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Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

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AGING**

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**THE EUROPEAN
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“Angel Hands”:

Margaret’s Story of Trust and Transformation with Dr. Hetienne Macedo

When Margaret Rasa first walked into Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry, she was in severe pain and filled with anxiety. Years of dental fear had kept her away from the chair, compounding her oral health issues and leading to infections that required complex restorative work. But that all changed the day she met Dr. Hetienne Macedo.

“I call her my angel hands,” Margaret says with a smile. “She’s the most extraordinary dentist I’ve ever met—gentle, compassionate, and truly gifted at what she does. I can honestly say I can’t wait to see her.”

A Painful Emergency Turns into a Lifelong Connection

Margaret, a seasonal resident who spends seven months a year in Naples, first found Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry online when she was desperate for emergency dental care. She was experiencing extreme sensitivity in her upper teeth and couldn’t find relief. The team immediately accommodated her situation.

“The receptionist was so kind and understanding,” Margaret recalls. “From the moment I walked in, I felt taken care of. The office is beautiful, and everyone there has the most incredible bedside manner.”

During her first visit, Dr. Macedo ordered a 3D CT scan, which revealed an infection on a previously treated root canal that had failed. The infection had spread, explaining Margaret’s severe discomfort.

“Dr. Macedo was so thorough in explaining everything,” Margaret says. “She told me what was happening in simple terms, showed me the scan, and gave me several treatment options based on my needs and my budget. No dentist had ever taken that kind of time with me before.”

A Gentle Touch and Advanced Skill

That first appointment lasted nearly five hours. Dr. Macedo treated the infection, performed an extraction, retreated another root canal, and placed a temporary bridge—all while ensuring Margaret remained completely comfortable. A dental implant was placed later to restore the missing tooth.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Margaret says. “I never even felt when she extracted the tooth or placed the bridge. She and her assistant checked on me constantly. They worked so smoothly together—it felt like being in the hands of miracle workers.”



Dr. Macedo’s precision and gentle technique come from years of advanced training. Originally from Brazil, she was a licensed endodontist—a dental specialist focused on root canal treatments

and the management of dental infections. In the United States, she practices as a general dentist, but her expertise in endodontics allows her to handle even the most complex restorative cases with exceptional skill and confidence.

“Endodontic infections can be quite serious,” explains Dr. Macedo. “Bacteria can travel beyond the tooth’s root, leading to abscesses or bone loss. Treating them properly means eliminating the infection, preserving as much healthy structure as possible, and restoring function and comfort. My goal is always to relieve pain and rebuild confidence.”

Overcoming Dental Anxiety Through Compassion

For Margaret, this was the first time in her life that a dental experience felt comfortable and positive. She describes Dr. Macedo not only as a talented clinician but also as an extraordinary person.

“She doesn’t just talk to me about my teeth—she asks about my family, my life, how I’m feeling. She’s loving, caring, and so professional. I used to be terrified of dental visits, but with her, I’m completely relaxed.”

That sense of comfort extended throughout the entire Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry team. Margaret especially praises Victoria, her hygienist, who performed a therapeutic cleaning after years of neglect caused by dental fear.

“Victoria was so gentle,” Margaret says. “I needed a deep cleaning, and she managed to do it without a bit of pain. I left feeling like I had a fresh start.”

State-of-the-Art Care with a Personal Touch

Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry is known for combining modern technology with a family-centered approach. Their state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment, including digital radiography and cone-beam CT imaging, allows for highly accurate treatment planning and early detection of issues such as decay, infection, and bone loss.

But for Margaret, it’s the human connection that truly stands out.

“Technology is wonderful, but it’s the people who make the difference,” she says. “Dr. Macedo and her team are compassionate professionals who put patients first. They focus on your well-being, your comfort, and your confidence. That’s what sets Park Dental apart.”

Looking Ahead

Margaret’s dental journey is ongoing—she is currently in the process of completing full upper restorations under Dr. Macedo’s care. But what was once a source of fear has now become an experience she looks forward to.

“I tell everyone I meet about Park Dental,” she says. “If you’ve ever been afraid to go to the dentist, this is where you need to be. Dr. Macedo changed my outlook on dental care completely. She’s an exceptional dentist and an exceptional human being.”

For Dr. Macedo, stories like Margaret’s are why she practices dentistry. “Every patient deserves to feel safe and cared for,” she says. “Helping someone overcome their fear, restore their health, and smile again—that’s the most rewarding part of my job.”

About Dr. Hetienne Macedo

Originally from Brazil, Dr. Hetienne Macedo brings over 15 years of experience as a practice owner and an extensive background in endodontics, having personally performed more than 1,000 root canal treatments throughout her career. After relocating to the United States, she earned her Advanced Education in General Dentistry from the University of Rochester, where she received the prestigious Gerald N. Graser Award for clinical excellence. Fluent in English, Portuguese, and Spanish, Dr. Macedo is known for her precision, compassion, and ability to help patients feel at ease.



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BEYOND TRADITIONAL BREAST CANCER SCREENING:

Exploring Additional Options for Women's Health

Breast cancer remains a significant concern for women's health, with millions of individuals affected by this disease worldwide. While traditional screening methods, such as mammography, play a crucial role in early detection, recent research suggests that they may not be sufficient for specific populations. As we strive to raise awareness about breast cancer screening, it's essential to explore additional options that can provide comprehensive care and improve outcomes for all women.

Organizations like the United States Preventive Services Task Force recommend breast cancer screening to start with annual or biennial mammograms for women aged 50 to 74. Mammography is a valuable tool for detecting breast cancer in its early stages, allowing for timely intervention and improved prognosis. However, studies have shown that mammography may not be as effective in detecting cancer in specific populations, including women with dense breast tissue or those at high risk due to family history or genetic factors.

One of the limitations of mammography is its reduced sensitivity in women with dense breast tissue. Dense breast tissue appears white on mammograms, making it challenging to distinguish between normal breast tissue and potential tumors, which also appear white. As a result, cancers may be missed or detected at later stages in women with dense breasts. According to the *American Cancer Society*, women with dense breast tissue have a slightly higher risk of breast cancer compared to women with less dense breasts, and additional screening methods may be necessary to improve detection rates.

The USPSTF recommended screening guidelines may not adequately address the needs of women at high risk of breast cancer due to family history or genetic predisposition. While mammography is still recommended for these individuals, additional screening modalities, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and ultrasound, may be recommended in some instances. MRI is beneficial for detecting breast cancer in women with a known genetic mutation, such as BRCA1 or BRCA2, who are at significantly higher risk of developing the disease.



Recent research published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* highlights the importance of personalized breast cancer screening strategies tailored to individual risk factors and breast density. The USPSTF Evidence Report and Systematic Review on Screening for Breast Cancer emphasizes the need for healthcare providers to consider alternative screening methods for women who may not benefit fully from mammography alone. By incorporating additional screening modalities, such as MRI or ultrasound, clinicians can improve detection rates and provide more comprehensive care for women at increased risk of breast cancer.

Women must advocate for their health and discuss their risk factors with their healthcare providers. By engaging in shared decision-making and exploring additional screening options, women can take proactive steps to detect breast cancer early and improve their chances of successful treatment. While mammography remains a cornerstone of breast cancer screening, it's essential to recognize its limitations and explore complementary screening methods that can provide a more comprehensive assessment of breast health.

As we strive to improve outcomes for all women, exploring additional screening options that can complement mammography and provide a more comprehensive assessment of breast health is essential. By advocating for personalized screening strategies and engaging in proactive discussions with healthcare providers, women can take control of their breast cancer risk and improve their overall health and well-being.

Reference:

United States Preventive Services Task Force. (Online First). Screening for Breast Cancer; US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. JAMA. doi:10.1001/jama.2023.18828

YOUR JOURNEY TO BREAST HEALTH

Magnolia Breast Center's commitment to excellence extends from early detection through treatment and into survivorship. Their comprehensive approach addresses both the physical and emotional aspects of breast cancer care, ensuring patients receive support at every stage.

What sets Magnolia Breast Center apart is their personalized treatment plans designed to achieve optimal results for each patient. The center utilizes advanced diagnostic technologies to determine the severity of conditions and develop targeted interventions. Their multidisciplinary team approach ensures that patients benefit from collaborative expertise across specialties. For women concerned about breast cancer risk, the center offers educational resources on risk reduction strategies and early detection methods.

The center's survivorship programs are particularly noteworthy, focusing on long-term wellness and quality of life after treatment. Patients benefit from ongoing support that addresses physical recovery, emotional well-being, and lifestyle adjustments. Magnolia Breast Center's dedication to breast health education extends beyond their patients to the broader community through outreach programs designed to increase awareness and promote early detection.

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



(Left to Right) Dr. Sharla Gayle Patterson, MD, MBA, Dr. Steven J. Leibach, MD, Dr. Tam T. Mai, MD, FACS, FSSO, Dr. David T. Rock, MD, FACS, Dr. Elizabeth Arguelles, MD, FACS



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BRACHIOPLASTY: Achieving Beautifully Contoured Arms at Naples Aesthetic Institute

For many individuals, the upper arms can be a source of frustration and self-consciousness. Despite dedicated efforts at the gym and maintaining a healthy diet, stubborn fat deposits and loose, sagging skin on the arms often refuse to budge. This common concern affects people of all ages, though it becomes increasingly prevalent following significant weight loss or as part of the natural aging process. The excess tissue can make it difficult to find clothing that fits comfortably and may cause individuals to avoid sleeveless tops or swimwear altogether. At Naples Aesthetic Institute, our skilled surgeon understands these challenges deeply and offer brachioplasty, commonly known as an arm lift, as a transformative solution for patients seeking sleeker, more youthful-looking arms that restore both comfort and confidence.

Understanding the Brachioplasty Procedure

Brachioplasty is a surgical procedure designed to reshape and contour the upper arm by removing excess skin and fat tissue. The procedure targets the area between the underarm and the elbow, addressing the drooping or bat wing appearance that many patients find troublesome. This excess tissue develops for various reasons, including genetics, aging, and fluctuations in body weight. During the consultation at Naples Aesthetic Institute, our board-certified surgeon carefully evaluates each patient's unique anatomy, skin elasticity, and aesthetic goals to develop a personalized treatment plan. The surgery typically involves making an incision along the inner arm, through which excess tissue is removed and the remaining skin is tightened and smoothed for a more toned appearance. In some cases, liposuction may be combined with brachioplasty to achieve optimal contouring results and create the sleek arm profile patients desire.

Ideal Candidates for Arm Lift Surgery

The best candidates for brachioplasty are individuals who have maintained a stable weight and are bothered by excess skin and fat on their upper arms that does not respond to diet or exercise. This procedure is particularly beneficial for patients who have experienced significant weight loss, as dramatic changes in body weight often leave behind loose, hanging skin that cannot be improved through fitness alone. Candidates should be non-smokers or willing to quit smoking well in advance of surgery, as



tobacco use can significantly impair healing and increase the risk of complications. During your consultation at Naples Aesthetic Institute, our team will conduct a thorough assessment to ensure brachioplasty is the right choice for your body and goals.

Recovery and Results

Following brachioplasty at Naples Aesthetic Institute, patients can expect some swelling, bruising, and discomfort, which are normal parts of the healing process. Our surgical team provides detailed post-operative instructions and remains available to address any questions or concerns that may arise during recovery. Most patients return to light daily activities within one to two weeks, though strenuous exercise and heavy lifting should be avoided for approximately four to six weeks. Compression garments are typically recommended to support the healing tissues and minimize swelling during this important recovery phase. As the initial post-operative swelling subsides over the following weeks and months, patients begin to see their beautifully contoured arms take shape. The results of brachioplasty are long-lasting, especially when combined with a healthy lifestyle and stable weight maintenance. Many patients report feeling more comfortable in their clothing and excited to show off their newly sculpted arms.

Why Choose Naples Aesthetic Institute

At Naples Aesthetic Institute, patient safety and satisfaction are our highest priorities. Our experienced surgeon combine artistic vision with technical precision

to deliver natural-looking results that enhance your confidence and quality of life. We take pride in creating a welcoming, supportive environment where patients feel comfortable discussing their concerns and aesthetic aspirations. From your initial consultation through your complete recovery, our compassionate team provides personalized care and support at every step of your journey. We utilize the latest surgical techniques to minimize scarring and optimize outcomes, ensuring you achieve the sleek, toned arms you desire. If sagging upper arms have been holding you back from feeling your best, contact Naples Aesthetic Institute today to schedule your private consultation and discover how brachioplasty can help you embrace a more confident you.

Call 239-596-8000 Today!



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Common Respiratory Conditions & When to See Your Doctor

By Manrique Iriarte, MD, FACP, Internal Medicine Physician at Millennium Physician Group

Respiratory conditions are among the most common health problems in the United States, affecting millions of people each year. Some are mild and manageable, while others can be life-threatening if ignored. As a physician, I often remind my patients that even healthy people can develop serious breathing issues. Recognizing the signs early and seeking medical attention can make all the difference.

Let's walk through some of the most common respiratory conditions, from mild to severe, and talk about when it's time to see your doctor.

Asthma

Asthma is a chronic disease that causes inflammation and narrowing of the airways, making it harder to breathe. It often begins in childhood, but it can also appear later in life, especially in seniors.

Asthma symptoms include:

- Wheezing
- Persistent coughing
- Chest tightness
- Shortness of breath

The good news is that asthma is reversible with proper treatment. If you or your child experiences frequent wheezing or shortness of breath, it's important to see your doctor to develop a personalized management plan.

Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an infection that inflames the air sacs in one or both lungs, which can fill with fluid or pus. It may be caused by bacteria, viruses, or fungi.

Symptoms range from mild to severe and include:

- Cough, sometimes producing phlegm
- Fever and chills
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain when coughing or breathing
- Fatigue

Certain groups, such as children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems, are more at risk for complications. Immunizations for pneumonia, frequent handwashing, and the flu shot can help reduce your risk.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA)

Not all respiratory conditions appear during the day. Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the airway collapses or becomes blocked during sleep, causing repeated pauses in breathing.

Signs of OSA include:

- Loud snoring
- Gasping or choking during sleep
- Daytime sleepiness or fatigue
- Morning headaches
- Dry mouth or sore throat upon waking

OSA is more common in people who are older, overweight, or have a family history of the condition. Left untreated, it can raise the risk of heart disease, diabetes, depression, and dementia.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

COPD is an umbrella term for progressive lung diseases like emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Unlike asthma, COPD is not reversible. It's most often linked to smoking, but long-term exposure to air pollution or workplace irritants can also play a role. Common symptoms of COPD include:

- Persistent cough with mucus
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness
- Fatigue

COPD can be difficult to detect, as early symptoms often mimic the natural aging process. Because COPD is a leading cause of death in the U.S., it's essential to talk to your doctor if you are concerned or notice any symptoms. Anyone with a history of smoking or chronic respiratory issues should be evaluated by their physician.

Lung Cancer

Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer deaths for both men and women in the U.S. Smoking is the top risk factor, but secondhand smoke, radon exposure, and workplace hazards like asbestos or diesel fumes can also increase risk.

Symptoms often take years to appear and may include:

- Chronic cough, sometimes with blood
- Hoarseness or voice changes
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing or harsh breathing sounds
- Chest pain
- Unexplained weight loss or fatigue

Early detection is critical, and screenings are available for people at higher risk, especially long-term smokers. If you have a history of smoking, ask your physician about whether lung cancer screening is right for you.



Pulmonary Hypertension

One of the most serious respiratory conditions is pulmonary hypertension, or high blood pressure in the lungs. This condition strains the heart and can lead to heart failure if left untreated. Symptoms include:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath with activity
- Dizziness or fainting
- Swelling in the ankles, legs, or abdomen
- Bluish lips or fingertips

Because symptoms may develop slowly, many people don't realize they have pulmonary hypertension until it has progressed. If you experience unexplained shortness of breath or chest discomfort, don't delay in seeking medical care.

When to Seek Emergency Care

Some breathing issues need immediate attention. Call 911 or have someone drive you to the nearest emergency room if you experience:

- Sudden, severe shortness of breath
- Shortness of breath with chest pain, fainting, nausea, or confusion
- Blue lips or nails
- New shortness of breath after surgery, illness, injury, or a long plane or car ride

Millennium Physician Group is Your Partner for Respiratory Health

Your lungs are vital to every aspect of your health, and any changes in your breathing deserve medical attention. At Millennium Physician Group, we work with patients to prevent, diagnose, and manage respiratory conditions with a personalized approach. Our team is here to help you breathe easier and live healthier.

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The Power of PLEXR

LIFT, SMOOTH AND REJUVENATE - WITHOUT SURGERY

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 Medical Aesthetics Group, 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.



DR. ALDENE MCKENZIE

Providing A Healthy, Happy and Confident Lifestyle for All

Kenzi Medical Aesthetics Group was inspired in 2017 with the goal for our clients to live a life well lived through optimizing their spiritual, physical, and psychosocial wellbeing. Holistic medicine considers the whole person—meaning body, mind, spirit, and emotions—in the quest for optimal health. That's also the philosophy of Dr. McKenzie, who is passionate about helping her clients look beautiful and feel empowered and confident thanks to an array of state-of-the-art aesthetic services. From Botox and dermal fillers to fat-loss treatments and medical-grade chemical peels, Dr. McKenzie will make sure that each treatment is tailored to meet her clients' beauty needs. With her caring and attentive approach towards patients, even injections turn into a pleasurable experience.

Reach out to book your complimentary consultation.



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LEARN HOW YOU CAN FIND RELIEF FROM THE DEBILITATING PAIN OF PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY WITHOUT ADDICTIVE DRUGS

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

Over 116 million people suffer from various types of chronic pain disorders, and 20 million of those individuals have peripheral neuropathy; that number is speculated to be much higher due to patients not getting a proper diagnosis. Peripheral nerves run from the spinal cord to the arms, hands, legs and feet.

UNDERSTANDING PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY
Peripheral Neuropathy is a complex condition, but nerve damage and signaling are the issue, finding the root cause is how a comprehensive plan is customized to regenerate a patients nerves, cells and tissues. Having high blood sugar levels, along with low blood oxygen supply, nutrient deficiency, high toxicity and inflammation damages the nerves throughout the body. This damage generally affects the long peripheral nerves that feed sensations to the legs, feet, and toes from the spinal cord, through communication with the brain. If your condition has progressed, you may feel nerve damage sensations in your upper extremities as well.

PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY SYMPTOMS

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Burning sensations
- Painful aching
- Joint inflammation
- Joint damage
- Balance issues
- Skin discoloration & texture changes
- Muscle cramps
- Feelings of stiffness
- Non-healing foot & ankle ulcers

STOP MASKING SYMPTOMS AND PAIN

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.

There are better alternatives to Peripheral Neuropathy that do not include addictive drugs.



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

FEEL AMAZING SPINE & JOINT 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 Biologics
- Platelet Rich Plasma
- Spinal Decompression Therapy
- Ozone Therapy
- Peptide Therapy
- Therapeutic Shockwave/Soundwave
- Natural supplementation to regenerate myelin sheath

WHAT KINDS OF EFFECTS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE NEUROPATHY TREATMENT AT FEEL AMAZING SPINE & JOINT INSTITUTE?

Clinical studies show that 88% 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. Several 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.

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We proudly serve the Naples area with comprehensive Chiropractic, 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.

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- Restless Leg Syndrome
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- Auto Accident, Whiplash Injuries

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THE LIGHT ADJUSTABLE LENS:

Give Yourself the Gift of Clear Sight

By Jon R. Berlie, M.D.

In the ever-evolving world of vision correction, the Light Adjustable Lens (LAL) stands out as a revolutionary breakthrough that promises to transform how we approach eye surgery and vision enhancement. This cutting-edge technology offers patients an unprecedented level of customization and precision in vision correction, making it truly a gift of clear sight that goes beyond traditional surgical options.

The Light Adjustable Lens represents a quantum leap in ophthalmological innovation. Unlike conventional intraocular lenses that are static once implanted, the LAL provides a unique post-surgical adjustment capability that allows for fine-tuning of vision after the initial procedure. This means patients can literally customize their vision with unprecedented accuracy, addressing vision problems in a way that was previously impossible.

How does this remarkable technology work? The LAL is made from a special photosensitive material that can be reshaped using ultraviolet light treatments after the initial implantation. During these precise light treatments, ophthalmologists can modify the lens's shape and focusing power, effectively allowing patients to "test drive" their vision and make adjustments until they achieve their optimal visual outcome.

For patients undergoing cataract surgery or those seeking vision correction, the benefits are substantial. Traditional lens implants require surgeons to select a lens power before surgery, based on pre-operative measurements. This approach, while effective, can sometimes leave patients with less-than-perfect vision. The Light Adjustable Lens eliminates this uncertainty by providing a dynamic solution that can be refined after the initial procedure.

The adjustment process is remarkably simple and patient-friendly. After the initial lens implantation, patients receive a series of light treatment sessions where the lens is precisely modified. During these sessions, patients can experience different vision configurations, allowing them to provide direct feedback about their visual clarity. This interactive approach means that the final vision correction is truly personalized to each individual's unique needs and preferences.



Moreover, the technology is particularly beneficial for patients with complex vision issues or those who have previously struggled to achieve optimal vision through standard surgical procedures. Patients with astigmatism, irregular corneal shapes, or those seeking precise vision correction for both near and distance vision can benefit tremendously from this adaptive technology.

Safety is paramount with the Light Adjustable Lens. Extensively tested and approved by regulatory agencies, the lens undergoes rigorous clinical trials to ensure its effectiveness and reliability. The photosensitive material used in the lens is designed to be biocompatible, minimizing risks associated with traditional lens implantations.

While the technology may come with a higher initial cost compared to standard intraocular lenses, many patients find the investment worthwhile. The ability to fine-tune vision post-surgery can potentially reduce or eliminate the need for corrective eyewear, offering long-term value and improved quality of life.

For those contemplating vision correction, the Light Adjustable Lens represents more than just a medical procedure—it's an opportunity to truly customize one's vision. It embodies the promise of personalized healthcare, where medical technology adapts to individual needs rather than requiring individuals to adapt to medical limitations.

This year, consider giving yourself the most precious gift of all: the gift of clear, precisely tailored vision. The Light Adjustable Lens isn't just a technological marvel—it's a pathway to seeing the world with unprecedented clarity and confidence.



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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Take Control of Your Health with BodyView Preventive MRI by Encore Imaging

In an era where healthcare costs continue to rise and medical conditions often go undetected until they become serious, preventive medicine has never been more crucial. Encore Imaging's BodyView Preventive MRI represents a revolutionary approach to health screening, offering comprehensive peace of mind in under 60 minutes through advanced, radiation-free technology.

Knowledge Is Your Greatest Health Asset

The old adage "knowledge is power" takes on profound meaning when applied to personal health. BodyView Full Body MRI empowers individuals to take charge of their wellbeing by providing detailed insights into their body's current state. This innovative screening technology transforms the traditional reactive approach to healthcare into a proactive strategy that can literally save lives.

For individuals with a family history of cancer or other hereditary conditions, the psychological burden of uncertainty can be overwhelming. BodyView MRI addresses this concern head-on, offering a simple yet comprehensive scan that can deliver worry-free results or identify potential issues while they're still manageable. The relief that comes from knowing your body is healthy – or the advantage of early detection – cannot be overstated.

Comprehensive Screening Without Compromise

What sets BodyView apart from traditional screening methods is its remarkable scope and safety profile. This radiation-free scan screens for cancer and over 500 different medical conditions across 13 vital organs, providing a full internal snapshot of your health in a single session.

The scan examines critical areas including the brain, thyroid, spine, lungs, liver, gallbladder, pancreas, spleen, kidneys, adrenal glands, bladder, and reproductive organs (ovaries, uterus, and prostate). This thorough approach means that potential health issues across multiple body systems can be identified simultaneously, eliminating the need for multiple separate screenings and reducing the overall time and cost associated with comprehensive health monitoring.



The Power of Early Detection

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of BodyView Preventive MRI is its ability to reveal hidden conditions before they become symptomatic. Many serious health conditions, including various forms of cancer, develop silently over months or years. By the time symptoms appear, treatment options may be more limited and outcomes less favorable.

BodyView MRI changes this narrative by enabling early intervention. When conditions are detected in their initial stages, treatment is typically more effective, less invasive, and often less expensive. For health-conscious individuals who understand the value of prevention, this technology represents the ultimate proactive health tool.

Safety and Convenience Combined

Unlike traditional CT scans or other imaging methods that expose patients to ionizing radiation, BodyView MRI utilizes magnetic resonance technology that is completely radiation-free. This safety advantage makes it suitable for regular health monitoring without the cumulative radiation exposure concerns associated with other screening methods.

In less than an hour, patients receive a comprehensive health screening followed by a virtual consultation with a physician to review the results in detail, which would traditionally require multiple appointments,

various specialists, and extensive testing. This efficiency makes preventive screening accessible to busy professionals and anyone who values their time while prioritizing their health.

Investing in Your Future Self

BodyView Preventive MRI represents more than just a medical screening – it's an investment in your future health and quality of life. The peace of mind that comes from comprehensive health knowledge allows individuals to plan confidently, whether that means pursuing aggressive career goals, planning family expansion, or simply enjoying life without the nagging worry about undetected health issues.

For those ready to embrace truly preventive healthcare, Encore Imaging's BodyView MRI offers an unparalleled opportunity to gain comprehensive health insights quickly, safely, and conveniently. In the world of modern medicine, this level of preventive screening allows you to be in control of managing your health and your future.

Take the first step. It's peace of mind and early detection when it matters most.

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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 Regenerative Orthopedics 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 Regenerative Orthopedics 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 Regenerative 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 Regenerative 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 Regenerative Orthopedics can provide personalized insights into whether their quarterly injection program aligns with individual health objectives and lifestyle needs. Contact Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics today at 239-829-4300 to schedule your consultation and discover how regenerative medicine can transform your path to healthy aging.

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GENICULATE ARTERY EMBOLIZATION: A Breakthrough Treatment for Knee Osteoarthritis

By Russell Becker, DO

Knee osteoarthritis affects millions of Americans, causing chronic pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility that can significantly impact quality of life. For patients who have exhausted conservative treatments but aren't ready for knee replacement surgery, the Vascular Center of Naples offers an innovative minimally invasive option: geniculate artery embolization (GAE).

Understanding Knee Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis occurs when the protective cartilage cushioning the ends of bones gradually wears down over time. In the knee, this deterioration leads to bone-on-bone contact, inflammation, and the formation of abnormal blood vessels around the joint. These new blood vessels, a process called neovascularization, contribute significantly to the chronic pain experienced by osteoarthritis patients. The vessels carry nerve fibers that transmit pain signals, creating a cycle of inflammation and discomfort that traditional treatments often struggle to address.

What Is Geniculate Artery Embolization?

Geniculate artery embolization is a cutting-edge, image-guided procedure that targets the abnormal blood vessels feeding the arthritic knee joint. During the procedure, a vascular surgeon inserts a tiny catheter through a small puncture in the wrist or groin artery. Using real-time X-ray guidance, the catheter is navigated to the geniculate arteries, which are the small blood vessels supplying the knee.

Once positioned, microscopic particles are injected through the catheter to block these abnormal vessels. By reducing blood flow to the areas of inflammation, GAE decreases the inflammatory response and interrupts pain signaling pathways. The procedure typically takes between one and two hours, and patients return home the same day.

Benefits of Geniculate Artery Embolization

The advantages of GAE make it an attractive option for many knee osteoarthritis patients. The procedure requires only a pinhole-sized incision, eliminating the need for general anesthesia, large surgical incisions, or extended hospital stays. Most patients experience minimal discomfort during and after the procedure, with many returning to normal activities within days.



Clinical studies have demonstrated impressive results, with the majority of patients reporting significant pain reduction within the first few weeks following treatment. Many patients experience sustained relief lasting a year or longer, allowing them to delay or potentially avoid knee replacement surgery altogether. Unlike steroid injections, which may lose effectiveness over time and carry risks with repeated use, GAE addresses the underlying cause of inflammation-related pain.

Ideal Candidates for the Procedure

Geniculate artery embolization is particularly well-suited for patients experiencing moderate to severe knee pain from osteoarthritis who have not found adequate relief from conservative measures such as physical therapy, anti-inflammatory medications, or joint injections. Candidates should have knee pain that significantly affects their daily activities and quality of life.

The procedure offers an excellent option for patients who wish to postpone knee replacement surgery, those who cannot undergo major surgery due to other health conditions, or individuals seeking an alternative to long-term pain medication use. During a consultation at the Vascular Center of Naples, our specialists evaluate each patient's imaging studies, medical history, and treatment goals to determine whether GAE is appropriate.

What to Expect After Treatment

Recovery from geniculate artery embolization is typically straightforward. Patients may experience mild soreness or bruising at the catheter insertion

site, which resolves within a few days. Some patients notice improvement in their knee pain immediately, while others experience gradual relief over several weeks as inflammation subsides.

Our team at the Vascular Center of Naples provides comprehensive follow-up care, monitoring each patient's progress and addressing any concerns. Most patients can resume light activities within one to two days and return to full activity within a week.

The Vascular Center of Naples Difference

At the Vascular Center of Naples, our board-certified vascular surgeon brings extensive experience in performing geniculate artery embolization and other minimally invasive vascular procedures. We utilize state-of-the-art imaging technology and maintain a patient-centered approach, ensuring each individual receives personalized care tailored to their specific needs.

If chronic knee pain from osteoarthritis is limiting your life and you're searching for alternatives to surgery, geniculate artery embolization may provide the relief you've been seeking. Contact the Vascular Center of Naples today to schedule a consultation and learn whether this innovative treatment is right for you. Our dedicated team is committed to helping you regain mobility and return to the active lifestyle you deserve.

Call us today at 239-431-5884.

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



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NEW YEAR, NEW YOU:

How to Choose the Right Primary Care Doctor

By Svetlana Kogan, MD IFMCP

December always brings reflection — on what worked, what didn't, and how we want to start the New Year. We make resolutions about our diets, our exercise, our sleep... but one area that often gets overlooked is who's guiding us through it all.

If your relationship with your primary care doctor feels rushed, impersonal, or transactional, it might be time for a change. The truth is, your doctor should be your health ally — someone who listens, understands, and helps you create lasting wellness. So, as you look toward the new year, here's what to keep in mind when choosing the right primary care doctor for you.

1. Look for Time and Attention to your needs.

We've all been there — sitting in an exam room after waiting 40 minutes, only to get 10 minutes of face time with the doctor before they rush to the next patient. It's not that they don't care; it's that they're caught in a system built on volume, not connection.

That's why the Concierge Medicine model is becoming so popular. It's a smaller, membership-based approach where doctors intentionally limit how many patients they see. That means longer appointments, same-day or next-day access, and genuine attention. Imagine being able to sit down and really talk about your health goals instead of just your latest symptom. That's the kind of relationship where healing happens.

2. Smaller Practice, Bigger Care

If you've ever felt like you were just another name on a chart, you'll appreciate this one: smaller is better. In large practices, you might never see the same provider twice. Information gets passed around, details get lost, and your care becomes fragmented.

A smaller practice, by contrast, feels personal. You know your doctor — and more importantly, your doctor knows you. They remember your preferences, your history, and your story. When you walk in, you're greeted like a person, not a case file.

3. Choose a Doctor Who Shares Their Cell Number

Yes, you read that right — their actual cell phone number. That's not a fantasy. You deserve to be connected to your doctor directly for anything that bothers you physically or emotionally at any given point in time.

Picture this: you wake up with a sore throat or have a question about your new medication. Instead of waiting on hold or navigating a phone tree, you can text your doctor directly or just call her cell phone. That kind of accessibility gives you peace of mind — especially during the busy, unpredictable holiday season. It's about trust. When your doctor gives you that level of access, it says: You matter. I'm here for you.

4. Skip the Middleman

Ever leave a message for your doctor and wonder if it actually got through? Or worse, do you get an answer that doesn't sound quite right, as if it was filtered through three people first? That's the "middleman problem" in modern medicine.

The more layers between you and your doctor, the more likely something gets lost — tone, context, even important medical details. Choose a practice where you can speak directly to your physician. It saves time, prevents miscommunication, and builds real trust.

5. Look for a Doctor Trained in Both Conventional and Functional Medicine

Here's where you can really elevate your care. A doctor who's trained in both conventional and functional medicine brings the best of both worlds:

Conventional medicine is excellent for accurate diagnosis, evidence-based treatment, and management of acute issues, while Functional medicine is perfect for understanding why something is happening in the first place — and how nutrition, stress, sleep, and environment all play a role. It's a holistic, science-backed approach that doesn't just patch problems — it helps you thrive. As we move into a new year, the doctor who is trained and certified in both kinds of medicine, can help you stay ahead of your health, not just react to it.



6. Functional "Detective":

For those living with chronic illness, the right doctor isn't just a clinician — they're a detective. You want someone willing to dive into the thick file of past tests, treatments, and unanswered questions, looking for the patterns everyone else missed. A great physician connects the dots, uncovers root causes, and crafts an innovative, personalized functional care plan. Healing is rarely linear, so follow-ups and adjustments are key — fine-tuning what works and letting go of what doesn't.

So, as you look ahead to the New Year, take your time and do your homework. Look for the smallest practice with direct access to the doctor and no middlemen. Look for a doctor with many years of experience. Choose someone who is trained and certified as both medical and Functional doctor. Your health is your most valuable asset — and finding the right doctor is the first step toward protecting it.



Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

The author of 'Diet Slove 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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THE LIFE-SAVING POWER OF REGULAR SKIN CANCER SCREENINGS: WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

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

Understanding Skin Cancer and Melanoma

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

The Power of Early Detection

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

Recognizing the Warning Signs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Screening Process

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

Who Should Get Screened and How Often?

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

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

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

Beyond Professional Screenings: The Importance of Self-Checks

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

Prevention: Your First Line of Defense

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

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

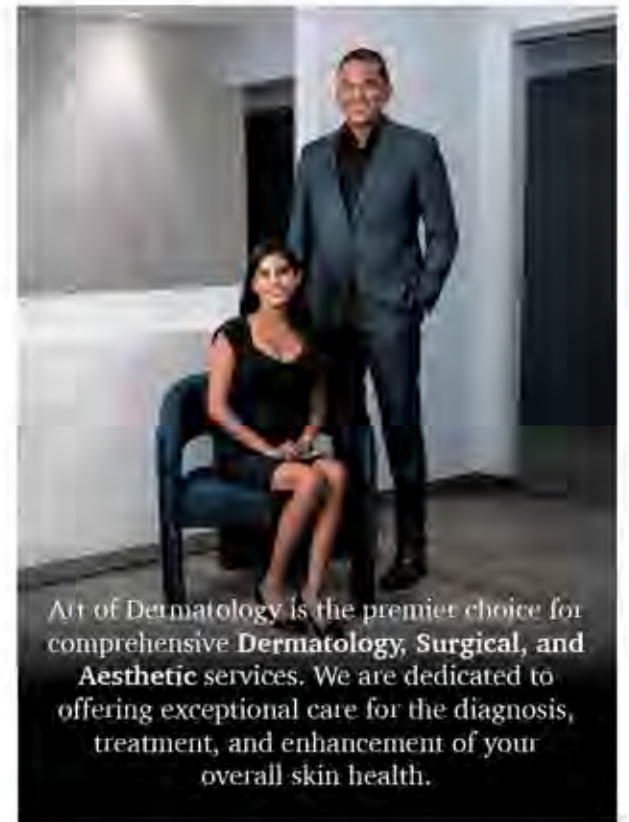
The Broader Impact of Regular Screenings

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

Conclusion: A Small Step for Significant Peace of Mind

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

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



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By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

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- NEUROPATHY
- CARPAL TUNNEL
- SPINAL STENOSIS PAIN
- ROTATOR CUFF TEARS
- MENISCAL TEARS



- ILIOTIBIAL BAND SYNDROME
- FROZEN SHOULDER
- TENNIS ELBOW
- ACHILLES TENDINITIS
- GOLFERS ELBOW
- AND MANY MORE

5) RESPIRATORY

- COPD NEBULIZER

6) RHEUMATOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

- RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS
- LUPUS
- POST COVID CONDITION

7) NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

- PARKINSON DISEASE
- POST CEREBRO VASCULAR ACCIDENT
- POST COVID

8) SEXUALITY

- MALE ED
- FEMALE CONDITIONS
- O- SHOTS
- P - SHOTS

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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. Practices in Naples, Fort Myers and Lehigh Acres, FL. His commitment to ongoing learning and patient-centered treatment makes him an invaluable partner in your health journey.

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PURPOSE, CONNECTION AND GENEROSITY SUPPORT HEALTHY AGING

The Carlisle Naples Residents Embrace Season of Giving

By Greg Pascucci

Acts of generosity may feel like a gift to others, but research consistently shows that giving back is just as beneficial for the giver, especially for older adults. Volunteerism, even in small doses, has been linked to lower stress levels, improved cognitive function and a greater sense of purpose. As people age, finding meaningful ways to stay engaged becomes an essential part of maintaining overall wellness.

Opportunities that match personal abilities, energy levels and interests can significantly enhance one's quality of life. Whether it's lending a helping hand, sharing a lifelong talent or supporting a cause close to the heart, giving back enriches both emotional and physical health.

Why Giving Back Supports Healthy Aging

The wellness advantages of volunteer engagement are well-documented. Studies highlight several key benefits:

- **Emotional well-being:** Helping others releases endorphins and reduces feelings of loneliness and isolation. Even brief acts of kindness can create a renewed sense of optimism.
- **Cognitive stimulation:** Activities such as mentoring, organizing groups, leading discussions or assisting with administrative tasks keep the mind active and engaged.
- **Physical health:** Volunteer activities, including helping in a community library or participating in donation drives, encourage movement and daily structure, both key components of healthy aging.
- **Purpose and identity:** Many retirees miss the roles that defined earlier chapters of their lives. Giving back allows individuals to reclaim a sense of usefulness that deeply supports mental well-being.

At The Carlisle Naples, an active retirement community, residents find a setting that naturally encourages involvement through meaningful opportunities. While the community offers a full

calendar of enrichment programs, it's the resident-led initiatives that truly highlight how giving back can become an extension of everyday life.

Some choose to volunteer in the community's onsite library, keeping the space organized and welcoming for neighbors. Others start or run interest groups, sharing their passions with peers and creating new connections along the way. These roles offer residents opportunities to stay active in ways that feel fulfilling and self-directed.

The spirit of philanthropy extends beyond the community's walls. Recently, The Carlisle Naples' Veterans Group organized a clothing collection benefiting Avow Hospice's retail shop, helping provide essential goods and support for local hospice programs. Residents have also led a food drive for Paws, an organization dedicated to providing highly trained service dogs to veterans and children with disabilities.

Finding Your Own Way to Give Back

You don't have to lead a large initiative to experience the wellness benefits of generosity. Seniors can start small:

- Donate gently used clothing or household items.
- Read to children at a nearby school.
- Write notes of encouragement to hospitalized patients or deployed service members.
- Share a hobby or skill with friends or neighbors.
- Offer to mentor younger adults entering your former profession.

Healthy aging is as much about emotional and social well-being as it is about physical health. When older adults find ways to contribute, they gain a sense of purpose, connection and joy. Giving back truly enriches the lives of everyone involved.



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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Understanding Bunions:

A Podiatrist's Guide to Treatment and Relief

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

Bunions, a common foot ailment, can cause discomfort and impact daily activities. As a podiatrist, I often encounter patients seeking effective ways to address this condition. Understanding bunions and exploring viable treatment options is crucial for those looking to alleviate pain and regain mobility.

Bunions, medically known as Hallux Valgus, manifest as a bony bump at the base of the big toe. They develop when the joint at the base of the big toe shifts out of place, causing the big toe to lean toward the second toe. This misalignment can lead to pain, inflammation, and difficulty finding comfortable footwear.

One primary cause of bunions is wearing ill-fitting shoes, especially those with a narrow toe box. Genetics also play a role; if bunions run in your family, you might be more prone to developing them. Additionally, conditions like arthritis and foot injuries can contribute to bunion formation.

For those experiencing bunion-related discomfort, consulting a podiatrist is crucial. A podiatrist can assess the severity of the condition and recommend appropriate treatment options. Here are some common strategies podiatrists employ to address bunions:

Footwear Modifications: Wearing shoes with a wider toe box and low heels can help reduce pressure on the affected area. Podiatrists often advise against high heels or shoes that squeeze the toes, as these can exacerbate bunion symptoms.

Orthotic Devices: Custom orthotic inserts can provide additional support and help distribute pressure more evenly across the foot. Podiatrists may recommend off-the-shelf or custom-made orthotics based on the patient's specific needs.

Padding and Taping: Applying pads or moleskin to the bunion can alleviate friction and reduce pain. Taping techniques may also be employed to help realign the big toe and relieve pressure on the bunion.



Physical Therapy: At times Physical Therapist are implemented as part of the post operative bunionectomy recovery to facilitate better range of motion in the joint. This is especially important for not all bunion surgeries are the same. Some include correction of the soft tissue, bone, or both, and the postoperative course and rehab depends on the type of surgery and exercise modification to be implemented.

Medications: Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) can help manage pain and reduce inflammation associated with bunions. However, long-term use should be monitored by a health-care professional.

Bunion Splints: Splints or braces designed to hold the big toe in a corrected position may be recommended, particularly during sleep. These devices can help slow the progression of the bunion.

Injections: In some cases, corticosteroid injections may be administered to alleviate severe pain and inflammation. This is a short-term solution and is typically used when other conservative measures are insufficient.

Surgical Intervention: When conservative treatments fail to provide relief, surgical intervention

may be considered. A podiatrist can discuss surgical options, such as bunionectomy, to realign the affected joint and alleviate pain.

It's essential for individuals with bunions to address the condition promptly to prevent worsening symptoms. Regular check-ups with a podiatrist, along with proactive measures like choosing appropriate footwear and maintaining a healthy weight, can contribute to better bunion management.

In conclusion, bunions are a common foot condition that can impact daily life, but with the guidance of a podiatrist, effective treatment options are available. Whether through conservative measures or surgical intervention, addressing bunions promptly can lead to improved comfort and mobility. If you're experiencing bunion-related discomfort, don't hesitate to seek professional advice and take steps toward better foot health.

Collier Podiatry

It's important to be evaluated by an experienced podiatric professional if you're experiencing any type of foot pain. At Collier Podiatry, Dr. Michael Petrocelli has been practicing podiatric medicine for well over 29 years. He is an expert in his field and a leader to his peers, he and his staff see a countless number of patients with bunion pain in the Naples area.

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

Please call Collier Podiatry, P.A. today if you are suffering from bunions to discuss the treatment you need to relieve the pain and correct deformities!



COLLIER PODIATRY, P.A.
Michael J. Petrocelli
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Shopping for the Best Incontinence Underwear?

There Might be a Better Solution

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

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

What is Overactive Bladder?

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

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

You may be suffering from overactive bladder if:

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

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

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

What is Axonics Therapy?

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

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

What are the benefits of Axonics Therapy?

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

Long-lasting symptom relief: Designed to provide therapy for at least 15 years, providing a long-term solution for your symptoms

Clinically proven results:

- **93%** of treated patients achieved clinically significant improvements* at 2-years³
- **94%** of patients were satisfied with their therapy³

Important Safety Information: Implantation and use of the Axonics System incurs risk beyond those normally associated with surgery, some of which may necessitate surgical intervention. Results and experiences may vary and are unique to each patient. No promise or guarantee is made about specific results or experiences. For more information about safety and potential risks, go to: www.axonics.com/si. Caution: Federal law (USA) restricts this device to sale and use by, or on the order of, a physician.
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It's time to regain control!

Take the first step towards symptom relief. Call us at 239-449-7979 to schedule your Axonics Therapy consultation today.

“ ”

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— Tricia M., Patient —


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Joseph Gault, MD

*50% or greater reduction in symptoms

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The European Liquid Facelift

The Art and Science of Facial Rejuvenation

By: Alina Stanciu, MD, FACS, FAAO, FASRS - Founder & Medical Director, Naples Eye & Aesthetics Institute and MediFace Spa



SCAN TO FOLLOW
DR. ALINA STANCIU

In the world of facial rejuvenation, surgical facelifts once stood as the only path to reverse aging. But for many patients, surgery feels too invasive, the downtime is too long, and the results are not only dramatic but can be less than the patient's expectations. Dr. Alina Stanciu, a Board-Certified Eye Physician, Surgeon, and Cosmetic Surgeon recognized the need for a gentler, more refined approach to facial rejuvenation – one that enhances your natural beauty rather than altering it with no downtime and better results.

This insight led to the creation of The European Liquid Facelift, an innovative, non-surgical procedure developed exclusively by Dr. Stanciu to lift, contour, and rejuvenate the face with precision and artistry.

A New Era in Facial Rejuvenation

Unlike traditional facelifts, which rely on incisions and skin tightening, the European Liquid Facelift uses strategic injections of advanced dermal fillers such as Sculptra, diluted Radiesse and other dermal fillers integrated into her procedures. The specialized treatments restore lost volume, redefine facial structure, and smooth fine lines while increasing collagen stimulation. This sculpting technique is Dr. Stanciu's own development and performed by her only. Her advanced techniques are designed to lift the mid face, contour the jawline, and refresh the eyes – without surgery, anesthesia, or extended recovery time. The main goal is a natural, youthful result.

What creates this unique youthful look lies in Dr. Stanciu's study of balancing your own anatomy, with carefully applied aesthetics, and artful restraint. Drawing from her medical training and decades of surgical experience, Dr. Stanciu approaches each patient's face as a unique canvas in which she masterfully and artfully improves your youthful look. "My goal is to restore the natural harmony of the face, not to change it," she explains. "Patients should look rested, youthful, and refreshed – not done, puffy, pulled or tightened."



Before

After

The Science Behind the Technique

Dr. Stanciu's method combines multi-layered filler placement with advanced techniques to achieve natural lift and contour while minimizing bruising and swelling. The procedure typically takes less than an hour, with visible results immediately after treatment and continued improvement over the following weeks.

The European Liquid Facelift is often enhanced with the anti-aging face and eye cream, Bella Piel MD, exclusively developed by Dr. Stanciu. Bio-stimulatory fillers promote collagen production for longer-lasting rejuvenation. Each treatment plan is personalized, targeting areas where aging has caused volume loss or skin & muscles laxity. The result is a youthful, sculpted appearance with no surgery required.

A Surgeon's Precision Meets an Artist's Eye

Dr. Stanciu's expertise in oculo-facial surgery provides her with unparalleled knowledge of facial anatomy, muscle structure, and tissue behavior. This background allows her to perform cosmetic procedures with the same precision she applies in delicate eye surgeries. With over 20 years of experience, she has earned a reputation for delivering results that are both scientifically advanced and aesthetically refined.

Patients often describe their results as transformative yet completely natural. "Friends tell me I look refreshed, but they can't tell what I've done," one patient shares. "That's how I know it's perfect."

Experience Matters

Practicing in Naples and Bonita Springs for two decades, Dr. Stanciu leads the Naples Eye & Aesthetics Institute and MediFace Spa, where she and her team specialize in advanced aesthetic and ophthalmologic care. Her boutique-style practice allows for individualized attention and continuity of care – every patient receives treatment directly from Dr. Stanciu herself.

She also developed Bella Piel MD, a medical-grade skincare line formulated to support anti-aging, dry eye therapy, and post-procedure healing, reflecting her holistic commitment to patient wellness and confidence. Significant results have been experienced by patients using her proprietary medical grade skincare line.

Where Medicine Meets Art

At its core, the European Liquid Facelift embodies Dr. Stanciu's philosophy: to treat every patient as she would a loved one – with precision, compassion, and artistry.

Call **239-949-2020** to schedule a consultation.



To learn more about *The European Liquid Facelift* visit www.MediFaceSpa.com or stop by her new location at:
6610 Willow Park Drive, Suite 104
Naples, FL 34109.

www.MediFaceSpa.com





What Does it Mean to Sleep Better?

TIPS TO OPTIMIZE SLEEP

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

Sleeping Better sounds like a simple set of instructions, but as we will discuss in this article, sleeping better is a far more complicated task than it seems.

From a philosophical standpoint, sleep is something that interrupts our perceived existence, as during this time we are unconscious and unable to interact with the environment, perform our duties to self and community, and to live those precious moments with our loved ones. During sleep we are vulnerable to the environment. We change our role from predator to prey. And all living things sleep in one way or another.

Even though there is still a lot to learn about sleep, we do know it is extremely important to preserve optimal brain and body functions. It is so important that we stop living our lives, and sometimes place ourselves in danger, so it can happen.

For eons, sleep has evolved with us to the way we now see it. Most of us spend roughly 1/3 of our lives sleeping. In the US, as of 2023, life expectancy is 77.5 years. This adds to roughly 25-30 years sleeping. Remarkably, we never stop to wonder what really happens in our sleep, we simply assume that sleep is the time where we rest and “recharge”.

During sleep we are unconscious, so we operate under a series of assumptions: we assume we slept X hours, we assume we slept enough or not enough, we assume we sleep well or poorly, or we may assume our sleep is good or bad. But the truth is we just don’t know, how can we “sleep better” if we can’t even see that we are sleeping poorly?

We also judge our sleep based on the assumption that sleep is a way to address fatigue and tiredness. We tend to see sleep the way we see placing a cell phone on a charger, “I sleep and I should feel restored tomorrow”. But what happens when the source of this fatigue is not sleepiness?

Unfortunately, all these assumptions often result in efforts to improve sleep that in fact lead to worse sleep than what we had going on before. We call these “maladaptive sleep behaviors”, which often herald Insomnia.

This brings us to another dilemma; how can we make sleep better if our sleep is damaged with sleep disorders such as Insomnia, sleep apnea, restless legs, circadian rhythm disorders, narcolepsy, hypersomnia, sleep disturbances due to other medical conditions, sleep disturbances due to medications, etc.

If you think you have a sleep problem, you should see your local sleep doctor. This article is not intended to help you diagnose or treat a sleep disorder, but is intended to provide with tips to optimize sleep when such disorders are not present.

I like to refer to this as Sleep Optimization. We can’t always make sleep better, but we can always optimize it. We can help you reach your best sleep. Here are some tips to do this:

1. Internal Clock Optimization:

Maintain a consistent sleep schedule, with particular attention to wake-up time, and with light exposure immediately upon awakening. This is how you set your circadian clock/rhythm. If your circadian rhythm does not match your sleep schedule, you will never have optimal sleep. Best example of a circadian-rhythm/sleep-schedule mismatch: Jet Lag.

2. Time in Bed Optimization:

We recommend a sleep schedule that is age appropriate, allows for enough time asleep, and minimizes time spent awake in bed.

Please note I am referring to time in bed, not sleep time.

Group	Recommended Time in Bed
Adults (20-35yo)	7-9 hours
Adults (over 35yo)	7-8 hours
Teenagers	8-10 hours
Younger children	More than 8-10 hours

It is important to note that sleep needs vary by individual. See a sleep doctor if you consistently feel tired after sleeping or if you spend too much time awake in bed.



3. Behavioral Optimization:

a. **Before Bed:** A sleep ritual for 1-2 hours before bed, if possible, sets the stage to sleep. Lower temperature to the sleep ideal 67F, dim lights, get ready early and focus on relaxing activities that you enjoy.

b. **At Bedtime:** Limit activities in bed to sleep and sex only. Activities like watching TV are trained behaviors (think of it as an adult version of a pacifier to sleep), that can easily be removed so that people just fall asleep in bed.

Reading can improve perceived sleep quality, but not actual sleep amount. So it is better to read than to watch TV.

c. **During Sleep Time:** If one wakes up, it may be best not to stay in bed and take a “sleep break”, like a reverse nap, where you may get up and read for 20-30 minutes at a time and then return to bed to sleep.

4. Adopt Stress Management Strategies:

Simple stress management strategies such as Gratitude Practice and Mindfulness Meditation can help reduce stress, improve sleep, restore some brain functions, reduce anxiety, among other things. Incorporating these into our wake time can often help us optimize the time we spend in bed, even when we are not actually sleeping.

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Your Brain's "Communication System" & How It Affects Mood

By Dr. Waldo Amadeo

Most people have heard that depression or anxiety comes from a "chemical imbalance." For many years, that was the leading explanation. The idea was simple: if you don't feel well, you probably don't have enough serotonin or dopamine.

But newer research shows something different AND more hopeful.

For many people, the issue isn't that the brain doesn't *have* enough chemicals. The issue is that the brain isn't *using* them properly. In other words, the chemicals are there... but the communication system is struggling.

This shift in understanding helps explain why so many people don't get better with medication alone, and why brain-based therapies are becoming a powerful option.

The Brain Is a Conversation, Not a Chemical Tank
Imagine your brain as a city filled with billions of tiny messengers (neurotransmitters) carrying information from one part to another. These messengers tell your brain how to focus, how to regulate stress, how to feel motivation, and how to feel calm.

But if the "roads" they travel on become damaged or chaotic, the messages don't reach where they need to go.

This means you can have *plenty* of serotonin, but if the pathways are stressed or inflamed, your brain still won't feel balanced.

This is why people can say:

- "I have anxiety and I don't even know why."
- "I want to feel motivated, but I can't make myself care."
- "My thoughts won't stop looping."
- "Small things feel huge."

These aren't flaws in personality, they're signs of a communication issue in the brain.

What Hurts the Brain's Communication System?

Several everyday factors can disrupt how the brain sends and receives messages:

1. Long-term stress

Stress hormones impact the parts of the brain that regulate mood, sleep, and focus. When stress becomes chronic, these pathways become "stuck" in survival mode.

2. Inflammation

Inflammation from mold exposure, poor food quality, infections, or gut issues can change how your brain responds to important chemicals like dopamine and serotonin.

3. Trauma or emotional overwhelm

Trauma doesn't just live in memories; it changes how the brain protects itself. This can make pathways hypersensitive, jumpy, or easily overloaded.

4. Sleep problems

Deep sleep is when the brain repairs and resets. Without it, the communication system becomes foggy and sluggish.

None of these problems are about "not trying hard enough." They are changes inside the brain's wiring — and wiring can be improved.

How We Support Better Communication in the Brain
The encouraging part is that the brain is remarkably adaptable. It can retrain itself when given the right stimulation.

At Heal Thyself Institute, we use several approaches that help the brain communicate more clearly and consistently.

1. Neuromodulation (ExoMind TMS)

This technology uses gentle magnetic pulses to help specific brain areas that control mood, clarity, motivation, and calmness.

It helps "wake up" underactive regions and "quiet down" overactive ones, like tuning a radio to get a clear signal instead of static.

People often report:

- improved motivation
- fewer looping thoughts
- calmer mornings
- better emotional resilience

2. Nervous System Calming (Rezzimax)

The Rezzimax uses vibration to help relax stress pathways in the brainstem and vagus nerve — the part of the body that switches you out of fight-or-flight.

This helps people who feel constantly tense, overwhelmed, or easily startled.

3. Simple sensory exercises

Gentle eye movements, balance work, or breathing exercises can create big changes because they directly affect how the brain organizes information.

4. Root-cause functional medicine

When inflammation, blood sugar swings, mold exposure, or gut issues affect the brain, we help find and address those contributors so the brain can communicate properly again.

Why This Matters for Mental Health

When people learn that their brain isn't "broken," it's just overloaded or misfiring, they feel hopeful again. Mental health symptoms become easier to understand:

- Anxiety is often a "too-loud alarm system."
- Depression is often a "low-power mode" in the brain.
- Brain fog is often a "traffic jam" in communication pathways.
- Irritability is often an "overworked stress response."

Once we know which patterns are active, we can support the brain in shifting into a healthier rhythm. The most important message is this:

Your brain can change — even in adulthood.

And when the brain changes, everything else begins to shift too.

About the Author

Dr. Waldo Amadeo is a chiropractor and functional neurology practitioner who focuses on the connection between brain function and whole-person health. His work explores how stress, inflammation, sensory processing, and nervous-system regulation influence mood, clarity, and emotional resilience.

At Heal Thyself Institute in Naples, FL, Dr. Amadeo integrates chiropractic care, neuroplasticity-based therapies, neuromodulation, and functional medicine testing to identify the root causes of imbalance within the brain and body. His approach blends structural work, sensory-motor rehabilitation, and metabolic insights to help patients strengthen their brain networks, regulate the nervous system, and improve long-term mental well-being.



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How The Good Feet Store's 3-Step Arch Support System (and Your HSA/FSA Funds) Can Help You Walk Pain-Free Into the New Year

If you've been living with that dull ache in your feet after long days—or that persistent twinge in your knees, hips, or lower back—you've probably learned to just “deal with it.” Maybe you've swapped shoes, stretched, or tried to ignore the discomfort altogether. But what if the problem isn't your shoes—or even your body? What if it's your alignment?

That's where The Good Feet Store comes in. Their 3-Step Arch Support System isn't just about comfort. It's about realignment—helping your body rediscover the posture and balance it was designed for. And here's something even better: you can use your HSA or FSA funds to invest in your health before those dollars disappear at the end of the year.

Let's break it down.

The Root of the Pain

Foot pain can be sneaky. It starts with a bit of soreness, maybe after standing all day or going for a walk. But over time, that misalignment in your feet can ripple upward, causing discomfort in your knees, hips, and even your lower back. Think of your feet as your foundation. If that foundation is uneven, everything above it starts to shift and strain.

The Good Feet Store's 3-Step System is designed to rebuild that foundation. Each set of arch supports—Relaxers, Maintainers, and Strengtheners—plays a role in helping your body find balance again. The Relaxers give you soothing comfort when you're off your feet. The Maintainers support you through everyday activity. And the Strengtheners help train your arches and muscles to stay properly aligned over time.

It's not just about temporary relief; it's about long-term correction. When your feet are properly supported, everything from your stride to your posture improves. You feel lighter. More stable. More you.

Real People. Real Relief.

One of the best parts of visiting The Good Feet Store is how personal the experience feels. You're not handed a one-size-fits-all support and sent on your way. Instead, a trained Arch Support Specialist takes you through a free fitting and test walk.



Customers often describe it as “magic,” but really, it's science meeting craftsmanship. The arch supports are precision-engineered and designed to fit the unique contours of your feet. Over time, they can help realign your entire body, reducing pain from the ground up.

Wait—You Can Use HSA or FSA Funds for This?

Yes! And this is where a lot of people are pleasantly surprised. Your Health Savings Account (HSA) or Flexible Spending Account (FSA) dollars can be used toward Good Feet Arch Supports because they qualify as a medical expense—after all, they're designed to help relieve pain and improve your health.

Here's the catch: many FSA plans expire at the end of the year. That means if you don't spend those funds, you lose them. Poof—gone. So instead of scrambling to find something eligible in December (hello, boxes of bandages and extra contact solution), consider investing in something that gives back every single day—relief.

Using your HSA/FSA funds for The Good Feet Store's arch supports is not only smart, but also strategic. You're putting your health dollars toward something that genuinely improves your quality of life.

Why Now Is the Time

There's never a bad time to start taking better care of your body, but year-end is the perfect time. As the holidays roll in, we're all on our feet more: shopping, cooking, traveling, celebrating. And with your FSA deadline approaching, there's real motivation to take that next step (literally) toward comfort.

Imagine heading into the new year with your body aligned, your pain reduced, and your posture improved—all thanks to a set of arch supports that feel like they were made just for you.

The Bottom Line

If you've been putting off addressing your foot, knee, hip, or back pain, this is your sign. The Good Feet Store's 3-Step Arch Support System can help you move through your day with less pain and more energy, and you can use your HSA or FSA funds to make it happen.

Don't let another year slip by with pain in every step. Visit your local Good Feet Store for your free fitting and test walk and see just how good it feels to step into balance again.

Your body will thank you. Your future self will thank you.

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

Supporting Safety and Specialized Lymphedema Care Across Southwest Florida

By James Ferrara, OTR/L, CLWT, and Lexie Lundquist, OTD, OTR/L, CLWT

As people experience changes in routines — whether due to travel, visitors, shifting home layouts, or fluctuations in daily activity — mobility and balance needs naturally shift as well. These transitions can impact confidence, safety, and independence within the home. Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics supports patients through these changes by delivering mobile outpatient occupational and physical therapy services directly where they live. This approach removes barriers to care, strengthens functional ability, and ensures therapy aligns with each patient's real environment and daily demands.

Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics specializes in two primary areas: fall prevention with integrated neurological rehabilitation, and evidence-based lymphedema care through Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT). By combining accessibility with clinical expertise, the team helps patients maintain independence and improve their quality of life.

Fall Prevention & Neurological Rehabilitation: Promoting Safety in the Home

Small adjustments in daily life — hosting visitors, moving furniture, increased errands, or new patterns in activity — can all impact balance, endurance, and the way a person moves through their home. As a provider of mobile outpatient OT and PT services, Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics offers practical, personalized fall-prevention therapy designed to reduce risk and enhance confidence.

Our fall-prevention services include:

- Home safety and environmental assessments
- Balance and gait retraining
- Strengthening and functional mobility programs
- Transfer training for home and community mobility
- Footwear and assistive device recommendations
- Pacing and energy-conservation strategies for busy days

Because therapy is provided in the home, recommendations are specific to the patient's personal environment—not a simulated clinic layout. This allows therapists to address real fall risks and make immediate, applicable changes to support safety.

Neurological Rehabilitation Integrated Into Fall Prevention

Many individuals navigating changes in balance may also be managing neurological or sensory conditions. Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics incorporates evidence-based neurological rehabilitation into fall-prevention plans to strengthen underlying systems related to balance, coordination, and mobility.

Our occupational and physical therapists provide specialized treatment for individuals with:

- Stroke
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple sclerosis
- Neuropathy
- Vestibular and balance disorders

Intervention focuses on neuroplasticity-based exercise, proprioceptive training, postural control, dynamic and static balance activities, and task-specific mobility work. By combining neurological rehabilitation with fall-prevention strategies, patients receive a well-rounded, functional approach to safety that supports long-term independence.

Specialized Lymphedema Management Through Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT)

In addition to fall-prevention and neurological rehabilitation, Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics provides gold-standard lymphedema treatment through Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT). Variations in routine, travel, dietary patterns, or daily activity can all influence swelling, making consistent, structured care especially important.

CDT includes:

- Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD)
- Compression bandaging
- Therapeutic exercise designed to support lymphatic flow
- Skin care and infection prevention

Each therapy plan is individualized to the patient's medical background—whether swelling is related to oncology treatment, vascular issues, surgery, or hereditary causes. By offering mobile outpatient OT and PT directly in the home, therapists can tailor education and treatment to the patient's actual lifestyle, helping them maintain comfort and stability.

Compression Garment Support, Simplified Through our DME Services

Ongoing compression is essential for maintaining CDT results, and many patients need assistance navigating garment choices, sizing, and usage. Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics provides in-home garment measuring, ordering, and training, ensuring a seamless process and improving long-term adherence.

Patients receive hands-on support with:

- Selecting appropriate day and night garments
- Donning and doffing techniques
- Assessing garment comfort and effectiveness
- Understanding wear schedules and garment care

For many individuals, the period before Medicare deductibles reset at the start of the year is an ideal time to update their compression garments—a process our therapists are fully prepared to assist with.

Clinician-Led, Patient-Focused Therapy Across Southwest Florida

Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics proudly provides mobile outpatient occupational and physical therapy to patients in Naples, Fort Myers, Bonita Springs, and Cape Coral. Co-Owners James Ferrara, OTR/L, CLWT, and Lexie Lundquist, OTD, OTR/L, CLWT, bring advanced clinical expertise and a commitment to improving accessibility for individuals who benefit most from in-home care. Their approach emphasizes education, independence, and personalized treatment, allowing patients to move more confidently and comfortably through the spaces where they live.

Helping Patients Stay Safe, Supported, and Independent

Whether the focus is preventing falls, improving neurological function, managing swelling, or strengthening mobility, Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics provides skilled therapy at home—where it is most effective and meaningful.

By offering specialized fall prevention, neurological therapy, and lymphedema management through a mobile outpatient model, the practice continues to elevate the standard of care across Southwest Florida.

We're Growing!

Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics is seeking an additional Physical Therapist (PT) to join our expanding mobile outpatient team! Referrals and inquiries are welcome.



Jim Ferrara



Lexie Lundquist

MOBILE REHAB & LYMPHATICS

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DECEMBER IS FALL PREVENTION MONTH: How Hearing Health Plays a Critical Role

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

Every December, healthcare providers across the country recognize Fall Prevention Month. Falls are the leading cause of injury among older adults, and the consequences can be life-changing—fractures, hospitalizations, and loss of independence.

Here in Naples, where active lifestyles are the norm, no one wants to miss out on golf, pickleball, tennis, or long walks on the beach because of a fall. While most people think about exercise, vision, and home safety when it comes to fall prevention, there's another factor that often gets overlooked: **hearing health.**

Yes, your ears play a major role in keeping you steady on your feet. And untreated hearing loss can significantly increase your risk of falling.

The Connection Between Hearing and Balance

So how are your ears and your balance connected? The answer lies in the close relationship between the auditory system and the vestibular system (the balance organs inside your inner ear). While the vestibular system detects motion and spatial orientation, your hearing helps you stay aware of your surroundings—subtle cues like footsteps approaching, traffic nearby, or someone calling your name.

When hearing loss occurs, those cues become harder to detect. That means your brain has fewer signals to work with, and you may not react as quickly to changes around you. Research shows that people with even mild hearing loss are nearly **three times more likely to experience a fall** than those with normal hearing.

The reasons are both physical and cognitive:

- **Cognitive load** – When your brain has to work harder to fill in the gaps in conversation, it leaves fewer resources available for balance and spatial awareness.
- **Reduced environmental awareness** – Missed sounds can mean missed warnings, like a car backing up or a golf partner's "Heads up!"
- **Shared inner ear structures** – The inner ear is responsible for both hearing and balance, so damage in one area can affect the other.

Why Falls Are So Dangerous

Falls aren't just bumps and bruises. According to the CDC, one in four adults over age 65 falls each year, and falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries in older adults. A single fall can lead to hip fractures, head trauma, and loss of mobility, often sparking a downward spiral in health.

Beyond the physical risks, falls can also lead to emotional consequences: fear of falling, reduced confidence, and withdrawal from activities. For many of my patients, this cycle of isolation looks very similar to what we see with untreated hearing loss.

Hearing Tests: A Vital Part of Fall Prevention

At Decibels Audiology, we emphasize hearing tests as a cornerstone of overall health. Just like an annual vision exam helps protect against falls by ensuring you can see clearly, a hearing test ensures you can process the sounds that keep you safe and steady.

A comprehensive hearing test allows us to:

- Identify even mild levels of hearing loss that might otherwise go unnoticed.
- Establish a baseline to monitor changes over time.
- Recommend personalized solutions—whether that's hearing technology, communication strategies, or referrals to other providers if balance issues are detected.

Many people put off a hearing test until they feel their hearing has gotten "bad enough." But when it comes to fall prevention, early detection is key. Addressing hearing loss sooner rather than later can reduce risks and keep you living an active, independent life.

Prevention Is Always Better Than Recovery

We all know that recovering from a fall takes time, energy, and often rehabilitation. Prevention, on the other hand, is simple. This December, as we observe Fall Prevention Month, think about the steps you're taking to protect yourself:

- Staying active to maintain strength and flexibility.
- Keeping your home free of tripping hazards.
- Getting your eyes checked regularly.
- And yes—making sure your hearing is tested and treated.

It's a holistic approach, and hearing is a piece of the puzzle too important to ignore.

Falls are not an inevitable part of aging—they're preventable. And one of the simplest, most effective steps you can take is scheduling a hearing test. By protecting your hearing, you're not just improving communication—you're protecting your balance, your confidence, and your independence. This December, as we highlight Fall Prevention Month, I encourage you to add a hearing test to your wellness checklist. At Decibels Audiology, our team is here to provide thorough, compassionate care and solutions tailored to your lifestyle.

Call us today to schedule your hearing test, and take a proactive step toward a safer, healthier, and more confident tomorrow.

AudioNova 

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Navigating Mental Health During the Holiday Season: A NEUROLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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

The holiday season brings joy and celebration for many, but it can also trigger significant stress, anxiety, and depression. At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we understand that mental health challenges during this time of year have real neurological foundations, and recognizing these connections is the first step toward maintaining your wellbeing.

The Brain Under Holiday Stress

The holidays disrupt our normal routines, often leading to changes in sleep patterns, diet, and exercise. These disruptions directly affect neurotransmitter balance in the brain, particularly serotonin and dopamine levels that regulate mood. Additionally, the pressure to create perfect celebrations, manage family dynamics, and meet financial obligations activates the brain's stress response system, flooding the body with cortisol and adrenaline.

For individuals already managing neurological conditions such as migraines, epilepsy, or chronic pain, holiday stress can exacerbate symptoms. Research shows that stress is a common trigger for migraine attacks and can lower seizure thresholds in those with epilepsy. Understanding this mind-body connection helps validate your experiences and emphasizes the importance of proactive mental health care.

Common Holiday Mental Health Challenges

Many people experience heightened anxiety during the holidays due to social obligations, family conflicts, or financial pressures. The expectation to feel cheerful can intensify feelings of sadness or loneliness, particularly for those grieving loved ones or dealing with family estrangement. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) compounds these difficulties, as reduced daylight hours affect melatonin and serotonin production in the brain.

The combination of altered sleep schedules, increased alcohol consumption, and dietary changes can destabilize mood and energy levels. For individuals with existing mental health conditions or neurological disorders, these factors create a perfect storm that requires careful management.



Strategies for Protecting Your Mental Health

Maintaining routine is crucial for brain health. Try to keep consistent sleep and wake times, even during holiday gatherings. Aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep, as rest allows the brain to process emotions and consolidate memories properly.

Set realistic expectations for yourself and communicate boundaries clearly with family and friends. It's perfectly acceptable to decline invitations or limit your time at events that feel overwhelming. Remember that social media often portrays unrealistic holiday perfection—your celebration doesn't need to match anyone else's.

Stay physically active, as exercise promotes the release of endorphins and other mood-regulating neurotransmitters. Even a brief daily walk can significantly impact your mental state. Be mindful of alcohol consumption, which can disrupt sleep quality and worsen anxiety or depression.

Practice stress-reduction techniques such as deep breathing exercises, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation. These activities calm the nervous system and can help prevent the escalation of stress-related symptoms.

When to Seek Professional Help

If you experience persistent sadness, anxiety, changes in sleep or appetite, difficulty concentrating, or thoughts of self-harm, reach out to a health-care provider immediately. At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we recognize that mental and neurological health are interconnected, and we're here to provide comprehensive care.

Don't hesitate to contact your doctor if your neurological symptoms worsen during the holiday season. Adjustments to treatment plans or additional support may be necessary to help you navigate this challenging time.

The holidays don't have to compromise your mental health. By understanding the neurological basis of stress responses and implementing protective strategies, you can move through the season with greater ease and resilience. Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Cory Lamar, MD, is a triple-board certified neurologist at Advanced Neurology Specialists, LLC, in Naples, Florida. His mission is to provide high-quality neurological care to individuals living in and around Collier County.

Dr. Lamar is a native Floridian and became fascinated with the complexity of the brain during a neuroscience course at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. After completing his medical degree with high honors, Dr. Lamar completed a neurology residency and fellowship at Wake Forest Baptist Health in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Dr. Lamar is triple board-certified in neurology, clinical neurophysiology, and epilepsy. At Advanced Neurology Specialists, LLC, he treats a wide variety of neurological conditions, including Parkinson's disease, dementia, multiple sclerosis, headaches, and seizure disorders. He also provides stroke screening, prevention, and rehabilitation.

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Lamar and the team at Advanced Neurology Specialists, LLC, call the office or request an appointment online today.



**Advanced Neurology
Specialists, LLC**

239-667-5878

advancedneurofl.com

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Naples FL 34102

REVOLUTIONIZING PAIN RELIEF:

Advanced Care with Dr. Michael Shaffer

For 44 years, Dr. Michael Shaffer has been dedicated to improving the health and well-being of his community. The motto for his practice is: "Rely on Clinical Expertise and Experience" and it remains committed to providing cutting-edge, non-surgical solutions for pain relief and improved mobility. "No matter how high-tech the future becomes," Dr Shaffer shares, "nothing will ever surpass hands-on physician care". "Our state-of-the-art location reflects a highly professional atmosphere and we are proud to be able to serve our amazing community and generations of families, providing life changing care and pain-relieving therapies."

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

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

What Makes MLS Laser Therapy Unique?

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

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



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

Comprehensive Care for Sciatica

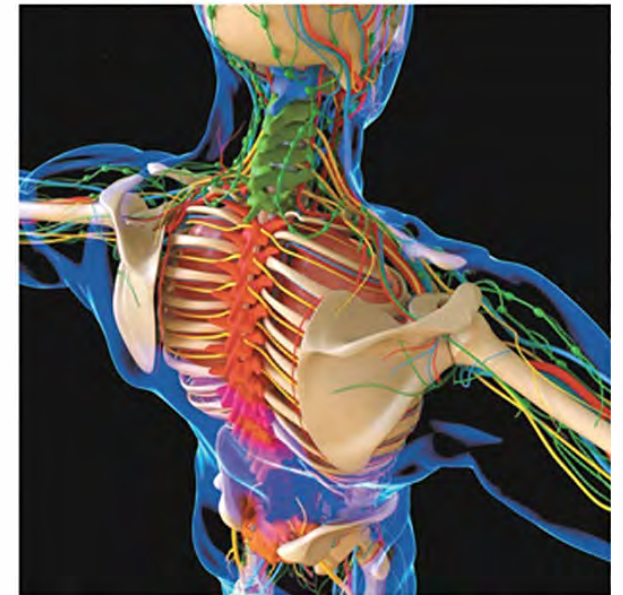
Did you know that approximately 40% of people will experience sciatica during their lifetime? This prevalent condition, clinically known as lumbar radiculopathy, manifests as low back pain radiating down the leg. Common causes include herniated discs, spinal stenosis, degenerative disc disease, and spondylolisthesis.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

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

Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression

Spinal decompression is a highly effective treatment for conditions like sciatica, herniated discs, and degenerative disc disease. This innovative, non-invasive approach relieves pressure on spinal nerves by creating negative pressure within the discs. This process promotes the reabsorption of disc material, enhances circulation, and supports natural healing. Patients undergoing spinal decompression often report feeling a gentle stretching sensation, with sessions designed for maximum comfort. The therapy offers numerous benefits, including:

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



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

Solutions for Sciatica and Beyond

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

A Legacy of Excellence

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



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

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**671 Goodlette Rd., Unit 160
Naples, FL 34102**



The Transformative Potential of Stem Cell Injections: REVOLUTIONIZING MODERN MEDICINE

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

Stem cell injections represent one of the most promising frontiers in modern medical treatment, offering hope and healing across a wide range of medical conditions. These remarkable therapeutic interventions harness the body's natural regenerative capabilities, providing innovative solutions for previously challenging medical challenges.

Understanding Stem Cell Technology

At the core of stem cell therapy is the unique ability of these remarkable cells to differentiate into multiple cell types. Unlike traditional treatment methods that primarily manage symptoms, stem cell injections aim to repair, regenerate, and restore damaged tissues at their fundamental cellular level. This approach represents a paradigm shift in medical treatment, moving from reactive to proactive healthcare strategies.

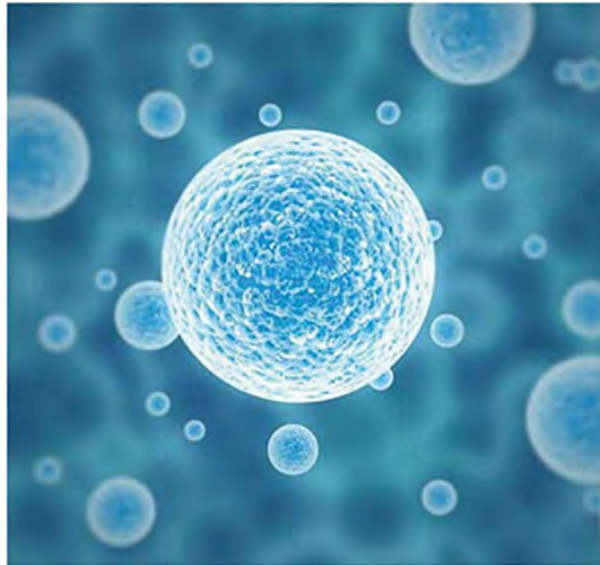
Orthopedic Regeneration and Pain Management

One of the most significant benefits of stem cell injections is in orthopedic medicine. Patients suffering from chronic joint conditions like osteoarthritis, tendon injuries, and ligament damages have found remarkable relief through these treatments. By introducing concentrated stem cells directly into damaged areas, physicians can stimulate natural healing processes, potentially reducing inflammation, promoting tissue repair, and alleviating chronic pain.

Athletes and active individuals particularly appreciate this approach, as stem cell injections offer a less invasive alternative to surgical interventions. The treatment can potentially accelerate healing time, reduce recovery periods, and provide long-term pain management without the risks associated with traditional surgical procedures.

Neurological Disorder Potential

Emerging research demonstrates promising applications of stem cell injections in neurological disorders. Conditions like Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injuries are being approached with renewed hope through stem cell therapies. These treatments aim to replace damaged neural cells, potentially restoring lost function and improving patients' quality of life.



Cardiovascular Health Innovations

Stem cell injections are showing remarkable potential in cardiovascular medicine. Researchers have documented instances where these treatments can help regenerate heart tissue after heart attacks, potentially reducing scarring and improving cardiac function. This approach offers hope for patients with previously irreversible heart damage, representing a significant breakthrough in cardiac care.

Autoimmune Disease Management

For patients battling autoimmune disorders, stem cell injections provide a novel therapeutic approach. By modulating the immune system and promoting cellular regeneration, these treatments can help manage conditions like lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, and type 1 diabetes. The ability to potentially reset or repair dysfunctional immune responses represents a groundbreaking development in treating these complex medical conditions.

Safety and Ethical Considerations

While stem cell injections offer immense potential, it's crucial to approach these treatments with informed perspective. Most modern stem cell therapies utilize autologous stem cells—meaning cells harvested from the patient's own body—which significantly reduces rejection risks and ethical concerns. Patients should always consult qualified medical professionals and undergo comprehensive evaluations to determine their suitability for these treatments.

Future Outlook

The field of stem cell therapy continues to evolve rapidly. As research advances and technological capabilities expand, we can anticipate increasingly sophisticated and targeted treatments. The potential to repair, regenerate, and restore human tissues at the cellular level represents one of the most exciting frontiers in contemporary medical science.

Stem cell injections are not just a treatment; they represent a fundamental reimagining of medical intervention. By harnessing the body's inherent healing capabilities, these therapies offer hope, healing, and the potential for transformative medical outcomes.

KATHY VERDES APRN, A-GNP- C

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

Are you ready for a consultation?

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CONTINUUM SURGERY CENTER OF NAPLES: Redefining Excellence in Surgical Care

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

Naples, Florida welcomes a groundbreaking addition to its healthcare landscape with the opening of Continuum Surgery Center of Naples. This state-of-the-art facility represents the future of surgical care, combining cutting-edge technology with an exclusive, patient-centered approach that sets a new standard for medical excellence in Southwest Florida.

A PREMIER PRIVATE CONCIERGE SURGERY CENTER

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples distinguishes itself as a private concierge surgery center, offering patients an unparalleled level of personalized care and attention. Unlike traditional hospital settings, our brand-new facility provides an intimate, comfortable environment where every detail has been carefully designed with patient comfort and safety in mind. From the moment you enter our doors, you'll experience the difference that concierge-level service makes in your surgical journey.

Our commitment to excellence begins with our infrastructure. As a newly constructed facility, we've incorporated the latest advancements in medical technology and surgical equipment, ensuring that our patients receive care that meets the highest industry standards. Every operating suite, recovery area, and patient space has been thoughtfully designed to promote healing while maintaining the privacy and exclusivity our patients deserve.

COMPREHENSIVE SPECIALTY SERVICES

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples proudly offers a diverse range of surgical specialties under one roof, making us a comprehensive destination for various medical needs:

Pain Management: Our pain management specialists utilize advanced interventional techniques to help patients find relief from chronic pain conditions, improving quality of life through minimally invasive procedures.

Interventional Spine: For patients suffering from spine-related conditions, our interventional spine program offers sophisticated treatment options that can alleviate pain and restore function without the need for traditional open surgery.



Podiatry: From complex foot and ankle surgeries to routine podiatric procedures, our podiatry services address a wide spectrum of lower extremity conditions with precision and care.

Plastic & Cosmetic: Our plastic and cosmetic surgery services combine artistry with medical expertise, helping patients achieve their aesthetic goals in a safe, professional environment.

Otolaryngology (ENT): Our ear, nose, and throat specialists provide surgical solutions for conditions affecting these delicate areas, utilizing the latest techniques for optimal outcomes.

Breast Surgical Oncology: We offer specialized breast cancer surgery with a focus on comprehensive care, providing patients with access to expert oncological procedures in our advanced surgical setting.

BUILDING AN EXCEPTIONAL TEAM

As we establish ourselves as Naples' premier surgery center, we are actively seeking talented healthcare professionals to join our growing team. We understand that exceptional patient care begins with exceptional staff, and we're committed to assembling a team of dedicated professionals who share our vision for excellence.

If you're a qualified healthcare professional looking to be part of something special, we invite you to submit your CV to Marisa@csc-surgerycenter-naples.com. Whether you're an experienced surgical nurse, anesthesiologist, surgical technician, or administrative professional, we want to hear from you.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SURGEONS

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples is extending a special invitation to surgeons seeking credentialing opportunities at our facility. We recognize that top surgeons want to practice in environments that support their work with the best resources available, and that's exactly what we provide.

Our center offers more than just a place to perform procedures. For qualified surgeons, we also present unique shareholder opportunities, allowing you to become an invested partner in the future of surgical care in Naples. This ownership model aligns your professional goals with the success of our center, creating a mutually beneficial relationship that serves both practitioners and patients.

To explore credentialing or shareholder opportunities, surgeons are encouraged to contact Marisa directly at 561-789-8435. We welcome the opportunity to discuss how Continuum Surgery Center of Naples can support your practice and professional aspirations.

YOUR SURGICAL EXCELLENCE AWAITS

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples represents more than a new facility—it's a commitment to transforming surgical care through innovation, expertise, and unwavering dedication to patient satisfaction. As we open our doors to the Naples community, we invite patients, healthcare professionals, and surgeons to experience the difference that true excellence makes. Welcome to the future of surgical care.

CONTINUUM
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Discover the Power of IV CBD INFUSIONS at The DRIPBaR Naples

The DRIPBaR Naples is proud to introduce our newest wellness offering: CBD Drip IV Infusions. This innovative treatment delivers broad-spectrum CBD directly into your bloodstream, providing maximum absorption and effectiveness for those seeking natural support for mood, stress, and sleep without the concerns associated with THC or addiction.

What Is IV Broad-Spectrum CBD?

Unlike traditional CBD products that must pass through your digestive system, IV CBD infusions bypass the gut entirely, delivering this powerful compound directly into your bloodstream. Our broad-spectrum CBD contains no THC, meaning you receive all the therapeutic benefits without any psychoactive effects. This method ensures nearly complete bioavailability, allowing your body to utilize the full potential of every drop.

Broad-spectrum CBD retains the beneficial cannabinoids, terpenes, and flavonoids found naturally in the hemp plant while completely eliminating THC. This creates what researchers call the "entourage effect," where these compounds work synergistically to enhance overall effectiveness.

Supporting Your Endocannabinoid System

Your body contains an intricate network called the Endocannabinoid System (ECS), which plays a crucial role in regulating numerous physiological processes including mood, sleep, stress response, immune function, and pain perception. The ECS works continuously to maintain balance and homeostasis throughout your body.

Regular support to your ECS through CBD can help optimize these natural regulatory functions. When CBD enters your system intravenously, it interacts with cannabinoid receptors located throughout your body, helping to promote equilibrium and overall wellness. Many clients report experiencing enhanced relaxation, improved sleep quality, and better stress management with consistent IV CBD sessions.

Benefits of CBD Drip at The DRIPBaR Naples

Our CBD Drip infusion offers numerous advantages for those seeking natural wellness solutions. Clients seeking mood support often find that IV CBD helps promote a sense of calm and emotional balance. For those struggling with daily stressors, the rapid delivery method provides quick relief, helping you feel more centered and focused.



Sleep quality is another area where many clients experience significant improvement. By supporting your ECS and promoting relaxation, CBD Drip can help prepare your body for restful, restorative sleep. Unlike sleep medications, CBD is non-habit forming and carries no risk of addiction, making it an excellent choice for those seeking natural sleep support.

Safe, Non-Addictive Wellness

One of the most significant advantages of our CBD Drip is its excellent safety profile. CBD is non-addictive and does not produce dependence, even with regular use. Our THC-free formulation ensures you can incorporate this treatment into your wellness routine without concerns about impairment or failed drug tests.

At The DRIPBaR Naples, our trained professionals administer every infusion in a comfortable, spa-like environment. We take the time to understand your individual wellness goals and customize your experience accordingly.



Experience the Difference

Ready to discover how IV CBD can transform your wellness journey? The DRIPBaR Naples invites you to experience the future of CBD delivery. Whether you're seeking support for mood, stress, sleep, or overall wellness, our CBD Drip infusion offers a safe, effective, and non-addictive solution. Contact us today to schedule your appointment and take the first step toward balanced, natural wellness.

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THE USE OF ROBOTICS IN BRAIN AND SPINE SURGERY: Revolutionizing Precision and Patient Outcomes

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

Advancements in medical technology have transformed the way surgeries are performed, with robotics emerging as one of the most significant innovations in the field. In particular, the use of robotic systems in brain and spine surgery has revolutionized the precision, efficiency, and safety of complex procedures. These technologies are not only enhancing the capabilities of surgeons but also improving patient outcomes, reducing recovery times, and minimizing the risk of complications.

The Role of Robotics in Brain and Spine Surgery

Both brain and spine surgeries involve intricate procedures where precision is critical. The human nervous system is delicate and highly sensitive, requiring surgeons to navigate through narrow spaces and avoid damaging surrounding tissues. Robotics offers a solution to these challenges by providing enhanced visualization, greater accuracy, and improved control during procedures.

One of the most significant advancements in robotic-assisted surgery is the development of minimally invasive techniques. Traditionally, brain and spine surgeries often required large incisions, which could lead to longer recovery times and increased risk of infection. Robotic systems allow surgeons to perform these complex surgeries through smaller incisions, reducing trauma to the body and enhancing recovery rates.

Robotic Systems in Brain Surgery

In Neurosurgery, robotic systems have gained prominence in procedures like brain tumor removal, aneurysms, hemorrhagic stroke, deep brain stimulation (DBS), and epilepsy surgery. The complexity of these surgeries often involves navigating the brain's intricate anatomy while avoiding critical structures, such as blood vessels and nerves. Robotics provides a level of precision that human hands alone cannot match.

The ExcelsiusGPS robotic system provides a 3D high-definition view of the surgical area and allows for precise, controlled movements of instruments, even in challenging locations. This system is particularly valuable in guiding surgeons during brain tumor resections, as well as in procedures like stereotactic biopsies and DBS implantations. It uses a combination of pre-operative imaging and real-time navigation to map the brain and assist surgeons in achieving accurate and optimal results. This robotic assistance allows for smaller incisions, less tissue disruption, and a more precise removal of tumors, which ultimately improves the chances of preserving healthy brain tissue.

Robotic Systems in Spine Surgery

Spine surgery is another area where robotics is making a transformative impact. Spine procedures, including spinal fusions, disc replacements, and scoliosis correction, often

require the surgeon to align the spine with millimeter precision. Traditional methods of spinal surgery rely on the surgeon's skill and experience to manually guide instruments into place, which can be challenging due to the complexity of the spinal column and the surrounding nerves.

The ExcelsiusGPS robotic system has become a game-changer in the field of spine surgery. This system integrates advanced imaging and navigation capabilities with robotic assistance to enhance the surgeon's precision during the procedure. It provides real-time feedback based on 3D imaging and enables the surgeon to place screws and other implants with unparalleled accuracy.

One of the primary benefits of robotic spine surgery is the ability to perform minimally invasive procedures. Surgeons can plan and execute the surgery with increased accuracy, whether they are performing a simple disc replacement or a more complex spinal deformity correction. Using smaller incisions and precise robotic control, surgeons can access the spine with less disruption to surrounding tissues. This translates into reduced blood loss, shorter hospital stays, and faster recovery times. Additionally, the reduced risk of complications, such as nerve damage or misplacement of screws, enhances patient outcomes.

Advantages of Robotic-Assisted Brain and Spine Surgery
The use of robotics in brain and spine surgery offers several key advantages:

- Enhanced Precision:** Robotic systems provide a level of precision that is difficult to achieve with human hands alone. The ability to make minute adjustments and operate with extreme accuracy is crucial in delicate areas like the brain and spine.
- Minimally Invasive Techniques:** With smaller incisions, robotic systems reduce trauma to the body, leading to less pain, reduced risk of infection, and faster recovery times for patients.
- Better Visualization:** Robotic platforms often come with advanced imaging systems, such as 3D visualization and real-time tracking, which allow surgeons to view the surgical site in greater detail and make informed decisions during the procedure.
- Reduced Risk of Complications:** By improving the accuracy of surgical procedures, robotics can reduce the likelihood of complications, such as nerve damage, blood loss, or misplacement of surgical instruments.
- Improved Patient Outcomes:** Minimally invasive surgery, faster recovery times, and reduced risks of complications all contribute to better long-term patient outcomes, including shorter hospital stays, less postoperative pain, and quicker returns to normal activities.

The Future of Robotics in Neurosurgery

While robotic systems have already demonstrated significant benefits in brain and spine surgery, the future promises even more innovations. As technology continues to evolve, we can expect robots to become more autonomous, with artificial intelligence (AI) playing an increasing role in decision-making and surgical planning. AI-powered robotic systems may assist surgeons in predicting outcomes, optimizing surgical approaches, and personalizing treatment plans for each patient.

Moreover, the integration of robotics with other emerging technologies, such as augmented reality (AR) and advanced imaging techniques, will further enhance the precision and effectiveness of brain and spine surgeries. Surgeons may one day use AR to visualize the patient's anatomy in 3D during the procedure, allowing for even more accurate navigation and real-time adjustments.

Conclusion - The integration of robotics into brain and spine surgery has undoubtedly transformed the landscape of these complex procedures. With its ability to enhance precision, reduce recovery times, and minimize risks, robotic-assisted surgery is improving patient outcomes and shaping the future of Neurosurgery. As technology continues to evolve, the role of robotics in healthcare will only expand, offering even greater opportunities for innovation and advancement in brain and spine surgery.

About Amanda Sacino MD, PhD

Dr. Sacino completed her neurosurgical training at Johns Hopkins Hospital. During that time she pursued extensive training in brain, spine, and peripheral nerve surgery. From there, she completed two spine fellowships at Johns Hopkins Hospital and Swedish Neuroscience Institute. She trained under Dr. Nicholas Theodore, the inventor of the Globus ExcelsiusGPS robot. She was present during the first robotic spine and DBS surgeries at Johns Hopkins Hospital and trained extensively with the robot for both brain and spine surgeries. She is in the top 1% internationally for number of robotic cases completed. She has also written research papers and given lectures on robotics for Neurosurgery. Her goal is to provide patients with case-specific solutions so they have all the information and options they need to make informed decisions.



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WHEN GLASSES AREN'T ENOUGH — THERE'S STILL HOPE HOW LOW VISION CARE HELPS PEOPLE WITH VISION LOSS STAY INDEPENDENT AND LIVE WELL

By Dr. Dennis Denick, OD, Dipl ABO, FIALVS - Low Vision of Southwest Florida

WHEN VISION LOSS CHANGES LIFE

If you've been told "there's nothing more that can be done," you're not alone—and it's not true.

Millions of Americans living with **macular degeneration, geographic atrophy, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and other eye diseases** struggle with everyday tasks such as reading, driving, or recognizing faces. Even moderate vision loss can affect more than eyesight—it can influence mood, cognition and daily life. Reading becomes one of the first and hardest skills to lose and can be especially frustrating: when central vision falters, the brain must adapt, slowing letter recognition and shrinking the "visual span." Patients often report that even if they can still see the words, their brain no longer "grabs" them as smoothly, and the act of reading feels clumsy or exhausting. Low vision devices, magnifiers, and electronic aids help the process of "re-learning" to read. Consistent practice and use of adaptive low vision devices help maintain the brain's ability to recognize text, keeping the mind engaged and preserving independence.

These challenges have emotional and cognitive consequences. Vision loss increases the risk of depression and anxiety, often due to frustration, social isolation and reduced independence. Studies also link reduced vision with accelerated cognitive decline and higher dementia risk, possibly through less mental stimulation and shared neurodegenerative pathways. Low Vision rehabilitation not only restores functional skills like reading but also helps the brain rewire, supporting mental engagement, emotional well-being, and independence. Protecting and restoring vision is therefore vital not just for sight, but for overall cognitive and emotional health.

WHEN GLASSES AND SURGERY AREN'T ENOUGH

There comes a time when traditional glasses, contacts, or surgery can no longer provide the clarity needed for daily life. That's where **Low Vision rehabilitation** makes the difference.

Low Vision Care focuses on enhancing the **vision you still have**—your *residual vision*—using advanced optical devices and personalized strategies to help you achieve what matters most on your "wish list."

Every Low Vision evaluation begins with one powerful question:

"What would you like to be able to do again that you've stopped doing because of your vision?"

Whether that's reading, watching TV, seeing loved ones' faces, or returning to work, your Low Vision specialist designs a custom plan to make those goals possible.

A LOCAL SUCCESS STORY: SEEING CLEARLY AT WORK AGAIN

A 58 year old Fort Myers man who works for a local plumbing company faced losing his job after macular degeneration made it difficult to navigate the warehouse safely.

After a comprehensive Low Vision evaluation, **Dr. Dennis Denick** fit him with **spectacle-mounted bioptic lenses**—specialized glasses that enhance central vision and improve depth awareness. He was also prescribed a **spectacle-mounted telemicroscope** for computer and reading. "With these glasses I can not only see my computer, but read again and resume working on projects that require seeing fine detail."

Now, he confidently moves through the warehouse, performing his job safely and effectively.

"These glasses gave me my confidence back," he said. "I can see what's in front of me again and do my job without fear. My life has improved 100%. My company AND my boss thank Dr Denick. Having these glasses has increased and extended my value to my company for years to come."

A TEAM APPROACH TO BETTER VISION

Low Vision Care bridges the gap between preserving sight and restoring independence.

Dr. Denick works closely with ophthalmologists and optometrists—who focus on preventing further vision loss—to help patients make functional use of the vision they still have through advanced technology, training, and individualized care.

MODERN TOOLS FOR BETTER VISION

Today's Low Vision solutions go far beyond standard magnifiers or off-the-shelf glasses. Specialized tools such as **bioptic telescopic lenses, telemicroscopes, reading microscopes, and contrast-enhancing filters** can dramatically improve visual performance.

Patients with side-vision loss from stroke or glaucoma may benefit from **Side-Vision Awareness Glasses**, which use built-in prisms to expand the field of view. Others with albinism or retinitis pigmentosa may find success with **custom tinted filters** that reduce glare and enhance contrast.

Even **E-Scoop®** glasses, which use proprietary lens curves and tints, can sometimes raise vision levels enough to meet Florida's driving requirements.



SEEING BETTER, LIVING BETTER

Research shows that vision loss worse than 20/40 can increase the risk of cognitive decline and depression.

Addressing functional vision loss early helps preserve independence, emotional well-being, and overall quality of life.

Low Vision care combines technology, training, and compassion—tailored to each person's lifestyle and goals. It's not about what's lost; it's about making the most of what remains.

WHY TRUST LOW VISION OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA?

Exclusively Focused on Low Vision Rehabilitation
We dedicate our practice solely to helping people with vision loss.

Innovative Technology and Vision Aids

From bioptic telescopic glasses to electronic magnifiers and digital systems, we use the latest technology to maximize remaining sight.

Patient-First Approach

We take time to listen, understand your goals, and provide realistic, compassionate solutions that restore confidence and independence.

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Dr. Dennis Denick, OD, Dipl ABO, FIALVS
Fellow, *International Academy of Low Vision Specialists*



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WELLNESS WINS: THE NEW WAY TO HOLIDAY GIFT

Florida's warm breezes may not signal sleigh bells, but the holidays are here just the same. This year comes with a renewed appreciation for slowing down, taking care of ourselves, and reconnecting with the people we love. As Christmas 2025 approaches, gift-giving is shifting in a meaningful direction—away from quick, forgettable presents and toward choices that nurture well-being long after the decorations come down.

More shoppers are embracing the idea of starting early, not just to beat the rush but to select gifts with intention. In a world that's only gotten busier, thoughtful planning allows for calmer celebrations and gifts that feel personal, restorative, and genuinely useful.



2025 Gifting Trends

This year, wellness isn't just a trend—it's a priority. After months of stress, fast-paced schedules, and constant screen time, many people are craving balance, calm, and healthier routines. As a result, premium skincare and self-care gifts are rising to the top of holiday lists.

Unlike traditional gifts that disappear in a day, high-quality skincare offers long-term benefits. Gentle, nourishing formulas help soothe stressed skin, improve hydration, reduce irritation, and support a healthy glow—something every age can appreciate. Choosing products made with natural ingredients also helps avoid harsh chemicals, artificial fragrances, and unnecessary additives, making these gifts feel both luxurious and thoughtful.



A best friend will appreciate a curated bath and body set designed to melt away tension at the end of a long day. A coworker will remember you every time they reach for a beautifully scented soap that elevates their daily routine. And for a significant other, cozy loungewear or a restorative balm for post-workout muscles can feel like an invitation to slow down and breathe.

Wellness gifts send a subtle but powerful message: *you deserve to take care of yourself.*



Creating Moments of Self-Care

More than ever, people are craving experiences that help them reconnect with themselves. Instead of adding to the holiday clutter, self-care gifts create meaningful pockets of peace. A beautifully curated skincare set can become the foundation of a weekly ritual, while a nourishing facial mask or aromatherapy cleanser invites someone to take ten minutes just for themselves. These aren't extravagant gestures—they're reminders to slow down, breathe, and reset. For someone who feels constantly pulled in every direction, the gift of stillness is priceless.

In a season that often demands more than it gives, offering tools that support rest and renewal feels thoughtful, personal, and deeply appreciated. Wellness-focused gifting turns the holidays into a time of restoration rather than exhaustion, making the celebration feel brighter, softer, and more intentional.

Shop Local and Shop with Intention

While online shopping is tempting, there's something special about browsing locally during the holidays—especially when searching for self-care gifts. Small businesses offer unique, high-quality products you won't find in big-box carts, along with knowledgeable staff who can help you select the right items for sensitive skin, fragrance preferences, or specific needs. Shopping small keeps communities vibrant, supports local makers, and turns gifting into a more personal experience.



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With 12 stores across Florida, Naples Soap Company invites you to shop in person for a personalized experience, or order online and enjoy free shipping on purchases over \$50. Visit naplessoap.com to find a store near you and start checking off your list with gifts that feel as good as they look.

INTEGRATIVE / NATUROPATHIC VIEW OF BAH THERAPY & RELATED MODALITIES FOR TBI

Brain Rejuvenation Clinic of Naples

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) triggers inflammation, oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, impaired blood flow, and disrupted neural connectivity. Integrative therapies at the Brain Rejuvenation Clinic aim to reduce these secondary-injury processes and support natural repair. The modalities utilized in our clinic are very effective in speeding the recovery process and maximizing the physical and cognitive outcomes.

1. Molecular Hydrogen Inhalation

How it works:

Hydrogen (H₂) is a selective antioxidant that neutralizes damaging free radicals and reduces neuroinflammation. It easily crosses the blood-brain barrier. Animal TBI studies show hydrogen decreases brain edema, protects neurons, and reduces microglial (Central Nervous System Immune cells) activation to reduce inflammation.

Potential benefits:

- Lowers oxidative stress
- Reduces inflammatory cytokines
- Protects vulnerable neurons
- May enhance overall recovery and reduce long-term damage

2. Sonic Wave / Vibration Therapy

How it works:

Gentle mechanical vibrations stimulate circulation, lymphatic flow, and can modulate the nervous system. Though direct research in TBI is limited, mechanotransduction pathways suggest a potential role in reducing tissue congestion and calming neural circuits.

Potential benefits:

- Helps reduce edema, improve fluid movement, and clear toxins
- Supports relaxation and autonomic balance
- Improves balance by stimulation of muscle fibers

3. Photobiomodulation (Red/NIR Light Therapy)

How it works:

Red and near-infrared light target mitochondria, increasing ATP energy production and reducing inflammation. PBM is one of the most researched natural therapies for TBI, with animal studies showing improved cognition, reduced lesion size, and enhanced neuroplasticity.

Potential benefits:

- Restores mitochondrial function
- Reduces neuroinflammation
- Promotes neurogenesis and synaptic repair
- Improves blood flow and oxygenation

4. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)

How it works:

Breathing oxygen in a pressurized chamber increases oxygen delivery to injured brain regions. HBOT can reduce swelling, promote new blood vessel growth, and revive "sleeping" but salvageable neurons.

Potential benefits:

- Reduces hypoxia and brain swelling
- Enhances vascular repair
- Supports neuroplasticity
- Often improves cognition, fatigue, and mood

5. PEMF Therapy & Grounding

PEMF:

Pulsed electromagnetic fields modulate inflammation, improve microcirculation, and influence neural signaling. Studies in TBI models show reduced inflammatory markers (like IL-1 β), improved blood-brain barrier integrity, and better neuronal survival.

Grounding/Earthing:

Grounding may support autonomic balance, stress reduction, and sleep—important factors in TBI recovery.

Potential benefits:

- Less neuroinflammation
- Better microvascular flow
- Enhanced repair of glial and neural cells
- Support for stress and sleep regulation

6. WAVi Brain Scanning

How it works:

WAVi uses EEG-based metrics to assess brainwave activity, cognitive processing speed (P300), and connectivity. It helps personalize treatment and monitor improvements over time.

Benefits:

- Objective baseline for TBI deficits
- Tracks changes from therapies like PBM, HBOT, PEMF
- Helps tailor protocols for optimal recovery

Overall Synergy

BAHI therapy combines therapies for oxygenation (HBOT), antioxidant/anti-inflammatory support (H₂), mitochondrial repair (PBM), neuromodulation (PEMF, Ultra-sonic Vibration), and objective tracking using the WAVi device. This multidimensional approach targets the major mechanisms of TBI and supports natural neuro-restoration without toxicity.



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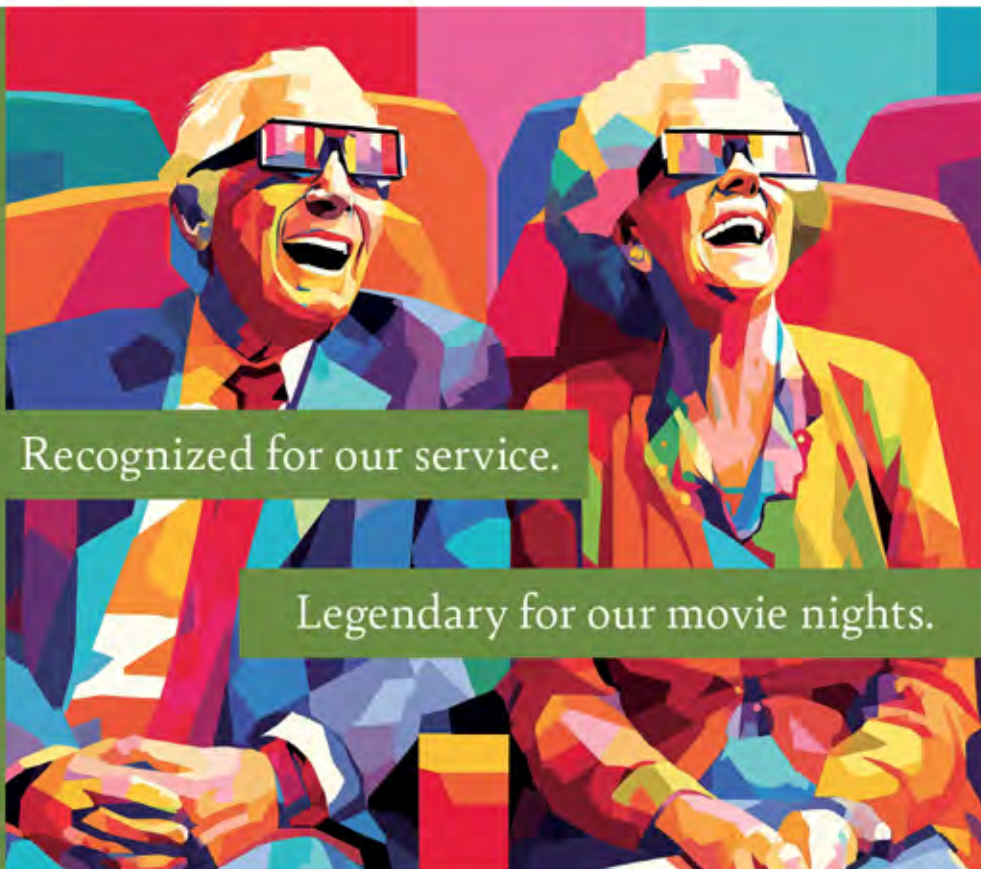


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The Importance of Progesterone Replacement in Both Men and Women

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

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

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

What Is Progesterone?

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

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

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

The Role of Progesterone in Women

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

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



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

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

Signs Of Low Progesterone in Women

Some signs of low progesterone in women include:

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

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

The Role of Progesterone in Men

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

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

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

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

Signs Of Low Progesterone in Men

Some of the signs of low progesterone in men include:

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

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

Estrogen Dominance and Progesterone

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

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

Women with estrogen dominance may have symptoms that include:

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

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

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

What Causes Low Progesterone?

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

Hypothyroidism

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

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

Low Cholesterol

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

Stress

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

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

Anovulatory Cycle

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

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

Abnormal Bodyweight

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

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

Prolactin Disorder

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

Correcting Low Progesterone

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Importance of Progesterone Replacement

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



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

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

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

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

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

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7 Common Examples of Premises Liability Claims in Florida

By F. Scott Pauzar, III, Naples Personal Injury Attorney

Although we rarely think about it, we all face a variety of injury risks on a daily basis. From slippery floors to cracked walkways and other construction and maintenance-related hazards, all types of premises-related dangers can (and often do) lead to severe injuries.

Dangerous Conditions that Qualify for a Premise Liability Claim

When you or someone you love suffers serious injuries in a premises-related accident, it is essential to speak with a lawyer about your legal rights. Florida's premises liability laws entitle accident victims and their families to just compensation in many cases. For example, the following types of accidents (among others) can all potentially support claims for just compensation:

Slip and Fall Accidents

Slip and fall accidents are among the most common causes of premises-related injuries. Spills, recently cleaned floors, slippery flooring materials and a variety of other issues can lead to sudden, unexpected and dangerous falls.

Trip and Fall Accidents

Trip hazards are a common injury risk as well. Cracked sidewalks, unmarked curbs, protruding roots, items left in hallways and stairwells, and numerous other hazards can lead to trip and fall accidents. Whether due to pedestrian traffic, poor lighting or other issues, accident victims often don't see these types of hazards until it is too late.

Falls from Heights

Falls from heights can be extremely dangerous for obvious reasons. Loose and missing handrails are among the most common causes of these serious premises-related accidents.

Elevator and Escalator Malfunctions

Elevator and escalator accidents are far more common than they should be. While property owners have a duty to inspect and service their elevators and escalators regularly, many fail to do so. Negligent inspections and maintenance work can lead to malfunctions as well.



Electrocutions

While the risk of electrocution is greatest at construction sites, faulty wiring and other issues at homes, businesses and government buildings can lead to electrocutions as well. Regardless of where it happened, if you or a loved one has been electrocuted, you should speak with a premises liability lawyer promptly.

Falling Objects

Falling objects can also cause serious injuries. Overstocked shelves and dangerous product displays are among the most common causes of these accidents. From amusement parks to grocery stores and home improvement stores, falling objects are a safety risk at many different types of locations.

Construction Defects

Regardless of whether a property has been properly maintained, construction defects can lead to falls, electrocutions and a wide range of other premises-related accidents. While property owners and tenants will be liable for premises-related issues in most cases, contractors and subcontractors will often be liable when a construction defect is to blame.

Speak with a Premises Liability Lawyer in Naples for Free

If you need to know more about filing a claim for a premises-related accident in Florida, we invite you to contact us. We represent accident victims and their families on a contingency fee basis, which means our clients pay nothing unless we win.

To learn more in a free and confidential consultation, please call 239-649-6555 or get in touch online today.



About the Author

F. Scott ("Scott") Pauzar, III is a litigation and personal injury law attorney in Woodward, Pires & Lombardo's Naples office. He has a broad base of

legal knowledge and skills cultivated through over 19 years of experience as a litigator in complex litigation in both state and federal courts. Previously, Scott was an Assistant State Attorney at the 20th Judicial Circuit State Attorney's Office in Fort Myers. During his five years as a Prosecutor, Scott conducted over 30 jury trials. After leaving the Office of the State Attorney, Scott served as an insurance defense attorney for 11 years, where his practice focused on litigation of complex cases and catastrophic injuries. Scott now combines his jury trial and defense experience to successfully represent his clients in litigation and personal injury law matters.

Scott is a military veteran, having served on active duty in the United States Air Force between 1989 and 1993. He is a native of Naples, Florida. Scott received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Jacksonville University in 1996 and his Juris Doctor from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, in 2004. He is a member of The Florida Bar, and is admitted to practice in the U.S. Middle District and U.S. Northern District of Florida.



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NO NEED TO WAIT UNTIL YOU ARE INJURED TO SEE A PHYSICAL THERAPIST

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

Many people believe that physical therapy is only needed when recovering from an injury. Makes sense, right?

However, that's not always the case. As we get older, physical therapy can play just as much of a role in preventing injuries as it does in helping us successfully through our recovery. That's why it's important as we age to be proactive about high-risk injuries such as those that result from falling.

Falls are a worldwide public health concern, especially for seniors. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 37.3 million falls that are severe enough to require medical attention occur each year. Additionally, the WHO noted that falls are also the second leading cause of unintentional injury deaths worldwide. Strategies to prevent these falls from occurring should include additional education, training, and safer environments according to the WHO.

So, what proactive measures can you take to prevent these potentially life-threatening falls? This is when physical therapy can come into play. A physical therapist evaluates and assess the patient for risk of falls, and develops fall prevention strategies and interventions for seniors based on select tests and measures that are designed to gauge the patient's strength, agility, and balance. For example, physical therapists conduct tests such as the Functional Reach Test and the Timed Up & Go Test (TUG) as ways to better understand a patient's fall risk and recovery potential. Physical therapists can then assign and assist in exercises with senior patients to properly counteract these risks.

The Shirley Ryan Ability Lab in Chicago, Illinois explains the Functional Reach Test as an exercise that is administered while a patient is standing next to, but not touching a wall. The patient is then instructed to, with the arm that is closer the wall, "reach as far as you can forward without taking a step." Three trials are done, and the final score of the test comes out to the average score of the second two trials.

The other test, the TUG Test, begins with a patient sitting in a chair with their back against the chair's backrest and arms on the chair's arm rests. From



that position, the patient is then timed while standing up, walking three meters, turning around, and returning to their original resting position in the chair. Test results from these quick and easy evaluations help provide a reliable foundation for physical therapists to measure a patient's fall risk and conduct the necessary preventative training.

As a patient, or to perhaps avoid becoming one, taking care of your body through the proper preventative measures before an injury happens is just as important as the recovery process after an injury has already occurred. That's why we often see professionals in fields that require a lot physically constantly training in attempts to get ahead of potential injuries. But you don't have to be a professional athlete, bodybuilder, or manual laborer to take the important steps necessary to take care of your body. That's why when working with a patient, injured or not, it's vital for physical therapists to understand the full scope of their patients' strengths and limitations to assign the correct interventions to prevent any injuries in the future. Workouts and testing exercises such as these are a significant part of a physical therapist's training and responsibilities in the field.

About Dr. Robert D. Swift, D.O.

Robert D. Swift, D.O. is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon and a Fellow of the American Osteopathic Association of Orthopedics. He has advanced training in minimally invasive surgery of the shoulder, knee, ankle, hip, and orthopedic trauma training.

Dr. Swift attended medical school at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. He completed a general surgery internship with the US Army at Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center. While stationed in Europe as an army physician, he supported missions and troops throughout Bosnia and Kosovo.

Dr. Swift completed his orthopedic residency training at the University of Medicine Dentistry of New Jersey, also known as UMDNJ-SOM/Copper Medical Center. After residency, he rejoined the military and was stationed at Ft. Campbell, KY. He was deployed as Chief of Orthopedics in Bagram, Afghanistan. His services are decorated by the Bronze Star Medal and the Meritorious Service Medal.

Dr. Swift is accomplished in his field. He has been a course instructor, presenter, and author on fracture care and on the minimally invasive shoulder and knee surgery.

Dr. Robert D. Swift, D.O., Board Certified Orthopaedic Surgeon, is a national leader in sports medicine and orthopedic joint care with over 20 years of experience in:

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Understanding Polycystic Kidney Disease

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

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

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

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

The primary symptoms of PKD are as follows:

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

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

PKD Treatment

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

How Can the Progression of Kidney Disease Be Delayed?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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FALLING DOWN: IT'S NOT INEVITABLE—IT'S PREVENTABLE THROUGH SCREENING

By RICK WEBER

Falls kill.

Those two words aren't designed for shock value—they're an increasing reality. Falls among adults 65 and older caused over 38,000 deaths in 2021, making it the leading cause of injury-related death for that group, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In 2021, emergency departments recorded nearly three million visits for older adult falls.

It couldn't happen to you? If you're in that age group, there's a 25% chance you will fall this year.

Elizabeth Templeton's passion is to do something about it. Templeton, DPT, GCS, WCS, CEEAA, is a physical therapy professor in Florida Gulf Coast University's Department of Rehabilitation Sciences.

She believes falls in older adults are preventable when risk factors are identified early through proactive screening. Early detection and intervention are critical, not only for traditional physical risks like balance and strength deficits, but also for often-overlooked contributors such as continence issues and pelvic floor function.

"From my clinical experience, I have observed that older adults are unaware of the importance of fall prevention, while others may resist seeking help due to stigma," she says. "There is strong evidence that demonstrates individuals may resist seeking help due to denial or self-perception, and that sedentary lifestyles are associated with persistent inactivity and increased fall risk.

"By broadening our understanding of fall risk, we can create more comprehensive and effective prevention strategies."

Fall rates can decrease by approximately 23–24% in high-risk groups when older adults are evaluated for fall-risk factors—such as a history of falls, balance or gait impairments, medication side effects and potential hazards in the home—and receive personalized interventions such as exercise programs, home safety modifications or medication adjustments, according to the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

The American Geriatrics Society and British Geriatrics Society advise that all adults over 65 should be screened annually for a history of falls or balance impairment. Screening involves asking about previous falls, balance problems and related symptoms. If risk is identified, a multifactorial fall-risk assessment is performed, which evaluates the circumstances and frequency of falls, associated injuries, medications (including over-the-counter), comorbidities, activities of daily living, use of assistive devices and fear of falling.

Screenings can be accomplished through self-reported prescreen questionnaires or through an intake interview. The CDC has identified a group of objective screening tools that can be done quickly and safely by a medical professional such as a physical therapist, including gait speed measurement and the Timed Up and Go (TUG) test.

Templeton says primary care providers can screen for falls during an individual's Annual Wellness Visit, which is typically reimbursed by Medicare. Community-based programs, senior centers and public health initiatives may also offer fall-risk screening using validated tools such as the STEADI Stay Independent questionnaire, which was part of research Templeton conducted at FGCU.

"Based on the frequency of falls in older adults, they should take the results very seriously—gait speed isn't just a predictor for falls but also for mortality and frailty," she says. "Depending on the deficit identified, some recommendations may be to increase lighting their home, such as installing motion lights or nightlights, or removing throw rugs.

"If we identify a patient may be at risk for falls based on polypharmacy (taking five or more medications daily), as a doctor of physical therapy, I will recommend that the individual see their prescribing provider to review their medications and their effect on falls. If we are assessing the individual at a community event, we may recommend they seek out formal physical therapy or occupational services."

Templeton's initial clinical passion developed through specialized training in pelvic floor rehabilitation following graduate school. The pelvic floor—a complex group of muscles within the pelvis—plays a vital role in bowel and bladder control, sexual function and overall pelvic stability.

"Because it sits at the body's center, where the pelvis is connecting the upper and lower extremities, I quickly realized that the pelvic floor cannot be treated in isolation because it influences nearly every aspect of movement and function," she says.

Several years into her career, while working in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, as a geriatric clinical specialist across multiple assisted living facilities, she began noticing a pattern: Many resident falls occurred when individuals were walking to or from the bathroom. This observation became the bridge between her two areas of focus.

Drawing on her background in pelvic health, she started incorporating pelvic floor muscle training and practical behavioral strategies, such as limiting fluid intake a few hours before bedtime and reducing bladder irritants like caffeine and alcohol, into her fall-prevention programs.

"This integrated approach deepened my commitment to both pelvic health and fall prevention, recognizing how closely these systems are connected in promoting safety, independence and quality of life for older adults," she says.

Through her work with the Shady Rest Institute for Positive Aging at FGCU, she has been focusing on investigating how older adults perceive their risk of falling compared to what objective screening tools tell us about their actual risk.

"It's been fascinating to see how confidence, awareness and physical ability all come together in fall prevention," she says. "I'm fortunate to mentor a wonderful group of student researchers who are continuing this work and taking it a step further, exploring how pelvic floor health may also play a role in fall risk through subjective questionnaires. It's an area that doesn't get enough attention, and we're excited to bring more awareness to it."

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Happy Holidays from the Healthy Life Center Team!

Healthy Life Center

Education and Navigation

DECEMBER 2025



Celebrating A Decade of Wellness, Connection & Community



Ten years ago, the Healthy Life Center first opened its doors on Coconut Point Mall's Fashion Drive—an innovative “go-first” strategy that paved the way for Lee Health Coconut Point. What began as a vision for health education and navigation soon grew into something extraordinary: a place where wellness became personal, accessible, community-driven, and empowered by connection.



Once construction was completed on Lee Health Coconut Point in 2018, the team moved in and expanded Healthy Life Center services to include a full-service Teaching Kitchen and holistic spaces.



From providing resources and support focused on healthy lifestyles to meeting challenges

like COVID-19 with creativity and care, we've continued to evolve—**always keeping you at the heart of it all.**

Through every class, conversation, and connection, one thing has never changed: our commitment to leading the community toward better overall wellness.



You are the heart of our story—our mission, our purpose, our “why.”

Together, we'll keep inspiring health and connection for the next decade and beyond!

Tuesday, December 16
A Decade of Wellness
- Healthy Life Center
10-year Celebration
 2-5 p.m. RSVP
Sip, Snack & Sparkle:
Holiday Jewelry
Making
 4-5 p.m. RSVP
 Fee: \$5



Healthy Life Center

Education and Navigation

DECEMBER 2025

10
YEAR
ANNIVERSARY

WEEKLY IN-PERSON EVENTS

Every Friday
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3-4 p.m.

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MIND & BODY PROGRAM

Limited spots are available, RSVP required. First class is free.

Drop in rate: \$10 per class

Class passes available for purchase.

Tuesdays:

December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Outdoor Chair Yoga

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Instructor: Molly

Thursdays:

December 4, 11, 18

Outdoor Chair Yoga

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Instructor: Molly



Fridays:

December 12, 19, 26

Self Guided Walking Club

9-10 a.m. RSVP

Outdoor Stretch, Balance & Strength

10:30-11:30 a.m. RSVP

Instructor: Meredith

Fridays:

December 12, 19

Free Blood Pressure Screenings

9 a.m.-noon

Walk-ins welcome



IN-PERSON EVENTS

Lee Health Coconut Point • 23450 Via Coconut Point, Estero, FL 34135

To register for these events, call 239-468-0050.

Thursday, December 4

Cooking Demo: Strong Body, Smooth Recovery - Nutrition for Surgery

11 a.m.-noon RSVP

Fee: \$5

Saturday, December 6

Cooking Demo: Savor the Flavor - Leek Quiche Saturday

2:30-3:30 p.m. RSVP

Fee: \$5



Monday, December 8

Senior Blue Book: Aging in Place

Noon-1:30 p.m. RSVP

Lunch will be provided

Wednesday, December 10

Everything You Would Like to Know About Colitis

11 a.m.-noon RSVP

Dr. Robert Janda, Gastroenterologist

Friday, December 12

Go With Your Gut: The Power of Fermented Foods

1-2 p.m. RSVP

Saturday, December 13

Free Community Yoga-Lakes Regional Park

9:30-10:30 a.m. RSVP

7330 Gladiolus Dr.

Fort Myers, FL 33908

Meet in parking lot #3



Tuesday, December 16

A Decade of Wellness - Healthy Life Center 10-year Celebration

2-5 p.m. RSVP

Sip, Snack & Sparkle: Holiday Jewelry Making

4-5 p.m. RSVP

Fee: \$5



Wednesday, December 17

Lee County Sheriff's Program: R.E.A.D.Y. - Women's Basic Self-Defense Class

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. RSVP

Lunch Provided

Thursday, December 18

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group

10 a.m.-noon

RSVP

Plant-Powered Kitchen: A Monthly Cooking & Learning Experience

Noon-1 p.m. RSVP

Fee: \$5

Friday, December 19

Monthly Grief Support Group

1-2 p.m. RSVP

Tuesday, December 30

Cooking Demo: The Role of Mocktails in Health and Wellness

11 a.m.-noon RSVP

Fee: \$5



Scan for information

Healthy Life Center is your destination for healthy events in your area.

RSVP at 239-468-0050
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LeeHealth.org/Events



UNDERSTANDING DIZZINESS, VERTIGO & BALANCE DISORDERS

What Is a Balance Disorder?

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

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

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

Balance and the Inner Ear

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

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

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

Common Vestibular Disorders

Autoimmune Inner Ear Disease (AIED)

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



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

Acoustic Neuroma

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

Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo (BPPV)

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

Mal de Debarquement Syndrome (MdDS)

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

Ménière's Disease

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

Vestibular Neuritis

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

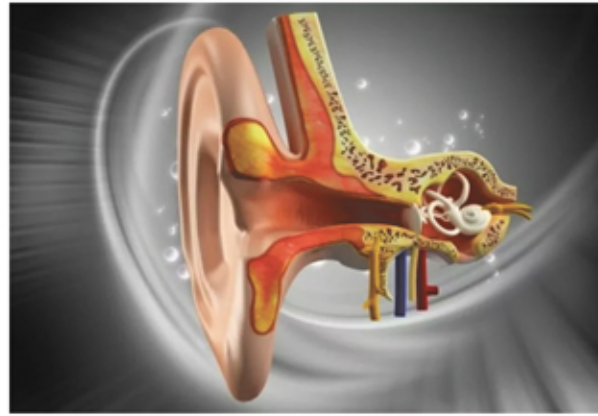
Perilymph Fistula

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

Diagnosing Vestibular Disorders

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

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



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

Treating Vestibular Disorders

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

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

Be Safe When Feeling Dizzy

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

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



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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ADVANCE CHRONIC MOBILE WOUND CARE:

How Amniotic Membrane Therapy Is Saving Lives in Southwest Florida

For the millions of Americans suffering from chronic wounds that refuse to heal after 30 days, hope arrives through advanced regenerative medicine. Jean Remy, FNP-BC, brings cutting-edge amniotic membrane therapy directly to patients throughout Southwest Florida offering a life-saving solution for diabetic ulcers, chronic pressure ulcers, venous leg ulcers, and other non-healing chronic wounds unresponsive to traditional treatments.

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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Revolutionizing Bone Health: The Cutting-Edge REMS Echolight Assessment

By Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

In the evolving landscape of preventive healthcare, 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.

Strength Lab⁺

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A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO NEW YEAR WELLNESS SCREENINGS

As we embrace the new year, making a commitment to comprehensive health becomes more than just a resolution – it's a strategic investment in your most valuable asset: your well-being. Any Lab Test Now offers an innovative approach to personal health management, providing accessible and comprehensive testing that empowers individuals to take proactive control of their health journey.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH SCREENING

Health is a complex, multifaceted aspect of life that goes far beyond simply feeling "okay." True wellness requires a deep understanding of your body's unique characteristics, potential risks, and underlying health conditions. Any Lab Test Now provides a holistic approach to health screening, offering an array of tests that cover virtually every aspect of personal health.

TARGETED HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

Men's Health Screening

Men face unique health challenges that require specialized attention. Comprehensive testing can evaluate:

- Testosterone levels
- Prostate health
- Cardiovascular risk factors
- Hormonal balance
- Overall metabolic health

Women's Health Screening

Women's health involves intricate hormonal and physiological systems that demand comprehensive care:

- Reproductive health markers
- Hormone balance
- Bone density
- Thyroid function
- Cardiovascular risk assessment

ADDRESSING SPECIFIC HEALTH CONCERNS

Anemia and Fatigue

Persistent tiredness isn't just an inconvenience – it's a potential sign of underlying health issues. Comprehensive testing can identify:

- Iron deficiency
- Nutritional imbalances
- Potential chronic conditions
- Metabolic disorders

Arthritis and Inflammation

Understanding inflammatory markers can provide crucial insights into:

- Chronic pain management
- Potential autoimmune conditions
- Early detection of inflammatory diseases
- Personalized treatment strategies

CRITICAL HEALTH SCREENINGS

Cancer Screening

Early detection is the most powerful weapon against cancer. Comprehensive screening can:

- Identify potential risk factors
- Detect early-stage abnormalities
- Provide peace of mind
- Guide preventative strategies

Diabetes and Blood Sugar

With diabetes rates continuously rising, comprehensive testing is crucial:

- Assess blood glucose levels
- Identify pre-diabetic conditions
- Monitor insulin sensitivity
- Provide early intervention opportunities

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SPECIALIZED TESTING

Chemical and Metal Exposure

Our modern environment presents unique health challenges:

- Detect toxic metal accumulation
- Assess environmental chemical exposure
- Identify potential long-term health risks
- Guide detoxification strategies

Digestive Health

A healthy digestive system is fundamental to overall wellness:

- Food sensitivity testing
- Nutrient absorption analysis
- Gastrointestinal disorder screening
- Microbiome health assessment

COMPREHENSIVE WELLNESS APPROACH

Heart Health

Cardiovascular wellness goes beyond simple cholesterol testing:

- Advanced lipid panel
- Inflammation markers
- Heart disease risk assessment
- Personalized prevention strategies

Hormone Health

Hormonal balance impacts every aspect of well-being:

- Thyroid function
- Stress hormone levels
- Reproductive hormone balance
- Metabolic health

Immunization and Infectious Disease

Stay informed and protected:

- Titer testing
- Vaccination status verification
- Infectious disease screening
- Immune system assessment

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CAN EBOO HELP WITH SPIKE PROTEIN?

Exploring the Science Behind the Therapy

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

As researchers continue investigating potential therapies for post-viral complications, EBOO therapy has emerged as a topic of significant interest in integrative medicine circles. Orchidia Medical Group offers this advanced treatment as part of their comprehensive wellness services, providing patients with access to one of the most sophisticated forms of ozone therapy available today.

Understanding EBOO Therapy

EBOO, which stands for Extracorporeal Blood Oxygenation and Ozonation, represents an advanced approach to blood purification and detoxification. Unlike conventional ozone therapies that treat small blood samples, EBOO processes significantly larger volumes—typically between two and six liters—during a single session. The procedure involves drawing blood from one vein, passing it through a specialized dialyzer while infusing it with medical-grade oxygen and ozone, then returning the treated blood through another vein.

This dual-action process combines ozonation with filtration, enabling the removal of various substances from the bloodstream while simultaneously enhancing oxygen delivery to tissues. The entire procedure typically lasts between 45 and 90 minutes and is performed in a comfortable clinical environment under continuous professional monitoring.

The Spike Protein Question

Among the conditions practitioners have explored with EBOO therapy is the presence of persistent spike proteins following viral infections. Some integrative medicine specialists report observing preliminary data suggesting decreases in spike protein and associated peptide levels after EBOO treatments.

The therapy may support general detoxification processes, and some practitioners believe this could indirectly benefit patients dealing with post-viral complications. Research in this area continues, with clinicians gathering data on patient outcomes to better understand EBOO's potential applications.

The Orchidia Medical Group Approach

At Orchidia Medical Group, patient safety and personalization remain paramount. Every EBOO treatment begins with a comprehensive consultation, during which experienced physicians evaluate whether the therapy is appropriate for each individual's health profile. Required laboratory testing includes complete blood count, comprehensive metabolic panel, and glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase testing to identify any contraindications.

Patients frequently report improvements in energy levels, mental clarity, and overall vitality following treatment. The therapy has also been associated with supporting immune function and reducing chronic inflammation, making it appealing to those seeking comprehensive wellness support.

Moving Forward

While EBOO therapy shows promise as a supportive treatment for various health concerns, patients should maintain realistic expectations and consult qualified medical professionals before pursuing any new therapy. Orchidia Medical Group emphasizes evidence-based practice while remaining open to emerging treatments that may benefit patient health.

For those interested in exploring EBOO therapy's potential benefits, scheduling a consultation represents the first step toward determining whether this advanced treatment aligns with individual health goals and circumstances. The team at Orchidia Medical Group is committed to guiding patients through this process, offering personalized care rooted in both scientific understanding and a genuine commitment to patient wellbeing. Contact Orchidia Medical Group today to learn more about EBOO therapy and discover whether this innovative treatment may be right for you.



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Finding Peace of Mind: How Private Duty Home Care Transforms Family Life

When a loved one needs assistance with daily activities, families often face difficult decisions about care options. The stress of ensuring proper support while maintaining quality of life can feel overwhelming. Private duty home care from Whitsyms In Home Care offers a solution that brings genuine peace of mind to families navigating these challenging circumstances.

Private duty home care allows individuals to receive personalized assistance in the comfort and familiarity of their own homes. Unlike institutional settings, home care preserves independence, dignity, and the emotional connections that come from remaining in a cherished environment. For many families, this approach represents the ideal balance between necessary support and personal autonomy.

Whitsyms In Home Care understands that every individual has unique needs and routines. Their caregivers work closely with families to develop customized care plans that address specific requirements. Whether someone needs help with bathing, dressing, meal preparation, medication reminders, or companionship, Whitsyms provides trained professionals who deliver compassionate, reliable assistance.

One of the greatest sources of peace of mind comes from knowing that care is consistent and dependable. Family members who have been serving as primary caregivers often experience burnout, stress, and health challenges of their own. Private duty home care from Whitsyms allows family caregivers to step back from the physical demands of caregiving while remaining involved in their loved one's life in meaningful ways. Instead of exhausting themselves with round-the-clock responsibilities, families can focus on spending quality time together.

Safety concerns weigh heavily on families with aging or disabled loved ones. Falls, medication errors, and household accidents pose significant risks for those living alone. Whitsyms caregivers provide attentive monitoring and assistance that reduces these dangers substantially. Their presence ensures that help is immediately available when needed, preventing minor issues from becoming serious emergencies.



The emotional benefits of private duty home care extend to the entire family. Adult children no longer lie awake worrying about whether their parent remembered to eat or take medications. Spouses find relief from the constant vigilance that caregiving demands. Even care recipients often experience improved mood when professional support alleviates the guilt they may feel about burdening family members.

Whitsyms In Home Care takes pride in carefully selecting and training their caregivers. Families can trust that individuals entering their homes have been thoroughly screened and possess both the skills and temperament necessary for exceptional care. This professionalism creates confidence that loved ones are in capable, caring hands.

Choosing private duty home care represents an investment in the wellbeing of the entire family. The practical support addresses immediate needs while emotional reassurance strengthens family relationships and reduces collective stress. Whitsyms In Home Care has built their strong reputation on delivering both elements with excellence.

For families seeking peace of mind during challenging times, private duty home care offers a path forward that honors independence while ensuring safety. Whitsyms In Home Care stands ready to partner with families in creating care solutions that bring comfort, confidence, and calm to everyone involved. The journey of caregiving becomes more manageable when trusted professionals share the responsibility.

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David Ruiz
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PAIN MANAGEMENT MONTH

Natural Relief Through Chiropractic Care and Acupuncture

December marks Pain Management Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about chronic pain and exploring effective treatment options. At Estero Family Chiropractic, we recognize that managing pain doesn't always require medication or surgery. Through chiropractic care and acupuncture, countless patients discover natural pathways to lasting relief and improved quality of life.

Understanding Chronic Pain

Chronic pain affects millions of Americans, impacting daily activities, sleep quality, and overall wellbeing. Whether stemming from injuries, poor posture, repetitive stress, or underlying health conditions, persistent pain can feel overwhelming. This December, we encourage those suffering to explore holistic approaches that address the root causes rather than merely masking symptoms.

The Chiropractic Advantage

Chiropractic care focuses on the relationship between the spine and nervous system. When vertebrae become misaligned, they can compress nerves and create pain that radiates throughout the body. Through precise spinal adjustments, chiropractors restore proper alignment, reducing nerve interference and allowing the body's natural healing mechanisms to function optimally.

At Estero Family Chiropractic, our approach extends beyond simple adjustments. We conduct thorough assessments to identify specific problem areas and develop personalized treatment plans. Patients seeking relief from back pain, neck pain, headaches, and joint



discomfort often experience significant improvement through regular chiropractic sessions. The benefits extend beyond pain relief, including enhanced mobility, improved posture, and better overall function.

Acupuncture: Ancient Wisdom, Modern Results

Complementing our chiropractic services, acupuncture offers another powerful tool for pain management. This time-tested practice involves inserting fine needles at specific points along the body's meridians, stimulating natural pain-relieving responses and promoting healing.

Research increasingly supports acupuncture's effectiveness for various pain conditions, including chronic back pain, arthritis, migraines, and sports injuries. The treatment works by triggering the release of endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, while reducing inflammation and improving blood circulation to affected areas.

Many patients initially skeptical about acupuncture discover it's far less intimidating than anticipated. The needles are incredibly thin, and most people report feeling minimal to no discomfort during treatment. Instead, they often describe a sense of deep relaxation and relief.

A Comprehensive Approach

What sets Estero Family Chiropractic apart is our integrated approach to pain management. By combining chiropractic adjustments with acupuncture, we address pain from multiple angles. This synergy often produces faster, more complete results than either treatment alone.

Our practitioners work collaboratively to ensure each patient receives care tailored to their unique needs and health goals. We also provide guidance on exercises, ergonomics, and lifestyle modifications that support long-term pain management and prevention.

Take Control This December

Pain Management Month serves as a reminder that you don't have to accept chronic pain as an inevitable part of life. Natural, non-invasive treatments can make a profound difference. If you've been living with persistent pain, this December is the perfect time to explore what chiropractic care and acupuncture can offer.

At Estero Family Chiropractic, we're committed to helping our community find relief and reclaim their vitality. Schedule a consultation today and discover how our holistic approach can help you live pain-free and fully engaged in the activities you love.



Dr. Larry Wallen



Dr. Leila Motta

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TrumpRX and How You Could Save on GLP-1's

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

President Trump's recent announcement establishing negotiated, lower prices for several GLP-1 medications represents a meaningful change in how these drugs may be accessed and paid for by people on federal coverage. The agreements with Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk are aimed at lowering the out-of-pocket cost of commonly prescribed GLP-1 agents (examples: semaglutide — brand names Ozempic, Wegovy; tirzepatide — brand name Zepbound/Mounjaro) and expanding coverage for selected clinical indications. The White House fact sheet and related administration briefings state that the negotiated pricing will enable new Medicare coverage for certain anti-obesity GLP-1 products and provide substantially reduced monthly prices for Medicare beneficiaries. *The White House*

How the program works, in plain terms: the federal government negotiated lower prices with manufacturers and will make those negotiated prices available to Medicare (and, via separate arrangements, to Medicaid under pilot programs). The reduced government purchase prices allow plans to translate lower wholesale costs into much smaller beneficiary copayments. Administration briefings have described beneficiary copays as low as \$50 per month for qualifying Medicare enrollees under the announced deal framework, and government purchase prices of roughly \$245 per month for certain formulations — figures the companies and administration report will apply when the program becomes operative. In addition, the White House announced a public purchasing portal (referred to as "TrumpRx") that will offer manufacturer-discounted cash prices for people without insurance or whose plans do not cover these drugs. *The Washington Post*+1

Who is included? The initial descriptions from the administration indicate coverage expansion to Medicare beneficiaries who meet clinical criteria related to obesity and related comorbid conditions (for example, obesity with cardiovascular risk factors, diabetes, or pre-diabetes where the GLP-1 drug is indicated). The agreements list semaglutide and tirzepatide among the GLP-1 therapies targeted; other agents and doses may be added later depending on FDA approvals and manufacturer participation. The administration has said roughly 10% of Medicare enrollees could become newly eligible for coverage of these agents under the announced terms, based on enrollment and utilization estimates cited by officials. *The White House*+1



When does it start — nationally and for Florida? Administration materials and press coverage identify "mid-2026" as the expected window for Medicare coverage under the negotiated prices and indicate some Medicaid pilot activity beginning in 2027. Because Medicare is a federal program, any new Medicare coverage and negotiated price terms will apply to Medicare beneficiaries in all states, including Florida, once implemented. That said, Medicaid is administered at the state level; the White House has described pilot or phased Medicaid expansions beginning later, and state Medicaid programs (including Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration) will determine how and when to add specific drugs to their formularies or preferred drug lists. As of this writing there has been no Florida-specific public adoption notice altering the Florida Medicaid PDL; Florida beneficiaries with Medicaid should monitor state AHCA announcements and contact their plan for confirmation. In short: Medicare changes will apply in Florida when federal implementation begins (mid-2026 as stated by the administration); Medicaid timing will depend on state-level adoption and any pilot programs. *The Washington Post*+1

Clinical context and public health impact: GLP-1 receptor agonists and related incretin-based therapies are evidence-based treatments for type 2 diabetes and, for some agents and doses, for chronic weight management. Their increased use has the potential to reduce risk factors linked with hypertension, diabetes progression, and cardiovascular disease in appropriately selected patients. This is relevant because roughly 40% of U.S. adults meet the clinical definition of obesity and more than one-third of adults have prediabetes — populations at elevated cardiometabolic risk for which GLP-1 therapy may be considered as part of a comprehensive treatment plan. Clinicians must continue to weigh benefits, risks, and cost when recommending therapy and adhere to FDA-approved indications and dose-specific safety monitoring. *CDC*+1

What this means for patients and prescribers:

- **Patients:** If you are a Medicare beneficiary in Florida (or any state) and have obesity, type 2 diabetes, or related cardiometabolic disease, ask your primary care provider or endocrinologist whether you meet the clinical criteria for GLP-1 therapy under the new coverage framework. Confirm with your Medicare Part D plan or Medicare Advantage plan about prior authorization, dosing limits, and copay estimates once the program goes into effect. For Medicaid enrollees, check with your state plan for specific formulary or pilot inclusion. *The White House*

- **Prescribers and pharmacists:** Review forthcoming Medicare guidance and manufacturer participation notices; be prepared for increased prior-authorization requests and documentation of indication (BMI, comorbidities, prior therapy). Compounding pharmacies should continue to counsel patients on approved uses, potential adverse effects (e.g., gastrointestinal symptoms, rare risk of pancreatitis), and the importance of clinician supervision when initiating or titrating GLP-1 agents.

Next steps for readers: Coverage details and eligibility criteria are evolving. Patients should not self-initiate GLP-1 therapy without clinical evaluation. Contact your medical provider to discuss whether GLP-1 therapy is clinically appropriate for you, confirm expected copays with your prescription drug plan, and ask your pharmacist about program changes and manufacturer programs that may affect out-of-pocket cost.

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Ten Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

Take control of the holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

Tips to prevent holiday stress and depression

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. Acknowledge your feelings. If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones for other reasons, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

2. Reach out. If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious, or other social events or communities. Many may have websites, online support groups, social media sites, or virtual events. They can offer support and companionship.

If you're feeling stressed during the holidays, it also may help to talk to a friend or family member about your concerns. Try reaching out with a text, a call, or a video chat. Volunteering your time or doing something to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships. For example, consider dropping off a meal and dessert at a friend's home during the holidays.



3. Be realistic. The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children or other relatives can't come to your home, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails, or videos. Or meet virtually on a video call. Even though your holiday plans may look different this year, you can find ways to celebrate.

4. Set aside differences. Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

5. Stick to a budget. Before you do your gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts.

6. Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, connecting with friends, and other activities. Consider whether you can shop online for any of your items. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for meal prep and cleanup.

7. Learn to say no. Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

8. Don't abandon healthy habits. Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday meals so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese, or drinks. Get plenty of rest, stay hydrated and limit alcohol.

9. Take a breather. Make some time for yourself. Find an activity you enjoy. Take a break by yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing, and restoring inner calm.

10. Seek professional help if you need it. Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or mental health professional.

If you or someone you love is exhibiting signs of a mood disorder, there is help in SWFL. Dr. Richard Capiola, MD is a Board Certified Psychiatrist with specialty certifications in addiction and forensic psychiatry with over 33 years of experience in the medical field. He graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine in 1990. Be sure to call ahead with Dr. Capiola to book an appointment today at 239-649-7494.



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



2026 Annual Enrollment is Here!

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

VERY IMPORTANT: Regarding Medicare it is illegal for an insurance agent to call, text, e-mail, knock on your door, hang anything on your door or vehicle or approach you without your consent. If they do ask for their National Producer Number NPN, and you will hear a click and will be removed from their list. If they don't hang-up get their number and report them to Medicare. There is so much fraud where people are being switched to plans that they never approved or were misled. Shop local, do background checks before you give anyone your personal information. You can google them, google reviews, check their Facebook, etc. Make sure that if you are working with someone you can call them personally if you have any questions or concerns.

Medicare Annual Enrollment is October 15 - December 7th for January 1st, 2026, effective. What can be changed at this time is Medicare Part D Drug Plans and Medicare Advantage Plans. The **last day** to make changes to **PART D for 2026 December 7th, 2025!**

Medicare Open Enrollment is January - March. What can be changed at this time of the year is Medicare Advantage Plans. You can make one change from one Part C Advantage Plan to another Advantage Plan from the same company or another. You can change from one Advantage Plan to a stand-alone Part D Drug Plan, this is not advised unless you have a secondary to Original Medicare, which is a Medigap and also called a Medicare Supplement. I always do the Medicare Supplement Applications 1st to make sure that the

person is approved. Medicare Supplement has medical underwriting, and you may not qualify. There are certain Special Election Periods that may qualify you as a guaranteed issue. You can NOT change from one Part D drug Plan to another this time of year.

Medicare Part C / Advantage Plans, most carriers have raised out of pocket limits and copays along with decreased extra value benefits for 2026. Annually Medicare Advantage Plans make changes. They must all include the same features as Original Medicare but not at the same cost share. They can have a premium, Medical and or Prescription deductible, copays and coinsurance can change. Extra Value such as Vision, Dental, Over the Counter, Part B Give Back, transportation, etc. can all change or be eliminated. Medicare sets the annual in-network out of pocket maximum; in 2025 it is \$9,250 for in-network and \$13,900 out-of-network services combined. However, individual insurance plans may set lower limits.

The old saying if it is not broken do not fix it DOES NOT apply to Annual Enrollment. Every year I see many people that have not checked/compared their current plan to what is new. I have saved so many people hundreds and in many cases thousands of dollars. You should be working with a broker that represents many insurance companies. Make sure you check them out, especially if you are going to allow someone in your house. I recommend meeting in their office. For myself, we represent most insurance carriers in our area and carrying all their literature with me is almost impossible. We use three large screens so that our clients can clearly see and compare the differences between the plans. The mini-

mum information always needed is all your doctors, medications: names, milligrams, and dosage. We load your current plan and then compare it to all the other companies in your area. What companies have all your doctors, the price for your medication normally makes a significant difference. Then the Extra Value is what is most important to you. We do NOT CHARGE for our review

and if warranted to change your insurance plan. Ethics is most important and if you are on the best plan we will tell you, plus you can see for yourself.

If your plan was CANCELLED/DROPPED for 2026, you have a guaranteed issue into a Medigap/Medicare Supplement. This is huge and very important, know your options!

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

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

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How Do Mycotoxins from Mold Spread?

By Scott Briggs
American Mold Experts of SWFL, LLC

What are mycotoxins?

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

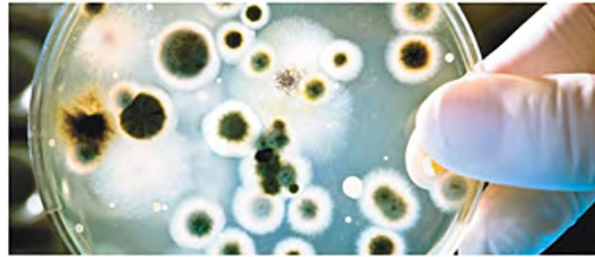
But how do they spread and cause problems for humans?

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

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

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

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



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

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

How can you keep yourself safe? *Evaluate your home:*

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

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

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

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



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Is Your Home Making You Sick?

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- It is well known that mold and **MYCOTOXINS** cause health issues.
- A water issue - even years earlier - could still be haunting your home.

The most common mold that affect our health can often appear as dust!



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Senior Driving: Navigating the Road Ahead

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

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

Observe for Possible Changes

• Changes in Driving Habits

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

• Diminished Executive Functions

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

• Memory Concerns

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

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

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

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

1. Express Concerns from a Place of Love

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

2. Highlight Alternative Transportation Options

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

3. Involve a Neutral Third Party

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

Introducing Beyond Driving with Dignity

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



Should you Consider Beyond Driving with Dignity?

If you answer yes to more than one of these questions, please reach out to us for a free consultation.

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

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

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



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Navigating the Holidays: A Pet-Friendly Guide to Stress-Free Travel

The holiday season is a time of joy, family, and festivities. For many, it also means embarking on journeys to visit loved ones or explore new destinations. However, for pet owners, the excitement of holiday travel often comes with the added challenge of ensuring their furry friends have a safe and comfortable experience. In this guide, we'll explore tips and tricks to make holiday travel with pets a breeze.

Plan Ahead for Pet-Friendly Accommodations

Before hitting the road, ensure your accommodations are pet-friendly. Many hotels and rental properties now cater to pet owners, offering amenities such as pet beds, food bowls, and even designated pet-friendly areas. Researching and booking in advance will help you find the perfect spot for both you and your pet.

Familiarize Your Pet with Travel Gear

If your pet isn't accustomed to travel, introduce them to the experience gradually. Begin by letting them explore their carrier or travel crate in a calm environment. Reward positive behavior with treats to create a positive association. This preparation can reduce anxiety when it's time to hit the road.

Keep Pets Comfortable During Transit

Whether you're traveling by car, plane, or train, prioritize your pet's comfort. Pack familiar items such as their favorite toys and blankets to create a sense

of familiarity. For longer journeys, schedule breaks to allow your pet to stretch their legs, hydrate, and relieve themselves.

Update Identification and Microchip Information

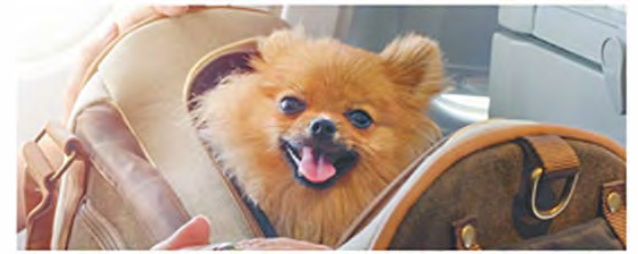
The hustle and bustle of holiday travel can increase the risk of pets getting lost. Ensure your pet's identification tags are up to date with your current contact information. Additionally, consider having your pet microchipped for an extra layer of security. In the event of separation, these measures can greatly improve the chances of a happy reunion.

Be Mindful of Pet-Friendly Attractions

While planning your holiday itinerary, look for pet-friendly attractions and activities. Many parks, hiking trails, and even some festive events welcome well-behaved pets. Incorporating these into your plans ensures that your pet can share in the holiday joy and create lasting memories with the family.

Prioritize Health and Safety

Before embarking on your journey, schedule a visit to the veterinarian. Ensure your pet is up-to-date on vaccinations and discuss any specific travel-related concerns. Pack a travel-sized pet first aid kit that includes necessary medications, a copy of their medical records, and contact information for a local veterinarian at your destination.



Establish a Safe Haven at Your Destination

Upon reaching your holiday destination, set up a designated area for your pet. This provides a familiar space where they can retreat if the holiday festivities become overwhelming. Pack their favorite toys, bed, and a few comforts from home to help them feel secure.

Holiday travel with pets can be a delightful experience with the right preparation and considerations. By planning ahead, prioritizing your pet's comfort and safety, and seeking out pet-friendly accommodations and activities, you can create a memorable holiday season for both you and your four-legged companion.

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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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How to **ENJOY** Having Your Home Professionally Cleaned

Your house is a mess. You have no free time. You hate to clean. If this sounds familiar, you're not alone. Over 100 million people in the US and Canada feel the same way. As you plan to hire house cleaning services, here are some tips that will make your experience even better.

Remember that you're hiring human beings

If you plan on every speck of dust being gone after your clean, you're most likely setting yourself up for disappointment. You'll enjoy your service more if you are realistic about what you're getting. While professional house cleaners are exceptional at what they do, they are not super human. They can't clean your master bathroom in 5 minutes. Humans also make mistakes. If something isn't done well, relax, call the house cleaning service at the office, and let them know. Depending on the type of issue, most professional house cleaning companies will send someone out to re-clean the area and make sure to correct the situation.

Leave your home while it's being cleaned

Do you like when someone looks over your shoulder while you work? Neither do housecleaners. Relax. Professional house cleaning services screen their employees, conduct background checks, and are bonded and insured. Get the most out of your cleaning service by getting out of



your house during the cleaning process. Not only will you enjoy the great feeling of walking into a clean home, but the cleaning staff will be better able to focus on their job. While leaving isn't a requirement, you just might find out how great it feels to abandon all thoughts of cleaning!

Leave a tip

Tipping service professionals is nothing new. Everyone tips their server at a restaurant, the bellboy, the valet. Tipping your cleaning professional is a good thing. Think about this; a professional cleaner is in your home, touching virtually all of your possessions. Cleaning is a physically demanding job. House cleaners are constantly bending down, scrubbing, walking up and down stairs, reaching up high, and moving heavy things around. And if hard work isn't enough, remember that they're dealing with all your dirty stuff! It's well worth a few extra dollars to say thank you. And who doesn't love a tip? Remember, a happy cleaner is a great cleaner.

To clean or not to clean

It's a question most people grapple with. Should I clean my house before the cleaning person comes? This is really up to you and there is no right answer. If you have hired a cleaning person for a set amount of time, the cleaner will be able to provide a deeper clean if your home is very tidy before their arrival. But, some people don't like even tidying up. If that's you, then letting the house cleaner do that might be well worth it. In the end, you have to decide how you want the house cleaner spending their time.

I clean my home in 1 hour...they should too

People always think a professional house cleaner should be able to clean their home faster than they clean it themselves. This is a misconception. When most homeowners clean their homes, they clean very differently than someone they hire. Homeowners know what areas they can skip and usually don't clean all the areas that professionals do. For example, many homeowners may skip the toilet when cleaning the bathrooms, only wiping down the counter and mirror. And even if they do tackle the toilet, they usually don't get the floor behind it. Professional home cleaners must clean everything, which, in the end, usually takes longer.

If you're realistic about your house cleaning service, you'll be much happier. And if there is something you're not happy with, simply call the office. You'll be much better off working through a few small issues than constantly jumping from one cleaning service to the next. Once you and the professional company get it right, having your home professionally cleaned is one of the best feelings around!

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It's A Wonderful Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

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

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

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

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

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

The first issue is to determine **what you are going to love**. To have a wonderful life, you start by having an attitude of love toward God and others. I say this first because where you choose to direct your love is going to affect every other area of your life. Love is a decision we make to place a high value on someone or something.

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

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

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

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



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


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

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



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