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Lee Edition - Monthly

January 2026

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WHY PRIORITIZING A HEARING SCREENING IS ESSENTIAL FOR YOUR WELL-BEING

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

As the calendar turns anew, embracing the opportunities of a fresh year often involves setting resolutions focused on health and wellness. Among the crucial yet overlooked aspects of well-being, the importance of a hearing screening stands out significantly.

In a world that constantly bombards us with sounds, our hearing health can easily be taken for granted. Yet, the significance of ensuring optimal hearing capability cannot be overstated. It's not merely about the ability to detect sounds but encompasses our overall mental, emotional, and social well-being.

Starting the new year with a hearing screening can be a proactive step towards preserving and improving our auditory abilities. Many are unaware that hearing loss often occurs gradually, and its signs might not be immediately noticeable. This makes regular screenings essential, especially for individuals above 50, as age-related hearing loss is common. However, even younger individuals can be affected by various factors like exposure to loud noises, genetic predispositions, or underlying health conditions.

The impact of untreated hearing loss extends far beyond difficulty in hearing. It can lead to social isolation, affecting relationships, job performance, and mental health. Research suggests a strong correlation between untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline, including conditions like dementia. By addressing hearing issues early through screenings, one can mitigate these potential risks and maintain a higher quality of life.

Moreover, the technological advancements in hearing aids and assistive devices have revolutionized the way individuals manage hearing loss. Early detection through screenings enables timely interventions, facilitating access to these cutting-edge solutions. Modern hearing devices are discreet, equipped with innovative features that enhance sound quality, and can be tailored to individual needs, providing a renewed sense of confidence and connection to the world.



However, the societal stigma surrounding hearing loss often deters individuals from seeking screenings or utilizing assistive technologies. Embracing a culture of proactive hearing care can break down these barriers, encouraging people to prioritize their auditory health just as they do their vision or dental care. Normalizing routine hearing screenings as part of an annual health check-up can significantly contribute to this cultural shift.

Furthermore, businesses and workplaces play a pivotal role in fostering a hearing-friendly environment. Encouraging and facilitating employee screenings can enhance productivity and foster inclusivity, creating a more supportive workplace for individuals with hearing impairments.

This new year, amidst setting fitness goals and career aspirations, let's not overlook the significance of our auditory health. Making a resolution

to prioritize a hearing screening can be the gateway to a world of improved communication, enhanced cognitive abilities, and enriched relationships.

In conclusion, a hearing screening isn't just a check-up; it's a gateway to a world of improved communication, enhanced cognitive abilities, and enriched relationships. As the new year dawns, let's prioritize our auditory health and embrace the possibilities that come with hearing the world more clearly.

John Nobile, HAS, BC-HIS, ACA is a licensed hearing aid specialist and an ACA-certified audioprosthologist who is also board-certified in hearing instrument sciences. With over 55 years of experience, he has transformed thousands of lives in Cape Coral and Fort Myers, FL, by providing his patients with the gift of sound. He is also a former veteran committed to providing all veterans with free services.



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SAVING LIVES WITH WHOLE BLOOD:

Lee Health Leads SW Florida in Revolutionary Trauma Care

When trauma patients arrive at Lee Health's Trauma Center at Gulf Coast Medical Center bleeding from severe injuries, every second counts. Now, thanks to a groundbreaking approach that's making Lee Health's trauma center the first in Southwest Florida to use whole blood transfusions, those critical seconds are being used more effectively than ever before—and lives are being saved.

This groundbreaking approach delivers all essential blood components—red blood cells, platelets, and plasma—in a single unit from one donor, streamlining care. The result is faster, more effective treatment and better outcomes for critically injured patients.



Dr. Joseph Lewis, a board-certified surgeon who specializes in trauma, general surgery, and surgical critical care, says whole blood is exactly what patients lose when they bleed. Like accidentally cutting your finger on a kitchen knife, "You bleed all that red stuff. It's a combination of those essential blood components."

He says that for decades, trauma centers replaced these blood components separately: red blood cells in one transfusion; clotting factors in another; and platelets in a third.

"Each component requires different preparations and contains different preservatives, making the process more complex and time-consuming when time is critical," he says.

Treatment administered during the first hour following severe injury can mean the difference between life and death. This includes determining whether the patient requires blood products, such as whole blood.

"Whole blood helps us quickly restore lost blood volume and provides essential clotting factors, which can help stop bleeding and stabilize the patient," Dr. Lewis explains. "The speed and simplicity of giving one product instead of multiple blood components also gives us more time to get them into the operating room for surgical intervention to control the source of bleeding."



JANUARY IS NATIONAL BLOOD DONOR MONTH.

The need for blood is constant, and you can help to make a difference! Visit a Lee Health Blood Center to donate and ask about platelet donation as another way to save lives.

Additionally, Lee Health has invested in advanced technology that allows the trauma team to test a patient's blood to ensure they have received a balanced resuscitation. This means the patient has received a 1:1:1 ratio of blood components.

"We make sure their blood is the perfect balance of red blood cells, clotting factors, and platelets because it prevents more blood loss," Dr. Lewis says.

Using whole blood has been shown to improve survival rates and reduce exposure risks for vulnerable patients, including children, transplant recipients, and those undergoing cancer treatments.

A return to proven methods

During World War I, whole blood was the standard of care because the medical industry hadn't yet developed a method to separate blood into its components.

The shift away from whole blood happened for practical reasons, Dr. Lewis explains. The military wanted blood products to last longer than the few weeks that whole blood could be stored. By separating blood into its components and adding different preservatives, red blood cells can last approximately six weeks, clotting factors can be stored for years at subzero temperatures, and platelets can be preserved for nearly a month.

However, thanks to improved technology and storage methods, whole blood can be used effectively in trauma care.

Expanding care beyond the hospital

Recently, Lee Health partnered with Lee County Emergency Medical Services to bring whole blood transfusions directly to the field. Specially trained paramedics can now administer whole blood to critically injured patients before they even reach the hospital.

This partnership creates an efficient system where unused blood from field responses is not wasted—it is redirected to the trauma center and can be used for other patients. This ensures maximum utilization of this precious resource while extending the life-saving potential of whole blood transfusions beyond the hospital walls.

Real impact on the community

As the only state-approved Level II trauma center between Sarasota and Miami, Lee Health's Trauma Center serves a five-county region and treats nearly 5,000 patients annually, averaging over 400 patients each month. The implementation of whole blood transfusions represents a significant advancement in caring for the most severe and complex trauma cases in Southwest Florida.

Supporting the mission through blood donation
While Lee Health doesn't currently collect whole blood directly, the broader mission of blood donation remains crucial to trauma care.

Community members can support the trauma center and other patients in need by donating blood at the Lee Health Blood Centers, where all blood donations stay right here in Southwest Florida. That means, together, we can save lives, make an impact, and help the people you care about the most.

Lee Health's pioneering use of whole blood transfusions represents more than just medical innovation—it's lifesaving progress that's already making a difference in Southwest Florida.



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.



Albert Smolyar M.D.

LASIK, Cataract & Lens Replacement Surgeon

Dr. Smolyar is a board-certified cataract and refractive surgeon with over 25 years of experience.

He received his medical degree from Kursk State Medical University in the former Soviet Union. He completed an ophthalmology residency at the University of Louisville and a fellowship in Neuro-Ophthalmology at Michigan State University. He completed another ophthalmology residency at Ben Gurion University in Israel prior to coming to the United States.

Dr. Smolyar specializes in premium cataract and lens replacement surgery, as well as laser vision correction with LASIK, photorefractive keratectomy (PRK) and phototherapeutic keratectomy (PTK). He also has significant expertise in cosmetic and reconstructive eyelid surgery. Dr. Smolyar is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology. He was in private practice in Louisville, Kentucky for many years where he also served as a clinical Associate Professor at University of Louisville Department of Ophthalmology.

He has been living in Fort Myers since 2018 with his wife and dogs; they have raised three children together. In his spare time, Dr. Smolyar enjoys swimming, scuba diving, kayaking and fishing. He has dedicated time to providing free surgical eye care in underserved countries and considers that to be one of his passions.



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MEMORY MATTERS

"Why is my wife so mean to me?" "My grandfather got downright ornery, wouldn't do anything we asked, and he yells all the time." "My mother is always so nervous and fidgety. When I tell her to relax, she says unkind things to me."

Are any of these situations familiar? For individuals living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia, sometimes it may seem like your loved one is being difficult. As a caregiver, this can be very frustrating. One of the best phrases to remember goes like this: *a person with dementia is not giving you a hard time they are having a hard time*. What does that mean exactly?

Alzheimer's disease is a brain disease that impacts everything the brain controls. Memory, speech, logical thinking, reasoning, executive functioning, and expressions, are just some of the things that can be impacted. And while it may seem that someone is behaving in a hateful, ornery, or unkind manner, it can be helpful to realize that what is being seen and experienced is likely a result of the impact of the disease on the person. Some of the behavioral expressions may be a result of an underlying unmet need.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, the individual with the disease is experiencing a biologically profound loss of their ability to negotiate new information and stimulus. This is due to disease, versus their personality. This can be difficult to understand for those who do not have the cognitive impact of this disease. To make things more challenging, sometimes the behavior observed is different from day to day, even hour to hour.

It is estimated that between 30 to 50% of individuals with Alzheimer's disease experience agitation and irritability at some time during the course of their illness. What we may see is restlessness, nervousness, short temperedness, expressions of frustration and lack of cooperation. Some individuals may pace, some may perform repetitive motions, others may be quicker to argue and raise their voice and may appear to be in total denial of the facts we present to them.

What looks like denial in someone with the disease may be related to the changes in the brain which impact cognition and awareness. As a result, approaches to address our observations and concerns may not be effective or achieve the response desired. Having a factual, logic based response many times is not effective.

What approaches and techniques can work? Unfortunately, it is true that responses that can be effective with one person may not work with another. As many caregivers know, the same approach used with the same individual may have a different response on a day to day and even on an hour to hour basis. Having some general considerations can be helpful. Here's an acronym to help: **CARE**

C: Consistently Calm: That may seem impossible some days, and that is to be expected. Doing your best to respond to what you are seeing in a calm, nonjudgmental and caring manner can help.

A: Appropriate Activities: Many times, when individuals are bored or don't have structure, some challenging behavioral expressions may present themselves. Many things can be considered an activity and it's important that the chosen activity is appropriate for the individual and tailored to their interests as much as possible.

Another important consideration is time of day, length of activity and inviting someone to participate versus insisting on participation. A saying that can reflect interacting with someone with Alzheimer's disease is "the more you insist, the more they will resist." None of us like to be told what to do and being invited or asked to do something, versus being told may be more successful.

R: Regular Routine: Keeping a consistent routine, based on your loved one's habits can help decrease anxiety and preserve independence. The Alzheimer's Association suggests considering the person's likes, dislikes, strengths, and abilities when developing the routine. Knowing the times of day that the person functions best and allowing ample time for activities is essential. While a consistent schedule is helpful, building in flexibility and going with the flow is also an important consideration.



E: Engagement and Empathy: Include the person in everyday activities and let them help, even if they don't do things exactly the way you hope they would. Include them in things they enjoy. Participating in your faith community, helping in the garden, running errands, having a meal are all ways to engage. Being empathetic and understanding are also tools that can be valuable. It can be challenging to be a caregiver, and recognizing that it must also be difficult for the person with the disease as well provides perspective.

Have you noticed subtle changes in your loved one's memory? It's not uncommon for memory lapses to occur as we age, but when they start impacting daily life, it's essential to take action.

Connect with the experienced team at the Neuropsychiatric Research Center at 239-939-7777, where we have a proven track record of helping individuals and families navigate memory related challenges. Remember, you're not alone on this journey. #MemoriesMatter

References:
 Anxiety & Agitation | Alzheimer's Association
<https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/stages-behaviors/anxiety-agitation>

Agitation and Dementia: Prevention and Treatment Strategies in Acute and Chronic Conditions - PMC (nih.gov)



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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.

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NOT ALL FOOT PAIN IS GOUT, BUT EVERY ATTACK IS A PAIN

By Joe Altepeter, DPM

Living here in Fort Myers, we are blessed with a climate that encourages us to stay on the move. Whether you are spending your Saturday at the downtown farmers market, hitting the links at your favorite golf course, or enjoying a sunset walk at Fort Myers Beach, your mobility is your greatest asset. However, nothing brings that active Southwest Florida lifestyle to a grinding halt, like the sudden, agonizing onset of a gout flare-up.

As a podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Center, I often see patients who come into our office convinced they've broken a bone or developed a severe infection overnight. While "gout" is frequently used as a misnomer for any general pain or swelling in the feet, it is a specific medical condition related to the buildup of uric acid. While it isn't the only cause of foot and ankle pain, those who have suffered through an attack can attest that it is one of the most significant and debilitating issues we treat.

The Science of the "Foot-Trap"

Gout occurs when uric acid, a natural byproduct produced as the body breaks down purine compounds, begins to accumulate. Normally, the kidneys eliminate this byproduct through urine. The problem arises when there is a breakdown in this process—either the body cannot further break down the acid, or it fails to transport the particles to their final destination. This retention allows uric acid to build up and crystallize within the joints, making them prone to an intense attack.

While gout can occur in various nearby joints, it is most commonly found in the big toe. This specific presentation is known as podagra, which appropriately translates to "foot-trap" in Greek. This joint is the largest in the forefoot and sits furthest from the heart, making it susceptible to temperature fluctuations and exposure to the environment. Because uric acid is highly sensitive to these changes, it crystallizes much more easily at cooler temperatures, where it begins wreaking havoc.

Identifying Your Triggers

Gout does not discriminate; it affects men and women of all ages, though we see it most frequently in men between the ages of 40 and 60.

Genetics play a massive role, as genes influencing how we produce and excrete uric acid are passed down through generations.

However, lifestyle and environment are major factors. One of our primary treatment strategies is preventative, involving dietary modifications to reduce purine intake. Common triggers include:

- **Seafood and Shellfish:** A local staple that is unfortunately high in purines.
- **Meats:** Red meat and organ meats.
- **Beverages:** Alcohol, including beer and red wine, as well as high fructose corn syrup.
- **Vegetables:** Deep green leafy vegetables and beans.

Beyond diet, other risk factors include high blood pressure, diabetes, and obesity. Furthermore, attacks can be triggered by high-stress situations such as surgery, chemotherapy, or other social stressors.

Recognizing the Classic Presentation

The presentation of gout in the foot is usually unmistakable. The affected joint typically becomes quite swollen, exhibiting deep redness and warmth that is far more significant than other arthritic processes. The pain is intense, with many patients complaining that even the light touch of a bed sheet is a significant trigger.

While these attacks can sometimes be self-limiting, they can take weeks or even months to resolve on their own. If a joint is subjected to recurrent attacks or prolonged uric acid deposition, it can lead to erosive changes and visible deformity. In severe cases, these deposits—known as tophi—can build up so significantly that the joint becomes swollen enough to rupture through the skin, causing ulceration and the expression of white, chalky debris.

Taking Control of Your Foot Health

The good news is that you don't have to live in the "foot-trap." It is vital to manage gout appropriately to avoid long-term damage. When you visit us at Family Foot & Leg Center, our initial workup includes plain film radiographs and blood work to confirm the diagnosis.



Once we determine you are suffering from gout, treatment can be initiated right away. Your personal plan may include:

- **Medications:** Corticosteroids and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories to manage inflammation.
- **Injections:** To help control localized pain and swelling.
- **Lifestyle Management:** Fluid management and specific diet modifications.
- **Systemic Control:** Medications to assist in the reduction of uric acid circulating in the body.

Don't Let Gout Keep You Sidelined

If you are experiencing sudden redness, warmth, or debilitating pain in your big toe or ankle, don't wait for it to "go away on its own." At **Family Foot & Leg Center**, we are dedicated to providing Lee County with the highest level of podiatric care to keep you active and pain-free.

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

Joe Altepeter, DPM, AACFAS

Joe Altepeter, DPM, AACFAS, is a Podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Centers in Fort Myers FL. He is a Fellow of the American College of Foot & Ankle Surgeons. Call 239-430-3668 or visit www.NaplesPodiatrist.com to make an appointment. Visit FootHealthFacts.org to learn more about foot and ankle conditions.



1645 Colonial Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33907

(239) 430 - 3668 (FOOT)
www.NaplesPodiatrist.com



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*



LOW VISION OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

(941) 799-8044

www.lowvisionofswfl.com

(Located inside The Eye Associates,
formerly Eye Centers of Florida)
4101 Evans Ave, Fort Myers, FL 33901

Don't let vision loss define your future—discover what's possible with dedicated Low Vision care.



Specialized care for macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and other vision-limiting conditions.



ALIGNMENT MATTERS: Move Different This Year

By Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

January arrives with its usual promise — *a new year, a new you*. Gym memberships spike. Diet plans sell out. Fitness trackers blink with optimism. But by February, research shows that nearly 80% of resolutions have already failed (U.S. News & World Report).

Why? Because most resolutions are built on willpower, not wisdom. Resolutions often demand that you fight your own biology, ignore your psychology, and overlook adaptations that can actually lead to change.

Pilates changes the framework entirely. It trains the body to adapt rather than exhaust, using mindful resistance and controlled movement to build strength, coordination, and balance. Each session reeducates the nervous system, replacing strain with stability and turning effort into efficiency.

The Psychology of Change: Why Resolutions Fail

Let's start with the science of behavior. Studies from Stanford's Behavior Design Lab show that motivation is fleeting. It spikes under novelty and emotion but collapses when stress or fatigue hit. The brain resists sudden, drastic changes. Especially changes tied to pain, deprivation, or shame.

That's why traditional New Year's resolutions often crumble. They operate from "I should" instead of "I can." The subconscious brain (responsible for 95% of behavior) interprets drastic fitness goals as threats to stability, triggering resistance and self-sabotage.

Pilates flips that switch. It begins with awareness, not aggression. By focusing on breath, precision, and control, Pilates trains your *interoception*, your brain's ability to sense internal cues like breath, tension, and alignment. This awareness rewires your stress response, creating calm focus rather than fight-or-flight urgency.

Science shows that lasting habits begin with awareness of what's happening inside the body. Pilates builds that awareness through focused breath and precision. What appears to be movement is actually a conversation between brain and body, and one that retrains the nervous system to find calm, balance, and better rest.

The Movement Science: Why Pilates Works

Modern research supports what Joseph Pilates intuitively knew a century ago: movement performed with control and consistency transforms the body from the inside out.

- A 2023 meta-analysis in the *Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research* found that adults practicing Pilates two to three times per week improved core endurance, flexibility, and muscle symmetry while reducing perceived stress levels by up to 35 percent.
- A 2020 study in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* reported that regular Pilates practice improves autonomic nervous system balance, as shown by significant increases in heart rate variability (HRV)—a key marker of stress recovery and sleep quality.
- In simple terms, Pilates trains the body to handle stress more efficiently, which in turn supports deeper rest and more stable energy throughout the day.

Unlike high-intensity workouts that elevate cortisol, Pilates strengthens without overloading the system. It teaches the body how to work efficiently, regulate stress, and restore the calm necessary for long-term resilience.

Mind Meets Muscle: A Smarter Path to Transformation

Resolutions often lack sustainability. Real change begins with ritual, the quiet consistency that reshapes both body and mind. In Pilates, each movement becomes an act of presence. Every repetition strengthens the connection between thought and action, forming new patterns of attention, resilience, and self-trust.

A 2021 study in *Frontiers in Psychology* found that individuals who practiced mindful movement disciplines such as Pilates, yoga, and tai chi demonstrated a 25 percent higher rate of long-term exercise adherence than those in traditional fitness programs. Researchers suggest that mind-body practices are more sustainable because they anchor behavior in identity rather than external outcomes.

When the focus shifts from achieving a specific goal to embodying a healthy identity, the nervous system responds differently. Pilates supports that shift by training both body and brain to move with intention and cultivating a sense of calm, capability, and lasting transformation.

Start Where You Are — But Start Smart

In a culture addicted to fast results, Pilates offers something truly radical: patience.

Progress reveals itself in subtle, sustainable ways such as a deeper breath, a steadier balance, and a calmer mind. These small adjustments compound over time, and by spring, energy, strength, and mobility have been reshaped through consistency rather than intensity.

Real change begins with being smart about where you start. New beginnings need a framework for adaptation, not a race toward exhaustion. Most resolutions are built on control—counting, restricting, and pushing. Pilates teaches something entirely different: regulation. It trains the nervous system to handle challenges without collapse and effort without excess.

The work is never about discipline for its own sake. It is about clarity, precision, and the ability to recover. When movement becomes mindful, the body learns efficiency. When effort meets awareness, progress becomes sustainable.

That is the true shift. Change that lasts is powered by presence, not pressure. Pilates doesn't demand more from the body; it teaches the body how to do more with less.

The Invitation

Pilates offers a return to alignment, strength, and vitality for new participants. It's a method that grows with you, meets you where you are, and helps you become who you're meant to be.

So this year, instead of another resolution that fades by February, make a commitment to awareness. Step onto the mat, lay on a reformer, and let your body learn the language of strength and ease again.

Because real change isn't about *doing more*. It's about *moving smarter*. And when you move smarter, everything else starts to align.

Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

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



WWW.CLUBPILATES.COM



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.

"Concierge treatment without the concierge price."

STEM CELLS

Revitalize Your Health with Stem Cell Injections

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

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

\$200

per month

RECEIVE A STEM CELL INJECTION EVERY 90 DAYS



Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics

Stem Cells, PRP, Exosomes, Spinal Decompression

239.829.4300

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**3380 WOODS EDGE CIRCLE #104
BONITA SPRINGS, FLORIDA 34134**

Downsizing for Retirement: 9 Downsizing Tips for Seniors

Many people choose to downsize for retirement. Now that the kids are grown and you simply don't need as much space, downsizing is a great way to boost your retirement fund and make your living situation more comfortable which is why this process is sometimes called "rightsizing for seniors." When you rightsize your home, you get rid of the extra space you don't need to make way for a new living space at a new budget that allows you the budget and time to better live your dream retirement.

However, it's difficult to know how to downsize your home for retirement, since it can feel like an overwhelming task. Consult our expert tips for seniors selling their homes to rightsize their life below.

DOWNSIZING TIPS FOR SENIORS

1. Start Early

Initiate the downsizing process well in advance to reduce stress and make thoughtful decisions. Take your time, ideally over several months, to ensure a smooth transition. Rushing through the process can lead to added stress and hasty decision-making. Instead, embrace the opportunity to reminisce and enjoy the process of downsizing for retirement, making it a pleasant journey rather than a stressful one. Downsizing for retirement can certainly be exciting, but also consider that you surely have a great number of possessions you no longer need, and it will take time to go through it all. Stop and enjoy the process of reflection before selling, donating or throwing away the items. Perhaps you even want to take photos to keep the memory without the item.

The earlier you begin, the more time you'll have to adjust to the idea of letting go of unnecessary possessions and simplifying your life.

2. Define Clear Goals

Why are you downsizing? Whether your goal is to save money, simplify your lifestyle, or relocate to a new area, it's important to set clear financial goals. Envision your desired retirement lifestyle, considering potential healthcare expenses and other future financial needs. By doing so, you can better understand your anticipated costs and how to achieve them while planning for retirement.

3. Create an Inventory of Your Belongings

One of the most useful tips for seniors selling their homes to downsize is to meticulously catalog your



possessions. By doing so, you gain a better understanding of what you own and can make informed decisions about what to keep and what to let go of during the downsizing process. Create a list of all your possessions, including items tucked away in the attic, basement, or storage units to reveal the extent of your belongings. Identify duplicate items and choose the one in the best condition. Certain online tools and programs can help in making this process easier. Also identify items that won't be needed in your new home (for example a lawn mower rendered unnecessary by a move to 55+ area or retirement community that handles lawn care for you), and consider selling or donating them.

4. Measure Your New Living Space

Acts recommends anyone considering downsizing for retirement understand the dimensions of their new living space to determine how much of their belongings they'll be able to bring. Visit your future home or assess online floor plans of potential options and consider the available space. Note any storage spaces like cabinets for kitchen appliances and closets for clothing. Start outlining which possessions will fit comfortably in your new living area. By understanding the layout and dimensions of your new home, you can make informed decisions about what items to bring with you and how to best arrange them in your smaller living space.

5. Organize Your Belongings

You can make the process of downsizing more efficient and less complicated with these organization strategies:

- **Categorize:** Sort your belongings into categories to bring structure to the downsizing process.

- **Ask Yes or No Questions:** Instead of vague, open-ended questions, use clear, binary queries like "have I worn this coat in the last year, and will I in the future?" to simplify decision making.
- **Three-Box Method:** Employ a "Yes, No, Maybe" system within three marked boxes and categorize your belongings into these straightforward options. Keep the "Maybe" box minimal.
- **6-Month Method:** For items unused in the past six months, consider donating or reselling them. Chances are, if you haven't used them recently, they may not be essential in your future life.
- **Hanger Method:** Turn hangers backward and set a time limit of around 6 months to a year. Clothes that remain backward haven't been worn and can be confidently discarded, simplifying closet downsizing.

6. Start Decluttering Your Home

Efficiently declutter your possessions by adopting a purposeful approach. By following these decluttering strategies, you can downsize your belongings while ensuring that your new retirement space is filled with items that truly enhance your life.

Tips for Decluttering Your Home:

- **Sell Unneeded and Valuable Items:** Consider selling items you no longer require, especially if you're moving to a smaller home. Identify marketable items like designer handbags or artwork and explore platforms like eBay, Craigslist, or Facebook Marketplace. This can provide quick cash for your move.
- **Dispose of Broken Items:** Throw away broken items immediately, ensuring that only the best-quality possessions accompany you into retirement.
- **Donate:** Items that you can't sell can find new homes through donations to friends, family, or charitable organizations. You may be surprised how cathartic it feels to know a beloved but no-longer-needed item will make a new owner extremely happy.
- **Digitize Important Documents:** Reduce paper clutter by discarding as many unnecessary papers as possible. Scan and store essential documents digitally to save physical space while ensuring easy access when needed.

 **Acts** | The Terraces at Bonita Springs
Where Loving-Kindness Lives

Are you interested in learning more about Acts and The Terraces at Bonita Springs?
Schedule a community tour today by calling 239-204-3469 or take a virtual tour right now! Please join us for our next event!



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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Call 239-468-0050 to speak with one of our Navigators who can connect you with a wide scope of health services.



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LeeHealth.org/Events



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.



www.naplessoap.com

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.



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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TOP 3 REASONS TO OPT FOR PROFESSIONAL TEETH WHITENING

By KELLY M. DAINIAK, DMD, GENERAL DENTIST

Brightening your smile can transform how you feel about yourself and how others perceive you. At Premier Dental & Implant Studio in Estero, FL, we offer professional teeth whitening that provides significant advantages over store-bought kits. Here's why professional whitening with Dr. Kelly M. Dainiak, DMD, is the smart choice for those seeking a dazzling smile.

1. POWERFUL, IMMEDIATE RESULTS

Our in-office **Zoom!® whitening treatment** can make your teeth up to eight shades lighter in just about an hour, perfect for those who need quick results. This professional-grade whitening delivers a transformative change that home kits can't match, ensuring you leave our office with a noticeably brighter smile.

2. PERSONALIZED AND SAFE TREATMENT OPTIONS

At Premier Dental & Implant Studio, we also understand that some patients prefer the convenience of whitening their teeth at home. That's why we offer custom whitening trays tailored specifically to the contours of your smile. Unlike one-size-fits-all kits, our take-home trays ensure an even application and use a safe concentration of whitening agent to protect your enamel and gums. Whether you choose in-office or at-home treatment, you can rest assured that the procedures are safe and designed according to your dental health and whitening goals.

3. EXPERT GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT FOR SENSITIVITY

We understand that teeth whitening can sometimes lead to sensitivity due to the chemicals used, such as hydrogen peroxide. This is usually temporary and can be managed effectively. We recommend using desensitizing toothpaste, fluoride varnish, and avoiding extreme temperature foods if sensitivity occurs. If the discomfort persists, **Dr. Dainiak and our team** are here to help. Dr. Dainiak and our experienced team at Premier Dental & Implant Studio provide expert advice to ensure that your whitening process is not only effective but also maintains the health of your teeth and gums. We can provide additional solutions or adjust your treatment to make your whitening experience as comfortable as possible.



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SMART PAIN MANAGEMENT:

CHOOSING REGIONAL BLOCKS OVER NARCOTICS FOR EXERCISE-RELATED INJURIES

By Dennis O. Sagini, MD

As an orthopaedic surgeon specializing in upper extremity injuries, I've witnessed a significant shift in how we approach pain management for exercise-related injuries. The conversation has moved away from narcotic pain medications toward safer, more targeted alternatives that allow patients to heal while maintaining function and avoiding the risks of opioid dependency.

The Regional Block Advantage

Regional and local nerve blocks represent a revolutionary approach to managing post-exercise and post-surgical pain. Unlike systemic narcotics that flood the entire body with medication, nerve blocks deliver precise pain relief directly to the affected area. For hand, wrist, and elbow injuries common in weightlifting, tennis, golf, and other activities, these blocks can provide 12-24 hours of complete pain relief without the cognitive impairment, nausea, or constipation associated with opioids.

The beauty of regional anesthesia lies in its specificity. A well-placed nerve block allows patients to remain alert and functional while the injured area heals. This is particularly valuable for athletes and active individuals who want to maintain their daily routines during recovery. Moreover, studies consistently show that patients who receive nerve blocks use significantly fewer narcotic pills post-operatively, reducing their exposure to potentially addictive substances.

The Anti-Inflammatory Foundation

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) remain a cornerstone of exercise injury management. These medications address the root cause of pain—*inflammation*—rather than simply masking symptoms. When used appropriately and under medical supervision, NSAIDs like ibuprofen and naproxen can effectively control pain from tendinitis, muscle strains, and joint inflammation without the addiction potential of narcotics.

The key is using anti-inflammatories strategically during the acute inflammatory phase, typically the first 48-72 hours after injury. This targeted approach reduces swelling, improves mobility, and accelerates the healing process by controlling the inflammatory cascade.



Ice: The Simplest Solution

Never underestimate the power of cryotherapy. Ice application remains one of the most effective, accessible, and side-effect-free pain management tools available. For acute exercise injuries, the protocol is straightforward: apply ice for 15-20 minutes every 2-3 hours during the first 48 hours. Ice constricts blood vessels, reduces swelling, and numbs nerve endings, providing immediate relief without any medication.

Why Avoid Narcotics?

The opioid crisis has taught us valuable lessons about narcotic pain medications. While these drugs have their place in severe, acute pain scenarios, they're often overprescribed for injuries that respond well to alternative treatments. Narcotics carry risks of dependence, respiratory depression, and decreased cognitive function. They also mask pain without promoting healing, potentially leading patients to overuse injured areas before they're ready.

A Comprehensive Approach

The most effective pain management strategy combines multiple modalities. Regional blocks for immediate post-injury or post-surgical relief, anti-inflammatories to control the healing process, ice for acute symptom management, and physical therapy to restore function—this integrated approach addresses pain while promoting true healing.

As physicians, our goal extends beyond simply eliminating pain; we aim to facilitate safe, complete recovery that allows our patients to return to the activities they love. By prioritizing targeted, non-narcotic interventions, we protect

our patients from unnecessary risks while delivering superior outcomes. The future of pain management is precise, personalized, and notably free from the shadow of opioid dependence.

Contact our office at 239-302-3216 to schedule a consultation and to learn more.



Dennis O. Sagini, MD

Dr. Sagini is an orthopedic surgeon with specialization in hand and upper extremity surgery. He specializes in arthritis of the hand, nerve compression, muscle and tendon injury, fracture care, and upper extremity dysfunction.

He completed his Bachelors of Science in Microbiology from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma in 1998 and his Doctor of Medicine at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA in 2002. It was during medical school training that Dr. Sagini developed an interest in orthopaedic surgery. His residency in orthopaedic surgery was completed at Howard University Hospital, Washington, DC. Dr. Sagini completed his fellowship training in Hand and Upper Extremity surgery at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Pittsburgh, PA.

Dr. Sagini is a member of the Lee County Medical Society, the American Association of Orthopedic Surgery and the American Board of Orthopedic Surgery.

Dr. Sagini is active in research and community service and has a passion for overseas medical mission work. He also enjoys running, traveling, listening to music, cooking, tennis, and spending time with his family and friends.



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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.

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Marsh Cove Dental Brings Specialized Full-Arch Implant Expertise to Fort Myers

By Dr. Eugene Titov and Dr. Olga Titov

Residents of Fort Myers and surrounding communities will soon have access to world-class dental implant care as Naples-based Marsh Cove Dental announces the opening of their new specialized facility. Unlike traditional dental expansions, this new location will focus exclusively on providing revolutionary full-arch dental implant treatments, bringing their cutting-edge technology and unparalleled expertise to Lee County.

Specialized Full-Arch Implant Center

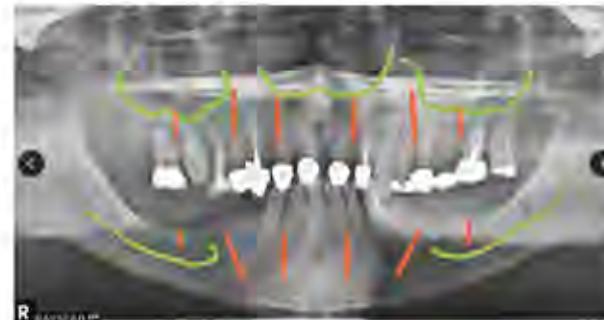
The new Fort Myers location will exclusively focus on full-arch dental implants – also known as All-On-4, Teeth-In-A-Day, or Same-Day Teeth – making them Southwest Florida's premier destination for this life-changing procedure. By concentrating solely on full-arch treatments, Marsh Cove's specialized team performs these complex procedures daily, offering a level of expertise unmatched by offices that only occasionally offer such services.

"Our decision to focus exclusively on full-arch dental implants in Fort Myers stems from recognizing a significant gap in specialized care in the area," explains Dr. Titov, the practice's leading implant specialist. "We're bringing an alternative to corporate chain offices that often treat patients as just another number. Our patients consistently tell us how different their experience feels with our personalized approach."

State-of-the-Art Technology Under One Roof

The Fort Myers facility will house Marsh Cove's complete suite of advanced technology, including their 3D CBCT scanner, RayFace Scanner, 3Shape digital scanner, and in-house dental lab. Additionally, the revolutionary Yomi robot-assisted implant system will be coming to the Fort Myers office, bringing the precision of robotic guidance to select implant procedures. This FDA-cleared robotic system provides real-time guidance during implant surgery, ensuring placement accuracy to within fractions of a millimeter while allowing Dr. Titov to maintain complete control throughout the procedure.

A standout feature of their approach is the in-house manufacturing capability. Using digital scans taken before and during surgery, the team designs and creates temporary arches on their 3D printer within hours of implant placement, ensuring every patient



leaves with functional teeth the same day as surgery. Final restorations are milled in their on-site lab using zirconia, dentistry's strongest material.

Advanced Solutions for Complex Cases

Marsh Cove Dental has built a reputation for successfully treating patients previously told they weren't candidates for full-arch implants due to bone loss. While less experienced providers might require extensive sinus lifts and bone grafting, Dr. Titov often employs zygomatic implants, anchoring into the cheekbone and eliminating the need for sinus procedures.

"We routinely welcome patients who've been turned away elsewhere," shares Dr. Titov. "Our advanced techniques allow us to provide solutions even in challenging cases with significant bone loss."

Comprehensive Care with Patient Safety Focus

Another distinguishing element of their approach is the use of dedicated anesthesia professionals. Unlike many practices where the dentist manages both sedation and the surgical procedure, Marsh Cove partners with licensed anesthesiologists and CRNAs, allowing Dr. Titov to focus exclusively on the dental procedure while ensuring optimal patient safety.



"Having dedicated anesthesia professionals is especially valuable for medically compromised patients," explains the practice manager. "It also significantly reduces sedation time, as Dr. Titov can work efficiently without dividing his attention."

The new Fort Myers location will maintain Marsh Cove's signature comprehensive care model, from complimentary consultations with transparent treatment planning to personalized support throughout the healing process. Patients can schedule a consultation to view before-and-after transformations, hear patient testimonials, and experience firsthand the difference specialized care makes.

For Fort Myers residents seeking an alternative to corporate dental chains for full-arch implant treatment, Marsh Cove Dental offers the rare combination of specialized expertise, advanced technology, and personalized care, all under one roof. Schedule your complimentary consultation today at (239) 300-0290 to discover how our life-changing full-arch implant solutions can restore both your smile and confidence—and see why our patients consistently recommend us as Southwest Florida's premier dental implant specialists.



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See What Our Patients Say



REGINA M.

After five disappointing consultations elsewhere, Regina found hope at Marsh Cove Dental who provided detailed explanations and complete transparency about her 4-on-4 dental implant surgery. Despite suffering from dental anxiety, she never felt anxious during any visit with the caring staff who treated her like family. With her brand new smile, Regina has gained new confidence and can finally enjoy foods she hasn't been able to eat for a long time.



DANIEL B.

My name is Daniel and for me Marsh Cove Dental is the best dentist office I've ever been to - their knowledgeable staff took time to explain procedures, answer all my questions, and they've gone above and beyond my expectations.



CHRIS S.



PAMELA F.

Pamela enthusiastically recommends Dr. T and the staff at Marsh Cove for dental implants, highlighting their exceptional care, the doctor's perfectionism, and how the experience transformed her smile and life.



KAREN W.



CHERYL D.



JOHNNY

My name is Johnny I was very happy with my experience at Marsh Cove Dental... **so happy in fact, I brought my friend in to have his teeth fixed also.**



The Doctor has a very discerning eye and my outcome was **aesthetically pleasing and most importantly functional**. Dr. Titov has state of the art digital technology and an on-site lab. The staff very knowledgeable, kind and caring and make you feel like one of the family.



PAMELA

My name is Pamela and I **give Marsh Cove 5 Stars!!!** From my first visit to my most recent visit I have only great things to say. Everyone is so friendly and knowledgeable, patient and kind. **All my questions were answered and my anxiety was addressed not only in person but also via telephone.** I had 17 teeth pulled and permanent implant supported "dentures" placed. Following all directions and taking products provided I had very little swelling, no bruising and returned to work in 5 days!

I highly recommend Dr. Titov and all his group at Marsh Cove Dental and Implant Center.



TOBY R.



MIKE S.



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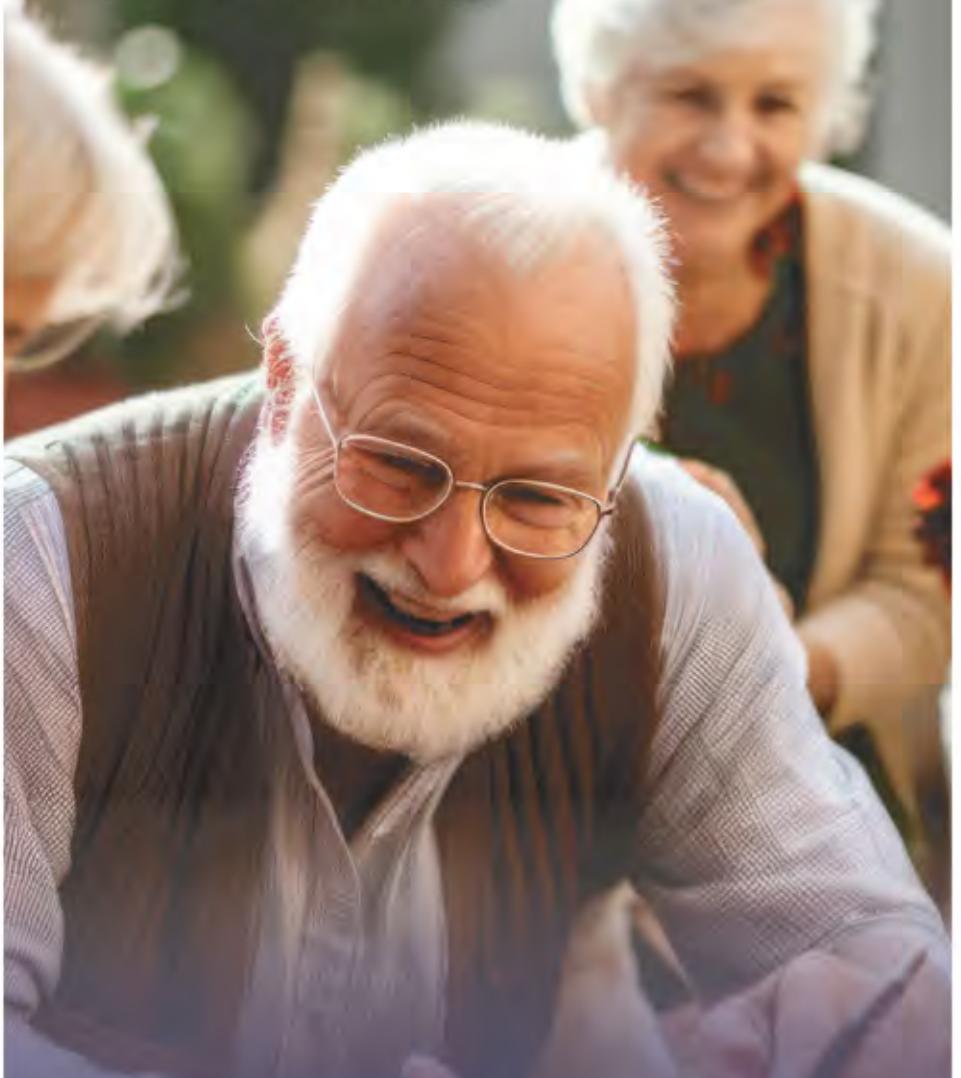
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KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: THYROID DISEASE CAN GO UNDETECTED WITHOUT YEARLY EXAM BY PCP

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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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.

Associates in Nephrology

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

Chronic Kidney Disease Program

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

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

Source:

1. https://www.nfcr.org/cancer-types/kidney-cancer/?gclid=CjwKCAiAyc2BBhAaElvA44-wW9qTM7gXbIKsBU1dxN-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.

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

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

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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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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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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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Integrative Medicine: What Kind of Hippie Dippie Stuff is That?

Integrative medicine is a partnership between a health care professional and a person seeking optimal health and wellness. The two parties work together to achieve optimal health for body, mind and spirit. There is active discourse aimed at achieving the goals decided upon. The patient is very active in the process, and ultimately achieves much more than the absence of disease. He or she achieves optimal health.

As health care costs rise, and insurance covers less, we must maintain our health as much as possible. We must decrease our need to enter the medical system. One way to do that is by achieving optimal health and reducing dependence on prescription medication. Dr. Doreen DeStefano, DNP, NHD can help you do just that. Check out her approach in the vignette below.

Interviewer: So I guess we'll start with the basics: What's your name?

Doreen: Oh good, an easy question! My name is Doreen DeStefano, NhD, APRN, DNP

Interviewer: That's a lot of letters after your name. What do they all mean?

Doreen: Haha, yes I know. They mean that I am a Nurse Practitioner with a Doctorate in natural health. I also have a Master's in Public Business Administration, Doctorate of Nursing, and of course, a Masters in Nursing.

Interviewer: So what does that mean, exactly?

Doreen: I am a fully licensed medical practitioner. I can order diagnostic studies, make a diagnosis and prescribe treatment, including medication. However, I believe in partnering with my clients and asking them to participate to a large degree in their health. I don't like to go straight to pharmaceutical support if we can use patient behavior, and naturally occurring things to accomplish the desired goal.

I like to use natural means to repair the body whenever possible. For example, if a patient has high cholesterol we are going to really work with nutrition, exercise, and nutrient supplementation

before we use pharmaceuticals to reduce cholesterol. Of course, it's patient specific. We always do what is in the best interest of the patient.

Interviewer: OK, so say I had high cholesterol I'm already taking medication for it. What would you do?

Doreen: First we would get a full health history, we would do a full physical exam, and I would look at your labs. I would do some of my own testing, like a Cleveland Heart Lab. We know that 50% of heart attacks occur in people with "normal" cholesterol levels. Research shows us that the inflammation of the blood vessel wall is a very important factor that we must measure, and if it's high, we need to lower it. Also, there are different types of cholesterol, some "good" and some "bad". Even within the good and bad cholesterol, there are subtypes that are "good" and "bad". Standard cholesterol testing doesn't tell us all that.

Interviewer: What do you do with all that information?

Doreen: Well, it's different for everyone. But in brief, we can teach our patients how to eat to lower inflammation and decrease "bad" cholesterol and increase "good" cholesterol. We find ways for the patient to move regularly. We find something that they like and can be consistent with. Even gardening is good exercise. We figure it out. We provide lifestyle modification options to create a healthier lifestyle, like maybe eating less red meat, or smoking cessation. We also have natural supplements that the patient can take at home to help decrease inflammation, lower bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol. We have in office treatments like hyperbaric oxygen and intravenous vitamins and minerals that help to optimize patient health. If the patient ultimately needs a prescription medication, then we use them. But we find that motivated people can usually decrease their cholesterol and inflammation to healthy levels. Then they can reduce or eliminate the need for medication.

Interviewer: It sounds difficult. Is it?



Dr. Doreen DeStefano, NhD, ARNP, DNP

Doreen: Well honestly, integrative medicine isn't for everyone. It's a partnership in health. The patient actually does more work than the practitioner. Diet and lifestyle change isn't easy. Some people don't want to do it. But some people really enjoy it. There are challenges, but the spectacular way that you feel when you optimize your health is beyond comparison.

Interviewer: So essentially, you help people get healthier without drugs as much as possible.

Doreen: Yes. I find I am very much a teacher and a coach. It's a holistic approach. We don't look at anything all by itself. We look at people as part of several environments, their own internal and external environments, and the environment in which they live. Each of those things effects the other. We strive to integrate all those pieces into optimal health.

Interviewer: What is optimal health?

Doreen: That is the state in which you look your best and feel your best physically, emotionally, and spiritually. You are simply your best you.

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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.



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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.



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REBOOT YOUR REST: How Exomind™ Helps You Sleep Better and Stress Less

By Dr. Ivan Bracic, Clinical Director – Novaré™ Medical and Wellness
Fort Myers & Lehigh Acres, Florida

Why We Lose Sleep as We Age

If you've noticed that sleep doesn't come as easily as it used to — you're not alone. More than half of adults over 50 report regular trouble falling or staying asleep. Changes in hormones, medications, and stress levels all affect how well the brain regulates rest. As we age, our natural melatonin production decreases, and the parts of the brain that control our sleep-wake rhythm begin to slow down. The result? Restless nights, groggy mornings, and the frustrating feeling that no amount of coffee can fix. But poor sleep doesn't just leave us tired — it affects nearly every system in the body. Chronic sleep deprivation has been linked to weight gain, slower metabolism, depression, reduced cognitive function, and even accelerated aging.

The Brain's Role in Rest

Most people think of sleep as a physical process — but it's actually governed by the brain. Deep sleep and stress recovery depend on balanced communication between key brain regions like the **prefrontal cortex** and **limbic system**. When those areas are overstimulated — often by stress, anxiety, or chronic tension — the brain can't "shut off," even when the body is exhausted.

That's why traditional sleep aids often fall short. Pills may temporarily force the body into rest, but they don't correct the underlying brain imbalance that's keeping you awake.

Meet Exomind™: A Brain Reset for Restful Sleep

At Novaré™ Medical & Wellness, we've introduced a breakthrough technology called **Exomind™**, designed to naturally retrain the brain's sleep regulation systems.

Exomind™ uses gentle, targeted magnetic stimulation — known as **ExoTMS™** — to activate areas of the brain responsible for mood, stress, and circadian rhythm. The treatment is **completely non-invasive, drug-free, and FDA-cleared**. Sessions are simple, relaxing, and take less than 30 minutes.

By helping the brain rebalance its natural communication patterns, Exomind™ encourages deeper, more restorative sleep — without the side effects or dependency risks of medication.



**"Your body heals when you rest.
Exomind™ helps your brain
remember how."**

The Science Behind the Results

In a recent Exomind™ study on **Sleep and Stress**, patients reported remarkable improvements after just a few sessions:

- 88% experienced better sleep quality and longer sleep duration.
- 71% reported lower stress levels (measured by the PSS-10 stress index).
- Participants noted both easier sleep onset and fewer nighttime awakenings.

These results echo broader research in neuroscience. A 2016 review in *NeuroRehabilitation* found that Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) — the foundation for Exomind™ — can safely modulate brain circuits involved in recovery, focus, and mood regulation. By improving how the brain communicates with itself, Exomind™ helps restore balance where it matters most — inside the mind.

Why Sleep Is the Ultimate Anti-Aging Tool

When we sleep, our body doesn't just rest — it repairs. Deep sleep promotes tissue recovery, regulates metabolism, balances hormones, and sharpens memory. When we don't get enough, inflammation rises, cortisol (the stress hormone) stays elevated, and the aging process accelerates.

That's why restoring healthy sleep isn't a luxury — it's essential to longevity.

At Novaré, Exomind™ therapy fits seamlessly into our **whole-body wellness approach**. By combining brain-based treatments like Exomind™ with other

restorative technologies such as **EmsculptNeo** (for strength and muscle metabolism) and **Emsella** (for core and pelvic balance), we help our patients build energy, calm, and control — from the inside out.

Real Results, Real People

Our patients often describe their first few Exomind™ sessions as a mental "reset."

- One veteran who struggled with anxiety and chronic insomnia reported his *first full night of sleep in over a decade* after completing a short series of treatments.
- Another patient shared that her energy and mood improved once her sleep returned to normal — saying, *"I finally feel like myself again."*

Stories like these are why Exomind™ has quickly become one of our most transformative tools for mental and physical wellness.

Take the First Step Toward Better Sleep

If you've tried everything — new pillows, sleep supplements, meditation apps — and still wake up tired, it might be time to look deeper. The issue may not be your body — it may be your brain's ability to find balance.

At Novaré™ Medical & Wellness, we help patients renew their energy, restore radiance, and defy aging — naturally. Our Exomind™ sessions are customized to support your goals, whether that's better sleep, sharper focus, or reduced stress.

Call 239-497-9355 (239-497-WELL) to schedule your complimentary consultation and discover how Exomind™ can help you sleep better and stress less.



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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?

Logical Insurance Solutions is a SWFL Insurance Broker that works with most of the insurance carriers in your area, we are happy to help you through the maze. We offer **Free Medicare Seminars, Personal Appointments & Virtual appointments**. Please e-mail info@logicalinsurance.com to register or call 239-362-0855 for dates.

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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.



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COMPASSIONATE HOME CARE:

Empowering Independence in Southwest Florida

By Dennis Agrusti

When families face the challenging decision of how to best care for aging parents or loved ones with special needs, the desire to maintain dignity, comfort, and independence often leads to one clear solution: quality home care. Home Helpers Home Care of Southwest Florida understands this deeply personal journey and has dedicated itself to providing exceptional care that honors the fundamental belief that everyone deserves to age gracefully in the comfort of their own home.

A Philosophy Rooted in Compassion

"Giving Care The Way You Want To Be Cared For" isn't just a motto for Home Helpers Home Care of Southwest Florida – it's a guiding principle that shapes every interaction, every service, and every relationship they build with families throughout Fort Myers, Cape Coral, and the surrounding areas. This philosophy recognizes that receiving care shouldn't mean sacrificing independence or personal preferences. Instead, it should enhance quality of life while providing the support necessary to thrive at home.

The team at Home Helpers understands that choosing home care represents a significant decision for families. It often comes during times of transition, uncertainty, or health challenges when emotions run high and practical concerns feel overwhelming. Their approach acknowledges these realities while focusing on solutions that bring peace of mind to both clients and their families.

Personalized Care That Adapts to Life's Changes
What sets Home Helpers Home Care of Southwest Florida apart is their commitment to truly personalized service. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all solutions, their dedicated senior caregivers invest time in understanding each client's unique circumstances, preferences, and goals. This thorough assessment process ensures that care plans reflect individual needs rather than generic protocols.

The services offered span a comprehensive range of daily living support. Companionship services combat isolation and loneliness, providing meaningful social interaction that contributes to mental and emotional wellbeing. Light housekeeping maintains a clean, safe living environment without the physical strain that cleaning can place on seniors or



those with mobility limitations. Meal preparation ensures proper nutrition while accommodating dietary restrictions and personal tastes.

Transportation services prove invaluable for maintaining independence and social connections. Whether it's medical appointments, grocery shopping, or social outings, reliable transportation keeps clients engaged with their communities. Personal care services, delivered with utmost respect for dignity and privacy, assist with activities of daily living when needed.

The Extended Family Approach

Home Helpers Home Care of Southwest Florida operates on the principle that effective caregiving extends beyond completing tasks – it involves building genuine relationships. Their caregivers are trained not only in technical skills but also in the art of compassionate communication and emotional support. This approach transforms the caregiver-client relationship from a purely professional arrangement into something more meaningful: an extended family connection built on trust, respect, and genuine caring.

This philosophy proves particularly valuable for seniors who may feel vulnerable or uncertain about accepting help. When caregivers approach their work with warmth and authentic concern, clients feel more comfortable and confident in their care arrangements. Families, too, experience greater peace of mind knowing their loved ones are receiving not just professional service but genuine personal attention.

Supporting Independence Through Dependable Care
The ultimate goal of quality home care is to enhance independence rather than replace it. Home Helpers Home Care of Southwest Florida structures their services to support clients' existing

capabilities while providing assistance where needed. This balanced approach helps maintain self-esteem and personal autonomy while ensuring safety and wellbeing.

For families in Southwest Florida seeking compassionate, professional home care services, Home Helpers Home Care offers a partnership built on understanding, flexibility, and unwavering commitment to quality care. Their dedication to treating each client as they would want their own family members treated creates a foundation for successful, long-term care relationships that truly make a difference in people's lives.

About Dennis Agrusti, Owner

Dennis Agrusti has been a proud resident of the Fort Myers area for over 39 years, has two adult children and six amazing grandchildren and credits his faith in God for guiding his journey. As an Army veteran, Dennis feels a deep responsibility to support fellow veterans, which is why his company is a VA provider affiliated with several veteran programs. His professional background includes over 20 years as an Allstate agent and 10 years as a realtor, along with active community involvement.

After retiring from insurance to care for his ailing mother in Texas, Dennis experienced firsthand the challenges families face as caregivers. This personal experience, combined with his own perspective as a senior citizen, inspired him to open Home Helpers. He chose this reputable franchise with over 20 years of nationwide service because of their industry-leading training and commitment to excellence. Dennis's mission is helping seniors maintain independence in their homes while providing families peace of mind, truly "Making Life Easier" for everyone involved.

Call Home Helpers Home Care of Southwest Florida today at (239) 312-5759 to schedule your free, no-obligation home care assessment and discover compassionate support and a senior caregiver tailored to your family's needs!



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Joan's Five Steps to Overcome a Sedentary Lifestyle

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

In a society that frequently underscores the value of youth and vitality, the narratives of those who defy stereotypes and champion physical activity in their golden years are particularly noteworthy. Joan is one such person. A 60-year-old retiree, Joan transformed her life from a sedentary existence to an active and thriving life she loves. Joan's story not only serves as an inspiration but is also underscored by scientific research, emphasizing that the pursuit of physical well-being is a possible journey for everyone, irrespective of age.

The Turning Point:

Joan gained weight after each of her three children were born. Physical activity became something she did not have time for as a busy mom. She led a sedentary lifestyle, grappling with fatigue, stiffness, and a sense of unfulfilled potential. The turning point came in the form of her husband's dementia diagnosis and subsequent move into a memory care community. Joan knew she had beat the odds; dementia caregivers have a 67% higher chance of dying before the person for whom they care. She set about making changes.

Overcoming Mental Barriers:

Like many individuals in her age group, Joan first had to navigate the mental hurdles associated with overcoming a sedentary lifestyle. Shifting her perspective on physical activity from a perceived chore to a gateway for personal growth proved to be a crucial step. She committed to walking every day, no matter how few steps it equaled. She knew consistency mattered more than an arbitrary goal.

Joan's approach aligned with the findings of a study published in the *"Journal of Aging and Physical Activity,"* emphasizing the importance of moderate-intensity physical activity for improved health outcomes in older adults (Brown et al., 2018).

Handling Emotions Through Movement:

Central to Joan's success was the discovery of joy in movement. On her walk, Joan listened to new music and even found podcasts on topics she enjoyed. She found that walking outside before visiting her husband in the memory care community put her in a better mood which made their visits better. Additional walking after her visit helped Joan process her grief. Experimenting with various activities, from dancing to her favorite tunes to participating in local fitness classes for seniors, Joan found that making physical activity enjoyable was pivotal to sustaining her new lifestyle.

Social Connection and Support:

Joan's children were grown and lived out of state. She maintained deep love for her husband, but she also felt lonely. Joining a local walking group and participating in senior fitness classes not only provided companionship but also transformed exercise into a communal activity. A study in the *"Journal of Aging and Social Policy"* supports this approach, underscoring the positive impact of social participation on the physical and mental well-being of older adults (Chang et al., 2020).

Embracing Variety:

Over the course of a year, Joan incorporated a variety of activities into her routine. She learned she liked the feeling of strength which came from lifting weights but

did not like water aerobics. She was intimidated to try yoga, but found she loved how leaner, taller and more flexible she felt after a simplified version of restorative yoga.

Celebrating Progress:

Joan celebrated every milestone, no matter how small, reinforcing her commitment to an active lifestyle. These celebrations became powerful motivators, propelling her to explore new activities and continually push her boundaries. Her family also noticed her success and praised her determination. They had never expressed it before, but as they watched their father deteriorate and take no action towards improving his lifestyle when he still had capacity to do so, they were afraid their mom was going to go down the same road. Samantha* said, "With my dad it was hard to see him get worse so quickly. I was afraid I was going to lose my mom, too." Samantha continued, "Now, I do not worry about her anymore. She is committed. She knows that a healthy life is built one step at a time. And, she inspires me!"

Joan's journey exemplifies that age does not have to be an impediment to embracing physical activity. Her story, backed by scientific research, underscores that it is never too early and it is never too late to change your lifestyle. Start where you are and do what you can with what you have.

Joan's daily walks became a force of strength and inspiration for herself and her family. During a time when it would have been easy to "give up" all over again with her husband's diagnosis, Joan determined in her heart not to end up as a statistic. She has since moved into an Independent Living community because she knew that living alone was not ideal. She needed more community and social relationships to live a long, full life. Now, with the physical and social aspects of life dialed in, Joan feels unstoppable.

If you see yourself in Joan's story, let us know.

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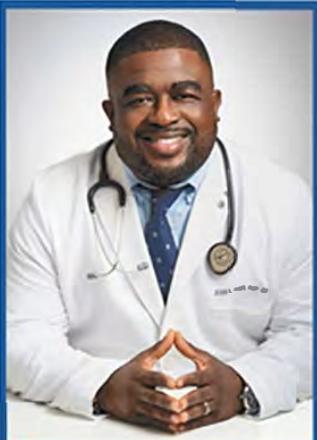
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ADVANCE CHRONIC MOBILE WOUND CARE:

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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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:

"In 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. *"I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I 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. I 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: *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For 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, *"Then 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.

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