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Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

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From Apprehension to Elation:

How One Teacher Transformed Her Smile with Invisalign®

Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry Patient Spotlight

For Jennifer Lange, a dedicated teacher, making the leap to a new dentist was not a decision she took lightly. She had endured her fair share of dental work growing up, and past experiences with subpar treatment had left her feeling cautious—if not a little apprehensive—about change.

“I had a couple of bad experiences with poor workmanship at a local office,” Jennifer recalls. “I never really felt comfortable there. I had a lot of dentistry as a kid, so finding someone I could trust was important.”

When it came time to try a new dental home, Jennifer chose **Dr. Scopu at Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry**—and her decision was guided by more than just convenience. “I liked that she was a woman and had a reputation for being well-liked by her patients,” she explains. “From our very first visit, I felt at ease. Dr. Scopu is super easy to talk to, gentle, kind, and conservative in her dental approach. She doesn’t push unnecessary treatment—she listens.”

A Smile 20 Years in the Making

Over time, as Jennifer and Dr. Scopu built a rapport, they began discussing something that had bothered Jennifer for decades: her anterior open bite and crooked lower teeth.

“I had braces as a kid and I swore I’d never go through that again,” she laughs. “But after we did the digital scan, I was able to see exactly how my teeth could look with Invisalign®. That was the turning point—I decided to take the leap.”

The results exceeded even Jennifer’s expectations. “I am *thrilled*! I haven’t been able to bite into food with my front teeth for a couple of decades. Now, problem solved! I can’t believe I lived biting from the side all my adulthood.”

Simple pleasures—like eating pizza, burgers, or sandwiches—no longer require awkward maneuvers or a fork and knife. “It’s a whole new world,” she says.

Confidence in the Classroom and Beyond

Jennifer’s work as a teacher means she interacts with students, colleagues, and parents every day. While her



smile had never been a major source of insecurity, her improved bite and alignment have brought a fresh sense of ease.

“My smile always looked decent in pictures since the top teeth weren’t too crooked, but the lack of overlap between my upper and lower front teeth made eating a challenge,” she explains. “Now, I don’t have to think twice about how my mouth looks in a picture or whether I can eat something in public without cutting it up. It’s just... effortless.”

The boost in confidence carries over into her personal life, too. Dining out is more enjoyable, and she’s no longer conscious of avoiding certain foods.

The Hygienist Who Makes All the Difference

Jennifer is quick to point out that her positive experience extends beyond her Invisalign® treatment. She credits **Judith Lubin, RDH**, one of Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry’s highly skilled registered dental hygienists, as being an essential part of her care.

“Judith is the best hygienist I’ve ever had work in my mouth,” Jennifer says emphatically. “She’s thorough, gentle, and incredibly knowledgeable. I will not let anyone else clean my teeth.”

Her appreciation for the “female connection” in her dental care is clear. “At my old office, I always connected better with the women hygienists, but here, it’s on another level. The trust and comfort I have with both Dr. Scopu and Judith is priceless.”

Why Jennifer Recommends Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry

For patients who may be hesitant to change providers—or unsure if Invisalign® is worth it—Jennifer’s message is simple: trust the process and the people. “From start to finish, I’ve felt heard and cared for. Dr. Scopu doesn’t just fix teeth—she listens to her patients, and that makes all the difference. And Invisalign®? It’s one of the best decisions I’ve made for myself.”

Her advice to others considering orthodontic treatment as an adult: “Don’t wait two decades like I did. The results are worth every bit of the journey.”

About Dr. Ana Scopu

Dr. Ana Scopu, DDS, MSc brings a powerful blend of global education, advanced technical training, and personalized care. After earning her DDS from NYU College of Dentistry (2007) and completing a residency at Wyckoff Heights, she pursued specialized orthodontic training before achieving a rare Master’s in Specialized Orthodontics from Münster University, Germany (2014). Fluent in English, Serbian, and Romanian, Dr. Scopu holds dental licenses in NY and FL. She is passionate about esthetic dentistry, previously volunteering at NY Hospital Queens’ prosthodontic residency on weekends. Now settled in Naples, FL with her family, she values each moment—balancing her professional passion with a deep appreciation for life’s simple joys.

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UNDERSTANDING BREAST DENSITY ON MAMMOGRAMS:

What It Means and When to Consider Additional Screening

By Sharla Gayle Patterson, MD, MBA

When you receive the results of a mammogram, you may notice a mention of "breast density." This term can be confusing, but understanding what it means is important for your breast health. Here's what you need to know about breast density, how it affects your mammogram results, and when additional screening might be recommended.

What Is Breast Density?

Breast density refers to the amount of fibrous and glandular tissue compared to fatty tissue in the breast, as seen on a mammogram. Dense breasts have more glandular and connective tissue and less fat. On a mammogram, dense tissue appears white, which can make it harder to spot abnormalities like tumors, which also appear white.

Breast density is common—about 40-50% of women over age 40 have dense breasts. It is a normal finding and not an abnormality or disease. However, it is important because:

- Dense breast tissue can make it more difficult to detect cancer on a mammogram.
- Women with dense breasts have a slightly higher risk of developing breast cancer compared to women with less dense breasts.

How Is Breast Density Reported?

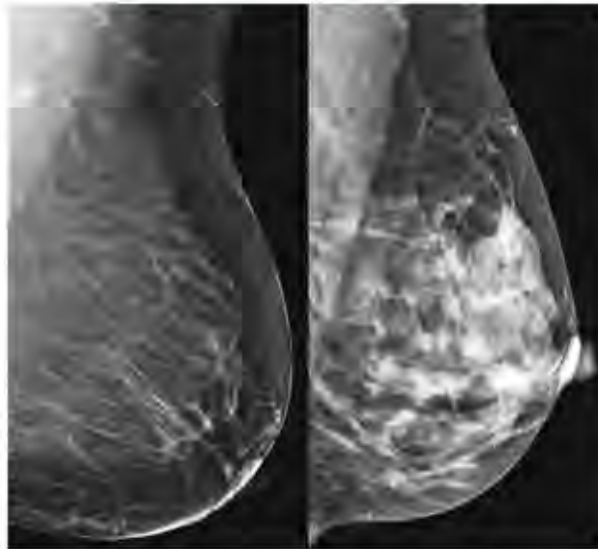
Radiologists classify breast density into four categories:

1. Almost entirely fatty
2. Scattered areas of fibroglandular density
3. Heterogeneously dense
4. Extremely dense

If your mammogram report mentions "heterogeneously dense" or "extremely dense" breasts, your provider may discuss what this means for your screening plan.

Should You Have Additional Screening?

For women with dense breasts, mammograms can be less sensitive. This means that some cancers may not be visible on the mammogram alone. In certain cases, additional screening tests such as breast ultrasound or breast MRI may be recommended to provide a more complete evaluation.



You might consider additional screening if:

- You have dense breasts and other risk factors for breast cancer, such as a family history or genetic predisposition.
- Your healthcare provider identifies an area of concern on your mammogram that needs further evaluation.
- You want extra reassurance, knowing that dense tissue can mask some cancers on mammograms.

What About Insurance Coverage?

It's important to know that insurance coverage for additional breast screening varies widely. Some insurance plans cover supplemental screening for women with dense breasts, while others may not. Coverage can depend on your state's laws, your individual risk factors, and the specific details of your insurance policy.

Before scheduling additional tests, check with your insurance carrier to understand what is covered under your plan. Some plans may require pre-authorization or a referral from your healthcare provider.

Personalized Screening Plans

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to breast cancer screening. Your screening plan should be tailored to your individual risk factors, breast density, and personal preferences. Discuss your options with your healthcare provider, who can help you weigh the benefits and limitations of additional screening based on your unique situation.



Sharla Gayle Patterson, MD, MBA

In Summary

Breast density is a common finding on mammograms and can affect how well mammograms detect cancer. If you have dense breasts, talk with your healthcare provider about whether additional screening is right for you. Remember, insurance coverage for extra tests can vary, so it's important to review your plan and make informed decisions about your breast health.



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RENUVION®

Advanced Skin Tightening Technology for Enhanced Body Contouring

By Dr. Kiran Gill

For individuals seeking to enhance their body contouring results and achieve smoother, firmer skin, Renuvion® represents a breakthrough in minimally invasive skin-tightening technology. This innovative treatment combines radiofrequency energy with helium plasma to deliver precise tissue contraction and stimulate collagen production, offering patients at Naples Aesthetic Institute a sophisticated solution for addressing skin laxity with minimal downtime.

Understanding Renuvion Technology

Renuvion is an FDA-cleared, minimally invasive procedure that revolutionizes skin tightening and contouring through its unique Dual Thermal Effect™ technology. By harnessing the power of radiofrequency energy and helium plasma, this advanced system creates controlled plasma energy beneath the skin surface, delivering optimal tissue contraction temperatures while simultaneously cooling the skin's surface to prevent thermal damage.

This sophisticated approach allows plastic surgeons to target specific areas with unprecedented precision, making Renuvion an ideal complement to procedures such as liposuction, facelifts, tummy tucks, neck lifts, submental liposuction, and brow lifts. The technology's ability to enhance surgical results while minimizing invasiveness has made it a preferred choice for patients from Naples, Fort Myers, and surrounding areas seeking natural-looking rejuvenation.

How Renuvion Works

The science behind Renuvion lies in its ability to generate controlled plasma energy that heats underlying soft tissues to optimal contraction temperatures. This process creates an immediate tightening effect while simultaneously initiating collagen production that continues to improve skin elasticity over time.

Unlike traditional skin-tightening treatments, Renuvion's targeted approach allows for precise tissue contraction with minimal heat transfer to the skin's surface. The treatment works by creating small incisions through which the Renuvion handpiece is inserted beneath the skin, delivering its unique combination of radiofrequency energy and helium plasma for immediate tissue contraction and long-term skin improvement.



Benefits of Renuvion Treatment

Renuvion offers numerous advantages for patients seeking skin tightening and enhanced body contouring results. The treatment effectively addresses loose skin on various areas including the neck, lower face, abdomen, arms, and other regions affected by aging or weight loss.

Key benefits include stimulation of natural collagen production for long-lasting results, minimal invasiveness requiring only small incisions, and significantly reduced downtime compared to traditional surgical approaches. Patients typically experience immediate improvements that continue to enhance as healing progresses.

When combined with plastic surgery procedures, Renuvion enhances body contouring outcomes by refining treated areas for a smoother, firmer, and more youthful appearance.

Ideal Candidates for Renuvion

The best candidates for Renuvion treatment are individuals in good overall health who do not smoke and have mild to moderate skin laxity. These patients typically seek to improve skin elasticity and enhance the results of procedures such as liposuction, facelifts, tummy tucks, or neck lifts, preferring treatments with small incisions and minimal downtime.

The Treatment Experience

Renuvion procedures are typically performed under sedation or general anesthesia for patient comfort. The process begins with small, strategically placed incisions in targeted areas, allowing precise insertion of the Renuvion handpiece beneath the skin. The actual treatment usually takes 45 minutes to an hour, depending on the areas being addressed. Many procedures combine Renuvion with other surgical techniques to maximize body contouring results.

Recovery and Results

Recovery after Renuvion treatment is generally straightforward. Patients typically wear compression garments for varying periods – one week full-time



followed by at least six additional weeks for facial treatments, or continuous compression for at least six weeks for body treatments. Normal post-treatment effects include swelling, tenderness, and mild discomfort that gradually subside over four to six weeks.

Results from Renuvion treatments provide noticeable improvements in skin elasticity, firmness, and overall contouring. While initial results are often visible within the first few weeks, final outcomes typically develop over six to nine months as the body continues producing collagen and tightening the skin. Improvements can continue for up to a year, providing long-lasting rejuvenation.

At Naples Aesthetic Institute, Renuvion represents a sophisticated approach to skin tightening that combines advanced technology with proven results, offering patients a minimally invasive option for achieving their aesthetic goals with natural-looking, long-lasting outcomes.



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When to See Your Healthcare Provider About Diabetes

By Charles Kilo, MD, Elizabeth Barton, APRN, & Doreen Cassarino, APRN at Millennium Physician Group

Diabetes can affect anyone, at any age, and its symptoms often arrive quietly before becoming a much bigger concern. Early detection through annual screenings is essential, as many health conditions – including diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol – can go unnoticed. Let's walk through the types of diabetes, signs to watch for, and when to talk to your healthcare provider.

Type 1 Diabetes in Kids

Type 1 diabetes can begin in childhood, when the body's immune system mistakenly attacks insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. This stops the body from producing insulin, a hormone necessary to convert sugar into energy.

Symptoms can develop quickly and may include:

- Increased thirst
- Frequent urination or bed-wetting
- Extreme hunger
- Unintentional weight loss
- Sleepiness
- Irritability or mood changes
- Fruit-smelling breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Rapid breathing

If you notice one of these symptoms, see your child's healthcare provider as soon as possible. Without treatment, type 1 diabetes can lead to dangerous complications. While there's no cure, insulin therapy, blood sugar monitoring, and healthy lifestyle habits can help your child live a full, active life.

Type 1 Diabetes Can Happen Later in Life

Formerly known as Juvenile Diabetes, nearly half of new type 1 diabetes cases are diagnosed in adults. Adult-onset type 1 diabetes, or latent autoimmune diabetes in adults (LADA), occurs when the pancreas gradually stops producing insulin due to an autoimmune response.

Symptoms may develop slowly and can be mistaken for type 2 diabetes:

- Excessive thirst and hunger
- Frequent urination, often at night
- Sudden, unexplained weight loss
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Increased infections

If you experience these symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider. A proper diagnosis is crucial for receiving the correct treatment and preventing complications.

Most Common: Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes, the most common form, impacts an estimated 6.3% of the world's population. It develops when your body doesn't use insulin properly or doesn't produce enough. It can progress slowly, and symptoms may go unnoticed for years.



Watch for these signs:

- Increased thirst and urination
- Feeling hungrier than normal
- Fatigue
- Blurred vision
- Slow-healing sores
- Tingling or numbness in hands or feet
- Unexplained weight loss
- Frequent yeast infections or urinary tract infections (UTIs) in women

Risk factors include being overweight, physical inactivity, a family history of diabetes, and being over 45. If you have these risks or notice any symptoms, discuss screening options with your healthcare provider.

Have You Heard of Prediabetes?

Before type 2 diabetes develops, many people experience prediabetes, where blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not yet high enough to be diabetes. Prediabetes usually has no symptoms, so screening is critical if you have known diabetes risk factors like excess weight, a sedentary lifestyle, high blood pressure, or a family history.

Screening for and identifying prediabetes early is an opportunity for you and your healthcare provider to discuss lifestyle changes that can help prevent type 2 diabetes from developing.

When to Seek Immediate Care with Diabetes

Sometimes, diabetes can lead to complications requiring emergency care. Always seek medical attention immediately if you or your child experience:

- High blood sugar with nausea or vomiting
- Fast breathing
- Fruity-smelling breath
- Confusion or extreme drowsiness

These symptoms may indicate diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA), a life-threatening condition that needs prompt treatment.

Why Seeing Your Healthcare Provider About Diabetes Matters

Diabetes is not one-size-fits-all. Managing diabetes successfully requires a personalized approach. Your body, lifestyle, and health goals are unique, and your diabetes care plan should be too.

Collaborating with your healthcare provider helps ensure that you or your child:

- Maintain good blood sugar control
- Adjust medications as needed
- Screen for complications like kidney disease, neuropathy, and eye problems
- Receive guidance on nutrition and exercise that fits your lifestyle
- Stay up to date on the latest tools and technology for diabetes management

Millennium Physician Group Is Your Partner for Diabetes Care

At Millennium Physician Group, we are committed to helping you take charge of your health through prevention, early detection, and customized care. Whether you are managing type 1 or type 2 diabetes, avoiding complications, or looking for guidance on effective lifestyle changes, we are here to support you at every step. Our diabetes care team includes Charles Kilo, MD; Elizabeth Barton, APRN; Doreen Cassarino, APRN; and specialized staff trained in continuous glucose monitoring and other advanced tools.

You don't need to have diabetes to make an appointment with our team. Even if it's been a while since your last visit, scheduling a checkup can help keep you on the path to better health.

About the Authors

Charles Kilo, MD, along with advanced practice providers Elizabeth Barton, APRN, and Doreen Cassarino, APRN, form a dedicated team at Millennium Physician Group in Naples. Together, they combine extensive expertise in internal medicine and preventive care to provide patient-centered, comprehensive care. Their collaborative approach focuses on supporting patients' overall health and well-being.



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NOURISHING YOUR BODY: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding and Managing Metabolic Health

By Greer Burcky, MS, RDN/LDN, CPT - Registered Dietician/Performance Coach

Understanding the intricate balance between diet, metabolism, and overall health is essential to supporting long-term wellness.

Metabolic diseases, a collective term encompassing conditions like diabetes, obesity, and lipid metabolism disorders, pose significant health risks and require proactive management strategies. Nutrition is more than the food we intake. We must also explore the fundamentals of metabolic health, understand the impact of dietary choices, and empower ourselves with the knowledge and insights to support optimal well-being.

- **Understanding Metabolic Health:** Metabolism is the cornerstone of physiological function, encompassing the intricate processes involved in energy production, hormone regulation, and nutrient metabolism. When metabolic pathways are disrupted, it can lead to a spectrum of health conditions collectively known as metabolic diseases. These include diabetes mellitus, obesity, metabolic syndrome, and lipid metabolism disorders.

- **Diabetes Mellitus:** Diabetes mellitus, a prevalent metabolic disorder, exists in two primary forms: type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes stems from the autoimmune destruction of insulin-producing beta cells, while type 2 diabetes involves insulin resistance and impaired glucose regulation. Both types pose significant health risks, including cardiovascular disease, neuropathy, nephropathy, retinopathy, and foot complications.

- **Navigating the Obesity Epidemic:** Obesity, characterized by excessive adipose tissue accumulation, has reached epidemic proportions globally. Beyond aesthetic concerns, obesity is a metabolic disease associated with numerous health risks, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, dyslipidemia, stroke, sleep apnea, certain cancers, and osteoarthritis. Addressing obesity requires comprehensive lifestyle modifications, including dietary changes, regular physical activity, and behavioral interventions.

- **Deciphering Metabolic Syndrome:** Metabolic syndrome represents interconnected risk factors, including abdominal obesity, elevated blood sugar levels, hypertension, and abnormal lipid profiles. This constellation of conditions significantly increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Lifestyle modifications focusing on weight management, balanced nutrition, and physical activity are crucial for mitigating these risks.

- **Unraveling Lipid Metabolism Disorders:** Disruptions in lipid metabolism, such as hyperlipidemia, hypercholesterolemia, and hypertriglyceridemia, contribute to the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease. Elevated lipid levels can lead to the formation of plaques within arterial walls, impairing blood flow and increasing the risk of heart attacks and strokes, dietary modifications play a pivotal role in managing lipid metabolism disorders.

- **Navigating Inherited Metabolic Disorders:** Inherited metabolic disorders stemming from genetic mutations affecting specific metabolic pathways pose unique challenges in diagnosis and management. Conditions like phenylketonuria (PKU), galactosemia, and glycogen storage diseases require specialized dietary interventions to mitigate symptoms and prevent long-term complications. Early detection, genetic counseling, and multidisciplinary care are essential for optimizing outcomes in individuals with inherited metabolic disorders.

- **Empowering Through Nutrition:** Dietary choices have a profound impact on metabolic health. Embracing a balanced and nutrient-rich diet forms the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. Portion control, mindful eating practices, and hydration are additional pillars of optimal nutrition.

Embracing a balanced and nutrient-rich diet forms the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. A good rule of thumb is to ensure you have a source of protein and fat with each meal. This should accompany a good amount of green, leafy, and colorful vegetables. Carbohydrates should include colorful berries and fruits, along with more dense sources like starchy vegetables less often, while restricting processed sources like pasta and bread. Portion control, mindful eating practices, and hydration are additional pillars of optimal nutrition.

- **Seeking Professional Guidance:** While dietary modifications play a central role in managing metabolic health, it's crucial to seek guidance from healthcare professionals, including registered dietitians and physicians. Personalized nutrition plans, tailored to individual needs and health status, can optimize metabolic outcomes and improve overall well-being.

As we navigate the complexities of metabolic health, let us embrace the opportunity to prioritize nourishment and well-being. By understanding the nuances of metabolic diseases and adopting proactive lifestyle interventions, we can pave the path toward lasting health and vitality. Let's empower ourselves and our communities to make informed dietary choices, fostering a culture of wellness and resilience for generations to come.

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Our performance coaches carefully guide, adjust, and intensify your exercise dose, progressively loading the body to activate the internal pharmacy within the muscles and prompt healing physiological processes.

Greer Burcky, Registered Dietician/Performance Coach
Greer is a registered dietitian with a Master of Science in Dietetics and Nutrition with over 1,200 hours of supervised practice in Naples and Miami. During her internship, she worked with registered dietitians in the food service and clinical sector at Physicians Regional Medical Center.

Additionally, she was able to work alongside registered dietitians at the Florida Department of Health and in private practice. With a specialty rotation focused on Integrative Functional Nutrition, Greer is passionate about the power nutrition can provide her patients. Greer aims to deliver quality care and healing through proper nutrition and exercise. She incorporates her dietetic and personal trainer licenses to offer both services seamlessly to her patients at Inspire Exercise Medicine.

You can find Greer cooking new recipes outside the gym, hiking the Great Smoky Mountains, and playing with all her dogs.



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EMBRACING VITALITY: YOUR GUIDE TO HEALTHY AGING THIS SEPTEMBER

By Tyrone Medina MD, FACEP

September marks Healthy Aging Month, a time dedicated to focusing on the positive aspects of growing older and taking proactive steps to maintain physical, mental, and emotional well-being throughout our later years. Rather than viewing aging as something to fear, this observance encourages us to embrace the opportunity to age gracefully while maintaining our independence, purpose, and joy.

The Foundation of Healthy Aging

Healthy aging begins with understanding that getting older doesn't automatically mean declining health or reduced quality of life. Research consistently shows that many age-related health issues are preventable or manageable through lifestyle choices made at any stage of life. The key lies in adopting a holistic approach that addresses multiple aspects of wellness simultaneously.

Physical activity remains one of the most powerful tools for healthy aging. Regular exercise helps maintain muscle mass, bone density, cardiovascular health, and cognitive function. Even moderate activities like walking, swimming, or gardening can provide significant benefits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity weekly, along with muscle-strengthening exercises twice per week.

Nutrition and Mental Wellness

Proper nutrition plays an equally crucial role in healthy aging. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats provides essential nutrients while reducing inflammation and supporting immune function. Staying hydrated becomes increasingly important as we age, as our sense of thirst may diminish over time.

Mental and emotional wellness deserve equal attention in any healthy aging strategy. Maintaining social connections, pursuing lifelong learning, managing stress effectively, and seeking help for mental health concerns when needed all contribute to overall well-being. Regular cognitive stimulation through reading, puzzles, or learning new skills helps keep the mind sharp and engaged.

Preventive Healthcare and Regular Monitoring

Preventive healthcare becomes increasingly important with age. Regular check-ups, screenings, and



vaccinations can help detect and prevent serious health issues before they become problematic. This includes routine monitoring of blood pressure, cholesterol levels, blood sugar, and other vital health markers.

Sleep quality often changes with age, making good sleep hygiene practices essential. Creating a consistent bedtime routine, maintaining a comfortable sleep environment, and addressing any sleep disorders can significantly impact overall health and quality of life.

Building Your Support Network

Creating a strong support network of family, friends, healthcare providers, and community resources provides the foundation for successful aging. This network can offer practical assistance, emotional support, and help maintain social connections that are vital for mental health.

Regular health maintenance also includes staying current with preventive care recommendations, managing chronic conditions effectively, and maintaining open communication with healthcare providers about any concerns or changes in health status.

As we celebrate Healthy Aging Month, remember that it's never too late to start making positive changes for your health and well-being. Pinnacle Health Specialists is a state-of-the-art walk-in clinic on Goodlette-Frank Road. The staff includes a board-certified Emergency Room physician as well as board-certified physician assistants who combined have over 40+ years serving Collier County. Pinnacle Health Specialists provides services in English and Spanish including same-day urgent care, primary care and pre/post-travel assistance. The clinic can draw labs on-site and can arrange same day imaging.

HEALTHY AGING TIPS

1. **Move daily** - 30 minutes keeps you strong
2. **Learn new skills** - challenge your brain
3. **Eat colorful foods** - fruits and vegetables
4. **Stay hydrated** - 8 glasses daily
5. **Sleep well** - 7-9 hours nightly
6. **Connect socially** - maintain relationships
7. **Get check-ups** - prevent problems early

Remember: It's never too early or too late to start your healthy aging journey!



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PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY: THERE IS A TREATMENT!

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

Do you have numbness or tingling in your arms, hands, legs, feet, or toes? Perhaps you are dealing with inflammation, restless legs, or burning sensations. If you have any of these issues, it's essential to seek medical attention as these are frequently warning signs of peripheral neuropathy. It's not uncommon; 20 million Americans have peripheral neuropathy.

Peripheral nerves run from the spinal cord to the arms, hands, legs, and feet. If the nerves are damaged due to injury or disease, it can cause some of the following symptoms:

Peripheral Neuropathy Symptoms

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Burning sensations
- Painful aching
- Balance issues
- Skin discoloration & texture changes
- Muscle cramps
- Feelings of stiffness or pressure
- Non-healing foot & ankle ulcers
- Cold feet
- Walking on marshmallows (sensations)

Many times, peripheral neuropathy is related to cancer treatment, medications, spinal injuries, or diabetes. In the case of diabetes, there is an extremely high storage of glucose; Glucose damages many organs in the body but also has a severely adverse effect on nerves. This nerve damage happens because the small blood vessels, which supply blood and nutrients to the nerves, becomes impaired. When the nerves are no longer fed nutrients, they either die, or their signals to the brain are ineffective. Symptoms of numbness, tingling, stumbling, and foot injuries are common. The lack of brain signaling from the nerve endings makes it difficult for a person to feel pain in their foot, so often, injuries and these disorders are overlooked.

There are viable ways to treat your condition's root cause and not just mask symptoms with pain medications, which is unfortunately what many providers will recommend.



You Don't Need Addictive Drugs—You Need to Treat the Cause of The Neuropathy

The most common treatment for nerve pain and numbness is to mask it with narcotic prescription pain medications. Narcotics like Opioids are highly addictive, and our state is currently leading the country in abusing the drug and overdose episodes.

Your Options

Physical medicine provides alternative therapeutic and rehabilitating procedures can significantly improve the condition, offer pain relief and limit drug dependency.

Feel Amazing Institute's Alternative Care

- Red LED and Low Level Infrared Light Therapy help to heal and regenerate the small nerve endings that are damaged in peripheral neuropathy
- Gentle electrical stimulation therapy improves nerve function, reduces pain, and improves movement.
- Stem Cell Allografts
- Platelet Rich Plasma
- Spinal Decompression Therapy
- Ozone Therapy
- Peptide Therapy
- Acoustic Wave Therapy
- Natural supplementation to regenerate myelin sheath

Neuropathy Treatment at Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute

Clinical studies show that 90% of the people who undergo the treatment experience excellent results with one or more of the following: Reduced pain and cramps, reduced tingling and numbness, ability to experience normal touch without pain, reduced cold or burning sensations, improved balance and coordination, lowered dependency on medications, improved sleep, reduced sensation of restlessness in

the legs. People also experience reduced local swelling and inflammation, increased range of motion, increased blood flow to the extremities, decreased tension, and decreased muscle spasm. An important side benefit to the treatment is that it reduces the risk of falls significantly by improving balance and position awareness of the feet.

Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute

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

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

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- Shoulder, elbow, or wrist pain
- Hip, knee pain treatment, ankle, or foot pain
- Arm or leg pain, or numbness
- Peripheral Neuropathy pain or numbness
- Restless Leg Syndrome
- Headaches, dizziness, vertigo, or balance problems
- Disc bulge or herniation, sciatica, or stenosis
- Auto Accident, Whiplash Injuries

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

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

AGING EYES: ALL ABOUT CATARACTS

By Jon R. Berlie, M.D.

As the years gracefully add to our age, our bodies go through various changes. Among these changes, our eyesight tends to be one of the most noticeable. One common issue that can arise with age is the development of cataracts. These cloudy patches that form within the lens of the eye can significantly impact our vision and overall quality of life. In this article, we will delve into the world of healthy aging and explore the intricacies of cataracts, shedding light on their causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment.

Understanding Healthy Aging

Aging is a natural part of life's journey, and taking care of our bodies becomes paramount as we grow older. This includes paying close attention to our eyes, which play a crucial role in how we perceive the world around us. Just like other parts of our body, our eyes go through changes as we age. While some decline in vision is considered normal, conditions like cataracts can amplify these changes and lead to more significant challenges.

Cataracts Unveiled

Cataracts are a prevalent eye condition among the aging population. They occur when the proteins in the lens of the eye begin to clump together, causing cloudiness and opacity. This clouding obstructs the passage of light, leading to blurry and less vibrant vision. As cataracts progress, they can hinder daily activities such as reading, driving, and recognizing faces.

Causes and Risk Factors

While aging is the primary contributor to cataracts, other factors can accelerate their development. Prolonged exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun, smoking, diabetes, and certain medications are some of the potential triggers. Genetics can also play a role; if cataracts run in your family, you may have a higher risk of developing them.

Recognizing the Symptoms

Cataracts don't usually show up overnight. Their onset is gradual, and symptoms might not be immediately noticeable. Initially, you might experience increased glare from lights, difficulty seeing in low-light conditions, or the perception that colors are becoming dull. As the cataracts progress, your prescription for eyeglasses or contact lenses might change more frequently, and you may find that you need brighter lighting to read.

Prevention and Management

While cataracts are a natural part of aging, there are steps you can take to potentially delay their onset or manage their progression. Protecting your eyes from excessive UV exposure by wearing sunglasses with UV protection is a wise measure. Eating a balanced diet rich in antioxidants, like vitamins C and E, may also contribute to eye health. Additionally, quitting smoking and managing conditions like diabetes can play a significant role in preventing cataracts.

Treatment Options

When cataracts begin to significantly impact your daily life and activities, surgical intervention might be necessary. Cataract surgery is one of the most common medical procedures performed worldwide and is generally safe and effective. During the surgery, the cloudy lens is removed and replaced with an artificial intraocular lens (IOL). This painless procedure takes only minutes per eye, and often results in improved vision, reduced dependence on glasses, and an enhanced quality of life.

Premium IOL Options

Not only does cataract surgery restore visual clarity by removing the clouded lens, but it allows patients the opportunity to turn back time and upgrade their IOL option to select an intraocular lens that can reduce or even eliminate the need for glasses and contact lenses following surgery. These premium lenses are a great option for patients seeking to further improve their visual acuity following cataract surgery.

Embracing Healthy Aging

As we age, it's essential to be proactive about our eye health. Regular eye examinations can help detect and manage conditions like cataracts early on. Moreover, adopting a healthy lifestyle that includes a balanced diet, regular exercise, and the avoidance of harmful habits can contribute to the well-being of our eyes and overall vitality.

In conclusion, aging eyes bring along various changes, and cataracts are a significant concern that can affect our vision and quality of life. Understanding the causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment options for cataracts empowers us to take control of our eye health as we age. By embracing healthy habits and seeking timely medical advice, we can ensure that our eyes continue to serve us well throughout the journey of life.



JON R. BERLIE, M.D.

LASIK, Cataract & Lens

Replacement Surgeon

Dr. Berlie is a board-certified ophthalmologist who specializes in LASIK and premium lens cataract surgery. He has been serving the Naples community for over 20 years. Dr. Berlie achieves superior visual outcomes for his cataract patients by utilizing the latest lens technology combined with state of the art equipment. His expertise in this area has led the Center For Sight Naples office to be recognized as the "Best Eye Center" in Naples, FL for the past 15 years. In addition to laser cataract surgery, Dr. Berlie performs vision correction procedures including All Laser LASIK, Epi-LASEK, Refractive Lens Exchange (RLE) and Implantable Contact Lenses. He is also skilled in reconstructive and cosmetic eyelid surgery. He has been honored as one of America's "Top Doctors" by the prestigious Top Doctors list, published annually by Castle Connolly Medical, Ltd.

Dr. Berlie completed his undergraduate training at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada and the California State University of San Bernardino. He then attended Creighton University School of Medicine in Omaha, Nebraska where he graduated Cum Laude, followed by an internship in internal medicine.

Dr. Berlie continued his education at the University of Nebraska Medical Center where he completed his ophthalmology residency followed by a fellowship in Oculoplastic and Aesthetic Laser Surgery at Saint Anthony Hospital in Oklahoma City.

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By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

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- SPINAL STENOSIS PAIN
- ROTATOR CUFF TEARS
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7) NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

- PARKINSON DISEASE
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8) SEXUALITY

- MALE ED
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ABOUT AXEL RUIZ MD, DABFP, CWS

Axel Ruiz MD, DABFP, CWS is a member of the American Academy and a Board of Regenerative Medicine Researcher. Axel has been harnessing the Power of Stem Cells in Joint Pain Management since 2024.

Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS, brings over 20 years of dedicated experience to family medicine, with a passion for delivering exceptional patient care. Board-certified in Family Practice (DABFP) and specializing in wound care (CWS), Dr. Ruiz offers a comprehensive and compassionate approach to health and wellness.

He is known for his ability to explain conditions thoroughly and build strong, trusting relationships with his patients. Practicing in Lehigh Acres, FL, Dr. Ruiz is affiliated with HCA Florida Lehigh Hospital, where he contributes to a high standard of hospital-based care. His commitment to ongoing learning and patient-centered treatment makes him an invaluable partner in your health journey.

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CELEBRATE HEALTHY AGING MONTH:

THRIVE AT EVERY STAGE OF LIFE

By Greg Pascucci

September is Healthy Aging Month, a time to focus on the positive aspects of growing older and to explore ways we can make the years ahead vibrant and fulfilling. It's about making choices that support our physical health, mental sharpness and emotional well-being.

For many, that journey begins with the basics: staying active, eating well and staying socially connected. Yet, it's the combination of those habits, along with a supportive environment, that truly makes a difference. At The Carlisle Naples, a luxury senior rental community, residents have access to an array of programs and resources that make these healthy choices not only possible but enjoyable.

Nourishing the Body Through Balanced Nutrition
What we eat plays a powerful role in how we age. Proper nutrition supports a strong immune system, helps manage chronic conditions and can even improve mood and cognition. At The Carlisle Naples, under the expertise of Executive Chef Marlon Perez, dining options are both flavorful and nutritious. Residents can choose from menus featuring fresh produce, lean proteins and plant-forward options that accommodate individual dietary needs. "Good health starts with good food," said Chef Perez. "We focus on seasonal ingredients and create dishes that are satisfying without being heavy. Whether it's grilled salmon with roasted vegetables or a vibrant spinach and berry salad, the goal is to make healthy eating a pleasure."

Keeping the Mind and Body Active

Physical activity is a cornerstone of healthy aging. Regular exercise helps maintain strength, flexibility and balance, keys to preventing falls and preserving independence. The Carlisle Naples' wellness program, Zest, offers a variety of classes and activities tailored to different fitness levels, from gentle stretching and chair yoga to water aerobics.

Equally important is keeping the mind engaged. Retirement communities often offer lectures, art classes, book clubs or musical performances. Plus, there are numerous opportunities for residents to



share their knowledge with neighbors. At The Carlisle Naples, resident-run activities, such as trivia and bridge, stimulate cognitive function and help participants find joy in lifelong learning.

The Power of Social Connection

Research consistently shows that social engagement is linked to better health outcomes for older adults. Isolation, on the other hand, can lead to declines in both mental and physical health. Life at The Carlisle Naples naturally supports connection. From themed dinners to volunteer opportunities, there's always a chance to meet new friends, share experiences and build meaningful relationships.

Residents often find that one of the most surprising benefits of community living is the deep sense of belonging it creates. Shared meals become opportunities for conversation and connection, turning breakfast into a time to catch up with friends. Even simple moments, like recognizing familiar faces during a morning walk or chatting with a neighbor in the lobby, can provide a sense of comfort and continuity. Over time, these interactions build a supportive network that can be just as important to overall well-being as exercise or nutrition.

Healthy Habits Made Easier

Living in a community like The Carlisle Naples removes many of the common barriers to healthy aging. For example, there's no need to worry about driving to the gym, cooking three meals a day or finding companions to go to the theatre. Everything needed to support a healthy lifestyle is right at hand.

Chef Perez offers simple tips for anyone looking to make healthy changes this month:

- **Experiment with seasonal produce.** Try vegetables or fruits you've never cooked before.
- **Make movement part of the routine.** Even short daily walks add up over time.
- **Stay curious.** Learn a new skill or revisit an old hobby.
- **Reach out.** Schedule regular calls or visits with friends and family.

Healthy Aging Month is a reminder that while aging is inevitable, how we age is influenced by the choices we make and the environments we choose. At The Carlisle Naples, it's woven into the fabric of daily living, making it easier for residents to embrace the art of aging well.

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



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THE POWER OF EARLY CANCER DETECTION

By Svetlana Kogan, MD IFMCP

Imagine if a single blood test could scan for dozens of cancers — even ones that don't yet have routine screening tests. That's the bold idea behind the Galleri test, a new advance in cancer detection that is creating excitement in the medical community.

For decades, cancer screening has focused on a handful of common cancers. We have mammograms for breast cancer, colonoscopies for colon cancer, Pap tests for cervical cancer, and low-dose CT scans for certain lung cancers. These tools save lives, but they cover only a small fraction of the more than 100 types of cancer that exist. Many dangerous cancers — such as pancreatic, ovarian, or certain blood cancers — are often found too late, when symptoms appear and treatment options are limited. The Galleri test aims to change that story.

How the Galleri Test Works:

The Galleri test is sometimes called a "multi-cancer early detection test." It's a simple blood draw — just like the ones you've probably had at your doctor's office. But instead of checking cholesterol or blood sugar, the test looks deep into your blood for tiny bits of genetic material that come from cancer cells.

Our DNA — the instruction manual for every cell in our body — is constantly being recycled. Old cells break down, releasing fragments of DNA into the bloodstream. If a person has cancer, the tumor cells also shed DNA, and those pieces carry a distinct "signature" that marks them as coming from cancer rather than healthy cells.

The Galleri test uses advanced sequencing technology and artificial intelligence to scan these fragments for abnormal patterns. If it detects a cancer signal, it can also give doctors a clue about where in the body that cancer might be hiding — such as the lungs, liver, or pancreas — so they know where to look next.

It's important to note: the Galleri test is not meant to replace regular screenings like mammograms or colonoscopies. Think of it as an extra safety net — one that can catch cancers we currently have no other way to find early.



Benefits of Having the Galleri Test:

1) Catching More Cancers, Earlier

Early detection is the single most powerful factor in improving cancer survival rates. For many cancers, if found at stage 1, treatment is far more effective, and survival rates can be above 80–90%. The Galleri test can screen for more than 50 types of cancer from one blood draw, many of which have no standard screening.

2) Less Invasive Than Other Screenings

Colonoscopies, biopsies, and certain imaging tests can be uncomfortable or require significant preparation. The Galleri test involves just a quick blood draw — no fasting, no anesthesia, and no recovery time.

3) Peace of Mind

For people with higher-than-average cancer risk — due to family history, lifestyle factors, or age — having an extra layer of screening can be reassuring. It's like having an extra smoke alarm in your house; you hope it never goes off, but you're glad it's there.

4) Guiding Faster Diagnosis

If the test detects a cancer signal, it also points doctors toward the most likely source. That means follow-up scans and tests can be more targeted, reducing delays and unnecessary procedures.

5) Who Might Consider the Galleri Test?

I generally recommend it for adults over age 50 or those with an elevated risk of cancer. It's not intended for people who already have symptoms of cancer — in that case, your doctor will use other diagnostic tools. Because it's still new, the test isn't yet covered by most insurance plans, and costs approximately \$950.

6) Limitations and Considerations

No test is perfect. A "false positive" result can happen — when the test suggests there might be cancer but follow-up exams show there's none. While that can cause anxiety, it's worth noting that traditional screenings have similar limitations.

There's also the possibility of a "false negative," where the test misses a cancer that's present. That's why experts stress the Galleri test should be used alongside — not instead of — regular screenings and check-ups. Finally, it's still relatively early days. Ongoing studies are tracking how well the test performs in real-world settings and how often it truly leads to earlier detection and better outcomes.

A Glimpse Into the Future

For now, the Galleri test offers a promising new tool for people who want to be proactive about their health. It's not magic, and it's not perfect, but it represents a big step toward a world where fewer cancers are found too late. Cancer is still a leading cause of death worldwide, but early detection saves lives.



Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

The author of 'Diet Slave No More!', Svetlana Kogan, MD is a Board-Certified Internal Medicine, Holistic & Functional Medical Doctor with 25 years of experience. She has appeared as a health expert on prime-time TV and radio stations and has authored hundreds of holistic health articles for internet and print. She moved her Concierge Practice from Manhattan NYC to Naples in 2019. Her Functional Medicine Primary Care Practice is focused on prevention and holistic approach to illness, and longevity.

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UNDERSTANDING ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM: SYMPTOMS AND CAUSES

By Russell Becker, DO

An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) represents one of the most serious cardiovascular conditions, characterized by a dangerous enlargement of the body's largest artery in the abdominal region. The aorta, which carries oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of the body, normally measures about two centimeters in diameter. When this vital vessel expands to more than three centimeters, it becomes classified as an aneurysm, creating a potentially life-threatening situation that requires immediate medical attention.

What Causes Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms?

The development of AAA involves a complex interplay of factors that weaken the arterial wall over time. Atherosclerosis, commonly known as hardening of the arteries, stands as the primary culprit. This condition occurs when fatty deposits, cholesterol, and other substances accumulate along arterial walls, creating plaques that reduce flexibility and strength. As these deposits build up, they trigger inflammatory responses that further compromise the vessel's structural integrity.

Age plays a significant role in AAA development, with the condition predominantly affecting individuals over 60 years old. Men face a considerably higher risk than women, with statistics showing that males are four to six times more likely to develop this condition. This gender disparity may be attributed to differences in hormone levels, lifestyle factors, and genetic predisposition.

Smoking emerges as perhaps the most modifiable risk factor for AAA development. Tobacco use accelerates atherosclerosis and weakens arterial walls through multiple mechanisms, including reduced oxygen delivery to tissues and increased inflammation. Research indicates that current smokers have a seven-fold increased risk compared to non-smokers, while even former smokers maintain elevated risk levels for years after quitting.

High blood pressure consistently strains arterial walls, creating microscopic tears and weakening the vessel structure over time. This mechanical stress, combined with the turbulent blood flow it



creates, contributes significantly to aneurysm formation and growth. Similarly, high cholesterol levels fuel atherosclerotic processes, providing the raw materials for plaque formation that initiates arterial wall deterioration.

Family history and genetic factors also influence AAA development. Individuals with first-degree relatives who have experienced aortic aneurysms face increased risk, suggesting hereditary components that affect arterial wall strength and susceptibility to degenerative changes.

Recognizing the Silent Threat

AAA has earned the ominous nickname "silent killer" because it typically develops without obvious symptoms until it reaches dangerous proportions or ruptures. This asymptomatic nature makes regular screening crucial for high-risk individuals, as early detection can mean the difference between successful treatment and catastrophic outcomes.

When symptoms do manifest, they often present as deep, aching pain in the abdomen or lower back. This discomfort may be constant or intermittent and can sometimes radiate to the groin, buttocks, or legs. Some patients describe a pulsating sensation in their abdomen, which may be visible or palpable, particularly in thinner individuals.

As aneurysms enlarge, additional symptoms may emerge. These include nausea, vomiting, and a feeling of fullness after eating small amounts of food, caused by the enlarged vessel pressing against surrounding organs. Some patients experience changes in bowel habits or urinary symptoms due to pressure on nearby structures.

The most critical concern with AAA is rupture, which constitutes a medical emergency with mortality rates exceeding 80 percent. Signs of rupture include

sudden, severe abdominal or back pain, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, and shock. These symptoms demand immediate emergency medical attention, as survival depends on prompt surgical intervention.

The Importance of Early Detection

Understanding AAA symptoms and causes empowers individuals to make informed decisions about their health. Regular screening, particularly for men over 65 with risk factors, can identify aneurysms before they become life-threatening. Through lifestyle modifications, medical management, and when necessary, surgical intervention, many AAAs can be successfully managed, highlighting the critical importance of awareness and proactive healthcare engagement.

Take Action for Your Vascular Health

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with abdominal aortic aneurysm or are experiencing symptoms that could indicate vascular problems, don't wait to seek expert care. The specialists at Vascular Center of Naples are experienced in the latest treatment options and can help determine the best approach for your specific condition. Call 239-431-5884 today to schedule a consultation and take the first step toward protecting your vascular health.

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.



Vascular Center
of Naples

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HEALTHY AGING: The Promise of Stem Cell Therapy

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

As we age, our bodies naturally experience a decline in cellular regeneration, leading to reduced energy, slower recovery, and increased susceptibility to age-related conditions. However, advances in regenerative medicine are offering new pathways to support healthy aging, with stem cell therapy emerging as a promising intervention. Wimmer Orthopedics & Regenerative Medicine has developed an innovative quarterly stem cell injection program designed to help individuals maintain vitality and promote cellular renewal throughout the aging process.

Understanding Stem Cells and Aging

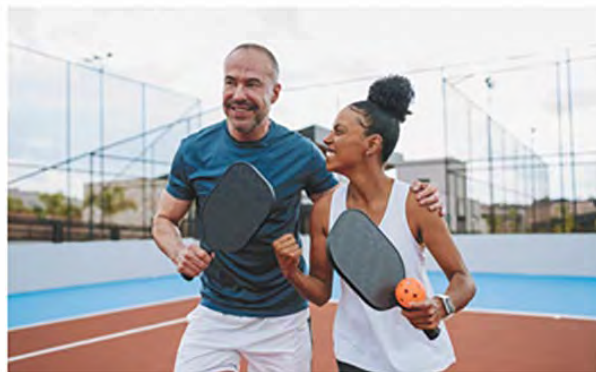
Stem cells are the body's master cells, possessing the unique ability to differentiate into various cell types and repair damaged tissues. As we age, our natural stem cell populations decline, contributing to the physical manifestations of aging such as decreased muscle mass, joint stiffness, reduced cognitive function, and slower wound healing. By supplementing the body's diminishing stem cell reserves through therapeutic injections, patients may experience enhanced cellular repair and regeneration.

The science behind stem cell therapy for aging focuses on the cells' ability to release growth factors and cytokines that promote tissue repair, reduce inflammation, and stimulate the body's natural healing processes. These biological signals can help rejuvenate aging tissues, potentially improving overall health and quality of life.

The Wimmer Orthopedics Quarterly Program

Recognizing that consistent, sustained treatment often yields better results than sporadic high-dose interventions, Wimmer Orthopedics & Regenerative Medicine has developed a unique quarterly stem cell injection protocol. This innovative approach distributes a full therapeutic dose across four intramuscular injections throughout the year, with each quarterly treatment delivering one-quarter of the total annual dose.

The program operates on a convenient subscription model, with patients paying \$200 monthly to receive their quarterly injections. This affordable payment structure makes advanced regenerative therapy accessible to more individuals seeking to



optimize their aging process. The consistent dosing schedule ensures that patients maintain steady levels of therapeutic stem cells in their system, potentially providing more sustained benefits compared to single large-dose treatments.

Benefits of the Quarterly Approach

The quarterly injection protocol offers several advantages over traditional single-dose treatments. By spacing injections evenly throughout the year, patients may experience more consistent therapeutic effects without the peaks and valleys associated with intermittent high-dose treatments. This steady approach allows the body to continuously benefit from the regenerative properties of stem cells.

The intramuscular delivery method ensures efficient absorption and distribution of stem cells throughout the body. Muscle tissue provides an ideal environment for stem cell integration, allowing the cells to migrate to areas where they can provide the most benefit. This delivery method is also minimally invasive and well-tolerated by most patients.

What to Expect

Patients enrolled in the Wimmer Orthopedics quarterly program can expect to receive their injections every three months, administered by trained medical professionals in a clinical setting. Each injection session is typically brief and performed using sterile techniques to ensure safety and efficacy.

Many patients report improvements in energy levels, joint comfort, recovery time from physical activities, and overall sense of well-being. While individual results may vary, the consistent dosing schedule helps maintain therapeutic levels that may support ongoing cellular regeneration and repair processes.

The Future of Healthy Aging

As regenerative medicine continues to evolve, programs like Wimmer Orthopedics' quarterly stem cell injection protocol represent a shift toward proactive, preventive approaches to aging. Rather than simply treating age-related conditions as they arise, this innovative program focuses on supporting the body's natural regenerative capacity to promote healthy aging from within.

The combination of cutting-edge stem cell therapy with an accessible, patient-friendly delivery model makes this treatment option particularly appealing for individuals seeking to optimize their aging experience. As more research emerges supporting the benefits of regular stem cell therapy, such programs may become increasingly important tools in the pursuit of healthy longevity.

For those interested in exploring how stem cell therapy might support their healthy aging goals, consultation with the experienced team at Wimmer Orthopedics & Regenerative Medicine can provide personalized insights into whether their quarterly injection program aligns with individual health objectives and lifestyle needs. Contact Wimmer Orthopedics & Regenerative Medicine today at 239-829-4300 to schedule your consultation and discover how regenerative medicine can transform your path to healthy aging.

STEM CELLS

Revitalize Your Health with Stem Cell Injections

Unlock the power of regenerative medicine with intramuscular stem cell injections, designed to support whole-body wellness.

- ✓ Increased energy and vitality
- ✓ Enhanced immune function
- ✓ Reduced inflammation and signs of aging
- ✓ Accelerated tissue repair and recovery

\$200 per month

RECEIVE A STEM CELL
INJECTION EVERY 90 DAYS



**Wimmer Orthopedics &
Regenerative Medicine**

239.829.4300

wimmerorthopedics.com

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BONITA SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34134**

THE ART OF AGING GRACEFULLY: WHY SKIN CHECKS MATTER AT ART OF DERMATOLOGY

Our skin tells the story of our lives—every laugh line, sun-kissed moment, and year of experience. As we age, maintaining skin health becomes increasingly important, not just for aesthetics but for overall wellbeing. At Art of Dermatology, we believe that healthy aging skin begins with proactive care and regular professional assessment.

Understanding Skin's Aging Process

Skin ages through two distinct processes: intrinsic aging (determined by genetics) and extrinsic aging (influenced by environmental factors). While we cannot control our genetic timeline, we can significantly impact how external factors affect our skin.

With age, our skin naturally produces less collagen and elastin, leading to thinner, less resilient skin. Cell turnover slows, and moisture retention diminishes. Meanwhile, years of sun exposure, pollution, and lifestyle choices accelerate these changes, potentially leading to premature aging and increased risk of skin conditions, including cancer.

The Crucial Role of Regular Skin Checks

Regular dermatological examinations serve as the cornerstone of proactive skin health management. These checks provide much more than peace of mind—they can be lifesaving. Consider these compelling reasons to schedule regular visits to Art of Dermatology:

- **Early Detection of Skin Cancer:** With over one million Americans diagnosed with skin cancer annually, early detection dramatically improves treatment outcomes. Professional dermatologists can identify suspicious changes that might go unnoticed during self-examinations.
- **Personalized Aging Management:** Everyone's skin ages differently. Regular assessments allow dermatologists to craft personalized treatment plans that address your skin's unique needs, from addressing sun damage to managing age-related conditions like rosacea or seborrheic keratosis.
- **Tracking Changing Moles and Spots:** What appears as a harmless freckle today could develop concerning characteristics over time. Consistent monitoring creates a valuable baseline for detecting meaningful changes.



Expert Guidance on Products and Treatments:

The skincare industry overwhelms consumers with countless anti-aging products. Your dermatologist can recommend evidence-based solutions truly appropriate for your skin type and concerns.

Healthy Habits for Aging Skin

Between professional visits to Art of Dermatology, maintaining these daily habits supports optimal skin health:

- **Sun Protection:** Apply broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen daily, regardless of weather conditions. Wear protective clothing and seek shade when possible.
- **Hydration:** Both internal hydration (drinking water) and external moisturizing help maintain skin's barrier function and elasticity.
- **Gentle Cleansing:** As skin becomes more delicate with age, harsh products can cause irritation. Opt for gentle, pH-balanced cleansers.
- **Antioxidant-Rich Diet:** Consuming foods high in vitamins C, E, and omega-3 fatty acids supports skin's natural repair processes.
- **Quality Sleep:** During deep sleep, skin undergoes essential regeneration and repair processes critical for healthy aging.

The Art of Dermatology Difference

At Art of Dermatology, we combine medical expertise with aesthetic sensibility. Our comprehensive skin examinations include advanced technologies

for detecting subtle changes invisible to the naked eye. Our dermatologists take time to understand your concerns, family history, and lifestyle factors affecting your skin health.

Rather than simply treating visible problems, we partner with you in preventative care—identifying risk factors and potential issues before they manifest. This approach not only supports graceful aging but potentially prevents serious health complications.

Don't wait for visible problems to appear. Schedule your comprehensive skin check at Art of Dermatology today and take the first step toward lifetime skin health. Remember, healthy aging isn't about fighting time—it's about supporting your skin's natural processes with expert care and attention.

Your skin's journey deserves the art of professional dermatology.

Art of Dermatology is the premier choice for comprehensive **Dermatology, Surgical, and Aesthetic** services. We are dedicated to offering exceptional care for the diagnosis, treatment, and enhancement of your overall skin health.



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ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH URINARY INCONTINENCE?

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

Yes or No:

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

THE TRUTH: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

#3 It's not always incontinence.

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

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

#4 There are numerous incontinence treatment options.

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

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

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

- Bladder Retraining
- Emsella (Kegel chair)
- Pelvic Floor Rehabilitation including Kegel Exercises, physical therapy and electrical stimulation
- Laser and Muscle Therapy
- Biofeedback
- Pessary Vaginal Device
- Injections including Botox and bulking procedures
- Outpatient Surgery
- Surgery for Organ Prolapse / Dropped Bladder Repair
- Axonics® Sacral Nerve Stimulation

At the Florida Bladder Institute, you will experience a thorough approach to the evaluation and treatment of pelvic organ prolapse, bladder and lower urinary tract disorders, bowel and gas incontinence, bleeding, pelvic pain and menopause. Our compassionate and expertly trained team will guide you along the way using state-of-the-art technology in our comfortable and private setting.



Tabitha Lane, PA-C



Joseph Gauta, MD



Nicole Houser, PA-C

It's time to start living your life to the fullest. Regain control of your life.



239-449-7979

www.FloridaBladderInstitute.com

Naples: 1890 SW Health Pkwy., Suite 205
info@floridabladderinstitute.com



Can Anyone Please Help My Painful Feet?

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

Every year more than a million patients visit their doctor due to heel pain! The most common foot and heel discomfort is caused by an excruciating disorder known as plantar fasciitis.

What is plantar fasciitis?

The foot is comprised of many different bones, joints, tendons, and ligaments; these include the plantar fascia. The plantar fascia is a band of ligament tissue. It stretches from the heel of your foot to the middle, and it is responsible for reinforcing and supporting your arch. When this area becomes inflamed due to extreme tension on the ligament, pain erupts every time you take a step, and if left untreated, many people will even experience discomfort while at rest.

Because plantar fasciitis is one of the most common foot issues; one in ten people will experience it at some time in their life. Usually, the pain is concentrated in the heel area, and it is generally caused by small injuries that occur over an extended period of time. It's quite common for heel spurs, which are bony protrusions under the heel bone to coincide with plantar fasciitis.

There are many treatment options that you can do at home with the guidance of your podiatrist to try and alleviate the painful symptoms of plantar fasciitis. But, because of weight bearing, this area of the foot, in particular, is challenging to heal on its own. The key to getting your foot health back to normal, and you free from pain is to have medically based procedures provided by your podiatrist.

What are my options?

Laser Treatment

Laser therapy is one of the top methods to reduce your pain and inflammation. Deep tissue laser therapy uses a process called photobiomodulation, which penetrates deep into the muscles tissues using photon energy. This therapy increases cellular metabolism while decreasing inflammation and pain.



Collier podiatry sees great results in their patient's foot health with this treatment option. The best part is that there are no side effects, no harmful medications and more importantly, long lasting results.

Stabilization

The second of the two mentioned treatment options is Stabilization. This option is achieved through a device such as a brace or foot support, which technically is an ankle-foot-orthosis or AFO.

Ultrasound- Guided Corticosteroid Injections

This is an innovative treatment available from Collier podiatry. It allows the podiatrist to view the precise placement of the cortisone injectable via an advanced ultrasound machine to make certain that all of the pain and tension relieving material is placed accurately.

Surgery

There is, of course, a more permanent stabilization option, which includes surgery of the foot and ankle, but not all patients need this. If your symptoms and pain are unbearable and not responded to traditional therapies within the specified amount of time, surgery is the most logical choice to get you back on your feet again.



The procedure is minimally invasive and requires cutting of the ligament to release the tension in the plantar fasciitis. It can be performed endoscopically with two small incisions on either side of the heel bone.

At Home Care

There are many medical ancillary options that your podiatrists can prescribe, such as ankle braces, high top orthotic shoes, lace up supports and shoes made with a medial-lateral supportive base. It's important to be examined by an experienced podiatric professional if you're experiencing any foot pain.

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

Dr. Michael Petrocelli is available to answer your questions and make your appointment. Please visit their website at www.collierpodiatry.com, or call them at (239) 775-0019.



COLLIER PODIATRY, P.A.
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STEP INTO YOUR BEST LIFE:

The Critical Role of Proper Foot Care in Maintaining Mobility and Independence as We Age

It's often forgotten that your feet are the foundation of your overall health and well-being. Despite their vital role in supporting weight, facilitating movement, and maintaining balance, feet often receive little attention until discomfort arises. As we age, maintaining optimal foot health becomes increasingly important not only for comfort but also as a cornerstone for sustaining mobility and independence throughout life's later years.

Understanding Foot Health and Aging

The aging process brings complex changes to many body systems, including the feet. With advancing age, it is common to experience alterations in foot structure and function that can significantly affect mobility. These include weakening muscles, reduced fat padding under the soles, joint stiffness, and decreased flexibility all of which contribute to diminished shock absorption and changes in gait efficiency.

One frequent change we observe is the gradual flattening of the arches, which can disrupt proper foot alignment. This misalignment may create abnormal stress not only in the feet but also in the knees, hips, and lower back, sometimes resulting in chronic discomfort and altered movement patterns. When foot discomfort persists, it can lead to reduced physical activity, further weakening strength and balance, and increasing the risk of falls, a leading concern for older adults due to the potential for injury and loss of independence.

Foot Care as a Foundation for Mobility

Proactive foot care is essential to preserve mobility and prevent fall-related injuries. Proper support and care can alleviate pain, enhance stability during walking, and improve balance. Research has shown that appropriate arch support and improved foot alignment can reduce strain on lower extremity joints and promote better posture, lowering fall risk. Because each person's feet and movement patterns are unique, a personalized approach to foot care is critical. Generic insoles or one-size-fits-all solutions often fail to address the specific structural and functional needs many older adults experience.

The Personalized Arch Support Approach

At The Good Feet Store, they provide a personalized arch support system designed to optimize foot function. Custom-fitted arch supports help realign foot posture, redistribute pressure, and reduce pain



caused by imbalances in foot structure and function. This realignment often results in improved walking patterns and less stress on surrounding joints.

Trained Arch Support Specialists perform thorough evaluations of your foot structure and gait to ensure your arch supports are tailored specifically to you. There are also follow-up visits to adjust your supports as needed, recognizing that feet and bodies can change over time.

This individualized approach to foot care has been shown to reduce pain, improve mobility, and build confidence allowing our clients to maintain active, independent lifestyles.

Maintaining Foot Health Every Day

In addition to personalized arch supports, there are everyday practices that support foot health:

- **Stay Active:** Gentle exercise such as walking, swimming, or yoga keeps your feet flexible and muscles strong.
- **Practice Good Hygiene:** Wash and dry feet thoroughly, especially between toes, to prevent infections.
- **Choose Supportive Footwear:** Shoes with good arch support, cushioning, and stability protect your feet and joints.
- **Routine Care:** Inspect feet regularly and trim nails carefully to avoid complications like ingrown nails or infections.

Combining these habits with customized arch supports helps sustain foot function and overall mobility.

Stories of Positive Change

There are plenty of firsthand accounts of how attentive foot care transforms lives. For example, clients who initially faced chronic foot discomfort and limited mobility often report noticeable improvements in pain levels, walking ability, and activity participation after receiving personalized arch supports and foot care guidance.

These success stories highlight the importance of integrating specialized foot care into health plans for older adults. By addressing foot health proactively, individuals can maintain their autonomy and reduce the risk of fall-related setbacks.

Conclusion

Foot health is a fundamental pillar of healthy aging, directly affecting mobility, balance, and independence. Age-related changes in foot anatomy and function call for careful assessment and individualized intervention. Customized arch supports, combined with proper footwear and healthy lifestyle choices, can significantly alleviate discomfort and enhance stability.

At The Good Feet Store, they are committed to providing personalized foot care solutions that support our clients in living their best lives. By helping to maintain strong, comfortable feet, they contribute to the ability to move confidently, remain active, and fully enjoy the rich experiences life offers.

Invest in your foot health today, your future self will thank you. Visit for a complimentary foot evaluation and personalized arch support fitting.

The Good Feet Store®

America's Arch Support Experts®

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1410 Pine Ridge Rd, Suite 12

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Arch Support Specialists are ready to help you take the first step toward greater comfort and improved mobility.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Symptoms Can Be Managed Naturally.

Brain Rejuvenation Clinic of Naples

ADHD is a neurological disorder that is effecting over 10% of children and over 4% of adults in the US symptoms. ADHD symptoms typically include inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity which interferes with the ability to function in school and in society. Traditional medical treatment has been treating these symptoms with pharmaceuticals that may improve symptoms but may cause unwanted side effects. From a holistic perspective, ADHD is more effectively managed by treating the underlying contributors like oxidative stress, neuroinflammation, mitochondrial dysfunction, and nutritional imbalances (e.g., low zinc or magnesium) that may play a significant role in symptom development. At Brain Rejuvenation Clinic of Naples, we offer a holistic, naturopathic approach to treating ADHD symptoms. We use WAVi scans and other tools for baseline assessment. Treatment is designed to support detoxification, mitochondrial health, and nutritional deficiencies through nutritional supplements, dietary modifications, and low-risk interventions like Photobiomodulation and Hydrogen Inhalation, and Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT). Holistic Treatment is individualized, targeting root causes like oxidative stress and inflammation while emphasizing lifestyle, diet, and nervous system support. These are the tools that we use to help treat the symptoms of ADHD:

WAVi Brain Scanning

WAVi is a portable EEG-based brain assessment tool that measures brainwave activity, reaction time, and P300 responses—helpful for detecting attention deficits and tracking progress. Naturopathically, it provides an objective baseline to guide and assess the effectiveness of lifestyle, supplement, or neurotherapy interventions.



Hydrogen Inhalation Therapy

Molecular hydrogen acts as a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent that crosses the blood-brain barrier. Since oxidative stress is linked to ADHD, hydrogen inhalation may support brain function and reduce symptoms. While early anecdotal results are promising, human studies are limited.

Photobiomodulation (Red/Near-Infrared Light Therapy)

This therapy stimulates mitochondrial function, supports ATP production, and reduces neuroinflammation. One small ADHD case series and broader studies show improvements in focus, memory, and emotional regulation. It is non-invasive and aligns well with naturopathic principles of supporting the body's innate healing systems.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)

HBOT increases oxygen delivery to the brain, enhances neuroplasticity, and reduces inflammation. Studies suggest it may improve attention and executive

function, especially in cases of mold toxicity or post-concussion symptoms resembling ADHD.

Nutritional Support

Supplements and dietary and lifestyle changes are recommended to improve the underlying causes and contributing factors that are contributing to the ADHD symptoms.

Call us to schedule a complementary consultation to learn how we can help you or your loved ones with treatment of the symptoms of ADHD. You can reach us at (239) 877- 2900.



**Brain
Rejuvenation
Clinic of Naples**

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Understanding Osteoporosis, Compression Fractures, & Kyphoplasty

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

Osteoporosis is a progressive bone disease that weakens bones and increases the risk of fractures. It's often called the "silent disease" because bone loss occurs gradually and without symptoms until a fracture occurs. Among the most common and painful complications of osteoporosis are vertebral compression fractures (VCFs)—breaks in the spinal bones that can lead to severe pain, reduced mobility, and deformity. Fortunately, treatment options such as kyphoplasty offer relief for some patients, restoring function and quality of life.

What Is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis literally means "porous bone." It occurs when the body loses too much bone, makes too little bone, or both. As bones become less dense, they become fragile and more likely to break from a minor fall or even simple actions like bending over, lifting, or coughing.

The condition affects millions worldwide, particularly postmenopausal women, though men and younger people can also develop osteoporosis. Risk factors include:

- **Age:** Bone density naturally declines with age.
- **Hormonal changes:** Especially decreased estrogen in women after menopause.
- **Nutritional deficiencies:** Low calcium and vitamin D intake.
- **Sedentary lifestyle:** Lack of weight-bearing exercise.
- **Smoking and alcohol use:** Both negatively impact bone health.
- **Certain medications and diseases:** Including corticosteroids and autoimmune disorders.

Often, the first sign of osteoporosis is a fracture—most commonly in the spine, hip, or wrist.

Compression Fractures: A Consequence of Bone Weakness

A vertebral compression fracture occurs when a bone in the spine collapses due to weakened bone structure. This is different from a traumatic fracture caused by a high-impact injury; compression fractures can happen spontaneously or from minimal trauma in osteoporotic patients.

Symptoms of a compression fracture can include:

- Sudden onset of back pain
- Pain that worsens with standing or walking
- Decreased height
- A stooped or hunched posture (kyphosis)
- Limited spinal mobility

In severe cases, multiple spinal fractures can lead to a condition called dowager's hump, a visible curvature of the upper back caused by collapsed vertebrae.

VCFs not only cause pain and disability but can also reduce lung function, impact digestion, and increase the risk of further fractures.

Diagnosing Compression Fractures

Diagnosis typically involves:

- **Medical history and physical exam:** Reviewing symptoms, activity limitations, and risk factors.
- **Imaging tests:**
 - **MRI:** Helps determine the age of the fracture and whether there is nerve involvement.
 - **Bone density scan (DEXA):** Used to evaluate the severity of osteoporosis.

Kyphoplasty: A Minimally Invasive Solution

Kyphoplasty is a surgical procedure used to treat painful compression fractures in the spine, particularly those caused by osteoporosis. It is a form of vertebral augmentation, and its goal is to stabilize the fracture, relieve pain, and restore vertebral height.

How Kyphoplasty Works:

- 1. Balloon Insertion:** A small balloon is inserted through a hollow needle into the fractured vertebra under X-ray guidance.
- 2. Balloon Inflation:** The balloon is gently inflated to elevate the collapsed vertebra and create a cavity.
- 3. Cavity Filling:** The balloon is removed, and the cavity is filled with a special cement-like material called polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA), which hardens quickly.
- 4. Stabilization:** Once hardened, the cement stabilizes the vertebra, relieving pain and preventing further collapse.

The procedure is usually done on an outpatient basis or with a short hospital stay. Recovery time is typically quick, with many patients experiencing significant pain relief within 48 hours.

Who Is a Candidate for Kyphoplasty?

Kyphoplasty may be appropriate for patients who:

- Have acute or subacute vertebral compression fractures (typically within the last 2–3 months)
- Suffer from persistent pain that doesn't improve with conservative treatments (rest, pain medication, bracing)
- Have fractures confirmed by imaging
- Are in otherwise good health to undergo a minor procedure

Kyphoplasty is generally not recommended for old or healed fractures, or when the pain is due to other causes like infection, tumors, or arthritis.

Prevention and Long-Term Management

While kyphoplasty can treat existing fractures, preventing future fractures is critical. Long-term osteoporosis management includes:

- **Medication:** Bisphosphonates, selective estrogen receptor modulators (SERMs), hormone therapy, or newer agents like denosumab or teriparatide.
- **Nutrition:** Adequate intake of calcium and vitamin D.
- **Exercise:** Weight-bearing and balance exercises to strengthen bones and reduce fall risk.
- **Fall prevention:** Home safety modifications, vision checks, and appropriate footwear.
- **Lifestyle changes:** Quitting smoking, limiting alcohol, and maintaining a healthy weight.

Conclusion

Osteoporosis is a common and serious condition that can lead to painful and debilitating spinal fractures. Vertebral compression fractures significantly impact patients' lives, but treatments like kyphoplasty offer hope for relief and recovery. Early diagnosis, effective intervention, and ongoing bone health management are essential to reduce the burden of osteoporosis and improve patient outcomes.



Apex Brain & Spine
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Experience Personalized Care at Our State-of-the-Art Ambulatory Surgery Center

By Basia Koser, RN, BSN, MBA - Clinical Director

When you choose our Ambulatory Surgery Center (ASC) for your surgical procedure, you're choosing more than just a medical facility—you're choosing a healthcare experience designed entirely around you. Unlike busy hospitals where patients often feel like numbers in a crowded system, our ASC provides the personalized attention, streamlined efficiency, and exceptional care you deserve.

Your Journey Begins with Genuine Personal Attention

From the moment you contact our center, you'll notice the difference. Our dedicated scheduling team works directly with you to find appointment times that fit your life, not the other way around. We understand that your time is valuable, which is why we guarantee punctual appointments and minimal wait times. When you arrive for your consultation, our physicians are readily available to answer every question, address your concerns, and walk you through your procedure with the patience and clarity you need to feel completely confident.

Our doctors aren't rushing between multiple hospital floors or dealing with emergency interruptions. Instead, they're focused entirely on you and your surgical needs. This means thorough consultations, detailed explanations of your procedure, and the time necessary to ensure you feel informed and comfortable every step of the way.

Surgical Excellence with Precision Scheduling

When it's time for your procedure, you can count on us to honor our commitment to you. Surgeries at our ASC start on time—every time. We've eliminated the unpredictable delays that plague hospital operating rooms, where emergency cases and complex scheduling conflicts can push your procedure hours behind schedule. Our streamlined approach means your surgery begins when scheduled, allowing you to plan your day with confidence.

Our state-of-the-art facility is equipped with the latest minimally invasive surgical technologies, including high-definition imaging systems, advanced laser technology, and precision robotic-assisted surgical tools. These cutting-edge innovations allow our surgeons to perform procedures through smaller incisions, reducing your time under anesthesia and accelerating your recovery process significantly.



Modern Surgical Techniques for Faster Recovery

The evolution of surgical care has transformed many complex procedures into same-day operations. Our surgeons specialize in minimally invasive techniques such as laparoscopic and robotic-assisted surgeries, which offer tremendous advantages over traditional open procedures. You'll experience less post-operative pain, minimal scarring, and remarkably faster healing times, allowing you to return to your normal activities sooner than you might expect.

A Healing Environment Designed for Your Comfort

Step into our ASC and immediately feel the difference. Our welcoming, spa-like environment is designed to reduce anxiety and promote healing. Unlike the institutional feel of large hospitals, our facility offers private, comfortable spaces where you can relax before and after your procedure. Our nursing staff provides individualized attention, taking time to address your specific concerns and ensure your comfort throughout your entire visit.

Our specially trained surgical teams work exclusively in our facility, developing expertise tailored to our specific procedures and patient population. This specialization translates to more efficient care, better outcomes, and a team that truly understands your needs.

Exceptional Value Without Compromise

Choosing our ASC doesn't mean sacrificing quality for cost savings—it means receiving superior care at a fraction of hospital prices. According to the Ambulatory Surgery Center Association, patients typically save thousands of dollars on eligible procedures performed at ASCs compared to hospitals. These savings extend to your insurance co-pays and deductibles, making quality surgical care more accessible for you and your family.

Our lower operational costs stem from our efficient, purpose-built design and streamlined operations, not from cutting corners on quality or safety. Every dollar saved on overhead expenses means more resources dedicated to patient care, advanced equipment, and staff training.

Your Recovery, Our Priority

Recovery begins the moment you arrive at our center. Our comprehensive pre-operative education ensures you know exactly what to expect, while our detailed post-operative care plans are customized to your specific procedure and lifestyle needs. Our nurses provide thorough discharge instructions and remain available for questions throughout your recovery period.

Most importantly, you'll recover in the comfort of your own home rather than in a busy hospital room. Same-day discharge means you can begin healing in familiar surroundings, surrounded by your loved ones, which studies consistently show improves recovery outcomes and patient satisfaction.

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PROTECTING YOUR MIND:

A Neurologist's Guide to Memory Care and Healthy Aging

By Cory Lamar, MD - Board-Certified in Clinical Neurophysiology and Epilepsy

As we age, maintaining cognitive health becomes increasingly important for preserving independence, quality of life, and overall well-being. At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we understand that memory concerns are among the most common worries our patients face as they grow older. The good news is that proactive memory care and healthy aging strategies can significantly impact your cognitive trajectory.

Understanding Normal Aging vs. Concerning Changes

Not all memory changes are cause for alarm. Normal aging might involve occasionally forgetting where you placed your keys or struggling to recall someone's name immediately. However, concerning signs include getting lost in familiar places, difficulty completing routine tasks, confusion about time or place, or personality changes that affect daily functioning.

The key distinction lies in the impact on daily life. While normal age-related changes are mild and don't significantly interfere with independence, more serious cognitive decline affects your ability to work, socialize, or manage personal affairs safely.

The Foundation of Brain Health

Cardiovascular health serves as the cornerstone of cognitive wellness. What's good for your heart is excellent for your brain. Regular physical exercise increases blood flow to the brain, promotes the growth of new neural connections, and may reduce the risk of cognitive decline by up to 30%. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise weekly, including both aerobic activities and strength training.

Sleep quality directly affects memory consolidation and brain detoxification. During deep sleep, your brain clears harmful proteins associated with neurodegenerative diseases. Adults should prioritize seven to nine hours of quality sleep nightly, maintaining consistent sleep schedules and creating optimal sleep environments.

Nutrition for Cognitive Longevity

The Mediterranean diet consistently demonstrates neuroprotective benefits in research studies. This eating pattern emphasizes omega-3 rich fish, antioxidant-packed berries, leafy greens, nuts, and olive oil while limiting processed foods and excessive sugar. These nutrients support brain structure, reduce inflammation, and may slow cognitive aging.



Staying hydrated is equally crucial, as even mild dehydration can impair concentration and memory. Limit alcohol consumption, as excessive drinking accelerates brain aging and increases dementia risk.

Mental Stimulation and Social Connection

Cognitive reserve—your brain's ability to adapt and compensate for age-related changes—can be built through lifelong learning and mental challenges. Engage in activities that are novel, complex, and meaningful to you. This might include learning new languages, playing strategic games, reading diverse materials, or pursuing creative hobbies.

Social engagement provides powerful protection against cognitive decline. Meaningful relationships and regular social interaction stimulate multiple brain regions simultaneously, promoting neural plasticity and emotional well-being. Isolation, conversely, significantly increases dementia risk.

Managing Risk Factors

Several modifiable risk factors accelerate cognitive aging. Chronic conditions like diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol can damage brain blood vessels over time. Working closely with healthcare providers to manage these conditions through medication, lifestyle changes, and regular monitoring is essential.

Chronic stress elevates cortisol levels, which can damage memory-critical brain regions like the hippocampus. Incorporate stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or yoga into your routine.

When to Seek Professional Evaluation

If you or family members notice persistent memory problems, difficulty with familiar tasks, poor judgment, mood changes, or withdrawal from activities, consult a neurologist specializing in memory disorders. Early evaluation allows for proper diagnosis, treatment of reversible causes, and development of comprehensive care plans.

At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we offer comprehensive cognitive assessments, advanced diagnostic tools, and personalized treatment strategies. Our multidisciplinary approach addresses not only medical aspects but also lifestyle factors that influence brain health.

Taking Action Today

Healthy aging begins with small, consistent steps. Start with one or two strategies that resonate with you, whether that's adding a daily walk, joining a book club, or improving your sleep routine. Remember, it's never too early or too late to invest in your cognitive health.

Your brain has remarkable capacity for adaptation throughout life. By embracing evidence-based memory care strategies today, you're taking powerful steps toward maintaining cognitive vitality and independence for years to come. To schedule a comprehensive cognitive evaluation or discuss your memory concerns with our specialists, call 239-667-5878.



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BREAKING THE SILENCE:

Why PCOS Awareness Month Matters for Millions of Women

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

September marks Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) Awareness Month, a crucial time to shed light on one of the most common yet misunderstood hormonal disorders affecting women worldwide. Despite impacting up to 10% of women of reproductive age, PCOS remains shrouded in misconceptions and often goes undiagnosed for years, leaving countless women struggling with symptoms they don't understand.

PCOS is a complex endocrine disorder characterized by irregular menstrual cycles, elevated androgen levels, and polycystic ovaries. However, the name itself is misleading—many women with PCOS don't actually have cysts on their ovaries. Instead, what appears as "cysts" are actually immature follicles that haven't developed properly due to hormonal imbalances.

The symptoms of PCOS extend far beyond reproductive health. Women may experience irregular or absent periods, excessive hair growth on the face and body, male-pattern baldness, acne, weight gain, and difficulty losing weight. Perhaps most significantly, PCOS is a leading cause of infertility, though many women with the condition can still conceive with proper treatment and lifestyle modifications.

What makes PCOS particularly challenging is its wide-ranging impact on overall health. Women with PCOS face increased risks of developing type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, sleep apnea, and mental health conditions including depression and anxiety. The insulin resistance commonly associated with PCOS can create a cascade of metabolic issues that affect multiple body systems.

The diagnostic journey for PCOS can be frustratingly long. Many women spend years visiting different healthcare providers, often being told their symptoms are "normal" or simply related to weight. The Rotterdam criteria, established in 2003, requires two of three conditions for diagnosis: irregular ovulation, clinical or biochemical signs of elevated androgens, and polycystic ovaries on ultrasound. However, these criteria don't capture the full spectrum of PCOS presentations, particularly in adolescents.



One of the most harmful myths surrounding PCOS is that it only affects overweight women. While weight gain is a common symptom, PCOS affects women of all body types. Lean women with PCOS often face additional diagnostic delays because their symptoms don't match the stereotypical presentation. This misconception has led to treatment approaches that focus primarily on weight loss, overlooking the underlying hormonal imbalances that drive the condition.

Treatment for PCOS is highly individualized and typically involves a combination of lifestyle modifications, medications, and symptom management. Dietary changes emphasizing balanced blood sugar levels, regular exercise, stress management, and adequate sleep form the foundation of PCOS management. Medications may include metformin for insulin resistance, hormonal contraceptives for cycle regulation, and fertility treatments for those trying to conceive.

The emotional toll of PCOS cannot be understated. Many women describe feeling frustrated, isolated, and misunderstood. The visible symptoms like hair growth and acne can significantly impact self-esteem, while fertility concerns add another layer of stress. Support groups, both online and in-person, have become lifelines for many women navigating this condition.

Recent research has brought new hope to the PCOS community. Scientists are exploring the role of inflammation, gut health, and environmental factors in the development and management of PCOS. New treatment approaches, including lifestyle interventions and novel medications, are showing promising results in clinical trials.

PCOS Awareness Month serves as a vital reminder that awareness leads to action. By sharing stories, supporting research, and advocating for better healthcare, we can ensure that future generations of women receive timely diagnoses and effective treatments. Every woman deserves to understand her body and have access to compassionate, knowledgeable healthcare providers who take her symptoms seriously.

As we observe PCOS Awareness Month, let's commit to breaking the silence surrounding this condition and empowering women with knowledge, support, and hope for better health outcomes.

Naples Clinic: Your Partner in Skin Health

At Naples Clinic, we understand the unique challenges of living in Southwest Florida's intense sun. Our experienced team is dedicated to helping you maintain healthy skin through comprehensive skin cancer screenings, preventive care education, and treatment options. Don't wait for problems to develop—proactive skin health management is the best defense against UV damage. Contact Naples Clinic today at 239-384-9392 to schedule your consultation and take the first step toward lifelong skin health protection.

Are you ready for a consultation?

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Revitalizing Your Golden Years:

THE ROLE OF IV THERAPIES IN HEALTHY AGING

In the quest for graceful aging, innovative approaches like intravenous (IV) therapies are gaining popularity among those seeking to preserve vitality and address age-related concerns. These targeted treatments deliver nutrients, antioxidants, and therapeutic compounds directly into the bloodstream, potentially offering more immediate and effective results than oral supplements. Let's explore several promising IV therapies that are helping redefine healthy aging.

NAD+/Niagen Plus (NR) Therapy: Energizing Cellular Function

Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD+) is a coenzyme present in every cell that plays a crucial role in energy production and cellular health. As we age, NAD+ levels naturally decline, potentially contributing to decreased energy, cognitive function, and cellular repair capacity. To address this decline, we offer both traditional NAD+ therapy and Niagen Plus, an advanced pharmaceutical-grade treatment using nicotinamide riboside (NR) that provides a more natural approach to boosting NAD+ levels with potentially fewer side effects and faster infusion times.

The key distinction between these therapies lies in their composition and delivery. While traditional NAD+ treatments deliver the coenzyme directly into the bloodstream, Niagen Plus utilizes nicotinamide riboside (NR), a NAD+ precursor that research suggests may offer superior benefits for healthy aging and energy enhancement. Both treatments are available as IV or IM injections, with Niagen Plus offering the advantage of reduced infusion time and milder potential side effects while maintaining the therapeutic benefits of enhanced cellular energy production.

Many recipients of both NAD+ and Niagen Plus therapies describe feeling a renewed sense of vitality, with improved energy levels, enhanced mental clarity, and better sleep quality. The effects typically build over multiple treatment sessions, and some research suggests these approaches may help support DNA repair mechanisms, potentially addressing fundamental aspects of aging at the cellular level. While more clinical studies are needed, preliminary research shows promise for both direct NAD+ therapy and NR precursor treatments as part of a comprehensive approach to healthy aging.

Ozone Therapy: Oxygenating and Detoxifying

Ozone therapy utilizes medical-grade ozone (O₃), a form of oxygen with three atoms instead of the usual two. When administered intravenously in carefully

controlled amounts, ozone can stimulate oxygen metabolism, activate the immune system, and promote detoxification pathways.

For aging individuals, increased oxygenation may improve circulation and cellular metabolism. The mild oxidative stress paradoxically stimulates antioxidant defenses through a hormetic effect, helping the body handle age-related oxidative stress.

Practitioners report patients experience improved energy, reduced chronic inflammation, and enhanced well-being. Personal responses vary, with optimal results achieved through holistic health integration.

Ultraviolet Blood Irradiation (UBI) combines ozone therapy with UV light exposure to patient blood before reinfusion. This synergistic treatment targets pathogens through enhanced antimicrobial effects, stimulates immune function via photobiological mechanisms, and optimizes circulation. The dual approach creates comprehensive pathogen elimination while supporting white blood cell activity and immune factor production.

Specialized IV Formulations for Age Management

Beyond single-compound therapies like NAD+, several combination IV formulations have been developed specifically to address the multifaceted nature of aging:

IV Firm cocktails typically blend collagen-supporting compounds, antioxidants, and minerals that promote skin elasticity and structural integrity. These formulations aim to address visible signs of aging from the inside out, potentially complementing topical skincare routines for more comprehensive results.

Metabolize infusions focus on supporting metabolic efficiency, which naturally declines with age. These specialized IV formulations often include a careful balance of B vitamins, amino acids, and compounds that support mitochondrial function and fat metabolism. Recipients may experience improved energy and more efficient metabolic processes.

Time Machine: cocktails represent comprehensive approaches combining multiple anti-aging compounds. These robust formulations typically include antioxidants, NAD+ or its precursors, glutathione, and various vitamins and minerals. They aim to address multiple aging pathways simultaneously, from oxidative stress to inflammation and cellular energy production.

Embracing IV Therapies Wisely

While IV therapies offer exciting possibilities for those pursuing healthy aging, they work best as part of an integrated approach. Quality nutrition, regular physical activity, stress management, and adequate sleep remain the foundation of any effective anti-aging strategy.

Before pursuing IV therapies, consult with healthcare providers knowledgeable in both conventional and integrative medicine. Individual health conditions, medication interactions, and personal health goals should guide treatment decisions.

As research evolves, these therapies will likely become more refined and targeted. For now, they represent promising tools that, when used appropriately, may help us redefine what healthy aging looks like in the modern era—maintaining vitality, cognitive function, and quality of life throughout our extended lifespans.

To experience these transformative IV therapies for yourself, call TheDRIPBaR today at 239-422-6044 and take the first step toward revitalizing your aging journey.

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CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

Surprising Link Between Hearing & Healthy Aging

By Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D., Doctor of Audiology/Ear Nerd

September is *Healthy Aging Month*, which means health experts everywhere are reminding you to eat your greens, get your steps in, and see your doctor regularly. But here's a question that often gets left out: When's the last time you had your hearing checked?

If your spouse says you don't listen and you respond with "What?", well... that's kind of the point.

Hearing: The Overlooked Health Hero

Hearing loss isn't just about turning up the TV or missing the punchline of a joke. Untreated hearing loss can chip away at your overall health. It's linked to cognitive decline, balance issues, depression, social isolation, and even increased risk of dementia.

Why? Because hearing is one of the brain's favorite ways to stay engaged. When sound input is reduced, your brain works overtime to fill in the gaps—pulling resources from memory and problem-solving. Over time, that mental juggling act takes its toll.

It's like trying to do your taxes while baking a soufflé and watching your grandkids—eventually, something's going to collapse.

Healthy Aging Starts with Staying Connected

One of life's biggest joys is connection—hearing your grandchild's laughter, catching up over coffee, or listening to your favorite oldies station. When hearing fades, these moments can become stressful instead of joyful.

You might nod along without catching half the conversation, withdraw from social activities, or feel left out. And here's the thing: social engagement is key to healthy aging. Staying socially active can boost brain health, reduce stress, and even help you live longer. Treating hearing loss isn't just about hearing better—it's about living better.

The Balance Connection

Your ears also help with balance. Hearing loss can sometimes go hand-in-hand with inner ear changes that increase fall risk. And as we age, preventing falls is critical for staying independent.

Healthy hearing supports healthy balance. When your ears aren't sending clear signals, your footing can suffer. A hearing screening helps ensure your body stays aligned and steady.



The Brain Health Bonus

Studies, including research from Johns Hopkins, show that untreated hearing loss can increase the risk of cognitive decline. The good news? Treating hearing loss with hearing aids can help slow that process.

Your brain loves stimulation. By improving hearing, you're giving your brain the sound input it craves—keeping neural pathways active and strong. Think of it as exercise for your brain—no treadmill required.

"I'll Get to It... Eventually" Isn't a Plan

Most people wait an average of seven to ten years from noticing hearing changes to doing something about it. That's nearly a decade of missed conversations, extra brain strain, and unnecessary risk.

If you wouldn't wait ten years to treat your vision, blood pressure, or cholesterol, why wait on your hearing?

The Screening is Quick and Easy

At Decibels Audiology, we make hearing care comfortable, straightforward, and yes—sometimes even enjoyable. A baseline hearing screening takes less than an hour, is completely painless, and gives you valuable insight into your overall health.

You'll sit in a cozy chair, listen to a few sounds, and walk out with answers. And if you do need help, today's hearing technology is sleek, discreet, and often Bluetooth-enabled—so you can take calls, listen to music, or binge podcasts right through your hearing aids.

Healthy Aging is About the Whole You

As an audiologist, I've seen firsthand how treating hearing loss transforms lives. Patients feel more confident, more connected, and even more energetic. They laugh more. They participate more. They enjoy life more.

When you hear better, you communicate better. When you communicate better, relationships improve. When relationships improve, your emotional and mental health get a boost. And when you're emotionally and mentally healthy, you're more likely to stay physically healthy, too.

Better hearing is a wellness multiplier.

A Few Tips for Healthy Ears at Any Age

- **Schedule regular hearing screenings** starting at age 50, or earlier if you notice changes.
- **Protect your ears** from loud noise at concerts, sporting events, or while mowing the lawn.
- **Keep your overall health in check**—conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, and smoking can affect hearing.
- **Don't ignore early signs** like ringing in the ears, turning up the TV, or asking people to repeat themselves often.

Let's Make This September Count

Healthy Aging Month is the perfect time to take action. Call it a check-up for your connection to the world. Whether you're 55 or 85, it's never too early—or too late—to make your hearing health a priority.

Because here's the truth: hearing well is living well. And life's too short to miss the punchline.

Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D., is a Doctor of Audiology at Decibels Audiology & Hearing Center in Naples, Florida. She specializes in helping patients reconnect with the sounds and people they love, using state-of-the-art hearing technology and a personalized, compassionate approach.

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GYNECOLOGIC CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

NEW DIRECTIONS IN MANAGEMENT

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

As September is Gynecologic Cancer Awareness Month, this is a great time to reflect about all the progress that has been made in limiting morbidity and mortality from gynecologic cancers. Most people are aware of the significant decline in the incidence, morbidity, and mortality from cervical cancer. This success story is unparalleled in oncology, especially in developed countries. Patient education regarding screening and prevention is a major vehicle through which we have realized these results. However, this positive news in cervical cancer is offset by the fact that uterine cancers have shown an increase in incidence and even mortality. The bottom line is that we must maintain our awareness of these and other malignancies that arise in the female reproductive system, as this gives us the best chance to make early diagnoses and provide a greater likelihood of cure.

Even as we work to raise awareness and facilitate early diagnosis, it remains the case that we still see, too often, cases of advanced gynecologic cancers of all sites. Although many women have recovered from locally advanced gynecologic cancers, there is still significant room for improvement. In my long career managing gynecologic cancers, I have seen steady but noticeable progress in all aspects of care, from prevention to early diagnosis, to improved outcomes, and, in some cases, limiting morbidity. In this brief article, my goal is to share, in general terms, what I see happening now that gives us hope for further improving outcomes from where we are now. There are two main topics that I am going to cover.

TUMOR BIOMARKERS

As I have often explained to patients and the general public, "cancer" is not one disease, but hundreds, possibly thousands. Even cancers that arise in the same location and look the same under a microscope can have very different molecular features. In some cases, we can evaluate tumors for these various characteristics (we might call them biomarkers). In some cases, the molecular profile (the marker status) can provide predictive and even therapeutically useful information. Endometrial cancer is a great example of a disease in which we increasingly rely on this information to aid in treatment decisions. With proper laboratory analysis using sophisticated techniques, subclassifications of endometrial cancers can be determined. There are obviously other prognostic factors, such as tumor stage, lymph-vascular space invasion, etc. that we have used for a long time, and these are still important. We are beginning to use this information to better tailor treatment, with the goal of limiting, to the extent possible,

undertreatment and overtreatment of patients. Lots of work has been done to advance our knowledge in this area, and much remains to be done for us to optimize the use of this new information.

Another promising area where biomarkers are demonstrating promise is in cervical cancer. It turns out that it is possible to measure circulating tumor DNA (ctDNA) in the blood of patients with cervical cancer. A large randomized study has recently shown that the vast majority of cervical cancer patients have detectable ctDNA, and levels of ctDNA at diagnosis appear to correlate with treatment outcomes. Following treatment, data suggests that following ctDNA after treatment can be used as an early sign of tumor progression, before other clinically apparent recurrence is recognized.

Although the use of molecular profiling and biomarkers is exciting, it is important to recognize that there are limitations. It is known that there can be discrepancies between laboratories, making interpretation of results an imperfect science. Furthermore, these are not binary "yes-no" tests, meaning that there will always be gray areas. Further work in this area is needed to better understand how to use this information clinically.

IMMUNOTHERAPY

After many years of "trial and error," cancer immunotherapy is rapidly becoming an important component of cancer treatment, usually in conjunction with established treatments such as radiation therapy, surgery, and chemotherapy. An example of an immunotherapy drug that has become well established is called pembrolizumab, but there are many others. At present, pembrolizumab is approved by the FDA for use in 18 different cancer types. Initially, these drugs were used mostly in patients with metastatic disease, but increasingly they are finding their way into upfront treatment, often with very promising results. Research is ongoing to better understand how to combine these drugs with standard treatments, and even how to combine different immunotherapy drugs with each other for greatest benefit. As promising as these drugs can be, they are not perfect. In addition to their expense, each drug adds potential toxicities, which can be quite different from older agents.

SUMMARY

The use of tumor biomarkers, molecular profiling, and immunotherapy agents hold tremendous promise in tailoring and optimizing treatment of many cancers, especially gynecologic malignancies.

As always, a close patient-physician partnership is important to making treatment decisions, even with imperfect information. The future of treatment for gynecologic cancers is brighter than ever!

About the Author

Dr. Marcus Randall joined NCA in 2024 as a specialist in gynecological oncology. Dr. Randall earned his medical degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1982, receiving their Distinguished Medical Alumnus Award in 2017. He completed his residency in Radiation Oncology at the University of Virginia Medical Center. During his first faculty appointment at Wake Forest University he was recruited to Indiana University as Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology, where he held the William A. Mitchell Distinguished Professorship. Subsequently, he became Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Kentucky, where he held the Markey Foundation Endowed Chair. He is board-certified by the American Board of Radiology and is a Fellow of both the American College of Radiology and the American Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology.

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

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



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FINDING RELIEF WITH THE M7 LASER: TAMMY WYATT'S JOURNEY WITH SCOLIOSIS

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

Living with scoliosis is more than just dealing with a curved spine—it means living with pain that can interfere with even the simplest daily activities. For Tammy Wyatt, this pain had been a constant companion for most of her life. Sitting for long hours at work, relying on ice packs and over-the-counter pain medications, and pushing through discomfort became her normal. When she consulted with Dr. Michael Shaffer and began treatments with the M7 Therapy Laser, her life changed. We sat down with Tammy to talk about her scoliosis, her pain, and how the M7 laser has given her relief she never thought possible.

LIVING WITH CHRONIC PAIN

Q: Tammy, can you describe what life with scoliosis has been like for you?

Tammy: "Pain has been a big part of my life. With scoliosis, you can't just ignore it—it's there every day. Sitting at my desk for work is hard because I can only sit for about 30 minutes before I have to stand up, stretch, or move around. I always keep ice packs at work and take Advil to manage it. The pain was all-consuming most days. It made even simple things feel difficult."

SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

Q: Had you tried chiropractic care before scheduling with Dr. Shaffer?

Tammy: "Yes but nothing eliminated the day to day pain. When I came to Dr. Shaffer, he suggested trying the M7 Therapy Laser instead of adjustments. That was something new for me, and it's made a huge difference."

EXPERIENCING THE M7 LASER

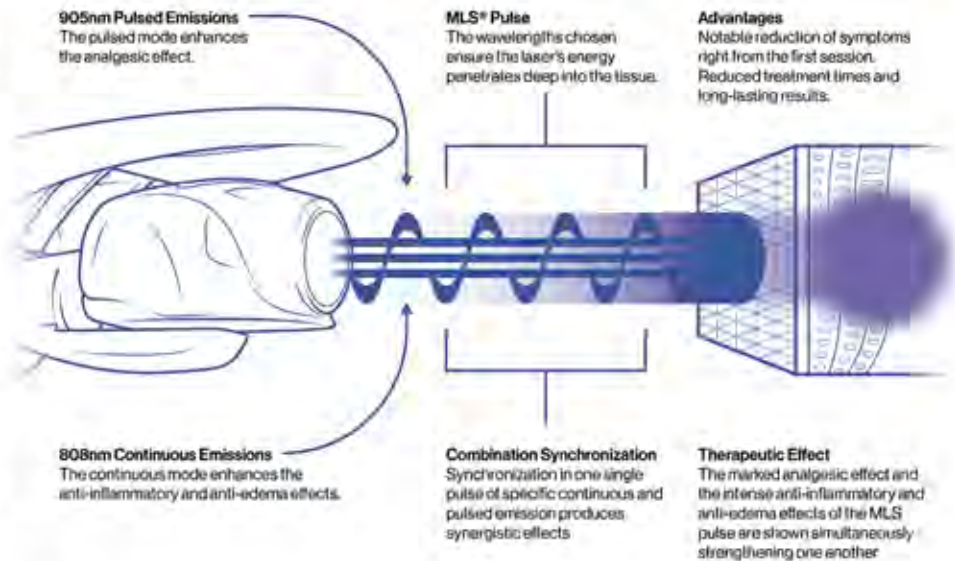
Q: How did you get started with laser therapy?

Tammy: "We started in April 2025 with 12 treatments—twice a week to begin. Now I come in every other week for maintenance. The treatments help reduce my pain, sometimes by as much as 70%. It doesn't take the pain away forever, but it makes it manageable. My intense pain has been reduced to more moderate pain. That's huge for me. I can get through my day, do my job, and even have good days where I feel more like myself."

THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES

Q: What improvements have you noticed since starting the M7 laser?

Tammy: "The laser has improved my ability to work and to function in my daily life. Before, the pain felt debilitating. Now, I wouldn't describe it that way anymore. It's not gone, but it's better. I wear a hard back brace every day, I use my inversion table, and I exercise. But the M7 laser is the only treatment that really controls the pain. It's given me back some quality of life."



COMMITMENT TO ONGOING CARE

Q: Do you plan to continue with the M7 laser treatments?

Tammy: "Yes, Scoliosis isn't something you can cure. The laser works for me, so I'll keep coming. My insurance doesn't cover it, so I pay out-of-pocket, but it's absolutely worth it."

GRATITUDE FOR CARE

Q: What has your experience been like with Dr. Shaffer and his team?

Tammy: "They are incredible. Dr. Shaffer and Kay really care. They're professional, they're thorough, and they're kind. You can tell they want what is best for their patients. They recommended custom foot inserts for me, and that's helped as well. I'm just so grateful for the way they treat me and the relief they've helped me find. I highly recommend them to anyone dealing with scoliosis or chronic pain."

CARE YOU CAN FEEL

Tammy emphasizes the clinic's patient-centered approach: "Dr. Shaffer and Kay just care so much. They're professional, helpful, and they take time to explain everything. I highly recommend Dr. Shaffer for scoliosis-related pain."

HOW THE M7 THERAPY LASER HELPS (QUICK SCIENCE)

- **What it is:** The M7 uses synchronized therapeutic light (often called MLS® laser therapy) designed to penetrate soft tissues.
- **Targets:** Inflamed muscles, ligaments, joint capsules, and irritated nerve tissues that commonly contribute to scoliosis pain.
- **How it works:** Light energy is absorbed by cells, supporting cellular metabolism and microcirculation. This can **reduce inflammation and swelling, ease muscle spasm, and modulate pain signaling.**
- **Why it fits scoliosis:** When traditional adjustments aren't advised, laser therapy offers a **non-invasive, drug-free** option to calm painful soft tissues around a curved spine—helping many patients move with less pain.
- **Course of care:** Often delivered in a series (e.g., 2–3 sessions/week for several weeks) followed by **maintenance** based on individual response.

If you or a loved one are living with scoliosis or chronic pain and have struggled to find relief, Dr. Michael Shaffer offers advanced therapies like the M7 laser to help reduce pain and improve quality of life.

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

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WHAT IS THE FLORIDA SUNSHINE LAW?

By Anthony P. Pires, Jr., B.C.S., Florida Local Government Lawyer

As local government law attorneys in Florida, Woodward, Pires & Lombardo regularly assist clients and provide guidance and representation concerning Florida's Sunshine Law regarding open government. As noted by the Office of the Attorney General of Florida, Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law, commonly referred to as the "Sunshine Law," provides the public a right of access to governmental proceedings of public boards or commissions at both the state and local levels. The law requires Florida governments to show their work by making decisions at publicly noticed meetings where minutes are taken and then filed/recorded.

The Sunshine Law "is of both constitutional and statutory dimension" and can be found in Article 1, Section 24 of the Florida Constitution and Section 286.011 of the Florida Statutes. These constitutional and statutory provisions establish a fundamental right of access to virtually all meetings of boards, commissions, and other governing bodies of state and local governmental agencies or authorities, with the exception of the courts and the state Legislature, which has its own constitutional provision relating to access.

The Three Elements of the Florida Sunshine Law

The Sunshine Law requires:

- (1) meetings of public boards or commissions must be open to the public.
- (2) reasonable notice of such meetings must be given; and
- (3) minutes of the meetings must be taken and promptly recorded.

The law applies whenever two or more board members meet and discuss items reasonably foreseeable to be on an upcoming agenda.

Government Transparency

These requirements result in what may appear to be inefficiencies because, for example, opponents of the proposed action by the governmental body can watch the decision-making process, but the goal of the Florida Sunshine Law is not efficiency, it is transparency.



Another perceived inefficiency is that discussions can only happen at publicly noticed meetings at locations accessible to the public. Thus, if a board subject to the Sunshine Law only meets once per month, absent setting and noticing special meetings, it cannot address items more frequently than that.

Exceptions to the Sunshine Law

There are a limited number of exceptions to the requirement that meetings must be open to the public. One exception is when a government is a party to pending litigation. During those times, Florida government boards can hold closed sessions with their attorneys with certain limitations and under strict conditions. These meetings, however, must have a court reporter, and the transcript becomes a public record after the litigation is concluded.

Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual

The Florida Attorney General's office compiles an annual guide known as the Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual at no taxpayer expense to assist the public. You can find it at:

[https://legacy.myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/wf/mnos-b9qq79/\\$file/sunshinemanual.pdf](https://legacy.myfloridalegal.com/webfiles.nsf/wf/mnos-b9qq79/$file/sunshinemanual.pdf).

Talk to Our Florida Local Government Law Attorneys
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About the Author

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Tony has been a Board Certified Specialist (B.C.S.) in City, County and Local Government Law by The Florida Bar for over 25 years. He is rated AV Preeminent® by Martindale-Hubbell® Peer Review Ratings™, a rating given to only attorneys who are ranked at the highest level of professional excellence for their legal expertise, communication skills, and ethical standards by their peers.



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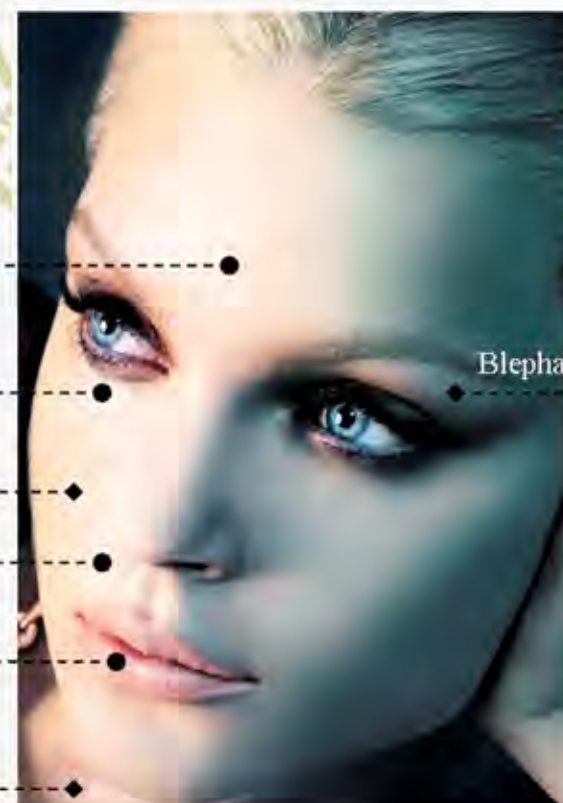
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Alina Stanciu, MD, FACS, FFAO, FASRS medical director of Naples Eye & Aesthetic Institute is a facial rejuvenation specialist and injectable treatment expert. Using her unique aesthetic sense and surgical skills she developed the European Face Lift using Xeomin or Botox® Cosmetic, all dermal fillers, lip augmentation and Blepharoplasty or eye lid lifts as an alternative to traditional surgery.

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Alina K. Stanciu

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Dr. Stanciu is a Board Certified Eye Physician and Surgeon who is a diplomate of the American Board of Ophthalmology, American Society of Retinal Surgery, and Fellow Member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Surgery. She is the Founder and Medical Director of Naples Eye & Aesthetics Institute and MediFace Spa.

Specializations & Expertise: Dr. Stanciu specializes in Advanced Cataract Surgery, Retinal Diseases, Comprehensive Eye Care, and Oculo-Facial Surgical Procedures. As a Medical Retina Specialist and Cataract Surgeon, she treats patients with Macular Degeneration, Diabetic Retinopathy, and Glaucoma. She is also a skilled Cosmetic Surgeon with expertise in minimally invasive facial rejuvenation and eyelid surgery.

Innovative Treatments: Dr. Stanciu developed The European Liquid Face Lift, which serves as the best alternative to surgical face lift procedures. Her areas of interest include minimally invasive facial rejuvenation and Blepharoplasty for drooping eyelids.

Experience & Training: With 20 years of experience and New York training, Dr. Stanciu has been practicing in Naples and Bonita for two decades. She operates the only boutique private practice in Naples, recently relocating to a new location at 6610 Willow Park Dr, Suite 104, Naples, FL.

Leadership & Innovation: As Founder and President of Naples Eye & Aesthetics Institute and MediFace Spa, Dr. Stanciu has also developed Bella Piel MD, a cosmetic line specializing in anti-aging and dry eye treatment with amazing results.

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INCREASING CANCER RATES SINCE COVID-19'S APPEARANCE: IS THERE A CONNECTION?

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

C OVID-19 undoubtedly changed the medical landscape as we knew it, with the repercussions of the global pandemic continuing to be felt even years later, and in more ways than just a viral infection.

The cancer community, in particular, is feeling the effects of the pandemic with an uptick in cancer cases, especially those that are rare and aggressive, since the onset of the pandemic. With the pandemic delaying patients from seeking health-care services and the virus potentially altering our biology, this begs the question: are these two events—the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing cancer rates—connected?

Investigating Increasing Cancer Rates in Relation to COVID-19

Research into cancer rates before the COVID-19 pandemic, during its height, and in the years following has revealed an interesting trend—the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in cancer rates, both during the height of its activity and as a residual effect still seen now. There are two possible causes of these observances: fewer cancer diagnoses due to a halt in screening and biological changes due to SARS-CoV-2.

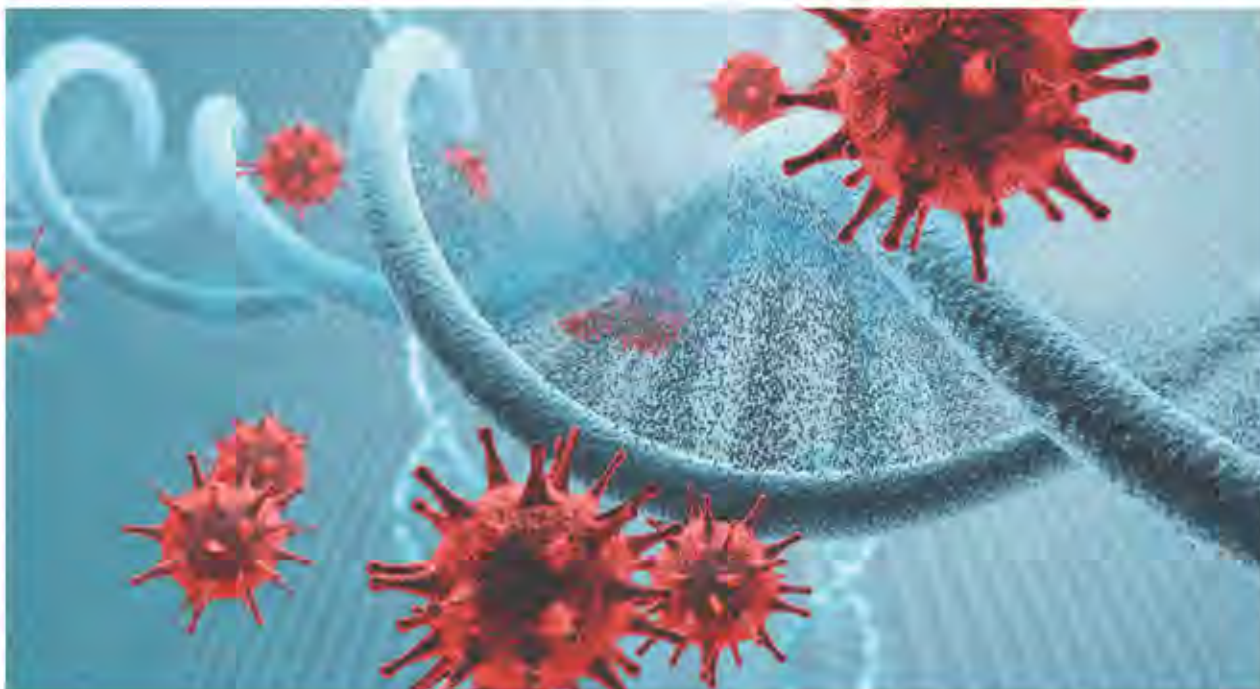
As expected, the initial effect comes from a significant decline in cancer diagnoses in the pandemic's early stages, specifically in cancers that are typically screened for. This is because of the cease of medical services that were deemed non-essential when society's sole focus was halting COVID-19's spread.

However, COVID-19 also produces a dramatic, and sometimes lingering, effect on the body—one that may awaken cancer cells or make them more likely to appear.

Collected below are three possible explanations for the rising cases of cancer in correlation with the appearance of COVID-19.

A Decline in Cancer Diagnoses

When it comes to cancer, the key to higher odds of survival is early detection. This is what makes the screening process crucial, as it can detect cancer in



its early stages before it otherwise has any discernable symptoms. However, in the initial stages of the pandemic, when everyone was encouraged to remain at home, and only the most pressing medical emergencies were deemed necessary for a doctor's visit, screening processes halted. As a result, fewer people received a cancer diagnosis during this time.

While the number of cancer diagnoses dipped, it's not because there were fewer cancer cases.

In one study, the researchers used pre-pandemic data (collected between January 2018 and February 2020) to predict cancer incidences for the first ten months of the pandemic, from March 1st, 2020 until December 31st. They then compared these predictions to actual cancer incidence rates, finding a 29% lower incidence rate than projected during the peak of the SARS-CoV-2 response (March-May) and a 6.3% lower incidence rate between June–December. Overall, there was a 13% lower incidence rate for the first ten months of the pandemic.

To give perspective to this number, this equates to around 134,395 malignancies that were likely undetected during that period.

The repercussions of this are numerous for both the patient's health and the health system. Early interventions allow the health system to fight the cancer while it remains in its early stages, which leads to fewer services required and a greater chance of completely eradicating the cancer. The further the cancer progresses, the harder this becomes, and the greater the burden on healthcare professionals since more treatments are needed. As a result of this decline in diagnoses, it's possible that many patients' cancer was not detected until it was too late to treat—if it was even detected at all.

Of the cancers that were most likely to be missed, prostate cancer topped the list, followed by breast cancers and lung cancers. Malignancies that can be screened for were predicted to have a 14% lower overall rate.

This delayed diagnosis is continuing to be felt. A study comparing the staging values at the time of diagnosis for the 22 months before and after COVID-19 found a 4.24% increase in the number of patients diagnosed and staged with clinical stage T2 breast cancer and a decrease of 2.21% of those diagnosed with pathological stage 2. Essentially, there are more people diagnosed with breast cancer in its later stages and fewer being diagnosed while the cancer is in its earlier stages.

These numbers are even more exaggerated for colorectal cancer, with a 2.80% decrease in those diagnosed at the earliest stage of disease, an 8.73% decline in those diagnosed at stage T1 (an early stage), yet a 12.67% increase in those diagnosed at clinical stage T4, which is the largest tumor stage.

A Rise in Rare and Aggressive Cancers

It's not just the number of cancer cases, overall, that has increased since COVID-19 appeared; there have also been increasingly unusual patterns observed by experts. Namely, there has been a 20% to 30% increase in new patients, patients with several different cancers appearing at the same time, patients relapsing after years of remission, and siblings and couples developing cancer within months of each other.

Experts believe that these unusual cases may be caused by inflammation associated with COVID-19 since inflammation can trigger genetic changes that may increase someone's likelihood of developing cancer. In this way, COVID-19 does not directly change cells to make them cancerous, but it may cause an inflammatory cascade that could exacerbate the growth of cancer cells in certain individuals. If this is true, it would make COVID-19 similar to other environmental stressors that increase cancer risks, such as alcohol, tobacco, or asbestos.

Yet another theory is that coronavirus disrupts the body's ability to suppress tumors, hindering our natural immune response, or that the organs of those with COVID-19 are too heavily infected and cannot resist cancerous agents.

It's not uncommon for a virus to receive the blame for the appearance or progression of cancer, with researchers estimating that up to 20% of all cancers worldwide originate from infectious agents such as Epstein-Barr, HPV, and hepatitis B. With this knowledge, it's not unusual to have some suspicion toward the lasting effects of COVID-19, especially since much about its long-term effects and impact continues to remain unknown.

Ultimately, any connection between rising unusual cancer cases and COVID-19 remains only a subject of speculation for now since there are no studies confirming that COVID-19 produces a cancer-promoting inflammatory effect. Still, even without a confirmed connection, these theories offer a new focus for doctors—with inflammation already having a reputation for harm and disruption, being

aware of another possible cause behind its appearance can allow them to better care for their patients.

Reawakening Cancer Cells

While still under investigation, COVID-19 may send cancer survivors into remission, even years after they have received the highly sought-after "all clear."

This theory comes from research on the effect of COVID-19 on mice with dormant cancer cells. When infected with SARS-CoV-2, these mice that were cancer survivors saw dormant cancer cells that proliferated in the lungs. Additionally, when analyzing human observational data, the researchers found that cancer survivors who contract COVID-19 have a higher risk of lung metastatic progression and cancer-related death.

It's not just COVID-19 that produces this effect, either; similar results were seen with the flu virus.

As for theories on why these results were observed, it has to do with the immune system's role in activating cells from dormancy. When you're infected with a virus such as COVID-19 or the flu, it triggers inflammation that may then change the immune microenvironments, causing these changes in dormant cancer cells.

Responding to Increasing Cancer Rates

Given our current scientific understanding of COVID-19, one of the most likely reasons behind these rising cancer rates, specifically the rise in late-stage cancer diagnoses, is a lack of screening and healthcare appointments. While it started in the early stages of the pandemic when the general public was encouraged to stay home, and practitioners only saw patients for medical emergencies, this decline in screening has continued even years after the pandemic's initial stages.

This requires an alteration to the cancer care landscape and a re-emphasis on the importance of early detection.

Screening remains the most important tool for detecting many cancers while in their early stages, and doctors should continue to emphasize its importance. Some screenings, such as those for colorectal cancer, even have at-home options that can be suitable for patients who meet certain criteria, increasing the ease with which they can complete their screening—the more seamless the screening process is, the more likely patients are to complete it.

However, there is also the potential link of COVID-19 exacerbating conditions that promote cancer cells. While research is still needed, doctors can use these initial theories to place a greater emphasis on inflammation prompted by COVID-19, especially for those suffering from long-COVID or those who are cancer survivors. Monitoring for inflammation and finding ways to lower it may maintain an internal environment that can better protect against cancer.

Ultimately, while the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the healthcare landscape as we know it, doctors, in their endless pursuit of greater knowledge, can change along with it and continue to adapt their care to meet their patients' needs.

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PICKLEBALL

By Robert Swift, D.O.

Board Certified Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine



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

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

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

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

Associated Injuries

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

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

Acute Injuries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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What is Rhinitis?

An In-Depth Look at This Common Nasal Condition

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

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

The Hallmark Symptoms

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

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

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

Two Main Types

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

Allergic Rhinitis: The Usual Culprit

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

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

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

The Diagnostic Process

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

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

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

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

Treating the Nuisance

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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

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Protecting Your Vision

The Surprising Link Between Cholesterol and Eye Health

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

As September marks National Cholesterol Education Month, it's crucial to understand that high cholesterol doesn't just affect your heart—it can also significantly impact your vision. While most people associate cholesterol with cardiovascular health, few realize its important role in eye health. This connection underscores the importance of maintaining healthy cholesterol levels for overall well-being, including preserving your eyesight.

Cholesterol, a waxy substance found in your blood, is essential for building cell membranes and producing hormones. However, when levels become too high, it can lead to various health issues, including eye problems. The eyes, like other organs, rely on a network of blood vessels to function properly. When these vessels are compromised by high cholesterol, it can result in serious eye conditions that may threaten your vision.

One of the most common eye problems associated with high cholesterol is retinal vein occlusion. This condition occurs when cholesterol deposits block the veins that drain blood from the retina, leading to swelling, bleeding, and potential vision loss. The sudden onset of blurry vision in one eye is often the first sign of this condition, which requires immediate medical attention to prevent permanent damage.

Another concern is arcus senilis, a gray or white arc visible around the cornea's outer edge. While this condition is common in older adults and usually harmless, its presence in younger individuals can indicate high cholesterol levels. It serves as a visible reminder of the importance of regular cholesterol checks and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Perhaps most alarmingly, studies have shown a link between high cholesterol and an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is a leading cause of vision loss in older adults, affecting the central part of the retina responsible for sharp, detailed vision. While the exact mechanism is not fully understood, researchers believe that cholesterol buildup in the eye may contribute to the development and progression of this condition.

Fortunately, many of the steps you can take to lower your cholesterol also benefit your eye health. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help reduce bad cholesterol levels

while providing essential nutrients for eye health. Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, sardines, and flaxseeds, are particularly beneficial for both cholesterol management and eye health.

Regular exercise is another crucial factor in maintaining healthy cholesterol levels and supporting eye health. Physical activity helps increase HDL (good) cholesterol while lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol. Moreover, exercise improves blood circulation throughout the body, including the eyes, which can help prevent vision problems.

Quitting smoking is also vital for both cholesterol management and eye health. Smoking not only lowers good cholesterol levels but also increases the risk of various eye diseases, including cataracts and AMD. If you smoke, consider seeking support to quit as part of your overall health improvement plan.

During National Cholesterol Education Month, it's an excellent time to schedule a comprehensive eye exam along with a cholesterol check. Many eye care professionals can detect signs of high cholesterol during a routine eye examination, potentially catching issues before they become more serious. These exams can include dilated eye exams, which allow your doctor to examine the blood vessels in your retina for signs of cholesterol buildup or other issues.

If you're prescribed cholesterol-lowering medications, such as statins, it's important to take them as directed. Some studies have suggested that statins may have additional benefits for eye health, potentially reducing the risk of certain eye conditions. However, always consult with your healthcare provider about the best treatment plan for your individual needs.

In conclusion, the connection between cholesterol and eye health highlights the importance of a holistic approach to health care. By maintaining healthy cholesterol levels through diet, exercise, regular check-ups, and appropriate medical interventions, you're not just protecting your heart—you're also safeguarding your vision. This National Cholesterol Education Month, take proactive steps to lower your cholesterol and keep your eyes healthy for years to come. Your future self will thank you for the clear vision ahead, allowing you to fully enjoy life's precious moments with sharp, vibrant sight.



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

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

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

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By Dr. Aldene McKenzie

Revealing refreshed, youthful skin is a priority for many people throughout the year. If signs of aging or skin concerns are affecting your confidence, Plexr offers an innovative solution that delivers surgical-like results without the invasiveness of traditional procedures.

What Is Plexr?

Plexr (Plasma EXeResis) represents the cutting edge of non-surgical skin rejuvenation. This advanced treatment uses plasma created from ionized gas molecules in the air, which touch the skin causing fibers to contract through precise applications. Unlike lasers or surgery, Plexr treats various skin concerns without cutting, anesthesia, or lengthy recovery periods.

The Science Behind the Transformation

The handheld Plexr device emits streams of plasma energy, creating tiny areas of controlled damage that trigger healing responses. This stimulates new collagen and elastin production – the essential proteins responsible for skin's firmness and elasticity. The result isn't just temporary improvement but actual structural enhancement over time.

Versatile Solutions for Multiple Concerns

Plexr addresses numerous skin concerns with one technology:

- **Non-surgical eyelid lifting:** Reduces hooded eyelids and under-eye bags
- **Wrinkle reduction:** Smooths fine lines around eyes, forehead, and mouth
- **Skin tightening:** Firms sagging areas on face and neck
- **Scar improvement:** Minimizes acne scars and imperfections
- **Skin tag removal:** Precisely targets unwanted growths
- **Texture improvement:** Refines overall skin appearance

The Treatment Experience

During your Plexr treatment at Kenzi MedSpa, we apply a topical anesthetic for comfort. The 20-60 minute treatment delivers controlled plasma energy, which most clients find very tolerable compared to invasive alternatives.



Afterward, tiny carbon crusts form where the plasma worked, falling off within 5-7 days to reveal fresher, tighter skin. Some temporary swelling may occur, particularly around the eyes, but typically subsides quickly.

Why Choose Plexr This Summer?

Plexr offers significant advantages as beach season approaches:

- **No surgery required:** Results without incisions or general anesthesia
- **Minimal downtime:** Return to most activities immediately
- **Precision targeting:** Address specific concerns without affecting surrounding tissues
- **Natural-looking results:** Enhance your appearance while looking like yourself

Most clients require 1-3 treatments spaced several weeks apart, making spring the perfect time to begin your transformation journey.

Dr. McKenzie, our Plexr specialist has undergone extensive training to provide the safest, most effective treatment possible. Your journey begins with a consultation to create a customized plan tailored to your specific goals, ensuring you achieve the summer-ready look you desire.

About Dr. Aldene McKenzie

Dr. Aldene McKenzie is a board-certified physician in Florida practicing Aesthetic and Bariatric Medicine in Naples for 9 years. She received her medical degree from Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine and has immense knowledge and experience providing an upscale experience with a humanitarian approach.



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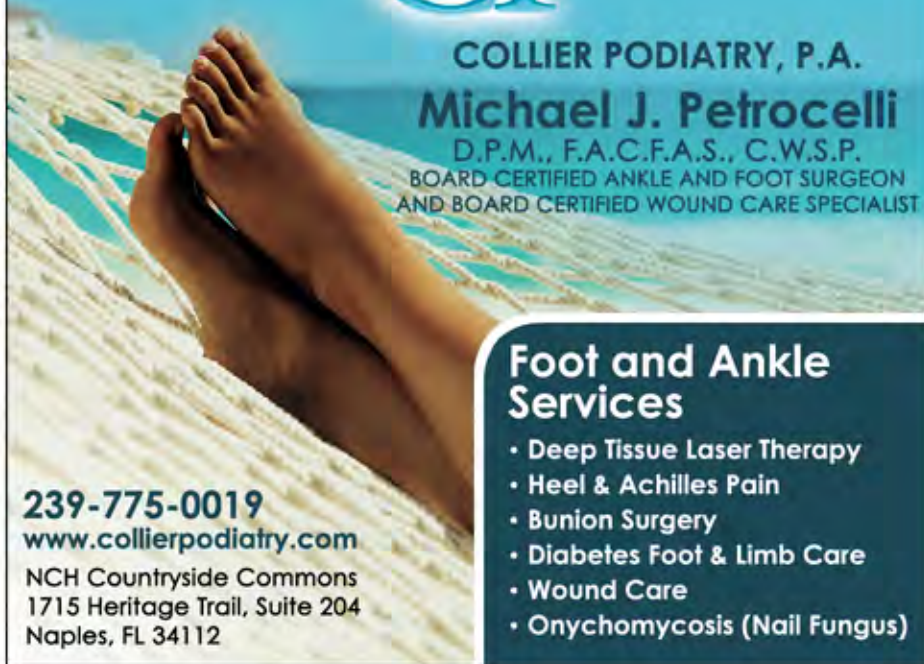
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GET MOVING! HEALTHY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HABITS CAN LAST A LIFETIME

EXERCISE IS MEDICINE

By RICK WEBER

In a concerted effort to address the urgent need for targeted health interventions, Florida Gulf Coast University is championing a global health initiative to make physical activity assessment and promotion a standard practice in health care for everyone.

The aging statistics are astonishing: According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 4.4 million Americans will turn 65 in 2025. That's 12,000 people per day. By 2030, all Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) will have reached this milestone.

Exercise Is Medicine (EIM) Active Aging aligns with the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) in its mission to integrate physical activity into routine healthcare, bridging the gap between older adults and evidence-based exercise programs led by qualified professionals. By prioritizing Active Aging, ACSM is taking a leadership role in meeting the growing demand for education, programs and policies that improve older adult health.

The Exercise Science Program at FGCU's Marieb College of Health & Human Services and FGCU's University Recreation and Wellness Department are working together to offer EIM-OC, or Exercise is Medicine on Campus, which calls upon colleges and universities to promote physical activity and encourage faculty, staff and students to work together toward improving the health and well-being of the campus community.

And that flows upward to every segment of Southwest Florida.

"What we learn with EIM-OC can be applied and revised to fit any community, corporation or group with shared interests and resources," says Dr. Patti Sawyer-Simmons, an Associate Professor in the Exercise Science (ES) program at FGCU's Marieb College of Health and Human Services. "Lessons learned on campuses can impact student lives beyond higher education, help with employee morale and wellness, be shared across campuses and ultimately expand to surrounding communities through community-engaged learning and impactful evidence-based programming interventions and collaborations beyond campus."

There's no better time to celebrate the work being done at FGCU, because September is National Cholesterol Education Month.

"The concept of exercise as medicine and the use of physical activity to help with certain conditions related to health and well-being ties into National Cholesterol Education Month by being a tool to help prevent dyslipidemia/hypercholesterolemia through exercise—in conjunction with a healthy diet," Sawyer-Simmons says. "Physical activity and exercise have been shown to increase 'good' cholesterol, or HDLs, as well."

EIM-OC makes movement a part of the daily campus culture; assesses physical activity at every student health visit; provides students with the tools necessary to strengthen healthy physical activity habits that can last a lifetime; and connects university health care providers with university health fitness specialists to provide a referral system for exercise prescription.

Over 90 participants (mostly students, but some faculty and employees) have taken advantage of this free PA promotion intervention since 2022, with more than 50 students—mostly Exercise Science majors—volunteering as EIM-OC mentors to support participants on their physical activity journey. Each year, hundreds of students and FGCU employees participate in EIM-OC-sponsored events such as FitCraze, EIM-OC Week in October and Movement Matters Day in the spring.

"That being said, we are still relatively unknown and are working to increase program awareness, promotion, participation and overall buy-in on campus," Sawyer-Simmons says.

Marieb College's Exercise Science Program also facilitates Community-Engaged Learning, in which students complete two full-time experiential learning internships at local cardiac rehab centers, wellness facilities, senior living communities and strength and conditioning programs.

"Students are exposed to various settings that align to the workforce's needs in the area," says Barbara Tymczyszyn, FGCU's ES Program Director. "Students get the opportunity to work directly with clients.

Often, older adults are perceived as becoming frailer, but the students quickly learn that older adults are very capable of being active, exercising and building strength—which ultimately helps with their quality of life. They also learn that keeping older adults healthy for longer through functional movement is a win-win situation for everyone."

She says the program provides a direct pipeline for local employers seeking qualified, field-ready professionals. The internship program is essentially a four-month interview process during which students have the opportunity to make their mark.

They work in such areas as fitness, wellness, cardiac and pulmonary rehab delivering exercise prescriptions, wellness programming and preventative care education. They also bring value to a community site by applying current, research-backed practices to improve the outcomes in strength, endurance, balance, mobility and quality of life. The FGCU EIM-OC program is one of the ES program's internship opportunities, working with the University Recreation and Wellness Department.

"Community partners report that their participants enjoy working with the students," Tymczyszyn says. "Students also often develop tools such as fitness plans, wellness workshops, exercise videos and educational materials that can be reused by the sites."

She says it's important for the community to understand that through these programs, FGCU is shaping the future of evidence-based practice in the field of exercise science.

"Our program is committed to developing well-rounded professionals who are prepared to work with a diverse range of clients—from elite athletes to individuals managing multiple chronic conditions," she says. "While we provide a strong academic and practical foundation, we also challenge our students to think critically and adapt within a constantly evolving industry. In an age of information overload, it is essential to prepare practitioners who can not only apply the science, but also discern credible sources and make informed, ethical decisions in practice."

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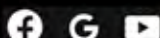
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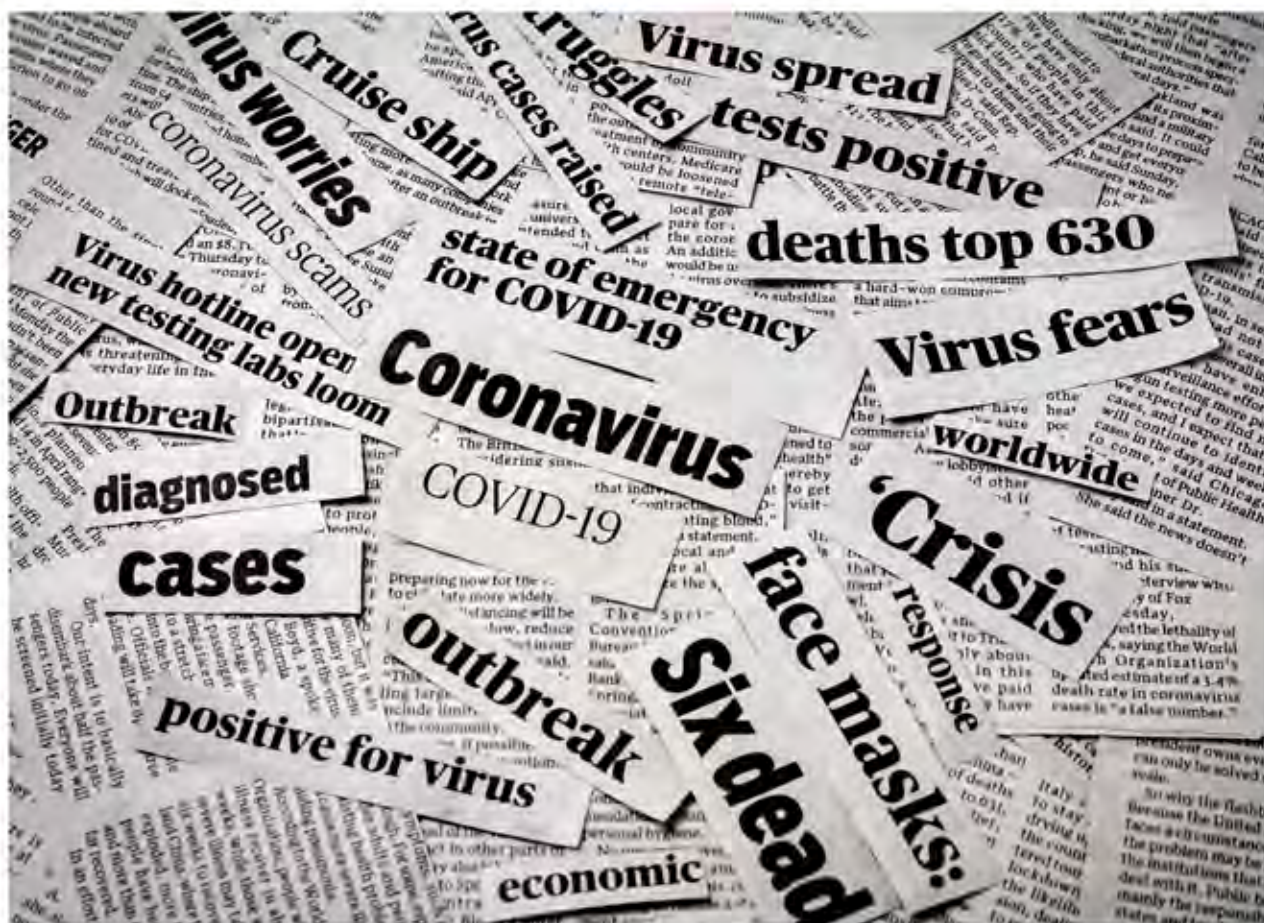
By Neetu Malhotra, MD

Stress Management

Have you ever felt overwhelmed? Are you feeling stressed out? The holidays can sometimes be quite stressful, whether it be making the house ready, making sure you have gotten all the presents for your loved ones/friends, but you might want to take some time for yourself too. In fact, the holidays are known to bring out all sorts of ailments and health problems, more than any time of year. The stress of the holidays is real and not something to be ignored and brushed under the rug. Stress Management is truly something we all have to deal with at one point or another. Not all stress is bad, but when you start to feel overwhelmed and feel a loss of control, that's when stress can wreak havoc in your life.

The first part in managing your stress is to identify the stressor, for example-whether it be certain negative people, going through a divorce, being told of a new diagnosis or fear of losing your job. Whatever that stressor is, it's important to identify it, talk it over with a close friend/relative or perhaps write it in a stress journal. It is crucial to not keep the feelings/emotions bottled up because that in itself is truly, I believe the heart of many health problems. Stress has been linked to heart disease, depression/mental illnesses, inflammatory conditions (ie arthritis, autoimmune illnesses, etc) and even some forms of cancer.

The second part of stress management is coming up with a plan or solution to dealing with the problem that is creating the stress/turmoil in your life. This is where taking a step back for a moment can often help. Sometimes, taking a deep breath and talking out loud is all that may be needed. I also believe it is extremely important to have outlets or hobbies in your life. Some people find getting up early and meditating is a way to relax and recharge your mind. Others may find playing an instrument, listening to a Ted talk, gardening or reading a book keeps them relaxed and content. The point is, you have to find some activity that makes you happy and feel relaxed. This in itself, helps you think of the solution as a third party and coming up with a new perspective on the problem/situation creating the stress in your life.



I think it is important to have general lifestyle principles and routines embedded in your life such as the 5 steps below:

1. It is important to stay positive and surround yourself with people that will bring positivity in your life as well.
2. Exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet also helps with keeping the stress levels manageable.
3. Staying well hydrated and avoiding excessive consumption of caffeinated and alcoholic beverages also help you manage your stress.
4. Learn also how to say "no" to unnecessary requests. You need to know your limits and stick to them. It is important to know the difference between the "shoulds" and the "musts" and when needed to say "no" to taking on too much, whether

it be in your personal or professional life. Taking on too much is indeed a recipe for disaster and the root of stress for most people.

5. Lastly, getting enough sleep is also vital to stress management. Most of us are not getting the recommended 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night.

In the end, it is always important to ask oneself, "Is this going to make a difference in the grand scheme of things?" "Is it really worth getting upset over?"

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Heart and Brain Health: A Unified Approach Through Nutrition

By James V. Talano, MD, MBA, FACC

As a cardiologist, I try and impress upon patients 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. Among the most effective diets are the Mediterranean, DASH, plant-based, and Flexitarian diets, as well as the MIND diet, which has a direct impact on cognitive health. Understanding these dietary strategies can help individuals make informed choices for long-term well-being.

HEART-HEALTHY DIETS

Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet (MeDi) is widely regarded as one of the most beneficial for heart health. It emphasizes:

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

A landmark study in the *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that a Mediterranean diet rich in olive oil or nuts significantly reduced cardiovascular events. The diet's monounsaturated fats and antioxidants help reduce inflammation and improve cholesterol.

DASH Diet

Designed to combat high blood pressure, the DASH diet includes:

- High intake of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains and lean proteins
- Low-fat dairy
- Limited sodium and saturated fats

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute reports that the DASH diet lowers blood pressure and supports vascular health.

Plant-Based and Flexitarian Diets

Plant-based diets consist mostly of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains. Vegan diets exclude all animal products, while vegetarian diets may include dairy and eggs. Flexitarian diets allow occasional meat but focus on plants.

These diets are rich in fiber, antioxidants, and healthy fats, supporting cholesterol improvement and inflammation reduction. A flexitarian approach offers cardiovascular benefits with greater flexibility, making it sustainable for many.



The MIND Diet and Alzheimer's Disease Prevention

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a growing concern with aging populations. While age and genetics are non-modifiable, diet plays a key role in prevention.

Mediterranean Diet and Cognitive Health

The Mediterranean diet also benefits the brain. A BMC Medicine study found that MeDi adherence reduced dementia risk, even among those with genetic susceptibility. Its antioxidants and unsaturated fats mitigate oxidative stress and inflammation—common to both cardiovascular and cognitive decline.

The MIND Diet: A Targeted Approach

The MIND (Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) diet emphasizes:

- Leafy greens, berries, nuts, and whole grains
- Olive oil as the main fat source
- Fish, beans, and poultry
- Limited red meat, butter, cheese, and processed foods

A *Neurology* study found slower cognitive decline and reduced AD risk among adherents, even with partial compliance.

KEY NUTRIENTS FOR BRAIN HEALTH

Several dietary components have been individually associated with cognitive benefits:

- **Polyphenols** (in fruits, vegetables, olive oil): Antioxidant properties that protect brain function.
- **Omega-3 Fatty Acids** (in fish): Anti-inflammatory and essential for neuron function.
- **Antioxidant**: (vitamins E and C): Combat oxidative stress.
- **B Vitamins** (folate, B6, B12): Support homocysteine metabolism, associated with reduced cognitive decline.

The Cardiovascular–Cognitive Link

Cardiovascular risk factors like hypertension, diabetes, and obesity increase AD risk. Diets like MeDi and MIND benefit both systems by reducing inflammation, improving lipid profiles, and enhancing vascular function.

Practical Recommendations

- **Increase Plant-Based Foods:** Prioritize fruits, vegetables, legumes, and whole grains.
- **Choose Healthy Fats:** Use olive oil, nuts, and fatty fish.
- **Limit Processed and Red Meats:** Opt for poultry and fish.
- **Reduce Sodium and Sugar:** Avoid processed snacks and sugary drinks.
- **Practice Mindful Eating:** Eat regular, balanced meals with appropriate portions.

Conclusion

By adopting heart-healthy eating patterns, individuals also reduce their Alzheimer's risk. The Mediterranean, DASH, plant-based, and Flexitarian diets all promote cardiovascular health. The MIND diet specifically targets cognitive protection. Small, consistent changes—like adding leafy greens or swapping butter for olive oil—can have lasting effects.

Consult with a healthcare provider or dietitian to personalize your approach. Through informed nutrition, we can safeguard both heart and brain health.

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Jim Ferrara received his Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy from Spalding University in 2006, and has been a certified lymphedema therapist for over six years. As a seasoned business owner for

more than five years, he integrates advanced wound care and lymphedema management into effective therapy, helping patients achieve meaningful recovery even in complex cases.



Lexie Lundquist earned her Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from the University of Florida in 2022 and became a certified lymphedema therapist in 2023.

Lexie is passionate about empowering patients through providing education, hands-on treatment, and personalized plans of care, and making a difference for her patient's lives.

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IVERMECTIN AND MEBENDAZOLE: Can Parasite Medicines Help Fight Cancer?

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

Ivermectin and mebendazole are medicines doctors have used for decades to treat parasites, like intestinal worms or head lice. Lately, there's been a lot of talk—especially online—about whether these drugs might also help treat cancer.

Some early research in labs and animals has shown these medicines may slow cancer growth. But here's the important part: there is no proof right now that they work in people with cancer. They are not FDA-approved for this use, and cancer experts warn against trying them without medical supervision.

What is Ivermectin?

Ivermectin is best known for treating certain parasitic infections in humans and animals.

- In the lab: Studies show it might slow the growth of cancer cells and make some tumors easier for the immune system to detect (PMC7505114). In mice with triple-negative breast cancer, combining ivermectin with certain immune drugs shrank tumors in some animals (City of Hope).

- In people: A small human study showed only one partial response and one case of stable disease out of eight patients. Most cancers continued to grow (Patient Power).

What is Mebendazole?

Mebendazole is another parasite medicine that works by blocking the ability of worms to absorb sugar, which they need to survive. Scientists have learned this same process can also affect cancer cells. In the lab and animals: Mebendazole has slowed the growth of cancers like brain tumors, pancreatic cancer, breast cancer, and melanoma in research studies (PMC8255490). In mice with pancreatic cancer, it helped stop tumors from spreading (Johns Hopkins Medicine).

Why This Is Not Yet a Cancer Treatment?

There's a big difference between what happens in a lab dish or animal and what works in real patients. Many treatments look promising early but fail when tested in people.



The risks:

- Taking too much ivermectin can cause confusion, seizures, or even coma.
- Mebendazole, especially in high doses, can damage the liver or lower blood counts.
- Using animal (veterinary) versions of these medicines is dangerous and not the same as human prescription doses.

The concern: Cancer specialists say that people who try these drugs on their own may delay proven treatments like surgery, chemotherapy, or immunotherapy—and that delay can make the cancer harder to treat (AntiCancer Fund).

Research Is Still Needed

To know for sure if ivermectin or mebendazole can help treat cancer, researchers would need:

- Large, well-designed human studies.
- Careful dosing guidelines to avoid harmful side effects.
- Data on how these drugs might work alongside standard cancer treatments.

Until that happens, these medicines remain experimental for cancer.

What To Do If You're Interested

If you or someone you know is considering a new or alternative cancer treatment:

1. Talk to your oncologist first. They can explain the latest research and help you weigh the risks and benefits.

2. Ask about clinical trials. If these medicines are being tested for your type of cancer, joining a trial is the safest way to try them.

3. Avoid self-medicating. Never use animal medicine or order from unreliable sources.

Ivermectin and mebendazole are safe and effective for certain parasitic infections, but right now, there's no solid proof they work against cancer in people. The early lab and animal research is interesting, but until we have results from large human studies, these drugs should not replace standard cancer care.

Your best defense is to follow proven treatments, stay informed about new research, and work closely with your healthcare team to explore safe options for your care.

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Sources:

- National Library of Medicine – Ivermectin and Cancer Research
- City of Hope – Drug Combo in Breast Cancer
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- Johns Hopkins Medicine – Mebendazole in Pancreatic Cancer
- AntiCancer Fund – Repurposed Drugs

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Hurricane Season and Your Medical Insurance, How is it Affected?

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

Especially during Hurricane season make sure you always keep your medical insurance cards on you. Do you understand your plan benefits? Most HMO plans have a limited network locally and require your primary care doctor to refer you for services and specialist. In case of a Medical Emergency, you should be covered to stabilize you. PPO's have in and out of network benefits, so if the provider you want to see is not in network and they are willing to accept the plans conditions you can see them but at a higher cost. During hurricanes many of us evacuate and leave the plans service area.

Also, during this time of the year, we have **Medicare Annual Enrollment Period which runs from October 15th to December 7th for January 1st effective.** The **Marketplace/Obama Care Open Enrollment runs November 1st to December 7th for January 1st effective.**

Make sure you don't leave your plan selection up to the last minute. Deal with a local agent that represents all/most of the insurance carriers in your service area. It is illegal for an insurance agent to call, text, knock on your door or even talk to you about Medicare without prior permission from you. If you receive this call don't just hang up or not answer your phone. Put an end to those calls by asking them for their National Producer Number, you will more than likely hear a click, if not get the number and tell them you are going to report them to Medicare. My clients & I do so, we don't get those calls anymore.

Travel Insurance – Did you know that most health insurance does NOT cover you outside of the country and that includes a cruise, in international waters (4 miles out). Travel insurance is not just about trip cancelation but most importantly what if you got sick or had an accident on your trip. Medical Trip insurance is very important and most of the time not very costly when you are out way the benefits.

Life Insurance – You are never too young to have life insurance, and many types offer living benefits. As an example, I purchase life insurance for my grandchildren almost as soon as they are born. Their policy continues to build cash value that they can use during their lives, for education, wedding or even a 1st home purchase. The younger you are the lower the cost. There are many types of life insurance, and it is important to understand the differences between them. You also have payment options, such as 10-Pay, this type of policy you can pay the premium in full in 10 years, there are other terms available as well.

Long Term Care Insurance – Overall, 48.7% of older adults with ADL difficulties (or an estimated 3 million persons aged 70 and older) reported needing some sort of personal assistance with one or more ADLs, and, of those individuals with need, 20.7% (or an estimated 629,000 persons) had an unmet need. Long Term Care Insurance helps pay for in-home or facility-based needs, such as assistance with acts of daily living or help with paying for a facility. Start shopping for this insurance in your 40's,

but it's never too late to try. Your overall health will play a major role in the cost of the plan's premium. The sooner than later for affordability. You have payment options such as a single payment, 10-Pay where the premium is paid in full in 10 years. You also get a discount with most companies doing a joint policy with your spouse. Remember Medicare is NOT meant for Nursing Home Care/Skilled Nursing.

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The Critical Nature of Chronic Wound Care

Chronic wounds affect over 6.5 million patients annually in the United States, with approximately 5 million deaths resulting from complications including severe infections, sepsis, and gangrene. These non-healing wounds—defined as wounds that fail to progress through normal healing stages within 30 days—create devastating impacts on patients' quality of life while placing enormous strain on healthcare systems and families.

Common chronic wounds include diabetic foot ulcers, pressure ulcers (bedsores), venous stasis ulcers, arterial ulcers, surgical wounds with delayed healing, and traumatic wounds resistant to conventional therapy. Without proper treatment, these conditions can rapidly progress to life-threatening infections requiring amputation or resulting in death.

Advanced Amniotic Membrane Technology

Amniotic membrane allografts represent a revolutionary approach to chronic wound healing. These bioactive tissue grafts, derived from human placental tissue, contain powerful growth factors, cytokines, and structural proteins that stimulate cellular regeneration and reduce inflammation. Unlike traditional wound dressings that simply cover wounds, amniotic membranes actively promote healing at the cellular level.

The membranes provide a natural scaffold for new tissue growth while delivering essential nutrients directly to damaged areas. This advanced therapy has shown remarkable success rates in healing wounds that have remained open for months or even years, often preventing the need for amputation and dramatically improving patient outcomes.

Concierge-Level Chronic Wound Care

Jean Remy, FNP-BC, provides personalized, concierge-level mobile wound care services that extend far beyond traditional clinical visits. Understanding



that chronic wound patients often face mobility challenges, he offers comprehensive home visits throughout southwest Florida and in his downtown Naples location. He will also make visits to independent living facilities, assisted living communities.

His collaborative approach involves working directly with patients' primary physicians, caregivers, family members, and home health agencies to ensure seamless continuity of care. This coordinated treatment model ensures proper wound assessment, infection management, amniotic membrane application, and ongoing monitoring throughout the healing process.

Flexible Treatment Options

Recognizing that chronic wounds require urgent attention regardless of the day or time, Jean Remy maintains availability five days a week for wound treatments. His downtown Naples office provides a welcoming and safe clinical environment, while his mobile services bring advanced care directly to patients who cannot travel.

Services are available for Cigna and Medicare patients, making advanced amniotic membrane therapy accessible to those who need it most. This insurance coverage removes financial barriers that often prevent patients from accessing life-saving wound care treatments.

Comprehensive Wound Assessment and Treatment

Each patient receives thorough wound evaluation including assessment of underlying conditions contributing to delayed healing such as diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, or autoimmune disorders. Treatment protocols address infection control, proper wound preparation, precise amniotic membrane application, and detailed aftercare instructions.

The goal extends beyond simply healing wounds—it's about restoring patients' independence, keeping them in their preferred living situations, and preventing the devastating complications that can result from untreated chronic wounds.

For patients and families struggling with chronic wounds that won't heal, Jean Remy's advanced amniotic membrane therapy offers new hope for recovery and improved quality of life.



About Jean E. Remy, FNP-BC

Jean Evins Remy, FNP-BC is a dedicated healthcare provider with a diverse background in medicine and nursing. Originally from Haiti, Remy earned his medical degree from Faculté de Médecine et de Pharmacie, Université d'Etat d'Haïti, and practiced as a licensed doctor of medicine before relocating to the United States. Here, he pursued further education, graduating with honors from Florida International University with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and a Master of Science in Nursing.

With over a decade of experience, Remy has worked in various healthcare settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, and home health environments. His roles have spanned clinical technician, registered nurse, and family nurse practitioner, with notable positions at Naples Community Hospital, Millennium Physician Group, David Lawrence Center, CVS, Humana, and Korunda Pain Management Center.

Remy is a proud member of the Florida Nursing Association. Fluent in Creole, French, and English, he is committed to providing culturally competent care to his diverse patient population.

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Shining a Light on Animal Pain Awareness Month

Every year, the month of September brings with it a powerful reminder of our responsibility towards the creatures that share our planet. It's a time when we collectively turn our attention to the often silent suffering experienced by animals – a topic brought to the forefront during Animal Pain Awareness Month.

Animal Pain Awareness Month, observed annually in September, serves as a poignant reminder that animals, just like humans, experience pain and discomfort. This month-long campaign aims to educate and sensitize people about the physical and emotional pain that animals can undergo due to various factors, such as illness, injury, and even human activities.

While animals cannot express their pain through words, their behavior often provides us with significant clues. Changes in appetite, restlessness, withdrawal from social interactions, altered gait, and even vocalizations can indicate their suffering. Recognizing these signs is the first step towards addressing their pain.

One of the primary goals of Animal Pain Awareness Month is to foster empathy and understanding. Animals, from pets to wildlife, are an integral part of our world. By recognizing and respecting their capacity to feel pain, we take a significant stride towards more compassionate treatment. This awareness prompts us to make ethical choices, whether it's providing appropriate veterinary care, supporting animal welfare initiatives, or promoting responsible wildlife conservation efforts.



This month also serves as an opportunity to shed light on some alarming practices that cause undue pain to animals. Activities such as factory farming, animal testing, and habitat destruction can lead to immense suffering. By highlighting these issues, the campaign encourages individuals to make informed choices about their consumption habits and lifestyle, contributing to the overall well-being of animals.

In addition to raising awareness, Animal Pain Awareness Month offers a platform for researchers, veterinarians, and animal welfare organizations to share their knowledge and advancements. Scientific research has progressed significantly in understanding animal cognition and emotions, enabling us to better comprehend their pain experiences. This growing body of knowledge contributes to the development of more effective pain management strategies in veterinary care.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behaviors towards animals. Schools, community organizations, and online platforms take advantage of Animal Pain Awareness Month to impart

knowledge about animal pain, promoting responsible pet ownership, wildlife preservation, and ethical considerations. By starting conversations about these topics, we pave the way for a future where animals' pain is acknowledged and addressed.

In conclusion, Animal Pain Awareness Month serves as a poignant reminder of our shared responsibility towards the well-being of animals. It calls on us to recognize their capacity to experience pain, prompting us to make compassionate choices in our interactions with them. By raising awareness, fostering empathy, and promoting education, this month-long campaign contributes to a world where animals are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. As we observe this important month, let us remember that compassion knows no bounds – it extends to all living beings that call our planet home.

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ACUPUNCTURE FOR DIGESTION: A GENTLE PATH TO LASTING GUT WELLNESS

By Quiet Waters Wellness Center

Imagine feeling lighter, more energized, and free from the discomfort of bloating, heartburn, or irregular digestion. For many, digestive issues are a daily struggle that can impact mood, sleep, and overall, your quality of life. Acupuncture, a time-tested therapy rooted in traditional Chinese medicine, offers a gentle yet powerful way to restore balance to your gut and improve overall well-being. When combined with simple, holistic lifestyle shifts, it can help your body work in harmony – not against you.

Truly, no matter how clean you eat and how healthy your lifestyle is, when you reach a certain age, you might begin experiencing persistent bloating, abdominal discomfort, and irregular bowel movements. Conventional treatments may prove frustrating and provide little relief. If this sounds like you, it just might be time to look for a drug-free, non-toxic alternative: acupuncture.

Acupuncture is believed to stimulate the body's natural healing processes and has been used to address various ailments, including digestive disorders.

How Acupuncture Supports Digestive Function

Regulation of Gastrointestinal Motility: Acupuncture can enhance the rhythmic contractions of the digestive tract, known as peristalsis, facilitating the movement of food and waste. This regulation helps alleviate symptoms of both constipation and diarrhea which is common in conditions like irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Reduction of Inflammation: Chronic inflammation in the gastrointestinal tract can contribute to disorders such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Acupuncture has been shown to modulate inflammatory responses, which leads to reducing inflammation and promoting healing in the gut lining.

Stress and Anxiety Reduction: The gut-brain connection plays a significant role in digestive health. Stress and anxiety can exacerbate digestive issues, leading to symptoms like bloating and discomfort. Acupuncture promotes relaxation and balances the nervous system, mitigating the impact of stress on the digestive system.

Pain Relief: Many digestive disorders are accompanied by abdominal pain and cramping. Acupuncture stimulates the release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, providing relief from discomfort associated with digestive issues.



What Science Says

Research suggests that acupuncture may support digestive health by regulating gastrointestinal motility, reducing inflammation, and balancing the gut-brain axis. Studies indicate it can help relieve symptoms of conditions such as:

Acid Reflux: Occurs when stomach acid flows back into the esophagus, causing symptoms like heartburn, chest discomfort, and a sour taste in the mouth.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS): A systematic review and meta-analysis indicated that acupuncture significantly improved IBS symptoms, including abdominal pain and bowel irregularities.

Functional Dyspepsia (Indigestion): Studies have shown that acupuncture can alleviate symptoms of functional dyspepsia, such as bloating and nausea, by regulating stomach function and improving gastric motility.

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD): Research suggests that acupuncture may reduce acid reflux symptoms and enhance esophageal function, offering relief to individuals with GERD.

Acupuncture works by stimulating specific acupuncture points that influence nerve pathways and digestive organ function.

Acupuncture Points Relevant to Digestive Health

Specific acupuncture points are commonly targeted to address digestive issues:

ST36 (Zusanli): Located on the lower leg, this point is known to enhance gastrointestinal motility and strengthen overall digestive function.

CV12 (Zhongwan): Situated on the upper abdomen, stimulation of this point can help regulate stomach activity and alleviate symptoms of indigestion.

PC6 (Neiguan): Found on the inner forearm, this point is often used to relieve nausea and vomiting.

Integrating Acupuncture into a Holistic Digestive Health Plan

While acupuncture offers numerous benefits for digestive health, it is most effective when combined with other lifestyle modifications like:

- Adopting an anti-inflammatory, whole-food diet that is rich in fiber.
- Practicing mindful eating to reduce stress on the digestive system.
- Incorporating gentle movement practices like walking or stretching to improve gut motility.
- Managing stress through meditation or breathwork.
- Supporting gut flora with pro-pre-and postbiotics or fermented foods.
- Maintaining regular sleep patterns to optimize digestive functions.
- Hydrating. Hydration supports the body's natural healing processes and helps maintain balanced energy flow, making treatments more effective. If you have trouble getting adequate water consumption, try herbal teas and water-rich foods like cucumber, watermelon, and leafy greens.

Acupuncture presents a natural and effective option for individuals seeking relief from digestive disorders. By addressing the root causes and promoting the body's innate healing abilities, this ancient practice offers a pathway to improved gastrointestinal health and overall well-being.



LeeTasha Perez,
AP, DOM



Leila Motta, D.O.M., AP,
Dipl. O.M., ADS.

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2. GPS Origins Ancestry Test:

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3. MTHFR PGx Panel:

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4. Addiction PGx Panel and ADHD PGx Panel:

Understanding the genetic factors contributing to conditions like addiction and ADHD can be a game-changer in managing and treating these complex disorders. Our specialized PGx Panels explore the genetic variations that may influence an individual's susceptibility to addiction or ADHD, paving the way for more targeted and effective treatment approaches.

5. Avuncular Informational DNA Testing:

In cases where paternity cannot be established, our Avuncular Informational DNA Testing offers a valuable alternative. By analyzing the genetic material of an alleged uncle and the child, we can determine the likelihood of a biological relationship, providing crucial information for family matters.

6. Cardiovascular PGx Panel and Comprehensive PGx Panel:

Genetic predispositions can play a significant role in various health conditions, including cardiovascular diseases. Our Cardiovascular PGx Panel and Comprehensive PGx Panel examine genetic variations that may influence an individual's risk for heart-related issues, empowering healthcare professionals to develop personalized preventive and treatment strategies.



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ORCHIDIA MEDICAL GROUP INTRODUCES EBOO THERAPY: The Most Advanced Detox Treatment Is Here

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

Orchidia Medical Group is proud to announce the launch of an groundbreaking wellness service that represents the cutting edge of detoxification and regenerative medicine: Extracorporeal Blood Ozonation and Oxygenation (EBOO) Treatment. This innovative therapy offers patients access to one of the most advanced and powerful detox treatments available in modern medicine today.

What Makes EBOO Therapy Revolutionary?

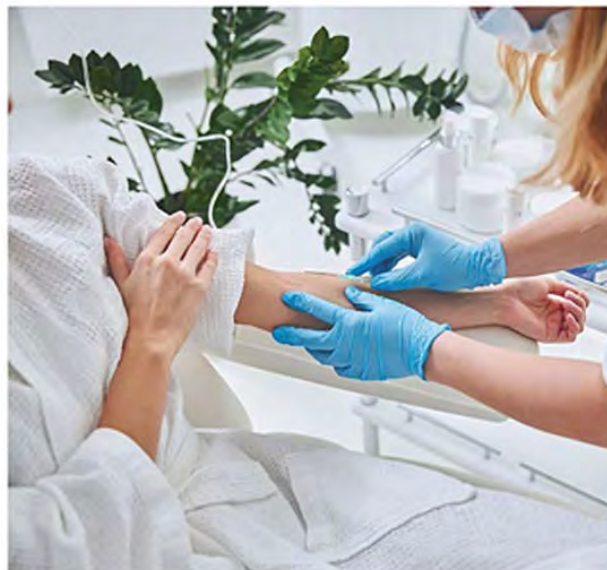
EBOO therapy stands apart from traditional detox methods and standard ozone treatments through its sophisticated approach to blood purification and oxygenation. Unlike conventional therapies that work indirectly, EBOO directly treats your blood outside the body in a controlled, medical-grade environment.

The process involves extracting blood from the patient and passing it through a specialized dialyzer while simultaneously infusing it with a continuous flow of medical-grade oxygen and ozone. During each treatment session, approximately 2-3 liters of blood are filtered and enriched with these therapeutic gases before being safely returned to the patient's circulatory system. This creates a complete systemic reset that many patients describe as transformational.

Comprehensive Health Benefits

The therapeutic effects of EBOO therapy extend far beyond simple detoxification. Clinical evidence demonstrates its effectiveness in treating peripheral artery disease and coronary artery disease, making it valuable for cardiovascular health. The treatment works by removing harmful substances including heavy metals, mold toxins, microplastics, and other environmental toxins that accumulate in our bodies over time.

Patients frequently report significant improvements in energy levels, mental clarity, and overall vitality after just one session. The therapy naturally boosts immune system function while reducing chronic inflammation throughout the body. Enhanced circulation and improved oxygen delivery to tissues support the body's natural healing processes and may contribute to anti-aging effects.



Who Can Benefit from EBOO Therapy?

EBOO therapy has shown promising results for patients struggling with various chronic conditions and wellness challenges. Those experiencing chronic fatigue syndrome, persistent brain fog, or fibromyalgia often find significant relief through this advanced treatment approach.

The therapy has proven particularly beneficial for individuals dealing with autoimmune conditions such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis, where inflammation reduction and immune system modulation are crucial. Patients recovering from Long COVID or those suffering from recurring infections may experience improved recovery and enhanced immune resilience.

Additionally, EBOO therapy offers hope for individuals battling Lyme disease, mold-related illness, or other complex chronic conditions that traditional medicine often struggles to address effectively. The treatment's ability to address multiple systems simultaneously makes it valuable for patients with overlapping health concerns.

The EBOO Treatment Experience

Safety and personalization are paramount in EBOO therapy administration. Each patient begins with a comprehensive consultation with one of Orchidia Medical Group's experienced physicians. This initial evaluation ensures that EBOO therapy is appropriate and safe for the individual patient's health profile.

Required laboratory testing includes a complete blood count (CBC), comprehensive metabolic panel (CMP), and glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) testing. These tests help identify any contraindications and allow physicians to customize the treatment protocol for optimal results and safety.

The actual EBOO session is conducted in a comfortable, clinical environment with continuous monitoring by trained medical professionals. The procedure is generally well-tolerated, with many patients using the treatment time to rest and relax.

A New Era of Integrative Medicine

Orchidia Medical Group's introduction of EBOO therapy represents a commitment to offering patients the most advanced treatment options available. This therapy bridges the gap between traditional medicine and cutting-edge regenerative treatments, providing hope for patients who have struggled to find effective solutions through conventional approaches alone.

The addition of EBOO therapy to Orchidia Medical Group's comprehensive service offerings reinforces their position as a leader in integrative and regenerative medicine. For patients ready to experience deep detoxification and support their long-term health through this revolutionary treatment, the journey toward optimal wellness begins with a simple consultation.

Ready to feel better, detox deeply, and support your long-term health? Schedule your EBOO consultation today at 239-333-8809.



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The Intricate Dance:

Exploring the Intersection of Mental Health and Sexual Wellness

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

Mental health and sexual health are deeply intertwined aspects of human well-being, often influencing each other in complex and significant ways. This relationship becomes particularly evident when examining the impact of common mental health conditions like depression and anxiety on sexual function and satisfaction.

Depression, characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and loss of interest in daily activities, can have a profound effect on an individual's sexual health. Many people experiencing depression report a marked decrease in libido, difficulty achieving arousal, and challenges in maintaining intimate relationships. The neurochemical imbalances associated with depression can directly affect sexual desire and response, while the emotional and cognitive symptoms may lead to reduced self-esteem and body image issues, further complicating sexual experiences.

Similarly, anxiety disorders can significantly impact sexual health. Individuals with anxiety may experience heightened stress and worry during intimate moments, leading to performance anxiety or difficulty relaxing enough to enjoy sexual encounters. This anxiety can manifest physically as tension in the body, potentially causing pain during intercourse or difficulty achieving orgasm. Moreover, specific anxiety-related conditions like obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) may lead to intrusive thoughts or compulsions that interfere with sexual experiences.

The relationship between mental health and sexual health is not unidirectional. Sexual difficulties can also contribute to or exacerbate mental health issues. For instance, persistent sexual problems may lead to feelings of inadequacy, shame, or frustration, potentially triggering or worsening depressive symptoms. This creates a feedback loop where mental health issues and sexual difficulties reinforce each other, making it challenging for individuals to break the cycle without professional intervention.

It's crucial to recognize that addressing one aspect of health often requires consideration of the other. Mental health treatments, such as antidepressants, while effective in managing depressive symptoms, can sometimes have side effects that impact sexual function. This highlights the importance of open communication between patients and healthcare providers to find treatment approaches that balance mental health improvements with sexual well-being.

Holistic approaches to treatment that consider both mental and sexual health are increasingly recognized as essential. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), for example, can be effective in addressing both anxiety and sexual concerns by helping individuals challenge negative thought patterns and develop healthier coping mechanisms. Additionally, mindfulness-based interventions have shown promise in improving both mental health symptoms and sexual satisfaction by promoting present-moment awareness and reducing stress.

For couples navigating these challenges, relationship counseling or sex therapy can provide valuable support. These therapeutic approaches can help partners communicate more effectively about their needs and concerns, develop strategies to maintain intimacy despite mental health challenges, and work together to create a supportive environment for healing and growth.

As awareness of the connection between mental and sexual health grows, healthcare providers are increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing both aspects in patient care. This integrated approach not only improves overall treatment outcomes but also contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of human well-being.

In conclusion, the intricate relationship between mental health and sexual wellness underscores the need for a holistic approach to healthcare. By recognizing and addressing the impact of conditions like depression and anxiety on sexual health, and vice versa, we can develop more effective strategies for improving overall quality of life and fostering healthier, more fulfilling relationships.

Dr. Richard J. Capiola is the Chief of Psychiatry for Physicians Regional Medical Center. He received his medical degree from Tulane University School of Medicine and has been in practice for more than 20 years. Call Dr. Capiola today at 239-649-7494.




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Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty Makes Aging in Place a Reality

The desire to age gracefully in the comfort of one's own home is universal. For millions of seniors and their families, maintaining independence while ensuring safety and quality care represents the ideal balance between dignity and security. Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty understands this delicate balance, offering comprehensive solutions that transform aging in place from a hopeful wish into a practical reality.

The Power of Personalized Home Care

Unlike institutional care settings, Whitsyms In Home Care provides truly individualized attention tailored to each client's unique needs and preferences. This personalized approach goes beyond basic assistance, encompassing everything from skilled nursing and rehabilitation therapies to medication management and daily living support. Research published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* demonstrates that such customized care plans significantly improve health outcomes for seniors, proving that one size definitely does not fit all when it comes to elder care.

The company's diverse team of care providers includes Certified Nursing Assistants, Companions and Homemakers, Home Health Aides, and Registered Nurses, ensuring that clients receive the appropriate level of professional care for their specific circumstances. Whether someone needs post-operative care, Alzheimer's and dementia support, or simply companionship, Whitsyms matches the right caregiver to the individual's needs.

Safety Without Compromise

One of the most compelling arguments for home-based care lies in its safety advantages. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that seniors face heightened infection risks during hospital stays, with infections contributing significantly to readmission rates. By receiving care at home, seniors minimize exposure to infectious agents while maintaining the comfort of familiar surroundings.

Studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* confirm that seniors receiving home health care experience lower hospital readmission rates compared to those in institutional settings. This reduction in medical complications

translates not only to better health outcomes but also to reduced healthcare costs and emotional stress for families.

Preserving Independence and Dignity

Aging in place allows seniors to maintain their routines, relationships, and sense of autonomy. The National Institute on Aging emphasizes that home-based care positively impacts emotional well-being, social engagement, and overall life satisfaction. Whitsyms recognizes this, offering services that support independence rather than replacing it.

Their comprehensive service menu includes specialized programs like Alzheimer's and dementia care, which requires particular sensitivity to maintaining dignity while ensuring safety. Live-in and 24-hour care options provide peace of mind for families while allowing seniors to remain in their cherished homes.

Supporting the Entire Family

Whitsyms In Home Care understands that aging in place affects the entire family system. Their respite care services provide essential breaks for family caregivers, while their Client Care Liaisons, led by professionals like David Ruiz, serve as dedicated points of contact throughout the care journey. This support network alleviates the physical, emotional, and financial burdens often associated with caregiving responsibilities.

The Family Caregiver Alliance notes that professional home health services don't just assist with caregiving tasks—they provide educational resources, counseling, and support programs that enable family members to maintain their own health and well-being while caring for their loved ones.

A Pathway Forward

As healthcare evolves and the senior population grows, aging in place represents more than preference—it's become a practical necessity. Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty offers specialized programs including Veterans' Aid & Attendance support and even Workers' Compensation services, demonstrating their commitment to serving diverse community needs.

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Mold Toxicity and Mycotoxins

Understanding the Dangers and Implications

By Scott Briggs - American Mold Experts of SWFL, LLC

Mold toxicity and mycotoxins pose significant health risks to individuals exposed to indoor mold contamination. Mold is a fungus that thrives in damp and humid environments, and when certain molds produce toxic substances called mycotoxins, serious adverse health effects can occur. Understanding these dangers and their implications is crucial for maintaining a safe indoor environment.

Origins and Risk Factors

Mycotoxins are secondary metabolites produced by certain molds as a defense mechanism. Environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, and nutrient availability trigger mycotoxin production. Moisture-rich environments, water damage, and poor ventilation create ideal conditions for mold growth and mycotoxin production.

Common indoor molds capable of producing mycotoxins include species of *Aspergillus*, *Cladosporium*, *Penicillium*, *Chaetomium*, *Fusarium*, and *Stachybotrys* (commonly known as black mold). These fungi can establish colonies within 24-48 hours of constant moisture exposure.

While not all molds are toxic, certain vulnerable populations face heightened risks. Infants, elderly individuals, and those with compromised immune systems or autoimmune disorders are particularly susceptible to severe symptoms. However, prolonged exposure increases sensitivity even in healthy individuals.

Health Effects and Symptoms

Exposure to mold and mycotoxins occurs through inhalation, ingestion, or dermal contact. Symptoms range from mild to severe, depending on individual sensitivity and exposure duration. Common respiratory effects include coughing, wheezing, throat irritation, and cold-like symptoms.

Additional symptoms may encompass allergies, sinus congestion, headaches, fatigue, skin rashes, and gastrointestinal issues. Prolonged exposure to elevated mycotoxin levels can lead to serious health conditions, including neurological disorders, brain fog, immune system dysfunction, and in certain cases, cancer.

Prevention Strategies

Preventing mold growth and mycotoxin exposure requires comprehensive moisture control. Address water leaks and damage immediately, removing saturated cellulose materials. Maintain indoor humidity below 60% using proper ventilation and dehumidifiers in prone areas.

Regular mold inspections and testing help identify growth early. Professional remediation services ensure proper removal when mold is detected. HVAC systems require quarterly maintenance, including condensation lines, evaporator coils, and proper ventilation to prevent mold growth.

Enhance indoor air quality through good airflow, proper ventilation, air purifiers, and regular filter replacement using MERV 10 or higher ratings.

Clean mold-prone areas regularly with non-toxic, mold-neutralizing products, avoiding chemicals that intensify mycotoxin release.

When conducting mold removal activities, wear protective clothing, gloves, and full-face masks with chemical filters to minimize exposure to spores and airborne particulates.

Mold toxicity and mycotoxins present serious health risks requiring proactive prevention. Through moisture control, routine inspections, proper maintenance, and protective measures, individuals can minimize exposure risks and create safer indoor environments.

Traditional spot treatments often fail to address both mold and mycotoxins adequately. Once colonies establish and release mycotoxins, comprehensive whole-home remediation may be necessary to eliminate biological contamination and protect occupant health effectively.



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Revolutionizing Bone Health: The Cutting-Edge REMS Echolight Assessment

By Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

In the evolving landscape of preventive health-care, bone health assessment has taken a quantum leap forward with REMS Echolight Technology. This revolutionary diagnostic tool is transforming how medical professionals evaluate, monitor, and treat bone conditions by providing comprehensive insights into both bone density and fragility—a dual approach that sets it apart from conventional methods.

Beyond Traditional Bone Density Scans

For decades, healthcare providers have relied primarily on DXA (Dual-energy X-ray Absorptiometry) scans to measure bone mineral density (BMD). While valuable, these scans tell only part of the story. REMS (Radiofrequency Echographic Multi Spectrometry) Echolight technology represents a paradigm shift by measuring not just how dense bones are, but also how fragile they might be—a critical factor in predicting fracture risk.

"The distinction is crucial," explains Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk. "Two patients can have identical bone density measurements but vastly different fracture risks due to variations in bone microarchitecture and quality. REMS Echolight captures these nuances."

How REMS Echolight Works

This non-invasive technology utilizes ultrasound waves that pass harmlessly through bone tissue. Unlike traditional methods that use ionizing radiation, REMS Echolight is radiation-free, making it suitable for regular monitoring without exposure concerns.

The system analyzes the returned ultrasound signals using sophisticated algorithms to create detailed maps of bone structure. These maps reveal critical information about bone mineral density, elasticity, strength, and microstructural organization—all factors that contribute to fracture risk assessment.

The entire procedure takes only 5-10 minutes and provides immediate results, enabling on-the-spot consultation.

Clinical Applications and Benefits

REMS Echolight technology has proven particularly valuable for early detection, identifying subtle changes in bone quality before significant density loss

occurs. By measuring both density and fragility, it provides a more complete picture of fracture risk than traditional assessments.

The technology also excels in monitoring treatment effectiveness, allowing clinicians to track how bones respond to medications, dietary changes, or exercise regimens in real-time. Its portable nature means this advanced technology can be deployed in various clinical settings, from major medical centers to community clinics.

The Future of Bone Health Management

With osteoporosis affecting approximately 200 million people worldwide and osteopenia affecting millions more, precise diagnostic tools are essential. REMS Echolight technology represents a significant advancement in addressing this growing public health concern.

"We're moving toward a more personalized approach to bone health," notes Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk. "REMS Echolight gives us the detailed insights needed to tailor treatment plans to each patient's specific bone composition and risk factors."

As healthcare continues its shift toward preventive strategies, technologies that can identify potential problems before they manifest as clinical symptoms become increasingly valuable. For patients concerned about bone health—particularly those with risk factors such as family history, certain medications, or hormonal changes—REMS Echolight offers peace of mind through precise, radiation-free assessment.

This technology represents not just an improvement on existing methods, but a fundamentally different approach to understanding and preserving bone health throughout life.

The Strength Lab Plus Promise

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

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

Functional and Integrative Medicine with Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

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

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

Services include:

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

Why Choose Us?

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

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HURRICANE PREPARATION GUIDE: 2025 HURRICANE SEASON

Ensuring your safety during hurricane season is a lot like taking care of your health. Regular checkups, including exams, screenings, and immunizations, can help prevent or detect health issues early, when treatment is most effective.

The same principle applies to preparing for hurricane season, which ends November 30, 2025. Whatever the weather brings, preparation remains key when it comes to your health and medical needs.

First things first:

Know the locations of special care shelters

Larry Antonucci, M.D., MBA and President & CEO of Lee Health, says a key component of preparing for hurricane season is determining if you or a loved one will need access to a special care shelter.

"Lee Health hospitals and facilities are not hurricane shelters," Dr. Antonucci says. "If you or a loved one requires assistance that exceeds services provided at a general population shelter, you must preregister with Lee County Emergency Management."

The Special Needs program is free for Lee County residents. The program provides shelter for people who live in a home and/or area exposed to storm surges or wind and for people who lack other places of safe shelter. The service also includes transportation to a shelter for anyone in need.

Medical supplies, prescriptions, and other essentials

If you rely on medical equipment, write down key details - such as the size, manufacturer, and your account and company information, Dr. Antonucci advises.



"Make sure you stock up on batteries, especially if your equipment requires specialty types that may take time to order. Also, take inventory of other medical supplies you may need, like catheters, dressings or items related to dietary restrictions, to ensure you have enough on hand.

"Ahead of a storm, be sure you have refills of your prescription medications and other essential medical supplies, like oxygen," Dr. Antonucci says. "Florida law allows pharmacies to fill prescriptions in advance during hurricane warnings.

"Think ahead, too," Dr. Antonucci adds, "about preserving refrigerated drugs, like insulin, in case the power goes out - be sure you have enough ice to keep them cool for several days. If you have questions about your drug's safety following a storm and power outage, you can contact poison control for assistance."

He cautions that if you use a generator, follow all safety guidelines.

"Unfortunately, improper generator use is one of the leading causes of injury and death after a storm," he notes. "Always operate generators outdoors and away from windows."

Lee Health Emergency Management Hub can help you prepare

Lee Health's Emergency Management Hub helps you stay informed so you can prepare in the event of any disaster, including hurricanes.

You'll find information and checklists on what to do before, during, and after a natural disaster or public health emergency.

- Hurricane Preparedness Resources and Helpful Links
- Food and Water Supplies
- Emergency Action Plan
- Emergency Updates

2025 Hurricane Season:

Lee Health Is 'StormReady' for you

Of course, we can't predict the future, but whatever this hurricane season brings, Lee Health's StormReady program is ready to help.

The program helps arm our communities with the communication and safety skills needed to save lives and property before, during and after an event, according to Tashawna Gaines, Emergency Preparedness Manager for Lee Health.

"Our StormReady program addresses the heightened risk of extreme weather and water-related events in our region," Tashawna says. "All Lee Health hospitals are certified as 'StormReady' by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. That means Lee Health has met a rigorous set of federal standards that help educate and prepare our communities on how to stay safe in a severe weather event."



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The Surprising Connection Between Alzheimer's and Cholesterol

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

September is National Cholesterol Education Month and at Senior Care Authority we are especially interested in cholesterol because of its emerging connection to Alzheimer's. In the health and wellness world, cholesterol has long been a topic of concern due to its association with cardiovascular diseases. However, recent research has unveiled a fascinating and complex connection between cholesterol and another formidable adversary: Alzheimer's disease. Because of our ongoing work providing support to our clients who have a loved one with Alzheimer's or who have Alzheimer's themselves, we want you to be aware of the intricate interplay between cholesterol and Alzheimer's. We will highlight findings from peer-reviewed research and offer valuable tips on how lowering your cholesterol may reap cognitive benefits.

Cholesterol and Brain Health: Beyond the Stereotype

Cholesterol is often unfairly vilified as a health villain, but it serves essential functions in the body. Beyond its role in maintaining cell membranes and hormone production, cholesterol plays a critical role in brain health. Nerve cells in the brain require cholesterol to build and maintain their cell membranes, ensuring efficient communication between neurons. Furthermore, cholesterol is vital for the formation of synapses, the microscopic connections that facilitate neural signaling. Cholesterol is also involved in the function of neurotransmitter receptors in the cell membrane. These receptors are essential for receiving and processing neurotransmitter signals, which play a critical role in various brain functions, including mood regulation and cognition.

The Amyloid Beta Puzzle

A hallmark of Alzheimer's disease is the accumulation of amyloid beta plaques in the brain, contributing to neurodegeneration and cognitive decline. Emerging research suggests that cholesterol metabolism may influence the production and clearance of amyloid beta. A study published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* (doi: 10.3233/JAD-170838) indicates that cholesterol

levels impact the activity of enzymes involved in amyloid beta production. High levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, commonly referred to as "bad" cholesterol, could potentially exacerbate the buildup of amyloid beta plaques, a pivotal step in Alzheimer's progression.

The Blood-Brain Barrier and Beyond

The blood-brain barrier is a protective shield that regulates the passage of molecules from the bloodstream into the brain. Cholesterol plays a crucial role in maintaining the integrity of this barrier. However, disruptions in the blood-brain barrier have been implicated in neurodegenerative processes, including Alzheimer's disease. Elevated cholesterol levels may compromise the blood-brain barrier, permitting harmful molecules to enter the brain and trigger inflammation and neuronal damage.

The APOE Gene Connection

The apolipoprotein E (APOE) gene, which influences cholesterol transport and metabolism, has gained significant attention in Alzheimer's research. Notably, the APOE ε4 allele is associated with a heightened risk of Alzheimer's disease. A peer-reviewed study published in *JAMA Neurology* (doi:10.1001/jamaneurol.2013.607) found that individuals carrying the APOE ε4 allele exhibited higher cholesterol levels and an increased susceptibility to Alzheimer's. This gene variant not only influences cholesterol but also affects the metabolism of amyloid beta, contributing to disease progression.

Strategies to Lower Cholesterol for Cognitive Well-Being

The evolving understanding of the cholesterol-Alzheimer's link highlights the importance of managing cholesterol levels for potential cognitive benefits. We know you have heard a lot of this before, but remember, your goal is to have healthy levels of cholesterol to improve your cognitive function. Here are practical tips to help lower cholesterol:

- **Healthy Diet:** Adopt a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Reduce saturated and trans fats, often found in fried and processed foods.

- **Physical Activity:** Engage in regular aerobic exercises such as walking, jogging, swimming, or cycling. Exercise helps increase high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol ("good" cholesterol) and supports overall cardiovascular health.

- **Quit Smoking:** Smoking is detrimental to both cardiovascular health and brain function. Quitting smoking can improve cholesterol levels and promote overall well-being.

- **Medication Management:** In some cases, lifestyle modifications may not be sufficient to lower cholesterol. Consult a healthcare professional to determine if cholesterol-lowering medications, such as statins, are appropriate.

The intricate connection between cholesterol and Alzheimer's disease reveals a multifaceted relationship that extends beyond cardiovascular health. While ongoing research strives to unveil the exact mechanisms at play, there is growing evidence suggesting that managing cholesterol levels has cognitive benefits.

If you or someone you know are interested in learning more about Alzheimer's or how to prepare for the future care of someone with Alzheimer's, we are here to help. Our advisors have supported our own loved ones with Alzheimer's or dementia and we know how hard it is. Planning as early as possible is as critical as keeping cholesterol levels in optimal ranges. We can be your trusted Alzheimer's resource. (239) 330-2133 or info@scanyfl.com.



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

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

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

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

Five critical sets of questions to ask:

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

Do not be afraid to ask these questions!

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

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



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Are You Practicing Mindful Wealth?

Courtesy of Nina Azwoir, First Vice President, Investments

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

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

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

Are You Allocating Your Time and Money with Your Intentions?

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

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

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

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

What Expenditures Bring You Happiness?

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

How Are You Allocating Your Precious Resources?

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

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

What Is Your Definition of "Enough"?

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

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

What Do You Want Your Legacy to Be?

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

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

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

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Hope and Optimism

By Pastor Timothy L. Neptune

Hope is confidence in God...not wishful thinking. To have hope is to trust in God to meet our needs...even in the midst of difficult times. When we do go through tough times our confidence in God can get a little rattled, as the Old Testament figure Job experienced. In the midst of his pain and heartache he cried out, "Where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me?" (Job. 17:15)

Ultimately, hope comes from God. The Scriptures say, "May the God of hope fill you all with joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13) Hope is an essential element of the Christian's life. In 1 Corinthians 13 the Apostle Paul included hope as one of the top three qualities of a person's life: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13)

As followers of Christ, we are called to be dispensers of hope. We should exude a confidence and trust in God that demonstrates that we have hope. Yet I pose the question, "Can a person be filled with hope without being filled with optimism?" According to the encyclopedia, optimism is "to anticipate the best possible outcome." Can we demonstrate hope in God without anticipating the best possible outcomes of the situations we face?

I believe we can. In fact, I think hope is best exemplified when it is demonstrated in the face of negative circumstances. There are many times when hope and optimism go hand in hand. David had both when he faced Goliath. He had confidence in God and he expected the best possible outcomes...Goliath's defeat and an Israelite victory over the Philistines. And yet, there are many examples of people who had hope in God but did not anticipate the best possible outcomes.

Simon Peter is a good example. He and the disciples had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. They had worked so hard and yet still had nothing to show for their labors. And then Jesus tells them to cast out the net one more time. Simon did not expect to catch any fish. He was pessimistic. But, he had confidence in Jesus, so he cast the net. Though the circumstances did not look promising, his hope in God made up for his lack of optimism.

Esther is another good example. She had confidence that God would ultimately provide deliverance for the Jews but as she prepared to go before the King she said, "...I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:16) She demonstrated hope but not necessarily optimism.

The point is this: hope and optimism are not the same thing. You can still be hopeful even if you are not optimistic. You can still be a dispenser of hope even if you think you are going to face hard times ahead because you know that God will meet your needs.

Jesus didn't sound very optimistic when he said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (a rather pessimistic view); but be of good cheer (maintain your hope), I have overcome the world (which is the basis of our hope)." (John 16:33)

Hope doesn't mean that the best possible situations will always occur, but it does mean that in some way God will bring something good or useful out of the situation. As we look into the future, we may not always be filled with optimism, but we must always be filled with hope...God is still in control!



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

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