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January 2026

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Disclaimer: These figures are general averages and vary by cancer type. Survival rates vary significantly based on cancer type, individual health factors, and available treatments. The statistics referenced are general averages across multiple cancer types and should not be interpreted as specific medical guidance. For personalized health assessments, please consult a licensed medical professional.

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Patient Spotlight: Missy Groff

Patient of Dr. Ana Scopu, Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

For Missy Groff, improving her smile was not the result of a single defining moment, but rather a journey that began in childhood and evolved over time. Like many patients, her path to cosmetic dentistry was shaped by early dental experiences, long-term orthodontic care, and eventually, a desire for a result that felt both healthy and natural.

As a child, Missy completed extensive orthodontic treatment, including jaw surgery. Shortly after, she chipped her front tooth in elementary school. Having already endured significant dental procedures at a young age, she chose not to have the tooth repaired at that time. While the chip did not immediately impact her confidence, it remained a lingering concern.

In her early twenties, Missy became more self-conscious about her smile and elected to have the chipped tooth bonded. Dental bonding can be an effective, conservative option for minor cosmetic concerns; however, over time, bonded restorations may stain or discolor. As the years passed, Missy noticed that the bonding on her front tooth no longer blended naturally with her surrounding teeth.

After relocating to Florida, Missy established care with Dr. Ana Scopu for routine dental visits and to continue Invisalign® orthodontic treatment she had previously started in Pennsylvania. During these visits, Dr. Scopu identified veneers as a potential long-term solution to address the discoloration and restore balance to Missy's smile. Although Missy initially hesitated, she ultimately decided to move forward with treatment.

The results exceeded her expectations. Veneers are designed to improve tooth color, shape, and symmetry while maintaining a natural appearance, and for Missy, they provided the durable, aesthetic outcome she had been seeking for years. Today, she describes the decision as one she is genuinely grateful she made.

Missy and her family were introduced to Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry through recommendations from new friends in Naples. When researching the practice, she appreciated that Dr. Scopu offers comprehensive dental care alongside advanced orthodontic services. This combination was especially



important, as both Missy and her daughter needed to continue orthodontic treatment that began out of state.

Dr. Scopu's credentials, experience, and ability to provide coordinated care for the entire family made Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry a clear choice. Missy's experience highlights how personalized treatment planning and modern cosmetic dentistry can help patients achieve lasting confidence in their smiles.

Patients considering cosmetic or orthodontic treatment are encouraged to schedule a consultation with Dr. Ana Scopu to discuss individualized options and determine the most appropriate plan for their dental health and aesthetic goals.



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Building a Healthier Future Through Nutrition & Exercise

By Adina Benitez, MD, Family Medicine at Millennium Physician Group

For most of us, the road to better health begins long before a diagnosis. Preventive medicine is rooted in the idea that taking proactive steps today, before symptoms appear, can dramatically reduce the risk of chronic disease tomorrow. While regular check-ups with your primary care provider, health screenings, and immunizations form the backbone of preventive care, there are lifestyle factors at the heart of lifelong health – like what you eat and how you move.

A healthy eating plan and regular exercise are simple concepts most of us recognize as necessary, but the science behind them is powerful. By understanding how your daily choices can influence your long-term health, you can take meaningful steps toward preventing chronic disease and supporting your overall well-being.

Nutrition & Preventive Health

Good nutrition is one of the most effective tools in preventive medicine. The foods and beverages we choose every day supply the energy needed for movement, support growth and healing, strengthen the immune system, and influence almost every bodily function. An eating plan built around whole, nutrient-rich foods helps protect against obesity and chronic conditions such as heart disease, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, and even certain cancers.

A meal plan rich in essential nutrients like lean proteins, healthy carbohydrates and fats, vitamins, and minerals provides a foundation for optimal body performance. Three guiding principles can help:

- **Balance:** Avoid over-relying on one type of food. A balanced assortment ensures you're getting a broad array of necessary nutrients.
- **Moderation:** Even nutritious foods can contribute to weight gain or health issues if eaten in excess.
- **Variety:** Diversifying your meals exposes your body to different vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. This is vital because no single food can meet all nutritional needs.

But building a healthy diet isn't just about what's on your plate; it's about how you approach food choices overall. Many of us know what healthy food is, but struggle with the why behind our eating patterns.

Stress, fatigue, convenience, or daily routines can often determine what ends up on our plates. Recognizing your eating habits and what triggers specific unhealthy cravings can help you become more proactive about your food choices.

Another challenge many people face is navigating the overwhelming number of diet trends and conflicting advice. The most time-tested, evidence-based dietary approaches are the Mediterranean and DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) diets. However, even with these widely recognized nutritional plans, it's important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to healthy eating. Your age, lifestyle, medical history, and goals all impact the right diet for you.

Exercise & Preventive Medicine

Physical activity is as important as nutrition in preventing disease. Regular exercise can help control weight, improve cardiovascular health, support joint function, boost mood, maintain healthy sleep patterns, and reduce the risk of numerous chronic conditions.

You don't need the perfect fitness routine at the gym to experience the benefits. What matters most is consistency. When you move your body, even in small ways, you burn calories, strengthen muscles, and increase circulation. Over time, these efforts compound and help prevent or manage conditions or health issues like:

- Arthritis
- Certain cancers
- Cognitive decline
- Depression and anxiety
- Fall risk in older adults
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Metabolic syndrome
- Stroke
- Type 2 diabetes



For most adults, experts recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week, along with strength training at least twice a week. Moderate activities include brisk walking, biking, swimming, yard work, or vacuuming, whereas vigorous exercise includes running or dancing.

If finding time to exercise feels overwhelming, remember that all movement counts. Short bouts of activity throughout the day add up, like taking the stairs, parking farther away, or walking during phone calls.

Personalized Support at Millennium Physician Group

Before starting any new eating or exercise plan, you should talk with your healthcare provider before starting a new routine. At Millennium Physician Group, our team works closely with patients to understand their nutritional needs, lifestyle habits, medical history, and personal goals. Together, we can develop a personalized plan that includes balanced nutrition, sustainable physical activity, routine screenings, and comprehensive support.

We believe that preventive medicine is the foundation of lifelong health. Whether you're looking to prevent illness, manage an existing diagnosis, or live a healthier life, the team at Millennium Physician Group is here to walk with you every step of the way. Our goal is to help you set small, achievable goals that build lasting wellness – because preventive care today leads to a healthier tomorrow.

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TRANSFORM YOUR LOOK:

The Power of Injectables at Naples Aesthetic Institute

Injectables have revolutionized facial rejuvenation and enhancement. At Naples Aesthetic Institute, Dr. Kiran Gill and her expert team offer comprehensive injectable treatments that deliver remarkable results without surgery, making them the gold standard for non-surgical anti-aging and facial contouring.

Understanding Injectables:

Two Powerful Categories

Neuromodulators like Botox, Dysport, and Xeomin temporarily relax facial muscles responsible for dynamic wrinkles, smoothing crow's feet, frown lines, and forehead wrinkles while creating a more relaxed expression. These treatments also effectively correct a gummy smile.

Dermal fillers restore lost volume and enhance facial contours. As we age, faces naturally lose fat and collagen, leading to hollowed cheeks, thinning lips, and deep folds. Fillers add volume where needed most, creating a lifted, rejuvenated appearance.

Why Experience Matters:

The Truth About Filler Longevity and Placement

While fillers are broken down by your body over time, they actually last longer than the original one to two year estimates. The exact rate of breakdown depends on the individual's metabolism, so the time frame is variable. This is why choosing an experienced injector is critical for optimal results.

One of the most important considerations in filler treatments is proper placement. Filler migration often relates to improper placement and can occur when filler is injected into the wrong plane or spaces. For example, under-eye filler placed into the orbital space where there's no ideal spot for it to settle can move and cause chronic swelling that can persist for years. This underscores why expertise and anatomical knowledge are essential when choosing your provider.

The Artistry of Customized Treatment

Naples Aesthetic Institute creates customized treatment plans honoring each patient's unique facial anatomy and goals. Dr. Gill and Board-Certified Physician Assistant Christina Everswick Espineta ensure



Products Used: A series of Voluma to cheeks and Restylane EyeLight to tear troughs

natural-looking results that enhance your features. The practice offers Botox Cosmetic, Dysport, and Xeomin, with each providing proven wrinkle reduction benefits.

Premium Fillers for Every Need

Naples Aesthetic Institute offers the Juvéderm and Restylane collections, trusted hyaluronic acid-based fillers that naturally integrate with your skin. Juvéderm Voluma XC restores cheek volume and enhances chin contours, while Juvéderm Ultra Plus XC targets nasolabial folds and marionette lines. Restylane options include Lyft for midface volume, Kysse for natural lip enhancement, and Eyelight for correcting dark undereye circles.

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Sculptra offers a unique biostimulatory approach, containing poly-L-lactic acid that stimulates natural collagen production. Results develop gradually over several months and can last up to two years or more.

Safe, Effective Results

When performed by experienced providers, injectables are safe and effective. Most patients return to normal activities immediately, with results improving over the following days and weeks.

Begin Your Rejuvenation Journey

Injectable treatments offer versatile solutions for smoothing wrinkles, restoring volume, and achieving comprehensive facial rejuvenation. At Naples Aesthetic Institute, Dr. Gill and her team combine medical expertise with artistic vision to deliver natural-looking results. Contact Naples Aesthetic Institute today to discover how injectables can help you look and feel your best.

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ALLEVIATE THE PAIN OR NUMBNESS OF NEUROPATHY

Advanced Treatment Protocol Restores Damaged Nerves, Alleviates Pain

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

When the gym that Linda Dolinger attends opens its doors at 5 a.m. each day, Linda is right there and among the first to walk through those doors. She's there to build up her body and strength, of course, but also to build relationships. "I go because I enjoy working out and because I enjoy the people," says Linda, 76. "I always say that going to the gym is as much of a social activity for me as it is a physical activity. I usually spend an hour doing cardio and an hour on the machines." A native of Delaware who's been living in Florida for more than 20 years, Linda also enjoys going for long walks, cooking and reading.

A little more than a year ago, she found herself reading up on a way to relieve discomfort in her left heel. "It was a burning feeling in my left heel, not all the time; it was intermittent. But it became more and more annoying. I knew enough that I thought it was probably peripheral neuropathy." Peripheral neuropathy can cause numbness, tingling and stiffness, as well as weakness, and burning and pain in the feet, hands and arms. It's most often caused by diabetes, exposure to certain medications, chemotherapy, and spinal stenosis. But sometimes, no cause can be found. In those cases, the condition is called idiopathic neuropathy. That was the case with Linda, who also knew enough to seek almost immediate medical help. "I know that if you don't do anything about peripheral neuropathy, you can wind up needing a walker or a wheelchair to get around because it makes it really hard to walk, so I went to a foot doctor," Linda says. "He was no help, though, so I next went to see Dr. Hiler."

Combination of Therapies

Richard A. Hiler, DC, DABCN, is a board-certified chiropractic neurologist at Feel Amazing Spine and Joint Institute, an integrated practice that has both medical and chiropractic providers. "We do chiropractic, physical medicine and regenerative medicine at our clinic," Dr. Hiler says. "And neuropathy is one of those things that patients need physical medicine for because there is no pill for numbness, only pills that mask pain while things worsen. Many doctors are trained to prescribe and are not trained in treatment. They will usually say,

"You'll have to live with it". But peripheral neuropathy can be helped by treating nerve flow and blood flow. Dr. Hiler has been successfully treating the condition for more than 20 years with a combination of therapies.

At the heart of that combination of therapies are neuro-electrical therapies, light therapy and manual therapy. The program can also incorporate the use of a blend of vitamins and peptides. "We use many different electrical therapies that emit a gentle impulse exercising the nerve, gently restoring function, and also works as an analgesic for pain. "The light therapy is a red LED and infrared light therapy, it has to be a certain wavelength, pulsed at a certain frequency, and with a sufficient power; power you're not going to get from something you pay \$100 for on Amazon. Then there is vibration, manual therapy, neurological exercises and balance therapy. "Sounds like a lot, but we make it pretty simple" say Dr. Hiler.

Positive results!

Dr. Hiler says that about 90 percent of his patients achieve a 50 percent improvement or better, and Linda is among those who have reached that mark. By the time she visited Dr. Hiler for the first time, she was also struggling to walk and sleep because of her neuropathy, but that is no longer the case. "Dr. Hiler's treatments have really lessened the pain and the frequency of it."



Linda also found relief with Dr. Hiler two years ago to alleviate symptoms from severe blockages in her femoral arteries. Linda says "I had what I call a roto-rooter procedure done on each leg, and a stent was put into each leg as well. The pain I was experiencing improved a lot after that but it didn't last. Dr. Hiler's treatments have improved that pain I was feeling in my legs as well, and that's got me walking regularly again. I am very happy with Dr. Hiler and his treatment program, and I would never hesitate to recommend him for the neuropathy treatment he offers or even for someone who is just looking for a good chiropractor."

Richard A. Hiler, DC, DABCN is a board-certified chiropractic neurologist who has more than 30 years of experience and specializes in addressing complex conditions involving the joints and spine. He is committed to providing innovative, drug-free solutions for chronic pain and neurological disorders. He was the first provider in Naples to develop a drug-free neuropathy program, setting a benchmark for holistic care in the region.

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SHEDDING LIGHT ON NATIONAL GLAUCOMA AWARENESS MONTH

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING GLAUCOMA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



JULIE A. CARTER, M.D.

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

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

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

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

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

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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

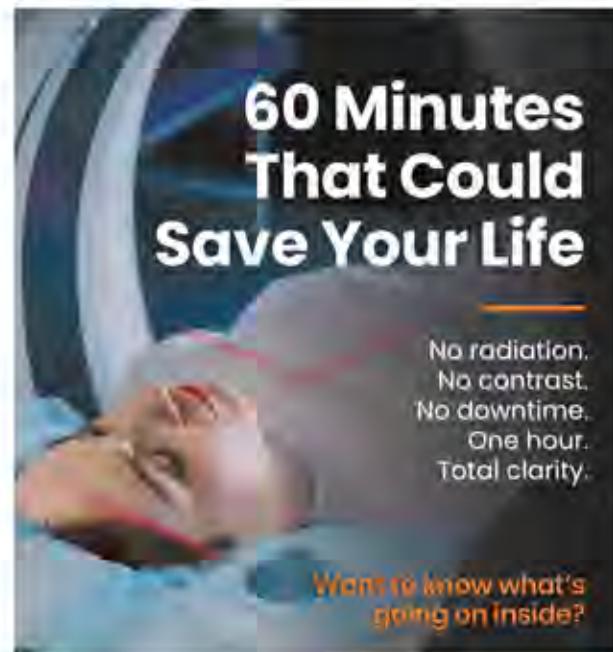
The old adage "knowledge is power" takes on profound meaning when applied to personal health. BodyView Full Body MRI empowers individuals to take charge of their wellbeing by providing detailed insights into their body's current state. This innovative screening technology transforms the traditional reactive 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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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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WHY WELLNESS LOOKS DIFFERENT AS WE AGE

By Greg Pascucci

The start of a new year often invites reflection. January is a time when many people pause to think about what they want more of in the months ahead. As we grow older, those intentions tend to shift. Wellness becomes less about quick fixes and more about sustaining a life that feels meaningful, connected and fulfilling.

While exercise and nutrition remain important, overall wellness is often shaped by the quieter moments of the day. Sharing a meal. Having a conversation that lingers. Waking up with something to look forward to. For many older adults, these moments become more consistent when they are part of a community.

At The Carlisle Naples, for example, wellness is woven into everyday living at the active retirement community. Being surrounded by neighbors creates natural opportunities for connection, whether through organized programs or simple, spontaneous interactions. Over time, these shared experiences can foster a sense of belonging that supports emotional resilience and mental well-being.

One resident described it simply, "Life feels fuller when you're not doing it alone."

Supporting this holistic view of wellness is central to Senior Resource Group's Zest initiative, which guides programming and experiences at The Carlisle Naples. Led by a full-time Zest Director, the approach is designed to nurture residents' mind, body and soul, recognizing that each plays a role in overall well-being.

"Wellness isn't one-size-fits-all," says Marcia Aldana, Zest Director at The Carlisle Naples, which is owned and operated by Senior Resource Group. "For some residents, it's movement and staying active. For others, it's creativity, learning something new or forming meaningful friendships. Our goal is to create opportunities that support all those paths."



Residents have access to more than 15 opportunities for physical wellness, along with programs that encourage intellectual curiosity, creativity and social engagement. The flexibility to choose how to spend one's time allows wellness to feel personal, not prescriptive.

Being with others also offers benefits such as lifting mood, sharpening the mind and creating a sense of security and belonging. Just as important is the opportunity to stay purposeful, whether through mentoring, volunteering or pursuing interests.

At The Carlisle Naples, residents are encouraged to stay engaged in ways that reflect who they are. Some explore new hobbies, while others return to passions set aside earlier in life. These experiences help reinforce identity and provide a sense of continuity.

As the new year begins, wellness doesn't have to mean reinventing oneself. Often, it's about choosing an environment that naturally supports healthier, more connected living. A place where engagement is easy, relationships are built over time, and each day offers meaningful experiences.

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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You Don't Need to Be Jack Nicklaus or Tiger Woods to Explore Advanced Regenerative Options for Chronic Back Pain

By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

You don't need to be a professional athlete like Jack Nicklaus or Tiger Woods to explore advanced regenerative approaches aimed at supporting comfort, mobility, and quality of life in the setting of chronic back pain.

Chronic back discomfort affects millions of people and can significantly interfere with daily activities, sleep, work performance, and overall well-being. For individuals who have not found adequate relief with conventional options such as physical therapy, medications, or lifestyle modifications, emerging regenerative-focused services are increasingly being discussed within medical and wellness communities.

UNDERSTANDING REGENERATIVE-FOCUSED APPROACHES

Regenerative medicine is an evolving field that focuses on supporting the body's natural repair and signaling processes. Rather than masking symptoms alone, these approaches are designed to work at a cellular and biochemical level to support tissue environments associated with inflammation, degeneration, or injury.

Stem-cell-derived products, extracellular vesicles (exosomes), and other biologic formulations are being studied for their potential role in cellular communication, immune modulation, and tissue support. These products do not function like traditional pain medications and are not intended to replace surgery or emergency care when those are clinically indicated.

WHO MAY CONSIDER THESE OPTIONS

Individuals who may explore regenerative-focused services for chronic back discomfort often include those who:

- Experience persistent back pain affecting daily function
- Have imaging findings such as disc degeneration, facet joint changes, or spinal wear-and-tear
- Are seeking non-surgical, minimally invasive options
- Prefer personalized, integrative medical strategies



Importantly, candidacy is determined through a comprehensive medical evaluation, including history, physical examination, and review of prior imaging or diagnostic studies.

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM A CONSULTATION

A regenerative medicine consultation typically focuses on:

- Understanding the nature and duration of symptoms
- Reviewing prior treatments and responses
- Discussing realistic goals and expectations
- Explaining available biologic or supportive options in clear, compliant language

Patients should understand that outcomes vary and that no regenerative service guarantees results. Education, informed consent, and transparency are essential components of care.

A PERSONALIZED, PATIENT-CENTERED APPROACH

Advanced regenerative services are not reserved for elite athletes or celebrities. They are increasingly discussed as part of individualized wellness and musculoskeletal support programs designed for everyday people seeking to remain active and engaged in their lives.

When delivered responsibly by qualified medical professionals, these services emphasize safety, education, and alignment with each patient's unique clinical profile.

IMPORTANT DISCLOSURE

The information provided is for educational purposes only. Regenerative medicine products discussed may not be FDA-approved for specific indications. These services are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Individual experiences and outcomes may vary.

ABOUT AXEL RUIZ MD, DABFP, CWS

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

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

He is known for his ability to explain conditions thoroughly and build strong, trusting relationships with his patients. 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.

For more information or to schedule a consultation, please call (855) 734-3620.



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UNDERSTANDING VARICOSE VEINS: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment Options

By Russell Becker, DO

Varicose veins affect millions of Americans each year, appearing as twisted, enlarged veins visible just beneath the skin's surface. While they most commonly develop in the legs and feet, varicose veins can cause both cosmetic concerns and physical discomfort. At Vascular Center of Naples, we understand the impact these vascular conditions can have on your quality of life and are committed to providing comprehensive care tailored to your individual needs.

What Are Varicose Veins?

Varicose veins occur when veins become enlarged, dilated, and overfilled with blood. These veins typically appear swollen and raised, with a bluish-purple or red color. The condition develops when vein valves, which normally prevent blood from flowing backward, become weakened or damaged. When these valves fail to function properly, blood pools in the veins, causing them to stretch and twist.

Unlike spider veins, which are smaller and closer to the skin's surface, varicose veins are larger and may protrude noticeably. While any vein can become varicose, the veins in your legs face the greatest challenge because they must work against gravity to return blood to your heart.

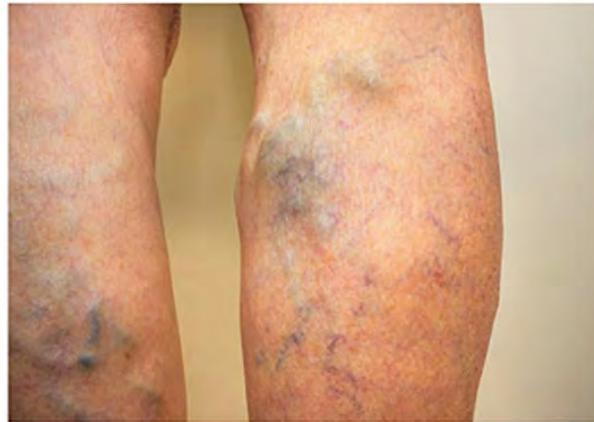
Common Causes and Risk Factors

Several factors can increase your likelihood of developing varicose veins. Age is a significant contributor, as vein walls and valves naturally weaken over time. Women are more susceptible than men, particularly due to hormonal changes during pregnancy, menstruation, and menopause. Pregnancy itself increases the volume of blood in your body while decreasing blood flow from your legs to your pelvis, creating additional pressure on leg veins.

Family history plays an important role in varicose vein development. If your parents or grandparents experienced this condition, you're at higher risk. Obesity adds extra pressure on your veins, while prolonged standing or sitting can restrict proper blood flow. Occupations requiring long periods on your feet, such as nursing, teaching, or retail work, may increase your susceptibility.

Recognizing the Symptoms

While some people view varicose veins purely as a cosmetic issue, they can cause significant discomfort. Common symptoms include aching or heavy



feelings in the legs, burning, throbbing, muscle cramping, and swelling in the lower legs. Many patients report that pain worsens after prolonged sitting or standing. You might also experience itching around affected veins, skin discoloration near the veins, or, in severe cases, bleeding from the veins or venous ulcers.

Symptoms often intensify during warmer weather or after physical activity. Women may notice their symptoms worsen during their menstrual cycle. If left untreated, varicose veins can lead to more serious complications, including superficial thrombophlebitis, where blood clots form in veins close to the skin's surface.

When to Seek Medical Attention

If you're experiencing painful symptoms or notice changes in your skin's appearance or texture near varicose veins, it's time to consult a vascular specialist. At Vascular Center of Naples, our experienced team can evaluate your condition and recommend appropriate treatment options. Early intervention can prevent complications such as blood clots, bleeding, or chronic venous insufficiency.

Modern Treatment Solutions

Today's varicose vein treatments are minimally invasive, effective, and require little to no downtime. Sclerotherapy involves injecting a solution into affected veins, causing them to collapse and fade. This outpatient procedure is particularly effective for smaller varicose veins and spider veins. Endovenous laser therapy uses laser energy to seal problematic veins from the inside. Radiofrequency ablation applies heat to close diseased veins, while VenaSeal uses a medical adhesive to seal veins shut.

Microphlebectomy, another minimally invasive option, involves removing varicose veins through tiny incisions that typically don't require stitches. Most procedures are performed under local anesthesia, allowing patients to return home the same day and resume normal activities within a day or two.

For some patients, compression stockings and life-style modifications may provide adequate relief. These conservative approaches include regular exercise, weight management, elevating your legs when resting, and avoiding prolonged periods of standing or sitting.

Taking the Next Step

Living with varicose veins doesn't have to mean accepting pain, discomfort, or self-consciousness about your appearance. At Vascular Center of Naples, we combine advanced technology with personalized care to deliver optimal outcomes. Our board-certified vascular specialists will conduct a thorough evaluation, discuss your symptoms and concerns, and develop a treatment plan designed specifically for you.

Don't let varicose veins limit your lifestyle or cause unnecessary discomfort. Contact Vascular Center of Naples today to schedule a consultation and discover how modern vascular care can help you achieve healthier, more comfortable legs.

Call us today at 239-431-5884.

It's no stretch to say that Russell Becker, DO, a fellowship-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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Seasons Change - People Change.

By Svetlana Kogan, M.D., IFMCP

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

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



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

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

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



Svetlana Kogan, M.D., IFMCP
The author of 'Diet Slave No More!', Svetlana Kogan, MD, IFMCP 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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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 word, 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, keeping the mind engaged and preserving cognitive function.

While macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, geographic atrophy affects central vision, **glaucoma** is often called the "silent thief of sight" because it can cause permanent vision loss before symptoms are noticed.

Glaucoma often coexists with macular degeneration or develops separately. Vision loss typically begins with reduced "contrast sensitivity," meaning things don't stand out from their background the way they used to. Loss of peripheral (side) vision occurs making activities such as navigating stairs, walking in unfamiliar environments and reading more visually demanding—even when central vision appears normal.

Low Vision rehabilitation can help individuals with glaucoma make better use of their remaining vision through special filters that enhance contrast, glare control, and "Side Vision Awareness Glasses" that expand peripheral vision.

When macular degeneration and glaucoma occur together, patients lose both central detail and peripheral awareness. This combination makes daily activities far more challenging than either condition alone.

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, Dr Denick can design a custom plan to make those goals possible.

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—they focus on preventing further vision loss—Dr Denick helps 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 life style 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.

Dedicated to Helping You See What's Possible

Dr. Dennis Denick, OD, Dipl ABO, FIALVS

*Fellow, International Academy of Low Vision Specialists
Low Vision of Southwest Florida*



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BEYOND PAIN RELIEF:

How Stem Cell Therapy Is Changing Lives

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

For millions of people living with chronic pain, traditional treatment options often feel like a revolving door of temporary relief, invasive surgeries, and mounting frustration. Whether it's degenerative joint disease, sports injuries, or age-related wear and tear, conventional approaches frequently mask symptoms rather than address underlying tissue damage. Patients find themselves cycling through anti-inflammatory medications, cortisone injections, and physical therapy with diminishing returns. However, a transformative shift is occurring in orthopedic medicine, and Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics stands at the forefront of this revolution through advanced stem cell therapy.

Stem cell therapy represents a paradigm shift from symptom management to actual tissue regeneration. Unlike pain medications that merely suppress discomfort or surgical interventions that remove or replace damaged tissue, regenerative medicine harnesses the body's innate healing capabilities. At Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics, this cutting-edge approach offers patients a promising alternative that targets the root cause of their pain while promoting natural recovery and long-term wellness.

The science behind stem cell therapy is both elegant and powerful. Stem cells possess the remarkable ability to differentiate into various cell types, including cartilage, bone, and soft tissue. When strategically introduced into damaged areas, these cells can stimulate repair processes, reduce inflammation, and regenerate deteriorated structures. They also release growth factors and proteins that create an optimal healing environment within the affected tissue. For patients suffering from conditions like osteoarthritis, rotator cuff injuries, meniscus tears, tendinitis, or degenerative disc disease, this means potentially avoiding surgery while achieving meaningful, lasting relief.

What sets Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics apart is their comprehensive, patient-centered approach to regenerative medicine. Rather than offering a one-size-fits-all solution, their team conducts thorough evaluations to determine each patient's candidacy for stem cell therapy. This personalized assessment considers the severity of tissue damage, overall health status, and individual treatment goals, ensuring that regenerative interventions are both appropriate and optimally effective.



The stem cell therapy process at Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics is designed with patient comfort and safety as top priorities. Procedures are typically performed in an outpatient setting using minimally invasive techniques. We use umbilical cord-derived mesenchymal stem cells, which are processed to concentrate the regenerative components, and then precisely delivered to the affected area using advanced imaging guidance. This targeted approach maximizes therapeutic benefits while minimizing risks and recovery time.

Patients who undergo stem cell therapy at Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics often report remarkable improvements in pain levels, mobility, and overall quality of life. Unlike surgical recovery that may require months of rehabilitation and carries risks of complications, many individuals return to daily activities within weeks. The regenerative effects continue developing over time, with some patients experiencing progressive improvement for six months or longer as new tissue forms and inflammation subsides. Many report being able to return to activities they had given up, from recreational sports to simple pleasures like gardening or playing with grandchildren.

Beyond pain relief, stem cell therapy offers the potential to slow or even reverse degenerative processes. For active individuals hoping to maintain their lifestyle or older adults seeking to preserve independence, this represents a game-changing opportunity. Rather than accepting progressive decline as inevitable or resigning themselves to joint replacement surgery, patients can take proactive steps toward genuine healing and tissue restoration. This is particularly significant for younger patients who want to delay or avoid artificial joint replacements that have limited lifespans.

The promise of regenerative medicine extends beyond current applications. As research advances and techniques become more refined, the scope of treatable conditions continues expanding. Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics remains committed to staying at the cutting edge of these developments, ensuring their patients have access to the most innovative and evidence-based treatments available.

For those exhausted by ineffective pain management strategies or hoping to avoid invasive surgery, stem cell therapy at Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics offers renewed hope. By combining advanced regenerative techniques with personalized care and deep clinical expertise, they're helping patients reclaim active, fulfilling lives free from chronic pain. In the evolving landscape of orthopedic medicine, this represents not just a treatment option, but a fundamental reimaging of what healing can be.

Contact Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics today at 239-829-4300 to schedule your consultation and discover how regenerative medicine can transform your path to pain free living.

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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.



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

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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

What is an Ingrown Toenail?

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

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

Causes of ingrown toenails include:

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

Treatment

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

Home care:

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



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

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

Physician care:

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

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

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

Preventing Ingrown Toenails

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

What You Should Know About Home Treatment

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

Collier Podiatry

It’s important to be evaluated by an experienced podiatric professional if you’re experiencing any type of foot pain. At Collier Podiatry, Dr. Michael Petrocelli has been practicing podiatric medicine for well over 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 heel pain and injuries in the Naples area.

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

Please call Collier Podiatry, P.A. today at (239) 775-0019 or visit www.collierpodiatry.com,



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CAN A HIGH-TECH CHAIR CURE INCONTINENCE?

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

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

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

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

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

How Long Is The Treatment?

How Many Sessions Do I Need?

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

What Does The Procedure Feel Like?

Is It Painful?

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



The following patients should not seek Emsella treatment.

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

How Fast Will I See Results?

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

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

References:

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



Some comments from local users:

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

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



www.FloridaBladderInstitute.com

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info@floridabladderinstitute.com

Step Into the New Year:

Why Better Foot Health Might Be the Resolution That Changes Everything

New Year's resolutions usually begin with big dreams: This year I'm finally going to run a 10K. I'm going to take daily walks. I'm going to hike more, move more, live more.

It's an exciting time, full of possibilities and momentum. But by February (or, let's be honest, sometimes by mid-January), that motivation starts to wobble. Our schedules get busy, our energy dips, and most commonly of all? Our bodies protest. Knees get cranky, hips get tight, feet ache after just a few days of renewed activity.

Here's the part most people don't realize: so many of those resolution-derailing aches start at ground level with your feet.

Where Resolutions Meet Reality

Think about it. Whether your New Year's goal is to walk more, run regularly, hit 10,000 steps a day, travel, chase your kids, or just stand comfortably while cooking dinner, your feet are doing the heavy lifting. They're your foundation, your shock absorbers, your balance boards, your personal transportation system.

But most of us don't treat them that way. We shove them into worn-down shoes, give them flat or unsupportive surfaces to stand on, and expect them to perform at their best. It's no wonder foot pain, knee pain, hip pain, and even lower back pain show up right when we're trying to build new, healthy routines.

That's why more people are realizing that the most effective New Year's resolution isn't necessarily about signing up for a gym or buying new running shoes—it's about taking care of that foundation first. And that's exactly where The Good Feet Store steps in.

The Good Feet Store Difference: A System Designed to Support Your Every Step

If you've ever walked into The Good Feet Store, you know the experience feels different from the moment you arrive. Instead of a quick in-and-out transaction, you're greeted by a trained Arch Support Specialist who takes the time to understand you: your lifestyle, your activity goals, your pain points (literal and figurative), and what you hope this new year will bring.

What you'll learn is that The Good Feet Store isn't just about inserts—it's about alignment, balance, and long-term wellness.

At the heart of their approach is the Good Feet 3-Step Arch Support System, a collection of three distinct, proprietary arch supports that work together to support and strengthen your feet over time.

Here's how they help keep your New Year's resolutions alive long past January:

Step 1: Strengthener — The Foundation for Long-Term Change

Just like lifting weights builds muscles, your feet benefit from targeted strengthening too. The Strengthener is designed to help train and condition your feet into ideal alignment.

When you're starting a new movement routine—whether that's jogging every morning or simply committing to daily after-dinner walks—you want your feet functioning as efficiently as possible. Better alignment means better posture, improved muscle engagement, and less strain on the joints that tend to get overworked when resolutions kick into gear.

Step 2: Maintainer — Your Everyday Superhero

Once alignment is improved, you need something you can wear comfortably all day. That's the Maintainer.

Think of it as your daily support system—the one you slip into your work shoes, sneakers, or casual footwear. It helps keep everything in place so you're not losing the progress you've made. Whether you're standing, walking, traveling, chasing goals, or just living your day-to-day life, the Maintainer keeps you on track, literally and figuratively.

Step 3: Relaxed — Recovery Made Simple

Your body can only perform at its best when it's allowed to recover properly. That's why the Relaxed exists.

For evenings and calmer moments, it gives your feet a gentle, restorative break. It's the arch support version of a deep exhale. Pair it with cozy socks or slide it into your favorite relaxation footwear—the Relaxed helps your feet recuperate so tomorrow's walk, run, or workout feels comfortable and attainable.

Better Feet = Better Follow-Through

Foot pain is one of the most unexpectedly common reasons people abandon their fitness resolutions. It creeps in slowly, almost invisibly, convincing you that you're "just not built" for that active lifestyle. But very often, it's not a lack of motivation or ability—it's a lack of proper support.

The Good Feet Store's arch supports are engineered to help reduce stress on the body, improve alignment, and distribute pressure more evenly. When your feet feel better, *everything* feels better:

- Walks go from tiring to energizing
- Runs go from painful to possible
- Hikes go from daunting to delightful
- Daily movement becomes something you look forward to rather than fear

And with their free, personalized fitting and test walk, you don't have to guess whether the arch supports will help—you'll feel it from the moment you step in.

A Resolution That Doesn't Fade

The best part? The Good Feet Store's arch supports are built for real life. They're designed to last, and your purchase includes a lifetime warranty along with free follow-ups, fittings, and adjustments.

That means your New Year's momentum isn't a one-month burst of enthusiasm—it becomes a long-term investment in your comfort, mobility, and health.

In a world full of resolutions that fizzle out, choosing to take care of your feet is one of the rare commitments that genuinely lasts. Every step toward better foot health is a step toward a more active, more joyful, more vibrant version of you.

A New Year Worth Walking Into

So this year, instead of making resolutions that depend on sheer willpower, consider making one that supports you—literally—from the ground up.

Whether you're lacing up your shoes for your first run, exploring new hiking trails, strolling with a friend, or simply trying to be more active in your everyday life, your feet deserve the same support and dedication you're giving to your goals.

And with The Good Feet Store's 3-Step System, you get a partner in that journey—one that's ready to walk with you every day of the year.

Here's to a new year filled with comfort, confidence, energy, and movement. Here's to taking that very first step—and every step after—with support that makes all the difference.

The Good Feet Store®

America's Arch Support Experts®

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



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





BRAIN-HEALTHY RESOLUTIONS: Your 2026 Guide to Preventing Neurological Issues

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

As we enter the new year, Advanced Neurology Specialists encourages you to consider resolutions that protect your most vital organ—your brain. While many people focus on weight loss or financial goals, investing in your neurological health can provide benefits that last a lifetime. Here are evidence-based strategies you can implement this year to reduce your risk of neurological conditions and optimize brain function.

Prioritize Quality Sleep

Sleep is not a luxury—it's a neurological necessity. During sleep, your brain clears toxic proteins, consolidates memories, and repairs cellular damage. Chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to increased risk of dementia, stroke, and other neurological disorders. This year, commit to seven to nine hours of quality sleep nightly. Establish a consistent sleep schedule, create a dark and cool bedroom environment, and limit screen time before bed. If you experience persistent snoring, daytime fatigue, or interrupted breathing during sleep, consult a specialist about possible sleep apnea, which significantly increases stroke risk.

Move Your Body, Protect Your Brain

Regular physical activity is one of the most powerful tools for neurological protection. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, promotes the growth of new neural connections, and reduces inflammation. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity weekly, combined with strength training twice per week. Activities don't need to be intense—brisk walking, swimming, dancing, or cycling all provide significant benefits. Exercise also helps manage conditions like hypertension and diabetes, which are major risk factors for stroke and vascular dementia.

Adopt a Brain-Healthy Diet

The Mediterranean diet continues to demonstrate remarkable neuroprotective benefits. Focus on incorporating more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fish, nuts, and olive oil into your meals while reducing processed foods, red meat, and added sugars. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish like salmon and sardines, support brain cell structure and reduce inflammation. Dark leafy greens provide folate and antioxidants that protect against cognitive decline. Stay well-hydrated, as even mild dehydration can impair cognitive function and increase headache frequency.



Challenge Your Mind

Cognitive engagement throughout life builds "cognitive reserve"—your brain's resilience against age-related changes and disease. This year, commit to learning something new: a language, musical instrument, or complex skill. Engage in activities that require problem-solving, such as puzzles, strategy games, or creative pursuits. Social interaction is equally important; meaningful conversations and relationships stimulate multiple brain regions and protect against isolation-related cognitive decline.

Manage Stress and Mental Health

Chronic stress takes a measurable toll on brain structure and function, affecting memory, decision-making, and emotional regulation. Incorporate stress-management techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or yoga into your daily routine. Don't ignore signs of depression or anxiety—these conditions are neurologically based and treatable. Seeking professional help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Schedule Your Neurological Check-Up

Finally, make 2026 the year you prioritize preventive neurological care. If you experience persistent headaches, memory concerns, dizziness, numbness, or other neurological symptoms, don't dismiss them. Early detection and intervention can make a significant difference in outcomes for many neurological conditions.

At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we're committed to helping you maintain optimal brain health throughout your lifetime. These resolutions aren't about perfection—small, consistent changes create lasting neurological benefits. Start with one or two goals and build from there. Your brain will thank you for decades to come.

Contact Advanced Neurology Specialists today to schedule your consultation and make 2026 your healthiest year yet.

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.



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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

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High-Dose Vitamin C, Alpha Lipoic Acid, and Ozone Therapy: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES IN CANCER CARE

In recent years, interest has grown in complementary approaches to cancer treatment that may work alongside conventional therapies. Among these, high-dose intravenous (IV) vitamin C, alpha lipoic acid, and ozone therapy have garnered attention from both patients and researchers. While these treatments remain controversial in mainstream oncology, ongoing research continues to explore their potential benefits and limitations.

High-Dose Intravenous Vitamin C

High-dose IV vitamin C therapy involves administering vitamin C directly into the bloodstream at concentrations much higher than could be achieved through oral supplementation. When given intravenously, vitamin C can reach blood levels 100-500 times higher than oral intake, potentially creating different biological effects.

The theoretical basis for using vitamin C in cancer care stems from several mechanisms. At high concentrations, vitamin C may generate hydrogen peroxide, which could selectively damage cancer cells while sparing healthy cells. Cancer cells often have lower levels of catalase, an enzyme that neutralizes hydrogen peroxide, potentially making them more vulnerable to this effect.

Several studies have investigated high-dose vitamin C's potential to enhance quality of life, reduce treatment side effects, and possibly improve outcomes when combined with standard treatments. Some research suggests it may sensitize certain cancer cells to chemotherapy and radiation, potentially enhancing their effectiveness.

However, the evidence remains mixed. While some clinical trials have shown promising results, others have found limited benefits. Most oncologists consider the evidence insufficient to recommend IV vitamin C as a standard treatment, though research continues.

Alpha Lipoic Acid

Alpha lipoic acid (ALA) is a powerful antioxidant that the body produces naturally and is found in foods like spinach, broccoli, and organ meats. When used as a complementary therapy, it's typically administered intravenously at doses much higher than dietary intake.



ALA's potential in cancer care stems from its unique properties. It functions as both a water-soluble and fat-soluble antioxidant, allowing it to work throughout the body. Additionally, ALA can regenerate other antioxidants like vitamins C and E, potentially enhancing their effects.

Some research suggests ALA may help reduce oxidative stress, support cellular energy production, and potentially inhibit certain cancer cell growth pathways. When combined with other approaches like high-dose vitamin C, proponents suggest it may create synergistic effects.

Ozone Therapy

Ozone therapy involves introducing ozone (O_3), a gas composed of three oxygen atoms, into the body through various methods. In cancer care, this typically involves removing blood, exposing it to ozone, and reinfusing it (autohemotherapy).

The proposed mechanisms of ozone therapy include increasing oxygen delivery to tissues, stimulating the immune system, and creating a mild oxidative stress that may trigger adaptive responses. Some proponents suggest these effects could potentially create an environment less favorable to cancer cell growth.

Research on ozone therapy for cancer remains limited. While laboratory studies have shown some interesting effects, clinical evidence of efficacy specifically for cancer treatment is sparse. Most mainstream medical institutions do not currently recognize ozone therapy as a standard cancer treatment.

Integration and Considerations

Proponents of these approaches often suggest using them as part of an integrative strategy alongside conventional treatments rather than as replacements. Some integrative medicine practitioners combine these therapies, suggesting potential synergistic effects when used together.

It's crucial to note that these treatments should be administered by qualified healthcare professionals in appropriate settings. IV therapies carry risks including infection, vein irritation, and potential interactions with certain medications and treatments.

Patients considering these approaches should discuss them with their oncology team. While some oncologists remain skeptical, others may be open to working with integrative practitioners to ensure safe coordination of care.

Looking Forward

Research into these alternative approaches continues to evolve. Several clinical trials are examining high-dose vitamin C in combination with standard treatments, while the scientific understanding of ALA and ozone therapy in cancer care is still developing.

For patients navigating cancer treatment decisions, maintaining open communication with healthcare providers and critically evaluating available evidence remains essential in making informed choices about complementary approaches.

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Weight Loss Through Neuroregulation:

Addressing Binge Eating, Stress Eating, and Cognitive Overload

By Dr. Waldo Amadeo

Weight loss resistance is frequently approached through the lens of caloric intake, macronutrient ratios, and physical activity. While these variables play an important role in metabolic health, they do not fully explain why many individuals struggle with binge eating, stress-driven food behaviors, and cyclical weight regain despite repeated dietary interventions. Increasingly, clinical evidence suggests that dysregulated eating patterns are not solely behavioral issues, but neurophysiological responses driven by stress, emotional processing, and impaired executive function.

Reframing weight loss as a neurobehavioral process allows for more precise intervention—particularly in individuals who experience compulsive eating, intrusive food thoughts, and difficulty sustaining dietary consistency.

The Brain's Role in Eating Behavior

Eating behavior is regulated by an interconnected network of brain regions, including the prefrontal cortex, limbic system, hypothalamus, and brainstem. The prefrontal cortex governs impulse control, planning, and decision-making, while the limbic system processes emotional input, reward, and threat perception. The hypothalamus integrates hormonal signals related to hunger, satiety, and stress.

Under conditions of chronic stress, sleep disruption, or emotional overload, prefrontal cortex activity decreases while limbic system reactivity increases. This shift compromises impulse control and biases behavior toward immediate relief rather than long-term goals. Highly palatable foods—particularly those high in sugar or refined carbohydrates—provide rapid dopaminergic and serotonergic stimulation, making them a common coping mechanism during periods of cognitive strain.

In this context, binge eating is not a failure of discipline, but a predictable neurological response to reduced executive function and heightened stress signaling.

Stress, Cortisol, and Metabolic Consequences

Chronic psychological stress activates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, resulting in sustained cortisol elevation. Cortisol increases appetite, promotes visceral fat storage, disrupts insulin sensitivity, and alters hunger-regulating hormones such as leptin and ghrelin. Over time, this hormonal environment favors fat retention and metabolic inefficiency.

Cortisol also intensifies mental rumination and emotional reactivity, reinforcing cycles of stress eating. Many individuals report feeling “out of control” around food during high-stress periods—not due to increased

caloric need, but because the brain is seeking rapid relief from cognitive overload. Repeated activation of this pattern strengthens neural associations between food and emotional regulation.

Binge Eating as a Nervous System Response

Binge eating behaviors are frequently associated with autonomic nervous system dysregulation. Individuals may spend much of the day in sympathetic dominance (fight-or-flight), followed by parasympathetic collapse (freeze or shutdown) later in the evening, when binge episodes most commonly occur.

This pattern is especially prevalent among high-performing adults, caregivers, and individuals with chronic stress exposure. In these cases, food functions as a self-soothing mechanism when adaptive nervous system regulation is insufficient. Traditional dietary counseling alone does not address this physiological pattern, which explains why compliance often deteriorates under stress.

Neuromodulation and Cognitive Control

Neuromodulation therapies have gained clinical interest for their role in regulating cortical excitability and improving executive function. By influencing neural activity in regions involved in impulse control, emotional regulation, and stress processing, these interventions may support behavioral change at the neurological level rather than relying solely on willpower.

Research on repetitive magnetic stimulation has demonstrated effects on mood regulation, compulsive behaviors, and cognitive flexibility. Improvements in mental clarity and emotional resilience may indirectly reduce binge eating frequency by restoring prefrontal control over limbic-driven impulses.

The Role of ExoMind Neuromodulation in Weight Loss Support

ExoMind is a noninvasive neuromodulation technology that applies repetitive magnetic stimulation to targeted cortical regions involved in executive function, emotional regulation, and stress response.

In the context of weight loss, ExoMind may be clinically relevant for individuals whose eating behaviors are driven by impulsivity, emotional reactivity, or chronic cognitive overload rather than metabolic hunger. By modulating activity in prefrontal networks responsible for decision-making and impulse control, ExoMind may help reduce intrusive food-related thoughts, diminish stress-driven eating patterns, and improve behavioral flexibility. Patients often report

improved mental clarity and reduced emotional reactivity, which can support greater consistency with nutritional and lifestyle recommendations.

Thought Patterns, Rumination, and Weight Loss Resistance

Persistent internal dialogue surrounding food—restriction, planning, guilt, and compensation—creates significant cognitive load. This mental fatigue further diminishes executive function, perpetuating cycles of overeating followed by restriction. Over time, the psychological burden of weight loss efforts becomes a barrier in itself.

Reducing maladaptive thought patterns is therefore essential for sustainable weight management. When cognitive noise decreases, individuals frequently report improved satiety awareness, less urgency around eating, and a more neutral relationship with food. Addressing neurological contributors to rumination allows nutritional strategies to be implemented more effectively.

Rethinking Weight Loss Interventions

Weight loss is not solely a metabolic equation, but a neurobehavioral process shaped by stress physiology, emotional regulation, and cognitive capacity. Approaches that fail to address the brain's role in eating behavior often lead to temporary success followed by relapse.

By integrating nervous system regulation, cognitive support, and functional nutrition, weight loss interventions can become more sustainable and less punitive. As clinical understanding continues to evolve, addressing binge eating and stress-related weight gain through a neuro-integrative framework represents a meaningful advancement in weight management care.

Dr. Waldo Amadeo is a chiropractor and functional neurology practitioner with advanced training in functional medicine and metabolic health. His clinical work focuses on the relationship between nervous system regulation, brain-based behavior, and chronic metabolic conditions in both adults and children.



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

Dan, a lifelong resident of Naples, Florida, has always embraced an active lifestyle. As a seasoned sailboat captain with a passion for extreme sports, he once reveled in the thrill of life on the water and on land. However, two serious neck injuries over the years and a lumbar disc herniation dramatically altered his quality of life. His inspiring journey of care with Dr. Michael Shaffer illustrates how advanced treatment modalities like M7 Laser Therapy and Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression can offer significant relief for patients suffering from chronic pain—while also integrating complementary therapies to address other spinal issues.

A History of Injury and Chronic Pain

Dan's troubles began during his college years when a severe neck injury ruptured two discs. The necessary surgery involved fusing and bolting the affected vertebrae together—a procedure that resulted in reduced movement and diminished sensation in his arms and fingers. Despite the stabilization provided by the surgery, Dan could no longer participate fully in the activities he loved.

Years later, while engaged in his regular workout routine, Dan experienced another traumatic event. An acute injury caused two additional discs, or "shock absorbers" in his neck to herniate. This led to a second surgical procedure, where the two cervical discs were replaced above the level of the previous fusion. For over 20 years, Dan endured constant neck pain, with daily discomfort fluctuating on the pain scale between a 6 out of 10 on a good day and a debilitating 9 out of 10 on bad days. He also endured frequent migraines and constant headaches. The limited range of motion—especially the inability to move his head from side to side—further compounded his challenges, making even routine activities a struggle.

Addressing Lower Back Pain with Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression

In addition to his chronic neck issues, Dan also faced lower back pain stemming from a herniated disc in his lumbar spine. This condition had caused severe leg pain, radiating all the way down to his toes—a discomfort that worsened after demands of employment. "On top of my neck problems I also had issues occasionally in my lower back. I had a herniated disc that caused leg pain that radiated all



the way down to my toes. It was especially worse after a long day on the water. I did a total of 24" (Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression) "sessions over 8 weeks and it completely resolved my pain. 100% better. I can work a fourteen hour day and have no back pain or radiating leg pain at all," Dan explains.

Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression is a non-invasive treatment designed to relieve pressure on the affected discs and nerve roots. Using a specialized table and harness system, this therapy gently stretches the spine, increasing the space between vertebrae. The resulting negative pressure within the disc encourages the retraction of disc material that may be impinging on nearby nerves. As a result, patients experience reduced inflammation, alleviation of pain, and an improvement in mobility.

Research indicates that Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression can be highly effective in treating herniated discs, with many patients reporting significant reductions in pain and improved function after completing a course of treatment. For Dan, the 24 sessions with the Hill DT state-of-the-art table, over an 8-week period were transformative. The treatment not only eradicated his lower back and leg pain but also restored his ability to work long hours without discomfort, allowing him to maintain his active lifestyle on and off the water.

The Turning Point: M7 Laser Therapy

Continuing to seek a solution to his unrelenting neck pain, Dan again consulted with Dr. Michael Shaffer and the innovative M7 Laser Therapy was recommended. This innovative treatment, and the only laser of its kind in Collier County, uses advanced low-level laser therapy (LLLT) to reduce both muscle and nerve pain. The M7 system emits near-infrared wavelengths—typically within the 800 to 1,000 nanometer range—that penetrate deep into tissues. By stimulating mitochondrial activity within the cell and enhancing the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), the therapy accelerates cellular repair, reduces inflammation, and alleviates pain.

Clinical studies on LLLT have shown that, in patients with chronic musculoskeletal conditions, such treatments can reduce pain intensity by 40–50% and improve range of motion. For Dan, after just 12 sessions administered three times a week, the deep, stabbing, and burning pain in his neck began to subside. He recalls waking one morning without his typical headache, a revelation that demonstrated the remarkable effectiveness of the treatment and provided him with newfound hope, and a new lease on life.

The Science Behind the Advanced Therapies

Both M7 Laser Therapy and Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression are backed by robust clinical evidence. The M7 system's use of near-infrared wavelengths leverages photobiomodulation—a process that increases ATP production at the cellular level. Enhanced ATP production accelerates tissue repair and reduces inflammatory markers, thereby alleviating pain and improving range of motion. Meanwhile, Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression directly addresses disc herniation by reducing intradiscal pressure, facilitating natural healing, and preventing further degeneration of spinal structures.



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Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery Focused on Patient's Rapid Recovery

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

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

What Is Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery?

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

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

Benefits of Minimally Invasive Surgery

MIS offers several advantages over conventional surgical approaches:

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

Conditions Treated with Minimally Invasive Surgery

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

1. Herniated Discs

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

2. Spinal Stenosis

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

3. Spondylolisthesis

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

4. Sciatica

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

5. Spinal Fractures

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

6. Spinal Tumors

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

Use of Robotics in Minimally Invasive Spine Surgery

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

Enhanced Surgical Planning

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

Improved Accuracy

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

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

Minimally Invasive Execution

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

What to Expect During Recovery

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

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

Conclusion

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



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New Year Resolution: Your Best Sleep for Improved Mental Health

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

The Connection Between Sleep and Mental Health

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

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

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

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

The Science Behind Sleep and Mental Health

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

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

The Impact of Sleep Deprivation on Mental Health

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

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



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

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

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

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

Sleep Disorders and Mental Health

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

Some of the most common sleep disorders:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Mental Toll of Hearing Loss

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

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

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

Cognitive Decline and Hearing Loss

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

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

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

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

Emotional Well-Being and Hearing Loss

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

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

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

Supporting Mental Wellness by Treating Hearing Loss

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

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

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

A New Year Focus on Mental Wellness

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

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

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

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Breathing Easier in the New Year: YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO ALLERGY TESTING AND TREATMENT

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

Understanding Allergy Testing: Your First Step to Relief

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

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

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

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

Immunotherapy: A Long-Term Solution to Allergy Management

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

Traditional Immunotherapy

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



Sublingual Immunotherapy:

A Convenient Alternative

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

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

Preparing for Your Allergy Treatment Journey

Before starting any allergy treatment, consider these important steps:

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

The Potential Benefits of Comprehensive Allergy Management

Successful allergy testing and treatment can lead to:

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

Conclusion

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

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

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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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The Holiday Hangover:

Why Marriages Crumble After the Festivities—and How to Pause Before Filing

By Ross E. Schulman, Esq., LLM., CFL™,CDFA / Associate

Everyone loves the holidays. The twinkling lights, the sounds of ripping into wrapping paper, the smells and tastes of indulgent foods. The mix of nostalgia for years past combined with the promise of a new year. However, as the confetti settles on New Year's Eve, the trash collectors have cleared the last of the holiday refuse and remnants of the season, January's quiet descends. Many couples face not just resolutions, but reckonings. Holidays evoke joy, yet for those on the edge, these moments often inspire one final push, a last grasp at rekindling more than just the holiday Yule log. No one wants to disrupt these rituals with talk of separation; instead, they delay, hoping shared traditions and a happy holiday season might just repair what's worn.

While the decorations come down and the champagne wears off, unresolved tensions resurface. If the hoped-for magic fades, decisions and emotions sharpen. For family lawyers, January arrives not with fresh resolve, but with a flood of divorce petitions and new conversations. Sometimes referred to as "Divorce Month," January marks a predictable surge in filings, as if the calendar itself flips a switch on suppressed tensions. Having practiced family law for over a decade, I've observed divorce filings ebb and flow with the calendar. Some years back, sociologists Julie Brines and Brian Serafini from University of Washington analyzed Washington state data from 2001 to 2015, revealing consistent spikes in March and August, post-winter and summer holidays. This "domestic ritual calendar" shows couples often defer action to maintain unity's facade. In my experience, filings drop from November through December, then surge in January as consultations book up quickly and can be hard to come by. Formal petitions peak later, closer to March, which aligns with the Washington study.

Ultimately, it seems that holidays don't just delay but amplify already strained relationships. Expectations clash with reality. Many Americans report severe holiday anxiety or depression from unmet ideals. For couples, this mismatch fuels resentment, while one spouse envisions a Hallmark moment, the other views it as simply surviving the time. Society peddles flawless gatherings and postcard worthy celebrations, but that is usually not the case. There's the emotional undercurrent. Fatigue from overscheduling erodes intimacy. Irritability flares over trivialities. Past issues resurface bringing unresolved grief and old

arguments, all intensified by the season's emphasis on "togetherness". Financial pressures escalate. Between the costs of gifts, travel, and entertaining, budgets become battlefields, especially for couples already at odds over money. Family dynamics expose additional grievances, whether it's an in-laws' barbs, uneven holiday labor, or logistics of spending holiday time with either spouse's family. For parents, the drive to create "perfect" memories heightens exhaustion, particularly in affluent families where grand gestures mask deeper emotional debts. Parents may bear a disproportionate load and are far more likely to feel stressed during festivities. Add in the parties, drinking, and desire to hide the truth of the struggles from everyone else, and the stress only increases.

Holiday vacations and escapes promise relief but often deliver feelings of confinement, exposing incompatibilities over the long hours actually spent together. For a strained marriage, it's a tipping point.

Have you ever delayed a tough talk, buoyed by holiday optimism, only to emerge more resolved? Or found a trip's end clarifying what routine obscures? These patterns invite reflection. The timing isn't random; it's tied to societal scripts valuing harmony in "happy" seasons.

Yet this seasonal discord need not lead only to endings. While it's true that holidays can highlight flaws, the glimmer and shine of holiday lights may also allow the positive aspects of a troubled marriage to once again sparkle. Before filing, consider alternatives. Options include therapy to rebuild communication. There is always the possibility of entering into a post-nuptial agreement to address financial imbalances or make a concerted effort to manage an agreeable outcome and smooth an equitable path forward if the effort to salvage the marriage fails. Many couples weather the holidays and emerge stronger, blending emotional tools like mindfulness with legal foresight.

Rushing to file post-holidays often stems from raw emotion, but quality family law counsel underscores the long game. Divorce is a marathon of assets, custody, and healing, not a sprint. Evidence suggests pauses can pay off. Couples who navigate one tough

holiday season often find footing for the next, blending legal savvy (e.g., consulting quietly pre-filing) with emotional tools like mindfulness apps or boundary-setting.

In the end, the holiday hangover reveals not just cracks, but capacities. As the new year dawns, will you file papers or forge paths? As a family lawyer, I've guided clients through these cycles with empathy and strategy. Divorce, when needed, fosters growth, but exploring options first often yields better outcomes. If this resonates—if you've glimpsed your own holiday highs and lows here—reach out. Let's discuss what fits your story: renewal, resolution, or something in between.



About the Author

Ross E. Schulman is a highly rated family law and estate planning attorney at Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. in Naples, Florida.

He is licensed to practice law in Florida and New York and is a Certified Financial Litigator (CFL™). Ross' Juris Doctorate is from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law Yeshiva University. He recently completed the University of Miami School of Law, Heckerling Graduate Program in Estate Planning, with a Master of Laws in Estate Planning LL.M.

Before becoming a lawyer, Ross worked in finance and gained strong negotiation skills while working on Wall Street. He traded financial products at Spear, Leeds & Kellogg (later Goldman Sachs) and Bear Stearns. He also worked as a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley, where he gained extensive knowledge about asset classes and various financial products. Ross is highly qualified to help you handle a variety of legal issues.



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THE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF OXYTOCIN SUPPLEMENTS FOR MEN AND WOMEN

By Dr. Melissa (Mel) Irvine, DNP - Clinical Sexologist

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

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

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

The Process of Oxytocin Release

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

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

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

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

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

The Benefits of Oxytocin

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

Reduces Anxiety and Depression

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

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

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

Reduces Stress Hormones

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

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

Improves Cardiovascular Health

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

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

Induces Labor

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

Supports Breastfeeding

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

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

Oxytocin Supplements

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

- social anxiety
- autism
- depression
- schizophrenia

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

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

Risks of Oxytocin Supplements

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

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

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

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

Ways to Naturally Boost Your Oxytocin

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

Physical Contact

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

Laugh

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

Give Your Pet Some Love

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



Share The Love

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

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

Exercise

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

Feel the Love: Oxytocin and Oxytocin Supplements

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

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

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

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

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LIGHT, CLEAN, AND EFFORTLESS:

NAPLES SOAP COMPANY DEBUTS FRESH NEW SCENTS FOR THE NEW YEAR

A fresh start to the New Year with fresh scents! As 2026 kicks off, Naples Soap Company is expanding its Luxe Line with thoughtfully crafted new scents formulated to smell fresh, clean, and effortlessly wearable. Known for its commitment to simple, natural ingredients and skin-loving formulas, the Southwest Florida-based brand continues to evolve its fragrance offerings with an emphasis on balance—never overpowering, always inviting.

At the heart of each product is Naples Soap Company's dedication to clean, effective ingredients. Fresh botanical elements, gentle oils, and thoughtfully blended fragrance notes work together to create skin and hair care that not only looks and smells beautiful but is also great for the body.

The new scent introductions reflect a growing desire among consumers for fragrances that feel light and modern while enhancing daily routines rather than overwhelming the senses. Inspired by coastal living and natural freshness, they are intentionally soft, airy, and approachable, making them ideal for everyday use across a range of skincare essentials.

"We developed these new scents with simplicity and comfort in mind," said Deanna Wallin, Founder and CEO of Naples Soap Company. "We launched our Luxe Line just over a year ago with an emphasis on enhancing our formulas. We created a hybrid Sugar & Salt Body Scrub that includes organic coconut oil, organic beeswax, organic shea butter and Vitamin E.



We expanded our Luxe Line with the addition of a super-hydrating Body Butter, lightweight spray Body Oil, and nutrient-rich Hand Cream. The line was so popular, that we spent the fall creating new scents to add to this line, including Moonlight Tide, Beach House Hideaway and Beach & Bamboo. Our Luxe Line offers scents for everyone – from clean and fresh unisex scents, to sweet florals, to zesty citrus – there is a scent that you can wear out to lunch with friends, to the tennis courts or for a round of golf, or to wrap up the day with dinner on 5th Avenue."

The new fragrances are featured across a selection of the company's most-loved products, including sea salt Spa Bliss Soaps, exfoliating Scrubs, and creamy Body Butters.



In keeping with the brand's inclusive approach to skincare, products are also available in fragrance-free options. This ensures that customers with sensitive skin or those who prefer no added scent can still enjoy the same high-quality formulations without compromise.

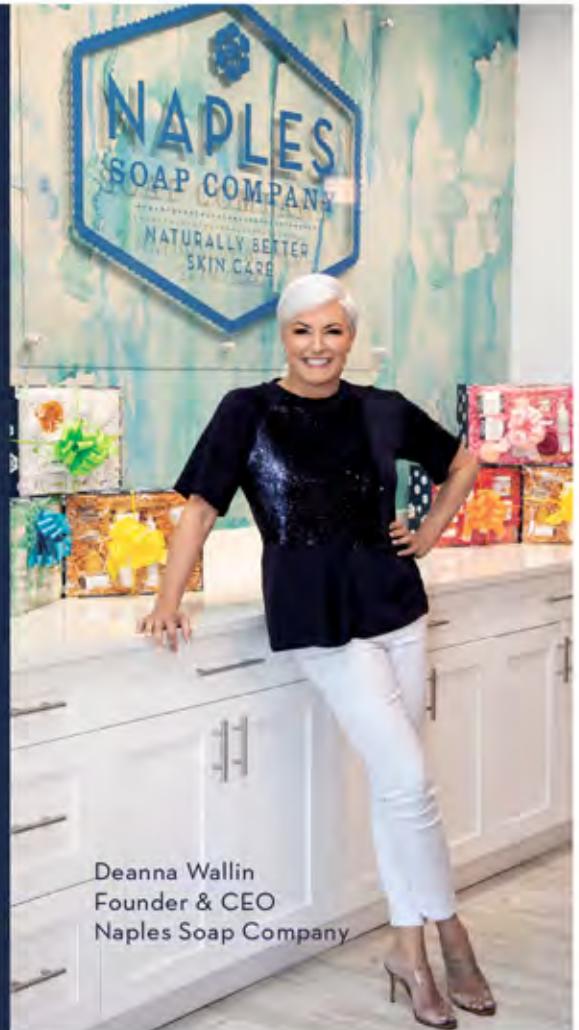
The debut of these new products marks a continued focus on mindful self-care for the year ahead. Rather than bold or heavy fragrances, Naples Soap Company embraces a more intentional approach—one that prioritizes freshness, comfort, and clean ingredients. It's a philosophy that aligns with modern wellness values and encourages simple moments of care throughout the day.

The new scent collection is now available at all Naples Soap Company retail locations and online at NaplesSoap.com, offering a fresh start to the year—one light, clean, and beautifully balanced scent at a time.



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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.



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NATUROPATHIC SYNTHESIS: SUPPORTING SMOKING AND VAPING CESSATION

Brain Rejuvenation Clinic of Naples

Stopping smoking or vaping involves more than willpower alone. Common challenges include cravings driven by reward-circuit dysregulation, withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety and sleep disruption, systemic inflammation and oxidative stress, heightened stress responses, and deeply ingrained habit patterns. A naturopathic approach focuses on restoring whole-body balance by supporting cellular energy, reducing inflammation, and regulating the nervous system. Within this framework, integrative technologies such as BAHI therapy and brain-based assessments may serve as supportive tools alongside behavioral and lifestyle change.

Photobiomodulation (PBM) uses red or near-infrared light to enhance cellular energy (ATP production), reduce inflammation, and support brain function. Emerging research suggests PBM may influence brain regions involved in mood, stress regulation, and reward processing—key systems affected by nicotine dependence. Some clinical settings report improved emotional regulation and reduced withdrawal symptoms during detoxification. From a naturopathic perspective, PBM may help rebalance neural energy and stress responses, supporting resilience during nicotine withdrawal.

Molecular hydrogen inhalation acts as a selective antioxidant, neutralizing harmful free radicals while supporting mitochondrial function. Smokers and vapers experience elevated oxidative stress and inflammation, particularly in lung and brain tissues. By reducing oxidative load, hydrogen inhalation may ease physiological strain during withdrawal and promote systemic recovery. While not a direct cessation therapy, it may support mood stability and cellular repair as the body detoxifies from chronic nicotine exposure.



Ultrasonic or sonic wave vibration therapy uses low-frequency vibrations to encourage circulation, lymphatic flow, and nervous system relaxation. Nicotine withdrawal often produces restlessness and heightened sympathetic nervous system activity. Gentle vibration therapy may help calm the body, improve circulation, and support autonomic balance, creating a more regulated internal environment that makes quitting more manageable. This modality is considered supportive rather than curative.

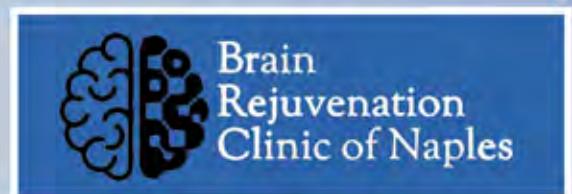
Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) delivers oxygen under increased atmospheric pressure, allowing greater oxygen absorption into blood plasma and tissues. Smoking and vaping impair oxygen delivery and contribute to tissue hypoxia. HBOT may help improve oxygenation, reduce fatigue, and support tissue and brain recovery during cessation. While HBOT does not treat addiction directly, it is sometimes used in recovery settings to support systemic healing and neurological health.

To individualize care, WAVi brain scans and autonomic nervous system (ANS) assessments provide objective insight into brainwave activity, cognitive processing, and stress regulation. Smoking and vaping

alter reward pathways and reduce cognitive control under stress. WAVi testing can establish baselines, track improvements over time, and reveal how well someone is adapting to withdrawal. Measures such as heart rate variability help assess sympathetic versus parasympathetic balance, guiding personalized interventions such as PBM protocols, breathing practices, meditation, and lifestyle strategies.

Integrative Perspective

Together, these modalities aim to support the body's innate healing capacity by calming the nervous system, reducing inflammation, improving oxygenation, and enhancing brain resilience. While none replace behavioral support or counseling, they may complement evidence-based cessation strategies by addressing the physiological and neurological stressors that often undermine attempts to quit smoking or vaping.



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

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

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

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

Setting Realistic and Meaningful Goals

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

Nutrition: The Foundation of Weight Loss

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

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



Exercise: Finding Joy in Movement

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

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

Mental Health and Motivation

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

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

Staying Consistent and Adaptable

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

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

KATHY VERDES APRN, A-GNP-C

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

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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: THYROID DISEASE CAN GO UNDETECTED WITHOUT YEARLY EXAM BY PCP

By RICK WEBER

An estimated 20 million Americans are affected by thyroid disease. But how many have it and don't know it?

Too many, according to Mark Monzone, Assistant Professor and Clinical Director in the Physician Assistant Program at Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health & Human Services. The American Thyroid Association (ATA) has tried to quantify it, saying up to 60% of people with thyroid disease are unaware of their condition.

"I currently work in Urgent Care, and a large population of the patients do not have a Primary Care Provider (PCP) and have not had bloodwork performed in years," Monzone says. "It is these patients that will often go undiagnosed with thyroid function problems, and the importance of routine yearly medical workup by a PCP would be the most important point of awareness needed when it comes to thyroid function."

"This is why it is key to talk to your PCP about all of your symptoms, even those that you think are not important. The general population should understand the importance of checking your thyroid, because often treatment of thyroid disease is simple and can often improve a patient's quality of life."

Undiagnosed thyroid disease could put patients at risk for serious conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, osteoporosis and infertility.

To check your thyroid, your provider will likely touch or palpate your neck to ensure the gland is not enlarged. If any nodules, lumps, masses or an enlarged thyroid are felt, then that patient should get an ultrasound to evaluate the thyroid to determine if there are any concerning findings for possible thyroid cancer.

Typically, the first laboratory test ordered is for the thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). This hormone, produced by the pituitary gland in your brain, signals an "on/off" mechanism of the thyroid gland. If this is abnormal, further studies may be necessary.

The thyroid gland is located in the anterior neck, directly midline. This gland release hormones that



help to regulate your body in many ways, but most importantly it regulates your metabolism, which determines how your body uses energy. The hormones released by the thyroid can affect your metabolism, heart rate, breathing, body temperature, digestion, mental activity, skin and bone health, fertility and rate of wound healing.

The thyroid gland is sometimes misunderstood because lab values can be misleading to a patient. A high TSH is an indicator of possible hypothyroidism (underactive or low-functioning thyroid) and a low TSH can be an indicator for possible hyperthyroidism (overactive or high-functioning thyroid).

"This confuses some patients, because they typically interpret a lab as 'high' to mean that you have too much or overactive amount—but with TSH, it is interpreted as the opposite," Monzone says.

Hypothyroidism has the following common symptoms: weight gain, fatigue, dry skin, depression, mental fog, constipation, feeling cold, hair loss and muscle aches. If the TSH is elevated, then a second blood test—a Free T4—is needed to confirm the level of function for the thyroid. If the thyroid is underactive, then the TSH is elevated and the Free T4 is decreased. Hypothyroidism is treated with synthetic thyroid hormone, levothyroxine, taken daily.

Hyperthyroidism has the following common symptoms: weight loss, palpitations/rapid heart rate, anxiety, tremors, feeling hot, diarrhea/frequent bowel movements, and sometimes bulging eyes.

Labs will show a TSH that is low or decreased, and another thyroid test known as T3 will be high/elevated. Free T4 can often be elevated as well but is less accurate with hyperthyroidism than T3 is.

Hyperthyroidism is treated with a combination of medications, but medical management of hyperthyroidism does not work consistently for many patients. The next two options for treatment:

- **Radioactive iodine.** This destroys thyroid cells, which in turn makes the thyroid inactive. There are side effects that should be discussed with an endocrinologist prior to deciding to undergo this treatment.

- **Surgery (thyroidectomy).** It is the best and most definitive option for treatment, if deemed appropriate for that specific patient based off their other health history.

Eighty percent of thyroid cancer is papillary thyroid carcinoma, which has a near-99% survival rate. The best treatment for thyroid cancer is removal of the thyroid via thyroidectomy.

"There are risks with thyroid surgery, but they are typically very low if the procedure is performed by a surgeon familiar with the surgery who performs them weekly," Monzone says. "As they say, 'The more you do something, the better you get.'

"After a thyroidectomy, you would no longer have a thyroid, so you would have no further thyroid hormones. This essentially would cause you to become very hypothyroid, and to avoid the hypothyroid symptoms and to balance/regulate your body; you would be placed on levothyroxine, which you would take each morning. If taken appropriately, it would replace all thyroid hormones for your body and make it seem like you had a perfectly functioning thyroid."

Thyroid problems are most likely to affect women or anyone over the age of 60. Women are five to eight times more likely than men to have thyroid problems and one woman in eight will develop a thyroid disorder during her lifetime, according to the ATA.

The risk increases for those with a family history of thyroid disorders or those with an autoimmune disease, especially pernicious anemia, Type 1 diabetes, Celiac disease, Addison's disease, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis or Sjogren's disease.

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PICKLEBALL

By Robert Swift, D.O.

Board Certified Orthopedic Surgery and Sports Medicine



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

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

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

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

Associated Injuries

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

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

Acute Injuries

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

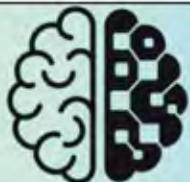
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KIDNEY CANCER: Are You at Risk?

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Treatment

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

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

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Chronic Kidney Disease Program

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

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

Source:

1. https://www.nfcr.org/cancer-types/kidney-cancer/?gclid=CjwKCAiAyc2BBhAaElvA44-wW9qTM7gXbIKsBU1dxNN-rM70KwmG3i43b2ni6h175MlIQCzwNsKORoCE5QQAvD_BwE

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

Services Provided

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

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- Electrolyte Disorders
- Fluid Overload, Edema (swelling)
- Glomerulonephritis
- Hypertension
- Injections of Aranesp for Anemia related to Kidney Disease
- Kidney Transplant Services: Patient and Donor Evaluations, Post-Transplant Follow-up Care
- Lupus Nephritis
- Nephrotic Syndrome
- Pyelonephritis
- Polycystic Kidney Disease
- Recurring kidney stones
- Renal Failure
- Renal Insufficiency

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

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CBD for Anxiety and Sleep: A Pharmacist-Guided Approach Using Clinically Vetted Brands

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

Anxiety and sleep disorders remain among the most common health concerns affecting adults in the United States. According to the *Anxiety & Depression Association of America*, anxiety disorders impact over 40 million adults annually, while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that approximately one in three adults does not obtain adequate sleep on a regular basis. As patients seek integrative options to complement conventional care, cannabidiol (CBD) has gained increasing clinical attention for its potential role in stress modulation and sleep support.

At Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy, CBD recommendations are approached through the same clinical lens used for prescription therapies—focusing on safety, product integrity, dosing precision, and patient-specific needs. The pharmacy intentionally carries only pharmaceutical-grade CBD products from U.S.-based manufacturers that meet rigorous quality and testing standards.

How CBD May Support Anxiety and Sleep Regulation

CBD is a non-intoxicating cannabinoid derived from hemp containing less than 0.3% THC, in accordance with federal regulations. Research indicates that CBD interacts with the endocannabinoid system, which plays a regulatory role in mood, stress response, and circadian rhythm. CBD has demonstrated activity at serotonin 5-HT1A receptors, a mechanism shared by certain prescription anxiolytics.

A 2019 clinical review published in *The Permanente Journal* found that 79% of patients reported decreased anxiety scores within the first month of CBD use, while 66% experienced improved sleep. Unlike benzodiazepines or sedative-hypnotics, CBD does not appear to produce tolerance, dependency, or significant cognitive impairment when used appropriately.

CBD may support sleep indirectly by reducing anxiety, calming hyperarousal, and addressing inflammation or discomfort that disrupts restorative sleep. Response varies by dose, formulation, and individual physiology, underscoring the importance of professional guidance.

Why Brand Quality Matters in CBD Therapy

The effectiveness and safety of CBD depend heavily on how it is grown, extracted, formulated, and tested. Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy selects CBD brands that provide:

- U.S.-grown hemp
- Third-party laboratory verification
- Precise cannabinoid labeling
- THC compliance
- Absence of heavy metals, pesticides, and solvents

The pharmacy currently features three clinically respected CBD manufacturers, each offering unique advantages for patients seeking anxiety or sleep support.

Provida CBD

Provida CBD is known for pharmaceutical-grade formulations designed with precision dosing and clean ingredient profiles. Their products are produced in the United States using organically grown hemp and CO₂ extraction methods.Provida emphasizes consistency and transparency, making their CBD tinctures and capsules well suited for patients who require controlled, predictable dosing—particularly those managing chronic anxiety or sleep disturbances under medical supervision.

Charlotte's Web

Charlotte's Web is one of the most extensively researched and recognized CBD brands in the United States. Founded by the Stanley Brothers, this brand has been used in multiple observational studies and maintains vertically integrated manufacturing, from hemp cultivation to finished product. Charlotte's Web offers full-spectrum CBD formulations designed to support the "entourage effect," which may enhance therapeutic response for stress resilience and sleep quality.

Nutritional Frontiers

Nutritional Frontiers focuses on practitioner-exclusive, evidence-informed nutraceuticals. Their CBD products are formulated with clinical practitioners in mind and often incorporate complementary botanicals or adaptogens that may support nervous system balance and sleep-wake regulation. This brand is frequently selected for patients seeking integrative support alongside functional or life-style-based care plans.



The Creative Scripts Difference

Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy does not approach CBD as a retail supplement. Instead, pharmacists evaluate patient goals, current medications, and health history to recommend appropriate products, dosing strategies, and timing. This individualized approach helps minimize drug interactions—particularly with medications metabolized through the cytochrome P450 enzyme system—and improves clinical outcomes.

CBD is not appropriate for all patients, including those who are pregnant, nursing, or managing certain medical conditions. Mild side effects such as fatigue or gastrointestinal discomfort may occur. For this reason, pharmacist consultation is essential prior to initiating therapy.

Supporting Informed, Safe CBD Use

As patient interest in CBD continues to grow, professional oversight remains critical. When sourced responsibly and used under medical guidance, CBD may provide meaningful support for individuals experiencing anxiety or sleep challenges.

Patients interested in CBD therapy are encouraged to consult with the pharmacists at Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy to determine whether CBD is appropriate for their individual needs and to ensure safe, evidence-informed use as part of a comprehensive care plan.

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Health & Wellness MAGAZINE

Healthy new year

2026

As we welcome 2026, we want to express our heartfelt gratitude to our incredible readers. Your commitment to living healthier, more vibrant lives inspires everything we do.

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Wishing you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and prosperous New Year!

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2026 Open Enrollment is Here!

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

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

Substantial changes to Medicare Part D, stand-alone drug plans as well as Advantage Plans, you won't have to pay more than \$2,100 in out-of-pocket costs, which include deductibles, co-pays, and coinsurance. It is especially important to check your plans formulary as medication must be in formulary to be capped. 2026 RX deductibles will be capped at \$615.00. As a reminder the cost of the plan is not as important as the cost plus your medications, that is what you look at, the total cost. It is important to know what the medication is used for to determine if it is covered by the plan. Example Wycovy may be covered but to be covered it must be used for certain heart conditions or diabetes, Medicare does not cover weight loss medications at this time.

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



The old saying if it is not broken do not fix it DOES NOT apply to Medicare Advantage Plans. Every year I see many people that have not checked/compared their current plan to what is new. I have saved so many people hundreds and in many cases thousands of dollars. You should be working with a broker that represents many insurance companies. Make sure you check them out, especially if you are going to allow someone in your house. I recommend meeting in their office. For myself we represent most insurance companies in our area and to carry all their literature with me is almost impossible. We use three large screens so that our clients can clearly see and compare the differences between the plans. The minimum information we need is all your doctors, medications: names, milligrams, and dosage. We load your current plan and then compare it to all the other companies in your area. What companies have all your doctors, the price for your medication normally makes a significant difference. Then the Extra Value, what is most important to you. We do NOT CHARGE for our review and if warranted we will change your insurance plan for you. Ethics is most important and if you are on the best plan we will tell you, plus you can see for yourself.

As a reminder it is illegal for an insurance agent to contact you unless you give them permission. There are specific forms that you should sign, such as a Scope of Appointment which outlines what you want to talk about. This form should be signed at least 48 hours prior to your meeting or if you walk into their office, prior to speaking about Medicare.

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

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

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EBOO THERAPY FOR MYCOTOXIN TOXICITY

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

Mycotoxin toxicity represents a significant health challenge affecting thousands of individuals who have been exposed to toxic mold in their homes, workplaces, or other environments. These invisible toxins can trigger a cascade of debilitating symptoms, from chronic fatigue and brain fog to respiratory issues and immune system dysfunction. Orchidia Medical Group is now offering an advanced solution: Extracorporeal Blood Oxygenation and Ozonation (EBOO), representing the cutting edge in mycotoxin detoxification therapy.

Understanding EBOO Technology

EBOO is a sophisticated medical procedure that combines blood filtration with ozone therapy to deliver unprecedented detoxification results. Unlike traditional ozone therapy methods, EBOO processes significantly larger volumes of blood—treating the patient's entire blood volume multiple times during a single session. This comprehensive approach ensures maximum exposure to therapeutic ozone and more effective removal of mycotoxins from the bloodstream.

During an EBOO treatment at Orchidia Medical Group, blood is drawn from the patient and passed through a specialized filtration system. The blood is then enriched with medical-grade ozone before being returned to the body. This process simultaneously accomplishes multiple therapeutic goals: neutralizing mycotoxins, reducing inflammation, improving oxygen delivery to tissues, and enhancing the body's natural detoxification pathways.



Why EBOO Excels for Mycotoxin Toxicity

Mycotoxins are notoriously difficult to eliminate because they accumulate in fatty tissues and can persist in the body for extended periods. Traditional detoxification methods often provide only modest results, leaving patients struggling with ongoing symptoms. EBOO's advanced technology addresses this challenge through its ability to directly treat the blood, where mycotoxins circulate after being released from tissue storage.

The ozone component of EBOO therapy provides additional benefits specifically relevant to mycotoxin exposure. Ozone's oxidative properties help break down toxic compounds, making them easier for the body to eliminate. Furthermore, ozone therapy has been shown to modulate immune function, which is particularly valuable for patients whose immune systems have been compromised by chronic mold exposure.

The Orchidia Medical Group Advantage

Orchidia Medical Group brings specialized expertise to EBOO therapy, with medical professionals trained in both the technical aspects of the procedure and the complex nature of mycotoxin-related illness. Their comprehensive approach includes thorough patient evaluation, customized treatment protocols, and ongoing monitoring to ensure optimal results.

Patients undergoing EBOO therapy at Orchidia Medical Group typically report significant improvements in energy levels, mental clarity, and overall well-being. Many experience relief from symptoms that have persisted despite other treatment attempts, making EBOO a game-changing option for those suffering from mycotoxin toxicity.

For individuals struggling with the devastating effects of mold exposure, EBOO therapy at Orchidia Medical Group offers new hope and a scientifically advanced path toward recovery and renewed health.



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What are some of the unexpected perks that can accompany living in a retirement community?

By Bruce Rosenblatt, CDP - Owner/Senior Housing Expert

THE HIDDEN BENEFITS OF RETIREMENT COMMUNITY LIVING

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted just how damaging isolation can be, especially for older adults. Social isolation has been directly linked to increased risks of loneliness, depression, and even cognitive decline, including dementia. As human beings, we are inherently social creatures. We thrive when we're connected to others.

One of the greatest advantages of living in a retirement community is that you don't have to be alone. You can maintain your privacy as much as you like, but you also have immediate access to social connection—whether that's dining with friends, joining group activities, or simply participating in daily life with others around you. Retirement communities are designed to foster engagement, connection, and a sense of belonging.

In fact, research into successful aging consistently points to one key pillar: having a sense of purpose and community. Living in a retirement community offers both. It's an environment where residents can contribute, connect, and continue growing—socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

Another primary reason people choose to move to a retirement community is for future peace of mind. Knowing that care will be available when and if you need it removes the uncertainty of "what if?" This not only reduces stress for you but also eases the burden on your spouse and family members. With the logistics of future care handled, you're free to focus on what really matters—enjoying life and embracing all your community has to offer.

As many of my clients have said, "*It was the best decision we ever made—we just wish we had done it sooner.*"

How can a senior make the most of living in a retirement community?

Words of Wisdom from Someone Who's Helped Many Make the Move



Having guided many individuals and couples through the transition to senior living, I've gathered a few pieces of practical advice worth sharing:

Don't Wait for a Crisis

One of the most common regrets I hear is, "*I wish we had done this sooner.*" Don't wait for a health scare or emergency to force your hand. Begin the process early, while you still have the time, energy, and options to make a thoughtful decision. As I tell my clients... "*It's always better to be five years too early rather than 5 minutes too late!*"

Move as a Couple, If You Can

If you're part of a couple, making the move together—before care is urgently needed—can make the adjustment easier and more rewarding for both of you.

Make the Decision Yourself

It's your life, your future, and your choice. While input from adult children can be helpful, the final decision should reflect your own preferences—not someone else's idea of what's best for you.

Downsize Intentionally

Apartments in retirement communities are typically smaller than your current home. Start the downsizing process early so you're not overwhelmed later. Sort, donate, and simplify. And remember: Your kids probably don't want your stuff!

Commit to the Move—Fully

"One foot in, one foot out" doesn't work.

Some people choose to keep their primary home "just in case" they don't like their new community. While that may seem like a safe backup plan, it often leads to a sense of hesitation or emotional limbo.

To truly thrive in a retirement community, you need to commit with the right mindset. Success comes from being open to new routines, relationships, and possibilities—not constantly looking back or second-guessing your decision. Give yourself the chance to fully embrace the lifestyle, and you'll be far more likely to enjoy it.

Embrace Community Life

Living in a retirement community is different from living in a private home. There will be shared spaces, social events, rules, and routines. It may feel like a big shift at first—but give it time. Be open to new people and experiences. You just might find yourself more engaged and fulfilled than you imagined.

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MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

Mental wellness is an important aspect of overall health and well-being. There are many natural ways to reduce stress and improve mental wellness, such as:

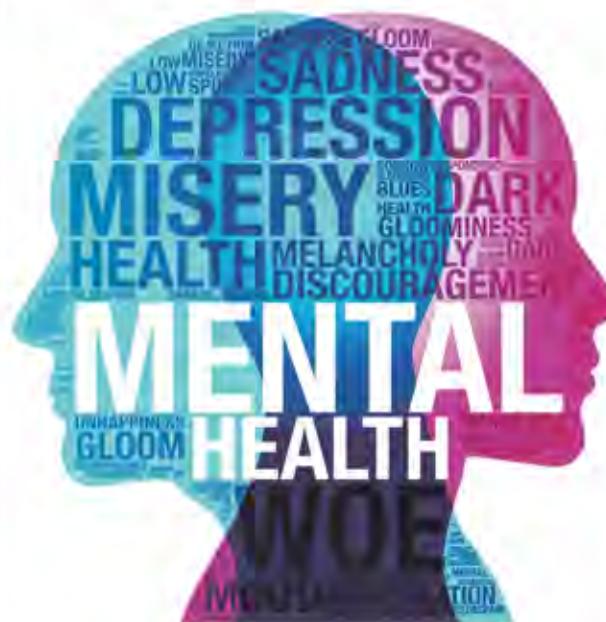
1 Exercise: Regular physical activity can help reduce stress and improve mental health. It can also help to improve sleep, boost mood, and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression.

2 Good sleep pattern: Getting enough sleep is essential for mental wellness. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night and create a relaxing bedtime routine to help you fall asleep and stay asleep.

3 Healthy diet: Eating a healthy, balanced diet can help improve mood and reduce stress. Foods rich in nutrients such as vitamins and minerals, including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, can help support mental health.

4 Social activities: Connecting with others and participating in social activities can help reduce stress and improve mental health. This can include activities such as joining a club, volunteering, or simply spending time with friends and family.

5 Seek treatment if anxiety/depression persists: If you are struggling with anxiety or depression, it is important to seek treatment. This may include psychotherapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or mindfulness-based therapy, and/or medication management.



In addition to these natural remedies, there are other strategies that can help reduce stress and improve mental wellness, such as practicing relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing or meditation, and finding activities that bring joy and relaxation, such as hobbies or spending time in nature. It's also important to manage your time effectively and set boundaries to reduce stress and improve overall mental health.

Remember, it's okay to ask for help if you are struggling with stress or mental health issues. There are many resources available to support you, including mental health professionals and support groups. Don't be afraid to reach out for help if you need it.

RICHARD J. CAPIOLA, MD

With triple board certification in general psychiatry, addiction psychiatry and forensic psychiatry, Dr. Richard J. Capiola has been in practice for 27 years. During his training at Tulane Medical School and UCLA, Dr. Capiola developed a keen interest in the treatment of depression and anxiety overlapping with drug and alcohol abuse. This focus led to his role as chief medical officer for Oglethorpe Inc., which specializes in the treatment of mental health and addiction. He has been instrumental in the clinical development and oversight of 12 specialty treatment centers in five states.

Dr. Capiola's specialties include adult and adolescent psychiatry, treatment of anxiety, depression, and substance use problems, and forensic psychiatry, where he evaluates patients with legal issues related to mental health.

Dr. Capiola is the chief of psychiatry for Physicians Regional Medical Center and was the medical director for the Wilough at Naples for many years. He's served 10 years with The Joint Commission, which evaluates hospitals nationwide for quality of care and safety.

Dr. Capiola was the featured neuropsychiatrist in the recent book "Don't Give Up On Me" with Darryl Strawberry. His confidential private practice focuses on using each individual's inherent strengths to achieve the goal of living a healthy, well-balanced life.

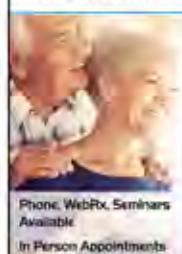
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Dr Capiola's mission is to focus on the strengths inherent in all of us to help overcome any problems and life stresses that make us feel stuck and limited. He combines psychotherapy and medication management into all patient visits.

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When families face the responsibility of caring for aging parents or loved ones with chronic conditions, the journey can be both rewarding and exhausting. Whitsyms In Home Care understands that quality caregiving requires support, flexibility, and professional expertise. Whether you need temporary relief or ongoing assistance, respite and long-term care services offer families the breathing room they need while ensuring their loved ones receive compassionate, personalized attention.

What is Respite Care?

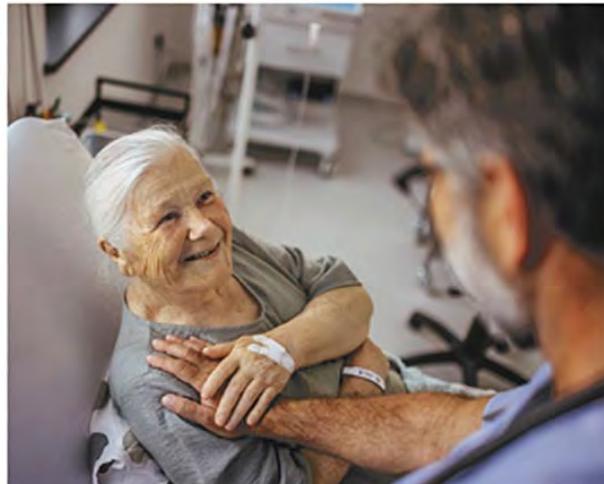
Respite care provides temporary relief for primary caregivers who need a break from their caregiving responsibilities. This essential service allows family members to recharge, attend to personal matters, or simply rest without worrying about their loved one's wellbeing. At Whitsyms In Home Care, respite services can range from a few hours to several weeks, depending on your family's needs.

Family caregivers often experience burnout, stress, and health problems from the demanding nature of constant care. Respite care isn't just a luxury—it's a necessity that helps preserve the caregiver's health while maintaining quality care for the person receiving services. Whether you need coverage for a vacation, medical appointment, or simply a day to yourself, professional respite care ensures continuity and safety.

The Value of Long-Term Care

Long-term care becomes necessary when individuals require ongoing assistance with daily activities such as bathing, dressing, medication management, or mobility support. Unlike respite care's temporary nature, long-term care provides sustained support that can span months or years. Whitsyms In Home Care specializes in creating customized care plans that evolve with your loved one's changing needs.

The advantages of private-duty home care over institutional settings are significant. Seniors remain in familiar surroundings, maintaining their independence and dignity while receiving one-on-one attention from dedicated caregivers. This personalized approach often leads to better health outcomes, improved emotional wellbeing, and stronger family connections.



Why Choose Whitsyms In Home Care?

At Whitsyms In Home Care, we recognize that every family's situation is unique. Our caregivers are thoroughly screened, trained professionals who bring compassion and expertise to each assignment. We work closely with families to develop care plans that address specific medical conditions, personal preferences, and household routines.

Our services extend beyond basic assistance. Caregivers can help with light housekeeping, meal preparation, transportation to appointments, and companionship—all crucial elements that contribute to quality of life. We also maintain open communication with family members, providing regular updates and adjusting care plans as circumstances change.

Making the Right Choice

Deciding between respite and long-term care depends on your current situation and future needs. Many families start with respite care and transition to long-term services as requirements increase. Whitsyms In Home Care offers both options, making it easy to adjust your care plan without changing providers.

The peace of mind that comes from knowing your loved one is safe, comfortable, and well-cared for is invaluable. Whether you need a few hours of support each week or comprehensive daily assistance, Whitsyms In Home Care stands ready to help your family navigate the caregiving journey with professionalism, empathy, and unwavering dedication to excellence.

SERVICES

- Alzheimer's & Dementia Care
- Companion Care
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- Personal Care
- Post-Operative Care
- Respite Care
- Skilled Nursing

PROGRAMS

- Veteran's Aid & Attendance
- Welcome Aboard

TYPES OF CARE PROVIDERS

- Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)
- Companions & Homemakers
- Home Health Aides (HHAs)
- Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)

SUPPORT SERVICES

- Workers' Compensation



David Ruiz

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START YOUR FITNESS JOURNEY RIGHT:

How Chiropractic Care and Acupuncture Support Exercise Safety Month

January marks both the start of New Year's resolutions and Exercise Safety Month, making it the perfect time to approach your fitness goals with a smart, injury-prevention mindset. While enthusiasm runs high at the beginning of the year, many people jump into intense workout routines without proper preparation, leading to strains, sprains, and setbacks that derail their progress. This is where integrative healthcare approaches like chiropractic care and acupuncture can make all the difference in keeping your resolutions on track.

The Exercise Safety Challenge

Exercise Safety Month was established to remind us that working out safely is just as important as working out consistently. Common mistakes include skipping warm-ups, increasing intensity too quickly, ignoring pain signals, and neglecting recovery. These errors can result in overuse injuries, muscle imbalances, and chronic pain that prevent you from maintaining your newfound fitness routine.

Chiropractic Care: Your Foundation for Movement
Chiropractic care focuses on optimizing your body's structural alignment and nervous system function, creating an ideal foundation for exercise. Before diving into your New Year's fitness plan, a chiropractor can assess your posture, joint mobility, and spinal alignment to identify potential problem areas that might lead to injury during exercise.

Regular chiropractic adjustments help maintain proper joint function and range of motion, which is essential for performing exercises with correct form.



When your spine and joints are properly aligned, your body moves more efficiently, reducing unnecessary stress on muscles and ligaments. This means you can exercise longer and more effectively while minimizing injury risk.

Chiropractors can also provide personalized advice on exercises that complement your body's specific needs and limitations. If you have a history of lower back pain, for instance, your chiropractor might recommend core-strengthening exercises and proper lifting techniques to protect your spine as you progress in your fitness journey.

Acupuncture: Recovery and Pain Management

Acupuncture, an ancient practice rooted in traditional Chinese medicine, offers remarkable benefits for exercise enthusiasts. This technique involves inserting thin needles at specific points to promote healing, reduce inflammation, and manage pain naturally.

For those embracing new workout routines, acupuncture can significantly accelerate muscle recovery after intense training sessions. It increases blood flow to affected areas, helping to flush out metabolic waste products that cause soreness and stiffness. Many athletes use acupuncture preventatively to maintain peak performance and reduce their risk of overuse injuries.

Acupuncture is particularly effective for treating common exercise-related complaints like tennis elbow, runner's knee, shoulder pain, and plantar fasciitis. Rather than masking symptoms with medication, acupuncture addresses the underlying causes of pain while supporting your body's natural healing processes.

Creating a Sustainable Resolution

This Exercise Safety Month, consider making chiropractic care and acupuncture part of your New Year's resolution strategy. These complementary therapies don't replace proper training and gradual progression, but they provide valuable support that can help you stay injury-free and motivated throughout the year.

By investing in preventative care and listening to your body, you're more likely to transform your January resolution into a lasting lifestyle change. Remember, the goal isn't just to start strong but to continue strong, and integrative healthcare can help you achieve sustainable fitness success.



Dr. Larry Wallen



Dr. Leila Motta

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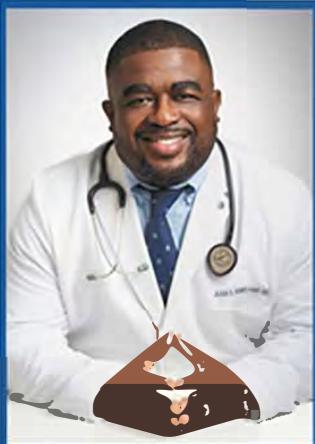
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Rebuilding Stronger Bones:

Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk's Revolutionary Approach to Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis, often called the "silent disease," affects millions worldwide as bones gradually become brittle and fragile. This degenerative condition typically progresses without symptoms until a fracture occurs – commonly in the hip, spine, or wrist. While conventional medicine has long considered osteoporosis an inevitable part of aging, Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk is pioneering a different approach that not only halts bone loss but actively reverses it.

Dr. Shepetiuk's methodology stands apart from traditional treatments that primarily focus on medication alone. Her comprehensive program begins with advanced diagnostics that go beyond standard DEXA scans to assess bone quality and identify individual risk factors. This detailed analysis allows her to create truly personalized intervention plans tailored to each patient's unique biochemistry and lifestyle.

"Osteoporosis isn't simply a calcium deficiency," explains Dr. Shepetiuk. "It's a complex condition influenced by hormones, inflammation, gut health, and even stress levels. Effective treatment requires addressing all these factors simultaneously."

The science-backed solutions in Dr. Shepetiuk's protocol incorporate several key elements. Nutritional optimization forms the foundation, with customized dietary recommendations that balance bone-building minerals and reduce inflammatory foods that contribute to bone loss. Her approach often includes targeted supplementation, but always personalized to address specific deficiencies rather than following a one-size-fits-all formula.

Movement is another crucial component of Dr. Shepetiuk's program. She prescribes specific weight-bearing and resistance exercises designed to stimulate osteoblast activity – the cells responsible for building new bone tissue. These exercises are carefully selected based on the patient's current bone density, fitness level, and fracture risk.

What truly sets Dr. Shepetiuk apart is her integration of cutting-edge research on bone metabolism. Her protocol addresses often-overlooked factors like sleep quality, stress management, and gut microbiome health – all scientifically proven to impact bone remodeling processes.



Dr. Shepetiuk's approach also emphasizes hormone balance, particularly for postmenopausal women who face accelerated bone loss due to declining estrogen levels. Rather than automatically prescribing hormone replacement therapy, she first conducts comprehensive testing to identify specific imbalances. This allows for more targeted interventions, which might include bioidentical hormones, herbal support, or lifestyle modifications to naturally optimize hormone production.

Environmental factors play a role in her protocol as well. Dr. Shepetiuk educates patients about reducing exposure to toxins that can interfere with bone metabolism, while encouraging vitamin D synthesis through appropriate sun exposure and specific supplementation when necessary.

The results speak for themselves. Many of Dr. Shepetiuk's patients have experienced significant improvements in bone density scores, some achieving increases of 3-5% annually – outcomes rarely seen with conventional approaches.

"I was told I would need to accept progressive bone loss as part of aging," shares one patient. "After two years with Dr. Shepetiuk, my bone density has increased by 8%, and I feel stronger than I have in decades."

Another patient reports, "The comprehensive approach made all the difference. Previous doctors only offered medication without addressing my vitamin deficiencies or teaching me the right exercises. Dr. Shepetiuk's program gave me back my confidence and freedom."

For those struggling with osteoporosis or looking to prevent it, Dr. Shepetiuk's approach offers hope beyond medication management. By addressing the root causes of bone deterioration through personalized, science-backed solutions, she's helping patients rebuild stronger bones and regain confidence in their body's natural healing abilities.

Her work demonstrates that osteoporosis need not be an inevitable consequence of aging, but rather a condition that can be effectively managed and even reversed with the right comprehensive care.

Functional and Integrative Medicine with Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

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

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

Services include:

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

Why Choose Us?

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

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Take Control of Your Health with Any Lab Test Now

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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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'Haiti, 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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6 REASONS TO AVOID STANDARD MOLD CLEANUP OPTIONS

By Scott Briggs - American Mold Experts of SWFL, LLC

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

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

Be wary of standard cleanup methods:

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

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

e. Bleach is ineffective and not recommended for use on porous surfaces such as concrete, wood, wallpaper, sheetrock, grout, books, clothing,

f. When inhaled during application, chlorine particles may cause lung and bronchial irritation and lung scarring, as well as headaches.

2. Chemicals, Biocides And Fungicides Are Dangerous Poisons

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

3. Ozone Generators May Pose Multiple Hazards To Your Health

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

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

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

5. Tear It Out, Remove It, Replace It, Tear It Down
a. Repairing leaks is essential to eliminating mold problems, however, it may not be necessary to Remove and Replace everything that has been affected by mold.

b. This option can be very costly.
c. This does not remove mold spores from the air.

6. Chlorine dioxide and other chemical fumigants

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

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



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- It is well known that mold and **MYCOTOXINS** cause health issues.
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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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WEALTH MANAGEMENT

239.687.5204

nazwoir@wintrustwealth.com

3401 Tamiami Trail North Naples, Florida

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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Healthy Life Center

Education and Navigation

JANUARY 2026

WEEKLY IN-PERSON EVENTS

Every Friday
SWFL Produce Box3-4 p.m.
To place an order, visit
www.swfiproduce.com

MIND & BODY PROGRAM

*Class Passes Available for Purchase

Tuesdays:
(January 6, 13, 20, 27)**Outdoor Chair Yoga**
10-11 a.m. RSVP
Instructor: Molly**Thursdays:**
(January 8, 15, 22, 29)**Outdoor Chair Yoga**
10-11 a.m. RSVP
Instructor: Molly**Fridays:**
(January 2, 9, 16, 23, 30)**Self Guided Walking Club**
9-10 a.m. RSVP**Outdoor Stretch, Balance & Strength**10:30-11:30 a.m. RSVP
Instructor: Meredith**Fridays:**
(January 9, 16, 23, 30)**Free Blood Pressure Screenings**9 a.m.-noon
Walk-ins welcome

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

January is Mind & Body Bingo Month!

Pick up your bingo card before class. Complete your card anytime between January 1-31, then drop it in the bingo jar at the front desk. One lucky winner will receive a free six-class pass!

**Friday, January 2**
MyChart Support10 a.m.-noon
Walk-Ins Welcome**Tuesday, January 6, 13, 20, 27 and February 3****Cooking & Learning for Cardiac Rehab: 5-Week Culinary Nutrition Class**10 a.m.-noon RSVP
(Must commit to all 5 weeks of program to participate and be a Cardiac Rehab patient)**Tuesday, January 6****Do I Have a Thyroid Problem? - Symptoms of Thyroid Dysfunction**1-2 p.m. RSVP
Dr. Renato Concepcion, endocrinology**Thursday, January 8, 15, 22, 29, and February 5, 12****Six-Week Series: Free Chronic Disease Workshop**Every Thursday for 6 weeks
9:30 a.m.-noon RSVP
(Must commit to all six dates to participate)**Thursday, January 8**
Plant-Powered Kitchen: A Monthly Cooking & Learning ExperienceNoon-1 p.m. RSVP
Fee: \$5**Friday, January 9**
Lee Health Pedal for a Purpose**benefiting the Lee Health Cancer Institute**5-9 p.m.
Make a difference, donate now towards cancer care in SWFL!

Scan this code ►



IN-PERSON EVENTS

Lee Health Coconut Point
23450 Via Coconut Point, Estero, FL 34135
To register for these events, call 239-468-0050.**Saturday, January 10****Free Community Yoga at Lakes Regional Park**9:30-10:30 a.m. RSVP
7330 Gladiolus Dr.
Ft. Myers, FL 33908
Meet in parking lot #3**Saturday, January 17****Cooking Demo: Vegetable Vegan Soup**2:30-3:30 p.m. RSVP
Fee: \$5**Tuesday, January 20****Donate blood, save a life! Mobile Blood Drive**9 a.m.-2 p.m.
Walk-ins Welcome!
Check out other locations to donate blood here ►**Wednesday, January 21****Indoor Gardening: Growing Herbs and Micro Greens all Winter!**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Friday, January 23**Audiology 102: Hearing Loss and Hearing Aids**10-11 a.m. RSVP
Complementary hearing screenings for attendees after presentation**Music Therapy:****The Groovy Group!**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Lunch & Learn: Sound Waves vs. Cancer - An Introduction to HistotripsyNoon-1 p.m. RSVP
Dr. Mark Bloomston, Surgical Oncologist

IN-PERSON & HYBRID OPPORTUNITY

Friday, January 16**Lunch & Learn: Frankly Speaking About Cancer - Bladder Cancer**Noon-1 p.m. RSVP
Dr. Joseph Klink, Urology Oncology

For virtual attendees - link to virtual event will be sent day prior to event and morning of

Friday, January 16**Monthly Grief Support Group**

1-2 p.m. RSVP

Monday, January 26**The Benefits of a Physical Therapist on your Parkinson's Team**

3-4 p.m. RSVP

Wednesday, January 28**Click with Caution: Hidden Dangers in Online Pharmacies and 'Natural' Supplements**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Healthy Life Center

Education and Navigation

JANUARY 2026

HEALTHY LIFE CENTER @ CAPE CORAL

609 SE 13th Ct., Cape Coral, FL 33990

Tuesdays, (January 6, 13, 20, 27)**Walking Club**

9-10 a.m. RSVP

Tuesday, January 6**Walk-in MyChart Support**

10-noon RSVP

Friday, January 9**Music Therapy: The Groovy Group**

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

Wednesday, January 14**Indoor Gardening: Growing Herbs and Micro Greens all Winter!**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Monday, January 19**Senior Blue Book: Estate Planning and More**

Noon-1:30 p.m. RSVP

Lunch will be provided

Friday, January 23**Monthly Grief Support Group**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Tuesday, January 27**Click with Caution: Hidden Dangers in Online Pharmacies and 'Natural' Supplements**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Wednesday, January 28**The Benefits of a Physical Therapist on your Parkinson's Team**

2:15-3:15 p.m. RSVP

Thursday, January 29**Move Your Way! - Finding Joy in Movement at Any Age**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

WELLWAY

NEW!! WA-KE HATCHEE RECREATION PARK AND RECREATION CENTER

16760 Bass Rd., Fort Myers, FL 33908

Friday, January 16**Move Your Way! Finding Joy in Movement at Any Age**

10-11 a.m. RSVP



Please call 239-468-0050 for more information and to register.

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

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

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

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

Five critical sets of questions to ask:

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

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

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



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Slowing the Pace of Your Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Apostle Paul said this about contentment. *¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*

Philippians 4:11-13

If you're going to slow down your life, you have to learn contentment. Paul also said this about contentment: *¹⁴But godliness with contentment is great gain. ¹⁵For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* 1 Tim. 6:6-7

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

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

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

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

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

If you find yourself making statements like this:

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

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

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

Svetlana Kogan, M.D., IFMCP

Functional Concierge Primary Care



Dr. Svetlana Kogan is a Cornell-educated, board-certified physician with over 25 years of experience blending traditional, functional, and holistic medicine. Trained and certified by the Institute for Functional Medicine, she brings deep expertise & compassion to every patient encounter.

Dr. Kogan has authored hundreds of articles, & has appeared as a medical expert on FOX, CBS, ABC, and NBC. She is also the author of the holistic book 'Diet Slave No More!'

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