

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

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

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**SEXUAL HEALTH
& CARDIOVASCULAR
DISEASE**

**FUELING A
STRONG HEART**

The Crucial Connection
Between Diet and Heart Health

**FEBRUARY: A MONTH OF
LOVE AND PREVENTION**

Encourage Those You Love
to Get Screened for Cancer

**THE CONNECTION
BETWEEN SLEEP,
TESTOSTERONE
& SEXUAL HEALTH**

**THE IMPACT OF
EXERCISE AND
NUTRITION
ON CANCER
PATIENT
OUTCOMES**

**HEART HEALTH
AWARENESS MONTH**

The Link Between Cardiovascular
Health and Hearing Loss

General Cardiologists Serve as
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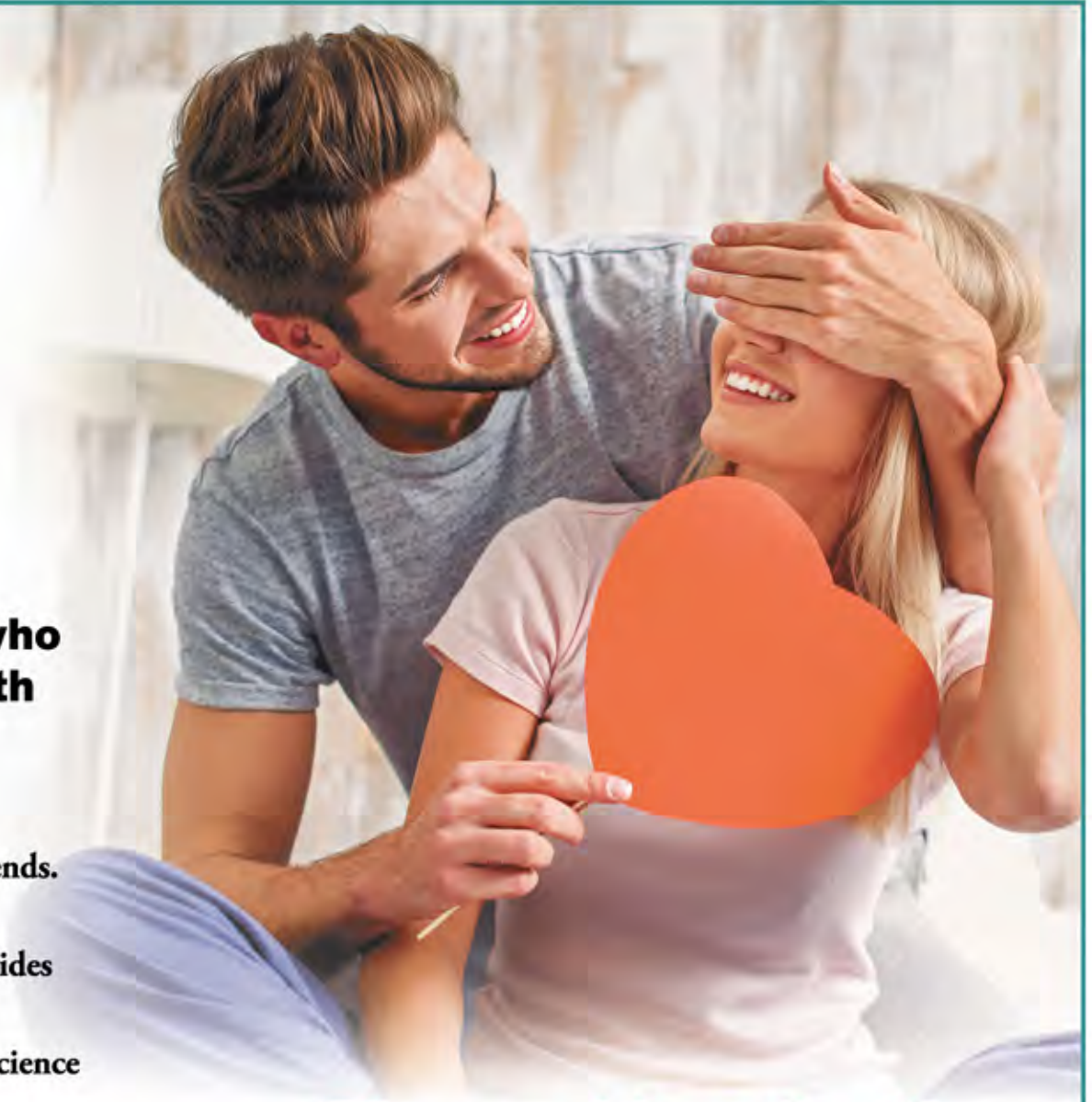
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CONTENTS FEBRUARY 2025

6 Regaining Confidence: An Interview with Nancy Large, a Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry Patient

7 Comprehensive Guide to Breast Cancer Prevention and Screening

8 Breaking the Stigma: Empowering Your Mental Health Journey

9 Enhancing Intimate Sexual Health: The Role of Labiaplasty in Women's Wellness

10 The Impact of Exercise and Nutrition on Cancer Patient Outcomes

11 The Connection Between Sleep, Testosterone and Sexual Health

12 General Cardiologists Serve as Primary Care Physicians for Matters of the Heart

13 Peripheral Neuropathy: A Widespread but Treatable Condition

14 Geniculate Artery Embolization: A Promising Minimally Invasive Treatment for Knee Osteoarthritis

15 The Power of Connection: Friendships Flourish at The Carlisle Naples

16 The Challenges of Aging in Men and Women and How Functional Medicine Can Help Address Both

17 Umbilical Stem Cell Therapy: A Revolutionary Approach to Joint Pain Relief

18 Show Your Eyes Some Love: Essential Tips for Maintaining Healthy Vision

19 The Life-Saving Power of Regular Skin Cancer Screenings

20 Hammertoes?

21 The Promising Role of PRP in Urogynecology

22 Revolutionizing Pain Relief: Advanced Care with Dr. Michael Shaffer

23 February: A Month of Love and Prevention - Encourage Those You Love to Get Screened for Cancer

24 Compression Fractures and Kyphoplasty: An Overview of Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

25 Heart Health Awareness Month: The Link Between Cardiovascular Health and Hearing Loss

26 What is Rhinitis? An In-Depth Look at This Common Nasal Condition

27 The Rejuvenating Power of Ozone Therapy: A Multi-Faceted Approach to Health and Wellness

28 Love Your Eyes This Valentine's Day: A Focus on Retinal Health and Prevention

29 Caudal Steroid Injections: An Effective Treatment Option for Lower Back and Tailbone Pain

30 Florida Gulf Coast University: The Leader in Healthcare Education

31 Fueling a Strong Heart: The Crucial Connection Between Diet and Heart Health

32 Vaginal Rejuvenation Stem Cell Therapy: Emerging Advances in Regenerative Gynecology

33 Rejuvenating Romance: The V-Shot Approach to Sexual Wellness This Valentine's Season

34 Mobile Home Parks

42 Optimizing Your Thyroid to Support Your Sex Hormones: Exploring Their Connections

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

46 Shoulder Injuries and Your Treatment Options

50 Stress Management

52 2025 Open Enrollment is Here!

53 Reversing Osteoporosis Naturally: The Most Accurate Osteoporosis Screening with REMS Echolight

54 Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy: Unlocking Regenerative Healing

55 Compounded Hormone Replacement Therapy

56 Maximizing Sexual Performance and Sensitivity with Gainswave Therapy

57 The Matterhorn Method: Eliminating Pain and Inspiring Hope

58 The Advantages of Home Health Care for Seniors: A Pathway to Comfort, Safety, and Independence

59 How Do Mycotoxins from Mold Spread?

60 The Autoimmune Theory in Alzheimer's Disease

61 Nurturing Pet Dental Health Amidst Chocolate Hazards

62 Sexual Health and Cardiovascular Disease

63 Understanding the Annual Check-up Panel

64 Three Factors That Improve Your Heart Health and Reduce the Risk of Alzheimer's

65 Understanding CBD: Nature's Wellness Compound

66 Are You Practicing Mindful Wealth?

67 Setting Boundaries to Protect Your Mental Health

68 Eating Heart Healthy Meals Just Got a Whole Lot Easier

69 Cleaning Tips to Keep the Flu Virus at Bay and Out of Your Home

70 Memory Matters

71 Spiritual Wellness: What's Your Diet?

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- Personality Disorders
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- Alzheimer's Disease
- Eating Disorders



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Regaining Confidence:

An Interview with Nancy Large, a Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry Patient

H *Health and Wellness Magazine* (HWM) recently had the opportunity to sit down with Nancy Large, a long standing Naples resident, to hear her remarkable story of overcoming dental anxiety, restoring her oral health, and finding her confidence again with the help of Dr. Tamer Eshra and the team at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry.

HWM: Nancy, thank you for sharing your story with us. Can you start by telling us what led you to seek treatment at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry?

Nancy Large: Of course. Honestly, I'm not entirely sure how my dental needs got so bad—it just kind of happened as life went on. Growing up, I had dental care, and during the years when I was raising my children, I tried to stay on top of it. But in my mid-50s, I started neglecting my teeth. I struggled with severe anxiety and had a real fear of the dentist, which made it hard to even think about scheduling appointments. Most of the dental work I did get was under sedation.

By the time I was 65, after undergoing open-heart surgery and bowel reconstruction surgery, I finally decided to fix my teeth. They were rotting away, and I couldn't bring myself to be around people because I was convinced everyone was staring at my horrible teeth. That added depression to my anxiety—it was a really dark time for me.

HWM: That sounds incredibly challenging. What brought you to Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry?

Nancy Large: My nephew actually recommended Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry. It still took a lot for me to work up the nerve to make the call, but when I did, they paired me with Dr. Eshra. My first visit was very emotional. Dr. Eshra did a thorough exam and took X-rays, but what stood out the most was that he truly listened to me. I left that appointment feeling like I had found the perfect dentist for me, especially since they offered sedation.

HWM: How did the treatment process unfold after that first visit?

Nancy Large: During my second visit, Dr. Eshra laid out all of my options and explained the cost of each one in terms I could understand. After much discussion, I decided to save the teeth I had. In the end, I got eighteen crowns, six implants, and he even corrected my bite.

The first surgery was the biggest—it happened in May of 2024. The office can provide all the clinical details, but what I can tell you is that Dr. Eshra and his team took



incredible care of me. He completed the treatment exactly as planned and at the exact cost he originally quoted. There were no surprises, and that was a huge relief.

HWM: What stands out to you most about your experience with Dr. Eshra and his team?

Nancy Large: It is hard to put into words just how much they've done for me. Dr. Eshra has the most caring bedside manner. He and his team always put my comfort first. His immediate assistant, Mariam, is so kind and professional—they make a wonderful team.

I also want to acknowledge Anita Perez and Gigi De La O, who are part of the clinical team. Everyone there made me feel so supported throughout the entire process.

Dr. Eshra has completely eased my fear of dentistry. I cannot imagine going through this journey with anyone else. Was it completely painless? No, but he always reassured me, even just by squeezing my hand and telling me everything would be okay.

HWM: That kind of personalized care makes such a difference. How has this experience impacted your life?

Nancy Large: It's been transformative. I have my confidence back, and I'm no longer hiding from people because of my teeth. I feel like myself again. If I had to make this decision all over, I wouldn't hesitate to let Dr. Eshra treat me.

HWM: Nancy, your story is truly inspiring. Thank you for sharing it with us. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Nancy Large: Just that I'm so grateful to Dr. Eshra and the entire team at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry. They gave me my smile and my life back.

Dr. Tamer Eshra: A Leader in Comprehensive Dental Care and Patient Comfort

Dr. Eshra's extensive training in dentistry, radiology, and medicine underscores his diverse and comprehensive expertise in healthcare. His impressive educational journey has equipped him with a broad skill set, enabling him to deliver exceptional patient care.

A key differentiator that sets Dr. Eshra apart from other dentists in Naples is his advanced certification in IV and Oral Conscious Sedation. This specialized training allows him to provide a level of comfort and relaxation for patients that is often unmatched in local dental practices. For individuals with dental anxiety, extensive treatment needs, or complex procedures, Dr. Eshra's ability to ensure a stress-free and pain-free experience is transformative.

As a Fellow of the esteemed Misch Implant Institute, Dr. Eshra demonstrates his commitment to mastering the intricate art of dental implantology. His dedication to advanced surgical techniques has also earned him the distinguished status of a Platinum Member within the Pikos Surgical Institute, showcasing his expertise in complex dental procedures.

Dr. Eshra excels in full-mouth reconstructions and is a Certified Hybrid Denture Provider, offering modern and functional denture solutions. His certifications in Insequence Immediate Full Arch Rehabilitation, Bone Augmentation, and Sinus Lift techniques reflect his commitment to delivering innovative solutions in oral health. Additionally, he offers Micro-Needling Facial Rejuvenation, further enhancing patient care and aesthetics.

"Crafting cosmetic cases, including crowns, implants, and veneers, is my passion," Dr. Eshra shares. "I enjoy creating beautiful, natural-looking smiles. My journey embodies dedication to mastering various aspects of oral health, aesthetics, and patient comfort, aiming to provide the best possible care and elevate the standards of dental practice."

With his expertise in IV and Oral Conscious Sedation, Dr. Eshra offers a unique and unparalleled approach to patient care in Naples. His dedication to personalized, innovative, and compassionate care ensures every patient feels at ease while receiving the highest level of dental treatment.

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Comprehensive Guide to Breast Cancer Prevention and Screening

Magnolia Breast Center is a beacon of excellence in pursuing optimal breast health, offering a cutting-edge breast health program encompassing every facet of care. At Magnolia Breast Center, we understand the importance of a holistic approach to breast cancer prevention and screening. Our comprehensive breast health program goes beyond routine screenings, providing a spectrum of services that include breast cancer risk assessment, genetic counseling, screening, diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship care.

A team of fellowship-trained, board-certified surgeons and oncologists embodies our commitment to excellence. These dedicated professionals collaborate seamlessly to deliver highly effective, personalized, coordinated healthcare for our patients. At the heart of our mission is recognizing that breast health is a priority for both women and men. We take pride in offering customized treatment and care programs designed to exceed our patient's expectations, constantly improve the quality of medical services, and achieve the best possible outcomes.

1. Lifestyle Factors:

Regular Exercise: Regular physical activity has been linked to a lower risk of breast cancer. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity weekly exercise, such as brisk walking, swimming, or cycling.

Healthy Diet: Adopting a nutritious diet plays a significant role in breast cancer prevention. Include a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Limit the intake of processed foods, red meat, and sugary beverages.

Moderate Alcohol Consumption: Limit alcohol intake, as excessive alcohol consumption has been associated with an increased risk of breast cancer. For women who choose to drink, it is recommended to have no more than one drink per day.

2. Medical Screenings:

Mammograms: Regular mammograms are a critical tool for breast cancer screening. The American Cancer Society recommends that women with an average risk of breast cancer start annual mammograms at age 40. However, individual screening plans may vary based on personal and family medical history.

Clinical Breast Exams: Regular clinical breast exams by a healthcare professional are essential for detecting any changes in the breast tissue. Women should discuss the frequency of clinical breast exams with their healthcare provider.

Breast Self-Exams: While not a substitute for regular mammograms, breast self-exams can enhance awareness. Women should be familiar with the normal look and feel of their breasts and report any changes to their healthcare provider promptly.

Genetic Testing: Some individuals may have an increased risk of breast cancer due to genetic factors. Genetic testing may be recommended for those with a family history of breast cancer or specific risk factors. Consult with a healthcare provider to determine if genetic testing is appropriate.

Breast Cancer Risk Assessment: Magnolia Breast Center can determine whether you are at a higher risk of developing breast cancer compared to the average person. Based on our assessment, we will recommend how often you should get checked and what lifestyle changes you must make to reduce your risk of developing cancer. We can determine your risk of developing non-invasive and invasive breast cancers.

3. Statistics:

- According to the American Cancer Society, about 1 in 8 women in the United States will develop invasive breast cancer during their lifetime.
- Regular mammography screening has been shown to reduce breast cancer mortality by detecting tumors at an earlier, more treatable stage.
- Lifestyle modifications, including maintaining a healthy weight and engaging in regular physical activity, may contribute to a 30-40% reduction in breast cancer risk.

Taking proactive steps to prevent breast cancer involves a combination of lifestyle choices and regular medical screenings. Customizing prevention strategies based on individual risk factors and consulting with healthcare professionals for personalized advice is essential. Encourage readers to prioritize

their breast health by adopting a healthy lifestyle and participating in recommended screenings. Early detection and prevention are powerful tools in the fight against breast cancer.

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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BREAKING THE STIGMA: Empowering Your Mental Health Journey

By Jo Ortiz, PMHNP-BC

In a world where we readily seek medical attention for physical ailments, many still hesitate to address their mental health needs. The persistent stigma surrounding mental health conditions continues to create barriers, preventing countless individuals from accessing the support they deserve. However, a powerful shift is occurring as more people share their stories and champion the importance of mental wellness.

Sarah Martinez, a 34-year-old marketing executive, remembers the day she finally reached out for help. "I spent years believing I needed to 'tough it out' through my anxiety and depression," she shares. "I worried what my colleagues would think if they knew I was seeing a therapist. Looking back, seeking help was the strongest decision I've ever made." Today, Sarah advocates for mental health awareness in her workplace, helping create a more supportive environment for others facing similar challenges.

Understanding when to seek support is crucial for early intervention and better outcomes. While everyone experiences occasional emotional difficulties, certain signs warrant professional attention. These include persistent changes in sleep patterns, difficulty maintaining relationships or work responsibilities, unexplained physical symptoms, or feelings of hopelessness that last more than two weeks. Remember: seeking help isn't a sign of weakness—it's an act of self-care and personal responsibility.

The landscape of mental health support has evolved significantly. Traditional therapy now coexists with innovative approaches like teletherapy, support groups, and mental wellness apps. This diversity of options makes mental health care more accessible than ever before. James Chen, a licensed clinical psychologist, notes, "We're seeing more people embrace therapy as part of their overall wellness routine, just like exercise or healthy eating. This normalization is crucial for breaking down stigma."



Personal stories of recovery provide powerful testimony to the possibility of positive change. Michael Thompson, a high school teacher, battled social anxiety for decades before seeking treatment. "I was terrified of being judged for my mental health struggles," he recalls. "But when I finally opened up, I discovered so many others had similar experiences. Now, I'm open with my students about mental health, showing them it's okay to ask for help."

Communities play a vital role in dismantling mental health stigma. Workplaces are implementing mental health days and employee assistance programs. Schools are incorporating mental wellness education into their curricula. Religious and cultural organizations are addressing mental health within their communities, recognizing that spiritual well-being and mental health often intertwine.

Taking the first step toward mental health support can feel daunting, but several strategies can help:

Start with your primary care physician if you're unsure where to begin. They can provide initial guidance and appropriate referrals.

Research mental health professionals who understand your specific needs and cultural background. Many now offer free initial consultations to ensure a good fit.

Confide in trusted friends or family members who can provide support and accountability during your journey.

Explore online resources and support groups to connect with others who share similar experiences.

Remember that recovery isn't always linear. Progress might include setbacks, but each step forward contributes to long-term well-being.

The conversation around mental health continues to evolve, with public figures, athletes, and celebrities increasingly sharing their own mental health journeys. Their openness helps normalize these experiences and demonstrates that mental health challenges can affect anyone, regardless of success or status.

As we move forward, let's remember that everyone deserves access to mental health support without fear of judgment or discrimination. By sharing our stories, supporting others, and prioritizing our own mental well-being, we contribute to a more compassionate and understanding society—one where seeking help for mental health is as natural as treating any other medical condition.

Your mental health journey is uniquely yours, but you don't have to walk it alone. Whether you're taking your first steps toward support or continuing along your path to wellness, remember that seeking help is an act of courage that can open the door to transformation and healing.



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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ENHANCING INTIMATE SEXUAL HEALTH:

The Role of Labiaplasty in Women's Wellness

Labiaplasty, a surgical procedure focused on modifying the labia minora or majora, has emerged as an important topic in women's health care. This medical intervention addresses both functional and aesthetic concerns that can significantly impact a woman's quality of life, physical comfort, and emotional wellbeing.

Understanding Labiaplasty

The procedure primarily involves surgical modification of the labia minora (inner vaginal lips) or, less commonly, the labia majora (outer vaginal lips). While often categorized as a cosmetic procedure, labiaplasty serves important functional purposes for many patients who experience physical discomfort or limitations in their daily activities.

Medical Indications

Many women seek labiaplasty for medical reasons beyond aesthetic concerns. Common functional issues include:

- Physical discomfort during exercise or athletic activities
- Irritation or chafing when wearing certain clothing
- Discomfort during intimate relations
- Hygiene challenges
- Recurring infections due to excess tissue

The decision to undergo labiaplasty often stems from a combination of these functional concerns alongside personal aesthetic preferences. Medical professionals emphasize the importance of thorough consultation to understand each patient's specific needs and expectations.

The Surgical Process

The procedure is typically performed on an outpatient basis under local anesthesia with sedation or general anesthesia, depending on patient preference and surgical requirements. Modern surgical techniques focus on preserving sensation and natural contours while addressing the patient's concerns. The surgery usually takes between one to two hours, with most patients returning home the same day.

Recovery and Results

Recovery from labiaplasty generally requires two to four weeks, during which patients gradually return to normal activities. Initial swelling and discomfort are

managed with appropriate pain medication and cold compresses. Most patients can return to work within a week, though strenuous activities and intimate relations typically resume after four to six weeks.

Patient Satisfaction and Outcomes

Research indicates high satisfaction rates among labiaplasty patients, with improvements reported in:

- Physical comfort during daily activities
- Confidence in intimate relationships
- Overall body image and self-esteem
- Ability to participate in athletic activities
- Comfort in wearing various clothing styles

Medical Considerations

Potential candidates for labiaplasty should undergo comprehensive medical evaluation to ensure they are suitable for the procedure. Important considerations include:

- Overall health status
- Realistic expectations about surgical outcomes
- Understanding of recovery requirements
- Psychological readiness for the procedure
- Completion of family planning, as future childbirth can affect results

The Role of Medical Professionals

Healthcare providers play a crucial role in guiding patients through the decision-making process. This includes:

- Conducting thorough physical examinations
- Discussing medical history and concerns
- Explaining surgical options and techniques
- Setting realistic expectations
- Providing comprehensive post-operative care instructions

Future Developments

Advancing surgical techniques and technology continue to improve labiaplasty outcomes. These developments focus on minimizing scarring, reducing recovery time, and optimizing results while maintaining natural tissue sensation and function.

Labiaplasty represents an important surgical option for women experiencing functional or aesthetic concerns related to labial tissue. When performed by

qualified medical professionals with appropriate patient selection and counseling, the procedure can significantly improve quality of life and intimate wellness. As with any surgical intervention, success depends on careful consideration of individual needs, thorough medical evaluation, and realistic expectations about outcomes. The growing acceptance of open discussions about intimate health issues has helped reduce stigma and improved access to information about this beneficial procedure.

What will my recovery be like?

With Dr. Kiran Gill and her team, you can be assured of personalized care at every step to ensure that you have a comfortable treatment experience and recovery. Following labiaplasty, you will have some discomfort, swelling, and bruising for a few days.

Dr. Gill, a Board Certified Plastic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgeon, will prescribe pain meds for a few days. She will recommend ice packs, loose clothes, and absorbent pads for the initial recovery period. You can expect to resume your regular routine in a week, but should avoid strenuous exercises and sexual activity for about one month.



Your Labiaplasty Consultation

The decision to undergo labiaplasty is a personal one, and Dr. Gill will ensure that you are fully informed before moving forward through a private, one-on-one consultation in Naples, FL.

She will use this session to answer all your questions in detail and create a customized plan of action for addressing your aesthetic concerns, tailored to your wishes and goals. Call us now at 239-596-8000 to schedule a convenient appointment with Dr. Gill.



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THE IMPACT OF EXERCISE AND NUTRITION ON CANCER PATIENT OUTCOMES

By Ashley Lampkin, Director of Exercise

Cancer, a formidable adversary affecting millions worldwide, demands a multifaceted approach to treatment and care. In the United States alone, statistics paint a stark reality: an estimated 1.9 million new cancer cases will be diagnosed in 2024, underscoring the urgency of exploring every avenue to enhance treatment outcomes. While medical interventions are pivotal, this article aims to shed light on the profound impact that exercise and nutrition can have on the journey of cancer patients. Grounded in facts and scientific evidence, our exploration will delve into the transformative power of strength training and dietary modifications, offering insights into how these lifestyle components can increase the chances of survival for individuals navigating the challenging terrain of cancer.

THE ROLE OF EXERCISE IN CANCER TREATMENT:

1. Enhanced Immune Function: Regular strength training has been shown to boost the immune system. For cancer patients, a strengthened immune response is vital in the fight against cancer cells and in preventing the spread of the disease.

2. Reduced Treatment Side Effects: Cancer treatments often have challenging side effects, such as fatigue and muscle weakness. Incorporating structured exercise routines has been proven to alleviate these side effects, enhancing the overall quality of life for cancer patients undergoing treatment.

3. Improved Mental Health: Exercise has profound effects on mental well-being. Cancer patients often experience emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. Regular physical activity has been linked to improved mood and reduced psychological symptoms, providing much-needed support during the challenging journey of cancer treatment.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN NUTRITION AND CANCER SURVIVAL:

1. Optimal Nutrient Intake: To maintain strength and resilience, adequate nutrition is crucial for cancer patients. Consuming a well-balanced diet rich in essential nutrients provides the body with the tools it needs to endure the rigors of cancer treatment.

2. Weight Management: Maintaining a healthy weight is associated with improved outcomes for cancer patients. Nutrition plays a pivotal role in weight management, and dietary modifications can help individuals achieve and sustain an optimal weight during and after cancer treatment.

3. Reduced Risk of Recurrence: Certain dietary patterns have been linked to a lower risk of cancer recurrence. For instance, a diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains has decreased the likelihood of cancer returning, providing patients a better chance of long-term survival.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACHES:

1. Consultation with Healthcare Providers: Cancer patients must consult with their healthcare providers before initiating any exercise or nutrition program. Individualized plans tailored to the specific needs and conditions of the patient ensure safety and effectiveness.

2. Monitoring and Adjustments: Regular monitoring of patients' progress and making necessary adjustments to their exercise and nutrition plans are essential to a comprehensive cancer care strategy. Healthcare professionals can guide patients on the appropriate intensity and duration of exercise and help fine-tune dietary recommendations based on individual responses.

The combination of exercise and nutrition holds immense potential to influence cancer patients' outcomes positively. From bolstering immune function and reducing treatment side effects to supporting mental well-being and reducing the risk of recurrence, the evidence supporting these interventions is compelling. However, it is crucial to emphasize that these strategies should be implemented under healthcare professionals' guidance. Cancer patients should work closely with their medical providers to develop personalized exercise and nutrition plans that align with their unique circumstances, ultimately contributing to improved chances of survival and a better quality of life.



THE INSPIRE EXERCISE MEDICINE WAY:

We are not a gym. This is not physical therapy. We are a medical fitness center, and our medical staff prescribes exercise as a complementary treatment in managing chronic conditions, including cancer.

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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 16 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.



THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SLEEP, TESTOSTERONE AND SEXUAL HEALTH

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

Sleep is a fundamental aspect of our overall health, and its impact on various bodily functions is profound. One less reported area where sleep plays a crucial role is in the regulation of libido and testosterone levels. In this month's article I will try to summarize the relationship between sleep, low libido, and testosterone levels in an effort to emphasize the importance of maintaining good sleep for optimal sexual health and hormonal balance.

Testosterone is a hormone primarily produced in the testes in men and in smaller amounts in the ovaries in women. It plays a vital role in various bodily functions, including muscle mass, bone density, mood regulation, and sexual desire. In men, testosterone levels typically peak during adolescence and early adulthood, gradually declining with age. In women, testosterone levels are significantly lower but still essential for maintaining libido and overall health.

Testosterone production follows a circadian rhythm, with levels rising during sleep and peaking during the early morning hours. This natural cycle is crucial for maintaining healthy testosterone levels. Research has shown that insufficient sleep or poor sleep quality can disrupt this cycle. For instance, studies have found that men who get less than 7 hours of sleep per night may experience a drop in testosterone levels, negatively affecting their energy levels, mood, and libido.

Libido, or sexual desire, is influenced by various factors, including hormonal balance, psychological state, and overall health. Testosterone is a key hormone in regulating libido, and its levels are closely linked to sleep quality. The disruption on testosterone production caused by poor sleep could lead to a decrease in sexual desire. Additionally, sleep deprivation can increase levels of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone, which can further suppress libido.

The Bidirectional Relationship

The relationship between sleep and testosterone is bidirectional. While poor sleep can lead to lower testosterone levels, low testosterone can also contribute to sleep disturbances. For example, low testosterone levels have been associated with increased sleep fragmentation and reduced sleep efficiency. This creates a vicious cycle where poor sleep leads to lower testosterone, which in turn exacerbates sleep problems.



The Connection Between Sleep Apnea and Low Testosterone

Sleep Apnea is a common sleep disorder defined by frequent stopping breathing episodes during sleep. Sleep apnea can significantly impact testosterone production by affecting your circadian rhythm. It results in frequent unconscious awakenings, preventing the body from entering the deeper stages of sleep crucial for hormone production. The repeated episodes of oxygen deprivation (hypoxia) associated with sleep apnea can also reduce testosterone production through oxidative stress and inflammation, directly impacting the testes' function and the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis.

Additionally, low testosterone can exacerbate sleep apnea symptoms. Individuals with low testosterone often experience fatigue and weaker respiratory muscles, contributing to increased likelihood and severity of sleep apnea episodes. This creates a vicious cycle where one condition worsens the other, making management challenging.

The Role of Testosterone Replacement Therapy

Testosterone Replacement Therapy (TRT) is frequently prescribed to men with low testosterone levels to alleviate symptoms like decreased libido, fatigue, and muscle mass loss. However, TRT's might exacerbate or even induce sleep apnea in susceptible individuals. One study found that healthy men experienced increased hypoxemia (low blood oxygen levels) and disrupted sleep breathing patterns after receiving high-dose testosterone injections. Similarly, men with hypogonadism (low testosterone) saw a rise in disordered breathing events when on TRT.

The underlying mechanisms are not entirely clear, but it is believed that testosterone might affect the body's respiratory control centers, leading to compromised airway stability during sleep. Thus, for individuals already suffering from sleep apnea, TRT could worsen their condition.

Conclusion

The relationship between sleep, low libido, and testosterone is complex and multifaceted. Adequate sleep is essential for maintaining healthy testosterone levels, which in turn supports libido and overall sexual health.

Sleep apnea can reduce testosterone production by disrupting sleep and causing oxidative stress, while low testosterone can worsen sleep apnea symptoms by weakening respiratory muscles.

While TRT can help alleviate symptoms of low testosterone, it can also exacerbate sleep apnea in susceptible individuals. Therefore, a careful and individualized approach to TRT is necessary, particularly for those at risk or already suffering from sleep apnea. Consulting with healthcare professionals and considering both conditions together can lead to tailored treatments, improving overall health outcomes and quality of life.

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GENERAL CARDIOLOGISTS SERVE AS PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIANS FOR MATTERS OF THE HEART

Heat attack symptoms typically come to mind when you mention heart disease - chest pain, shortness of breath, radiating pain in the left arm, etc. Due to robust education, we all know to call 911 if these symptoms appear.

But what about occasional shortness of breath, a random feeling that your heart “skips” a beat, or other related symptoms that aren’t necessarily emergencies, but need to be evaluated?

That’s where general cardiologists like Physicians Regional Medical Group’s Thinn Hlaing, M.D., and Catherine Law, M.D., come into play.

Hlaing, who is board certified in cardiovascular disease and echocardiography, is often the front-door for cardiovascular care, as he evaluates, diagnoses and either treats patients, or coordinates their care with other cardiology specialists.

General cardiologists can be thought of as primary care providers for matters of the heart — addressing chronic heart diseases like heart failure, valve problems, abnormal heart rhythms, and more.

“Understanding the complexities of the heart and the critical role it plays within the human body can be challenging,” says Hlaing. “It’s an honor to be able to diagnose and treat patients.”

His interests include heart rhythm disease, cardiac imaging, coronary artery disease screening, and preventive medicine including managing high cholesterol and blood pressure. Board certification in echocardiography means Hlaing is recognized as having extensive training and expertise in echocardiograms, a diagnostic echo (image/video) of the heart that helps identify any structural or functional issues.

Hlaing earned his medical degree from the University of Medicine in Mandalay, Myanmar, and completed residency at Lankenau Medical Center in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania. For more advanced training, Hlaing completed a fellowship at Georgetown University Hospital and Washington Hospital Center Program in Washington, DC.



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

“The heart has always interested me—especially the mechanisms of how the heart functions and the pathology. Small aberrations in the mechanics and pathways within the heart can ultimately lead to significant physical changes throughout the body,” Law says.

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

Dr. Law wants her patients to know she is compassionate, an effective communicator and a patient-oriented physician.

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

Dr. Hlaing and Dr. Law are accepting new patients at Physicians Regional Pine Ridge, Founders Square and Bonita Springs. For more information visit PhysiciansRegionalCardioCare.com or call (239) 348-4120.





PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

A WIDESPREAD BUT TREATABLE CONDITION

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

Chronic pain is a debilitating issue that impacts millions worldwide. Of the over 116 million people suffering from various chronic pain disorders, an estimated 20 million are afflicted by peripheral neuropathy specifically. However, experts believe this number could be significantly higher due to frequent misdiagnosis and underreporting of the condition.

Peripheral neuropathy results from dysfunction or damage to the peripheral nerves - the vital neural pathways that transmit sensory information from the extremities to the brain and spinal cord. These nerves extend from the central nervous system out to the arms, hands, legs, and feet. When compromised, they can produce distressing and disruptive symptoms.

The Peripheral Neuropathy Puzzle

While peripheral neuropathy is complex, the core issue revolves around impaired nerve signaling caused by nerve damage or degeneration. A variety of potential root causes can initiate this deterioration, including chronically high blood sugar levels, poor circulation reducing oxygenation, vitamin/nutrient deficiencies, toxic exposures, and unchecked inflammation.

As the longest nerves in the body, those serving the lower extremities are often the first to manifest symptoms as the condition progresses. However, if left unchecked, the upper extremities can eventually become affected as well as the neuropathy advances through the peripheral nervous system.

Recognizing the Signs

Peripheral neuropathy can produce a range of troubling sensory, motor, and physiological symptoms, including:

- Numbness, tingling, or "pins and needles" sensations
- Burning pain or aching in the limbs
- Joint swelling, stiffness, and diminished range of motion
- Loss of proprioception (spatial positioning awareness) leading to balance/coordination issues
- Muscle cramping, weakness, and atrophy
- Discolored, thickened, or abnormally textured skin
- Non-healing sores, rashes, or ulcers on the feet and ankles

Avoiding the Pitfalls of Painkillers

Conventionally, nerve pain and numbness are often simply "masked" with prescription narcotic painkillers like opioids. However, this approach fails to address the underlying neuropathy while exposing patients to the grim risks of addiction and potentially fatal overdose. In fact, the opioid crisis has become so severe that certain states now lead the nation in drug abuse and overdose rates.

There is a better way. Pioneering physical medicine clinics are achieving remarkable results in treating peripheral neuropathy through integrative, non-narcotic therapies that can actually regenerate damaged nerves and restore proper functioning.

Regenerative Neuropathy Treatments

At the forefront of this emerging treatment approach is Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute in Naples, Florida. Their comprehensive peripheral neuropathy program revolves around advanced regenerative therapies like:

- Red LED and infrared light to stimulate nerve repair
- Gentle electrical nerve stimulation to reduce pain and improve mobility
- Stem cell allografts and platelet-rich plasma injections to accelerate tissue healing
- Therapeutic shockwave to disrupt pain signals
- Targeted supplements to aid remyelination of nerve coatings

In clinical studies, a remarkable 88% of neuropathy patients experienced significant improvements after this multimodal treatment regimen. Reduced pain, numbness, tingling, temperature sensitivity, and restless legs were just some of the benefits reported. Improved sleep quality, balance, coordination, and range of motion were also frequently noted - along with lowered dependence on oral medications.

Most importantly, patients gained greater mobility and reduced fall risk by restoring protective sensation and positional awareness in their feet and ankles. This decreased risk of potentially devastating injuries.

Embracing a Brighter Future

For over two decades, Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute has been a trusted leader in pioneering physical medicine solutions in the Naples area. By fusing compassionate care with the latest evidence-based therapies, their team of chiropractic neurology experts is helping countless neuropathy sufferers reclaim their health and vitality.

Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute

We proudly serve the Naples area with comprehensive Chiropractic Neurology, Physical Medicine, and Regenerative Medicine services since 1998. Our office strives for excellence, and we are consistently furthering our education and techniques to improve the care you receive in our office. Whether you suffer from chronic pain, are recovering from an injury, or are seeking overall improved health and performance, we have the skills and experience to help you work toward your goals.

If you are looking for a chiropractic Neurologist to treat bulging discs and/or herniations, neck or back pain, knee, shoulder or hip pain, sciatica, or neuropathy (numbness and/or burning and pain in feet and hands), you have found the right place for your health care needs.

When you work with us, you can be sure that we are equipped to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions that include:

- Severe neck & back pain
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- Arm or leg pain, or numbness
- Peripheral Neuropathy pain or numbness
- Restless Leg Syndrome
- Headaches, dizziness, vertigo, or balance problems
- Disc bulge or herniation, sciatica, or stenosis
- Auto Accident, Whiplash Injuries

If you are in need of a highly experienced Chiropractic Neurologist in Naples, FL, look no further than **Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute**. For more information or to schedule your initial consultation, call us today!

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Dr. Richard Hiler DABCN, is a board-certified Chiropractic Neurologist with more than 27 years of clinical experience. Dr. Hiler and his team offer a complementary telephone consultation. For questions or to schedule an appointment contact the office at 239.330.1000.



Geniculate Artery Embolization: A Promising Minimally Invasive Treatment for Knee Osteoarthritis

By Russell Becker, DO

Knee osteoarthritis (OA) affects millions of people worldwide, causing chronic pain and significantly impacting quality of life. While traditional treatments range from conservative management to total knee replacement, a novel interventional procedure called geniculate artery embolization (GAE) is emerging as a promising minimally invasive option for patients with knee OA. This innovative treatment targets the underlying vascular pathology associated with knee osteoarthritis, offering new hope for those seeking alternatives to surgery.

Understanding the Connection Between Inflammation and Blood Supply

The development and progression of knee osteoarthritis involve complex inflammatory processes. Research has shown that increased blood vessel formation (angiogenesis) and inflammation in the synovial membrane of affected joints play crucial roles in the pathogenesis of OA. These new blood vessels not only supply inflammatory cells and mediators but also contribute to pain through the growth of sensory nerve fibers alongside them. This understanding has led to the development of GAE as a targeted treatment approach.

The GAE Procedure: How It Works

Geniculate artery embolization is performed by interventional radiologists under local anesthesia. During the procedure, a tiny catheter is inserted through a small puncture in the femoral artery, typically in the groin area. Using advanced imaging guidance, the catheter is navigated to the arteries surrounding the knee joint, specifically the geniculate arteries that supply the synovial membrane.

Once the target vessels are identified, small particles are injected through the catheter to block abnormal blood vessels that contribute to inflammation and pain. This embolization reduces blood flow to the inflamed synovium while maintaining adequate circulation to healthy tissues. The procedure typically takes 1-2 hours, and patients can usually return home the same day.

Clinical Evidence and Treatment Outcomes

Several clinical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of GAE for knee osteoarthritis. Research has shown significant improvements in

pain scores and functional outcomes following the procedure. A notable study published in the *Journal of Vascular and Interventional Radiology* reported that 70-80% of patients experienced meaningful pain reduction within the first month after treatment, with benefits lasting up to two years in many cases.

The procedure has shown particularly promising results for patients with moderate to severe knee OA who have not responded adequately to conservative treatments but may not be ready or suitable for knee replacement surgery. Importantly, GAE does not "burn any bridges" – patients can still undergo other treatments or surgery if needed in the future.

Advantages and Patient Selection

GAE offers several advantages over traditional surgical interventions:

- Minimally invasive nature with only a small puncture site
- Performed under local anesthesia
- Short recovery time with most patients returning to normal activities within days
- Preservation of native joint anatomy
- No bridges burned for future treatment options

However, not all patients with knee OA are ideal candidates for GAE. The best results are typically seen in patients who:

- Have moderate to severe knee OA with documented synovitis
- Experience pain despite conservative management
- Show evidence of inflammatory changes on imaging studies
- Have no severe mechanical deformity of the knee

Safety Profile and Considerations

The safety profile of GAE has been encouraging, with relatively few reported complications. Most side effects are minor and temporary, such as mild bruising at the puncture site or short-term post-procedure pain. However, as with any medical procedure, proper patient selection and careful technique are essential for optimal outcomes.

Future Perspectives and Research

While GAE shows promise, ongoing research continues to refine the technique and better understand its long-term effectiveness. Current studies are investigating optimal particle sizes for embolization, identifying the most reliable predictors of treatment success, and exploring potential applications for other joint conditions.

The development of more sophisticated imaging techniques and embolization materials may further improve the precision and effectiveness of the procedure. Additionally, researchers are studying whether combining GAE with other treatments might provide enhanced benefits for certain patient populations.

Conclusion

Geniculate artery embolization represents an important advancement in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis, offering a minimally invasive option that targets the underlying vascular pathology of the condition. While not a cure-all for every patient with knee OA, it provides a valuable alternative in the treatment arsenal, particularly for those seeking options between conservative management and joint replacement surgery. As research continues and techniques are refined, GAE may become an increasingly important tool in managing this common and debilitating condition.

It's no stretch to say that Russell Becker, DO, a fellow-trained vascular surgeon practicing at Vascular Center of Naples in Naples, Florida, gets into things for the long run. Dr. Becker, who runs marathons in his free time, has experience and interest in all areas of vascular and endovascular surgery, including treatment of conditions like carotid artery disease, hemodialysis access creation and maintenance, and diseases of the veins.



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THE POWER OF CONNECTION: FRIENDSHIPS FLOURISH AT THE CARLISLE NAPLES

By Jenny Bradley

Friendship knows no age, and for many seniors, retirement offers an unexpected opportunity to forge deep, meaningful connections. Whether over a shared hobby or a new class, the friendships that blossom in senior living communities can transform this stage of life into one rich with camaraderie and joy. These connections often bring a sense of belonging and purpose, enhancing emotional and physical well-being.

Friendships Are Easier to Build in a Retirement Community

One of the biggest benefits of living in a retirement community is how naturally friendships can develop. Retirement communities are designed for connection, unlike traditional neighborhoods, where schedules and lifestyles may differ. Residents frequently find themselves surrounded by people with similar interests, hobbies or life experiences. At The Carlisle Naples, an active retirement community, life enrichment programs such as book clubs, current event groups and crafting classes create opportunities to bond.

Dining together is also a cornerstone of social life. Thanks to The Carlisle Naples' open-seating concept for dining in the onsite restaurant, residents can sit with different neighbors each night. Shared meals provide an easy, enjoyable way to connect and can quickly turn strangers into lifelong friends.

A Supportive and Inclusive Environment

Beyond shared interests, retirement communities foster a culture of inclusion. New residents often find their neighbors are eager to welcome them and help them adjust. This sense of belonging is particularly valuable for those who may have recently relocated or lost a loved one, as it offers a built-in support network.

Many residents connect over similar backgrounds, whether they're from the same city or share a similar profession. At The Carlisle Naples, newcomers are also welcomed by a Hospitality Committee, with members visiting with their newest neighbors to help them get acclimated. Plus, the CARF-accredited community hosts monthly events, inviting prospective residents to sample the lifestyle and mingle with potential neighbors. This provides a wonderful opportunity to form friendships even before a move to the community!



Trying Something New Together

Friendships in retirement communities are not just about shared pasts—they're about creating new memories. With a calendar full of engaging programming and classes, there's always something to try. Residents might attend a painting workshop, learn a foreign language or join a walking group. At communities like The Carlisle Naples, residents benefit from a wealth of classes, events and gatherings tailored to residents' interests. For many, trying something new with a friend adds extra excitement and makes the experience even more rewarding.

Tips for Building Friendships at Any Age

Fostering connections can be simple with the right approach, even for those not living in a retirement community. Here are a few tips:

- 1. Be Open to New Experiences:** Attend local events or join a club that interests you. Shared activities create natural opportunities to meet people.
- 2. Reach Out:** Sometimes, all it takes to start a friendship is a warm smile or a simple hello.
- 3. Follow Up:** If you meet someone you connect with, make an effort to follow up, whether by inviting them for coffee or attending another event together.
- 4. Embrace Technology:** Social media and apps designed for seniors can help you connect with others in your area.

Whether in a community like The Carlisle Naples or elsewhere, meaningful connecting with others can lead to a richer, more fulfilling life.

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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The Challenges of Aging in Men and Women and How Functional Medicine Can Help Address Both

By Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

Aging is a natural part of life, yet it brings a host of physical, mental, and emotional challenges that can affect one's overall quality of life. Fortunately, functional medicine provides a holistic, patient-centered approach that can address these age-related issues in both men and women, helping to enhance their health and well-being in their later years.

Age-Related Challenges for Men

As men age, the most significant hormonal change they face is a gradual decline in testosterone levels, typically starting around the age of 50. This reduction in testosterone can lead to a variety of physical and emotional changes. Common symptoms associated with low testosterone include fatigue, loss of muscle mass, increased body fat, reduced libido, and diminished sexual function.

Testosterone levels are not the only factor affecting aging men. As they age, men also become more susceptible to certain chronic health conditions. Cardiovascular disease is a major concern, as the walls of blood vessels lose their elasticity over time, contributing to higher blood pressure and increasing the strain on the heart. Men are also at greater risk for conditions such as type 2 diabetes, erectile dysfunction, and prostate-related issues, such as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or prostate cancer, which can affect their overall health and quality of life.

Cognitive decline is another area of concern for aging men, although it may not be as widely discussed as other aspects of aging.

Age-Related Challenges for Women

Women face a different set of challenges as they age, with the most significant change occurring during the transition to menopause. Menopause typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, marking the end of a woman's reproductive years and the cessation of menstruation. This phase is characterized by a decrease in the production of estrogen and progesterone, leading to a variety of physical and emotional symptoms.

Hot flashes, night sweats, weight gain, and mood swings are common complaints during perimenopause and menopause. Women may also experience



vaginal dryness, which can impact sexual health and function. Another major concern is osteoporosis and osteoarthritis.

Cognitive decline is also a prominent issue for aging women, as are general mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression.

Like men, women also experience physical limitations as they age. Reduced muscle mass, joint stiffness, and diminished endurance can significantly impact daily functioning, making it harder to remain independent and active. Additionally, chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease affect women as they age.

The Role of Functional Medicine

Functional medicine offers a comprehensive approach to managing the challenges of aging by focusing on addressing the root causes of health problems rather than simply masking symptoms. This patient-centered approach is particularly beneficial for aging individuals, as it considers the complex interplay of genetics, environment, lifestyle, and emotional well-being. By focusing on prevention and individualized care, functional medicine helps promote healthier aging for both men and women.

One of the key elements of functional medicine is the belief that every individual is unique, and therefore, health interventions must be tailored to meet their specific needs. In the context of aging, functional medicine emphasizes the importance of understanding how various factors—such as hormonal

imbalances, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, chronic stress, and environmental toxins—can contribute to the aging process and age-related diseases.

For men, functional medicine practitioners often focus on balancing hormone levels, particularly testosterone. Since low testosterone can lead to symptoms such as fatigue, reduced muscle mass, and low libido, functional medicine approach may involve supplements, nutritional interventions, hormone replacement therapy, lifestyle changes, and stress management techniques. Through personalized nutrition plans, anti-inflammatory diets, exercise, and targeted supplements, men can improve heart health, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and maintain overall vitality as they age.

For women, functional medicine provides a holistic approach to managing the symptoms of menopause and promoting hormone balance. Through comprehensive testing, functional medicine practitioners can assess estrogen and progesterone levels and offer natural interventions, including supplement, dietary changes, and lifestyle modifications, or bioidentical hormone replacement therapy, Nutrient-dense diets, physical activity, stress management, and sleep optimization are all key components of functional medicine's approach.

Through this approach, aging individuals can feel empowered to take control of their health and well-being, ensuring that they live their later years to the fullest.



Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

The author of 'Diet Slave 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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Umbilical Stem Cell Therapy: A Revolutionary Approach to Joint Pain Relief

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

Millions of people worldwide suffer from chronic joint pain and degenerative conditions that significantly impact their quality of life. While traditional treatments often focus on managing symptoms, umbilical stem cell therapy has emerged as a promising regenerative medicine approach that could potentially offer long-lasting relief and healing. This innovative treatment harnesses the remarkable properties of stem cells derived from umbilical cord tissue to address joint pain and inflammation at their source.

Umbilical stem cells, also known as umbilical cord mesenchymal stem cells (UC-MSCs), are harvested from donated umbilical cords after healthy births. These cells possess unique characteristics that make them particularly valuable for therapeutic applications. Unlike embryonic stem cells, umbilical stem cells avoid ethical concerns while maintaining powerful regenerative capabilities. They are also more potent and versatile than adult stem cells, which typically decline in function as we age.

The therapeutic potential of UC-MSCs lies in their remarkable ability to perform multiple functions within the body. These cells can differentiate into various cell types, including cartilage, bone, and connective tissue cells. Additionally, they release powerful anti-inflammatory compounds and growth factors that promote healing and tissue regeneration. This dual action makes them particularly effective in treating joint conditions and chronic pain.

When administered for joint pain relief, umbilical stem cells work through several mechanisms. First, they can help repair damaged cartilage and other joint tissues by differentiating into the necessary cell types. Second, they reduce inflammation through the secretion of anti-inflammatory molecules, helping to break the cycle of chronic pain and further tissue damage. Third, they stimulate the body's natural healing processes by releasing growth factors that promote tissue repair and regeneration.

Clinical applications of umbilical stem cell therapy have shown promising results in treating various joint conditions, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, and sports-related injuries. Patients typically receive the treatment through targeted



injections directly into the affected joints or through intravenous administration. The procedure is minimally invasive and can be performed on an outpatient basis, with many patients reporting significant improvements in pain levels and joint function within weeks or months of treatment.

One of the key advantages of umbilical stem cell therapy is its safety profile. Since these cells are immunologically privileged, meaning they rarely trigger an immune response, the risk of rejection is minimal. Furthermore, the cells undergo rigorous screening and processing to ensure their safety and quality before use. This makes them a viable option for patients who may not be suitable candidates for more invasive surgical procedures.

Research continues to demonstrate the effectiveness of umbilical stem cell therapy for joint pain relief. Studies have shown improvements in pain scores, joint function, and quality of life measures among treated patients. For example, a recent clinical trial focusing on knee osteoarthritis reported that patients receiving umbilical stem cell injections experienced significant pain reduction and improved mobility compared to those receiving conventional treatments.

Despite the promising results, it's important to note that umbilical stem cell therapy is still an evolving field. While many patients experience significant benefits, individual results can vary. Factors such as the severity of the condition, the patient's overall health, and the specific protocol used can all influence treatment outcomes. Additionally, multiple treatments may be necessary to achieve optimal results, and the long-term durability of the effects is still being studied.

The future of umbilical stem cell therapy looks bright, with ongoing research exploring new applications and refinements to treatment protocols. Scientists are investigating ways to enhance the therapeutic potential of these cells through various processing techniques and combination therapies. As our understanding of stem cell biology continues to advance, we may discover even more effective ways to harness their healing potential for joint pain relief.

For those considering umbilical stem cell therapy, it's essential to consult with qualified healthcare providers who specialize in regenerative medicine. These professionals can evaluate individual cases and determine whether stem cell therapy is an appropriate treatment option. They can also provide guidance on what to expect during treatment and help monitor progress throughout the healing process.

As we continue to witness advances in regenerative medicine, umbilical stem cell therapy represents a promising frontier in the treatment of joint pain and related conditions. With its unique combination of safety, effectiveness, and regenerative potential, this innovative therapy offers hope to those seeking alternatives to traditional pain management approaches.

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SHOW YOUR EYES SOME LOVE: ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR MAINTAINING HEALTHY VISION

In our digital age, our eyes work harder than ever before. From smartphones to computer screens, our visual system faces unprecedented challenges. Yet, many of us take our eye health for granted until problems arise. Here's how you can protect and nurture your precious vision with some practical eye care tips.

Practice the 20-20-20 Rule

Digital eye strain is a growing concern, but there's a simple solution: the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and look at something 20 feet away. This simple habit helps reduce eye fatigue and prevents your eye muscles from becoming locked in a fixed position. Set a reminder if needed – your eyes will thank you.

Optimize Your Work Environment

Proper lighting and screen positioning make a significant difference. Position your computer screen at arm's length and slightly below eye level. Reduce glare by adjusting room lighting and consider using an anti-glare screen protector. If possible, choose natural lighting over harsh fluorescent lights, which can contribute to eye strain.

Protect Against UV Radiation

Sun damage isn't just bad for your skin – it can harm your eyes too. Invest in quality sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays, and wear them year-round, not just in summer. When choosing sunglasses, look for labels indicating "100% UV protection" or "UV400." Don't forget to wear them even on cloudy days, as UV rays can penetrate cloud cover.

Nourish Your Eyes Through Diet

Your diet plays a crucial role in maintaining eye health. Include foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, zinc, and vitamins C and E. Think leafy greens, fatty fish, eggs, nuts, and colorful fruits and vegetables. These nutrients help prevent age-related vision problems and maintain overall eye health.

Stay Hydrated and Well-Rested

Proper hydration helps maintain the natural lubrication of your eyes. When you're dehydrated, your eyes can become dry and irritated. Additionally, getting adequate sleep allows your eyes to rest and repair themselves. Lack of sleep can lead to eye strain, twitching, and even temporary vision problems.



Regular Eye Examinations Matter

Don't wait for vision problems to schedule an eye exam. Regular check-ups can detect potential issues before they become serious. Adults should have comprehensive eye exams at least every two years, while those with existing conditions or over 60 should visit annually or as recommended by their eye care professional.

Exercise Your Eyes

Just like other muscles, your eyes benefit from exercise. Try focusing exercises: hold a pen at arm's length, focus on it, then slowly bring it closer to your nose while maintaining focus. Another simple exercise is to roll your eyes in circles occasionally throughout the day to help relieve tension.

Consider Blue Light Protection

While research is ongoing about blue light's long-term effects, many find that blue light filtering glasses or screen settings help reduce eye fatigue during screen time. If you spend many hours in front of digital devices, this extra protection might be worth considering.

Remember, your eyes are irreplaceable. These simple yet effective habits can help maintain your vision health for years to come. By incorporating these practices into your daily routine, you're investing in one of your most valuable assets – your sight. Start showing your eyes some love today, and they'll serve you well throughout your lifetime.



Hunter Vittone, OD Optometric Physician

Dr. Hunter Vittone is an optometrist at Center For Sight. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from The Pennsylvania State University in State College, PA, and his Doctor of Optometry degree from Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry in Davie, FL.

Prior to joining Center For Sight, Dr. Vittone completed two optometric externships and earned certifications in CooperVision MiSight Orthokeratology, Paragon CRT Orthokeratology and MoonLens Orthokeratology.

At Center For Sight, Dr. Vittone provides comprehensive eye exams, ocular disease management, glaucoma treatment, dry eye care, as well as family eye care and contact lens fittings. He also provides pre- and post-operative care.

He is a member of the American Optometric Association and the Nova Optometry Practice Management Association.

In his spare time, Dr. Vittone enjoys golfing, fishing, tennis, and taking ski trips during the winter.

Dr. Vittone will be seeing patients in our Naples, FL office.



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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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Hammertoes?

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

Hammertoes are a common foot deformity that can cause significant discomfort and affect your daily activities. This progressive condition occurs when there's an imbalance in the muscles, tendons, or ligaments that normally hold the toe straight, causing one or more toes to bend or curl downward instead of pointing forward. While initially flexible, hammertoes can become rigid and permanent without proper intervention, making early treatment by a qualified board certified podiatrist essential.

Understanding the Causes

Several factors can contribute to the development of hammertoes. Wearing ill-fitting shoes, particularly those with a tight toe box or high heels, is a leading cause as these shoes force toes into a cramped, bent position. Genetic predisposition, trauma to the toe, and certain medical conditions like arthritis or diabetes can also increase the risk. Additionally, muscle imbalances or neurological conditions affecting foot mechanics may lead to hammertoe formation.

Recognizing the Symptoms

The most obvious sign of a hammertoe is the abnormal bend in the affected toe's middle joint, typically occurring in the second, third, or fourth toes. Patients often experience pain when wearing shoes, as the raised portion of the toe rubs against footwear. Corns and calluses frequently develop on the top of the middle joint or the tip of the toe due to friction. Some people may also experience inflammation, redness, and difficulty walking or balancing.

Conservative Treatment Approaches

When patients first consult a board certified podiatrist about hammertoes, treatment typically begins with conservative measures, especially if the toe is still flexible. Your board certified podiatrist may recommend:

Footwear Modifications: The first step often involves switching to shoes with a wider, deeper toe box to accommodate the toe deformity and prevent further irritation. Your board certified podiatrist can provide specific shoe recommendations based on your foot structure and severity of the condition.

Padding and Orthotic Devices: Custom orthotic devices can help redistribute pressure and improve foot function. Padding and cushioning products can protect the affected area from friction and pressure, reducing pain and preventing the formation of corns and calluses.

Toe Exercises: Specific stretching and strengthening exercises can help maintain toe flexibility and prevent the condition from worsening. These might include picking up marbles with your toes or using your hands to manually stretch the affected digits.

Medication: Anti-inflammatory medications may be prescribed to reduce pain and swelling associated with hammertoes.

Surgical Intervention

When conservative treatments fail to provide relief, or if the hammertoe has become rigid, surgical intervention may be necessary. Your board certified podiatrist will determine the most appropriate surgical procedure based on several factors, including:

- The flexibility of the affected toe
- The presence of other foot deformities
- Your age and overall health
- Activity level and lifestyle requirements

Common surgical procedures for hammertoes include tendon transfers, joint resection, or fusion. These procedures aim to realign the toe and restore normal function. Recovery typically involves wearing a special post-operative shoe and following a structured rehabilitation program.

Prevention and Long-term Management

Preventing hammertoe progression requires ongoing attention to foot health. Your board certified podiatrist will likely recommend:

- Regular foot examinations to monitor any changes in toe position or flexibility
- Proper shoe selection and fit
- Continued use of prescribed orthotic devices
- Maintenance exercises to preserve toe flexibility



Working closely with your board certified podiatrist is crucial for successful management of hammertoes. They can provide regular assessments, adjust treatment plans as needed, and offer guidance on preventing recurrence or progression of the condition.

Early intervention is key to preventing permanent deformity and avoiding surgical intervention. If you notice signs of hammertoe development, consulting a board certified podiatrist promptly can help ensure the best possible outcome through appropriate treatment and management strategies tailored to your specific needs.

Collier Podiatry

It's important to be evaluated by a board certified podiatrist if you're experiencing any type of foot pain. At Collier Podiatry, Dr. Michael Petrocelli has been practicing podiatric medicine for well over 30 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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THE PROMISING ROLE OF PRP IN UROGYNECOLOGY

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

Urogynecology and Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery

Urogynecology is a rapidly evolving specialty focused on addressing complex conditions of the pelvic floor. At the Florida Bladder Institute, we strive to provide advanced, evidence-based care that prioritizes patient outcomes and quality of life. Among the innovative treatments we offer is **Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) therapy**—a novel approach that holds significant promise for a variety of urogynecologic conditions.

What Is PRP?

PRP is derived from your own blood, which is processed to concentrate platelets and growth factors. These components play a critical role in healing and tissue regeneration. Originally utilized in orthopedics to enhance recovery, PRP has now found applications in urogynecology, demonstrating its potential in managing conditions like **stress urinary incontinence (SUI)**, **interstitial cystitis (IC)**, **fistulas**, and **lichen sclerosis**.

How PRP Works

The process begins with a simple blood draw performed in our office. Blood is processed using proprietary technology to extract a concentrated solution of platelets. This PRP solution is then injected or instilled into the targeted tissue to promote healing, reduce inflammation, and encourage regeneration. Because PRP is autologous—derived from your own body—the risk of adverse reactions is minimal.

Current and Emerging Applications

PRP therapy has shown promise in addressing various urogynecologic conditions, including:

- **Stress Urinary Incontinence (SUI):** Particularly in cases caused by intrinsic sphincter deficiency (ISD), PRP injections can strengthen and regenerate periurethral tissues, potentially reducing the need for surgical intervention.
- **Interstitial Cystitis (IC):** PRP may alleviate pain and inflammation when instilled into the bladder or injected into the bladder wall, often in conjunction with other treatments.

- **Lichen Sclerosis:** Emerging studies suggest PRP can improve symptoms and promote healing in affected areas.
- **Fistulas:** PRP can be used preoperatively to enhance healing or injected directly into the fistula site to promote closure, potentially avoiding surgery for smaller fistulas.

Evidence Supporting PRP in Urogynecology

While more research is needed to establish long-term efficacy, the current literature highlights the benefits of PRP therapy:

- **Stress Urinary Incontinence (SUI):** Studies show that PRP injections significantly improve symptoms, especially when combined with pelvic floor muscle therapy. Results often extend up to 12 months.
- **Interstitial Cystitis (IC):** Meta-analyses reveal reduced pain scores in patients receiving intravesical PRP instillations. Improvement is typically noted after a series of monthly treatments.
- **Fistulas:** Research suggests PRP enhances healing and reduces recurrence rates, particularly when used in combination with surgical repair.

The Procedure: What to Expect

PRP therapy is a straightforward process that can be completed in our office. Here's what you can expect:

- 1. Preparation:** The treatment area, such as the periurethral or vaginal tissues, is prepped for injection.
- 2. Injection:** PRP is injected into targeted areas using precise techniques tailored to the condition being treated. For example:
 - In SUI, PRP is injected circumferentially into periurethral tissues.
 - For IC, PRP may be instilled into the bladder or injected into the bladder wall.
 - In fistulas, PRP can be administered preoperatively or directly into the site of the fistula.
- 3. Post-Treatment Care:** Patients can return to normal activities immediately. Most individuals notice improvement within 4–6 weeks, though multiple sessions may be required for optimal results.

Costs and Insurance

As PRP is still considered experimental by insurance providers, including Medicare, patients are responsible for the cost of treatment. Pricing for Arthrex PRP treatment at the Florida Bladder Institute ranges from \$800-\$1200.

While insurance coverage is not yet available, we anticipate this may change as demand grows and additional research substantiates PRP's efficacy.

A Vision for the Future

At the Florida Bladder Institute, we are committed to staying at the forefront of urogynecologic innovation. PRP represents a significant step forward in the management of conditions that can profoundly impact a patient's quality of life. Though ongoing research is needed, early results are encouraging, and we are proud to offer this cutting-edge therapy to our patients today.

If you're interested in learning more about PRP therapy and how it could benefit you, schedule a consultation with our team. Together, we can explore personalized treatment options to address your needs.

References and Further Reading

For patients interested in the research behind PRP therapy, we can provide a detailed list of studies supporting its use in urogynecology. Ask our team for the "PRP References for FBI" handout.



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REVOLUTIONIZING PAIN RELIEF:

Advanced Care with Dr. Michael Shaffer

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

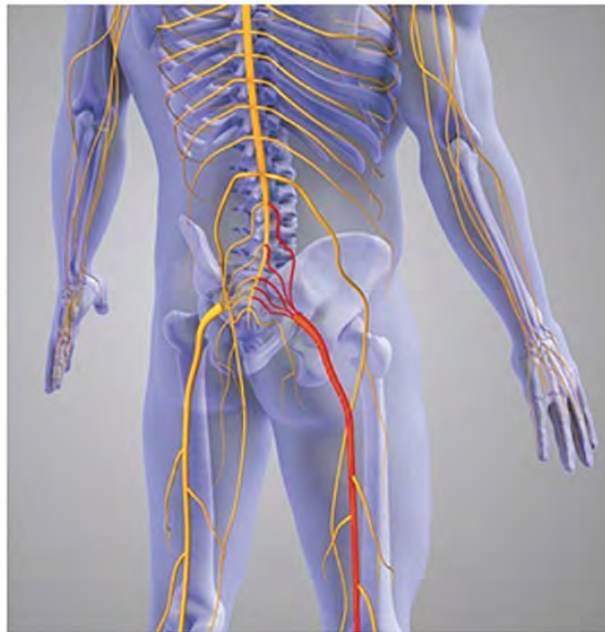
As of this month, Dr. Shaffer has moved to a new location, 671 Goodlette Road, Unit 160, Naples, FL 34102. The practice remains committed to providing cutting-edge, non-surgical solutions for pain relief and improved mobility. "No matter how high-tech the future becomes," Dr. Shaffer shares, "nothing will ever surpass hands-on physician care. Our new location will reflect a highly professional atmosphere as well as the practice continuing to adhere to the clinical expertise we have been dedicated to over the years. We are proudly celebrating 44 years of serving our amazing community, providing life changing care and pain-relieving therapies."

One of the cornerstone therapies offered is **MLS Laser Therapy**, a state-of-the-art, FDA-cleared treatment designed to alleviate pain and inflammation without the need for surgery or drugs. The innovative M7 MLS Medical Therapy Laser is the first of its kind in Collier County, delivering rapid results with no known side effects. This therapy has been transformative for patients suffering from conditions such as:

- Sciatica
- Neck and back injuries
- Spinal stenosis
- Herniated discs
- Arthritis and bursitis
- Sports injuries
- Knee pain
- Neuropathy
- Plantar fasciitis

What Makes MLS Laser Therapy Unique? The therapy utilizes concentrated light energy to stimulate the body's natural healing processes. By targeting specific wavelengths and employing a patented delivery system, MLS Laser Therapy effectively reduces pain, inflammation, and recovery times. Most patients experience significant improvement after just a few sessions, with 85-90% reporting relief from musculoskeletal pain. Conditions such as arthritis, herniated discs, and spinal stenosis can be significantly alleviated, often enabling patients to delay or cancel surgical procedures.

Unlike many other treatments, MLS Laser Therapy is painless. While some patients may feel a mild warming sensation during the session, the process is typically well-tolerated, making it suitable for individuals of all ages.



For those with degenerative conditions like arthritis, ongoing treatments every 4-6 weeks can help manage inflammation and maintain mobility. Patients often find that the improved comfort enables them to lead more active, fulfilling lives.

Comprehensive Care for Sciatica

Did you know that approximately 40% of people will experience sciatica during their lifetime? This prevalent condition, clinically known as lumbar radiculopathy, manifests as low back pain radiating down the leg. Common causes include herniated discs, spinal stenosis, degenerative disc disease, and spondylolisthesis. Symptoms often include numbness, tingling, and muscle weakness in the affected leg.

To diagnose sciatica, imaging techniques such as X-rays or MRIs are employed to identify the underlying issue. Dr. Shaffer emphasizes personalized treatment plans, combining advanced therapies like spinal decompression and MLS Laser Therapy for optimal results.

Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression

Spinal decompression is a highly effective treatment for conditions like sciatica, herniated discs, and degenerative disc disease. This innovative, non-invasive approach relieves pressure on spinal nerves by creating negative pressure within the discs. This process promotes the reabsorption of disc material, enhances circulation, and supports natural healing.

Patients undergoing spinal decompression often report feeling a gentle stretching sensation, with sessions designed for maximum comfort. The therapy offers numerous benefits, including:

- Targeted relief for affected spinal segments
- Promotion of nutrient-rich blood flow to damaged discs
- A drug-free alternative for pain management

When combined with MLS Laser Therapy, spinal decompression delivers superior outcomes by addressing both inflammation and structural issues. This synergistic approach ensures faster recovery and long-lasting pain relief.

Solutions for Sciatica and Beyond

The practice focuses on empowering patients to regain control of their lives through evidence-based, non-surgical treatments. Dr. Shaffer's decades of experience and commitment to innovative care have made the practice a trusted destination for pain relief in Naples.

A Legacy of Excellence

For 44 years, Dr. Michael Shaffer and his wife, Kay, who is the office manager, have been dedicated to improving the health and well-being of their community. Now located at 671 Goodlette Road, Unit 160, Naples, FL 34102, Dr. Shaffer invites you to explore the latest advancements in pain management and discover a path to a pain-free life. Schedule your consultation today to experience the difference firsthand.



Rely on Clinical Expertise and Experience

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February: A Month of Love and Prevention – Encourage Those You Love to Get Screened for Cancer

By Mandi Reid, MSN, APRN, ACNP-BC, Nurse Practitioner at Naples Cancer Advisors

February is often associated with love, from heart-felt Valentine's cards to meaningful gestures that show care and appreciation. But what if this year, you showed your love in a different way—by encouraging the people you care about most to prioritize their health? Cancer prevention and early detection can make a life-saving difference. While it's not always easy to bring up health topics, reminding your loved ones to get their cancer screenings is an act of love that could save their lives.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force provides clear recommendations for cancer screenings, offering guidance on when and how often individuals should be checked. By staying informed and proactive, you can help ensure the people you care about catch potential issues early—when treatment is most effective. Here's a detailed guide to key cancer screenings for men and women. Consider printing this and keeping it on your refrigerator to make it easy for everyone in your household to stay on track.

Recommended Cancer Screenings for Women

1. Breast Cancer:

- Women aged 50 to 74: Mammograms every 2 years are recommended.
- Women aged 40 to 49: Mammogram timing should be based on personal risk factors and discussed with a healthcare provider.

2. Cervical Cancer:

- Women aged 21 to 29: Pap smear every 3 years.
- Women aged 30 to 65: Pap smear every 3 years or combined Pap smear and HPV testing every 5 years.

3. Colorectal Cancer:

- Begin screening at age 45. Options include colonoscopy every 10 years or annual stool-based tests.

4. Lung Cancer (for smokers and former smokers):

- Women aged 50 to 80 with a 20-pack-year smoking history should have an annual low-dose CT scan if they smoke or have quit within the past 15 years.

5. Skin Cancer:

- Perform monthly self-checks for unusual moles or lesions, and schedule full-body exams with a dermatologist if you're at higher risk.

Recommended Cancer Screenings for Men

1. Prostate Cancer:

- Men aged 50 to 69 should discuss PSA testing with their healthcare provider to weigh the benefits and risks.
- African-American men and those with a family history may need to start screening earlier.

2. Colorectal Cancer:

- Screening should begin at age 45. Options include colonoscopy every 10 years or annual stool-based tests.

3. Lung Cancer (for smokers and former smokers):

- Same guidelines as for women: Annual low-dose CT scans are recommended for adults aged 50 to 80 with a 20-pack-year smoking history.

4. Skin Cancer:

- Men should perform monthly self-checks for new or changing moles and schedule regular skin exams if they have risk factors such as fair skin or excessive sun exposure.

5. Testicular Cancer:

- While routine screenings are not generally recommended, younger men are encouraged to perform monthly self-exams to check for lumps or changes.

Making Screenings a Priority

Discussing cancer screenings may not seem romantic, but it's one of the most loving things you can do. Far too many cancers are diagnosed late, often because people put off screenings or don't realize their risk factors. By starting the conversation with your loved ones, you might be giving them the nudge they need to schedule that overdue mammogram or colonoscopy.

Better yet, turn it into a family affair. You can encourage your spouse, parents, siblings, or friends to schedule their screenings together. It's also a great opportunity to reflect on your own health—are you up to date on your screenings?

A Lifesaving Gift of Love

Cancer screenings are about more than prevention—they're about early detection, which increases the likelihood of successful treatment. According to the American Cancer Society, regular screenings have significantly reduced death rates for cancers like cervical, breast, and colorectal. For lung cancer, early detection through low-dose CT scans can improve survival rates dramatically, especially for high-risk individuals.

Think of screenings as a gift you give not only to yourself but to your loved ones. The earlier cancer is caught, the more treatment options are available, and the better the chances of a positive outcome.

At Naples Cancer Advisors, we believe everyone deserves access to life-saving cancer care and prevention resources. We're here to help guide you and your loved ones through the process, from providing second opinions to connecting you with specialists.

About Amanda (Mandi) Reid, MSN, APRN, ACNP-BC
Mandi is a nurse practitioner at Naples Cancer Advisors, where she is dedicated to empowering patients with the knowledge and resources they need to prevent and detect cancer early. As a healthcare professional since 1997, Mandi's varied roles and experience have given her a unique perspective on providing for the care needs of her patients. Her prior experience includes roles such as phlebotomist, lab assistant, nursing assistant, critical care technician, registered nurse, and nurse practitioner; each lending itself to her broad knowledge base and clinical acumen.

Mandi earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from Lander University in Greenwood, South Carolina in 2000. While working as an intensive care RN in South Carolina and then Central Florida, her love of patient care and pursuit of higher education led her to earn a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) from the University of South Alabama in 2008, achieving board certification as an Acute Care Nurse Practitioner shortly after graduation.

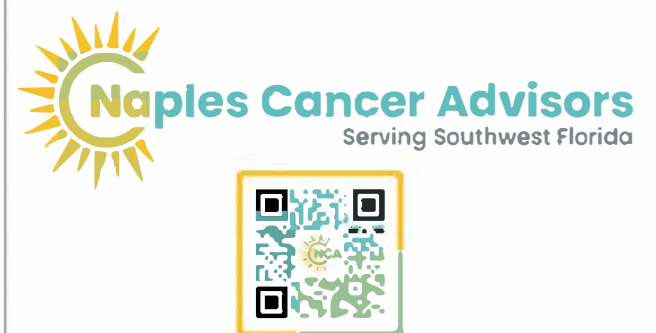
Mandi's desire to make a difference in the lives of cancer patients comes from personal experience. One of the most influential women in her life, Mandi's grandmother, was a breast cancer survivor. After living many years as a survivor, she was diagnosed with and passed due to glioblastoma multiforme, a fast growing and aggressive brain tumor. From this experience, Mandi found her purpose and passion, beginning her journey in the specialty practice of oncology when she moved to Naples, Florida in 2011.

Mandi has continued to make oncology her life's work with the goal of giving every patient the kind of care she would want her own family to receive (including hugs!). With experience in both acute care (hospital) and office practice settings, she brings a multifaceted, compassionate and holistic approach to care while providing education and options to ensure patients meet their individual goals and honoring their journey.

Take Action Today

This February, show your love by encouraging someone you care about to schedule a cancer screening. If you're unsure where to start, Naples Cancer Advisors is here to help. Our team provides personalized support and guidance, including referrals, second opinions, and navigation through screening options—all at no cost to patients.

Call us at 239-846-2273 (CARE) to take the first step toward a healthier future for yourself and your loved ones. Love isn't just about words—it's about taking action to ensure a long, healthy life for those who matter most.



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Compression Fractures and Kyphoplasty: An Overview of Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

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

Compression fractures occur in the vertebrae, often caused by osteoporosis, trauma, or other bone-weakening conditions. These fractures can result in pain, loss of height, and decreased mobility. While conservative treatments like pain management and physical therapy are commonly used, some individuals benefit from kyphoplasty, a minimally invasive procedure designed to treat compression fractures. This article discusses the causes, symptoms, and treatment of compression fractures, focusing on kyphoplasty.

What is a Compression Fracture?

A compression fracture occurs when one or more vertebrae collapse, usually due to weakened bone strength. The vertebrae become compressed or "crushed," causing deformities in the spinal column. These fractures most often affect the thoracic spine (middle back) but can also occur in the lumbar spine (lower back).

Osteoporosis, which weakens bones and makes them more prone to fractures, is the most common cause of compression fractures. In some cases, trauma such as a fall or car accident may cause a compression fracture in people without osteoporosis.

Causes of Compression Fractures

- **Osteoporosis:** The most common cause, especially in postmenopausal women, older adults, and those with a family history of the disease. Weakened bones are more susceptible to fractures from everyday activities.
- **Trauma:** Falls, car accidents, and sports injuries can cause compression fractures, even in individuals without osteoporosis, especially when the trauma is severe.
- **Cancer:** Certain cancers, such as metastatic cancer and multiple myeloma, can weaken the bones and lead to fractures.
- **Corticosteroids:** Long-term use of corticosteroids for conditions like arthritis and asthma can decrease bone density, increasing fracture risk.
- **Other conditions:** Paget's disease, which causes abnormal bone growth, or vertebral infections (osteomyelitis) can also weaken the vertebrae.

Symptoms of Compression Fractures

The symptoms vary depending on the severity and location of the fracture:

- **Back pain:** Sudden, severe pain, often localized in the back, worsens with movement, sitting, or standing.
- **Loss of height:** Recurrent fractures can cause noticeable height loss.
- **Spinal deformity:** Severe fractures can result in kyphosis, or a hunched back.
- **Pain radiating to other areas:** Pain may spread to the chest, abdomen, or legs.
- **Difficulty moving:** Patients may experience difficulty bending, twisting, or walking, and in severe cases, weakness or numbness in the lower extremities.

Treatment Options for Compression Fractures

Initial treatment typically involves conservative approaches:

- **Pain management:** NSAIDs, opioids, or muscle relaxants may be used to alleviate pain.
- **Bracing:** A back brace can help stabilize the spine and reduce pain.
- **Physical therapy:** Exercises to improve posture, flexibility, and strength support the spine.
- **Supplements:** Calcium and vitamin D help improve bone density and prevent further fractures.
- **Bisphosphonates:** Medications that slow bone loss in individuals with osteoporosis.

If conservative treatments fail or the fracture is severe, surgery may be necessary, such as kyphoplasty.

What is Kyphoplasty?

Kyphoplasty is a minimally invasive procedure used to treat vertebral compression fractures caused by osteoporosis, cancer, or trauma. It aims to reduce pain, restore vertebral height, and improve spinal alignment.

Procedure Overview: Kyphoplasty is performed under local anesthesia with the patient lying on their stomach. Steps include:

1. **Needle insertion:** A needle is inserted into the fractured vertebra through a small incision, using X-ray guidance for accuracy.

2. **Balloon inflation:** A balloon is inserted through the needle into the vertebra and inflated to restore the vertebra's height and shape, creating a cavity.

3. **Bone cement injection:** Once the vertebra is reshaped, bone cement (polymethylmethacrylate or PMMA) is injected into the cavity, stabilizing the fracture.

4. **Recovery:** The patient is monitored briefly and can usually go home the same day, with minimal recovery time. Many patients experience significant pain relief within days.

Benefits of Kyphoplasty

- **Pain relief:** Kyphoplasty can provide near-immediate relief for many patients experiencing chronic back pain due to compression fractures.
- **Restoration of vertebral height:** The procedure may restore the vertebra's height and improve spinal alignment, reducing deformity.
- **Minimally invasive:** With small incisions, kyphoplasty is less invasive than traditional surgery, leading to faster recovery and fewer complications.
- **Improved mobility:** Reducing pain and stabilizing the spine helps patients regain mobility and independence.

Risks and Considerations

Although kyphoplasty is generally safe, it carries some risks, including infection, bleeding, cement leakage, and nerve damage. However, complications are rare, and the procedure is usually well-tolerated.

Conclusion: Compression fractures are common, especially in individuals with weakened bones from osteoporosis or other conditions. Kyphoplasty offers an effective, minimally invasive treatment for those whose symptoms do not improve with conservative measures. While it may not be suitable for everyone, kyphoplasty can provide significant pain relief and improved quality of life for patients with severe compression fractures.



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Heart Health Awareness Month: The Link Between Cardiovascular Health and Hearing Loss

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

February is Heart Health Awareness Month, a time dedicated to highlighting the importance of cardiovascular health. While many focus on diet, exercise, and blood pressure management, recent research suggests that heart health also plays a crucial role in hearing. The connection between cardiovascular conditions and hearing loss is becoming clearer, and understanding this relationship is vital for overall well-being.

The Cardiovascular-Hearing Connection

The cardiovascular system, including the heart and blood vessels, is responsible for delivering oxygen and nutrients throughout the body, including to the inner ear. The cochlea, the part of the ear that processes sound, relies on a consistent blood supply to function. When cardiovascular health deteriorates, the blood flow to the inner ear can be compromised, leading to hearing loss.

Several cardiovascular conditions, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, are linked to an increased risk of hearing loss. A study published in *The Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that people with heart disease, particularly those with high blood pressure, are more likely to experience hearing loss. This is thought to be due to the damage hypertension causes to blood vessels, including those that supply the cochlea.

How High Blood Pressure Affects Hearing

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is one of the most common cardiovascular conditions worldwide. It occurs when blood pressure is consistently high, putting strain on the heart and blood vessels. Over time, hypertension can damage the blood vessels, including those that supply the inner ear, which may lead to hearing loss.

The cochlea is highly sensitive to changes in blood flow. When blood vessels narrow due to hypertension, the cochlea can be deprived of essential oxygen and nutrients, resulting in damage to the hair cells responsible for detecting sound. This leads to sensorineural hearing loss, which is typically permanent.

Cholesterol and Hearing Loss

Cholesterol, particularly high levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or "bad" cholesterol, is another key factor in cardiovascular health that can affect hearing.

High cholesterol levels contribute to plaque buildup in the arteries, which restricts blood flow throughout the body, including the ears.

A study by the *American Heart Association* found that individuals with high cholesterol levels were more likely to develop hearing loss. Researchers suggest that poor circulation, due to plaque buildup, may affect the cochlea's ability to function properly. Additionally, high cholesterol can reduce the elasticity of blood vessels, further hindering circulation to the inner ear.

Diabetes and Hearing Loss

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects both cardiovascular health and hearing. People with diabetes are more likely to develop cardiovascular diseases, such as high blood pressure and heart disease, which can, in turn, damage the blood vessels in the inner ear.

High blood sugar levels associated with diabetes can damage the blood vessels, including those supplying the cochlea, leading to hearing impairment. Studies show that people with diabetes are twice as likely to experience hearing loss compared to those without the condition. Managing blood sugar levels effectively is crucial in preventing damage to the inner ear and preserving hearing.

Protecting Your Heart and Ears

Given the link between cardiovascular health and hearing loss, protecting both your heart and hearing is essential. Here are some strategies to maintain optimal health:

- 1. Maintain a Heart-Healthy Diet:** Eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats can help manage cholesterol and blood pressure. Avoiding excessive salt and processed foods can also reduce cardiovascular risk.

- 2. Exercise Regularly:** Regular physical activity improves circulation, lowers blood pressure, and supports heart health. Exercise also helps manage weight, which can reduce the risk of developing diabetes and other cardiovascular conditions.

- 3. Control Blood Pressure and Cholesterol:** If you have high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol, work with your healthcare provider to manage these conditions. Medications, along with lifestyle changes, can help protect both your heart and ears.

- 4. Monitor Blood Sugar Levels:** If you have diabetes, keeping your blood sugar levels in check is crucial. Proper diabetes management can help prevent damage to the blood vessels in the inner ear.

- 5. Get Regular Hearing Checkups:** Regular hearing screenings are essential, especially for those with cardiovascular risk factors. Early detection of hearing loss can help ensure timely intervention and prevent further deterioration.

Conclusion

Heart Health Awareness Month is a reminder of the importance of cardiovascular health in overall well-being. The connection between heart health and hearing loss is strong, and maintaining a healthy heart is crucial for protecting your hearing. By managing blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels, and getting regular hearing checkups, you can safeguard both your heart and ears, ensuring better health for years to come.

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What is Rhinitis?

An In-Depth Look at This Common Nasal Condition

Rhinitis is an incredibly prevalent condition, impacting over 20 million adults and 7 million children in the United States annually. Despite its widespread nature, many people remain unfamiliar with this nasal nuisance. So, what exactly is rhinitis?

At its core, rhinitis refers to inflammation of the nasal passages and mucous membranes. While often mistaken for sinusitis, the majority of presumed "sinus" issues are actually cases of chronic rhinitis. Recognizing this key distinction is critical for proper diagnosis and treatment.

The Hallmark Symptoms

The telltale signs of rhinitis include nasal congestion, difficulty breathing through the nose, frequent sneezing, runny nose, post-nasal drip, itchy nose and eyes, and headaches. These bothersome symptoms arise when the sensitive nasal lining becomes inflamed and swollen.

Under normal circumstances, the nasal mucous membranes act as a filter, trapping dust, pollen, bacteria, and other airborne particles in a thin mucus layer. Tiny hair-like projections called cilia then sweep this debris down the throat to be expelled from the body. However, when irritated, these membranes react by producing excess mucus, swelling up, and obstructing airflow - giving rise to the characteristic rhinitis symptoms.

While rhinitis is typically not a serious condition, its effects can significantly disrupt daily activities like sleeping, exercising, and concentrating.

Two Main Types

Rhinitis can be classified into two overarching categories: acute and chronic. Acute cases are short-lived, resolving within just a few days for most people. In contrast, chronic rhinitis lingers for weeks or months at a time, often recurring repeatedly.

Allergic Rhinitis: The Usual Culprit

In the vast majority of cases, rhinitis stems from an allergic reaction. When the immune system mistakenly identifies a harmless substance (known as an allergen) as a threat, it kicks into overdrive. This prompts the production of antibodies called Immunoglobulin E (IgE) to neutralize the perceived danger.

However, this process also triggers the release of inflammatory chemicals like histamine, which then cause the swelling and irritation characteristic of allergic rhinitis. Common allergens include pollen, dust, dander, mold, certain foods, and more.

Allergic rhinitis can be further divided into seasonal and perennial categories. Seasonal cases are caused by allergens present during specific times of year, such as spring tree pollen. Perennial rhinitis, on the other hand, persists year-round due to ongoing exposure to triggers like dust mites or pet dander.

The Diagnostic Process

If you visit an ENT (ear, nose, and throat) specialist with suspected rhinitis, they will gather detailed information about your symptoms, their onset and progression, potential triggers, prior treatments or testing, medical history, and more.

The physician will then carefully examine the interior of your nasal passages, evaluating the condition of the mucous membranes, assessing mucus color and amount, and checking for any abnormalities like polyps or a deviated septum that could contribute to obstruction.

Depending on the exam findings, additional diagnostic tests may be recommended, such as allergy testing, pulmonary function tests, imaging studies like CT scans or X-rays, or laboratory analysis. Many of these can be conveniently performed in the ENT clinic.

Once a rhinitis diagnosis is confirmed, your doctor will develop a personalized treatment strategy tailored to your specific needs, symptoms, and triggers.

Treating the Nuisance

For cases of mild allergic rhinitis, your treatment plan may start with environmental control measures, nasal saline irrigation, antihistamines, or corticosteroid nasal sprays to reduce inflammation.

If these initial steps prove insufficient, your ENT may recommend additional interventions like decongestants (for short-term use), turbinoplasty to reduce obstructive nasal tissue, or minimally invasive procedures like balloon sinuplasty to improve sinus drainage.

For severe, persistent allergic rhinitis, immunotherapy remains the most effective long-term solution. Through a course of allergy shots or sublingual (under-the-tongue) therapy, your immune system can be gradually desensitized to your specific triggers over time.

In some cases, surgical procedures like rhinoplasty or septoplasty may be considered to correct structural nasal abnormalities that exacerbate symptoms.

No matter the rhinitis type or severity, an individualized multimodal treatment plan is key to achieving lasting relief and an improved quality of life.

By combining patient education, environmental control strategies, medical management, and specialized ENT services, the experts can tackle even the most stubborn cases of this nasal nuisance. Don't let rhinitis disrupt your daily routine - seek expert care to overcome those congested, drippy, sneezy days for good.



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

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



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



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

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The Rejuvenating Power of Ozone Therapy: A Multi-Faceted Approach to Health and Wellness

In the evolving landscape of modern healthcare, innovative treatments are emerging that offer new hope for individuals seeking optimal health and immune support. Ozone therapy stands at the forefront of these groundbreaking approaches, presenting a sophisticated method of enhancing immune response, promoting cellular healing, and improving overall wellness.

Understanding Ozone Therapy's Comprehensive Benefits

Ozone therapy offers a unique and promising therapeutic approach across multiple aspects of health:

Immune System Enhancement and Anti-Viral Properties

- Strengthens natural immune responses
- Demonstrates powerful anti-viral capabilities
- Helps balance immune system function
- Supports the body's natural defense mechanisms

Anti-Inflammatory and Healing Effects

- Regulates pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory cytokines
- Activates the body's antioxidant defense systems
- Improves cellular oxygen utilization
- Enhances natural healing processes

Cardiovascular and Blood Flow Benefits

- Improves circulation and oxygen delivery
- Enhances red blood cell flexibility
- Optimizes cellular nutrient absorption
- Promotes better vascular health

Shield IV: Your Defense Against Seasonal Viruses

As we navigate through challenging viral seasons, our Shield IV therapy provides robust immune support:

Targeted Protection Against Current Viral Threats

- Powerful defense against norovirus and seasonal flu
- High-dose Vitamin C for immune system boosting
- Zinc and other essential minerals for viral defense
- Comprehensive blend of immune-supporting nutrients

Key Benefits of Shield IV

- Rapid immune system response
- Enhanced viral resistance
- Reduced severity and duration of symptoms
- Preventive protection during high-risk seasons

The Vitality Drip: Sexual Health and Performance

Our Vitality drip, combined with ozone therapy, offers a natural approach to sexual health enhancement:

Sexual Health Benefits

- Improved blood flow and circulation
- Enhanced energy and stamina
- Better hormone balance
- Increased cellular oxygenation

Ozone's Role in Sexual Wellness

- Promotes nitric oxide production for better vasodilation
- Enhances oxygen delivery to reproductive tissues
- Supports healthy testosterone levels
- Improves overall cellular function

The Science Behind Ozone's Therapeutic Action

Ozone, a highly reactive form of oxygen, demonstrates remarkable capabilities in addressing multiple aspects of health:

Physiological Benefits

- Enhanced blood circulation
- Improved oxygen utilization
- Optimized metabolic function
- Accelerated healing response

Personalized Treatment Considerations

Each therapy at The DRIPBaR is tailored to individual needs:

- Comprehensive health assessment
- Customized treatment protocols
- Regular monitoring and adjustments
- Integration with existing health practices

Important Considerations and Precautions

Patients should:

- Consult with our specialized healthcare providers
- Undergo thorough pre-treatment assessments
- Maintain open communication about existing treatments
- Follow recommended treatment protocols

Conclusion

The combination of Ozone therapy, Shield IV, and Vitality drip represents a cutting-edge approach to health optimization, offering comprehensive support for immune function, viral defense, and sexual wellness. At The DRIPBaR, our team of medical professionals is dedicated to providing personalized, scientifically-backed treatments that address your unique health goals.

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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Love Your Eyes This Valentine's Day: A Focus on Retinal Health and Prevention

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

February brings hearts and flowers, but it's also an ideal time to show love to one of our most precious gifts – our eyes. While we exchange cards and chocolates this Valentine's Day, let's take a moment to focus on eye health, particularly retinal diseases that can impact our vision and quality of life.

The retina, a light-sensitive layer of tissue at the back of the eye, plays a crucial role in transforming light into signals that create the images we see. Like a delicate film in a camera, our retina requires proper care and attention to maintain its function. Several conditions can affect this vital tissue, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD), diabetic retinopathy, and retinal detachment.

Age-related macular degeneration particularly affects the central portion of the retina called the macula, which is responsible for sharp, detailed vision. As we age, the risk of AMD increases, making it essential to monitor any changes in vision. Early symptoms might include difficulty reading or recognizing faces, or noticing straight lines appearing wavy.

Diabetic retinopathy, another common retinal condition, affects people with diabetes when high blood sugar levels damage the delicate blood vessels in the retina. Regular blood sugar control and comprehensive eye examinations are crucial for prevention and early detection. Like nurturing any relationship, maintaining eye health requires consistent attention and care.

This Valentine's Day, consider giving yourself the gift of eye health. Start by scheduling a comprehensive eye examination, especially if you haven't had one in the past year. Regular check-ups can detect early signs of retinal diseases before they cause significant vision loss. Remember, prevention is always better than treatment.

Lifestyle choices play a significant role in maintaining retinal health. A diet rich in antioxidants, particularly leafy greens, fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, and colorful fruits and vegetables, can support eye health. Think of it as treating your eyes to a healthy Valentine's feast every day. Additionally, protecting your eyes from harmful UV rays by wearing sunglasses and maintaining a healthy blood pressure can help preserve retinal function.



For those already diagnosed with retinal conditions, modern medicine offers various treatment options. From medications and laser therapy to advanced surgical procedures, ophthalmologists can help manage these conditions effectively when caught early. Support groups and educational resources are also available to help patients understand and cope with their diagnosis.

Digital eye strain has become increasingly common in our screen-dominated world. This Valentine's Day, show your eyes some love by practicing the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and look at something 20 feet away. Consider it a moment of meditation for your eyes.

Don't forget that smoking significantly increases the risk of developing retinal diseases and can accelerate their progression. If you smoke, quitting is one of the most loving gifts you can give your eyes – and your overall health.

As we celebrate love this February, remember that self-care includes caring for our vision. Schedule that eye appointment you've been postponing, adopt healthy habits that support eye health, and pay attention to any changes in your vision. Early detection and treatment of retinal diseases can help preserve your sight for all the Valentine's Days to come.

After all, our eyes help us see not just the world around us, but also the faces of those we love. This Valentine's Day, make a commitment to protect and cherish your vision, ensuring many more years of seeing life's beautiful moments clearly.



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.

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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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CAUDAL STEROID INJECTIONS: An Effective Treatment Option for Lower Back and Tailbone Pain

By Dr. Magdalena Kerschner

Caudal steroid injections have emerged as a valuable treatment option for patients suffering from chronic lower back pain, sciatica, and tailbone discomfort. This minimally invasive procedure delivers powerful anti-inflammatory medication directly to the affected area, providing meaningful relief for many individuals who have not found success with conservative treatments.

The caudal approach involves injecting a combination of local anesthetic and corticosteroids into the epidural space through the sacral hiatus, a natural opening at the base of the spine. This technique is particularly effective because it allows medication to spread throughout the lower epidural space, addressing inflammation and pain signals in multiple nerve roots simultaneously.

Patients considering this treatment often have conditions such as herniated discs, spinal stenosis, or failed back surgery syndrome. The procedure is especially beneficial for those experiencing radicular pain – pain that radiates from the spine into the legs – as the medication can effectively target inflamed nerve roots that cause these symptoms.

The procedure itself is typically performed in an outpatient setting and usually takes less than 30 minutes. Before the injection, patients receive local anesthesia to minimize discomfort. Using fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance, the physician carefully positions the needle to ensure accurate placement. This imaging guidance is crucial for both safety and effectiveness, allowing the doctor to verify the correct distribution of medication.

Most patients report feeling pressure during the injection but minimal pain. The local anesthetic provides immediate pain relief, while the steroid medication typically begins working within 2-3 days, gradually reducing inflammation and pain over the following week. The duration of pain relief varies among individuals, with some experiencing benefits for several months or longer.

While caudal steroid injections are generally safe, patients should be aware of potential risks and side effects. These may include temporary numbness or weakness in the legs, mild soreness



at the injection site, and rarely, infection or bleeding. Some patients might experience a temporary increase in pain before the anti-inflammatory effects take hold.

The success rate of caudal injections varies depending on the underlying condition and individual factors. Research suggests that approximately 60-75% of patients experience significant pain reduction following the procedure. This treatment can be particularly effective when combined with physical therapy and appropriate exercise programs, as the pain relief window provides an opportunity to strengthen supporting muscles and improve flexibility.

For optimal results, healthcare providers typically recommend limiting strenuous activities for a few days following the injection. Patients can usually return to normal activities the day after the procedure, though they should follow their physician's specific instructions for recovery.

While not a permanent cure for chronic pain conditions, caudal steroid injections can provide substantial relief and improve quality of life for many patients. They may be repeated if necessary, though most physicians limit the number of injections to three or four per year to minimize potential side effects from repeated steroid exposure.

Before considering this treatment, patients should undergo a thorough evaluation to determine if they are suitable candidates. Certain conditions, such as active infections, bleeding disorders, or allergies to the medications used, may preclude someone from receiving these injections. A detailed discussion with a healthcare provider can help determine if caudal steroid injections are an appropriate treatment option for an individual's specific condition.



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.

When your pain is under control you can get back to living the way you are used to. Exercise, eat healthy, and enjoy life to the fullest. At Advanced Pain & Spine Institute we are more than just a doctor's office, we are friends that are ready to help you get your life back.



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The healthcare industry is booming. It's projected to add more jobs than any other field in the next several years, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. A growing and aging population, technological advancements and changes in the way healthcare is delivered are among the primary reasons the industry is expanding so rapidly.

That translates into a wealth of career opportunities for well-trained professionals, and Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) is Southwest Florida's leader in educating these caregivers — your caregivers. With comprehensive academic programs, rigorous clinical training and faculty grounded in professional practice, FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services prepares well-rounded practitioners to meet the mounting health and wellness needs of Southwest Florida.

Our graduates are your nurses, counselors, social workers, lab scientists and physical and occupational therapists. They are breaking new ground in research, clinical and leadership roles in public health throughout the region and beyond.

Marieb College Continues to Grow

When FGCU welcomed its first students in 1997, what was then the College of Health Professions enrolled 178 students in a nursing bachelor's degree program and bachelor's and master's degrees in health science. Today, Marieb College of Health & Human Services educates more than 2,700 students a year in 15 degree programs in its School of Nursing and Departments of Social Work, Rehabilitation Sciences, Health Science and Counseling. The college also houses FGCU's Counseling and Psychological Services for students as well as the Community Counseling & Education Center.

And Marieb College continues to grow. In the 2024 legislative session, FGCU secured final funding for the construction of a new health sciences building on campus, Academic Building 10. The facility will complement Marieb Hall, the college's home, where students learn in state-of-the-art classrooms and practice laboratory facilities. The new building will support further expansion of the college and further cement its ability to train the needed healthcare workforce.

With support from community partners in the healthcare industry and matching state funds, the college's School of Nursing has also been able to expand its programs and faculty to address the widespread shortage of professionals in the field.

Generous gifts from private foundations have also fueled growth in specialty research and outreach initiatives that have broad regional impact, leading to the establishment of the Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging and the Golisano Intellectual and Developmental Disability Initiative.

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Our graduates consistently score higher than peers from other institutions on national licensure exams, achieving 100% first-time pass rates in six program areas. It's no wonder Marieb boasts a 100% six-month employment rate for new graduates.

Last year marked the seventh time that Marieb's bachelor of science nursing students led the state university system in first-time licensure pass rates. In fact, ours was the only such program to claim a 100% first-time pass rate.

But Marieb College's licensure success do not end there. For the 10th year, our master of science occupational therapy program maintained a 100% overall pass rate. Moreover, the doctor of physical therapy program secured a 100% first-time pass rate on the Florida Board of Physical Therapy licensing examination, with four students posting perfect scores. Our master of physician assistant studies program also secured a 100% overall pass rate on the Physician Assistant National Certifying Examination, marking five consecutive years with this success.

To build on this history of success while preparing graduates to work in fields that are quickly and constantly changing, Marieb College is committed to pursuing innovation in educational practices and experiences. We have a renewed focus on interprofessional education that has been accelerated with gracious gifts from the Marieb Foundation and the hiring of our first director of interprofessional education and emerging technology.

Interprofessional education is a strategic learning approach that brings together healthcare professionals from diverse backgrounds within a simulated setting to enhance collaboration and communication among practitioners. This fosters an environment where they can learn from one another to effectively improve health outcomes.

Marieb College is committed to advancing this initiative by establishing an Interprofessional Simulation Center in the coming years that will serve as a hub for collaborative efforts among various programs, academia and partners, thus facilitating preclinical and simulation-based training.

As always, our mission is to advance the education, health and well-being of our students through teaching excellence, impactful scholarship and service. By achieving this mission, we help improve our community and make Southwest Florida the best place for education and living.

Learn more about FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services at fgu.edu/marieb.



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FUELING A STRONG HEART:

The Crucial Connection Between Diet and Heart Health

Maintaining a healthy heart is a lifelong commitment, and what we put on our plates plays a pivotal role in shaping the destiny of our cardiovascular well-being. As we celebrate American Heart Month, it's imperative to delve into the profound impact of diet on heart health, unraveling the key dietary choices that can fortify our hearts and promote longevity.

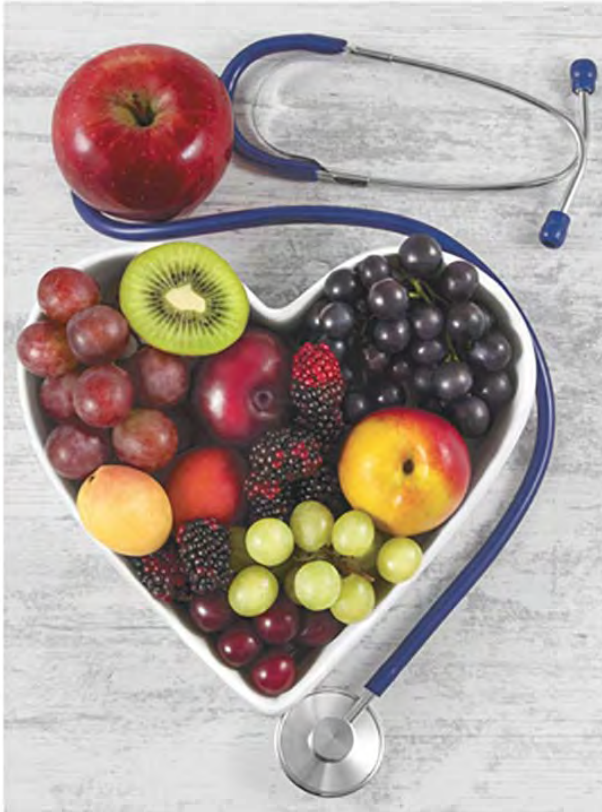
The cornerstone of a heart-healthy diet lies in embracing a diverse array of nutrient-rich foods. Incorporating fruits and vegetables into your daily meals not only infuses your body with essential vitamins and minerals but also provides a rich source of antioxidants, which combat oxidative stress and reduce the risk of heart disease. Think vibrant greens, berries, and citrus fruits to pack a powerful punch of heart-loving nutrients.

Whole grains stand as stalwarts in the battle for heart health. Opting for whole grains over refined counterparts ensures a steady supply of fiber, a dietary superhero that aids in managing cholesterol levels and promoting a healthy weight. Quinoa, brown rice, and oats can seamlessly integrate into your meals, elevating both taste and heart health.

Navigating the landscape of fats requires a discerning eye. While saturated fats and trans fats can pose a threat to heart health, unsaturated fats, especially the omega-3 fatty acids found in fatty fish like salmon and trout, contribute to reducing inflammation and maintaining optimal cardiovascular function. It's a matter of balance — choosing olive oil over saturated fats, and incorporating nuts and seeds for a heart-boosting dose of unsaturated fats.

Protein, an essential building block for our bodies, can be sourced from a variety of options. Lean meats, legumes, and plant-based proteins like tofu and tempeh offer diverse choices to cater to different dietary preferences. A balanced approach ensures that your heart receives the nutrients it needs without overburdening your system.

The nemesis of heart health often lurks in the hidden realms of our diets — excessive salt. Reducing sodium intake is a critical component of



promoting heart health, as high sodium levels can contribute to hypertension. Embracing herbs and spices as flavorful alternatives can transform your dishes, allowing you to savor the taste without compromising your heart's well-being.

As we traverse the intricate terrain of nutrition, it's essential to acknowledge the impact of lifestyle choices on heart health. Regular physical activity synergizes with a heart-healthy diet, forming an alliance that fortifies cardiovascular resilience. Strive for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week, whether it's brisk walking, cycling, or engaging in activities that elevate your heart rate and invigorate your cardiovascular system.

American Heart Month serves as a poignant reminder to assess our dietary habits and make informed choices that contribute to our heart's longevity. Small, sustainable changes can yield significant results. Consider meal prepping to ensure that nutritious options are readily available, making it easier to resist the allure of processed and unhealthy foods.

Beyond the nutritional realm, stress management and adequate sleep weave themselves into the tapestry of heart health. Chronic stress can trigger unhealthy habits that impact the heart, emphasizing the need for mindfulness practices such as meditation or yoga. Quality sleep, an often underestimated ally, plays a crucial role in the body's ability to repair and rejuvenate, contributing to overall cardiovascular well-being.

In conclusion, the journey to a healthier heart involves a harmonious interplay of nutrition, exercise, and lifestyle choices. American Heart Month provides a timely opportunity to reflect on our habits and make conscious decisions that prioritize the well-being of our hearts. By cultivating a heart-healthy diet, embracing an active lifestyle, and incorporating stress-reducing practices, we pave the way for a robust cardiovascular future, celebrating the resilience of our hearts throughout the year.



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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VAGINAL REJUVENATION STEM CELL THERAPY: EMERGING ADVANCES IN REGENERATIVE GYNECOLOGY

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

Stem cell therapy for vaginal rejuvenation represents a groundbreaking advancement in regenerative medicine, offering new possibilities for women experiencing various gynecological concerns. This innovative treatment approach harnesses the regenerative potential of stem cells to address both functional and aesthetic concerns related to vaginal health. As the field of regenerative gynecology continues to evolve, understanding the science, applications, and implications of this therapy becomes increasingly important.

The emergence of stem cell therapy in vaginal rejuvenation stems from the remarkable ability of these cells to promote tissue regeneration and cellular repair. Stem cells are undifferentiated cells capable of developing into various specialized cell types, making them valuable tools in regenerative medicine. In the context of vaginal rejuvenation, these cells can potentially regenerate vaginal tissue, enhance blood flow, and improve overall vaginal health.

The primary sources of stem cells used in vaginal rejuvenation typically include autologous adult stem cells, particularly those derived from adipose tissue or bone marrow. These cells are harvested from the patient's own body, minimizing the risk of rejection or adverse reactions. The harvested cells undergo processing and concentration before being carefully reintroduced into targeted areas of the vaginal tissue.

The therapeutic mechanisms of stem cell therapy in vaginal rejuvenation operate through multiple pathways. When introduced into the vaginal tissue, stem cells release growth factors and cytokines that stimulate local tissue repair and regeneration. They promote angiogenesis (formation of new blood vessels), enhance collagen production, and support the development of healthy vaginal epithelium. This comprehensive approach addresses various aspects of vaginal health simultaneously.

Clinical applications of vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy extend to several conditions and concerns. Women experiencing vaginal atrophy, particularly post-menopausal women, may benefit from this treatment as it can help restore vaginal

thickness and improve natural lubrication. The therapy has shown promise in addressing stress urinary incontinence by strengthening the supporting tissues of the urethral sphincter. Additionally, women who have experienced childbirth-related trauma or age-related changes may find relief through this regenerative approach.

The procedure typically involves several steps, beginning with a thorough medical evaluation to determine candidacy. The stem cell harvesting process is performed under local anesthesia, followed by cell processing in a specialized laboratory. The prepared stem cells are then administered through precise injections into specific areas of the vaginal tissue. The entire procedure usually takes a few hours, and patients can typically return to their regular activities within a few days.

Research findings regarding the effectiveness of vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy have been encouraging, though long-term studies are still ongoing. Early clinical trials have reported improvements in vaginal tissue quality, enhanced natural lubrication, and better sexual function in treated patients. Some studies have also noted positive outcomes in treating stress urinary incontinence and vaginal atrophy symptoms.

Safety considerations remain paramount in the implementation of this therapy. While the use of autologous stem cells minimizes many risks, potential complications can include temporary discomfort, mild swelling, or infection at the injection sites. Proper patient screening, sterile technique, and adherence to established protocols are essential for optimal outcomes and safety.

The future of vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy appears promising, with ongoing research exploring new applications and refinements to existing techniques. Scientists are investigating the potential use of different stem cell sources and delivery methods to enhance treatment effectiveness. Additionally, combination therapies incorporating stem cells with other regenerative treatments are being studied to potentially optimize outcomes.

Despite the encouraging developments, it's important to note that vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy is still considered an emerging treatment option. Patients considering this therapy should consult with qualified healthcare providers who can provide detailed information about the procedure, expected outcomes, and potential risks. The decision to undergo treatment should be based on individual circumstances, medical history, and realistic expectations.

As research continues and technology advances, vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy may become an increasingly important option in regenerative gynecology. This innovative approach offers hope for women seeking natural, long-lasting solutions for various gynecological concerns. However, continued scientific investigation and clinical trials remain essential to fully understand the long-term implications and optimize treatment protocols for maximum benefit and safety.

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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REJUVENATING ROMANCE

The V-Shot Approach to Sexual Wellness This Valentine's Season

By Dr. Magdalena Kerschner

As couples seek meaningful ways to enhance their intimate relationships this Valentine's Day, medical innovations in sexual wellness are gaining attention. Among these advancements, the V-Shot (also known as the O-Shot) has emerged as a notable treatment option for women looking to improve their sexual health and satisfaction.

Understanding the V-Shot

The V-Shot is a non-surgical procedure that utilizes platelet-rich plasma (PRP) derived from the patient's own blood. This revolutionary treatment aims to enhance sexual function and address various intimate health concerns that women may experience. The procedure involves drawing a small amount of blood, processing it to concentrate the platelets, and carefully injecting the PRP into specific areas.

How the Treatment Works

The science behind the V-Shot lies in the healing and regenerative properties of PRP. When injected, these growth factors stimulate cell renewal and tissue regeneration, potentially improving blood flow and nerve sensitivity in the treated areas. The procedure typically takes about 30-40 minutes and is performed under local anesthetic to ensure patient comfort.

Potential Benefits

Many women who undergo the V-Shot treatment report several improvements in their intimate health:

- Enhanced natural lubrication
- Increased sensitivity and pleasure
- Stronger and more frequent orgasms
- Reduced urinary incontinence
- Improved vaginal tone and elasticity
- Greater confidence in intimate situations

The Valentine's Day Connection

While sexual wellness should be a year-round priority, Valentine's Day offers a perfect opportunity to focus on intimate health. The V-Shot can be part of a broader approach to sexual wellness, complementing other aspects of a healthy relationship such as open communication, emotional connection, and overall well-being.



Important Considerations

Before pursuing the V-Shot treatment, individuals should:

- Consult with qualified healthcare providers who specialize in sexual health
- Discuss their medical history and expectations
- Understand that results can vary among individuals
- Consider the investment, as the treatment may not be covered by insurance
- Be aware that multiple sessions might be recommended for optimal results

Recovery and Results

One of the advantages of the V-Shot is its minimal downtime. Most patients can return to their normal activities within 24 hours, though it's recommended to wait 24-72 hours before resuming intimate activities. Results typically begin to appear within a few weeks and can last for several months to a year.

A Holistic Approach to Intimate Wellness

While the V-Shot can be an effective treatment option, it's essential to view it as part of a comprehensive approach to sexual wellness. This includes maintaining good physical health, managing stress, nurturing emotional connections, and addressing any underlying health concerns that might affect intimate relationships.

The Future of Sexual Wellness

As medical technology continues to advance, treatments like the V-Shot represent a growing trend toward non-surgical solutions for sexual health concerns. This Valentine's Day, couples have more options than ever to address intimate health proactively and enhance their physical connection.

Remember that sexual wellness is a personal journey, and what works for one person may not work for another. Open discussions with healthcare providers and partners remain crucial for making informed decisions about treatments like the V-Shot.



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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MOBILE HOME PARKS

By Lenore T. Brakefield and Cameron G. Woodward

Many people like the idea of living in Florida during winter months. And while this idea seems nice in theory, it can be cost prohibitive for many. Mobile home parks offer a more affordable alternative to purchasing traditional housing. Mobile home parks come in a few different variations, and it is important to remain cognizant of the differences. There are pros and cons of each type that should be considered – namely, the amount of money you want to spend and the amount of control (and responsibility) you are looking for. The three main types of these mobile home parks are: land rental, land ownership, and cooperatives.

In a land rental mobile home park, an individual or an entity owns the real property that comprises the park. The individual residents own their home but not the land upon which their home sits. The land, or lot, is rented to each resident from the landowner, or park owner. These types of parks have certain benefits that go along with them. For example, residents do not have to invest additional capital to purchase the land, only their mobile home. Additionally, these types of parks are generally run by professional management companies retained by the landowner and the parks amenities are maintained and operated by this management company. There are downsides, however, as a tenant, the resident typically has little say in how the park is managed. As is the case in most lease agreements, should the resident fail to make the monthly rental payments, he or she can be evicted from the park. With this type of ownership arrangement, mobile homes are not considered an improvement to the real property and maintain vehicle registration and tags. This means taxes for the mobile home are paid to Florida's Department of Motor Vehicles.

In a landownership mobile home park, residents not only own their mobile home, but also the land upon which it sits. In this type of park, the residents are typically members of a homeowner's association (HOA) which governs the park. As members of the association, residents are obliged to pay assessments to cover the costs of operating the mobile home park, as well as any special assessments that may be necessary due to unforeseen expenses. One of the benefits of this type of mobile home park is that it affords residents the most rights. Typically, lots have a specific legal description detailing the



dimensions and location. In addition, residents, as members of the association, may run for the board of directors, attend board meetings and vote at membership meetings, giving residents a voice in how the mobile home park is managed. With this type of ownership, mobile homes are considered an improvement to the real property and taxed by the county tax collector. Florida's Department of Motor Vehicles no longer regulates these mobile homes, as the vehicle tags should be retired.

In a cooperative mobile home park, the mobile park land is owned by a corporation and the residents are shareholders of that corporation. With this type of ownership, residents are given a lease for their individual lots but still have an ownership interest in the real property. This form of park ownership has its drawbacks, however, as a cooperative, associations are not required (although some do) to have legal descriptions that are accurate enough to ascertain where each lot begins and ends. This can create problems and boundary issues between neighbors.

No matter what type of mobile home park you choose to live in, the professionals at Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. can help you understand the pros and cons and aid you in your purchase and any dispute you may have after your purchase.



Lenore T. Brakefield



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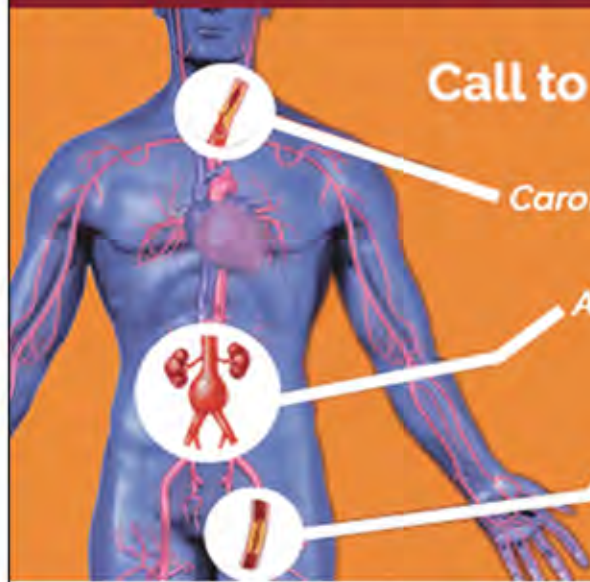
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OPTIMIZING YOUR THYROID TO SUPPORT YOUR SEX HORMONES: EXPLORING THEIR CONNECTIONS

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

Just like the post office workers chatting in between runs, the chemical messengers in your body—hormones—also influence each other. They're not distinct entities, and while each type of hormone may have its own list of specific tasks, its levels can affect other hormones in your body and then their ability to carry out their tasks.

Thyroid hormones and sex hormones are two well-known types of hormones, and they may have a greater influence on each other than you think. In fact, if you're seeing challenges associated with low or high levels of sex hormones, it may be due to your thyroid hormone levels.

How Thyroid Function Relates to Sex Hormones

Research has shown that hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism (producing too little or too much thyroid hormones, respectively) have been associated with sex hormone concentrations and, more specifically, sexual dysfunction.

The reason for this connection has to do with the interrelationship between thyroid hormones and sex hormones. Specifically, thyroid hormones regulate the bioavailability of sex hormones, so if there is thyroid dysfunction, there may be an imbalance in the concentrations of bioavailable sex hormones, leading to ovulatory or erectile dysfunction. For women, this results in menstrual irregularities or menopause, while for men, it can lead to difficulty getting and maintaining an erection.

The connection exists in the opposite manner, as well. Estrogen therapy has been shown to increase the need for thyroid hormone, and this is because estrogen increases the production of thyroid-binding globulin in the liver, which causes more thyroid hormones to bind, reducing their availability and leading to symptoms of hypothyroidism.

Progesterone can also influence thyroid levels. Namely, it influences thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) levels, with studies showing that it can decrease TSH levels and increase FreeT4 levels.

As for how thyroid problems may manifest in your sex life, there are a few pathways.



First, low thyroid levels can lower vaginal lubrication, making sex uncomfortable and unsatisfying. Thyroid issues can also lower testosterone levels, lowering libido in those of either gender. Hyper- and hypothyroidism can also contribute to fatigue and depression, both of which can further lower your sex drive.

Issues with the thyroid can also affect how long it takes a man to ejaculate. Hyperthyroidism can cause premature ejaculation, while hypothyroidism can result in delayed ejaculation.

Knowing these influences, thyroid hormone issues can lead to difficulty with fertility, whether because you or your partner lack a desire to be intimate or cannot ejaculate. Issues with the thyroid can also cause irregularities in a woman's menstrual cycle, which can further cause issues with fertility.

In order to maintain optimal levels of your sexual hormones, one area to monitor is your thyroid hormone levels.

How to Optimize Thyroid Function

Hormone levels require maintenance in an optimal range in order to communicate throughout the body as needed. If your thyroid is producing too much or too little hormone, it can manifest in your metabolism, but it can also affect your sex hormones, causing issues that extend beyond the thyroid's area of expertise.

In order to support your sex hormones, it's important to optimize thyroid function.

Fuel Up

Within the body is the diet-gut-thyroid axis, which makes it so that nutrition and thyroid function are closely linked. As such, the foods that you eat can

influence your gut, which then impacts your thyroid as a result of immunological regulation and nutrient absorption. If your nutritional profile is imbalanced, thyroid dysfunction can occur.

Knowing this, it's important to eat a balanced diet that is rich in thyroid-boosting nutrients, such as:

- Iodine
- Selenium
- Zinc
- Iron
- Magnesium
- Copper
- Vitamin B12
- Vitamin A

These nutrients influence thyroid hormone synthesis and regulation—if they're lacking in your diet, your body may not be able to keep up its thyroid hormone levels. However, it's also important that you don't consume too much, as this can also cause issues. If you're ever curious about what nutrition to focus on, reach out to a specialist for personalized guidance.

Besides upping your intake of these key nutrients, you can also be more mindful of the foods you avoid. Namely, a higher consumption of ultra-processed foods has been associated with a higher risk of hyperthyroidism. To promote your thyroid's health, try to avoid ultra-processed foods such as packaged snacks, cereal, candy, and soda.

Exercise Regularly

There are numerous benefits to exercising regularly, even for your thyroid. Specifically, for those whose thyroid overproduces, daily exercise may help to lower thyroid hormone levels.

Other studies have found that exercising at your maximum capacity can help raise levels of T4, fT4, and TSH. One study even found that for women with hypothyroidism, aerobic training, resistance training, and a combination of both all helped to improve T4 levels.

These studies show that your exercise type and frequency can influence how much thyroid hormone is circulating; depending on whether your thyroid is over - or under-producing, you can modify your workout schedule to support your thyroid's production, using exercise to give it a boost without overdoing it.

Beyond the direct effects of exercising, its indirect effects, such as managing weight and improving blood sugar control, can help mitigate other qualities that may negatively affect your thyroid, further optimizing its function.

While exercise can help your thyroid, it's important to ease into it, especially if you suffer from hypothyroidism, which can cause joint pain and fatigue. By starting slow, your body can adjust to the training, lowering your risk of injury.

Get Some Sleep

Research has shown that your sleep can significantly affect your thyroid function. Specifically, sleep strongly affects your thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), with both sleep quality and duration playing a role.

Unfortunately, problems with your thyroid can cause sleep problems, with both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism linked to difficulty sleeping. Knowing this, it's especially important to prioritize your sleep to break the cycle of imbalanced thyroid function and preserve its health in the days to come.

Some ways that you can improve your sleep include:

- **Find the right temperature.** Hyperthyroidism can cause night sweats, while hypothyroidism can decrease your cold tolerance, so take some time to find your ideal temperature for sleep.
- **Improve your sleep hygiene.** Set your nights up for success by following a consistent sleep/wake schedule, relaxing before bed, and avoiding electronics before bed.
- **Avoid late-night snacks.** Eating something heavy before bed can disrupt your sleep, so try to avoid snacking; if you're hungry, opt for something light.

Have Your Thyroid Checked Regularly

Sometimes, your thyroid may be sending out warning signals that something is amiss, but they remain undetected or attributed to something else. In order to detect thyroid issues early, it's best to undergo periodic check-ups to monitor its functionality. The sooner issues are detected, the sooner you can intervene to optimize its output.

Maintain a Healthy Body Weight

There are many advantages to keeping your body weight in a healthy range, especially for your thyroid. Specifically, the more you weigh, the more thyroid hormone your body requires, which creates opportunities for insufficiency and hypothyroidism. To help your thyroid meet your body's needs, focus on maintaining a healthy body weight through a balanced diet and regular exercise.

When to See a Doctor

Hormone imbalances can often go undetected, causing your body to suffer unnecessarily. As such, it's helpful to know the signs of thyroid hormone imbalance so that you know when to see a doctor.

If you have any of the following symptoms, consider having your thyroid function checked:

- A lump in your thyroid gland or a swollen neck
- Anxiety or depression
- Significant weight changes despite a regular diet and exercise regimen
- Thinning of hair or skin changes
- Tremors or palpitations
- Menstrual cycle irregularities
- Constant fatigue, no matter your sleep habits
- Changes in bowel habits
- Issues with tolerating heat or cold

Thyroid and Sex Hormones: An Unexpected Connection

While the thyroid and ovaries/testes may seem immensely different, they both produce hormones that can affect each other. Thyroid hormones can influence the bioavailability of sex hormones, creating an abundance or deficit that can then contribute to sexual dysfunction. Similarly, too much sex hormone, such as estrogen, can lower the amount of circulating thyroid hormones, while progesterone increases its availability.

Knowing the interrelationships between thyroid hormones and sex hormones, it's clear that a priority for the optimization of one should be finding balance in the other. Some ways that you can support the health of your thyroid include eating a thyroid-supporting diet, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and maintaining a healthy weight. It can also be helpful to have your thyroid checked periodically, especially if you display any symptoms of hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism.

By working on balancing your thyroid hormones, the other areas of your body, including your sex hormones, will have an easier time maintaining balance, as well.



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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

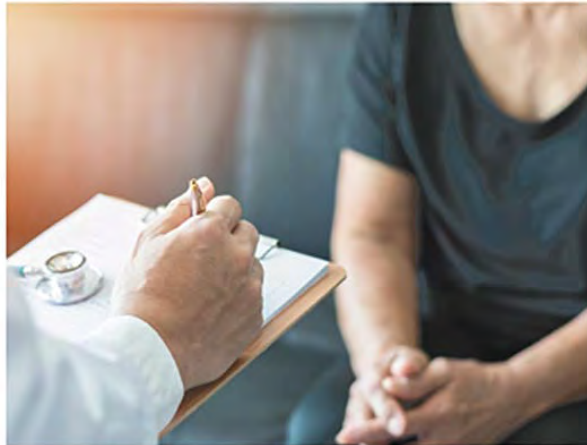
One of the most significant advantages of doctor house calls is the time physicians can devote to each patient. Unlike traditional office visits, often constrained by tight schedules and waiting rooms full of patients, house calls allow the physician to focus entirely on the individual without the pressure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

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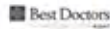
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Shoulder Injuries and Your Treatment Options

By Robert Swift, D.O. - Board Certified Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine

Driving along the beach, nearby parks or in many communities, you'll notice that people of all ages are living active lifestyles. Here in Florida, we have gorgeous weather throughout the entire year, which allows for more activities like jogging, tennis, pickleball, kayaking, pushing grandchildren on the swing, and the list goes on and on; but with all of this healthy activity, many individuals are more prone to injury and wear and tear.

One of the most common injury sites is the shoulder. The shoulder is a combination of bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, and muscles that provide an extensive range of motion in common everyday tasks, as well as in advanced athletic performance. Whether you're using a walker, picking up a heavy grocery bag, or driving the ball 200 yards, an optimal range of motion is key to healthy living. However, many times shoulder pain is due to advanced arthritis or degenerative joint disease. If you have tried pain medications, alternative methods, physical therapy and are still experiencing difficulty with range-of-motion or impingements and discomfort; it may be time to speak to your orthopedic surgeon about shoulder replacement surgery, also known as shoulder arthroplasty.

Most tears of the rotator cuff occur slowly over time as the tissue wears out, and they commonly occur in those 50 years and older. Any force strong enough to tear tendons also damages and weakens

the surrounding ligaments. Shoulder pain is multifactorial, and rotator cuff results in instability, frozen shoulder, and severe discomfort. Many rotator cuff tears can be treated nonoperatively. However, painful tears and tears that interfere with shoulder function should be treated with surgical repair.

An MRI, and an evaluation of the overall shoulder stability, which is essential if the individual wants to return to their normal activities, is determined, and the best option for that specific patient is planned out, including rehab and physical therapy.

For full tears of the rotator cuff, surgery is almost always necessary, and this can be done through a standard incision or by arthroscopy. If the person can use their arm with some mobility, the tear may be partial and, in that case, arthroscopic repair may suffice.

How is arthroscopic surgery performed?

Your surgeon begins the procedure by inserting the arthroscope through a small incision made near the treatment area. A sterile liquid is used to help open up the area, making it easier to see the joint.

Your surgeon then uses specialized miniature instruments to cut, shave, and apply stitches to the affected area. Additional incisions may be required to insert the surgical instruments. Once the joint has been treated, the incisions are bandaged, and you're off to recovery.

Recovery

After surgery, the initial recovery time usually takes about six weeks as the tendon heals back to bone. Full recovery can take a few months up to a year. Many patients report feeling no pain, and also having an increased range-of-motion very soon after surgery. Your surgeon will also provide you with an exercise and stretching program, along with physical therapy for an allotted period of time.

Although arthroscopic surgery can be used to treat any joint in the body, it's most commonly performed on joints in the knee, shoulder, elbow, ankle, hip, and wrist. If arthritis develops in a shoulder joint, and after conservative treatment options such as physical therapy, oral medications and injections fail, shoulder replacement is a successful option.

Shoulder Replacement Surgery

During a traditional shoulder replacement procedure, the surgeon will remove part of the top of the humerus bone, which is located in the joint of the shoulder. The surgery consists of reshaping the shoulder joint and placing a metal stem (a few inches long) into the shaft of the humerus bone. A metal or plastic plate is then attached to the glenoid socket. These two connected devices will then take the place of the "ball and socket" in the upper shoulder area. Over time, the new joint replacement will allow the shoulder to move more freely, and it will substantially alleviate the pain that the individual was accustomed to on a daily basis. This procedure is for patients with normal rotator cuff tendons.

There are several types of shoulder replacements. If you need one you may be a candidate for a resurfacing type replacement.

Finally, if you wear out your rotator cuff muscles and tendons, and also develop arthritis, you would be a candidate for a reverse total shoulder replacement.

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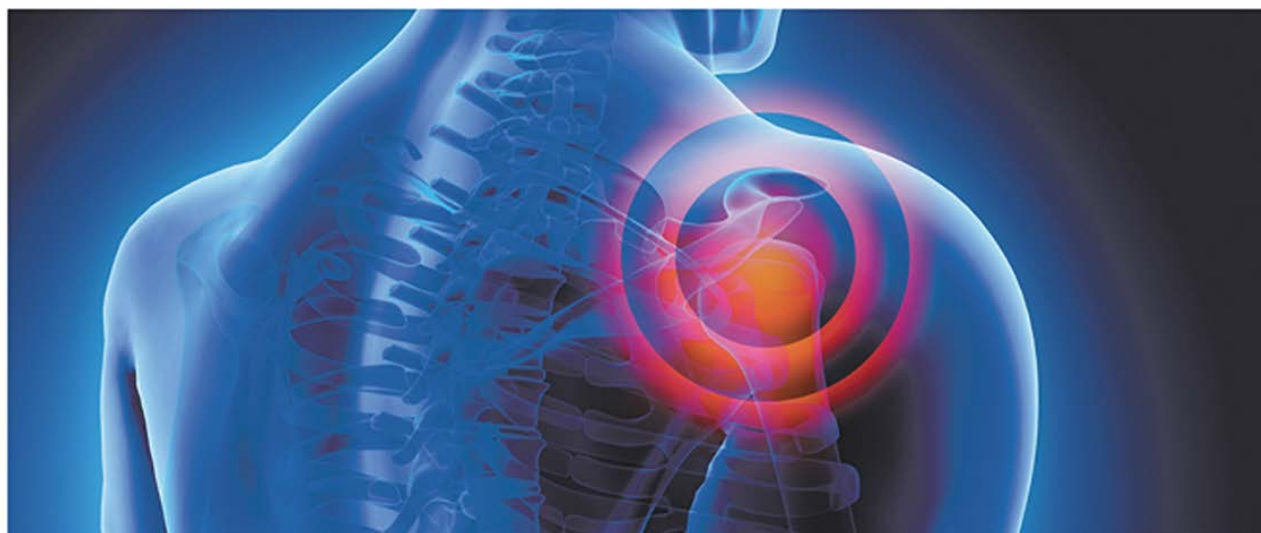
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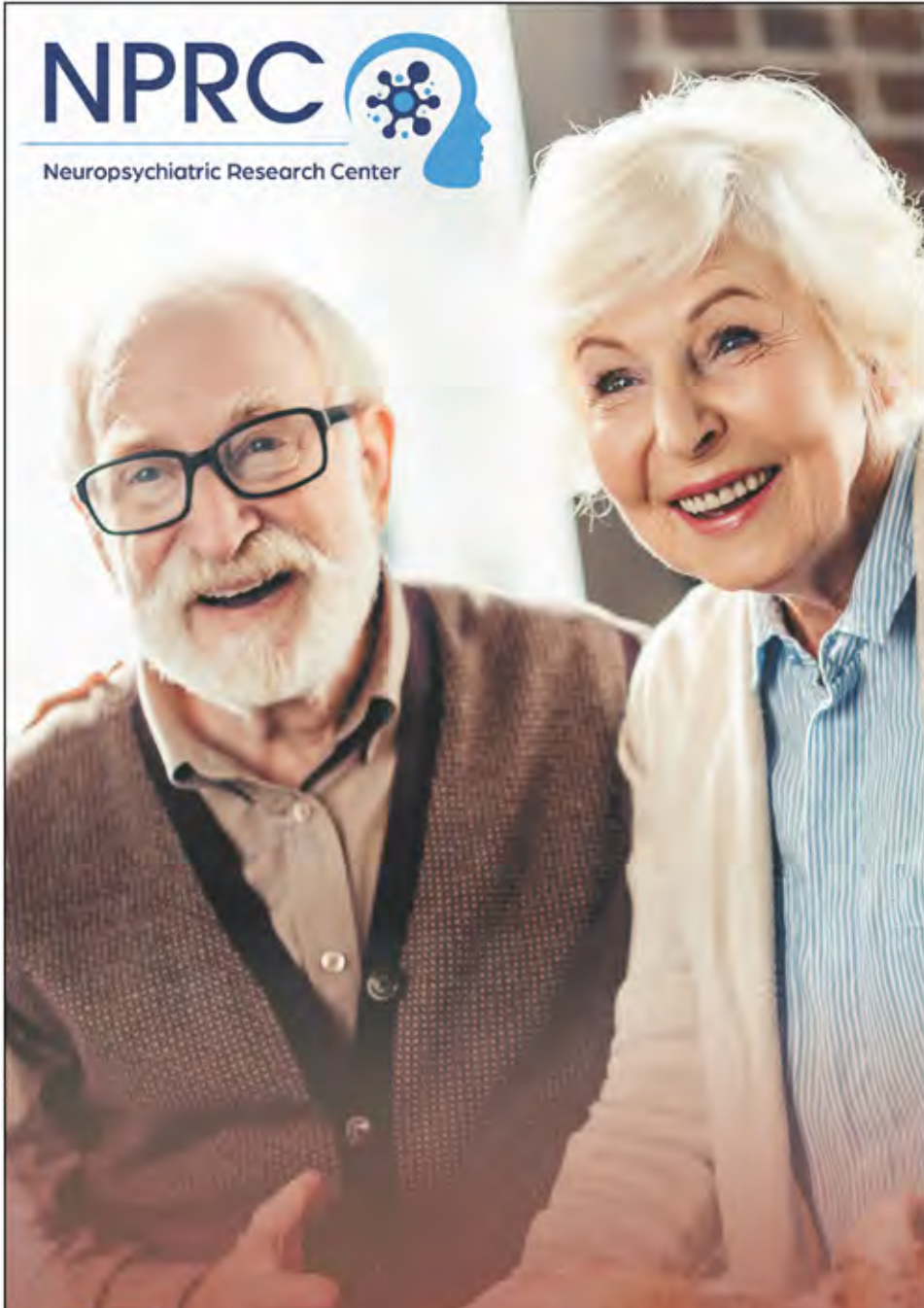


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2025 Open Enrollment is Here!

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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Reversing Osteoporosis Naturally:

The Most Accurate Osteoporosis Screening with REMS Echolight

By Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

Osteoporosis, a silent disease affecting millions worldwide, has found a new ally in the revolutionary REMS (Radiofrequency Echographic Multi Spectrometry) Echolight technology. This innovative screening method represents a significant advancement in bone health assessment, offering unprecedented accuracy without the risks associated with traditional radiation-based techniques.

REMS Echolight technology utilizes ultrasound waves to analyze bone microarchitecture and density, providing detailed insights into bone health status. Unlike conventional DXA (Dual-energy X-ray Absorptiometry) scans, this non-invasive approach eliminates radiation exposure while delivering comparable or superior diagnostic accuracy.

The technology works by emitting high-frequency sound waves that penetrate bone tissue, creating detailed maps of bone density and structure. Advanced algorithms analyze the returning echoes, producing comprehensive data about bone quality and potential fracture risks. This sophisticated analysis considers multiple parameters beyond just bone density, including bone elasticity and microarchitectural patterns.

One of REMS Echolight's most significant advantages is its ability to detect early signs of bone deterioration before significant bone loss occurs. This early detection capability enables healthcare providers to initiate preventive measures sooner, potentially averting the development of severe osteoporosis and reducing fracture risks.

Clinical studies have demonstrated REMS Echolight's impressive accuracy, with sensitivity and specificity rates exceeding 90% when compared to traditional diagnostic methods. The technology has shown particular effectiveness in identifying patients at risk for vertebral and femoral fractures, two common sites of osteoporotic breaks.

Patient comfort and convenience are paramount with REMS Echolight screening. The procedure typically takes only 5-10 minutes and can be performed in any clinical setting. No special preparation is required, and patients remain fully clothed throughout the examination. This accessibility makes it an ideal option for regular monitoring of bone health, especially in at-risk populations.

Healthcare providers appreciate the technology's immediate results delivery, allowing for on-the-spot consultation and treatment planning. The system generates comprehensive reports that include T-scores, Z-scores, and detailed bone quality assessments, facilitating informed decision-making about patient care.

REMS Echolight is particularly valuable for monitoring specific patient groups who may be unsuitable for traditional DXA scans. These include pregnant women, patients who cannot lie still for extended periods, and those requiring frequent follow-up assessments. The absence of radiation exposure makes it safe for repeated screenings, enabling closer monitoring of treatment effectiveness.

The technology's precision in measuring bone quality extends beyond just diagnosing osteoporosis. It effectively tracks changes in bone density over time, making it an excellent tool for monitoring treatment response and disease progression. This capability allows healthcare providers to adjust treatment plans based on objective data, optimizing patient outcomes.

Cost-effectiveness adds to REMS Echolight's appeal. The technology requires minimal maintenance, uses no consumables, and can be operated by trained healthcare professionals. These factors contribute to lower per-scan costs compared to traditional screening methods, making bone health assessment more accessible to a broader patient population.

As healthcare continues to evolve toward more precise and patient-friendly diagnostic tools, REMS Echolight stands out as a breakthrough in osteoporosis screening. Its combination of accuracy, safety, and convenience makes it an invaluable asset in the fight against osteoporosis, promising better outcomes for patients worldwide. As adoption grows, this innovative technology is poised to become the new standard in bone health assessment, revolutionizing how we approach osteoporosis diagnosis and management.

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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ACUPUNCTURE POINT INJECTION THERAPY: Unlocking Regenerative Healing

By Dr. Mary Lambert, AP, DOM

Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy (APIT) combines traditional acupuncture with modern medicine to stimulate the body's natural healing processes. By injecting biocompatible substances like vitamins, minerals, and ultra-high dilution medicines into acupuncture points, APIT supports tissue repair, pain relief, and regeneration. Its unique approach is gaining recognition as a non-invasive alternative to conventional treatments for various musculoskeletal and systemic conditions.

The Science Behind Regeneration with APIT

APIT stimulates the body at specific acupuncture points, where blood flow, nerve pathways, and connective tissue intersect. The injection not only activates these acupuncture points but also delivers regenerative compounds directly to areas that need healing. This dual action can:

- **Boost Collagen Production** Substances like amino acids promote collagen synthesis, essential for repairing soft tissue and maintaining skin elasticity.
- **Reduce Inflammation:** Anti-inflammatory agents like saline or vitamin B12 help modulate the body's inflammatory response, accelerating recovery.
- **Enhance Cellular Regeneration:** Ingredients such as ultra-high dilution medicines and growth factors stimulate cell renewal, aiding in tissue repair and revitalization.

Clinical Evidence Supporting Regenerative Benefits

Several studies highlight the regenerative potential of APIT:

1. Pain and Tissue Repair

Research published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* demonstrated that injecting procaine (a mild anesthetic) into acupuncture points improved pain relief and reduced stiffness in patients with myofascial pain syndrome. The injections also showed evidence of enhancing blood flow and tissue repair in affected areas.

2. Joint and Cartilage Health

A study on knee osteoarthritis found that injecting hyaluronic acid into acupuncture points decreased pain and improved joint function. The localized

stimulation of acupuncture points, combined with hyaluronic acid's lubricating properties, supported cartilage regeneration and reduced degeneration.

3. Wound Healing and Skin Rejuvenation

Cosmetic acupuncture combined with APIT using ultra-high dilution medicines or hyaluronic acid has been shown to enhance skin regeneration. PRP, rich in growth factors, promotes cellular repair and collagen production, reducing wrinkles and improving skin elasticity.

4. Tendon and Ligament Injuries

APIT with regenerative compounds like vitamin B12 and amino acids has been used to treat chronic tendonitis and ligament injuries. Studies suggest that these injections improve tensile strength and promote healing by increasing local circulation and cellular repair.

Advantages of APIT for Regenerative Healing

- **Non-Invasive:** Compared to surgical options, APIT offers a safer, less invasive way to promote regeneration.
- **Natural Healing:** By leveraging the body's innate repair mechanisms, it encourages long-term recovery rather than masking symptoms.
- **Targeted Delivery:** The precise placement of injections ensures the therapeutic substances are delivered exactly where they're needed.
- **Versatile Applications:** APIT can be used for musculoskeletal injuries, chronic pain, skin rejuvenation, and even systemic conditions like fatigue or immune dysfunction.

Popular Substances Used in APIT for Regeneration

1. **Vitamin B12:** Supports nerve health, reduces inflammation, and enhances cellular energy.
2. **Hyaluronic Acid:** Improves joint lubrication and hydration, particularly in osteoarthritis.
3. **Ultra-high Dilution Medicines:** Aid in balancing the body's energy and promoting healing as well as regeneration of cells.

What to Expect

During your first visit to Lambert Wellness Center, Dr. Mary will have an in-depth consultation to curate an individual treatment plan for your needs. Regenerative APIT treatments work best in a series, but the number of treatments necessary for optimal healing will depend on the individual's health concerns and healing goals. You will, however, have some relief after the very first treatment.

Conclusion

Acupuncture Point Injection Therapy is at the forefront of regenerative medicine, blending the ancient wisdom of acupuncture with cutting-edge medical innovations. Whether addressing chronic pain, skin rejuvenation, or musculoskeletal injuries, APIT offers a powerful, non-invasive solution for those seeking natural healing and long-term wellness.

As more research emerges, APIT's role in regenerative therapies continues to expand, offering hope for those seeking to heal, repair, and rejuvenate without surgery or synthetic drugs.

Would you like to explore how APIT can benefit your specific needs? Reach out to us today by calling or texting us at 239-776-4055.

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Compounded Hormone Replacement Therapy

Upon aging, women will start to experience symptoms of hormonal imbalance, which can be related to perimenopause, menopause, postmenopause, giving birth or from a hysterectomy.

Females tend to experience an imbalance of estrogen, testosterone, and progesterone, which can lead to hot flashes, night sweats, anxiety, depression, brain fog, weight gain, loss of muscle, irritability and bone deficiency. Bone loss in women can exacerbate stress fractures caused by osteopenia or osteoporosis.

Changing the hormone levels through bio-identical hormone therapy can alleviate or in many cases eliminate these symptoms and life fluctuations. There are even studies now that suggest bio-identical hormones can help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's and dementia.

In the U.S., Bio-identical Hormone Therapy (BHT) has been used since the 1930s. And based on hundreds of current medically thorough studies, the results for patients overall quality of life and dramatic changes in their hormonal symptoms are astounding.

Bio-identical hormones are equal to our body's natural hormones on a molecular level. The difference between synthetic and identical hormones is that synthetic hormones do not match human hormones on a biological level. For example, a very popular synthetic estrogen cream that many physicians prescribe is made from a pregnant horse's urine. Most people can see why the body would not fully accept this substance.



Bio-identical hormones are made from plant sources and are easily received by the body as natural and normal. They are much more therapeutic and effective than synthetic hormonal substances.

Bio-identical progesterone will provide the most efficient way to mesh with the body's natural progesterone receptors. This is critical because body receptors are structure specific. A few of the benefits from bio-identical progesterone are proper embryo development and survival, increase in bone health, protection against breast cancer and endometrial growth, an antidepressant effect, controlling blood clotting and an increased sex drive. The side effects are fatigue and lack of energy or drowsiness.

On the contrary, Progestin (synthetic) doesn't have quite as many benefits. In fact, it has more negative effects, like, miscarriages, weight gain, decreased sex drive, increased risk of breast cancer, high risk of fractures and osteoporosis, increased blood clotting risks, anxiety, depression, migraine headaches and other health related disorders.

Opposite of what some uninformed physicians believe, women that have had a hysterectomy see just as many benefits with progesterone therapy. It's has been widely studied and proven that bio-identical, hormone replacement is just as important and beneficial for their health, even though they no longer have a uterus. For women, progesterone is essential for all of life's stages, and it provides beneficial results outside of the uterus because progesterone receptors are embedded in almost every cell in the body. Women without a uterus still need progesterone therapy.

MISIRx Compounding Pharmacy

Obviously, the bio-identical progesterone hormone therapy is the better option due to its ability to work with the body naturally, and due to the proven health benefits that coincide with the treatment. At MISIRx Pharmacy, they understand the importance of providing this type of hormone therapy for their patients.



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MAXIMIZING SEXUAL PERFORMANCE AND SENSITIVITY WITH GAINSWAVE THERAPY

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

Sexual performance and sensitivity play a significant role in relationships and overall satisfaction in life. However, various factors such as age, lifestyle, and physical health can negatively impact these aspects. For many men and women, this can lead to decreased desire and decreased sexual satisfaction. The good news is that advancements in medical technology have provided a solution to this common issue. Gainswave therapy is a cutting-edge treatment that uses subcutaneous injections to improve sexual performance and sensitivity in both men and women.

Gainswave therapy is a type of shockwave therapy that uses high-frequency acoustic waves to stimulate the growth of new blood vessels in the genital region. These new blood vessels increase blood flow and oxygenation to the genital area, leading to improved sexual performance and sensitivity. The therapy is non-invasive, painless, and has been proven to be highly effective in numerous clinical studies.

For men, Gainswave therapy can be used to treat erectile dysfunction, a condition in which a man is unable to achieve or maintain an erection sufficient for sexual intercourse. This condition can be caused by a variety of factors, including age, lifestyle, and physical health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Gainswave therapy has been shown to be a highly effective treatment option for men with erectile dysfunction, helping them to achieve and maintain stronger and longer-lasting erections.

For women, Gainswave therapy can be used to improve sexual sensitivity and overall sexual satisfaction. Women's sexual sensitivity can decline due to a variety of factors, including age, hormonal changes, and physical health conditions. Gainswave therapy has been shown to increase blood flow and oxygenation to the genital area, leading to increased sexual sensitivity and overall sexual satisfaction. Additionally, Gainswave therapy has also been shown to help with issues such as vaginal dryness and pain during intercourse, leading to a more fulfilling and enjoyable sexual experience.

The Gainswave therapy process is quick, easy, and safe. The therapy is performed in a clinical setting and involves subcutaneous injections of the shockwave therapy solution. The procedure is non-invasive and typically takes less than 30

minutes to complete. Patients can return to their normal activities immediately following the therapy and there is no downtime required.

One of the key benefits of Gainswave therapy is that it is a non-surgical, non-invasive treatment option. Unlike other treatments for sexual performance and sensitivity issues, such as surgery or prescription medications, Gainswave therapy does not require any incisions or long recovery periods. Additionally, Gainswave therapy does not have any significant side effects, making it a safe and effective option for those looking to improve their sexual performance and sensitivity.

Gainswave therapy is a cutting-edge treatment option for individuals looking to improve their sexual performance and sensitivity. The therapy has been shown to be highly effective in both men and women, providing a non-surgical, non-invasive solution to common sexual performance and sensitivity issues. With its quick, easy, and safe process, Gainswave therapy is a great option for those looking to enhance their sexual satisfaction and experience.

It's important to note that Gainswave therapy is not a one-time solution and results may vary from person to person. Patients may need multiple treatments to achieve the desired results. It's also important to consult with a qualified healthcare provider to determine if Gainswave therapy is the right option for you.

Females can improve Libido and Orgasm with the following medications:

- **PT-141 Subcutaneous Injection**
Peptide taken as needed and shown to improve sexual desire, libido and orgasm for up to 72 hours.
- **Intranasal Oxytocin 6mL**
Peptide, known as the "Love Hormone" and shown to enhance bonding between partners, control and orgasm.
- **Sexual Satisfaction Cream**
Combination cream shown to enhance female sexual satisfaction by improving ease of stimulation and increasing the intensity of orgasms.



Males can improve Libido and Orgasm with the following medications:

- **PT-141 Subcutaneous Injection**
Peptide taken as needed and shown to improve sexual desire, libido and orgasm for up to 72 hours.
- **Intranasal Oxytocin 6mL**
Peptide known as the "Love Hormone" and shown to enhance bonding between partners, control and orgasm.
- **Enhance Male Cream**
Combination Rapid Dissolve Tablet shown to enhance male sexual response, including erection, desire, orgasm and satisfaction.

*Individual results may vary

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The Matterhorn Method: Eliminating Pain and Inspiring Hope

By Angela Puchalla, MS, ATC, LAT

As we age, we are constantly fighting an uphill battle of pain and physical limitations. When our body starts to break down, we are unable to perform the activities that we want and the mental burden becomes as great as the physical one. Many patients bounce from doctor to doctor without ever getting to the root cause of their problem. This can be extremely frustrating and causes many to lose hope.

Naples based Matterhorn Fit, has a solution. Through their proprietary process, called the Matterhorn Method, they have been able to successfully treat over 70 professional athletes, 11 Olympians, and thousands of SW Florida residents in as little as two weeks. In 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 are still in pain.. When you address pain, injury, and movement dysfunction from a neurological level, the results are fast 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 fast 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. “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 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
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The Advantages of Home Health Care for Seniors: A Pathway to Comfort, Safety, and Independence

Shopping for home health care for a senior is akin to navigating the options when purchasing a new car. Just as selecting a vehicle involves weighing factors like reliability, safety features, and comfort, choosing the right care for your loved one requires careful consideration of various factors. While opting for the cheapest model might seem tempting initially, the adage "you get what you pay for" rings true in both scenarios. Regarding senior care, home health care emerges as the premium option, offering unparalleled benefits that prioritize personalized attention, reduced risk, and enhanced independence. For caregivers and seniors alike, understanding these advantages is pivotal in making informed decisions about their healthcare journey.

Personalized Care Tailored to Individual Needs

One of the primary advantages of home health care is its ability to provide personalized care tailored to everyone's unique needs. According to a study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, personalized care plans crafted by home health professionals have been shown to improve health outcomes for seniors significantly. These plans encompass a comprehensive range of services, including skilled nursing, rehabilitation therapies, medication management, and assistance with activities of daily living.

Reduced Risk of Infections and Hospital Readmissions
Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveal that seniors are at a higher risk of contracting infections during hospital stays, with infections accounting for a significant portion of hospital readmissions among this demographic. Home health care mitigates this risk by providing care in the familiar and controlled environment of one's home, where exposure to infectious agents is minimized. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) found that seniors receiving home health care experienced lower hospital readmission rates than those receiving care in institutional settings.

Promoting Independence and Quality of Life

Maintaining independence and quality of life is paramount for seniors who wish to age in place or receive extra support while residing in assisted living facilities. Home health care empowers seniors to retain a sense of autonomy and dignity by enabling them to receive care in a setting that aligns with their preferences and lifestyle choices. Research conducted by the National Institute on Aging underscores the



positive impact of home-based care on seniors' emotional well-being, social engagement, and overall satisfaction with their care experience.

Empowering Caregivers with Support and Respite

Home health care is a vital source of support and respite for family caregivers, alleviating the physical, emotional, and financial burdens associated with caregiving responsibilities. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, home health services provide professional assistance with caregiving tasks and offer educational resources, counseling, and caregiver support programs. This holistic approach enables caregivers to fulfill their roles more effectively while maintaining their health and well-being.

Home health care benefits for seniors and their caregivers are profound and far-reaching. By embracing this model of care, individuals can experience the comfort of familiar surroundings, reduce the risk of infections and hospital readmissions, and preserve their independence and quality of life. As the demand for home health services continues to increase, caregivers and seniors must explore this option as a viable and compassionate pathway to holistic care and support.

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How Do Mycotoxins from Mold Spread?

By Scott Briggs
American Mold Experts of SWFL, LLC

What are mycotoxins?

Many of you may not have heard about mycotoxins, so let's start at the beginning. Many common molds produce a byproduct called mycotoxins. As the name implies, these are toxic chemical molecules (non-living) produced by mold in a colony. For mold, they serve two purposes: a) as a waste product, similar to how human bodies produce waste, and b) the poison helps the mold thrive against competitors in their environment, such as bacteria.

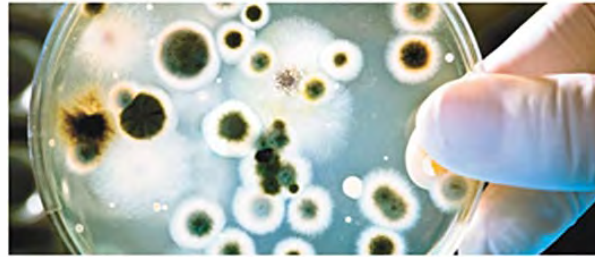
But how do they spread and cause problems for humans?

They become aerosolized. Think about hairspray or spray paint—these are particles distributed by compressed air.

Mold in your home, even inside your walls, can be affected by air as well. Many things can create airflow in your home, including walking around, vacuuming, running a fan, temperature changes, storms, and running the AC or heater.

A mold colony releases spores, as well as many spore fragments and mycotoxins that can travel on these spores and fragments or even solo. Once released, mycotoxins can also float around and end up stuck to dust, dander, smoke, and other particles in your home.

Because mycotoxins are incredibly small, they end up everywhere and can easily travel through your HVAC system. They can lodge in your books, clothes,



appliance motors, and more. They can even travel with you if you move to a new house.

They cannot be 'killed,' but they can be cleaned or transformed into harmless compounds by things like enzyme formulations.

How can you keep yourself safe?

Evaluate your home:

1. Is your humidity controlled and always under 55-60%? Purchase several humidity meters and place them throughout your home to keep a regular check. During our Florida cooler months, the HVAC may not run as much, and that is the main vehicle that dehumidifies our home.
2. Do you see any visible mold? Mold in our shower is common, but if you see mold on drywall or furniture, then you need to be concerned. Mold is microscopic, and by the time you see a 1" square, it contains millions of spores.
3. Clean your home regularly. Mold loves to feed off dust.

4. Check for leaks under sinks and around the house. Mold starts to form colonies between 48-72 hours.

5. Living in Florida, I personally do not have any raw wood, wicker baskets, wreaths, or rattan furniture—mold loves it.

This is not an exhaustive list but a few items to keep in mind. If you have had previous mold remediation but still have possible health issues, it might be mycotoxins still lurking around. Traditional mold remediation (biological remediation) does not address the remediation of mycotoxins (chemical remediation). Very few companies address both mold and mycotoxins.



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THE AUTOIMMUNE THEORY IN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

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

For decades, Alzheimer's disease has been widely considered a brain disorder primarily caused by the accumulation of beta-amyloid plaques, abnormal protein deposits that disrupt brain function. However, emerging research challenges this perspective. Scientists now suggest that Alzheimer's may be an autoimmune disease, marking a significant shift in understanding and potential treatment approaches.

Beta-amyloid, long thought to be a problematic protein, may actually play a critical role in the brain's immune system, defending against injury and infection. Unfortunately, due to the molecular similarity between bacterial membranes and brain cell membranes, beta-amyloid may mistakenly target healthy brain cells, leading to chronic inflammation, tissue damage, and cognitive decline.

This autoimmune misfire redefines Alzheimer's as a disorder of the immune system, emphasizing the role of inflammation and immune dysregulation in its progression. This paradigm shift opens new avenues for treatment, focusing on regulating immune responses rather than solely targeting beta-amyloid accumulation. This theory aligns with broader research into autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and multiple sclerosis, which share common themes of immune system malfunction and systemic inflammation.

How Compounding Pharmacies Can Help with Autoimmune Issues and Alzheimer's Disease

Compounding pharmacies like Creative Scripts in Naples, FL, offer personalized solutions that address the unique needs of individuals dealing with autoimmune conditions and Alzheimer's disease. Here's how:

1. Immune System Modulation

Compounding pharmacies can create custom formulations of medications and supplements aimed at reducing inflammation and supporting immune balance. These may include:

- **Low-Dose Naltrexone (LDN):** Shown to modulate immune responses and reduce inflammation, LDN is a promising therapy for many autoimmune conditions and potentially Alzheimer's disease.
- **Antioxidant Supplements:** Formulations containing glutathione, vitamin C, or CoQ10 can help combat oxidative stress and support brain health.



2. Hormone Balancing

Autoimmune diseases often involve hormonal imbalances, particularly in conditions affecting women. Compounded bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (BHRT) can support hormone levels, reduce inflammation, and improve overall well-being.

3. Customized Anti-Inflammatory Medications

Chronic inflammation plays a pivotal role in autoimmune diseases and possibly Alzheimer's. Compounding pharmacies can create tailor-made anti-inflammatory medications, such as:

- **Topical Creams:** For localized pain and inflammation in autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis.
- **Oral Medications:** Customized dosages of medications to minimize side effects and maximize effectiveness.

4. Cognitive Support Supplements

For Alzheimer's patients, compounding pharmacies can provide supplements that target brain health, such as:

- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** Essential for reducing brain inflammation and supporting cognitive function.
- **Curcumin:** Known for its anti-inflammatory properties, curcumin may help protect brain cells.
- **Phosphatidylserine:** A compound that supports memory and cognitive performance.

5. Gastrointestinal Health Support

Since gut health is closely linked to immune function, compounded probiotics and gut-healing

supplements (like L-glutamine or zinc carnosine) can help address underlying inflammation and enhance overall immune health.

6. Alternative Delivery Methods

For patients who struggle with oral medications, compounding pharmacies can create alternative delivery methods, such as transdermal creams, sublingual drops, or injectable formulations, ensuring optimal absorption and ease of use.

Moving Forward

The autoimmune theory of Alzheimer's highlights the complex interplay between immune function and chronic diseases. Creative Scripts Pharmacy is uniquely positioned to help patients navigate these challenges by offering personalized treatments that address inflammation, support immune health, and enhance cognitive function. If you or a loved one is managing an autoimmune condition or concerned about Alzheimer's disease, consult with a health-care provider to explore how customized care from a compounding pharmacy can make a difference.

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Nurturing Pet Dental Health Amidst Chocolate Hazards

February marks Pet Dental Health Month, a time dedicated to the well-being of our beloved furry companions. Simultaneously, the sweet delights of candy season beckon, accompanied by the looming threat of chocolate toxicity for pets. In this delicate dance between dental care and chocolate safety, responsible pet ownership takes center stage.

Pet Dental Health Month: A Spotlight on Smiles

Pet Dental Health Month is an annual reminder to prioritize the often-overlooked aspect of our pets' overall health – their dental hygiene. Beyond the endearing wag of tails and playful barks, a healthy smile is indicative of a thriving pet. Dental issues can impact an animal's quality of life, causing discomfort and affecting their ability to eat. Hence, this designated month encourages pet owners to take proactive steps in caring for their furry friends' teeth.

Routine dental care involves a combination of professional cleanings by veterinarians and at-home practices. Introducing pets to toothbrushes and pet-friendly toothpaste is a positive step. Additionally, dental treats and toys designed to reduce plaque and tartar buildup contribute to oral health. Pet Dental Health Month serves as an annual check-in, urging guardians to schedule vet visits for comprehensive dental examinations.

Chocolate Toxicity: A Hidden Menace in Sweet Indulgence

Amidst the festivities, the allure of chocolates is omnipresent. However, many pet owners may not be fully aware of the potential danger chocolate poses to their animals. Chocolate contains theobromine, a stimulant that affects the central nervous system and cardiovascular system in pets. Dogs and cats metabolize theobromine more slowly than humans, making them susceptible to toxicity.

Dark chocolate and baking chocolate contain higher theobromine levels, intensifying the risk. Symptoms of chocolate toxicity include restlessness, increased heart rate, vomiting, diarrhea, and, in severe cases, seizures. The urgency in addressing chocolate ingestion cannot be overstated – immediate veterinary attention is crucial.

Balancing Treats and Safety: A Pet-Approved Approach

As pet owners, finding the equilibrium between indulging in candy season and safeguarding our pets demands thoughtful consideration. Opting for pet-friendly treats that mimic the festive spirit without the harmful ingredients is a creative approach. Engaging pets in the celebration with safe alternatives, such as pet-friendly toys and treats, ensures they feel included without compromising their health.



Prevention becomes paramount in avoiding emergencies related to chocolate ingestion. Pet-proofing living spaces by storing chocolates securely and educating family members, especially children, about the risks associated with sharing human treats with pets is fundamental. Vigilance during festive periods can avert potential hazards and contribute to a joyous, worry-free celebration for both pets and their owners.

In conclusion, Pet Dental Health Month serves as a timely reminder to invest in our pets' smiles, promoting overall well-being. Simultaneously, navigating the risks of chocolate toxicity during candy season necessitates a vigilant and responsible approach to pet care. As guardians of these loyal companions, our commitment to their health extends beyond festivities, ensuring a lifetime of happiness and health.

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Sexual Health and Cardiovascular Disease

By James V. Talano, MD, MBA, FACC

Sexual health is a vital component of overall well-being, yet its connection to cardiovascular health is often overlooked. As a cardiologist, understanding the interplay between sexual function and heart health is crucial for comprehensive patient care. This article delves into the relationship between cardiovascular disease (CVD) and sexual health, highlighting the importance of recognizing sexual dysfunction as a potential indicator of underlying heart conditions.

The Link Between Erectile Dysfunction and Heart Disease

Erectile dysfunction (ED), defined as the inability to achieve or maintain an erection satisfactory for sexual performance, affects a significant number of men, particularly as they age. Notably, ED is not just a quality-of-life issue but also a potential harbinger of cardiovascular disease. The University of Chicago Medicine emphasizes that ED may be the first sign of a heart or vascular issue requiring medical attention. This is because both ED and CVD share common risk factors, including hypertension, diabetes, smoking, obesity, and dyslipidemia. The pathophysiology involves endothelial dysfunction and atherosclerosis, which impair blood flow in both the penile and coronary arteries.

Studies have shown that men with ED are at a higher risk of developing heart disease, especially younger men in their 40s and 50s who may not exhibit other cardiovascular symptoms. Therefore, the onset of ED should prompt a thorough cardiovascular evaluation to identify and mitigate potential heart-related issues.

Sexual Health Concerns in Patients with Cardiovascular Disease

Patients diagnosed with cardiovascular conditions often experience sexual dysfunction, which can manifest as reduced libido, ED, or difficulties achieving orgasm. The American Heart Association notes that sexual health concerns are common in patients with all types of cardiac disease, including those with coronary artery disease and individuals recovering from a heart attack. The psychological impact of a cardiac event, coupled with concerns about the safety of sexual activity, can contribute to these issues.

It's essential for healthcare providers to address sexual health proactively with their patients. Open discussions can alleviate anxiety, dispel misconceptions, and lead to appropriate interventions that enhance both sexual function and overall quality of life.



The Cardiovascular and Sexual Health Clinic: A Holistic Approach

Recognizing the intricate relationship between heart health and sexual function, institutions like Yale Medicine have established specialized clinics. The Cardiovascular and Sexual Health Clinic at Yale offers comprehensive evaluations for men with early cardiovascular or peripheral vascular disease and sexual dysfunction. This multidisciplinary approach ensures that patients receive tailored care addressing both cardiovascular and sexual health concerns.

Such programs underscore the importance of viewing sexual health as an integral component of cardiovascular care, promoting early detection and management of potential heart diseases.

Addressing Sexual Health in Women with Cardiovascular Disease

While much of the focus has been on men's sexual health, it's imperative to acknowledge that women with cardiovascular disease also face sexual health challenges. The Cedars-Sinai Women's Heart Disease & Health program provides focused training in clinical, basic, and translational research in cardiovascular disease in women, emphasizing sex and gender differences. Women may experience decreased libido, vaginal dryness, or discomfort during intercourse, especially after cardiac events or procedures.

Healthcare providers should create a supportive environment where female patients feel comfortable discussing these issues. Addressing hormonal changes, providing counseling, and considering safe therapeutic options can significantly improve sexual health outcomes for women with CVD.

The Importance of Lifestyle Modifications

Lifestyle factors play a pivotal role in both cardiovascular and sexual health. Encouraging patients to adopt heart-healthy habits can lead to improvements in sexual function. Key recommendations include:

- **Regular Physical Activity:** Engaging in moderate exercise enhances cardiovascular fitness and blood flow, benefiting sexual function.
- **Balanced Diet:** A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins supports vascular health.
- **Smoking Cessation:** Smoking damages blood vessels and impairs circulation, exacerbating both ED and heart disease.
- **Stress Management:** Chronic stress negatively impacts heart health and can lead to sexual dysfunction. Techniques such as mindfulness and counseling can be beneficial.

By addressing these modifiable risk factors, patients can experience improvements in both heart and sexual health.

Conclusion - The interplay between sexual health and cardiovascular disease is complex and significant. As cardiologists, it's our responsibility to recognize sexual dysfunction as a potential indicator of underlying heart conditions and to address these concerns with empathy and expertise. Through comprehensive care, patient education, and lifestyle interventions, we can enhance the quality of life for our patients, ensuring that both their hearts and sexual well-being are optimally managed.

Here are some links to reputable sources that provide information on sexual health and its connection to cardiovascular health:

1. American Heart Association: Sexual Activity and Heart Disease
2. University of Chicago Medicine: Erectile Dysfunction as an Early Warning for Heart Disease
3. Yale Medicine: Cardiovascular and Sexual Health Clinic
4. Cedars-Sinai Medical Center: Women's Heart Center: Addressing Cardiovascular Health in Women
5. Cleveland Clinic: Erectile Dysfunction and Heart Disease Connection
6. Mayo Clinic: Sexual Health After a Heart Attack

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One of the primary components of the panel is the Complete Blood Count (CBC), which examines red and white blood cells, platelets, and hemoglobin levels. This provides crucial information about your immune system function, oxygen-carrying capacity, and ability to fight infections. The CBC can also help identify conditions such as anemia, infections, or blood disorders.

The Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP) is another vital element of the annual check-up. This portion evaluates liver and kidney function, electrolyte and fluid balance, and blood sugar levels. By measuring proteins, enzymes, and minerals in your

blood, the CMP can reveal potential issues with major organ systems before symptoms become apparent.

Lipid profile testing is included to assess cardiovascular health by measuring cholesterol levels – both the "good" HDL and "bad" LDL cholesterol – as well as triglycerides. These results help evaluate your risk for heart disease and stroke, enabling early intervention through lifestyle changes or medical treatment if necessary.

The panel also includes thyroid function tests, which measure hormones that regulate metabolism, energy levels, and various bodily functions. Thyroid disorders are common but often go undiagnosed without proper screening.

Any Lab Test Now makes the testing process straightforward and accessible. Appointments are typically not required, and results are usually available within 24-72 hours. The company's certified laboratories maintain high standards of accuracy and confidentiality, ensuring reliable results you can trust.

Once you receive your results, you can share them with your healthcare provider for interpretation and guidance. This proactive approach to health monitoring can lead to earlier detection of potential health issues, more informed discussions with your doctor, and better-managed healthcare decisions.

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Regular annual check-ups through comprehensive testing can help identify potential health concerns before they become serious issues. By providing a detailed snapshot of your health status, the Annual Check-up Panel at Any Lab Test Now serves as a fundamental tool in maintaining and optimizing your well-being through informed, proactive healthcare management.

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Three Factors That Improve Your Heart Health and Reduce the Risk of Alzheimer's

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

When embarking on the journey of wellness in your golden years, it's crucial to remember and protect the intricate relationship between your cardiovascular health and cognitive well-being. February, known as American Heart Month, provides us with the perfect opportunity to shed light on a topic close to our hearts - the connection between Alzheimer's and heart health. Research has shown a compelling connection between cardiovascular health and the risk of developing Alzheimer's or other dementias.

The Heart-Brain Axis

Often, we think of our organs as separate, but they all exist in the same eco system; the intricate network of blood vessels that nourishes the brain is influenced by the same factors that impact heart health. Picture the heart and the brain as interconnected hubs of vitality, working in harmony to sustain our overall well-being. The heart pumps oxygen-rich blood to every nook and cranny of the body, including the brain. This symbiotic relationship is commonly referred to as the "heart-brain axis." When disruptions occur in the cardiovascular system, they can reverberate through this axis, potentially affecting cognitive functions.

Alzheimer's and Cardiovascular Risk Factors

Several shared risk factors contribute to both Alzheimer's disease and cardiovascular issues. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity are among the culprits that can compromise both heart health and cognitive function. By addressing these risk factors, individuals can potentially reduce their susceptibility to both conditions.

Now, let us explore how lifestyle choices play a pivotal role in safeguarding our heart and brain. Engaging in regular physical activity, maintaining a heart-healthy diet, and getting adequate sleep, are all proactive steps towards supporting overall well-being.

Movement Matters

Physical movement is one of the greatest things you can do for your heart and brain health. But what if you are not in good health already? Often,



people give up because the odds seem greater than the potential impact. Nevertheless, research has shown that any physical activity improves cardiovascular health and brain health. Of course, it is ideal to aim for movement every day. It is more important, however, to remember that all movement, even minimal movement, is better than no movement at all. To get started, look at your existing amount of physical activity and ask how can you move just 1% more today than you did yesterday? You might be wondering, what about our family and friends who use assistive technology, like wheelchairs or walkers? Considering the movement they can do is important. Can they raise their arms or do leg raises while seated? Doing what you can, with what you have, where you are is a great way to build stamina.

Food Matters

It is not just physical activity that makes great heart and brain health. Food matters, too. Every food that is good for your heart is also good for your brain. Much like we can build stamina in exercise, we can also build better food habits. If you are someone that does not eat a lot of fruits or vegetables, practice adding one to a meal. Sometimes getting more vegetables and fruit can be as simple as chopping the lettuce for a salad or slicing the apple instead of eating it whole. Meat is not always bad,

but instead of having a plate full of meat, try eating equal amounts of fruits, vegetables and meat. In the later stages of life, many people become disconnected to their food because someone else is preparing it. They lose touch with the diversity of all the amazing food options. If variety is the spice of life, it can also literally be the spice on your food. If you have control over the food you eat, try a new recipe, add a new spice to your repertoire. Even these little changes bring big results and not just to our physical body. The more we take care of ourself, the better our self-esteem and sense of adventure.

Get Your ZZZZ's

Sleep is critical to heart and brain health. It might also be the one thing we can improve which has the greatest leverage on our health. When we sleep, our body may be still, but our brain is highly active. Our lymphatic system is busy removing toxins which are responsible for neurological disorders, including Alzheimer's. Quality sleep also improves heart health by lowering blood pressure, which is a common risk factor for Alzheimer's. If you are having trouble falling or staying asleep, talk to your doctor. There may be simple solutions.

In Conclusion

As we celebrate American Heart Month, let's embark on a journey of self-care that encompasses both heart and mind. By understanding the intricate relationship between cardiovascular health and brain health, we empower ourselves to make informed choices that contribute to a vibrant and fulfilling life. Together, let's embrace the wisdom of age with grace, ensuring that our hearts and minds continue to beat in harmony for years to come.

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UNDERSTANDING CBD: NATURE'S WELLNESS COMPOUND

CBD, short for cannabidiol, has emerged as a prominent natural compound that's revolutionizing the wellness industry. This non-psychoactive substance, derived from the cannabis plant, has garnered significant attention for its potential therapeutic properties while offering users the benefits of cannabis without the intoxicating effects associated with THC.

At its core, CBD is one of over 100 cannabinoids found in the cannabis plant. Unlike its well-known cousin THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), CBD doesn't produce a "high" or alter consciousness. Instead, it interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system (ECS), a complex network of receptors that helps regulate various physiological processes including mood, sleep, appetite, and pain sensation.

The extraction of CBD typically comes from hemp, a variety of cannabis containing high levels of CBD and minimal THC (legally less than 0.3% in most countries). This extraction process can be accomplished through various methods, including CO2 extraction, ethanol extraction, or oil infusion, with CO2 extraction being considered the gold standard for purity and safety.

Research into CBD's potential benefits has expanded dramatically in recent years. Studies suggest that CBD may help manage anxiety, reduce inflammation, alleviate chronic pain, and improve sleep quality. Some research indicates it might have neuroprotective



properties and could potentially aid in treating certain forms of epilepsy. In fact, the FDA has approved a CBD-based medication called Epidiolex for treating specific types of seizures.

CBD products come in various forms to suit different preferences and needs. These include oils and tinctures, capsules, edibles, topical creams, and vaping products. Each delivery method offers unique advantages – oils provide precise dosing and quick absorption, while topicals target specific areas for localized relief. Edibles offer a convenient and tasty option, though they typically take longer to take effect.

Despite its growing popularity, consumers should approach CBD with informed caution. The market remains largely unregulated in many regions, making it crucial to purchase from reputable manufacturers who provide third-party lab testing results. These tests verify the product's CBD content and ensure it's free from contaminants like pesticides and heavy metals.

When considering CBD use, it's important to start with low doses and gradually increase them while monitoring your body's response. While CBD is generally considered safe, it can interact with certain medications, particularly those metabolized by the

liver. Consulting with a healthcare provider before starting CBD is advisable, especially for individuals taking other medications.

Looking ahead, the CBD industry continues to evolve with ongoing research revealing new potential applications and benefits. As regulations develop and scientific understanding deepens, CBD's role in wellness and healthcare may expand further. For now, it remains a promising natural compound that has captured the attention of both the scientific community and health-conscious consumers seeking alternative approaches to wellness.

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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.

**Nina Azwoir, First Vice President of Investments,
Wintrust Wealth Management.**

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SETTING BOUNDARIES TO PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

In the intricate tapestry of life, maintaining a delicate balance between personal and external demands is vital for mental well-being. Setting and negotiating personal boundaries is a cornerstone for creating a harmonious and stress-resistant lifestyle. As a mental health provider, Dr. Capiola understands the significance of cultivating boundaries that align with individual needs, values, and priorities. In this guide, Dr. Capiola lists steps to empower you to establish boundaries effectively. From self-reflection to assertive communication and consistent enforcement, these steps guide you toward reduced stressors, improved relationships, and enhanced mental resilience. Let's embark on this transformative exploration of boundary-setting for a healthier and more fulfilling life.

HOW TO SET BOUNDARIES TO REDUCE STRESSORS IN YOUR LIFE:

- 1. Self-Reflection:** Reflect on your needs, values, and limits. Identify areas of your life where you feel overwhelmed or stressed. Consider past situations that have caused discomfort and recognize patterns that indicate a need for boundaries.
- 2. Identify Stressors:** Pinpoint specific stressors in your life, whether related to work, relationships, or other aspects. This could include excessive workload, intrusive requests, or emotional demands. Understanding the sources of stress helps in creating targeted boundaries.

- 3. Clarify Your Values:** Clearly define your values and priorities. This clarity will guide you in setting boundaries that align with your core beliefs. For example, if family time is a priority, establish boundaries around work hours to ensure dedicated time for your loved ones.

- 4. Communicate Effectively:** Practice open and assertive communication when setting boundaries. Clearly express your needs, feelings, and limits to others. Use "I" statements to convey your perspective without sounding accusatory. For instance, say, "I need some quiet time in the evenings to relax and recharge."

- 5. Learn to Say No:** Recognize that declining requests or commitments that exceed your capacity is okay. Saying no is not a rejection; it's a healthy acknowledgment of your limitations. Prioritize your well-being by avoiding overcommitment.

- 6. Set Clear Limits:** Establish clear and specific boundaries. Whether designating work hours, specifying personal time, or defining expectations in relationships, ensure that your limits are well-defined. This clarity helps others understand and respect your boundaries.

- 7. Consistent Enforcement:** Be consistent in enforcing your boundaries. When others witness your commitment to maintaining limits, they are more likely to respect them. Consistency also reinforces the importance of these boundaries for your mental health.

- 8. Utilize Technology Mindfully:** Set boundaries around technology use in the digital age. Designate specific times for checking emails or social media and

create technology-free zones in your home. This helps prevent the intrusion of work-related stressors into personal time.

- 9. Seek Support:** Share your boundaries with trusted friends, family, or colleagues. A support system that understands and respects your limits can provide reinforcement and encouragement.

- 10. Regularly Assess and Adjust:** Periodically assess the effectiveness of your boundaries. Life circumstances may change, and what worked before might need adjustments. Be flexible and willing to modify boundaries to align with evolving priorities.

- 11. Prioritize Self-Care:** Make self-care a non-negotiable part of your routine. Whether it's dedicating time for relaxation, exercise, or hobbies, prioritize activities that contribute positively to your mental and emotional well-being.

Remember, setting and negotiating boundaries is an ongoing process that requires self-awareness and commitment. Establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries empowers you to create a more balanced and fulfilling life. Schedule a visit with Dr. Capiola to discuss further how to apply these principles to your situation.

If you or someone you love is exhibiting signs of depression or anxiety, there is help in SWFL. Dr. Richard Capiola, MD, is a board-certified psychiatrist with specialty certifications in addiction and forensic psychiatry and over 31 years of experience in the medical field. He graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine in 1990. Be sure to call ahead with Dr. Capiola to book an appointment.

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Dr Capiola's mission is to focus on the strengths inherent in all of us to help overcome any problems and life stresses that make us feel stuck and limited. He combines psychotherapy and medication management into all patient visits.

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Eating Heart Healthy Meals Just Got a Whole Lot Easier

Eating more plant-based foods doesn't mean you have to be vegan or vegetarian, although those options are good for some individuals. The Mediterranean diet, the MIND or Dash diet are all viable options for individuals that want to have healthy cardiovascular systems but still consume some animal products. Eating plant-based foods while consuming lean proteins like finfish, shellfish or poultry can nonetheless be very healthy. With a heart-healthy diet, the best advice is to load up on fresh produce, limit refined or processed foods, reduce alcohol and sugar, eliminate processed meats and excessive saturated fats. If being vegan or vegetarian is better suited for one's personal preference or needs, that is absolutely a remarkable way to stay healthy and protect the heart. But the one thing we know from various studies and research is that processed carbohydrates, sugars, and trans fats cause inflammation and can exacerbate cardiovascular disorders.



Speaking to a medical professional is essential to learn which foods are best for your condition.

Meal planning, grocery shopping and food preparation can be challenging for seniors. That's why Chefs for Seniors specializes in fresh, nutritious meals that are cooked right in the comfort of your home, AND there is no shopping or planning involved on your part.

What is Chefs for Seniors?

As individuals age, shopping and preparing meals can become a difficult task. With so many other issues to worry about such as being a caregiver, suffering from arthritis, or other disorders that limit mobility, cooking is one thing that many seniors wish they didn't have to do. 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.

Why Chefs For Seniors?

Our Mission is to Provide Amazing Food and Proper Nutrition

- Find peace of mind knowing our personal chefs will handle the 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

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.

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.

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. 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.

What if I Have a Special Diet or Dietary Concerns?

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.

Do I Have to Supply the Cooking Equipment?

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!

You don't have to be a senior to enjoy the professional chef prepared foods! Contact Chefs For Seniors today to find out more.

For any questions, please contact your local Chefs For Seniors Office:

Phone: **239-776-1758**

Email: bill.springer@chefsforseniors.com



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Cleaning Tips to Keep the Flu Virus at Bay and Out of Your Home

Flu season is among us and with an increase in the number of people in the area for the winter, preventing the flu and other viruses can be difficult this time of year. The muscle aches, fever, chills and fatigue that accompany the virus affect five to 20 percent of the U.S. population each year and hospitalize hundreds of thousands, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Many of us are armed with an array of physical preventatives — from flu-shots to Emergency-C packets, neti-pots to home remedies — but what are we doing to stop the illness from spreading in our own homes, amongst our families and community members?

MaidPro expert cleaners, offer these tips to help you clean for health year-round and to stop the flu virus from invading your home:

1. Wash your hands regularly in warm soapy water. For quick clean-up, use antibacterial hand sanitizer. Make an effort not to touch your mouth or nose without first washing your hands.
2. Wear rubber gloves when cleaning household items to protect yourself. By wearing gloves, you will be less likely to touch your eyes, nose or mouth, which are havens for the flu virus.

3. Spray disinfecting spray on a cloth, wipe toys, door-knobs, appliance handles, keyboards, remote controls, light switches, phones and facial tissue box covers. Viruses can live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces.

4. Wash items like towels and bedding in hot water with soap if someone has been sick in the home. Be sure not to share these items until they are thoroughly cleaned.

5. Change vacuum bags monthly or more frequently:

6. Boil toothbrushes for one minute in water and vinegar, run through a dishwasher cycle or purchase new brushes.

7. Use antibacterial wipes on your keyboard, phone and pens to protect yourself from spreading germs at work.

8. Wash telephones, cabinet handles, doorknobs, light switches and refrigerator door handles using a slightly dampened cloth with a solution of mild detergent and warm water.

9. Wash mop heads in a solution of ¼ cup bleach and one gallon water, dry thoroughly, then store. Not only will mop heads pick up germs and dirt, but they also can also grow mold and mildew if they don't dry out completely.



10. Disinfect the bathroom and kitchen, especially the faucet and toilet handles, daily. The kitchen and bathroom are the most used rooms in the home and possibly the most contaminated.

MaidPro is a residential cleaning service that uses a tried and true approach to clean each home for health, combining environmentally preferable cleaning supplies and state-of-the-art equipment to maintain the healthiest living environment possible.

If you're worried about the flu virus showing up uninvited, give MaidPro a call to schedule a cleaning.



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MEMORY MATTERS

By Neuropsychiatric Research Center of SW Florida

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Manage any other medical conditions with your health care provider. Conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes are all risks for heart disease and are not good for your brain.

With appropriate intervention, these conditions can be managed effectively, and doing so helps your heart and your brain.

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

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

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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What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

Weight-watchers. Nutrisystem. Mediterranean diet. Paleo. Living healthy has become a craze, although obesity in our country, rather legitimizes it. For many people it is about looking and feeling better, living longer, stronger and disease-free. These are all important reasons for eating clean, exercising, and learning to rest our bodies sufficiently.

For Christians, however, trying to maintain healthy habits finds its motivation in more than adopting diet fads to longevity and better quality of life. Taking care of our bodies is stewardship. That is, it is a reflection of our recognition of having been created by God, and how our lives can be instruments in his hands to serve and honor him on earth. Of course, God can use both the healthy and the unfit for his purposes, including the sick, feeble, and dying. Human worth and value is not in question.

The reality is that our earthly lives are only a speck in the sands of eternity. However, Christ followers understand that life doesn't belong to them. It is a gift from a Good Father who entrusted them with a brief span of years that should be invested in loving others and making our world a better place. For those who have believed in Christ and experienced God's forgiveness of sin, the reason for taking care of their bodies goes beyond living

longer and healthier. It's about honoring Jesus Christ with all of life, including the way they take care of their bodies.

In his book, *"The Unknown God: Searching for spiritual fulfillment,"* Oxford University professor, Alister McGrath, describes the parable of Plato's Cave, a story about people enslaved inside the cave oblivious to the reality that existed on the outside beyond the flickering shadows which they knew. That is, until the day someone was able to find their way out and discover a world beyond description, a world of beauty and splendor. McGrath writes, "Our desires have become attached to things that are little more than shadows, when they are meant to be attached to something which cannot decay or disappoint" (32).

How does this relate to healthy living? Focusing on living healthier and longer, like any other pursuit we might obsess about, really reveals a spiritual longing in our souls for something more: *eternity*. Whether is it longing for a "perfect" relationship that often disenchant, earthly riches that can quickly vanish, or a healthy and strong body that is suddenly brought to a standstill due to an unexpected medical report, our hearts are longing for something beyond what this world can provide.



McGrath probes us to consider this question: "Suppose our longing for fulfillment points to something we have yet to discover? What if our yearning is a clue to the meaning of the universe?" (10). Taking care of your body and staying healthy is a good thing, but it isn't everything. The truth of the matter is, whatever we pursue in life has a way to deceive us to think that by attaining "it" our lives will be complete. They're not. Deep inside a voice continues to remind us that our longings for fulfillment are like signposts in the sky pointing us to something beyond ourselves. Could that something (Someone) be our Creator?

May you achieve physical well-being and wholeness. But may you also discover the gift of eternal life which Jesus promises to all who believe and trust in him alone. "...I have come that they may have life, and have it in abundance" (John 10:10). I would enjoy exploring with you the meaning of life and God.

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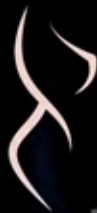
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