more nuanced intervention:

Immune Modulation Mechanisms

- **Cytokine Regulation:** Ozone has been shown to help balance pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory cytokines, which are crucial in managing auto-immune responses.
- **Oxidative Stress Reduction:** By activating the body's antioxidant defense systems, ozone can help mitigate the chronic inflammation characteristic of many auto-immune conditions.
- **Cellular Oxygen Utilization:** Improved oxygen metabolism can help restore mitochondrial function, which is often compromised in auto-immune disorders.

Specific Benefits for Auto-Immune Patients

1. Immune System Recalibration: Ozone therapy can help "reset" aberrant immune responses, potentially reducing the body's inappropriate inflammatory reactions.

2. Enhanced Cellular Resilience: By improving cellular oxygenation and reducing oxidative stress, ozone supports the body's natural healing mechanisms.

3. Reduced Inflammatory Markers: Clinical observations suggest potential reductions in key inflammatory indicators associated with conditions like rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and multiple sclerosis.

The Science Behind Ozone's Therapeutic Action

Ozone, a highly reactive form of oxygen, demonstrates remarkable capabilities in addressing the underlying mechanisms of auto-immune disorders:



- **Improved Blood Circulation:** Enhances oxygen delivery and cellular nutrient absorption
- **Immunomodulatory Effects:** Helps balance overactive immune responses
- **Antimicrobial Properties:** Supports overall immune system health
- **Metabolic Optimization:** Promotes more efficient cellular energy production

Complementary Approach with NAD+ Therapy

The NAD+ Rejuvenation Drip complements Ozone IV Therapy by addressing cellular energy and repair mechanisms:

NAD+ Benefits for Auto-Immune Patients

- **Cellular Repair:** Supports DNA repair mechanisms
- **Mitochondrial Function:** Enhances cellular energy production
- **Neurological Support:** Potentially mitigating cognitive symptoms associated with some auto-immune conditions

Personalized Treatment Considerations

While promising, Ozone IV Therapy requires a highly individualized approach for auto-immune patients:

- **Comprehensive Assessment:** Detailed medical history and current condition evaluation
- **Tailored Protocols:** Customized treatment plans based on specific auto-immune challenges
- **Holistic Monitoring:** Regular tracking of inflammatory markers and overall health indicators

Important Considerations and Precautions

Patients with auto-immune conditions should:

- Consult with specialized healthcare providers
- Undergo thorough pre-treatment assessments
- Maintain open communication about existing treatments and medications
- Approach this therapy as part of a comprehensive treatment strategy

Conclusion

Ozone IV Therapy represents a cutting-edge approach to managing auto-immune conditions, offering hope through its sophisticated immune-modulating and cellular rejuvenation mechanisms. At The DRIPBaR, our team of medical professionals is dedicated to providing personalized, scientifically-backed treatments that address the unique challenges of auto-immune health.

Disclaimer: While promising, these treatments are part of an evolving field of medical research. Always consult with qualified healthcare professionals to determine the most appropriate treatment for your specific condition.

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NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: YOUR ROADMAP TO SUSTAINABLE WEIGHT LOSS

By Kathy V. Verdes, APRN, A-GNP-C

As the calendar turns and a new year begins, millions of people around the world find themselves making the same heartfelt promise: to lose weight and transform their health. Yet, by February, many of these well-intentioned resolutions have already fallen by the wayside. This year can be different. With the right approach, mindset, and strategies, your weight loss journey can become a lasting lifestyle change rather than a fleeting temporary effort.

The key to successful weight loss isn't about dramatic, unsustainable measures or punishing yourself. Instead, it's about creating a holistic approach that addresses nutrition, physical activity, mental health, and long-term habits. Understanding this comprehensive perspective is crucial to achieving and maintaining your weight loss goals.

Setting Realistic and Meaningful Goals

The first step in your weight loss journey is establishing realistic, achievable objectives. Instead of declaring "I want to lose 50 pounds," break down your goal into smaller, manageable milestones. Perhaps aim to lose 1-2 pounds per week or focus on developing consistent healthy habits. These incremental targets not only make the process less overwhelming but also provide regular opportunities for celebration and motivation.

Nutrition: The Foundation of Weight Loss

Sustainable weight loss begins in the kitchen. Forget crash diets and extreme restrictions. The most effective approach involves creating a balanced, nutritious eating plan that you can maintain long-term. Focus on whole foods, lean proteins, abundant vegetables, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats. Learn to practice portion control and mindful eating, paying attention to hunger cues and enjoying your meals without guilt.

Consider consulting a registered dietitian who can help you develop a personalized nutrition plan tailored to your specific metabolic needs, lifestyle, and preferences. They can provide expert guidance on creating a calorie deficit without compromising your nutritional intake.



Exercise: Finding Joy in Movement

Physical activity is a critical component of weight loss, but it doesn't mean spending hours in a gym dreading every minute. The most effective exercise routine is one you genuinely enjoy. Whether it's dancing, hiking, swimming, cycling, or group fitness classes, find activities that bring you pleasure and make you feel energized.

Start slowly and gradually increase intensity. If you're new to exercise, begin with 15-20 minute sessions and progressively build your endurance. Aim for a mix of cardiovascular exercise and strength training, which helps boost metabolism and preserve muscle mass during weight loss.

Mental Health and Motivation

is mental preparation. Develop a positive mindset that views this journey as an act of self-care rather than punishment. Practice self-compassion and understand that progress isn't linear. There will be weeks of significant loss and periods of plateau, and that's completely normal.

Consider journaling your progress, tracking not just weight but also how you feel, your energy levels, and non-scale victories like improved sleep or increased strength. Surround yourself with a supportive community, whether through fitness groups, online communities, or friends and family who encourage your goals.

Staying Consistent and Adaptable

Consistency trumps perfection. If you have a day where you deviate from your plan, don't view it as a failure. Instead, see it as a single moment in your broader journey. Learn from these experiences, adjust your approach, and keep moving forward.

Remember, sustainable weight loss is a marathon, not a sprint. By approaching your resolution with patience, knowledge, and a holistic mindset, you're not just working towards a number on the scale – you're investing in your overall health and well-being.

KATHY VERDES APRN, A-GNP-C

Kathy earned her Master's in Nursing Degree from Kaplan University in 2017. Kathy is certified by the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) as an Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner (A-GNP-C). Prior to her Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Degree (APRN), Kathy managed a weight loss clinic for over 6 years right here in Naples. Kathy has since then managed acute and chronic care illnesses in different settings, and she genuinely enjoys spending time with her patients.

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PROGRESS AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER: A Success Story for Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

By Marcus E. Randall, MD, FACR, FASTRO - Naples Cancer Advisors

As January marks Cervical Cancer Awareness Month, it's an opportune time to celebrate the remarkable progress in reducing cervical cancer rates. The decline in cases and mortality is an unparalleled success story in oncology, particularly in developed countries. Public education about prevention and screening has been instrumental in achieving these results. Yet, with over 13,000 women diagnosed annually in the U.S. and nearly 4,500 succumbing to the disease, it's clear we must continue efforts to provide the tools and resources that have saved so many lives.

SCREENING AND EARLY DETECTION

The key to curing cervical cancer lies in early detection. Unlike many cancers, cervical cancer has highly effective screening tools. The majority of cases are caused by Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), which can be detected through routine tests. Pap smears and HPV tests can identify changes in cervical cells before they progress to cancer.

These tools have revolutionized outcomes, enabling early diagnosis and intervention. Pre-cancerous changes can often be treated effectively with minimal procedures, even preserving fertility for younger women. Since the introduction of the Pap test, the incidence of cervical cancer and advanced cases has declined dramatically—an achievement primarily seen in populations with regular access to screenings.

U.S. PREVENTIVE SERVICES TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) provides evidence-based recommendations for preventive care, including cervical cancer screening. The current guidelines recommend:

- Women ages 21–29 undergo Pap tests every three years.
- Women ages 30–65 choose from three options:
Pap tests every three years, HPV tests every five years, or co-testing (both Pap and HPV tests) every five years.

Recent draft recommendations propose allowing women to self-collect HPV samples, a strategy that could improve access for underserved populations. As these updates are finalized, it remains crucial to educate the community about the latest guidelines and empower women to take control of their health.

HPV VACCINATION: PREVENTING CERVICAL CANCER

The HPV vaccine, approved for individuals aged 9–45, has significantly reduced the risk of cervical cancer. Targeting the most dangerous HPV strains, this vaccine is a game-changer, especially in high-risk populations. Expanding vaccine accessibility globally is critical to reducing cervical cancer rates in underserved regions.

Promoting HPV vaccination is essential in the mission to prevent cancer. By increasing awareness about the vaccine's effectiveness and addressing vaccine hesitancy, we can help protect future generations from cervical cancer and other HPV-related diseases.

CERVICAL CANCER AND OTHER GYNECOLOGIC CANCERS

While cervical cancer has seen remarkable advancements, other gynecologic cancers—affecting the uterus, ovaries, vagina, and vulva—remain significant challenges. Vaginal and vulvar cancers, like cervical cancer, are often linked to HPV. Symptoms such as unexplained pelvic bleeding, pain, or changes in bowel or bladder habits should prompt immediate medical evaluation.

Unfortunately, effective screening tools for these cancers are not as developed as those for cervical cancer. However, progress in understanding genetic changes in some gynecologic cancers holds promise for improved treatments.



INTRODUCING DR. MARCUS RANDALL AND NAPLES CANCER ADVISORS

Naples Cancer Advisors (NCA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping cancer patients navigate their care journey with confidence and clarity. NCA provides a range of specialized consultation services, including second opinions, care coordination, clinical trial navigation, financial navigation, and access to precision oncology services such as genetic testing and counseling. These services are offered at no cost to patients, ensuring that individuals receive the guidance and support they need regardless of financial circumstances.

NCA is committed to empowering patients and their families through education, expert advice, and personalized care plans. By connecting patients with experienced oncologists and leveraging the latest advancements in cancer treatment, NCA helps ensure patients make informed decisions about their care and access the best possible treatment options.

We are also proud to announce that Dr. Marcus Randall has joined NCA as a specialist in gynecological oncology. Dr. Randall earned his medical degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1982, receiving their Distinguished Medical Alumnus Award in 2017. He completed his residency in Radiation Oncology at the University of Virginia Medical Center. During his first faculty appointment at Wake Forest University he was recruited to Indiana University as Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology, where he held the

William A. Mitchell Distinguished Professorship. Subsequently, he became Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Kentucky, where he held the Markey Foundation Endowed Chair. He is board-certified by the American Board of Radiology and is a Fellow of both the American College of Radiology and the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Randall has led national trials in endometrial and ovarian cancers within the Gynecologic Oncology Group (now NRG Oncology). He chaired several large randomized trials in endometrial cancer that were practice-changing, improving our knowledge of the respective roles of chemotherapy and radiation therapy in the management of early stage and locally advanced endometrial cancer. While in the GOG/NRG, he chaired the Radiation Oncology Committee and for over 15 years was co-chair of the Uterine Corpus Committee. His clinical interests include brachytherapy and gynecologic malignancies. Outside of work, Dr. Randall enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with his family, including his seven grandchildren.

With Dr. Randall's expertise and NCA's comprehensive support services, we are making a significant impact in improving outcomes for women in Southwest Florida. By offering platinum-level care and guidance, NCA ensures that no patient faces their cancer journey alone.

A CALL TO ACTION

Cervical cancer's dramatic decline is a testament to the power of prevention, education, and early intervention. However, there's more work to be done. Ensuring access to screenings, promoting HPV vaccination, and advancing care for gynecologic cancers are vital next steps.

Naples Cancer Advisors continues to lead these efforts locally, providing resources that save lives. By supporting their mission, you can be part of the movement to protect women's health and make cervical cancer a problem of the past. Together, we can ensure that every woman has the tools and care needed to live a healthy, cancer-free life.



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Understanding the New Flood Disclosure Requirements for Home Buyers

By Mary C. Brockman, Associate Attorney

As of October 1, 2024, sellers will be required to provide a flood disclosure summary to buyers either before or at the time the sales contract is executed. This new regulation aims to enhance transparency and ensure that prospective homeowners are fully informed about potential flood risks associated with their new property.

What You Need to Know About the Flood Disclosure Summary

The flood disclosure summary includes several key components designed to inform buyers about the specifics of flood risk and insurance coverage:

1. Importance of Flood Insurance

Homeowners' insurance policies do not include coverage for damage resulting from floods; therefore, the disclosure must include language indicating as such. Additionally, there must be well a statement encouraging the Buyer to discuss purchasing separate flood insurance coverage or at least discuss their options with their insurance agent.

2. Seller's Flood Claim History

Sellers will need to indicate whether they have filed a claim with any insurance provider related to flood damage on the property, including, but not limited to, a claim with the National Flood Insurance Program. This information can provide valuable insight into the property's history and potential vulnerabilities.

3. Federal Assistance for Flood Damage

The seller must also disclose if they have received federal assistance for flood damage, such as help from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This aspect can be a significant indicator of past flood issues and how they were addressed.

Definitions

For the purposes of disclosure, flooding is defined as a general or temporary condition of partial or complete inundation of the property caused by:

- Overflow of inland or tidal waters



- The unusual or rapid accumulation of runoff or surface waters from established water sources, such as rivers, streams, or drainage ditches
- Sustained periods of standing water resulting from rainfall

Implications for Buyers

As a buyer, be sure to review the flood disclosure summary carefully. It's an essential step in safeguarding your investment and ensuring you are prepared for any potential flood-related issues in the future. Understanding these new flood disclosure requirements will empower you as a buyer to make informed decisions about your potential new home.

Implications for Sellers

As a seller, you need to make sure that you accurately include all required disclosure information either before or at the time of contract execution in order to protect yourself from potential liability.

Contact Woodward, Pires, & Lombardo, P.A. Today To discuss how this new Flood Disclosure regulation may impact you, contact us via phone or email to schedule a consultation.



About the Author

Mary C. Brockman is an associate attorney at the Marco Island location of Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. Mary's law practice focuses on probate, trusts and estates, and personal injury law. Prior to being elevated to attorney, Mary served as a paralegal at the firm, where she developed a wealth of experience in multiple areas of law and quickly established herself as a key team member.

Mary received her Juris Doctorate, with honors, from Ave Maria School of Law in Naples, Florida, where she was awarded the CALI Excellence for the Future Award in Criminal Law studies and the St. Thomas More Full-Tuition Scholarship. Mary also holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and Literature from Indiana University-Purdue University, where she was recognized twice on the Dean's List.



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The Doctor Will See You Now.... At Home!

By Dennis J. Ruditser, MD

In an era where medical care is increasingly fast-paced and impersonal, the resurgence of doctor house calls is rekindling a vital connection between patients and healthcare providers. While house calls may seem like a relic of a bygone era, their growing popularity demonstrates the value of personalized, comprehensive medical care in the comfort of one's home. Beyond convenience, house calls offer several distinct benefits for patients, particularly those managing chronic diseases or limited by mobility challenges.

Unrushed and Thorough Care

One of the most significant advantages of doctor house calls is the time physicians can devote to each patient. Unlike traditional office visits, often constrained by tight schedules and waiting rooms full of patients, house calls allow the physician to focus entirely on the individual without the pressure of back-to-back appointments.

For patients managing multiple chronic conditions—such as diabetes, hypertension, or arthritis—this extended time is invaluable. A house call offers the opportunity for a thorough evaluation, allowing the physician to address multiple issues in a single visit. Complex medical histories, medication regimens, and ongoing symptoms can be reviewed in depth, ensuring no detail is overlooked. Patients often feel more comfortable discussing their concerns in the familiar surroundings of their home, further enhancing the quality of care.

Greater Accessibility to the Physician

House calls also improve patient access to their physician, particularly for individuals with mobility issues, elderly patients, or those living in rural areas. For these groups, traveling to a clinic can be challenging, often requiring assistance from family members or costly transportation services. Home visits remove these barriers, bringing care directly to the patient's doorstep.

This enhanced accessibility is especially crucial for patients who may delay or avoid seeking care due to logistical difficulties. By meeting patients where they are, house calls help bridge gaps in the healthcare system, ensuring that those most in need receive timely and consistent medical attention.



A Holistic View of Patient Health

One of the unique benefits of house calls is the physician's ability to observe and assess the patient's living environment. Unlike traditional office visits, where the scope is limited to clinical discussions, home visits provide a more holistic perspective on the patient's health.

For example, a doctor can evaluate whether the home environment is safe and conducive to the patient's well-being. Are there tripping hazards for someone at risk of falls? Is there access to healthy food and adequate lighting? Are medications stored properly? These insights allow the physician to make tailored recommendations that address not just the patient's medical needs but also the social and environmental factors affecting their health.

In cases where chronic diseases are exacerbated by poor living conditions, the doctor can suggest practical changes or connect the patient with additional resources, such as social services or home health aides. This proactive approach can significantly improve health outcomes and reduce hospitalizations.

Building Trust and Strengthening Relationships

House calls foster a deeper level of trust and rapport between patients and their doctors. The one-on-one setting and the undivided attention of the physician create an environment where patients feel heard and valued. This strong relationship encourages patients to adhere to treatment plans, ask questions, and engage actively in their care.

For families caring for elderly or disabled loved ones, having a doctor visit the home can also provide much-needed reassurance. Caregivers can be involved in discussions about treatment options and receive guidance on how best to support their loved ones.

Modern Tools Meet Traditional Care

The resurgence of house calls doesn't mean healthcare is stepping back in time; instead, it's embracing the best of both worlds. Today's home visits are supported by modern medical tools and technology. Portable diagnostic devices, telemedicine platforms, and electronic health records enable physicians to deliver high-quality care comparable to that of a clinic.

With these advancements, doctors can perform routine tests, monitor chronic conditions, and even conduct minor procedures during home visits. This blend of traditional care and modern technology ensures patients receive comprehensive and convenient medical attention.

The Future of Personalized Healthcare

As healthcare systems worldwide continue to evolve, the return of doctor house calls represents a promising shift toward more patient-centered care. By offering unrushed appointments, greater access to medical professionals, and a holistic understanding of patients' lives, house calls are reshaping how we think about healthcare delivery.

For patients, particularly those managing chronic illnesses or facing mobility challenges, this approach provides not only medical care but also peace of mind. For physicians, it's an opportunity to reconnect with the foundational principles of medicine—listening, understanding, and healing.

In a world that often prioritizes efficiency over empathy, house calls remind us that the heart of healthcare lies in the human connection. Whether it's addressing complex medical issues, evaluating living conditions, or simply taking the time to listen, doctor house calls are a vital and meaningful way to ensure that every patient receives the care they deserve.

Dennis J. Ruditser, MD
Board Certified Internal Medicine

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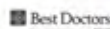
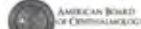
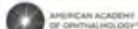
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PICKLEBALL

By Robert Swift, D.O.

Board Certified Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine



Pickleball is a recreational sport that is gaining in popularity and has become one of the fastest growing sports in America. The sport is easy to learn, promotes competitiveness and socialization, and is a great form of low impact exercise.

The game was developed in 1965 by a former Washington state congressman, Joel Pritchard. He and a friend were looking to play badminton, but unable to find a full set of rackets they improvised, playing with wooden ping-pong paddles and a perforated plastic ball. With this collection of equipment, they played on an asphalt surface using a badminton net adjusted to a height like that of tennis. The friends eventually developed a permanent set of rules. Their intention was to develop a sport the entire family could enjoy together. Within two years, the first permanent court was constructed next door to Joel Pritchard's home. Within a few more years, a corporation was developed to protect the sport. Since its inception, the game has continued to grow, and is now played in all 50 states.

The game was named after the Pritchards' dog, Pickles. In the early development of the game, there no official name assigned to it. As the game progressed, an official name was needed, and "Pickleball" was it.

Pickleball is currently the fastest growing sport in the US. The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) estimated that in 2017 there were over 2.8 million Pickleball players in the U.S., which was an increase of 12.3% from the previous year. Further details from the 2016 SFIA report included that over 1.5 million people were 'casual' participants (play one to seven times per year), and that 930,000 were 'core' participants (play eight or more times per year). Further breakdown of participation rates by age showed that 'core' participants tend to be older, with 75% of core participants being age 55 or older, and 42% of all players over 65 considered to be core participants. Along with fitness benefits of the sport, many older adults enjoy playing Pickleball because it promotes competitiveness and socialization.

Associated Injuries

A recent literature search did not reveal any published research describing specific injuries related to Pickleball. However, there is published research on injuries associated with other racket sports. In tennis, a similar style racket sport played on a similar surface, the most common injuries are sprains/strains of the lower extremity, followed by sprains/strains of the upper extremity and injuries of the trunk and low back. Given the underhand nature of the game play of Pickleball, one would expect a lower occurrence of shoulder

injuries than in tennis where overhand serving is a major component of the sport. However, there is still a risk for a variety of other upper extremity injuries in Pickleball.

Acute Injuries

Acute traumatic injuries in Pickleball can result from falls, secondary to a sudden turning or pivoting movement. Sprains of the ankle joint, particularly with inversion, are very common in tennis and the mechanism for this injury would be similar for Pickleball. Depending on the severity of the sprain, this injury could result in significantly impaired movement or inability to bear weight. If weight bearing is painful, initial treatment may initially include crutches (if needed), or immobilization with an ankle brace. Further treatment consisting of relative rest, icing, compression, and elevation (RICE) are generally useful in the treatment of sprains of the ankle and other joints. Depending on severity, ankle sprains can take several weeks to resolve, but patients can generally resume their previous level of play if proper steps are taken during the healing process. Return to sport participation for this and other injuries is often expedited by physical therapy.

Other injuries that can arise near the ankle can involve the Achilles tendon. These can include an Achilles strain, which can present as pain anywhere along the tendon, from the musculotendinous component at the lower calf muscle, to the body of the tendon, to its insertion at the calcaneus. Treatment of Achilles tendon strains typically consists of relative rest, focused stretching of the tendon, and eccentric loading exercises. This injury can take weeks to fully heal. A much less common but more severe injury, Achilles tendon rupture, can occur with forceful movement of the ankle, usually an abrupt plantarflexion. This injury usually results in severe pain in the posterior ankle and an inability to bear weight or actively plantarflex the foot. This type of injury will often require surgical repair and should be evaluated promptly for optimal long term outcome.

Knee injuries are also common in racket sports such as tennis, and likely to affect Pickleball players as well. These can range from acute sprains of the knee to meniscal and ligamentous injuries. A sprain of the knee can affect the collateral ligaments, caused by rapid starting/stopping and sudden turning or pivoting movements. A sprain will often result in pain with weight bearing, usually worse with lateral movement. Acute injuries of the meniscus can include tears, which can present with the same mechanism as a ligament sprain, but often will result in the inability to

bear weight, decreased range of motion, and significant swelling. Treatment of these injuries can range from initial non-weight bearing, to bracing, to physical therapy, or even potential surgical repair. Any knee injury that results in pain with weight bearing, decreased range of motion, or significant swelling should prompt immediate evaluation by a physician.

Muscle groups in the lower extremity that can be acutely strained include the hamstring muscles, quadriceps, hip flexors and adductors, and calf. Many strains can involve partial tearing of the muscle body or tendon. These injuries can present as pain in the muscle with stretching or muscle contraction. Mild sprains usually respond to RICE treatment, and participants can usually return to their activity in a matter of a few weeks. More severe muscle strains or tears may have more severe pain, associated swelling or bruising of the muscle, and tend to take longer to recover. As stated above, many of these injuries will respond well to physical therapy, and this can often help to assist players to return to their previous level of competing and can often address other potential biomechanical inefficiencies that can be future injury risks.

For the upper extremity, the wrist is a common site of tennis injury, and Pickleball players are at risk as well. Falls onto an outstretched hand are a common mechanism for wrist sprains and can also result in a fracture. The elbow and shoulder can also be injured by falls. Minor bruising to the upper extremity may be initially treated with RICE, but an injury to the upper extremity that causes significant swelling, bruising, or limited range of motion should prompt a player to be evaluated.

Pickle ball can be a great way to enjoy the beautiful weather and there are many courts in the SWFL area. The benefits of exercise, and socialization out way the risks of injury. Even when we are at our most competitive, it is important to remember to play it safe, give up the point. That way you can always come back to the court to play again.

Always stretch and warm up gently before competitive play. Make sure you are getting your physical once a year to understand and appreciate your health. Drink plenty of water and the occasional sports drink. Wear appropriate gear, and footwear.

In the event of any related Pickleball injury we are available to take care of you and get you back on the court.

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Revolutionize Your New Year Resolutions with Healthy Eating

As the New Year dawns upon us, the resolution to prioritize health often takes center stage. The quest for a healthier lifestyle often begins with the food we consume. Embracing a nutritious diet isn't just a fleeting resolution; it's a commitment to sustained well-being.

Setting the Stage: Understanding Healthy Eating

Healthy eating isn't just about shedding pounds; it's about nourishing the body, mind, and spirit. At its core, a healthy diet comprises a balance of macronutrients—proteins, carbohydrates, and fats—and an array of micronutrients found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.

Navigating the Maze of Food Choices

In a world teeming with dietary options, finding the right path can be daunting. However, the essence lies in simplicity. Embrace whole, unprocessed foods that fuel the body without burdening it with unnecessary additives. Opt for colorful fruits and vegetables, whole grains like quinoa and brown rice, and lean sources of protein such as fish, poultry, and legumes.

Mindful Eating: Cultivating Awareness

Mindful eating isn't merely about what you consume; it's about how you consume it. Slow down, savor each bite, and relish the flavors. Cultivate a deeper connection with your food, appreciating the journey from farm to plate. This practice not only aids digestion but also fosters a healthier relationship with food.

Planning for Success: Meal Prepping and Smart Choices

Success in adopting a healthy diet often hinges on preparation. Engage in meal prepping, carving out time each week to plan and prepare meals. This not only saves time but also helps in making mindful choices. Incorporate a variety of foods to ensure a well-rounded intake of nutrients.

The Role of Hydration

Water—the elixir of life—is often overlooked. Adequate hydration is paramount for bodily functions, aiding digestion, regulating body temperature, and promoting overall health. Aim for at least eight glasses of water a day, adjusting intake based on individual needs and activity levels.



Navigating Challenges: Overcoming Hurdles on the Path to Health

While embarking on a healthier journey, challenges are inevitable. From cravings to social pressures, staying committed can be tough. However, the key lies in resilience. Understand that setbacks are part of the process and focus on progress, not perfection. Seek support from friends, family, or even online communities to stay motivated.

Mind and Body: The Connection

A healthy diet isn't just about physical health; it profoundly impacts mental well-being too. Nutrient-rich foods support brain function and emotional balance. Consuming a variety of foods ensures a broad spectrum of nutrients that aid cognitive function and mood regulation.

Sustainable Choices: Beyond the New Year

The essence of a healthy diet lies in sustainability. Avoid crash diets and extreme restrictions. Instead, aim for a balanced, realistic approach that can be maintained over time. Incorporate foods you enjoy and occasionally indulge in treats—moderation is key.

Culinary Exploration: Embracing Diversity

Elevate your culinary experience by exploring diverse cuisines. Experiment with herbs, spices, and cooking methods from around the world. Embracing variety not only tantalizes the taste buds but also ensures a broad spectrum of nutrients.

Conclusion: A Journey Towards Wellness

As the New Year unfolds, embark on a journey towards wellness through the power of a healthy diet. It's not just a resolution; it's a lifestyle change that can transform your life. Embrace the abundance of nutritious foods available, savor each bite mindfully, and relish the transformation within.

Crafting a sustainable diet for your New Year's resolution is not just about the number on the scale; it's about nurturing your body, cultivating a healthy relationship with food, and embracing a lifestyle that prioritizes well-being in all its facets.



Dr. Ricardo Martinez

Dr. Ricardo Martinez is an internist in Naples, FL and is affiliated with NCH Baker Hospital. He received his medical degree from Superior Institute of Medical Sciences of Santiago de Cuba and has been in practice 20 years. He also speaks multiple languages, including Spanish. He specializes in hospital medicine, ambulatory care and is experienced in hospice and palliative medicine, bariatric medicine, diabetes mellitus, food allergy, and infectious disease. As of March 16th, 2020, Dr. Martinez has founded Well-Being Medical center in Naples Florida. He is looking forward to providing Medical care within primary care settings and urgent care service throughout the Naples Florida area.



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EPIDURAL INJECTIONS: A Beacon of Hope for Sciatic Back Pain Sufferers

By Dr. Magdalena Kerschner

Sciatic back pain can be a debilitating condition that affects millions of people worldwide, interfering with daily activities and quality of life. For those grappling with this persistent discomfort, epidural injections have emerged as a promising treatment option, offering relief and improved functionality. This article delves into the use of epidurals for sciatic back pain, exploring their benefits, risks, and what patients can expect from the procedure.

Understanding Sciatic Back Pain

Sciatica is characterized by pain that radiates along the path of the sciatic nerve, which branches from the lower back through the hips and buttocks and down each leg. This condition is typically caused by a herniated disk, bone spur on the spine, or narrowing of the spine (spinal stenosis) compressing part of the nerve. The resulting inflammation and pressure on the nerve lead to the characteristic pain, tingling, and numbness associated with sciatica.

The Role of Epidural Injections

Epidural injections have become a popular treatment for managing sciatic back pain, especially when conservative treatments like physical therapy and oral medications prove insufficient. These injections deliver a combination of local anesthetics and corticosteroids directly into the epidural space surrounding the spinal cord and nerve roots.

The primary goals of epidural injections are:

1. To reduce inflammation around the affected nerve roots
2. To provide pain relief
3. To improve function and mobility

The Procedure

The epidural injection procedure is typically performed on an outpatient basis and usually takes less than 30 minutes. Here's what patients can expect:

1. The patient lies on their stomach or side on an X-ray table.
2. The injection site is cleaned and numbed with a local anesthetic.
3. Using fluoroscopy (live X-ray) for guidance, the physician inserts a needle into the epidural space.
4. A contrast dye may be injected to ensure proper needle placement.
5. The medication mixture is then injected into the epidural space.



Patients are usually monitored for a short period after the injection before being discharged.

Benefits and Effectiveness

Many patients experience significant pain relief within a few days of receiving an epidural injection. The effects can last from a few weeks to several months, allowing patients to engage more effectively in physical therapy and rehabilitation programs. This combination of pain relief and improved function can lead to long-term benefits and potentially delay or avoid the need for surgery.

Studies have shown that epidural injections can be effective in providing short to medium-term relief for sciatic back pain. However, the degree and duration of relief can vary significantly among individuals.

Who Should Consider Epidural Injections?

Epidural injections may be recommended for patients who:

- Have not found relief from conservative treatments
- Experience moderate to severe sciatic pain
- Need short-term pain relief to participate in physical therapy
- Wish to avoid or delay surgery

However, they may not be suitable for everyone, particularly those with certain medical conditions or allergies to the medications used.

Conclusion

Epidural injections represent a valuable tool in the management of sciatic back pain, offering a middle ground between conservative treatments and surgery. While not a cure-all, they can provide significant relief and improve quality of life for many sufferers. As with any medical procedure, it's essential for patients to have thorough discussions with their healthcare providers to determine if epidural injections are the right choice for their specific situation. With proper evaluation and administration, epidural injections can be a beacon of hope for those navigating the challenging waters of sciatic back pain.



Dr. Kerschner

Dr. Magdalene Kerschner, a graduate of Wayne State University School of Medicine, completed her Anesthesiology residency at The University of Kentucky. Her experience in spine surgery anesthesia led to her specialization in chronic pain management. As a Board Certified Interventional Pain Physician, Dr. Kerschner believes that while pain is undeniable, suffering is optional. She aims to help patients reclaim their joy through interventional techniques and complementary therapies.

Dr. Kerschner stays involved with professional societies to keep up with medical advancements. She served as Vice President of Ohio Interventional Pain Physicians Society and is an active member of Ohio Medical Association's Substance Abuse Committee. She contributed to the development of Ohio's HB 93, known as "The Pill Mill Bill," which led to the closure of illegal pain clinics.

Her compassionate work extends internationally. Dr. Kerschner has participated in medical missions with World Medical Mission in Kenya, worked alongside Mother Teresa in Calcutta, and served in Brazil, the Philippines, and Belize. She received a Humanitarian Award from the Philippine government for her contributions.

Dr. Kerschner's Scotty Dog Foundation has awarded numerous high school scholarships in Southwest Ohio and surrounding areas.

In her practice, Dr. Kerschner emphasizes individualized treatment plans, recognizing that each patient has unique needs. She believes in using good judgment to determine the most beneficial procedures, medications, and therapies for each patient. Dr. Kerschner and her staff prioritize spending ample time with patients during consultations, ensuring they have opportunities to ask questions and fully understand their treatment options.

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KIDNEY CANCER: Are You at Risk?

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

The kidneys are a major part of our detoxifying system. These two small bean-shaped organs clean the blood and filter waste products and toxins from the body through the urine. Kidney cancer is one of the ten most prevalent cancers. The lifetime risk for developing kidney cancer is about 1 in 46 in men and 1 in 82 in women.¹

The symptoms of kidney cancer often go unnoticed or don't begin to show until the tumor(s) has grown. However, some of the key indicators are as follows:

- Blood in the urine
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Fever or infection
- Swollen abdomen
- Lump on the side of the abdomen (with or without pain)
- Anemia
- Swollen legs and ankles
- Chronic inflammation
- High blood pressure
- Shortness of breath

If you have symptoms or your physician finds a lump during a physical examination, they will order diagnostic testing such as a renal arteriogram, MRI, CT Scan, blood and urine analysis, and a needle biopsy may be necessary.

There are some increased risk factors, which make some individuals more susceptible to renal cancer. The risks factors included:

- Being over the age of 40
- Being male
- Being black
- Smoking
- Obese
- Overuse of NSAIDs and other prescription medications
- Family History
- Chemical Exposures
- Kidney disease

Most kidney cancer appears first in the tubules of the kidneys. When the malignant cells form a tumor(s) the growth rate is typically slow, so the

likelihood of an early diagnosis is increased, and the treatment can usually be performed before the tumor has metastasized into any other organs.

Treatment

Depending on the stage and size of the tumor(s), your physician will develop a specific treatment plan tailored to your needs.

Typically, performing a nephrectomy treats kidney cancer. There are three main types of this surgical option. The first is a Partial nephrectomy, which removes the tumor and some of the surrounding tissue. The second is a Simple nephrectomy, which removes the entire kidney, and the third treatment method is a Radical nephrectomy, which removes the kidney, adrenal glands, lymph nodes, and any questionable surrounding tissue margins. These procedures can usually be done laparoscopically. Some patients may also require radiation or chemotherapy treatments.

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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.

Source:

1. https://www.nfcr.org/cancer-types/kidney-cancer/?gclid=CjwKCAIAYc2BBhAaEiwA44-wW9qTM7gXbIKsBU1dxNN-rM7OKwmg3j43bZni6h175MIIQCzwNsKORoCE5QQAvD_BwE

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.

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THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF OXYTOCIN SUPPLEMENTS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

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

Hugs, music, exercise. What do all three of these things share? They all release the hormone oxytocin, more commonly known as the love hormone.

We're not talking only about romantic love. Oxytocin is released when a parent looks at their child or even when you look at your dog—it's the love of deep relationships and complete comfort. That's not to say that romantic partners don't trigger a release of oxytocin, but it's not solely limited to these relationships. Oxytocin goes deeper than attraction, cementing feelings of pure connection.

When the hypothalamus produces oxytocin and spreads it into the bloodstream, thanks to the pituitary gland, you'll experience a promotion of empathy, trust, and bonding. The impact of oxytocin doesn't stop there, either, with it also improving your cardiac health and increasing your resilience against stress. In short, oxytocin production can significantly improve both your mental and physical health.

The Process of Oxytocin Release

Positive social connections and stressful conditions trigger oxytocin release. The former is a way to further the bond, and the latter (speculatively) motivates those under stress to reach out for help. So, the next time you feel stressed and want to ask for help, know that it's your body telling you that you should.

Oxytocin is produced in the hypothalamus, also known as the brain's control center. Once the hypothalamus signals for oxytocin production, it is released to other parts of the brain and spinal cord or into the bloodstream. From there, it binds to oxytocin receptors, and the "feel-good" benefits of oxytocin are triggered.

Oxytocin is involved in many life-affirming activities, including:

- reproduction
- social bonding
- raising children
- building relationships
- childbirth
- breastfeeding

In the past, oxytocin was thought to be a hormone only found in women because of its ties to childbirth and breastfeeding. However, research has since shown that both men and women require oxytocin. For instance, oxytocin helps with male and female production, affects the metabolism of both genders, and influences immune health. While women complete more activities that use and produce oxytocin, it is crucial in those of both genders.

The Benefits of Oxytocin

The benefits of oxytocin are numerous, spanning both your physical and mental health—there's a reason why this feel-good hormone is so important.

Reduces Anxiety and Depression

One of the quintessential elements of being a human being is an innate desire to have a group that we connect with and belong to. We can't help it; we're pack creatures and like to know that we're not alone, no matter what group we may fit into.

Oxytocin helps to promote these feelings of trust, connectedness, and intimacy, further helping you benefit from the sense of belonging.

The impact of oxytocin levels on your mental health is significant, with studies showing that low oxytocin is linked to anxiety and depression. So, supplementing oxytocin can help you feel more secure in your family or friend group, lessening the anxiety and/or depression you would otherwise feel from believing you don't belong.

Reduces Stress Hormones

When the body perceives a stressful situation, it releases the hormone cortisol, which puts your body into a fight-or-flight mode. While it would be good if a lion were chasing you, it's not a great reaction to the everyday stresses our busy lives subject us to. Even more, those with chronic stress have continually high cortisol levels, which can increase blood pressure, suppress your immune system, and increase the risk of diseases such as diabetes or atherosclerosis.

Oxytocin has been shown to reduce cortisol levels, helping your body better manage stress and leaving you more relaxed and with a lower risk of these hazards of chronic stress.

Improves Cardiovascular Health

As the love hormone, it should come as no surprise that oxytocin supplements can improve your heart health, but perhaps not in the way you would think.

Oxytocin has been shown to lower blood pressure and heart rate, helping to keep your heart from being overworked. High blood pressure, in particular, is commonly referred to as "the silent killer" because of the role it plays in the development of many life-limiting diseases. If you want to keep your health high, managing your blood pressure is a great place to start, and oxytocin can help.

Induces Labor

Oxytocin helps to strengthen the labor contractions during childbirth while also facilitating the production of prostaglandins. These are chemicals that help increase contractions and move labor along. In addition, oxytocin helps with controlling bleeding after childbirth so that your body can start the healing process.

Supports Breastfeeding

A 2018 study highlighted that one of oxytocin's primary functions is to support breastfeeding, which is also why it was initially considered only a female hormone (something we now know isn't true).

When a baby nurses from their mother's breast, nerves in the nipple send signals to the pituitary gland that trigger the production oxytocin. This release then causes the tiny muscles around the nipple to contract, releasing milk.

Oxytocin Supplements

While the benefits of oxytocin are numerous, oxytocin supplements are generally believed to focus primarily on relieving social and emotional problems, such as:

- social anxiety
- autism
- depression
- schizophrenia

Additionally, a synthetic version of oxytocin (Pitocin) can be given intravenously to induce labor.

As of this time, oxytocin supplements are only available as injections or nasal sprays, as it is otherwise destroyed by the gastrointestinal tract.

Risks of Oxytocin Supplements

The most significant risk of oxytocin supplements is simply a lack of knowledge about their long-term impact. By this, we mean that it isn't entirely known how effective oxytocin supplements can be if used long-term. Furthermore, more research is still needed to determine how different people react to oxytocin supplements based on their genetics or underlying psychiatric disorders.

Some research has shown that some people may experience increased envy, prejudice, and dishonesty when taking oxytocin supplements. In other cases, taking too much oxytocin can cause watery eyes, a runny nose, or more severe complications, including seizures or uterine bleeding.

As for Pitocin, the oxytocin supplement injected to induce labor, it can have side effects that include digestive issues or increased pain. If taken in high doses, it may cause arrhythmia or other cardiovascular symptoms.

Still, many of these risks can be managed by ensuring you only take as much oxytocin as you need, which your doctor can help you with.

Ways to Naturally Boost Your Oxytocin

Oxytocin supplements are not the only way to boost the levels of this calming hormone. If you're feeling more stressed than usual, give the following a try and help increase your oxytocin levels.

Physical Contact

The number one thing associated with oxytocin is physical contact, but few people realize that it relates to any type of physical contact, with massages, hugs, handshakes, sexual activities, and breastfeeding all releasing oxytocin. Even more, whether you're connecting with a friend, lover, child, or parent, physical contact in any form will help increase your oxytocin.

Laugh

Laughter truly is one of life's greatest medicines. Watch a funny movie, get together with friends and share funny stories, read a humorous book; whatever gets you laughing will also help boost your oxytocin levels.

Give Your Pet Some Love

Spending some time each day giving extra attention to your pet will not only help to raise your oxytocin levels, but this can also help increase the bond you share with them.



Share The Love

Cook dinner for someone else, give a gift, or volunteer your time. All of these actions help to raise your oxytocin levels while also making you feel better for doing something for someone else.

Actions may speak louder than words, but saying "I love you" can also raise your oxytocin levels and those of the person you share the sentiment with. So, don't be afraid to share your feelings, and often.

Exercise

Going for a walk or some other form of exercise you like is a great way to boost your oxytocin levels while also improving your physical health. Want to boost your oxytocin even more? Try exercising with someone else.

Feel the Love: Oxytocin and Oxytocin Supplements

Oxytocin is the "love hormone" produced when you're surrounded by friends, family, or a significant other. It lowers your stress levels while also increasing trust, empathy, and contentment. Its benefits are wide-reaching, reducing anxiety and depression, improving cardiovascular health, and aiding in maternal tasks such as childbirth and breastfeeding.

With how vital oxytocin is for these tasks, it's natural to look into supplementation to boost oxytocin levels and see these benefits. However, as of right now, oxytocin supplements are primarily prescribed to aid the labor process or relieve social and emotional problems. There are some risks associated with oxytocin supplements, but your healthcare provider can help you weigh the risks versus the benefits.

Luckily, for those in need of a quick pick-me-up, there are many ways to naturally boost oxytocin levels that you can begin implementing immediately. They are especially useful for those under stress or looking to further improve their relationships.

Give oxytocin a boost and experience the benefits of love (hormones) on your mind and body.

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As we transition into a new season, it's the ideal time to delve into the art of exfoliation—a transformative skincare ritual that symbolizes renewal, rejuvenation, and a fresh start. Exfoliation transcends beyond achieving a radiant complexion; it's a holistic experience that physically, mentally, and emotionally promotes personal growth and self-care. Dry January is the perfect time to start afresh - and start your year aglow!

1. The Physical Gratification:

By gently removing dead skin cells, unclogging pores, and promoting circulation, exfoliation reveals a fresh, vibrant complexion beneath. Incorporating exfoliating products into your skincare routine enhances the skin's natural renewal process, helping to prevent breakouts and improving the absorption of other skincare products. Beyond its physical benefits, the act of exfoliating provides a refreshing boost to confidence and self-esteem, as glowing skin is truly a source of pride.

To maximize the benefits of a body apply it liberally in the shower or bath on wet skin using gentle, circular motions. Pay special attention to dry areas like feet, legs, arms, and hands, where exfoliation can be particularly effective. After scrubbing, rinse thoroughly with water and pat your skin dry with a soft towel. For more intense hydration, allow the scrub's moisturizing ingredients to soak in for 1-2 minutes before rinsing.

Moreover, the rhythmic motion of scrubbing the skin can be a therapeutic experience. This mindful practice encourages relaxation and serves as a moment to reconnect with oneself amidst a busy day. By intentionally caring for your skin, you not only improve its health but also nurture your overall well-being, making exfoliation a cherished self-care ritual that revitalizes both body and mind.



2. An Emotional Transformation:

The art of exfoliation transcends mere skin care; it emerges as a therapeutic practice that fosters mindfulness and promotes self-connection. By dedicating time to this ritual, you can release not only physical impurities but also emotional burdens. Opt for products crafted with care, as their soothing scents and natural ingredients come together to create a serene pause in your hectic day, uplifting your mood and enhancing your overall sense of well-being.

Naples Soap Company's Vitamin C Orange Blossom & Vanilla Sugar Scrub offers a refreshingly light scent of orange blossoms, oranges and sweet vanilla. The fresh aroma of orange blossoms and oranges provides uplifting citrus aromatherapy, reducing stress and anxiety while boosting energy and motivation. Meanwhile, the sweet, warm scent of vanilla evokes comfort and tranquility, creating a calming atmosphere that fosters well-being.

3. The Mental Reset:

The act of exfoliation brings with it a mental reset. In a world filled with chaos and constant change, incorporating this simple yet effective practice can serve as a grounding routine. As individuals scrub away the old layers of skin, they can metaphorically release negative thoughts, stressors, and worries that weigh them down.

A-scented face scrub, such as Naples Soap Company's Coffee Face Scrub, is a fantastic addition to your morning routine, providing a refreshing start and serving as a mental reset. The invigorating aroma stimulates the senses, awakening your mind and boosting your energy for the day ahead. Gently massaging our Coffee Face Scrub polishes the skin and enhances circulation, giving your complexion a radiant glow. Formulated with finely ground coffee beans, cocoa butter, and fractionated coconut oil, it cleanses away dullness and rehydrates for a fresh look.



We invite you to explore the therapeutic benefits of exfoliation can facilitate this holistic journey of self-renewal. By integrating these practices into daily routines, individuals can refresh not only their skincare regimen but also their overall mindset and emotional well-being.



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New Year's Resolutions: Transforming Joint Pain Management with Biologic Treatments

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

As the new year approaches, many individuals find themselves confronting a persistent challenge that threatens their resolution to become more active and healthy: chronic joint pain. Traditional approaches often involve temporary relief methods like steroid injections, but emerging biologic treatments offer a more comprehensive and long-term solution to managing joint discomfort and improving overall mobility.

The Limitations of Conventional Pain Management

For years, patients have relied on conventional pain management techniques that primarily mask symptoms rather than address underlying causes. Steroid injections, while providing temporary relief, are a short-term solution that can potentially mask progressive joint damage. These treatments offer quick but fleeting comfort, often leading patients into a cycle of repeated interventions without addressing the root of their joint issues.

The Hidden Costs of Temporary Solutions

Repeated steroid injections come with significant drawbacks:

- Potential cartilage deterioration
- Increased risk of joint infection
- Temporary pain relief that doesn't resolve underlying inflammation
- Potential weakening of surrounding tissues
- Masking of progressive joint damage

Biologic Treatments: A Revolutionary Approach

Biologic treatments represent a paradigm shift in joint pain management. Unlike traditional methods that simply cover up pain, these innovative therapies target the underlying mechanisms of joint inflammation and degradation. By focusing on the body's immune response and cellular processes, biologic treatments offer a more holistic and sustainable approach to joint health.

Key Advantages of Biologic Treatments

1. Targeted Inflammation Reduction: Biologics work at the cellular level to interrupt inflammatory processes, providing more precise and effective relief compared to broad-spectrum treatments.

2. Regenerative Potential: Many biologic treatments stimulate the body's natural healing mechanisms, potentially helping to repair damaged joint tissues rather than simply numbing pain.



3. Personalized Treatment: Advanced biologics can be tailored to an individual's specific genetic markers and inflammatory profiles, ensuring more effective and personalized interventions.

Implementing a Comprehensive Joint Health Strategy

For those making new year's resolutions focused on improved mobility and reduced pain, a multi-faceted approach is crucial:

Medical Interventions

- Consult with rheumatologists and orthopedic specialists
- Explore cutting-edge biologic treatment options
- Consider comprehensive diagnostic imaging to understand joint health
- Discuss personalized treatment plans

Lifestyle Modifications

- Incorporate low-impact exercises like swimming and cycling
- Maintain a healthy weight to reduce joint stress
- Practice regular stretching and mobility exercises
- Consume anti-inflammatory diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids

Emerging Treatment Options

- Platelet-rich plasma (PRP) therapy
- Stem cell treatments
- Peptides
- Exosomes
- Advanced monoclonal antibody therapies
- Genetic and molecular targeted interventions
- Focused Shockwave therapy

The Psychological Impact of Effective Pain Management

Beyond physical relief, effective joint pain management can dramatically improve mental health. By providing hope and tangible improvements, biologic treatments help individuals reclaim their quality of life, enabling them to pursue new year's resolutions with genuine enthusiasm and confidence.

Conclusion

As medical science continues to advance, the approach to joint pain is evolving from mere symptom management to comprehensive healing. This new year presents an opportunity to embrace innovative treatments that offer real solutions, transforming joint health from a source of limitation to a pathway of renewed mobility and well-being.

Consulting with healthcare professionals remains the most critical step in developing a personalized joint health strategy that aligns with individual needs and goals.

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MEMORY MATTERS

By Neuropsychiatric Research Center of SW Florida

"Why is my wife so mean to me?" "My grandfather got downright ornery, wouldn't do anything we asked, and he yells all the time." "My mother is always so nervous and fidgety. When I tell her to relax, she says unkind things to me."

Are any of these situations familiar? For individuals living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, sometimes it may seem like your loved one is being difficult. As a caregiver, this can be very frustrating. One of the best phrases to remember goes like this: *a person with dementia is not giving you a hard time they are having a hard time*. What does that mean exactly?

Alzheimer's disease is a brain disease that impacts everything the brain controls. Memory, speech, logical thinking, reasoning, executive functioning, and expressions, are just some of the things that can be impacted. And while it may seem that someone is behaving in a hateful, ornery, or unkind manner, it can be helpful to realize that what is being seen and experienced is likely a result of the impact of the disease on the person. Some of the behavioral expressions may be a result of an underlying unmet need.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, the individual with the disease is experiencing a biologically profound loss of their ability to negotiate new information and stimulus. This is due to disease, versus their personality. This can be difficult to understand for those who do not have the cognitive impact of this disease. To make things more challenging, sometimes the behavior observed is different from day to day, even hour to hour.

It is estimated that between 30 to 50% of individuals with Alzheimer's disease experience agitation and irritability at some time during the course of their illness. What we may see is restlessness, nervousness, short temperedness, expressions of frustration and lack of cooperation. Some individuals may pace, some may perform repetitive motions, others may be quicker to argue and raise their voice and may appear to be in total denial of the facts we present to them.

What looks like denial in someone with the disease may be related to the changes in the brain which impact cognition and awareness. As a result, approaches to address our observations and concerns may not be effective or achieve the response desired. Having a factual, logic based response many times is not effective.

What approaches and techniques can work? Unfortunately, it is true that responses that can be effective with one person may not work with another. As many caregivers know, the same approach used with the same individual may have a different response on a day to day and even on an hour to hour basis. Having some general considerations can be helpful. Here's an acronym to help: **CARE**

C: Consistently Calm: That may seem impossible some days, and that is to be expected. Doing your best to respond to what you are seeing in a calm, nonjudgmental and caring manner can help.

A: Appropriate Activities: Many times, when individuals are bored or don't have structure, some challenging behavioral expressions may present themselves. Many things can be considered an activity and it's important that the chosen activity is appropriate for the individual and tailored to their interests as much as possible.

Another important consideration is time of day, length of activity and inviting someone to participate versus insisting on participation. A saying that can reflect interacting with someone with Alzheimer's disease is "the more you insist, the more they will resist." None of us like to be told what to do and being invited or asked to do something, versus being told may be more successful.

R: Regular Routine: Keeping a consistent routine, based on your loved one's habits can help decrease anxiety and preserve independence. The Alzheimer's Association suggests considering the person's likes, dislikes, strengths, and abilities when developing the routine. Knowing the times of day that the person functions best and allowing ample time for activities is essential. While a consistent schedule is helpful, building in flexibility and going with the flow is also an important consideration.



E: Engagement and Empathy: Include the person in everyday activities and let them help, even if they don't do things exactly the way you hope they would. Include them in things they enjoy. Participating in your faith community, helping in the garden, running errands, having a meal are all ways to engage. Being empathetic and understanding are also tools that can be valuable. It can be challenging to be a caregiver, and recognizing that it must also be difficult for the person with the disease as well provides perspective.

Have you noticed subtle changes in your loved one's memory? It's not uncommon for memory lapses to occur as we age, but when they start impacting daily life, it's essential to take action.

Connect with the experienced team at the Neuropsychiatric Research Center at 239-939-7777, where we have a proven track record of helping individuals and families navigate memory related challenges. Remember, you're not alone on this journey. #MemoriesMatter

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THE BOCOXTM PROCEDURE

ENHANCING PENIS HEALTH AND FUNCTION WITH BOTOX®

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

When it comes to men's sexual health, the Bocox™ procedure has emerged as a revolutionary technique utilizing Botox® injections to improve penis health and function. Botox®, commonly known for its cosmetic applications, is now being employed as a minimally invasive solution to address various sexual concerns. In this article, we will delve into the details of the Bocox™ procedure, its potential benefits, and what men need to know about this innovative approach to enhancing their sexual well-being.

Understanding the Bocox™ Procedure

The Bocox™ procedure is a specialized technique that involves injecting Botox, a purified form of the botulinum toxin, into specific areas of the penis. The injections are strategically administered to target the smooth muscle tissue responsible for erectile function. By temporarily relaxing these muscles, Botox can alleviate conditions such as erectile dysfunction (ED), Peyronie's disease, and premature ejaculation. This groundbreaking procedure offers a non-surgical alternative to traditional treatment options, providing men with a safe and effective solution for improving their sexual health.

Benefits of the Bocox™ Procedure

The Bocox™ procedure offers several potential benefits for men experiencing sexual health issues. Primarily, it can aid in the treatment of erectile dysfunction by promoting better blood flow and relaxation of the penile muscles. Additionally, Botox injections can address the symptoms of Peyronie's disease, a condition characterized by the abnormal curvature of the penis, by relaxing the affected area and reducing pain during intercourse. Moreover, the Bocox procedure has shown promising results in combating premature ejaculation, extending sexual stamina, and enhancing overall sexual satisfaction. These benefits make the Bocox procedure an appealing option for men seeking to improve their sexual performance and regain confidence in the bedroom.

Procedure and Recovery

The Bocox™ procedure is typically performed as an outpatient procedure in a medical office or clinic. The process involves administering Botox injections into predetermined areas of the penis, guided by



ultrasound or other imaging techniques. The injections are relatively painless, and the entire procedure usually takes less than 30 minutes. After the treatment, patients may experience mild swelling, bruising, or discomfort, but these side effects are temporary and typically resolve within a few days. Full recovery is expected within a week, and patients can resume sexual activity as advised by their healthcare provider. The Bocox™ procedure's minimally invasive nature and quick recovery time make it an attractive option for those seeking to improve their sexual health without significant downtime.

Considerations and Potential Risks

While the Bocox™ procedure offers promising results, it is essential for men to approach it with realistic expectations and consult with a qualified healthcare professional. Like any medical procedure, there are potential risks involved. Some individuals may experience allergic reactions to Botox or encounter temporary side effects such as bruising, swelling, or pain. It is crucial to choose a reputable and experienced healthcare provider who specializes in sexual health to ensure safe and effective treatment. Open communication with the healthcare provider regarding medical history, expectations, and concerns is key to a successful outcome.

Nothing, including this procedure, works for everyone. Discuss the procedure with your provider & read the consent form which incorporates the possible side effects seen with both Botox and Viagra (since, in theory, the same side effects could occur with Bocox™).

WARNING: Treating erectile dysfunction is serious business; only providers trained & licensed by the Cellular Medicine Association® (indicated by their listing on our directory) can legally use the name, Bocox™, to describe a procedure offered in their office.

The Bocox™ procedure utilizing Botox injections represents an exciting advancement in the field of men's sexual health. With its potential to improve erectile function, alleviate Peyronie's disease symptoms, and enhance overall sexual satisfaction, this minimally invasive technique offers hope to men seeking effective solutions. By understanding the procedure, considering the benefits and risks, and consulting with a qualified professional, men can make informed decisions about their sexual well-being and explore the potential benefits of the Bocox procedure.

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Reversing Osteoporosis Naturally:

A Comprehensive Path to Bone Strength and Wellness

By Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

Osteoporosis is no longer a condition to be passively managed—it's a challenge that can be actively confronted and overcome through innovative, holistic approaches. At Strength Lab Plus, we've developed a groundbreaking strategy that empowers individuals to reclaim their bone health naturally, without relying solely on pharmaceutical interventions.

Understanding Bone Health Beyond Traditional Methods

Conventional approaches to osteoporosis have often been reactive, focusing on medications and minimal interventions. Our methodology represents a paradigm shift—a proactive, comprehensive strategy that addresses bone health from multiple angles. We believe that the human body has an extraordinary capacity for healing and regeneration when provided with the right tools, environment, and support.

Precision Diagnosis: The REMS Revolution

At the core of our approach is the cutting-edge REMS (Radiation-free Electromagnetic Scanning) technology. Unlike traditional bone density scans that expose patients to radiation, REMS provides precise, detailed assessments of bone health without any harmful side effects. This state-of-the-art diagnostic tool allows us to:

- Create highly personalized baseline measurements
- Track subtle changes in bone density with unprecedented accuracy
- Develop targeted interventions based on individual physiological characteristics
- Monitor progress with minimal patient discomfort

The bioDensity Protocol: Natural Muscle and Bone Strengthening

Central to our treatment philosophy is the bioDensity protocol, a revolutionary approach to bone and muscle strengthening that harnesses the body's natural adaptive mechanisms. This scientifically designed program focuses on:

- Targeted, progressive resistance exercises
- Stimulating bone formation through controlled, strategic loading
- Enhancing muscle strength as a critical support system for bone health
- Improving overall functional mobility and balance

The bioDensity method differs dramatically from traditional exercise regimens by creating precise, controlled stress points that trigger the body's natural bone-building responses. Clients experience gradual, sustainable improvements in bone density and muscular strength without the risks associated with high-impact activities.

Functional Medicine: A Comprehensive Support System

Beyond physical interventions, our functional medicine approach considers the complex interplay of factors influencing bone health:

- Comprehensive hormone panel testing
- Nutritional analysis and targeted supplementation
- Assessment of lifestyle factors like sleep, stress, and diet
- Identifying and addressing underlying inflammatory processes
- Personalized nutrition plans rich in bone-supporting nutrients

Each client receives a meticulously crafted care plan that takes into account their unique genetic makeup, lifestyle, and health history. This individualized approach ensures that interventions are not just effective but optimally tailored to each person's specific needs.

Continuous Monitoring and Refinement

Progress isn't a one-time achievement but an ongoing journey. Our commitment to our clients extends beyond initial assessments through:

- Regular REMS technology evaluations
- Adaptive treatment protocols
- Continuous performance tracking
- Collaborative client education and empowerment

The Strength Lab Plus Promise

We stand at the forefront of a healthcare revolution that sees patients not as passive recipients of treatment, but as active participants in their healing journey. Our holistic approach to reversing osteoporosis naturally represents more than a treatment protocol—it's a comprehensive wellness strategy that restores strength, confidence, and quality of life.

By integrating advanced technology, personalized functional medicine, and innovative exercise protocols, we offer hope and tangible results for individuals seeking to overcome osteoporosis naturally.

Functional and Integrative Medicine with Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

Are you concerned about osteoporosis and looking for a natural, medication-free approach to restoring your bone health?

Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk specializes in reversing bone loss and strengthening your bones using personalized, science-backed solutions. Her expertise ensures each client receives a custom plan tailored to their unique needs, helping you regain confidence in your health.

Services include:

- ✓ REMS Bone Health Diagnostics
- ✓ Personalized Functional Medicine Consultations
- ✓ BioDensity Sessions to naturally stimulate bone growth
- ✓ Holistic Anti-Aging Strategies for long-term resilience

Why Choose Us?

- ✓ **Advanced Bone Diagnostics:** The REMS Bone Health Scan provides the most accurate, radiation-free assessment of your bone density and quality.
- ✓ **Individualized Care:** Every client gets a fully customized plan to rebuild bone health naturally and sustainably.
- ✓ **Medication-Free Approach:** With cutting-edge osteogenesis techniques, bioDensity sessions, and functional medicine, we focus on natural healing and strength-building.

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Realistic New Year's Resolutions for Better Cardiovascular Health

By James V. Talano, MD, MBA, FACC

The start of a new year offers an opportunity to set intentions for healthier living. If you're aiming to protect your heart and improve overall well-being, adopting practical, achievable resolutions is key. Here are some cardiovascular health-focused resolutions that can easily become lifelong habits.

1. Prioritize Your Regular Physical Activity

Exercise is a cornerstone of heart health. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity weekly. This may sound daunting, but you can achieve this by:

- Taking brisk 30-minute walks five times a week.
- Riding a bicycle 40 minutes four days a week
- Dancing, swimming, or engaging in a sport you enjoy for 50 minutes 3 days a week
- Using wearable trackers to motivate daily step goals.

Breaking exercise into smaller chunks (e.g., 10-minute sessions) can also make it more manageable. Research shows that regular exercise lowers blood pressure, improves total cholesterol, and strengthens heart function.^{1,3}

2. Adopt a Heart-Healthy Diet for Yourself

Eating smarter doesn't mean drastic changes. Small, consistent adjustments to your diet can support cardiovascular health. Consider:

- Increasing fruit and vegetable intake: Aim for five servings daily, focusing on colorful varieties.
- Choosing whole grains over refined carbs to stabilize blood sugar and lower cholesterol.
- Limiting sodium to reduce high blood pressure; check labels and cook more meals at home.
- Incorporating heart-healthy fats, like omega-3s from fish, nuts, and seeds.

Adopting a Mediterranean or DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diet can help you achieve these goals sustainably.^{1,2}

3. Manage Your Stress More Effectively

Chronic stress can lead to unhealthy behaviors like overeating or smoking, increasing cardiovascular risk. Resolve to handle stress proactively by:

- Practicing mindfulness or meditation for a few minutes daily.

- Engaging in yoga or other calming exercises such as Pilates
- Setting aside time for hobbies or social interactions.
- Read New books or listen to your favorite music or Broadway plays
- Even simple deep-breathing techniques during stressful moments can lower your heart rate, blood pressure and improve focus.²

4. Quit Smoking and Limit Alcohol

Smoking is a leading cause of heart disease. Resolve to quit using resources like counseling, nicotine replacement therapies, or apps designed to support smoking cessation. For those who drink, limit alcohol to one drink per day for women and men, as excessive consumption contributes to high blood pressure, heart failure and arrhythmias.³

5. Maintain a Healthy Weight Through Diet and Exercise

Excess weight, particularly around the abdomen, raises the risk of heart disease. Setting realistic goals such as losing 5-10% of your body weight can significantly impact heart health. Achieving this involves:

- Combining physical activity with mindful eating.
- Tracking your calorie intake to ensure a slight deficit each day
- Celebrating non-scale victories, such as improved energy or better sleep, to stay motivated.^{1,3}

6. Get Adequate Sleep

Lack of sufficient sleep is linked to hypertension, diabetes, heart disease and cognitive decline. Adults need 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Achieve this by:

- Sticking to a consistent sleep schedule, even on weekends.
- Avoiding television, listening to loud music and heavy meals close to bedtime.
- Creating a relaxing bedtime routine with calming activities like reading or gentle stretches.
- Avoid heavy exercise within three hours of bed time

If sleep problems persist, consult a healthcare provider to rule out conditions like sleep apnea, leg spasms which affects heart health.^{1,2}

7. Know Your Numbers

Knowledge is power when it comes to cardiovascular health. Commit to learning and tracking key health indicators, such as:

- Blood pressure (ideal: less than 120/70 mmHg).
- Cholesterol levels less than 150 mg/dl
- Blood sugar or A1C levels at 5.6 or below (for better carbohydrate management).

Regular check-ups with your healthcare professional will help you stay informed and adjust your habits as needed.³

8. Keep Yourself Well Hydrated

While drinking water might seem trivial, it helps support healthy blood viscosity and supports organ function. Replace sugary beverages with water and aim for about 4-5 16 oz bottles daily, adjusting for individual needs based on activity and climate.¹

9. Build a Support System for Yourself

Healthy habits are easier to sustain with the encouragement of family, friends, or community groups. Partner up with a friend or family members for workouts, join a cooking class, or take part in online health challenges. This social accountability can keep you motivated throughout the year.^{2,3}

10. Celebrate Your Progress, Not Perfection

Perfection isn't the goal—progress is. Reward yourself for small victories, whether it's preparing a new healthy recipe or hitting a weekly step count. Positive reinforcement makes healthy behaviors more enjoyable and sustainable.^{1,3}

A Heart-Healthy Year Awaits You

With these realistic resolutions, you can take meaningful steps toward better cardiovascular health without feeling overwhelmed. Remember, incremental changes often lead to lasting transformation. Embrace the new year as a fresh start to prioritize your heart health and overall well-being.

References:

1. American Heart Association (AHA). Recommendations on physical activity and diet for heart health.
2. Mayo Clinic. Heart-healthy eating and lifestyle tips.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Benefits of quitting smoking and understanding health numbers.

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ANY LAB TEST NOW!

Take Control of Your Health with Any Lab Test Now

Residents of Naples, Florida now have a convenient new option for getting affordable lab tests right in their neighborhood. *Any Lab Test Now* has opened a new location on Immokalee Road, bringing their extensive selection of professional lab tests to the Naples area.

Any Lab Test Now allows individuals to order their own lab tests without requiring a doctor's order. This puts patients in control of their own health monitoring and screening. The retail lab testing model provides an easy and affordable way to get lab work done for wellness, prevention, treatment, and management of existing conditions.

"We're excited to open our doors in Naples and provide this level of access to lab testing services," said the local owner. "Our goal is to empower people to be proactive about their health by making it simple and affordable to get the lab tests they need."

At Any Lab Test Now, patients can get tested for a wide range of health concerns from routine wellness panels to highly specialized biomarker tests. Some of the most popular tests offered include:

- **Annual Check-Up Panel:** A comprehensive array of tests that screen for a variety of potential health issues like diabetes, liver and kidney problems, anemia and more.

- **Paternity Informational (Non-Legal):** For those needing to determine biological relationships through DNA testing for personal knowledge.
- **STD Panel, Comprehensive:** Screens for all major sexually transmitted infections like HIV, syphilis, hepatitis B & C, herpes, chlamydia and more.
- **Cholesterol (Lipid) Panel:** Checks HDL, LDL, triglycerides and total cholesterol levels to assess heart disease risk.
- **5 Panel Rapid Drug Screen (Urine):** Detects recent use of marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, opiates and PCP.
- **Weight Management Hormone Test Panel:** Looks at levels of hormones like cortisol, thyroid, testosterone and more that can affect weight.
- **Hemoglobin A1C:** Used to monitor average blood sugar levels over 2-3 months for diabetes management.
- **Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA):** Screens for prostate cancer and other prostate disorders in men.
- **Basic Thyroid Panel:** Checks TSH, T4 and T3 levels to identify thyroid disorders.
- **Testosterone, Free & Total:** Measures free and total testosterone levels in men and women.



The new Any Lab Test Now Naples is staffed by certified technicians who can properly collect samples for blood tests, urine tests, saliva tests, hair tests and more. They are knowledgeable about all the tests offered and can help customers select the right screening for their needs. Test results are typically available within 24-48 hours.

With the opening of the Naples location, residents of Collier County now have convenient access to professional lab testing services. Stop by Any Lab Test Now on Immokalee Road and take control of your health today.

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BEYOND THE PILL BOTTLE: Why Compounding is the Future of Pharmacy

By Jerry and Lisa Meloche, Pharm.D., Owners, Compounding Pharmacists

As we step into a new year filled with goals of better health and wellness, it's time to rethink how medications fit into our lives. Standard prescriptions from chain pharmacies are not always the best fit for every patient, and that's where the art and science of compounding pharmacy come in. Compounding allows for customized medications tailored to each individual's unique needs—a vital service in today's increasingly personalized approach to healthcare. Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy in Naples is leading the way, providing solutions for patients seeking alternatives to one-size-fits-all medications.

The Case for Compounding Medications

Compounded medications are custom-made by a licensed pharmacist to address specific patient needs that commercially manufactured drugs cannot meet.

These needs may include:

- **Allergy-Free Formulations:** Patients allergic to dyes, preservatives, or fillers commonly found in mass-produced drugs can benefit from formulations free of these ingredients.
- **Tailored Dosages:** Standard doses may not suit every patient. Compounding allows for precise adjustments to achieve optimal therapeutic outcomes.
- **Alternative Delivery Methods:** For patients who struggle with swallowing pills, medications can be reformulated as topical creams, gels, lozenges, or liquids.
- **Unavailable Medications:** When a drug is discontinued or in short supply, compounding pharmacies can recreate it.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), compounding is especially critical for patients with unique health challenges—an estimated 3% of prescriptions in the United States are compounded. As healthcare trends move toward patient-centered care, this percentage is expected to grow.

Benefits Backed by Research

Personalized medicine, including compounding, has been shown to improve patient adherence and outcomes. Studies indicate that approximately 50% of patients with chronic illnesses fail to take medications



as prescribed, often due to adverse side effects, difficulty with administration, or poor tolerance. Customized formulations can address these barriers, improving compliance and enhancing therapeutic benefits.

For example, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is a field where compounding excels. Many women undergoing menopause find relief through bioidentical hormones, which are custom-compounded to match their body's natural hormone levels. Similarly, men seeking optimized health often benefit from compounded testosterone therapies tailored to their precise needs. These approaches reduce side effects and provide better outcomes compared to off-the-shelf options.

Creative Scripts: Naples' Compounding Leader

Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy has become a cornerstone of the Naples community, offering personalized care and innovative solutions that empower patients to take control of their health. Here are some ways Creative Scripts is setting the standard:

- 1. State-of-the-Art Facility:** Creative Scripts operates with cutting-edge technology to ensure the highest standards in sterile and non-sterile compounding.
- 2. Expertise and Collaboration:** The team works closely with physicians to develop custom treatment plans, ensuring medications are effective and safe.
- 3. Wide Range of Services:** From pediatric formulations to veterinary medicine, Creative Scripts serves diverse patient populations with specialized needs.

4. Focus on Education: Empowering patients to make informed decisions, the pharmacy provides resources on the benefits and limitations of compounded medications.

Embrace a New You with Personalized Care

The start of a new year is the perfect time to take charge of your health. Compounding offers solutions that align with your unique goals, whether you're managing a chronic condition, addressing allergies, or optimizing wellness.

Creative Scripts invites you to explore how customized medications can enhance your health journey. Visit their Naples location or consult with their team of experts to learn how compounding can be part of your "new year, new you" plan.

Why Choose Creative Scripts?

Choosing the right pharmacy is a critical step in achieving better health. Creative Scripts is more than a provider; it's a partner dedicated to helping you achieve optimal wellness through personalized medicine. As healthcare continues to evolve, Creative Scripts remains at the forefront, proving that the future of pharmacy lies beyond the pill bottle.

Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy custom builds medication, one patient at a time. We use the highest quality pharmaceutical-grade ingredients, state-of-the-art bases, equipment, and technology. Continual training on the newest techniques, advances in therapy, and regulations allows our pharmacists and technicians to provide the safest, most effective medications for you AND your pets. In addition to compounded medications, we offer pharmaceutical-grade nutritional supplements, health advice, and hormone consults. Creative Scripts specializes in veterinary compounding, dermatology, bio-identical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT), pain management, and more. Pharmacists Jerry and Lisa Meloche have served Naples and surrounding communities since 2005.

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The Matterhorn Method: A Seamless Integration Between Pain Relief and Performance

By Angela Puchalla, MS, ATC, LAT

The leading company in Florida for identifying and correcting neurological compensation is Naples-based Matterhorn Fit. Through their proprietary process, called the Matterhorn Method, they have been able to successfully treat thousands of active seniors, over 70 professional athletes and 11 Olympians, in as little as two weeks. Through their comprehensive initial evaluation, they will identify exactly where the root cause of your problem is coming from, create a plan to fix it quickly, and prevent it from returning.

“Many of our clients have lost hope. They have tried traditional treatment methods and still live with pain. When you address pain, injury, and movement dysfunction from a neurological level, the results are immediate and our clients become hopeful again,” says Matterhorn Fit CEO Ryan Vesce.

Ryan Vesce was on the verge of retirement from his professional hockey career after major back and hip surgery, but mentally he was not ready. Ryan teamed up with professional athlete strength coach, Sean Sullivan, to find a solution to his chronic pain. The team spent the next five years compiling various techniques they had learned in professional sports into a systematic process and applied it to Ryan’s rehabilitation. The results were immediate and it enabled Ryan to keep playing for an additional 5 years pain free. Ryan and Sean founded Matterhorn Fit in 2018 to bring their newly developed process, called the Matterhorn Method, to everyday people who struggle with pain.



“When I retired in 2018, we had to tell the world what we had discovered,” says Vesce. “So we started testing our new process on pro athletes, and it worked. We started testing on active seniors in the area (60-80 yr olds) and it worked. In fact, the Matterhorn Method worked so well that our clients told all of their family and friends about it. That’s when we knew we had something really special. Within 2 weeks, virtually all of our patients were seeing a major reduction of pain and that has held true for thousands of our clients through today. The process worked fast. The culture was inspiring, and we began to take off.”

WHY IT WORKS

The reason why Matterhorn Fit has been able to consistently relieve pain in two weeks is credited to their proprietary process called the Matterhorn Method. The Matterhorn Method identifies the root cause of the issue from a neurological level and allows for muscles that were inactive to support the body again which eliminates the pain response from the brain.

The first step in Matterhorn Fit’s process is a comprehensive initial evaluation. Through their evaluation, they will be able to identify any neurological compensation in the client’s system. If they do find compensations, there is a very high probability that they can improve the client’s pain in two weeks.

“Through our initial evaluation we will be able to determine IF we can help you. If we do find something that we can fix, then we will start you with 6 sessions over a two week period to resolve your symptoms,” says Vesce. “Over 94% of our clients have reported a major reduction of pain within two weeks. After the symptoms are resolved, we build a personalized movement plan to prevent the problem from returning.”

To schedule an initial evaluation visit
matterhornfit.com or call the office at
 239.676.5342.

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2025 Open Enrollment is Here!

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

Medicare Open Enrollment is January - March. What can be changed at this time of the year is Medicare Part D Drug Plans and Medicare Advantage Plans. You can make one change from one Part C Advantage Plan to another Advantage Plan from the same company or another. You can change from one Advantage Plan to a stand-alone Part D Drug Plan, this is not advised unless you have a secondary to Original Medicare, which is a Medigap and also called a Medicare Supplement. I always do the Medicare Supplement Applications 1st to make sure that the person is approved. Medicare Supplement have medical underwriting and you may not qualify. There are certain Special Election Periods that may qualify you as a guaranteed issue. You can NOT change from one Part D drug Plan to another this time of year.

Substantial changes to Medicare Part D, stand-alone drug plans as well as Advantage Plans, you won't have to pay more than \$2,000 in out-of-pocket costs, which include deductibles, co-pays, and 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.

Medicare Part C / Advantage Plans annually Medicare Advantage Plans make changes. They must all include 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 2025 it is \$9,350 and \$14,000 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 Medicare Advantage Plans. 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 insurance companies 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 we 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 we will change your insurance plan for you. 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 months 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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6 REASONS TO AVOID STANDARD MOLD CLEANUP OPTIONS

By Julie S. Hurst- Nicoll, MBA, CMI, CMR - Partner, Mold Safe Homes, LLC

Indoor mold growth, now more than ever is fast becoming the “cancer” of the home. The very moves we (and our homebuilders) make to increase the energy efficiencies in our homes is causing more mold problems than ever before. Mold thrives with moisture and humidity. And now our homes are tighter than ever locking in moisture. If we have even the smallest of leaks or high humidity it will feed mold spores that enter our home on our clothes, pets and open doors or windows. Many species also produce a byproduct call mycotoxins. These tiny, invisible microns are poisons that can cause many varied health issues. **Three tips:**

- If you have a water leak, repair it within 24-48 hours.
- Purchase a humidity meter and monitor your home keeping levels no higher than 55%
- If you suspect mold or see a colony address it immediately.

Be wary of standard cleanup methods:

1. Bleach Is Not Effective – And May Be Hazardous To Your Health

- a. Mold usually returns in less than 24-48 hours after using bleach.
- b. Cleaning stirs up mold spores and puts them into the air, creating more mold related health problems and allergic reactions.
- c. Bleach only treats the surface. It does not kill or eliminate airborne mold spores.
- d. Bleach is 3-6% Sodium Hypochlorite and 94% to 97% water. The Sodium Hypochlorite evaporates, leaving water behind to foster the growth of more mold.



- e. Bleach is ineffective and not recommended for use on porous surfaces such as concrete, wood, wallpaper, sheetrock, grout, books, clothing,
- f. When inhaled during application, chlorine particles may cause lung and bronchial irritation and lung scarring, as well as headaches.

2. Chemicals, Biocides And Fungicides Are Dangerous Poisons

- a. Most of these are hazardous to your health as well as to mold.
- b. These agents either treat surfaces or the air, they almost never treat both surface and air.

3. Ozone Generators May Pose Multiple Hazards To Your Health

- a. Air Purifiers producing ozone are banned by California citing studies that ozone leads to lung damage.
- b. Used at levels sufficient to kill mold, ozone generators may oxidize and produce off-gassing of harmful contaminants.
- c. Ozone may destroy or damage electrical wiring, nails, and other building materials when used at levels sufficient to kill mold according to recent studies.

4. UV Only Kills Mold In Air Exposed Directly To The UV Light.

- a. UV does not treat surfaces.
- b. UV only treats air streams that are directly exposed to it.
- c. UV has no impact on the source of mold in buildings.

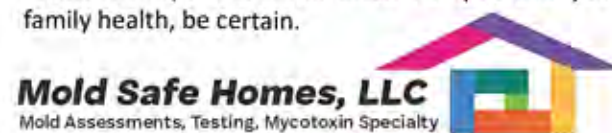
5. Tear It Out, Remove It, Replace It, Tear It Down

- a. Repairing leaks is essential to eliminating mold problems, however, it may not be necessary to Remove and Replace everything that has been affected by mold.
- b. This option can be very costly.
- c. This does not remove mold spores from the air.

6. Chlorine dioxide and other chemical fumigants

- a. Not practical for occupied buildings.
- b. Harmful to humans and pets.
- c. When applied at levels sufficient to kill mold may damage metal fasteners, nails, cabinet hardware and electrical wiring.

If you are uncertain about the level of mold and mycotoxins you are exposed to daily in your home or business we suggest hiring a professional mold assessor who has experience in both mold and mycotoxins to inspect and run tests. For you and your family health, be certain.



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TOP 4 Reasons Chefs for Seniors Might Be The Right Choice For You

#1 Shopping is Challenging

In light of our global pandemic, shopping has proven to be challenging for all ages, but if you have an underlying medical condition or are over 65, the risk of infection has become a significant concern. Along with COVID-19, shopping at the grocery store heightens the risk of other communicable illnesses such as the flu or the common cold.

In addition to these concerns, many seniors find it taxing or may not be able to drive themselves safely to the store due to mobility issues, diminished eyesight, cognitive issues, or other aspects that might make driving, parking, shopping, walking, or calculating a genuine challenge.

#2 Cooking is Becoming Difficult or Dangerous

Perhaps you used to love cooking, or maybe you've never been keen on whipping up a meal. Some individuals find that following a recipe and cooking can be difficult, time-consuming, or in some cases, dangerous.

If you'd prefer to have someone else make your meals out of convenience, or you'd rather not unintentionally burn or overcook your food, many people feel the same way. This is especially true for seniors who no longer need to cook for an entire family and those that have issues with getting around easily or are developing neurodegenerative disorders.

#3 You or Your Loved one Need Special Meals (Low Sodium, Low Fat, etc.)

Have you or your loved one undergone a heart procedure, stroke, or been diagnosed with diabetes? If so, you know the importance of following a strict diet that will help manage and sustain your disease and longevity.

Many people find it challenging to understand which foods are best and how to prepare those foods so that they are delicious and appetizing.

#4 You Want Nutritious Food Without the Hassle

Combining all of the reasons that so many seniors could benefit from a chef-prepared meal is easily identified in the previously mentioned issues and

conditions. You want to eat the healthiest meals possible, meals that are good for your body, and that taste amazing so that it's easy to stick to eating the way you know you should. That's where Chefs for Seniors can help.

Chefs for Seniors

Chefs For Seniors is a welcomed answer for many that want nutritious, flavorful foods custom-prepared right in the comfort of your home by a licensed chef that not only provides gourmet-style meals, but also compassionate companionship. They also have specialty meals for low sodium, low fat, and other dietary needs.

- Find peace of mind knowing personal chefs will handle the shopping and cooking
- Feel healthy and rejuvenated with meals for seniors that fit your diet
- Truly affordable and much less expensive than eating out
- All personal chefs are servsafe licensed, undergo background checks, and are fully insured

The company's local professional chefs prepare affordable meals for the week in the home using the freshest ingredients, while offering a fun interactive experience. Chefs for Seniors is a private meal preparation service which specializes in providing companionship with the chefs preparing the meals in the home of the client. Clients select meals from a regional menu which can be customized to the client's dietary preferences and needs. The process aims to be an affordable option for seniors who may want fresh home-cooked meals, but who may be physically unable to cook the meals for themselves.

Professionally Prepared Meals and Clean Up!

Chefs for Seniors offers rotating menu options, which includes select Chef creations inspired by the region. Clients select their desired meal in advance, allowing the chef to shop and prepare the meals on the designated cooking day. Chefs prepare the meals between two to two and a half

hours. And an added benefit is that after the meal is prepared and stored according to the client's preferences, the chefs clean before leaving the house.

Your chef will bring their own "toolbox" with pots, pans, knives, and utensils into the home. You don't need to have anything on hand except an appetite and working appliances!

Cost and Insurance Coverage

The price of our services are region-specific and depends on your individual needs. Our goal is to provide an affordable solution that seniors can use long-term. We offer three different service packages to meet a variety of needs: Standard, Custom, and Non-Standard.

Some Long Term Health Insurance Policies may cover certain in-home services like Chefs For Seniors.

Multiple Meals During Visit

During a 2-hour home visit, your personal chef will prepare 4 different entrées and 10-12 individually-packaged servings of meals. The exact number of servings depending on your appetite and the types of meals ordered and serving sizes can be adjusted with your chef.

Most clients have their personal chef visit their home every week, although some choose to schedule services every 2 weeks or 2x per week. We can work within your budget, appetite, and needs.

Special Diets

We can accommodate most dietary concerns and diets. Our chefs and menus are particularly well-suited for low-sodium, diabetic friendly, gluten-free, Kosher, and renal diet meals. We also take inspiration from the DASH Diet (Dietary Approach To Stopping Hypertension), when designing our weekly menu rotations. Our Custom Package is well suited for clients with less common diets or dietary concerns.

For any questions, please contact Chefs For Seniors at 239-776-1758.



CHEFS FOR SENIORS

chefsforseiors.com

Phone: 239-776-1758

Email: bill.springer@chefsforseiors.com

Nourishing Companions: Unveiling the Vitality of Diet and Nutrition for Pets

Our furry, feathery, and scaly friends are not just pets; they are beloved companions who deserve the utmost care and attention, especially when it comes to their diet and nutrition. Just like us, their human counterparts, animals thrive when provided with a balanced and nourishing diet. The importance of diet and nutrition for pets cannot be overstated; it serves as the cornerstone for their overall well-being and longevity.

Adequate nutrition forms the bedrock of a pet's health. Essential nutrients such as proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, and minerals are vital for their growth, energy, and immune system. Each species and breed have specific dietary needs, and meeting these requirements ensures their bodies function optimally. For instance, carnivorous pets like cats need high protein diets to support their muscle maintenance and overall health, while herbivorous animals such as rabbits require a diet rich in fiber to maintain healthy digestion.

The quality and source of pet food are pivotal. Opting for high-quality, well-balanced commercial pet food or preparing homemade meals under veterinary guidance can significantly impact an animal's health. Quality food choices can prevent common health issues like obesity, dental problems, and skin conditions. Moreover, specialized diets can cater to specific health conditions like allergies, diabetes, or renal issues, enhancing the pet's quality of life.



Beyond physical health, nutrition influences a pet's behavior and mental well-being. A nutrient-rich diet can foster better cognition, improved mood, and reduced stress levels. Behavioral problems in pets can often be linked to inadequate nutrition, highlighting the intricate connection between diet and mental health.

However, navigating the realm of pet nutrition can be challenging amidst the vast array of options available. Consulting a veterinarian or a certified animal nutritionist is paramount to tailor a diet suitable for an individual pet's needs. They can provide guidance on portion sizes, dietary restrictions, and the appropriate balance of nutrients, ensuring that pets receive a diet aligned with their specific requirements.

In recent years, the trend of holistic and natural diets for pets has gained momentum. Owners are increasingly recognizing the significance of whole, unprocessed foods and organic ingredients for their furry companions. While these options can be beneficial, it's crucial to ensure they meet the nutritional standards necessary for the pet's health.

Ultimately, the significance of diet and nutrition for pets transcends mere sustenance; it directly influences their quality and longevity of life. Responsible pet ownership involves providing not just love and shelter but also a well-rounded, nutritious diet that caters to their individual needs. As guardians of these cherished beings, it's our responsibility to ensure they receive the best possible nutrition, enriching their lives and fostering a stronger bond between pets and their human counterparts.

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ACUPUNCTURE POINT INJECTION THERAPY AND ACUPUNCTURE FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT

By Dr. Mary Lambert, AP, DOM

Pain can significantly impact one's quality of life, limiting physical activity, disrupting sleep, and affecting overall well-being. While conventional treatments such as medications or invasive procedures are common, natural and effective options like Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy (APIT) and traditional acupuncture are gaining recognition for their ability to provide relief. At Lambert Wellness, Dr. Mary, a board-certified acupuncturist and doctor of Oriental medicine, specializes in musculoskeletal disorders, offering a unique approach to pain management that combines modern techniques with ancient healing practices.

What is Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy?

Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy (APIT) enhances traditional acupuncture by incorporating natural substances like ultra high dilution medicines, saline, vitamins, or Chinese herbal extracts. These substances are injected into specific acupuncture points, stimulating the body's natural healing mechanisms while targeting areas of pain and dysfunction.

APIT works particularly well for:

- Muscle tension and spasms
- Joint pain
- Tendonitis
- Sports injuries
- Chronic pain conditions, such as sciatica and fibromyalgia

The therapy is minimally invasive and is known for providing long-lasting relief by reducing inflammation, promoting tissue repair, and improving blood flow to affected areas.

Acupuncture for Pain Management

Traditional acupuncture has been used for thousands of years to treat pain naturally. By inserting thin, sterile needles into specific acupuncture points, this technique stimulates the body's nervous system, releasing endorphins (natural painkillers) and increasing blood circulation.

Clinical research supports acupuncture as an effective treatment for various pain conditions:

1. Lower Back Pain: A large-scale study published in Archives of Internal Medicine showed that acupuncture is more effective for chronic back pain compared to standard treatments like medications or physical therapy.



2. Osteoarthritis: Research in The Journal of Pain found that acupuncture reduces pain and improves function for individuals with knee osteoarthritis, making it an excellent alternative to medications.

3. Neck and Shoulder Pain: A clinical trial in Pain Medicine revealed that acupuncture significantly relieves tension and muscle tightness, particularly in patients with chronic neck and shoulder pain.

These results highlight acupuncture as a powerful tool for managing pain naturally, without the potential side effects of medications.

Dr. Mary's Expertise in Musculoskeletal Disorders

As a specialist in musculoskeletal disorders, Dr. Mary combines acupuncture and APIT to create tailored treatment plans that address the root causes of pain. Musculoskeletal conditions often result from injuries, repetitive strain, poor posture, or chronic inflammation. Common conditions she treats include:

- **Sciatica:** Acupuncture reduces nerve pain and muscle spasms that can result from sciatic nerve irritation.
- **Tendonitis:** APIT helps repair damaged tissue and reduces inflammation in the tendons, improving mobility.
- **Sports Injuries:** Dr. Mary works with athletes to accelerate recovery and prevent long-term complications.

Her integrative approach targets pain while improving range of motion, reducing inflammation, and promoting overall healing. Patients often experience noticeable relief almost immediately, with continued improvement over time.

Why Choose Acupuncture and APIT?

Unlike conventional treatments that often focus solely on symptom relief, acupuncture and APIT address the underlying causes of pain. These therapies are:

- Natural and drug-free
- Safe with minimal side effects
- Effective for chronic and acute pain
- Focused on long-term healing

Additionally, acupuncture can enhance other treatments, making it an excellent complementary therapy for individuals undergoing physical therapy, chiropractic care, or post-surgical recovery.

Experience Pain Relief at Lambert Wellness

If you are struggling with pain from musculoskeletal disorders, sports injuries, or chronic conditions, Dr. Mary at Lambert Wellness is here to help. Her expertise in acupuncture and Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy can provide you with the natural relief you've been searching for.

Take the first step toward a pain-free life!

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Joan's Five Steps to Overcome a Sedentary Lifestyle

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

In a society that frequently underscores the value of youth and vitality, the narratives of those who defy stereotypes and champion physical activity in their golden years are particularly noteworthy. Joan is one such person. A 60-year-old retiree, Joan transformed her life from a sedentary existence to an active and thriving life she loves. Joan's story not only serves as an inspiration but is also underscored by scientific research, emphasizing that the pursuit of physical well-being is a possible journey for everyone, irrespective of age.

The Turning Point:

Joan gained weight after each of her three children were born. Physical activity became something she did not have time for as a busy mom. She led a sedentary lifestyle, grappling with fatigue, stiffness, and a sense of unfulfilled potential. The turning point came in the form of her husband's dementia diagnosis and subsequent move into a memory care community. Joan knew she had beat the odds; dementia caregivers have a 67% higher chance of dying before the person for whom they care. She set about making changes.

Overcoming Mental Barriers:

Like many individuals in her age group, Joan first had to navigate the mental hurdles associated with overcoming a sedentary lifestyle. Shifting her perspective on physical activity from a perceived chore to a gateway for personal growth proved to be a crucial step. She committed to walking every day, no matter how few steps it equaled. She knew consistency mattered more than an arbitrary goal.

Joan's approach aligned with the findings of a study published in the *"Journal of Aging and Physical Activity,"* emphasizing the importance of moderate-intensity physical activity for improved health outcomes in older adults (Brown et al., 2018).

Handling Emotions Through Movement:

Central to Joan's success was the discovery of joy in movement. On her walk, Joan listened to new music and even found podcasts on topics she enjoyed. She found that walking outside before visiting her husband in the memory care community put her in a better mood which made their visits better. Additional walking after her visit helped Joan process her grief. Experimenting with various activities, from dancing to her favorite tunes to participating in local fitness classes for seniors, Joan found that making physical activity enjoyable was pivotal to sustaining her new lifestyle.

Social Connection and Support:

Joan's children were grown and lived out of state. She maintained deep love for her husband, but she also felt lonely. Joining a local walking group and participating in senior fitness classes not only provided companionship but also transformed exercise into a communal activity. A study in the *"Journal of Aging and Social Policy"* supports this approach, underscoring the positive impact of social participation on the physical and mental well-being of older adults (Chang et al., 2020).

Embracing Variety:

Over the course of a year, Joan incorporated a variety of activities into her routine. She learned she liked the feeling of strength which came from lifting weights but

did not like water aerobics. She was intimidated to try yoga, but found she loved how leaner, taller and more flexible she felt after a simplified version of restorative yoga.

Celebrating Progress:

Joan celebrated every milestone, no matter how small, reinforcing her commitment to an active lifestyle. These celebrations became powerful motivators, propelling her to explore new activities and continually push her boundaries. Her family also noticed her success and praised her determination. They had never expressed it before, but as they watched their father deteriorate and take no action towards improving his lifestyle when he still had capacity to do so, they were afraid their mom was going to go down the same road. Samantha* said, "With my dad it was hard to see him get worse so quickly. I was afraid I was going to lose my mom, too." Samantha continued, "Now, I do not worry about her anymore. She is committed. She knows that a healthy life is built one step at a time. And, she inspires me!"

Joan's journey exemplifies that age does not have to be an impediment to embracing physical activity. Her story, backed by scientific research, underscores that it is never too early and it is never too late to change your lifestyle. Start where you are and do what you can with what you have.

Joan's daily walks became a force of strength and inspiration for herself and her family. During a time when it would have been easy to "give up" all over again with her husband's diagnosis, Joan determined in her heart not to end up as a statistic. She has since moved into an Independent Living community because she knew that living alone was not ideal. She needed more community and social relationships to live a long, full life. Now, with the physical and social aspects of life dialed in, Joan feels unstoppable.


If you see yourself in Joan's story, let us know. You can reach us at (239) 330-2133 or info@scanyfl.com.



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Are You Practicing Mindful Wealth?

Courtesy of Nina Azwoir, First Vice President, Investments

If the past few months have given you more time for introspection, use it to improve your financial plan in a big-picture way. Even for the privileged among us who still have our jobs, are not on the front lines with the pandemic, and have not had anyone close to us felled by COVID-19, the current crisis has brought hardships big and small.

Parents have confronted the daily struggle of trying to do their jobs while also home-schooling. Adult children have not been able to visit their elderly parents. Graduations, weddings, and even funerals have been put on hold or "Zoomified." Yet as difficult as it has been, there have been a few silver linings too, especially for those of us lucky enough to not be touched directly by the crisis. One of the most valuable is that pressing pause on our usual routines has given many of us the opportunity to take a step back, get out of our ruts, and take stock. What do we really value? What do we really miss? What can we not wait to do when this is all over? What "necessity" of our past lives, whether the daily purchased latte or frequent meals in restaurants, are we finding that we are quite happily doing without?

Travel may be someone's greatest longing, while others miss cooking and entertaining big groups of family and friends. Talking about how the pandemic has changed our thinking on a topic, or made us want to do more of something else, can help us feel like we are using the present situation productively. The current sense of isolation will not be for naught, because it is shaping how we intend to use our lives in the future, when we once again have a full set of choices before us.

Are You Allocating Your Time and Money with Your Intentions?

It can be argued that now is a good time to put a fresh set of eyes on your financial plan, taking a similarly expansive view of it that you might not have been able to do when you were busy and mired in your day-to-day activities. Too often, one expert opined, financial plans (and planners) move straight to the "solution" phase, without stopping to ask some basic questions about what someone is trying to achieve and what their real problems are.

"Much of the scientific research about spending and happiness points to a clear connection between spending on experiences versus things."

What will constitute "success" for you over the next few years, not just in financial terms, but in life terms, too? Are you allocating your time and money in line with your intentions, what you find fulfilling, and what brings you joy? These questions are incredibly personal; no one else can answer them for you.

Whether you are well into retirement or early in your career, it can be easy to backburner questions like these and move straight to logistics, determining your asset allocation and minimizing taxes, for example. Those are all worthy pursuits, but if you find yourself with a bit of extra time to think a bit more broadly and introspectively about your financial plan, here are some of the key questions to ask yourself.

What Expenditures Bring You Happiness?

As most investors know, the biggest determinant of whether you achieve financial success is how much you spend versus how much you save. But as important as it is to make sure your intake exceeds your outgo, budgeting can seem like sheer drudgery. Here is a different way to think about budgeting. Simply begin to take note of how various discretionary expenditures make you feel. It can be incredibly illuminating. Much of the scientific research about spending and happiness points to a clear connection between spending on experiences versus things. Many would also argue that many of life's most memorable experiences cost very little.

How Are You Allocating Your Precious Resources?

Investors should strive to make smart allocations of financial capital across opportunity sets, not just saving versus spending but also debt pay down versus investing in the market, how much to allocate to retirement savings versus college, and so on. These are crucial topics worthy of significant analysis and introspection. Ultimately, the right answers are a matter of math (expected return on "investment") and personal preference.

Many of us pay much less attention to how we allocate an even more scarce resource, our time, even though that allocation will ultimately have an even greater impact on whether we feel like we have met our goals. Of course, some of our time expenditures are pre-ordained, the time we spend working or caring for children, for example. Even within those allocations it seems worthwhile to be more mindful, to help ensure that your allocation of time in a given day, week, or year aligns with your goals and vision for that period. An audit of how you are allocating your time currently is a good starting point. Technology tools can help you determine how much time you waste (uh, spend) on social media and other activities that could be detracting from your productivity and happiness.

What Is Your Definition of "Enough"?

Many of us are operating with an incredibly vague notion of how much we really need to save in order to achieve our financial goals and find security. Even financial planners might rely on rules of thumb when setting your retirement savings target. For example, they might assume that you will need 80% of your working income in retirement and extrapolate the rest of your plan from there.

As humans, we often have a natural tendency to reach for more more more, regardless of whether that "more" is actually bringing more happiness and security. Trying to keep up with the people around us, in terms of possessions and outward signs of success, can get exhausting and may not get us any closer to our life's goals. That is why, in this period of limited activity, spending, and social contact, it is worthwhile to think through your own definition of enough, both now and for the future.

What Do You Want Your Legacy to Be?

When taking a strictly financial and estate-planning perspective, leaving a "legacy" is one of those topics that can seem overly narrow. It is about leaving assets behind for children, grandchildren, and other loved ones, as well as charity if we so choose. It is about making sure we do not burden the people we care about. Those are crucial considerations and they are why everyone needs an estate plan that includes wills, powers of attorney, and beneficiary designations, among other key documents.

While you are at it, why not think big picture about your legacy, too? What do you hope people will say about you after you are gone? What life philosophy or pieces of wisdom do you hope that your loved ones will always associate with you? If you find yourself with a bit of extra time for introspection, write down a few ideas along these lines. And no, you are not too young to start thinking about this. You can find templates for creating a "personal legacy" online, but some good advice is not to overthink it. Balance more serious ideas with more lighthearted ones. We all have credos that we live by; make sure your loved ones know yours.

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Your Cleaning Service May Be Sweeping More Than Just Dirt Under The Rug

Pop quiz: How much do you really know about the people you hire to work in and around your home? Through casual conversations you may know where they live, their children's names and ages. You might know someone for whom they've done work or have a friend or acquaintance in common (that's probably how you found out about them in the first place).

But, what do you really know about your landscaper, electrician, painter, plumber, the cable guy, the guy who fixes your appliances, or the person who cleans your home each week (and to whom you have given a key!)? Are they financially responsible? Have they ever fallen into legal trouble or veered over the line into petty criminal behavior? And what do you really know about the people your service providers employ or how they go about hiring them?

Statistically speaking, there is a high probability that all of the service providers who come into your home are upstanding, law-abiding citizens. They work, right? And perhaps everyone should be forgiven the minor transgressions of their teenage years. But, while you don't need to be paranoid, you can at least be sensible. As a homeowner and customer, it is always your right to inquire about your service provider's hiring and other business practices that-if not executed properly and consistently-can create financial liability, even danger, for you and your family;

Five critical sets of questions to ask:

- **Hiring practices.** How and where do you source new employees? Do you check personal references? Do you conduct criminal background checks? Do you verify your employees are legal to work in the U.S.? And do you use credible sources for background checks?
- **Tax practices.** Do you have a federal employer's tax ID number? Are all of your employees of the W-2 variety? Do you pay all FICA, social security, unemployment insurance, and other required tax withholding for yourself and for your employees?
- **Bonding and insurance practices.** Are your employees bonded and insured to cover any damage to or theft of my property? Are you and your employees covered by workers' compensation insurance in the event someone gets injured while working on my property?
- **Certification and training practices.** Do your employees have all the required professional training and certifications to conduct the work I am hiring them to do? And if there is no required certification, do you offer employees training to ensure the protection of my assets?
- **Security practices** (for instances where service providers require unsupervised access to your home). How will you store my key? Who will know that you have it and where it is kept? How will my key be marked? And how susceptible will it be to loss, duplication, or theft?

Do not be afraid to ask these questions! If a home service provider is not paying their taxes or insuring their employees properly, you can be financially liable for back taxes, penalties, interest, and for loss or damage to your own property. Also, when you show you are savvy in the hiring process, your service provider is more likely to treat you with respect in other areas, for example, in assessing the work you need done or in quoting you fair rates.

Something else to consider: Best business and employment practices cost business owners money. In order to cut costs, many independent businesses or individuals skip the necessary precautionary measures of running criminal and personal background checks on their employees, thus attracting less than reputable employees to these smaller shop businesses. The benefits and job security provided by a more reputable company tend to attract and retain reputable employees that are keen to their stature in the employment screening process. If a home service provider quotes you a rate that is substantially below market or below their competitors, the difference is likely to be in their operating costs. So, don't just take 'yes' for an answer to the above questions. Ask for documentation! If a potential service provider gets offended or tells you it is none of your business, they could be getting ready to sweep THEIR dirt under YOUR rug.



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Slowing the Pace of Your Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you find yourself making statements like this:



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

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

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



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



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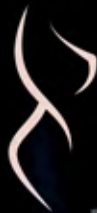
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