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March 2025

Lee Edition - Monthly

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# THE SILENT CONNECTION:

## How Sleep Apnea Affects Kidney Health and Nocturia

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

**S**leep is a fundamental aspect of our overall health, and its impact on various bodily functions is profound. One less reported area when we think of obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), we often focus on its most recognizable symptoms: loud snoring, gasping for air during sleep, and daytime fatigue. However, this common sleep disorder reaches far beyond disrupted sleep patterns, creating a complex relationship with kidney function and nocturia—the need to wake up multiple times during the night to urinate. This connection represents an important but often overlooked aspect of both conditions.

### Understanding Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the muscles in the back of the throat intermittently relax during sleep, causing the airway to narrow or close completely. These brief but frequent interruptions in breathing trigger drops in blood oxygen levels and force the brain to partially wake the sleeper to reopen the airway. While the person may not fully awaken or remember these episodes, they disrupt the natural sleep cycle dozens or even hundreds of times per night.

Affecting approximately 25% of men and 10% of women, OSA's prevalence increases with age and weight. Most concerning is that an estimated 80% of moderate to severe cases remain undiagnosed, leaving many to suffer its systemic consequences unknowingly.

### The Kidney-Sleep Apnea Connection

The relationship between sleep apnea and kidney disease works in multiple directions:

### How Sleep Apnea Affects Kidney Function

When breathing repeatedly stops during sleep, oxygen levels in the blood drop while carbon dioxide levels rise. This creates a cascade of harmful physiological responses:

- 1. Sympathetic Nervous System Activation:** The body experiences a fight-or-flight response, increasing blood pressure and heart rate.
- 2. Oxidative Stress:** The frequent oxygen deprivation and reoxygenation cycles generate damaging free radicals.

**3. Systemic Inflammation:** The body produces inflammatory markers that can damage kidney tissues over time.

**4. Disrupted Hormonal Regulation:** Normal nighttime drops in blood pressure fail to occur, and kidney-regulating hormones like renin and aldosterone become dysregulated.

Research shows that people with untreated OSA have a significantly higher risk of developing chronic kidney disease (CKD). One study found that patients with severe sleep apnea were 94% more likely to develop kidney disease compared to those without the condition.

### How Kidney Disease Affects Sleep

Kidney disease can also exacerbate sleep apnea:

- 1. Fluid Retention:** Compromised kidneys may not effectively remove excess fluid, leading to fluid accumulation in the neck and upper airway tissues, particularly when lying down.
- 2. Uremic Toxins:** These build up in patients with kidney disease and can affect central respiratory drive and upper airway muscle function.

### Nocturia: The Nighttime Nuisance

Nocturia—waking up multiple times at night to urinate—affects quality of life for both OSA and kidney disease patients. Up to 80% of people with sleep apnea report nocturia, compared to about 30% of the general population.

Several mechanisms explain this connection:

- 1. Increased Atrial Natriuretic Peptide (ANP):** The pressure changes in the chest during apnea episodes trigger increased production of ANP, a hormone that promotes sodium and water excretion by the kidneys.
- 2. Reversed Circadian Rhythm of Urine Production:** Normally, urine production decreases at night. OSA disrupts this pattern, causing increased nighttime urine volume.
- 3. Enhanced Sensory Awareness:** Frequent partial arousals from sleep may make patients more aware of bladder fullness that might otherwise be ignored during deeper sleep.

### Breaking the Cycle

The good news is that treating OSA can significantly improve both kidney function and nocturia:

- **CPAP Therapy:** Continuous Positive Airway Pressure, the gold standard treatment for OSA, has been shown to reduce protein in urine (a marker of kidney damage) and decrease nocturia episodes by up to 65% in some patients.
- **Weight Loss:** Even modest weight reduction can improve both OSA severity and kidney function.
- **Blood Pressure Control:** Managing hypertension helps protect kidney function and can reduce OSA severity.

### The Importance of Early Detection

Given that both conditions can remain silent until advanced stages, screening for OSA in patients with kidney disease—and vice versa—represents an important preventive opportunity. Common symptoms warranting evaluation include daytime sleepiness, loud snoring, witnessed breathing pauses during sleep, morning headaches, and of course, frequent nighttime urination.

By recognizing and addressing this important connection between sleep apnea, kidney disease, and nocturia, healthcare providers can better manage these interrelated conditions and potentially slow disease progression, ultimately improving both quality of life and long-term health outcomes for millions of affected patients.

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# HEARING AND MEMORY LOSS ARE CONNECTED

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



## Hearing Loss Affects the Brain

Hearing loss doesn't just mean an older adult needs to turn up the TV. It's been linked to a range of health problems, including dementia. The latest aging research not only shows the two are connected but also leads scientists to believe that hearing loss may cause dementia. If you have hearing loss, you have a greater chance of developing dementia, according to a 2020 Lancet commission report that lists hearing loss as one of the top risk factors for dementia.

## Brain Strain and Social Isolation

Hearing loss can make the brain work harder, forcing it to strain to hear and fill in the gaps. That comes at the expense of other thinking and memory systems. Another possibility is hearing loss causes the aging brain to shrink more quickly. A third possibility is that hearing loss makes people less socially engaged, which is hugely essential to remain intellectually stimulated. If you can't hear very well, you may not go out as much, so the brain is less engaged and active.

## Quantifying Hearing Loss's Impact

Hearing loss is estimated to account for 8% of dementia cases. This means that hearing loss may be responsible for 800,000 of the nearly ten million new cases of dementia diagnosed each year.

Studies from the National Institute of Health show an association between hearing impairment and dementia while supporting the hypothesis that hearing impairment contributes to cognitive dysfunction in older adults.

## Reducing the Risk of Dementia

Johns Hopkins is leading a large National Institute on Aging study to see if hearing aids can safeguard seniors' mental processes. The study has multiple locations and has recruited nearly 1,000 people ages 70-84 with hearing loss. One group is provided hearing aids, while another group receives aging education. By early 2023, the study should provide definitive results on whether treating hearing loss reduces cognitive decline risk. In essence, we'll know whether the use of hearing aids can potentially reduce brain aging and the risk of dementia.

## Other Effects on Health

Hearing loss has long-term effects on health. It's believed to increase the risk for falls and depression. It also leads to higher health care costs:

People with hearing loss have, over ten years, a 47% increased hospitalization rate. Hearing loss is associated with an increased risk of institutionalization, an increased risk for dementia, and increased health care costs overall for all ages.

## In Summary

Individuals with hearing loss are at an increased risk for developing cognitive decline and dementia. New research finds that treating hearing loss is the single most modifiable risk factor for reducing the risk of dementia. While your risk increases with the degree of hearing loss, it is essential to note that even mild hearing loss can increase your risk by as much as 200%! If you or a loved one struggles to hear clearly, we can help reduce your risk of dementia in Cape Coral and Fort Myers, FL., with our 5-star-rated hearing care.

**John Nobile, HAS, BC-HIS, ACA** is a licensed hearing aid specialist and an ACA-certified audioprosthologist who is also board-certified in hearing instrument sciences. With over 55 years of experience, he has transformed thousands of lives in Cape Coral



and Fort Myers, FL, by providing his patients with the gift of sound. He is also a former veteran committed to providing all veterans with free services.

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# TWO ORGANIZATIONS, ONE GOAL

## PHYSICIANS REGIONAL AND FC NAPLES AIM TO KEEP PLAYERS, COLLIER COUNTY HEALTHY

**W**hen FC Naples players take the field this season, they do so with a peace of mind knowing they are backed by orthopedic specialists from Physicians Regional Healthcare System.

Physicians Regional is collaborating with FC Naples, Collier County's first professional sports team, to ensure the players remain healthy and are able to perform at their best.

Dr. Bryan Hanypsiak, an orthopedic surgeon with Physicians Regional Medical Group, serves as the team physician for FC Naples. He provides specialized care tailored to the unique demands of elite athletes, including diagnosing and treating acute injuries on and off the field.

Hanypsiak also works with trainers and additional medical staff to implement preventative care strategies, reducing the risk of future injuries and fostering long-term physical well-being.

"This partnership is a vital piece of our success on and off the field. Having a healthcare partner that supports our players and keeps them healthy allows us to get the most out of our team," FC Naples Coach Matt Poland said. "I am excited that we will be working with such renowned physicians."

This endeavor isn't simply about keeping FC Naples healthy, though. Both the soccer team and Physicians Regional say they will utilize a larger platform to help promote health and wellness throughout the community.

"We're excited to work with FC Naples, not only as their healthcare provider of choice, but as a community partner to help those in Naples and the



surrounding areas live healthier lives," said Scott Lowe, market chief executive officer, Physicians Regional Healthcare System.

While opportunities in the community are still being identified, Collier County's youth is one audience that will benefit. Nearly two dozen local youth will have complimentary access to gameday events, and more exclusive events are being developed to help promote health and wellness.

"We are committed to promoting wellness, inspiring healthy lifestyles, and making a positive impact in our community. This partnership goes beyond soccer—together, we aim to build a stronger, healthier Naples and create a legacy of unity and well-being for our region," said Bob Moreno, CEO of FC Naples.

Hanypsiak is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon with a subspecialty certification in Orthopedic Sports Medicine. His expertise includes shoulder and knee surgeries, joint replacements, cartilage transplants, and joint preservation procedures. He is also highly skilled in hip arthroscopy, robotic-assisted knee replacements, ultrasound evaluation of acute injuries, and guided hip injections.



Bryan Hanypsiak, M.D., FAAOS, CAQSM  
Orthopedic Surgery



To schedule an appointment with Dr. Hanypsiak please call (239) 348-4340 or visit [physiciansregionalmedicalgroup.com](https://www.physiciansregionalmedicalgroup.com)





# ALIGNMENT MATTERS:

## The Role of Nutrition in Maximizing Pilates Performance

By Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

**P**ilates is a holistic exercise system designed to improve strength, flexibility, posture, and the mind-body connection. However, many people overlook the vital role nutrition plays in enhancing Pilates practice. Just as a car needs the right fuel to perform optimally, your body requires the right balance of nutrients to power through Pilates sessions, sustain energy, support muscle recovery, and maintain balanced blood sugar levels.

### Energy: Fueling Your Pilates Flow

Pilates demands sustained energy, especially during mat or Reformer sessions that focus on controlled, precise movements. Energy levels directly influence your ability to maintain proper form and focus. Your body's primary source of energy is carbohydrates, which break down into glucose and fuel your muscles during exercise.

Focus on complex carbohydrates like whole grains, sweet potatoes, oats, and legumes to ensure sustained energy throughout your Pilates practice. These foods release glucose slowly, providing a steady stream of energy. Pairing these carbs with protein or healthy fat can further stabilize blood sugar and prevent energy crashes.

- **Pre-Pilates Snack Idea:** A whole-grain toast with almond butter and banana combines carbs, protein, and healthy fats to energize you.

Avoid refined carbs like sugary snacks or white bread before Pilates. These may cause a quick spike in energy followed by a rapid crash, leaving you feeling fatigued mid-session.

### Protein: Supporting Muscle Recovery and Strength

Pilates may not involve heavy lifting like traditional strength training, but it still engages your muscles in an intensely targeted way. Every stretch, hold, and controlled movement challenges your body, requiring adequate protein intake to repair and rebuild muscle tissue after a session.

Protein comprises amino acids, the building blocks your body uses to repair muscle fibers and support the lean muscle growth that Pilates encourages. Consuming high-quality protein after your workout helps minimize muscle soreness and boosts recovery.

### Great Protein Sources:

- Lean meats like chicken or turkey
- Fish (especially fatty fish like salmon for added omega-3 benefits)
- Eggs

- Plant-based options such as tofu, lentils, and chickpeas
- Greek yogurt or cottage cheese

For plant-based practitioners, combining incomplete proteins (e.g., rice and beans or hummus and whole-grain pita) ensures you get all essential amino acids.

- **Post-Pilates Meal Idea:** A grilled chicken salad with quinoa and mixed greens offers protein, fiber, and antioxidants for recovery.

### Blood Sugar Balance: The Key to Sustained Focus

One of Pilates' key principles is concentration, which requires staying mindful of your body and movements. Fluctuating blood sugar levels can make focusing challenging, leading to distractions or a less effective session.

Eating balanced meals that combine carbohydrates, protein, and healthy fats is essential to maintain stable blood sugar. For example:

- **Healthy Fats** like avocados, nuts, and olive oil slow digestion, keeping blood sugar stable.
- **Fiber-rich foods** like vegetables, whole grains, and legumes help avoid spikes and crashes in glucose levels.

Another helpful tip is to avoid starting a Pilates session on an empty stomach. While fasted workouts are popular in some fitness circles, they can leave you light-headed and reduce your ability to engage in Pilates movements fully.

### Hydration: Often Overlooked but Essential

Proper hydration is vital for Pilates, impacting your energy levels, muscle function, and flexibility. Even mild dehydration can lead to cramping, fatigue, and reduced mental clarity, making it harder to stay present during class.

Aim to drink plenty of water throughout the day and consider hydrating with herbal teas or coconut water for added electrolytes. While Pilates isn't as sweat-inducing as high-intensity workouts, you're still losing fluids, so it's essential to replenish them.

- **Hydration Tip:** To stay hydrated, drink a glass of water 30 minutes before your session and sip water afterward.

### Micronutrients: Supporting Whole-Body Wellness

In addition to macronutrients like carbs, protein, and fats, micronutrients are essential for optimal Pilates performance. Key nutrients include:

- **Magnesium:** Supports muscle relaxation and reduces cramps. It is found in leafy greens, nuts, and seeds.

- **Calcium:** Essential for bone strength, particularly for Pilates, to improve posture and prevent osteoporosis. It is found in dairy, fortified plant milks, and leafy greens.
- **Iron:** Helps transport oxygen to muscles, improving stamina and preventing fatigue. It is found in red meat, lentils, and spinach.
- **Vitamin D:** Enhances calcium absorption and supports bone health. Consider fortified foods or safe sun exposure.

### Gut Health: A Hidden Player in Pilates Performance

Gut health plays a surprising role in energy, inflammation, and overall well-being, impacting Pilates practice. A healthy gut microbiome promotes better digestion and nutrient absorption, ensuring your body gets the necessary fuel.

Include fermented foods like yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, or kimchi in your diet for probiotics, which support gut health. Additionally, eat fiber-rich foods to feed beneficial gut bacteria.

### Sample Day of Nutrition for Pilates

Here's a sample meal plan to fuel your Pilates practice:

- **Breakfast:** Overnight oats with almond milk, chia seeds, fresh berries, and a drizzle of honey.
- **Pre-Workout Snack:** A handful of trail mix (nuts, seeds, and dried fruit).
- **Lunch:** Grilled salmon with quinoa, roasted sweet potatoes, and broccoli.
- **Post-Workout Snack:** Greek yogurt with a sprinkle of granola and sliced banana.
- **Dinner:** Stir-fried tofu with brown rice, snap peas, and sesame oil.
- **Hydration:** Water throughout the day and herbal tea in the evening.

### Final Thoughts

Nutrition and Pilates go hand-in-hand in creating a balanced, energized, and strong body. By fueling your body with the right foods, you'll enhance your Pilates performance and support long-term health and vitality. Remember, Pilates is about connecting your mind and body—and nutrition is the bridge that supports both. Eat mindfully, move with purpose, and watch your energy soar.

### Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

Shannon Willits is a Master Pilates Educator with over 20 years of experience in functional movement and athletic performance. She is STOTT-certified, a Fellow of Applied Functional Science (FAFS), and a Functional Golf Specialist, bringing expertise to both rehabilitation and sport-specific training. As the owner of four Club Pilates studios in Lee County, FL, she trains and mentors aspiring instructors through her Southwest Florida Pilates Academy and innovative apprenticeship model. Shannon is also the host of the Alignment Matters Podcast, where she shares insights on Pilates, movement science, and wellness.

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# HOW TO MAXIMIZE OUTCOMES AFTER MOHS SURGERY ON LOWER EXTREMITIES

**P**odiatrists frequently encounter patients who have undergone Mohs surgery for skin cancer, particularly on the lower extremities. Mohs surgery is a highly precise technique for treating skin cancer, ensuring complete removal of cancer while preserving as much healthy tissue as possible. This method is incredibly effective for basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and certain melanomas, with success rates as high as 99%. However, the healing process, especially when the wound is left to heal by secondary intention—requires careful management to prevent complications and ensure optimal recovery.

## Key Considerations for Healing After Mohs Surgery

Healing by secondary intention can take 6-12 weeks or longer, depending on the wound's size and location. The wound should be reduced by at least 50% within the first month; otherwise, it may be considered chronic and require advanced intervention. Since open wounds are more susceptible to infection, keeping the wound clean and following prescribed care routines significantly reduces risks.

## The Podiatrist's Role in Post-Mohs Wound Care

Your podiatrist plays a crucial role in wound management, particularly for wounds on the feet and legs. Your podiatrist will assess wound severity, considering factors such as blood flow, pressure, and the patient's overall health, to develop an individualized treatment plan. The approach often involves regular wound debridement to remove nonviable tissue and promote healing. If a wound is slow to heal, your podiatrist may incorporate advanced techniques such as bioengineered skin substitutes or negative pressure therapy. Your podiatrist will collaborate with your dermatologist, vascular specialist, and other healthcare providers to ensure comprehensive care is tailored to your specific case.

## Advanced Healing Approach

- **Amniotic Tissue Grafts** – Applied immediately post-surgery to promote faster healing and reduce complications, especially for high-risk patients.
- **Surgical Closure Solutions** – Your team should include surgeons with hospital privileges who can perform split-thickness skin grafts (STSG) and muscle flaps for complex cases.



- **Preoperative Planning** – Your podiatrist will work closely with Mohs surgeons to ensure graft availability before surgery, allowing for same-day or next-day application.
- **Regular Wound Debridement** – Your podiatrist removes nonviable tissue and biofilm, enhancing recovery and encouraging healthy tissue formation.

## Collaboration Opportunities

Family Foot & Leg Center remains at the forefront of wound care advancements, incorporating research-driven techniques to enhance healing outcomes. Patients who have recently undergone Mohs surgery and have concerns about wound healing can receive specialized support through personalized treatment plans. Appointments are available for those seeking expert care.

Dermatologists are invited to collaborate in optimizing post-Mohs wound management. Through partnership, patient care can be elevated, promoting efficient healing and reducing complications.

**Working together ensures the best possible outcomes.**

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

## Sahiba Singh DPM, AACFAS

For more information, you may contact Dr. Sahiba Singh at Family Foot & Leg Center at **(239) 430 - 3668 (FOOT)**. Family Foot & Leg Center has 8 locations throughout Collier, Lee, & Charlotte Counties to quickly resolve all your foot and ankle problems.



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# Regenerative Medicine Breakthrough: Stem Cell and PRP Therapies Offer New Hope for Autoimmune and Neurological Conditions

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

**A**s we recognize both Parkinson's Disease Awareness and Lupus Awareness Month, breakthrough developments in regenerative medicine are showing remarkable promise for patients with autoimmune and neurological conditions. Stem cell therapy and Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) treatments are emerging as powerful tools in managing these challenging conditions, offering hope to millions of patients worldwide.

## Understanding Regenerative Medicine Approaches

Regenerative medicine represents a paradigm shift in treating chronic conditions, moving beyond symptom management to address underlying cellular dysfunction. Two key approaches have shown particular promise: stem cell therapy (including exosome treatment) and PRP therapy.

Stem cells are the body's natural repair system, capable of developing into different cell types and promoting healing. When administered intravenously or directly into affected joints, these cells can help regulate the immune system and promote tissue repair. Exosomes, the communication vehicles released by stem cells, carry vital proteins, lipids, and genetic material that can influence cellular behavior throughout the body.

PRP therapy, derived from a patient's own blood, concentrates healing factors to accelerate tissue repair and reduce inflammation. When combined with stem cell approaches, these treatments can provide comprehensive support for healing and regeneration.

## Transformative Results in Autoimmune Conditions

For autoimmune conditions like lupus, traditional treatments often focus on suppressing the immune system broadly, leading to increased infection risk and other side effects. Stem cell therapy offers a more targeted approach by helping to reset and regulate immune function. Clinical observations have shown remarkable results, with some lupus patients experiencing complete remission from flares after receiving stem cell treatment.

The mechanism appears to involve the stem cells' ability to modulate immune response, reducing inflammation while maintaining normal immune function. This balanced approach helps prevent the

excessive immune activation that characterizes autoimmune conditions while preserving the body's natural defense capabilities.

## Joint Pain Management and Systemic Health

For patients suffering from joint pain, whether due to autoimmune conditions or other causes, the combination of stem cell and PRP therapy can be particularly effective. These treatments work synergistically to:

- Reduce inflammation in affected joints
- Promote the regeneration of damaged cartilage
- Improve joint mobility and function
- Decrease pain levels naturally
- Support overall joint health

When administered intravenously, stem cell exosomes can provide systemic benefits beyond joint health, including:

- Enhanced cellular repair throughout the body
- Improved energy levels and vitality
- Better immune system regulation
- Reduced systemic inflammation
- Potential neuroprotective effects

## Promising Applications for Neurological Conditions

During Parkinson's Awareness Month, it's particularly relevant to highlight how these regenerative approaches may benefit neurological conditions. Research suggests that stem cell therapy and exosomes may help:

- Support dopamine-producing neuron function
- Reduce neuroinflammation
- Promote nerve tissue repair and protection
- Improve cellular communication in the brain

## The Road Ahead: Integrating Regenerative Medicine

While these treatments show impressive potential, it's important to note that research is ongoing, and results can vary among individuals. However, the

growing body of clinical evidence suggests that regenerative medicine approaches may offer significant benefits for patients with both autoimmune and neurological conditions.

The future of medicine increasingly points toward personalized, regenerative approaches that work with the body's natural healing mechanisms. For patients with chronic conditions who have struggled with traditional treatments, these innovative therapies offer new possibilities for improved health and quality of life.

Success stories, such as lupus patients achieving remission from flares, demonstrate the transformative potential of these treatments. As research continues and treatment protocols are refined, regenerative medicine may become an increasingly important tool in managing chronic conditions.

For patients considering regenerative medicine treatments, it's essential to work with qualified healthcare providers who can determine the most appropriate therapeutic approach based on individual conditions and needs. As we continue to understand and develop these treatments, they may represent a significant step forward in treating chronic conditions that have traditionally been difficult to manage effectively.

## Experienced Medical Professionals

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# MARCH: YOUR LUCKY MONTH FOR PRESERVING EYE HEALTH

**A**s March ushers in the promise of spring and the celebration of St. Patrick's Day, it's the perfect time to focus on both good fortune and something equally valuable – your vision health. While finding a four-leaf clover might bring luck, taking proactive steps to maintain healthy eyes is a more reliable path to long-term visual wellness.

The eyes are our windows to the world, yet many of us take them for granted until problems arise. According to vision health experts, many sight-threatening conditions are preventable through proper care and regular maintenance. This March, let's explore how you can create your own luck by adopting habits that protect and enhance your vision.

## **Nutrition: Your First Line of Defense**

Just as leprechauns guard their pot of gold, you should treasure the nutrients that support eye health. Leafy greens like spinach and kale contain lutein and zeaxanthin, powerful antioxidants that protect against macular degeneration. Orange vegetables such as carrots and sweet potatoes provide beta-carotene, while fatty fish offer essential omega-3 fatty acids. Consider these foods your lucky charms for maintaining crystal-clear vision.

## **Digital Wellness in the Modern Age**

In our screen-dominated world, digital eye strain has become increasingly common. Practice the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away. This simple habit can be as valuable as finding gold at the rainbow's end when it comes to reducing eye fatigue and preventing long-term damage.

## **Regular Eye Examinations: Your Vision Insurance**

Don't rely on luck to maintain healthy eyes – schedule regular comprehensive eye exams. These checkups can detect early signs of conditions like glaucoma, cataracts, and diabetic retinopathy before they become serious problems. Many eye diseases develop slowly and painlessly, making professional monitoring essential.



## **Environmental Protection**

Like a shamrock shields itself from harsh weather, protect your eyes from environmental hazards. Wear UV-blocking sunglasses year-round, use appropriate protective eyewear during sports or hazardous activities, and maintain proper lighting while reading or working. These precautions are your shield against potential eye damage.

## **Lifestyle Choices for Lasting Vision**

Your daily habits significantly impact eye health. Maintaining a healthy weight, controlling blood pressure, and avoiding smoking can prevent various eye conditions. Regular exercise improves blood circulation, including to the eyes, while adequate sleep allows your eyes to repair and refresh themselves.

## **Hydration and Eye Comfort**

Keep your eyes as fresh as morning dew by staying well-hydrated. Proper hydration helps maintain the natural moisture in your eyes, preventing dryness and irritation. Consider using artificial tears if you experience persistent dry eyes, especially in air-conditioned environments or while using digital devices.

## **Creating Your Vision Legacy**

Just as Irish folklore passes down through generations, good vision care habits can influence your family's eye health awareness. Share these practices with loved ones, especially children, who can benefit from early adoption of eye-healthy habits.

This March, while others chase leprechauns and search for four-leaf clovers, focus on creating your own luck through proactive vision care. Remember, good fortune in health often comes to those who make wise choices and maintain consistent healthy habits. By following these guidelines, you're not leaving your vision to chance but taking control of your eye health destiny. Now that's something worth celebrating more than a pot of gold at the rainbow's end.



**BRADLEY MIDDAGH, O.D.**  
Optometric Physician

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

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

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

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

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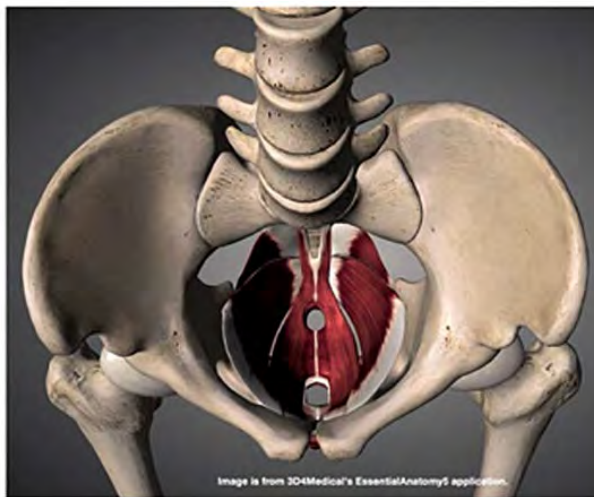
# Do You Have A Weakened or Tight Pelvic Floor?

## What You Should Know

**T**he muscles of the pelvic floor are a group of muscles that support the pelvic organs. These muscles support the bladder, rectum, prostate in men, and vagina and uterus in women. As we age, our muscles tend to weaken or get too tight. Conditions that involve this chronic pelvic pain in both men and women are often caused by muscle tightness. When these muscles don't behave appropriately, they can enter into a spasm or a cramp and this could mimic other conditions. Because of this, the organs supported by these muscles do not work properly and can cause urinary and/or fecal incontinence and sexual dysfunction in men and women along with many other symptoms.

This condition is frequently underdiagnosed and can greatly affect your quality of life. Many people suffering from pelvic floor dysfunction do not want to leave their home due to their symptoms and can have frequent unnecessary visits to the emergency room. Many of our patients even suffer in their personal relationships due to their symptoms. There are many reasons why these muscles do not work correctly including a fall, trauma, surgery or stress. Stress can cause you to unknowingly clench your pelvic floor muscles, which can lead to knots or trigger points in the muscle and cause pain or discomfort.

Fortunately, we have a minimally invasive treatment available to treat the muscles thereby improving your quality of life. You can expect to see a 70-80% or more improvement in symptoms.



**If you suffer from any of the following symptoms, pelvic floor therapy might be the right treatment for you:**

- **Stress Incontinence-** leaking urine with coughing, sneezing, heavy lifting, or laughing
- **Urge Incontinence-** leaking urine when you get a strong desire to urinate
- **Urinary Frequency-** getting the desire to urinate many times during the day
- **Nocturia-** getting a strong desire to urinate many times at night
- **Frequent urinary tract infections**
- **Fecal Incontinence-** leaking of stool
- **Constipation/Diarrhea**
- **Incomplete bladder emptying**
- **Vaginal Pain**
- **Penile Pain**
- **Pain with intercourse**

Our providers are highly-qualified, skilled experts in the area of urinary and bladder disorders, pelvic floor prolapse, prostate cancer, along with many other related disorders. Dr. Miranda-Sousa and his staff are ready to answer any of your urological questions and concerns, as they treat all of their patients with the utmost of care.



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

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# Fun Day Trips for Seniors Near Bonita Springs

**B**onita Springs is a gem for seniors seeking delightful day trips filled with adventure, relaxation, and cultural enrichment. With a blend of scenic landscapes, historical charm, and leisurely activities, there's something for everyone to enjoy. From serene beaches to scenic parks, these outings offer a chance to immerse yourself in the area's natural surroundings.

Whether you're interested in exploring local history or simply enjoying a peaceful day in nature, Bonita Springs offers a variety of experiences that cater to your interests and mobility needs.

Here's a guide to some of the best day trips for seniors in and around Bonita Springs, perfect for making the most of your golden years.



Naples, FL

## 1. Explore Nature's Beauty

### Lovers Key State Park

Renowned for its tranquil beauty, Lovers Key State Park is a paradise for nature enthusiasts. Seniors can enjoy peaceful walks along flat, well-kept trails, making it an ideal spot for bird-watching, relaxing by the water or having a picnic. The park also provides beach wheelchairs, ensuring accessibility for all visitors.

### Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary

Immerse yourself in a preserved swamp ecosystem. The elevated boardwalk makes it easy to navigate, providing a secure and enjoyable way to explore this natural wonder. Along the trail, you might spot alligators, turtles, and an array of bird species, making it a truly unique experience.

## 2. Relax on the Beaches

Unwind at the beautiful beaches near Bonita Springs:



Bonita Beach, FL

### Bonita Beach Park

A favorite among locals and visitors alike, Bonita Beach Park offers seniors a serene spot to unwind. With ample facilities, including accessible restrooms and picnic tables, it's a great place to enjoy the ocean breeze, have a leisurely meal or take a gentle stroll along the shore.

### Barefoot Beach Preserve

Barefoot Beach Preserve provides a serene escape from the busy pace of life. Its accessible pathways, shaded picnic areas, and breathtaking sunsets make it a perfect spot for seniors to relax and see what Southwest Florida has to offer.

## 3. Discover Local Culture

Enjoy the vibrant cultural scene just a short drive from Bonita Springs:

### Naples Botanical Garden

A short drive from Bonita Springs, the Naples Botanical Garden delights the senses. The garden is thoughtfully designed with wide, shaded paths and plenty of seating, making it easy for seniors to explore. Enjoy the beautifully themed gardens, seasonal exhibits, and educational programs that provide a deeper appreciation of the natural world.

### The Baker Museum

Art enthusiasts will find plenty of inspiration at The Baker Museum in Naples. Featuring a range of exhibitions from classic to contemporary, this museum is senior-friendly with its accessible layout and welcoming atmosphere. It's an excellent spot to spend a culturally enriching afternoon.

### Artis—Naples

Beyond The Baker Museum, Artis—Naples hosts a variety of live performances, including symphonies, theater, and ballet. Seniors who enjoy the arts will appreciate the rich cultural experiences offered here, making it a must-visit for those looking to enrich their lives with music and theater.

## 4. Visit Historic Towns

Step back in time and immerse yourself in the history and charm of nearby towns:

### Everglades City

Venture to Everglades City for a glimpse into Florida's rich history. This quaint town offers a laid-back atmosphere, with opportunities to visit local museums, enjoy waterfront dining, and learn about the area's unique heritage. It's a perfect destination for a relaxed yet educational outing.

### Matlacha

Step into the vibrant world of Matlacha, a colorful fishing village known for its eclectic art galleries, charming boutiques, and cozy cafes. The town's laid-back vibe and welcoming atmosphere make it a perfect destination for seniors to explore, shop, and enjoy dining experiences.

### Fort Myers River District

Experience the charm of the historic Fort Myers River District. With its brick-lined streets, unique shops, and diverse dining options, this area is a lively yet accessible destination. Seniors will enjoy the array of cultural events, live music, and the opportunity to explore at their own pace.



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

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





### 5. Enjoy Leisurely Activities

Take a break from the everyday hustle and indulge in some leisurely activities around Bonita Springs:

#### Tin City

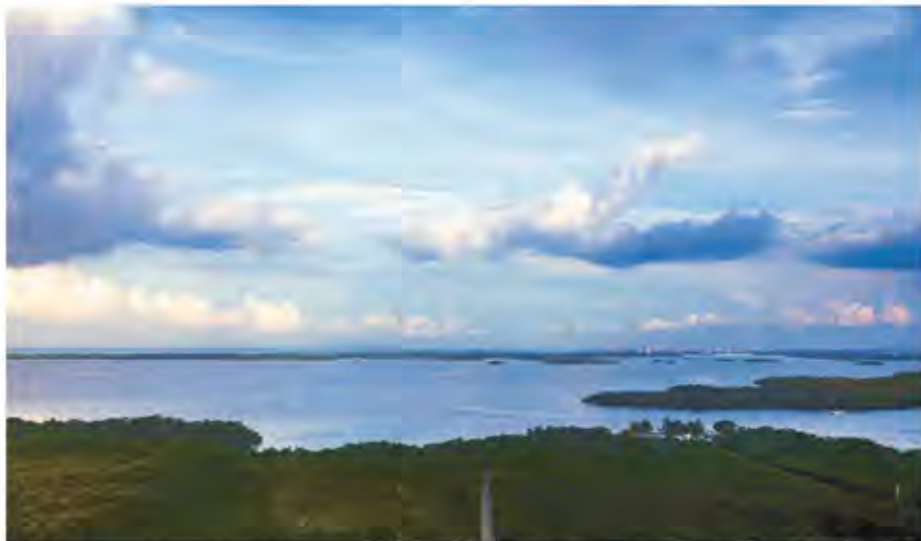
Tin City in Naples offers a nostalgic waterfront shopping experience. Stroll through unique shops, indulge in delicious food, and take in the scenic views. The relaxed atmosphere and easy-to-navigate layout make it a favorite for seniors looking for a leisurely day out.

#### Koreshan State Park

Discover Koreshan State Park, where you can explore easy walking trails and historic buildings. The park offers picnic spots for a relaxing outdoor meal, making it an ideal destination for a day of leisurely exploration and enjoyment.

#### Wonder Gardens

Wonder Gardens in Bonita Springs is a must-visit destination for nature enthusiasts. The garden features rehabilitated and non-releasable birds and reptiles, offering visitors a unique opportunity to observe and learn about these creatures up close. With its educational exhibits, Wonder Gardens provides an engaging experience for guests to explore wildlife conservation efforts and gain a deeper understanding of the natural world.



Estero Bay, FL

### Make the Most of Your Day Trips With The Terraces at Bonita Springs

At The Terraces at Bonita Springs, our residents enjoy the freedom to explore these wonderful destinations, making every day an opportunity for adventure and relaxation. Our community promotes an active lifestyle, encouraging residents to engage with their surroundings and participate in exciting outings.

With organized group excursions and convenient transportation options, you can easily join friends for a day of exploration or relaxation, whether a trip to a scenic nature park, a visit to a charming local town or a cultural experience at a nearby museum.

Our supportive environment allows you to maintain independence while enriching your life with new experiences. With a calendar full of activities and outings tailored to all interests, there's always something happening at The Terraces.

Contact us today at 239-208-6963 to learn how The Terraces at Bonita Springs can enhance your lifestyle, support your independence, and open doors to exciting new adventures in and around Bonita Springs.

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# Understanding Venous Insufficiency: Signs, Symptoms, and Treatment Options

By Russell Becker, DO

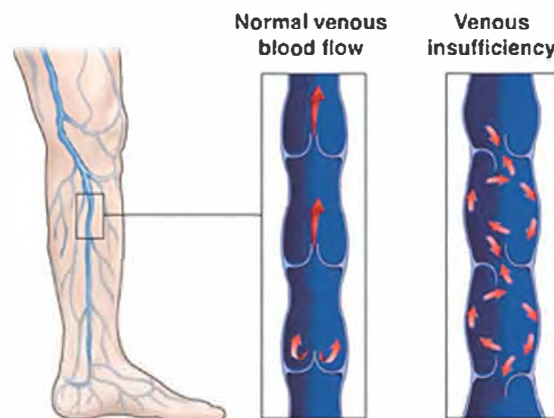
**V**enous insufficiency is a condition that occurs when the veins in your legs struggle to efficiently pump blood back to your heart. This circulatory disorder affects millions of people worldwide, particularly those over 50, and can significantly impact quality of life if left untreated. While the condition can be chronic, understanding its signs and available treatments can help manage symptoms effectively.

The underlying mechanism of venous insufficiency involves damaged or weakened vein valves. These one-way valves normally ensure blood flows upward against gravity toward the heart. When they malfunction, blood can pool in the legs, leading to various uncomfortable symptoms and potential complications.

Early recognition of venous insufficiency symptoms is crucial for proper management. The most common signs include swelling in the legs and ankles, particularly after standing for extended periods. This swelling, known as edema, often worsens throughout the day and may improve with elevation of the legs. Patients frequently report a heavy or achy feeling in their legs, which can be accompanied by cramping, especially during physical activity.

Skin changes are another significant indicator of venous insufficiency. The affected areas may appear brownish or reddish, a condition called stasis dermatitis. The skin can become dry, itchy, and more prone to injury. In some cases, the surface may take on a leathery texture, and white scarring can develop, particularly around the ankles. These changes occur due to increased pressure in the veins and reduced oxygen delivery to the skin.

One of the most visible signs is the development of varicose veins – twisted, enlarged veins that appear blue or purple under the skin. While sometimes considered merely a cosmetic concern, varicose veins can be painful and indicate underlying venous insufficiency. Spider veins, smaller versions of varicose veins, may also appear, particularly on the ankles and feet.



More severe symptoms include leg ulcers, which typically develop on the lower leg or ankle. These wounds can be slow to heal due to poor circulation and require immediate medical attention. Some patients may also experience restless legs, especially at night, leading to sleep disturbances and decreased quality of life.

Treatment options for venous insufficiency range from conservative measures to medical interventions. The cornerstone of conservative treatment involves lifestyle modifications. Regular exercise, particularly walking, helps activate the calf muscle pump, improving blood flow. Weight management is crucial as excess weight puts additional pressure on leg veins. Elevating the legs above heart level several times daily can help reduce swelling and improve circulation.

Compression therapy plays a vital role in treatment. Graduated compression stockings apply controlled pressure to the legs, helping to prevent blood pooling and reduce swelling. These stockings come in various compression levels, and proper fitting by a healthcare professional is essential for optimal benefit.

Medications may be prescribed to address specific symptoms. Diuretics can help reduce fluid retention and swelling, while anti-inflammatory drugs may help manage pain and discomfort. Some patients benefit from medications that improve vein tone or prevent blood clots, depending on their specific condition.

For more severe cases, several minimally invasive procedures are available. Sclerotherapy involves injecting a solution into affected veins, causing them to collapse and eventually be reabsorbed by

the body. Endovenous laser treatment or radiofrequency ablation uses heat to seal off problematic veins, redirecting blood flow to healthier vessels. These procedures are typically performed on an outpatient basis with minimal recovery time.

Prevention strategies are crucial for those at risk of developing venous insufficiency. Regular movement throughout the day helps prevent blood pooling, particularly for those with sedentary jobs. When sitting for extended periods, simple exercises like ankle rotations and calf raises can help maintain blood flow. Wearing compression stockings during long flights or car trips can also help prevent problems.

Early intervention is key to preventing complications of venous insufficiency. Anyone experiencing persistent leg swelling, pain, or skin changes should seek medical evaluation. A healthcare provider can perform a thorough examination and may use ultrasound to assess blood flow and vein function.

While venous insufficiency is a chronic condition, proper management can significantly improve symptoms and prevent progression. Through a combination of lifestyle modifications, compression therapy, and medical interventions when necessary, most people with venous insufficiency can maintain an active and comfortable lifestyle. Regular follow-up with healthcare providers ensures that treatment remains effective and can be adjusted as needed to optimize outcomes.

*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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# MEMORY MATTERS

**M**arch is Women's History Month! This tribute to the contributions of women actually began in the early 1980s as Women's History week and in 1987, Congress passed a resolution that March would be proclaimed Women's History Month. Women's history month celebrates the accomplishments of women in a variety of different fields that have positively impacted history. This month also serves as a celebration of women's efforts to continue to fight for equality, justice and opportunities in the world.

In the early 1900s, Dr. Alois Alzheimer identified the characteristic plaques and tangles in the brain of a 51 year old woman. He had followed her disease progression and when she died, he was able to provide analysis of her brain, where he was able to make the discovery of these histological alterations. Dr. Alzheimer's patient was a woman named Auguste Deter, who also has a place in the history of Alzheimer's disease.

Alzheimer's disease impacts women more than men. Approximately twice as many men have Alzheimer's disease than men. Why is this? Age is the number one risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. Women live longer than men. As noted in a recent JAMA article, the gap between men and women's life expectancy increased to 5.8 years. Life expectancy is one consideration, but are there other things at play?

One of the world's leading experts and researchers in the area of Alzheimer's disease. Dr. Reisa Sperling is working on trying to understand what other factors contribute to Alzheimer's disease in women. As highlighted in an Alzheimer's Association profile, Dr. Sperling, who is a professor at Harvard Medical school and the Director of Alzheimer's Research and Treatment at Brigham and Women's Hospital, is not only a pioneer in Alzheimer's disease research, she has mentored many women who are dedicated to dementia science. She is also the Director of Neuroimaging Core at the Massachusetts Alzheimer's Disease research center at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Sperling was in medical school when her grandfather died with Alzheimer's disease. Her father was also diagnosed with the disease, which also fueled her focus on finding approaches to stopping the disease.



The Alzheimer's Association has also highlighted several other prominent female researchers. Dr. Marilyn Albert, the Director of the Division of Cognitive Neuroscience and the Director of the John's Hopkins Alzheimer's Research Center has focused on the lifestyle changes that may preserve cognitive abilities as we age. Her current research is focused on early identification and ways to monitor disease progression.

Another accomplished researcher, Dr. Malu Tansey has focused her research on the role of inflammation and the immune system in brain health and the development of Alzheimer's disease. Currently, Dr. Tansey is the Professor of Neuroscience and Neurology and the Director of the Parkinson's Foundation Research Center of Excellence at the University of Florida.

Several other prominent female scientists are leading the charge at the Alzheimer's Association. Dr. Maria Carillo is the Chief Science Officer and medical affairs lead who sets the strategic vision for global research in the area of Alzheimer's disease. Among her many leadership responsibilities, Dr. Carillo is a co-investigator for the Association led US Pointer Study, a lifestyle intervention trial to prevent cognitive decline. She has also received numerous awards and in 2020, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award in Alzheimer's Disease Therapeutic Research from the Clinical Trials on Alzheimer's Disease Conference.

Dr. Heather Snyder is the Vice President of Medical and Scientific Relations at the Association, and is recognized as an industry expert. Dr. Rebecca Edelmayer

has more than 20 years of experience as a scientist and an educator and serves as the senior Director of Scientific Engagement. These amazing women are at the forefront of Alzheimer's disease research, forging relationships and connections with global leaders in the Alzheimer's research space. The President and CEO of the Alzheimer's Association is Joanne Pike, DPH. Dr. Pike has an extensive background in social support and public health initiatives.

These are just a few of the many outstanding female scientists and leaders working with Alzheimer's disease with a commitment to finding a cure for the disease. Here at the Neuropsychiatric Research Center, we are also dedicated to finding a cure and improving the lives of people with neurological diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease, through research and education. We understand the impact of Alzheimer's disease on those who have been diagnosed, and their family and friends. If you haven't been formally diagnosed with a memory condition, yet have noticed changes please contact us at 239-939-7777.

Would you like to have a free baseline memory screen? We can help! Brain health is critical for all of us, and knowing your cognitive status via an easy and free memory screen is a service we provide to the community. Memories matter! NPRC 239-939-7777.



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Widening Gender Gap in Life Expectancy in the US, 2010-2021 | Health Disparities | JAMA Internal Medicine | JAMA Network



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# FGCU's 'Disaster Day' Prepares Tomorrow's Healthcare Heroes

Marieb College simulation ensures graduates are ready for any emergency

**E**mergencies are unpredictable, and preparing future healthcare professionals to handle them is a top priority at Florida Gulf Coast University. To ensure students gain invaluable real-world experience, FGCU hosted its inaugural "Disaster Day" event in November, bringing together over 600 participants for an adrenaline-charged emergency training exercise. More than 300 students from FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services joined faculty, staff, volunteers and local first responders in an all-day simulation designed to test their ability to assess, diagnose and treat patients under pressure.

The multidisciplinary exercise highlighted FGCU's commitment to ensuring healthcare students are prepared to enter the workforce equipped to handle real-world emergencies.

## It takes a village to stage a 'disaster'

Over 600 participants were involved, including hundreds taking part in a mass CPR training in partnership with the American Red Cross.

Some 100 student actors portrayed victims on the worst day of their lives, creating realistic scenarios by simulating injuries and distress. Emergency vehicles — including ambulances, fire trucks, police cars and a medical helicopter — added to the life-like atmosphere.

The event brought together local first responders, the Florida State Guard, the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, the Salvation Army, Lee County Sheriff's Office, San Carlos Fire Department, Lee Flight, NCH and Lee Health, as well as several simulation companies that donated their time and equipment. Eleven FGCU academic programs were involved, including eight from Marieb College.

As the day unfolded, healthcare students rotated through various zones of the staging areas, each presenting unique challenges. Students practiced skills learned in the classroom, like how to help triage, evaluate, assess and treat. They faced a variety of issues affecting their patients' mental health, physical ability and psychomotor, cognitive and functional skills.

The experience dramatically underscored the importance of healthcare professionals working together. For many of the healthcare students involved, participating in a hands-on emergency simulation added urgency to lessons learned from textbooks and classroom lectures.

The simulated disaster was more than just a test of individual skills — it was a masterclass in teamwork. Students from different healthcare disciplines worked side by side, combining their expertise to deliver optimal care. This interprofessional collaboration reflected real-world healthcare settings, where success often depends on effective communication and coordination among diverse teams.

For many participants, the exercise offered a profound sense of realism. Tasks like managing airways, monitoring vital signs and delegating responsibilities became second nature as the adrenaline kicked in. By the end of the day, students reported feeling more confident and prepared to face actual emergencies.

## Preparing for real life

To enhance the realism of playing victims, student actors from FGCU's theatre department arrived several hours before the simulation to apply moulage, a theatrical disaster makeup, to create the appearance of injuries involving blood and gore. The volunteer "casualties" took their positions on Recreation Field 1 under the watchful eye of four groups of first responders and Marieb College faculty, there to observe the progress of the healthcare students.

Their realistic performances added urgency and complexity to the scenarios. Healthcare participants were able to practice skills learned, such as controlling a patient's airway, making sure patients are intubated if they are unconscious and delegating tasks to other team members.

Before the event, Joe Buhain, Marieb College's director of interprofessional simulation and emerging technology, said his primary goal was to

engage students in interprofessional education with the hope that they would learn, not just from the event, but from each other.

FGCU's Disaster Day is a testament to the university's dedication to hands-on learning. Through carefully crafted scenarios, participants not only practiced their technical skills but also learned how to adapt to the unpredictable nature of crisis situations. Each scenario was designed to challenge students' clinical knowledge, decision-making abilities and emotional resilience.

The event also highlighted Marieb College's emphasis on interdisciplinary learning. Healthcare students interacted with peers from programs like social work, counseling and nursing anesthesia — fields they might not typically encounter in classroom settings. This exposure broadened their understanding of the holistic approach required in emergency care.

## The path forward

As FGCU looks ahead, the success of Disaster Day has set the stage for future simulations. Organizers plan to make this an annual event, continually refining the scenarios to mirror evolving healthcare challenges. By providing students with immersive, real-life experiences, Marieb College is preparing them to succeed — and shaping the future of healthcare.

For prospective students, current professionals and community partners, Disaster Day exemplifies the university's innovative approach to education. It's a place where learning goes beyond the classroom, where collaboration takes center stage and where the future of healthcare is being shaped.

*Learn more about FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services at [fgcu.edu/marieb](http://fgcu.edu/marieb).*



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# FINDING PEACE:

## Holistic Treatment for Anxiety Disorders at Phoenix Behavioral Group

By Jo Ortiz, PMHNP-BC

In today's fast-paced world, anxiety disorders have become increasingly common, affecting millions of people globally. These conditions—including generalized anxiety disorder, panic attacks, and social anxiety—can significantly impact one's quality of life, relationships, and overall well-being. At Phoenix Behavioral Group, a revolutionary holistic approach is transforming how anxiety disorders are treated, offering hope and healing to those who have long suffered in silence.

### Understanding Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders manifest in various ways. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) involves persistent, excessive worry about everyday concerns. Panic attacks strike suddenly, causing intense fear accompanied by physical symptoms like rapid heartbeat, chest pain, and shortness of breath—often mistaken for heart attacks by sufferers. Social anxiety disorder creates overwhelming fear of social situations and scrutiny, leading many to avoid gatherings or interactions altogether.

These conditions share common threads: they disrupt daily functioning, create avoidance behaviors, and often respond poorly to one-dimensional treatment approaches. Many patients report feeling trapped in a cycle of medication adjustments without addressing the underlying causes of their anxiety.

### The Phoenix Behavioral Group Difference

What sets Phoenix Behavioral Group apart is their comprehensive, whole-person approach to anxiety treatment. Rather than viewing anxiety as simply a chemical imbalance requiring medication, their team of specialists recognizes the complex interplay of biological, psychological, social, and lifestyle factors contributing to anxiety disorders.

"We believe in treating the whole person, not just symptoms," explains Dr. Jo Ortiz. "Our integrated approach combines evidence-based therapies with complementary practices that address the mind, body, and spirit connection."

### A Multi-Faceted Treatment Approach

Phoenix Behavioral Group's holistic protocol typically includes:

- **Personalized Psychological Therapy:** Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) help patients recognize thought patterns and develop healthier responses to anxiety triggers.
- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Structured mindfulness practices build patients' capacity to observe anxious thoughts without being consumed by them, creating space between stimulus and response.
- **Body-Based Interventions:** Somatic approaches like trauma-informed yoga and progressive muscle relaxation help release tension stored in the body—particularly beneficial for panic attack sufferers.
- **Nutritional Support:** Dietary counseling addresses the gut-brain connection, often overlooked in traditional anxiety treatment despite mounting evidence of its importance.
- **Lifestyle Modifications:** Sleep hygiene, exercise planning, and stress management techniques become integral parts of recovery, not merely supplemental suggestions.

### Success Stories and Outcomes

James, a 34-year-old marketing executive who suffered debilitating panic attacks for years, found relief through Phoenix's approach. "After trying multiple medications with limited success, Phoenix helped me understand how my lifestyle, thought patterns, and even diet were contributing to my anxiety. Six months into treatment, I haven't had a panic attack in over two months—something I wouldn't have believed possible."

Similarly, Mia struggled with social anxiety that prevented her from advancing in her career. "Traditional therapy helped somewhat, but integrating mindfulness practices and addressing physical manifestations of my anxiety through Phoenix's program has been transformative. I recently gave a presentation to over fifty people—something unimaginable a year ago."

### The Science Behind the Approach

Research increasingly supports this integrated approach. Studies show that combining cognitive therapies with mindfulness practices yields significantly better outcomes than either approach alone. Furthermore, addressing nutrition, sleep, and physical activity has been shown to enhance treatment responsiveness.

Phoenix Behavioral Group continuously refines their protocols based on emerging research, ensuring patients receive the most effective, evidence-based care available.

### A Path Forward

For those suffering from anxiety disorders, Phoenix Behavioral Group offers more than symptom management—they provide a pathway to genuine transformation. By addressing the multiple dimensions of anxiety and tailoring treatment to individual needs, they help patients not just survive but thrive.

Through their holistic approach, Phoenix reminds us that healing from anxiety isn't about eliminating all fear—it's about building resilience, understanding our minds and bodies, and finding balance in an often unbalanced world.



### 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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# Understanding Colorectal Cancer: PREVENTION AND RISK FACTORS

**C**olorectal cancer, a malignancy affecting the colon or rectum, remains a significant health concern globally. According to the American Cancer Society, it is the third most common cancer diagnosed in both men and women in the United States. While the risk of developing colorectal cancer increases with age, it is not exclusive to older demographics. However, individuals aged 45 and older are at higher risk, with most cases occurring in this age group.

Statistics reveal the gravity of colorectal cancer's impact on public health. Each year, millions of people worldwide are diagnosed with this disease, and sadly, many lose their lives to it. In the United States alone, approximately 150,000 new cases are diagnosed annually, with over 50,000 deaths attributed to colorectal cancer. These numbers underscore the urgency of understanding risk factors and implementing preventive measures.

Several factors contribute to the development of colorectal cancer, including genetics, lifestyle choices, and environmental influences. While some risk factors, like age and family history, cannot be modified, others are within our control. Adopting a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins while limiting processed foods, red meats, and alcohol consumption can significantly reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. Regular physical activity also plays a crucial role in maintaining digestive health and minimizing cancer risk.

Emerging research suggests the potential benefits of nutrient IV therapy in colorectal cancer prevention. Nutrient IV therapy involves administering vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants directly into the bloodstream, bypassing the digestive system for enhanced absorption. These intravenous infusions may include ingredients such as vitamin C, vitamin D, selenium, and glutathione, all of which possess antioxidant properties and contribute to immune function and cellular health.



Vitamin C, a powerful antioxidant, helps combat oxidative stress and inflammation, which are implicated in cancer development. Vitamin D plays a vital role in regulating cell growth and immune function, and deficiency has been linked to an increased risk of colorectal cancer. Selenium, another essential nutrient, exhibits anticancer properties by supporting DNA repair mechanisms and inhibiting tumor growth. Glutathione, known as the body's master antioxidant, aids in detoxification and immune system modulation, potentially reducing cancer risk.

While nutrient IV therapy shows promise as a complementary approach to colorectal cancer prevention, it is essential to emphasize that it should not replace conventional screening methods or medical advice. Screening tests such as colonoscopies remain the gold standard for early detection of colorectal cancer and precancerous polyps, allowing for timely intervention and improved outcomes. Individuals should consult their healthcare providers to determine the most appropriate preventive strategies based on their medical history and risk profile.

Colorectal cancer remains a significant public health concern, impacting millions of lives worldwide. While age and genetics play a role in predisposing individuals to this disease, lifestyle factors such as diet and physical activity can influence risk. Incorporating a healthy lifestyle and considering complementary approaches like nutrient IV therapy

may help reduce the likelihood of developing colorectal cancer. However, it is crucial to prioritize regular screening and medical guidance to detect and address any potential concerns promptly. Together, through awareness, prevention, and early detection, we can strive toward a future where colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates are significantly reduced.

#### Sources:

• American Cancer Society. (2022). Key Statistics for Colorectal Cancer. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer/about/key-statistics.html>



#### **Doreen DeStefano, NhD, APRN, DNP**

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

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

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# The Long-Term Care Asset Protection Trust: How Smart Planning Today Can Protect Your Tomorrow

By Carl Zacharia

**A**s healthcare costs continue to soar and Americans live longer than ever, families face a growing challenge: how to protect their hard-earned assets while ensuring access to quality long-term care. An Asset Protection Trust offers a powerful solution that helps families navigate this complex landscape while preserving their wealth for future generations.

**Understanding the Long-Term Care Challenge**  
The statistics are sobering. The average cost of nursing home care in Florida now exceeds \$10,400 per month, a figure that can quickly deplete a lifetime of savings. While Medicaid offers a safety net for long-term care expenses, qualifying for benefits traditionally requires spending down assets to near-poverty levels – a prospect that threatens many families' financial security and legacy plans.

This is where strategic planning makes all the difference. An Asset Protection Trust represents a sophisticated approach to asset protection that helps families qualify for Medicaid benefits while preserving their wealth for future generations.

**A Proactive Approach to Asset Protection**  
Unlike traditional estate planning tools, an Asset Protection Trust is specifically designed to address the unique challenges of long-term care planning. When properly established, this irrevocable trust helps to protect assets from being counted in the Medicaid eligibility process while maintaining important tax benefits for your heirs.

The key lies in timing. By establishing the trust at least five years before needing Medicaid benefits – known as the "lookback period" – families can protect significant assets that would otherwise need to be spent down. This foresighted approach can preserve hundreds of thousands of dollars in family wealth while ensuring access to necessary care.

**Preserving Tax Benefits for Future Generations**  
One of the most powerful features of an Asset Protection Trust is its ability to maintain the step-up in basis for capital gains tax purposes. This means that when assets pass to your heirs, their tax basis is adjusted to the fair market value at the time of inheritance, potentially saving them significant capital gains taxes in the future.

This combination of asset protection and tax efficiency sets an Asset Protection Trust apart from other planning tools. It's a sophisticated solution that addresses immediate concerns about long-term care costs and future tax implications for beneficiaries.

## Why Timing Matters

The five-year Medicaid lookback period makes early planning crucial. Assets transferred within this period may trigger penalties that delay benefit eligibility. However, transfers completed outside the lookback period are generally not penalized, allowing for faster qualification when benefits are needed.

Consider this example: A family transfers \$500,000 in assets to an Asset Protection Trust. If they wait the full five years before applying for Medicaid, these assets are protected and won't affect eligibility. Without such planning, the same family might need to spend most of these assets on care before qualifying for benefits.

## Maintaining Control While Protecting Assets

Many families worry that placing assets in an irrevocable trust means losing all control. An Asset Protection Trust addresses these concerns through careful drafting that can provide continued access to income while protecting the principal.

## The trust can be structured to:

- Provide income to the grantors during their lifetime
- Protect the family home and other real estate
- Preserve investment accounts and other assets
- Allow for flexible distribution options to beneficiaries
- Maintain privacy of family wealth

## Planning for Peace of Mind

Perhaps the greatest benefit of an Asset Protection Trust is the peace of mind it provides. Families can move forward knowing they have taken concrete steps to protect their legacy while ensuring access to quality care if needed.

## Taking the Next Step

While an Asset Protection Trust offers powerful benefits, proper timing and implementation are crucial. Working with an experienced estate planning and elder law attorney ensures that the trust is structured appropriately for your specific situation and goals.

Don't wait until a crisis forces your hand. The best time to plan for long-term care is before you need it. An Asset Protection Trust offers a path forward that protects your assets, preserves your legacy, and provides peace of mind for you and your loved ones.

Contact the attorneys at Zacharia Brown today to explore how an Asset Protection Trust can help protect your family's financial future while ensuring access to the care you may need.

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# TAURINE AND ITS POTENTIAL BENEFITS IN THE TREATMENT OF LONG COVID

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

**W**ith how long COVID-19 has been a part of our lives, you may be surprised to learn that your symptoms might not end with the initial infection. Some people are reporting lingering or new-onset symptoms that last weeks or even months after they had COVID-19, and the cause behind them remains unknown.

This phenomenon, termed long COVID, can differ from person to person and does not always occur. However, for those unfortunate enough to develop it, the relentless symptoms can severely decrease their quality of life, creating a need for long COVID treatment.

## Possible Causes of Long COVID

Long COVID, also known as long-haul COVID or post-COVID conditions, can have the following symptoms:

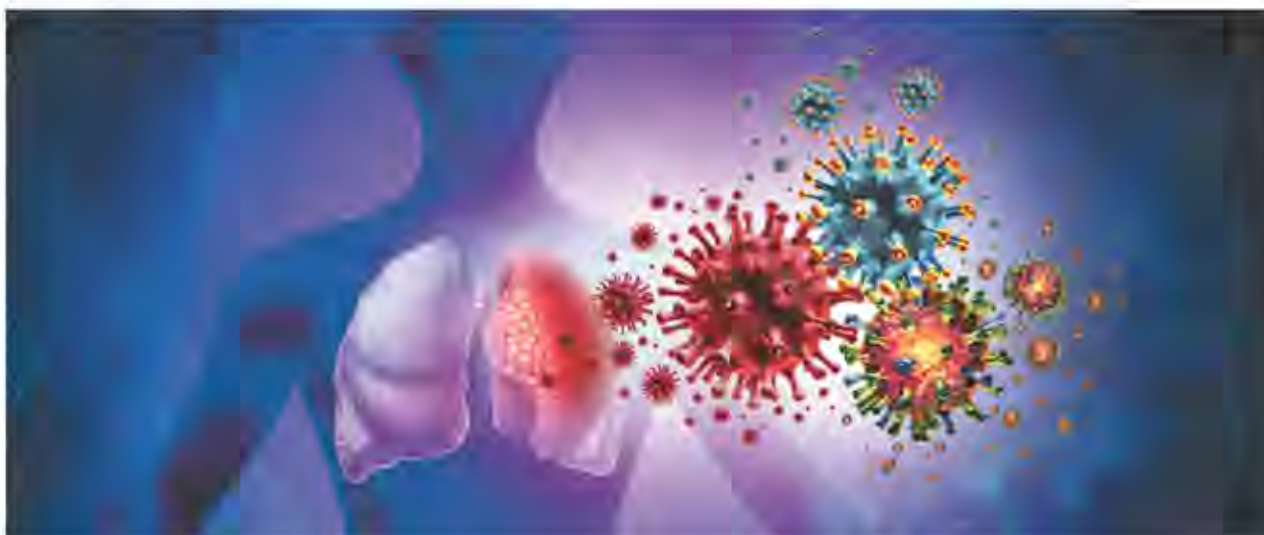
- fatigue
- brain fog
- insomnia
- changes in taste and smell
- anxiety
- depression
- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- dizziness

While many of these symptoms may seem minor, they can be a significant burden on your quality of life when they persist day after day. This is why treatment for long COVID is a new area of research. However, before getting into the potential treatments, it is first helpful to discuss the possible causes of long COVID, which are currently theories within the scientific community.

The first hypothesis is that long COVID results from lingering viral remnants, such as viral protein or RNA. These pieces of the virus can remain in the tissues and cause chronic inflammation.

Another theory is that long COVID results from an autoimmune reaction, which can occur with acute respiratory infections.

Finally, scientists speculate that long COVID symptoms can result from dysregulation in the gut microbiome, which can occur during infection.



With there being three possible causes, it can be hard to determine who may develop long COVID and who won't. However, predictive tests are in development.

## The Power of Taurine

Taurine is an amino acid the human liver produces, and it is also found in meat and fish. It plays a vital role in regulating various physiological functions, including the immune system.

Researchers from the University of Alberta have found that long COVID patients with lower levels of taurine had more symptoms, were hospitalized more often, and were at a higher risk for mortality. However, the purpose of their study was not to analyze taurine's role in long COVID, but to create a predictive model.

Of the 117 patients enrolled in the study, the researchers analyzed blood samples for each, looking for changes in various proteins, metabolites, and markers of inflammation. Utilizing the results obtained on 20 molecules, they then created a predictive model that had an 83% accuracy rate when predicting adverse clinical outcomes after discharge from acute infection.

While 20 molecules were used in the predictive model, the researchers did find that the difference in taurine levels among the patients was the most prominent. Beyond the poorer clinical outcomes seen in those with low taurine levels, those with high taurine levels had much fewer ongoing symptoms.

The results of this trial suggest that there may be promise in taurine supplementation when it comes to treating long COVID. However, further study is

needed to gauge the impact of taurine supplementation.

What is exciting about this discovery is that the treatment for long COVID may not require fancy drugs but instead simple supplementation to return balance in the body. This also matches up with the hormonal imbalances that can occur due to COVID-19, potentially evolving into long COVID. In these cases, restoring balance through hormone replacement therapy can also help to relieve symptoms.

## Other Benefits of Taurine Supplementation

Taurine supplementation may offer the potential to help with more than just long COVID.

### Taurine helps with the following:

- forming bile salts, which help with digestion
- maintaining hydration and electrolyte balance in the cells
- supporting the central nervous system and eyes
- regulating immune system health and the function of antioxidants
- regulating minerals in the cells

Taurine deficiency on its own is rare because of the body's ability to produce it. Still, when you're ill or under stress, it is possible that your body needs more taurine, which is why supplementation may help.

Research has shown that taurine supplementation can help regulate blood pressure in those with heart conditions, enhance insulin sensitivity, and increase the amount of oxygen taken in by the body.



These findings show great promise in taurine supplementation, and as research into it continues, it may soon be a viable treatment for those with long COVID.

### Hormonal Imbalance, Another Need for Supplementation

Women, in particular, are more susceptible to long COVID, and researchers speculate that this is because of their hormones or, more specifically, the way that the COVID-19 virus can potentially infiltrate the ovaries and lower estrogen production.

Unfortunately, this side effect will persist unless an effort is made to correct the amount of estrogen in the body, such as through hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Similar to taurine supplementation, HRT helps to bring estrogen back to normal levels. This not only relieves the resulting symptoms (which are often indicative of long COVID) but also allows the ovaries to heal so that they can resume normal estrogen production.

### Recovering From Long COVID

With how persistent long COVID can be, it's essential to think of your recovery as a shift in your lifestyle. There is no overnight fix, which can be frustrating to many. However, if you keep in mind that your recovery will take time, it can be easier to push through it and, eventually, feel better.

You can make the following holistic lifestyle changes to ease your long COVID recovery and help your body return to balance.

### Promote Gut Health

Within your gut are trillions of bacteria, most of them having crucial roles in your digestion and immune health. However, when we get sick, the balance of bacteria in our gut can shift, lowering the amount of helpful bacteria and allowing the number of harmful bacteria to increase. The result can be digestive troubles, such as diarrhea or bloating, alongside difficulty recovering from illness.

One of the theories around long COVID is that it results from dysregulation in the gut, so those looking to recover from long COVID should focus on improving and promoting their gut health. Nothing fancy is needed to do this, either; simply focus on consuming more plant-based foods such as fruits, veggies, nuts, and seeds, and prioritize getting a variety of different foods. The more variety, the more types of vitamins and nutrients you get, and thus, the healthier your body.

Alongside a balanced diet, it's also best to focus on consuming probiotic-rich foods such as yogurt or fermented foods like kefir or sauerkraut. Probiotic supplements are also available if you do not get enough probiotics from your diet.

By prioritizing the food you put into your body, you can help return balance to your gut, healing your body from the inside out.

### Relax

One of the most common symptoms of long-COVID is fatigue. Even more frustrating is that this fatigue is often accompanied by sleep problems, meaning not only are you tired, but even when you try to sleep, you can't.

Relaxation techniques can help you to minimize your fatigue and finally get some much-needed sleep. Not only will sleep help minimize your daytime fatigue, but quality sleep also gives your body time to heal and repair itself, which can help fight any lingering infection or heal the damage sustained by your cells while sick with COVID-19.

### Go Easy on Yourself

When you have long COVID, it's most important to remember that it's not something that will quickly get better. It's a process, but each healthy habit you implement can help you to feel better.

With long COVID, it's common for people to try to push through the symptoms and return to normal activity levels before their body is physically ready. No one wants to feel as though they are out of commission for too long, but pushing your body can cause more harm and increase the length of time that you are ill.

Instead, remember that you're healing, and your body doesn't need to be worked as strenuously. This can mean opting for low-impact workouts instead of something demanding; you can still move your body, but in a gentler way. This might also mean going to bed earlier each night to help you get more sleep.

Recovering from long COVID is a journey, so take note of what activities help you feel better and try adding more of them to your day.

### Long COVID and Future Treatments

Long COVID is a health condition that follows COVID-19 infection in some individuals. It is characterized by continued or new onset symptoms that last weeks or months after infection. It does not affect everyone, and those who develop long COVID often experience different types of symptoms.

New research into predictive markers of long COVID revealed that taurine levels are dramatically different between those experiencing long COVID symptoms and those without. Specifically, those with low levels of taurine were more likely to experience severe symptoms, be hospitalized, and have a higher rate of mortality.

After seeing this potential connection between low taurine levels and long COVID, a logical conclusion would be that supplementing taurine can help treat long COVID. While this is not a verifiable treatment at this time, researchers are looking into its promise.

If you are suffering from long COVID, it's only natural to wonder what you can do to help ease your symptoms. Various lifestyle habits can help, such as eating a balanced diet, relaxing, and getting enough sleep and physical exercise. However, other interventions can also work, especially if you are experiencing a deficiency.

If your long COVID symptoms are not getting better, reach out to your doctor to schedule an appointment and go over what options you have to treat this condition and restore balance to your body.

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# FINDING RELIEF

## Allergy Sufferers Turn to Specialized Care

Southwest Florida's beautiful landscape and year-round warmth create the perfect environment not just for residents and tourists, but unfortunately for allergens as well. For the thousands of allergy sufferers across Naples, Fort Myers, and surrounding areas, the region's abundant pollen, mold, and dust mites can transform paradise into a daily struggle of sneezing, watery eyes, and congestion.

Many locals have long relied on over-the-counter medications with limited success. However, a growing number of Southwest Florida residents are discovering that seeking specialized care from board-certified otolaryngologists like Dr. Price Sonkarley offers more comprehensive and effective treatment options.

"The humidity and vegetation in Southwest Florida create a unique challenge for allergy sufferers," explains Dr. Sonkarley, whose practice has become a destination for those seeking relief. "Many patients have self-medicated for years before realizing that an otolaryngologist can provide targeted treatments based on their specific allergen profile."

Dr. Sonkarley, with extensive training in both ear, nose, and throat conditions and allergy management, represents a new approach for many patients. As a board-certified otolaryngologist, he offers a level of specialized care that addresses both the symptoms and underlying causes of allergic reactions common to Southwest Florida residents.

One treatment gaining popularity among Dr. Sonkarley's patients is sublingual immunotherapy, commonly known as allergy drops. Unlike conventional allergy shots that require frequent clinic visits, these drops can be administered at home. The treatment works by gradually desensitizing patients to specific allergens, delivering antigen in liquid form under the tongue.

"What makes an otolaryngologist's approach different is our comprehensive understanding of the entire respiratory system," Dr. Sonkarley notes. "We don't just treat the allergy symptoms—we evaluate how those symptoms interact with sinus issues, ear problems, and throat conditions that are often interconnected."



For busy professionals and families throughout Southwest Florida's growing communities, this integrated approach saves time and frustration. Rather than visiting multiple specialists for related symptoms, patients receive comprehensive care in one location.

Local resident Meredith Carson shares her experience: "After seeing three different doctors for what I thought were separate issues—allergies, recurring sinus infections, and ear pressure—Dr. Sonkarley identified how they were all connected. The allergy drops he prescribed have improved all my symptoms, not just the sneezing."

Dr. Sonkarley emphasizes that board certification matters when seeking specialized allergic care. "Board certification in otolaryngology ensures that your physician has completed rigorous training and testing specifically in conditions affecting the ears, nose, throat, and related allergic reactions," he explains.

The treatment protocols Dr. Sonkarley develops are tailored to Southwest Florida's unique environmental challenges. "Our patients face different allergens than those in other parts of the country. Treatment must be regionalized to be effective," he adds.

For those with chronic sinusitis—a common complaint in Florida's humid environment—Dr. Sonkarley often recommends a combined approach of allergy drops and targeted sinus treatments. This comprehensive strategy has proven particularly effective for long-term Southwest Florida residents who have struggled with symptoms for years.

While most immunotherapy treatment plans require daily use for three to five years, Dr. Sonkarley works with patients to develop personalized schedules based on allergy severity and

Southwest Florida's seasonal variations. Regular follow-up appointments allow for adjustments as patients progress.

As Southwest Florida continues to grow, access to specialized care from board-certified otolaryngologists like Dr. Sonkarley becomes increasingly vital for maintaining quality of life. For many residents, this specialized approach represents not just symptom relief, but a renewed ability to fully enjoy the outdoor lifestyle that drew them to Florida in the first place.



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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# Shopping for the Best Incontinence Underwear?

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

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

## What is Overactive Bladder?

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

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

You may be suffering from overactive bladder if:

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

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

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

## What is Axonics Therapy?

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

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

## What are the benefits of Axonics Therapy?

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

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**Clinically proven results:**

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- **94%** of patients were satisfied with their therapy<sup>3</sup>

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

### References:

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# SPRINGTIME RENEWAL:

## Southwest Florida's Secret to Radiant Skin

The arrival of spring in Southwest Florida brings a unique set of challenges and opportunities for skincare. As temperatures rise and humidity levels increase, the subtropical climate creates the perfect environment to address skin concerns and achieve that coveted year-round glow. Amidst swaying palms and brilliant sunshine, Hideout Boutique & Med Spa stands as a sanctuary for those seeking rejuvenation during this transformative season.

### Southwest Florida's Spring: Beauty and Challenges

Spring in Southwest Florida differs dramatically from the rest of the country. While northern states experience melting snow and gradual warming, Florida's spring brings intensifying sunshine, increasing humidity, and the occasional afternoon shower. These environmental factors can exacerbate skin concerns, from unexpected acne flare-ups to accelerated signs of aging due to UV exposure.

The combination of heat and humidity creates the perfect storm for clogged pores, while the stronger spring sun accelerates collagen breakdown and pigmentation issues. Many locals and seasonal residents find themselves seeking solutions to maintain healthy, radiant skin during this transitional time.

### Customized Care at Hideout Boutique & Med Spa

Nestled in Southwest Florida, Hideout Boutique & Med Spa has become the region's premier destination for addressing these specific seasonal skin challenges. Specializing in acne and anti-aging treatments, Hideout offers personalized care that adapts to Florida's unique climate and your skin's changing needs.

"Spring in Southwest Florida requires a specialized approach to skincare," explains Hideout's lead aesthetician. "What works in other parts of the country often needs adjustment for our subtropical environment. Our treatment protocols are designed specifically with our climate in mind."

This bespoke approach has earned Hideout a loyal following among both year-round residents and seasonal visitors looking to maintain their skin's health despite environmental challenges.

### Advanced Treatments for Spring Renewal

Hideout Boutique & Med Spa distinguishes itself through its comprehensive range of cutting-edge

treatments. For those battling seasonal acne breakouts, their multi-modality approach combines advanced laser therapies with medical-grade peels and personalized skincare regimens. These treatments effectively address clogged pores and inflammation while balancing oil production—a common concern during Florida's humid spring months.

For clients focused on anti-aging, Hideout offers the latest in neurotoxins (Botox, Jeuveau, and Xeomin) and a variety of fillers to restore volume and smooth away fine lines. Their Sculptra treatments provide gradual, natural-looking rejuvenation by stimulating collagen production—particularly beneficial after winter's drying effects.

The spa's PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma) treatments harness the body's natural healing properties to refresh and renew skin texture, while their microneedling protocols stimulate collagen production to address sun damage—a year-round concern in Florida's sunshine.

For those seeking more dramatic rejuvenation, Hideout's PDO threading provides a non-surgical lifting effect, perfect for counteracting the effects of gravity and sun exposure common in the Florida lifestyle.

### Spring Skincare: A Seasonal Approach

What sets Hideout apart is their understanding that skincare needs evolve with the seasons, even in Florida's relatively stable climate. Spring treatments focus on deep cleansing, exfoliation, and protection against intensifying UV exposure. Their aestheticians work closely with clients to adjust home care routines to accommodate increasing humidity and stronger sun.

"Many people don't realize that their winter skincare routine can become problematic as we move into spring," notes Hideout's skincare specialist. "We help our clients transition their regimens to maintain that healthy glow year-round."

As Southwest Florida blooms with the vibrancy of spring, Hideout Boutique & Med Spa provides the perfect oasis for skin renewal and rejuvenation. Through their specialized treatments and deep understanding of the region's unique climate challenges, they've become the destination of choice for those seeking to maintain radiant, healthy skin throughout the changing seasons.

For residents and visitors alike, spring in Southwest Florida means more than just beautiful beaches and swaying palms—it's the ideal time to invest in your skin's health at Hideout Boutique & Med Spa.

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

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



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# Understanding Polycystic Kidney Disease

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

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

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

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

The primary symptoms of PKD are as follows:

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

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

## PKD Treatment

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

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

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

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

## Associates in Nephrology

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

## Chronic Kidney Disease Program

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

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

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

## Services Provided

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

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

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

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# CAN YOU HAVE A CRACKED TOOTH?

By KELLY M. DAINIAK, DMD, GENERAL DENTIST

## Have you ever noticed a crack in your tooth?

Don't be alarmed, not all cracks become problematic. As we age, we develop cracks in our teeth due to regular wear and tear as well as paroxysmal habits like clenching and grinding (bruxism). Cracks should be noted and monitored by your dentist. When a crack deepens your tooth is at risk to develop symptoms and possible tooth loss.

## What to look for:

- Pain on biting and relief when you stop biting.
- Deep cracks (visible in dental chair)
- Deep cracks that are visible on dental radiograph
- Tooth movement when biting
- Sharp pain when biting

The proper treatment after diagnosing a Cracked Tooth is a crown preparation then wait 3-4 weeks to see if symptoms resolve. If symptoms resolve, great! Then the permanent crown can be placed. If symptoms don't resolve then a root canal treatment is needed. After the root canal treatment if symptoms are resolved then the permanent crown can be delivered. In rare circumstances, there is still pain on biting after a root canal treatment and final crown. In this case the only way to relieve symptoms is tooth extraction.

Pain when biting is not something that should be ignored. Over time the crack in the tooth will continue to worsen and bump into the nerve or worse case scenario, split the tooth. The sooner it is diagnosed and treated the less dental work will be required.

In my practice I have seen teeth without any dental restorations crack and split requiring dental extraction. I closely monitor tooth cracks with photographs and radiographs to advise my patients for the best dental treatment.

*Dr. Kelly M. Dainiak is a Hospital Residency trained General Dentist who takes pride in caring for her patients' well-being.*



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# The Power of Oxygen: How HOCATT Technology Can Supercharge Your Mind & Body in 30 Minutes

In today's fast-paced world, many of us are searching for effective ways to restore balance, feel renewed, and achieve peak vitality. The demands of daily life along with the buildup of environmental toxins, daily stress, and sluggish circulation can leave us fatigued and depleted, both physically and mentally. For those seeking a comprehensive solution that supports multiple aspects of wellness in a single session, the HOCATT™ (Hyperthermic Ozone and Carbonic Acid Transdermal Technology) system combines multiple advanced wellness modalities into one seamless experience. Unlike standalone treatments, these therapies work synergistically, enhancing each other's effects to deliver comprehensive support for detoxification, oxygenation, and revitalization. This integrative approach sets HOCATT™ apart, offering a uniquely efficient and transformative wellness solution.

The HOCATT™ system integrates several complementary therapies that work together to support rejuvenation:

## 1. Transdermal Ozone Therapy

Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), a highly oxygenated form of oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>), contains an extra oxygen molecule that breaks down into oxygen and a single oxygen atom upon entering the body. This additional oxygen supports cellular energy, circulation, and detoxification. Unlike hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT), which uses only oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>), ozone therapy provides an extra oxygen molecule, which plays a crucial role in activating the body's antioxidant defense systems.

Research indicates that ozone therapy can enhance the activity of antioxidant enzymes such as superoxide dismutase, catalase, and glutathione peroxidase, which play crucial roles in neutralizing free radicals and protecting cells from oxidative damage.

By potentially upregulating these antioxidant defenses, ozone therapy may help maintain a balance between oxidants and antioxidants, thereby supporting the body's ability to manage oxidative stress.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Supports immune system
- Encourages cellular energy production
- Aids the body's natural detoxification processes
- Enhances oxygenation and circulation
- Helps manage oxidative stress through balanced antioxidant response

## 2. Oxygen Breathing Therapy

During HOCATT™ sessions, clients also breathe in concentrated oxygen. This supports oxygen delivery to the bloodstream, optimizing the body's ability to absorb and utilize oxygen while complementing ozone therapy.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Supports cardiovascular and respiratory health
- Boosts mental clarity and focus
- Enhances physical stamina and endurance
- Encourages relaxation and stress management

## 3. Carbonic Acid (CO<sub>2</sub>) Therapy

During a HOCATT™ session, carbonic acid is transdermally (through the skin) delivered to open capillaries and enhances circulation and relaxation. Improved circulation ensures that oxygen and ozone can penetrate tissues more effectively.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Supports healthy blood flow
- Encourages natural oxygen absorption
- Promotes relaxation and stress management
- Stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system for deep relaxation and cognitive clarity

## 4. Far Infrared Sauna Therapy

Far-infrared heat penetrates deep into tissues, raising core body temperature to support detoxification and promote relaxation without excessive external heat.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Supports gentle detoxification
- Encourages muscle and joint comfort
- Promotes relaxation and stress relief

## 5. Electrotherapy

A specialized form of electrotherapy is used to support cellular function and balance.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Supports cellular function and repair
- Encourages restful sleep
- Helps manage stress responses

## 6. Aromatherapy

Therapeutic essential oils are diffused during sessions, engaging the limbic system to support emotional balance and mental clarity.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Promotes stress relief and relaxation
- Supports positive mood and outlook
- Complements oxygenation benefits

## 7. Photon Light Therapy (Photobiomodulation)

Specific wavelengths of light penetrate the skin to support overall balance and encourage cellular vitality.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Supports skin health by stimulating collagen production
- Promotes mood balance and mental clarity
- Enhances circulation, supporting oxygen and nutrient delivery
- Stimulates ATP production for cellular energy

## 8. Ultraviolet (UV) Light Therapy

UV light works synergistically with ozone therapy to support oxygen utilization and balance.

### Key Supportive Benefits:

- Supports immune responses
- Complements oxygen-based therapies
- Aids the body's natural detoxification processes

## Why Oxygen Matters: The Foundation of Vitality

Oxygen powers every function in the body, from brain clarity to cellular energy production. However, modern lifestyles, environmental stressors, and reduced circulation can lower oxygen levels, contributing to fatigue and sluggish detoxification. HOCATT™ addresses this through transdermal ozone therapy and oxygen breathing, delivering highly bioavailable forms of oxygen that the body absorbs efficiently.

### Supportive Outcomes:

- **Enhanced Energy:** Cellular oxygenation supports ATP production, the body's energy currency.
- **Mental Clarity:** Improved oxygen delivery encourages cognitive performance.
- **Optimized Detoxification:** Oxygen supports liver function and natural detoxification processes.

## HOCATT™ vs. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT): A Distinct Difference

While both HOCATT™ and HBOT involve oxygen-based approaches, they differ in key aspects. HBOT uses pure oxygen (O<sub>2</sub>) in a pressurized chamber, significantly increasing oxygen levels in the blood and tissues. In contrast, HOCATT™ uses ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), which contains an additional oxygen molecule. This extra oxygen molecule provides enhanced support for detoxification and oxidative stress management, offering a unique benefit not found in HBOT.

## Experience the Transformation at Soaring Spirit of Florida LLC

Harnessing the power of oxygen and the comprehensive wellness modalities of HOCATT™, Soaring Spirit of Florida LLC offers sessions designed to support your journey toward greater vitality. Whether you're seeking to renew energy, detoxify naturally, or restore balance, HOCATT™ sessions provide a supportive environment for overall well-being.

*Discover the difference that oxygen-powered wellness can make. Your path to rising vitality starts here—experience it for yourself at Soaring Spirit of Florida LLC.*

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# YOUR PHARMACIST: A VALUABLE PARTNER IN NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH AND BEYOND

By Justin Ceravolo, PharmD

**E**ach March, National Nutrition Month spotlights the vital connection between healthy eating and overall wellness. While many people turn to their doctors or nutritionists for dietary guidance, your local pharmacist can be an equally valuable resource in your nutrition journey. These healthcare professionals offer unique insights into how medications, supplements, and nutrition work together to support your health.

Pharmacists undergo extensive training in biochemistry and understand how nutrients interact with medications, making them ideally positioned to offer personalized nutrition advice. For instance, they can explain why certain medications should be taken with food, while others work better on an empty stomach. They're also knowledgeable about potential interactions between supplements and prescription medications – information that could be crucial for your health.

Beyond medication management, pharmacists can help identify nutritional gaps that might affect your health. Many medications can impact nutrient absorption or increase your body's demand for specific vitamins and minerals. Your pharmacist can recommend appropriate dietary adjustments or supplements to counteract these effects. For example, some blood pressure medications may deplete potassium levels, requiring increased consumption of potassium-rich foods or supplementation under professional guidance.

Pharmacists are particularly valuable for individuals managing chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, or gastrointestinal disorders. They can provide tailored advice about dietary choices that complement your medication regimen and support your overall treatment plan. For diabetic patients, pharmacists often offer guidance about meal timing in relation to insulin or other diabetes medications, helping maintain stable blood sugar levels throughout the day.

Your pharmacist can also be an excellent resource for decoding nutrition labels and evaluating dietary supplements. With countless products on the market making various health claims, having a knowledgeable professional help you navigate these choices is invaluable. They can explain which supplements might benefit your specific health situation and which ones to avoid based on your current medications and health status.

During National Nutrition Month, many pharmacies offer expanded nutrition services, such as medication nutrition reviews or educational workshops about healthy eating. These services provide excellent opportunities to discuss your nutrition concerns with your pharmacist and develop strategies for improving your dietary habits.

The accessibility of pharmacists makes them particularly valuable nutrition partners. Unlike other healthcare providers who require appointments, pharmacists are often available for quick consultations during pharmacy hours. This convenience allows you to address nutrition questions or concerns as they arise.

Remember that your pharmacist is part of your healthcare team and can collaborate with your other healthcare providers to ensure your nutrition plan aligns with your overall health goals. This National Nutrition Month, consider scheduling a consultation with your pharmacist to discuss how you can optimize your nutrition while safely managing your medications.

## Justin Ceravolo, PharmD - Owner & Pharmacist

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

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# The Synergistic Relationship Between Weight Management and Heart Health

**M**anaging weight isn't just about fitting into smaller clothes or achieving aesthetic goals – it's fundamentally intertwined with cardiovascular health, affecting everything from blood pressure to heart function. Understanding this connection can help motivate and guide effective lifestyle changes that benefit both weight management and heart health simultaneously.

The impact of excess weight on cardiovascular health is significant and well-documented. When we carry extra pounds, our hearts must work harder to pump blood throughout our bodies, leading to increased blood pressure and greater strain on the cardiovascular system. Additionally, excess body fat, particularly around the midsection, is metabolically active and can promote inflammation throughout the body, potentially damaging blood vessels and increasing the risk of heart disease.

However, even modest weight loss can yield remarkable cardiovascular benefits. Research shows that losing just 5-10% of body weight can significantly reduce blood pressure, improve cholesterol levels, and decrease the risk of heart disease. This improvement occurs because weight loss helps reduce the workload on the heart while simultaneously addressing many of the underlying metabolic issues that contribute to cardiovascular problems.

The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight while supporting heart health lies in adopting a comprehensive approach that includes both dietary modifications and regular physical activity. Rather than focusing on quick fixes or extreme measures, successful long-term weight management requires sustainable lifestyle changes that can be maintained indefinitely.

From a dietary perspective, emphasizing whole, nutrient-dense foods while limiting processed foods and added sugars provides dual benefits for weight management and heart health. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats naturally supports weight loss by providing satisfying nutrition with fewer calories. These same foods also deliver essential nutrients that support cardiovascular health, such as potassium, fiber, and omega-3 fatty acids.

The Mediterranean diet serves as an excellent example of an eating pattern that promotes both weight management and heart health. This approach emphasizes olive oil, fish, nuts, legumes, and abundant fresh produce while limiting red meat and processed foods. Studies consistently show that following a Mediterranean-style diet can lead to sustainable weight loss while significantly reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Physical activity plays an equally crucial role in this relationship. Regular exercise not only burns calories and supports weight loss but also strengthens the heart muscle, improves circulation, and helps regulate blood pressure. The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, combined with muscle-strengthening activities at least twice weekly.

The beauty of exercise is that its benefits are cumulative and begin immediately. Even before significant weight loss occurs, regular physical activity starts improving cardiovascular function. As fitness improves and weight decreases, many people find they can engage in more challenging activities, creating a positive feedback loop that supports both continued weight loss and enhanced heart health.

Sleep and stress management also play vital roles in this relationship. Poor sleep and chronic stress can interfere with weight loss efforts by disrupting hormones that regulate appetite and metabolism. These factors can also directly impact heart health through increased inflammation and blood pressure. Prioritizing adequate sleep (7-9 hours per night) and implementing stress-reduction techniques such as meditation or yoga can support both weight management and cardiovascular health goals.

It's important to recognize that sustainable weight loss for heart health isn't about achieving a specific number on the scale but rather about making consistent, healthy choices that support overall well-being. Small, progressive changes often lead to more sustainable results than dramatic overhauls. This might mean starting with a 10-minute daily walk and gradually increasing duration and intensity, or slowly incorporating more vegetables into meals rather than attempting a complete dietary transformation overnight.



Regular medical check-ups and monitoring of cardiovascular health markers can provide valuable feedback and motivation throughout the weight loss journey. Improvements in blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and other health indicators often occur before significant weight loss is visible, offering encouraging evidence that positive changes are taking place.

The relationship between weight management and cardiovascular health is clear and compelling. By adopting a comprehensive approach that includes thoughtful dietary choices, regular physical activity, adequate sleep, and stress management, individuals can work toward achieving and maintaining a healthy weight while simultaneously supporting their heart health. This integrated approach not only leads to better health outcomes but also creates a foundation for lasting lifestyle changes that can support well-being for years to come.

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## CBD'S POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR MOOD AND PAIN IN TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

**T**raumatic brain injury (TBI) presents complex challenges for patients, with mood disorders and chronic pain among the most debilitating symptoms. Cannabidiol (CBD), a non-psychoactive compound derived from cannabis, has emerged as a potential therapeutic option worth exploring. Research suggests CBD may address multiple aspects of TBI recovery through its anti-inflammatory, neuroprotective, and analgesic properties.

The endocannabinoid system plays a crucial role in regulating mood, pain perception, and neuroinflammation—all processes disrupted by TBI. CBD interacts with this system, potentially helping restore balance. Studies indicate CBD may reduce neuroinflammation that contributes to persistent symptoms following brain injury. This anti-inflammatory action appears particularly relevant for minimizing secondary brain damage after initial trauma.

For mood regulation, CBD shows promise in addressing the anxiety and depression that frequently accompany TBI. By modulating serotonin receptors similar to conventional antidepressants, CBD may help stabilize mood without the side effects associated with many psychiatric medications. Patients report improved sleep quality when using CBD, which indirectly supports better mood regulation and cognitive function during recovery.

Pain management presents another significant challenge for TBI patients. CBD's analgesic properties work through multiple mechanisms, including inhibiting

pain signaling pathways and reducing inflammation at pain sites. Unlike opioid medications, CBD doesn't carry the same risks of addiction or respiratory depression, making it a potentially safer option for long-term pain management.

Current research, while promising, remains preliminary. Most studies involve animal models or small human trials, and optimal dosing protocols aren't yet standardized. The FDA has not approved CBD specifically for TBI treatment, though interest in clinical applications continues to grow. Patients considering CBD should consult healthcare providers familiar with cannabinoid therapy and TBI management.

Administration methods vary from oils and tinctures to capsules and topical applications, each with different absorption rates and durations of effect. Starting with low doses and gradually increasing allows patients to determine their optimal therapeutic range while minimizing potential side effects.

Quality and sourcing remain important considerations. CBD products vary widely in purity and potency, with third-party testing providing essential verification of product contents. Full-spectrum CBD products contain trace amounts of other cannabinoids that may enhance therapeutic effects through the "entourage effect," though they also contain minimal THC. Broad-spectrum and CBD isolate products offer THC-free alternatives for those concerned about drug testing or THC sensitivity.

Some patients report combining CBD with conventional TBI treatments enhances overall symptom management. This integrative approach may allow for reduced dosages of prescription medications, potentially minimizing adverse effects while maintaining therapeutic benefits.

As research advances, CBD may become an integrated component of comprehensive TBI treatment plans, potentially reducing reliance on multiple medications with problematic side effect profiles. For patients struggling with the mood and pain complications of TBI, CBD represents a promising avenue worth discussing with knowledgeable healthcare providers.

### About Hemp Joi

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

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

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# 2025 Open Enrollment is Here!

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

**M**edicare 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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# THE IMPORTANCE OF WHOLE HOME REMEDIATION VS. TRADITIONAL SPOT TREATMENTS

By Scott Briggs - American Mold Experts of SWFL, LLC

**W**hen faced with mold issues, homeowners often grapple with the decision between whole home remediation and traditional spot treatments. While spot treatments may seem like a quick less expensive fix, they often fall short of delivering a comprehensive solution. Understanding the importance of whole home remediation can lead to better long-term outcomes for your living environment.

## Limitations of Traditional Spot Treatments

Traditional spot treatments focus on specific areas where problems are visible, such as a small patch of mold in a bathroom. While these methods can provide immediate relief, they have significant limitations:

- 1. Incomplete Addressing of Issues:** Spot treatments may overlook hidden problems, such as mold growing in walls or concealed spaces. This can lead to a resurgence of the issue once the treatment wears off.
- 2. Temporary Solutions:** Without addressing the root causes, such as moisture or structural vulnerabilities, spot treatments tend to be short-lived. Mold growth can quickly return, leading to unnecessary repeated treatments and escalating costs.
- 3. Potential Health Risks:** Concentrated applications of chemicals in localized areas can pose health risks to residents, particularly vulnerable populations such as the elderly, children, pets and anyone with an auto immune disorder. We always recommend non toxic solutions for removing mold & mycotoxins.



## Advantages of Whole Home Remediation

Whole home remediation takes a comprehensive approach, ensuring that the entire property is assessed and treated. Here are some key benefits:

- 1. Thorough Inspection:** A whole home remediation process begins with a detailed inspection, identifying not just visible problems but also hidden threats. Also note addressing all moisture problems is a must to prevent future mold growth. This ensures that no area is overlooked.
- 2. Sustainable Solutions:** By addressing the underlying causes of infestations or mold growth—such as improving ventilation, addressing humidity issues and/or repairing leaks—whole home remediation provides lasting results, reducing the likelihood of recurrence.

**3. Enhanced Safety:** Comprehensive remediation often utilizes safer, environmentally friendly methods, minimizing health risks associated with chemical exposure.

In conclusion, while traditional spot treatments may offer quick fixes, they often fail to deliver long-term solutions. Whole home remediation provides a more effective and sustainable approach, ensuring that your home remains a safe and healthy environment for you and your family. Investing in a thorough remediation process not only resolves current issues but also helps prevent future problems, ultimately protecting your home and peace of mind.



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**AS THE EPA STATES:**  
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# Nutrition's Vital Role in Breast Cancer

**B**reast cancer is a pervasive health concern that affects millions of individuals worldwide. While advancements in medical treatments continue to improve outcomes, there is growing recognition of the crucial role nutrition plays in breast cancer prevention, treatment, and survivorship. This article explores the impact of dietary choices on breast cancer risk, the role of nutrition during treatment, and the importance of a balanced diet for survivors.

**Breast Cancer Prevention: The Power of Nutrition**  
Research suggests that adopting a healthy lifestyle, including a well-balanced diet, can contribute significantly to reducing the risk of developing breast cancer. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins provides essential nutrients that support overall health and may help lower the risk of cancer.

Certain foods have been linked to a lower risk of breast cancer due to their potential protective properties. For example, cruciferous vegetables like broccoli and Brussels sprouts contain compounds that have been associated with a reduced risk of breast cancer. Additionally, incorporating omega-3 fatty acids from sources like fatty fish, flaxseeds, and walnuts may have protective effects.

Conversely, it's advisable to limit the intake of processed foods, sugary beverages, and red or processed meats. High alcohol consumption has also been linked to an increased risk of breast cancer, so moderation is key.

## Nutrition during Breast Cancer Treatment

Nutrition becomes even more critical during breast cancer treatment, where the body is subjected to the stress of surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation. Maintaining adequate nutrition is essential for supporting the immune system, promoting healing, and minimizing treatment-related side effects.

Patients undergoing chemotherapy may experience changes in taste, appetite, and digestive function. To combat these challenges, focusing on easily digestible, nutrient-dense foods can help ensure adequate caloric intake. Small, frequent meals that include a variety of colorful fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins can be beneficial.

Protein intake is particularly important during treatment to support tissue repair and maintain muscle mass. Dairy, eggs, legumes, and lean meats are excellent sources of protein that can contribute to overall strength and well-being.

Hydration is another crucial aspect of nutrition during treatment. Staying well-hydrated helps manage side effects such as fatigue and supports the body's natural detoxification processes.

## Survivorship and the Role of Nutrition

After completing breast cancer treatment, survivors often face the challenge of rebuilding their health and wellness. Nutrition continues to play a pivotal role in this phase, supporting recovery and reducing the risk of recurrence.

Maintaining a healthy weight through balanced nutrition is associated with improved outcomes for breast cancer survivors. Regular physical activity combined with a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can contribute to overall well-being and help manage long-term health risks.

Post-treatment, survivors may experience lingering side effects such as fatigue, joint pain, or hormonal imbalances. Tailoring the diet to address these specific concerns, such as incorporating anti-inflammatory foods or foods rich in antioxidants, can be beneficial.

Support groups and nutrition counseling are valuable resources for breast cancer survivors seeking guidance on post-treatment nutrition. These platforms provide personalized advice based on individual health needs and can help survivors make informed choices about their diet and lifestyle.

In the complex landscape of breast cancer, nutrition emerges as a powerful ally in prevention, treatment, and survivorship. Adopting a diet rich in diverse nutrients, combined with a healthy lifestyle, can contribute to lowering the risk of breast cancer. During treatment, a focus on nourishing foods helps the body cope with the rigors of therapy, while post-treatment, a balanced diet supports recovery and reduces the risk of recurrence.

As we continue to unravel the intricate connections between nutrition and breast cancer, the importance of incorporating sound dietary practices into comprehensive cancer care becomes increasingly evident. Empowering individuals with knowledge about the role of nutrition in breast cancer not only promotes better health outcomes but also inspires proactive choices for a resilient and thriving future.

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# Heart and Brain Health: A Unified Approach Through Nutrition

By James V. Talano, MD, MBA, FACC

**A**s a cardiologist, I emphasize that both heart disease and neurodegenerative conditions like Alzheimer's disease are influenced by lifestyle choices, particularly diet. Research consistently highlights that dietary patterns promoting cardiovascular wellness also support brain function.

## HEART-HEALTHY DIETS

### Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is widely regarded as one of the most beneficial for heart health. Based on traditional diets from Mediterranean countries, it emphasizes:

- Fruits and vegetables as the foundation of every meal
- Whole grains, nuts, and legumes as primary carbohydrate and protein sources
- Healthy fats from olive oil, avocados, and nuts
- Fish and poultry as primary sources of animal protein, with limited red meat

A landmark study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that individuals following a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil or nuts had a significantly lower risk of cardiovascular events. This diet reduces inflammation and improves cholesterol levels through its rich content of monounsaturated fats and antioxidants.

### DASH Diet

Designed specifically to combat high blood pressure, the DASH diet also reduces heart disease risk by emphasizing:

- High intake of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains and lean proteins such as poultry, fish, and legumes
- Low-fat dairy products
- Limited sodium intake
- Reduction in saturated fats and added sugars

According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the DASH diet significantly lowers blood pressure through its high potassium, calcium, and magnesium content.

### Plant-Based and Flexitarian Diets

Plant-based diets primarily consist of plant-derived foods, with variations including vegetarian and vegan approaches. The American College of Cardiology highlights their benefits in reducing heart disease risk, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes due to their high dietary fiber, antioxidants, and heart-healthy fats.

The Flexitarian diet offers a more flexible approach, allowing occasional inclusion of animal products while maintaining a plant-based focus. Studies suggest this approach can lower heart disease risk by improving cholesterol levels and reducing inflammation.

### The MIND Diet and Alzheimer's Prevention

Alzheimer's disease presents a growing public health concern. While age and genetics are non-modifiable risk factors, diet plays a significant role in prevention and progression.

### Mediterranean Diet and Cognitive Health

In addition to heart health, the Mediterranean diet has been linked to reduced cognitive decline. A study in *BMC Medicine* demonstrated that individuals adhering to this diet experienced a significant reduction in dementia risk, independent of genetic predisposition. Its neuroprotective effects stem from rich antioxidants and unsaturated fatty acids, which mitigate oxidative stress and inflammation—processes involved in both cardiovascular and neurodegenerative diseases.

### The MIND Diet: A Targeted Approach

Building upon the Mediterranean and DASH diets, the MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet specifically promotes brain health by emphasizing:

- High consumption of leafy greens, berries, nuts, and whole grains
- Olive oil as the primary fat source
- Fish, beans, and poultry as protein sources
- Limited red meat, butter, cheese, and processed foods

Research indicates that adherence to the MIND diet correlates with slower cognitive decline and lower Alzheimer's risk. Even partial adoption has shown significant neuroprotective benefits.

## KEY NUTRIENTS FOR BRAIN HEALTH

Several dietary components have been individually associated with cognitive benefits:

- **Polyphenols:** Found in fruits, vegetables, and olive oil, these antioxidants protect brain function.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids:** These anti-inflammatory fats found in fish are essential for neuronal membrane function.
- **Antioxidants:** Vitamins E and C combat oxidative stress, a contributor to neuronal damage.
- **B Vitamins:** These play crucial roles in homocysteine metabolism, with elevated homocysteine levels associated with cognitive decline.

### The Overlap Between Cardiovascular and Cognitive Health

The similarities between dietary recommendations for heart and brain health are striking. These diets not only support neuroprotection but also improve lipid profiles, lower blood pressure, and enhance vascular function. Cardiovascular risk factors such as hypertension and diabetes have been linked to Alzheimer's development, making dietary interventions a dual-benefit strategy.

### Practical Recommendations

Key dietary modifications that support both heart and brain health include:

- **Increase plant-based foods:** vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains
- **Incorporate healthy fats:** olive oil, nuts, and fatty fish
- **Moderate animal product consumption:** limit red and processed meats
- **Reduce processed foods high in saturated fats, sugars, and sodium**
- **Practice mindful eating with regular meal patterns and portion control**

### Conclusion

By prioritizing heart-healthy nutrition, individuals can also take proactive steps in reducing Alzheimer's risk. The Mediterranean, DASH, plant-based, and Flexitarian diets all provide cardiovascular benefits, while the MIND diet specifically targets cognitive health. Ultimately, adopting a sustainable, balanced approach to diet can promote long-term well-being for both the heart and brain.

For those unsure where to start, consulting a healthcare provider or dietitian can help tailor a dietary plan suited to individual health needs. Small, gradual changes—such as adding more vegetables to meals or swapping refined grains for whole grains—can have lasting health benefits. By making informed nutritional choices, we can safeguard our hearts and minds for years to come.

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# Maintaining Healthy Friendships

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

The first step is to realize that you really do **NEED** friends.

Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived said, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* Prov. 27:17

That means that we make each other better. It seems pretty important to God that we have good friendships. The Bible is full of examples of this.

Think about the amazing friendship of Jonathan and David. Jonathan warned David that his life was in danger at the hands of Jonathan's own father, King Saul.

This warning allowed David to take action and avoid harm, and ultimately this act of true friendship allowed David to take the throne.

Friends look out for each other. They should have each other's back. Your friends are the ones who will be there for you when everything in your life is falling apart.

The second step is to be friendly and willing to meet new people. The Bible says, *"A man who has friends must himself be friendly..."* Prov. 18:24

Put a smile on your face, stick out your hand and meet new people. Opportunities abound for making new friends if you are willing to actively pursue new relationships. Get involved in a local church, join a social organization, volunteer at the local schools or another non-profit organization. These are all great ways to meet new people and do good in the community at the same time.

The third step to building relationships is to make yourself vulnerable even at the risk being rejected. The reality is that not everyone is going to like you. And, you are not going to like everyone.

Look for people with similar interests or a common background. If you don't connect with someone, just move on. You will certainly find several good friends if you keep working towards making friends.

You will find the fourth step most helpful if you make it a natural part of your life: put other's needs ahead of your own. The Bible says it like this:

*<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup>not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.* Phil. 2:3-4

Have you ever met people who want you to listen to all of the details about their life but then they never bother to ask about yours? Be interested in other people. In humility, don't try to "one up" their stories. Just listen, smile, and ask genuine questions. Get to know them.

If you want to make friends, get interested in other people. Discover their story. Dale Carnegie writes, "You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you."



You might find it helpful to evaluate how you talk with other people. Are you genuinely interested in others or does every conversation revolve around you? Do you make yourself the hero of every story? Do find it necessary to talk about your successes and achievements? Are you trying to impress people or relate to people?

If you really want to make friends, get interested in other people. Learn about them. Listen to their stories and ask questions. If you listen and genuinely care about others, you'll have more friends than you can handle in a short time.

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