

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

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I KNOW PAIN!

**I WISH I DIDN'T.
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GIVE YOU A
CHOICE.**

Prof. William J. Cole, Jr., DO

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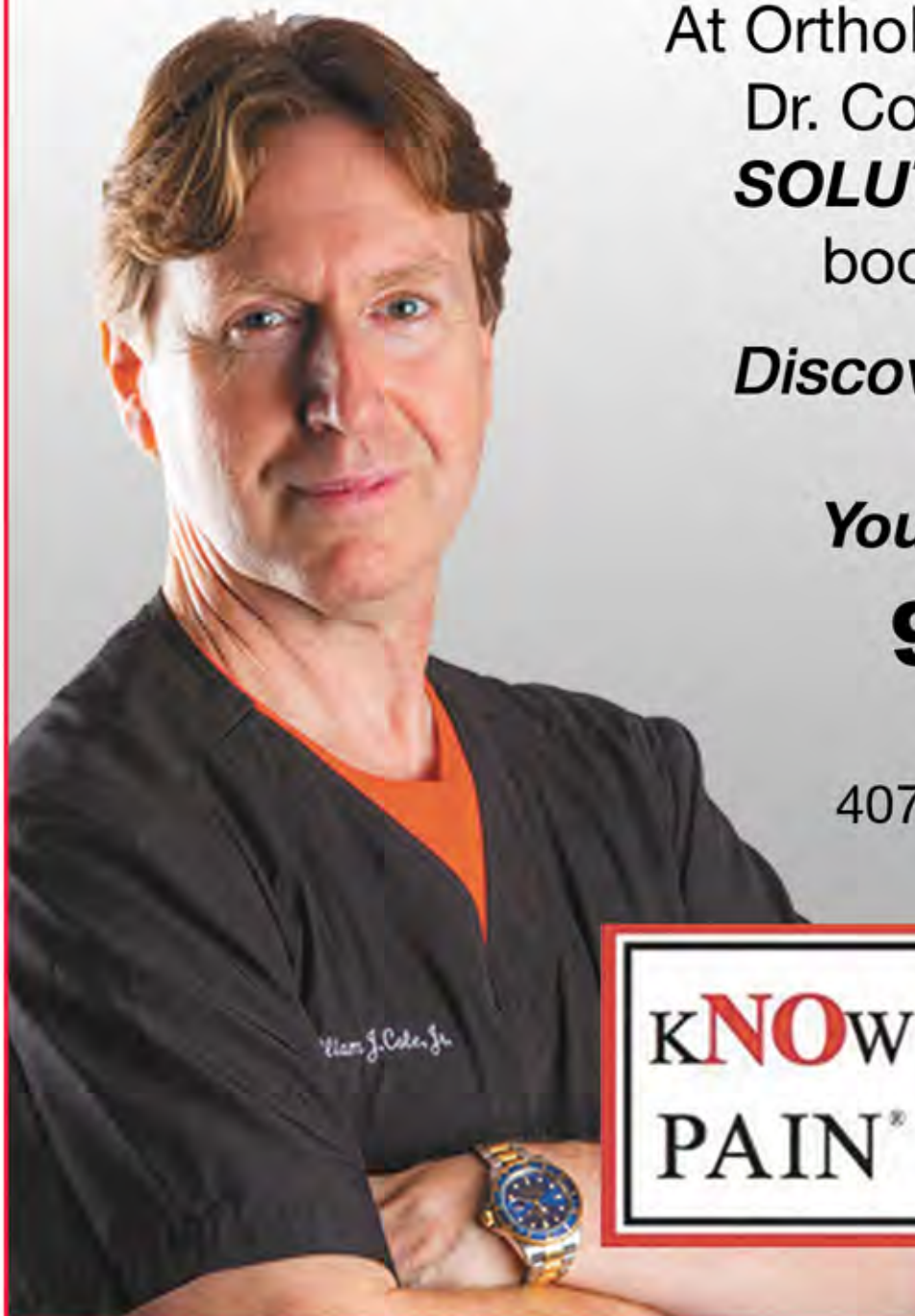
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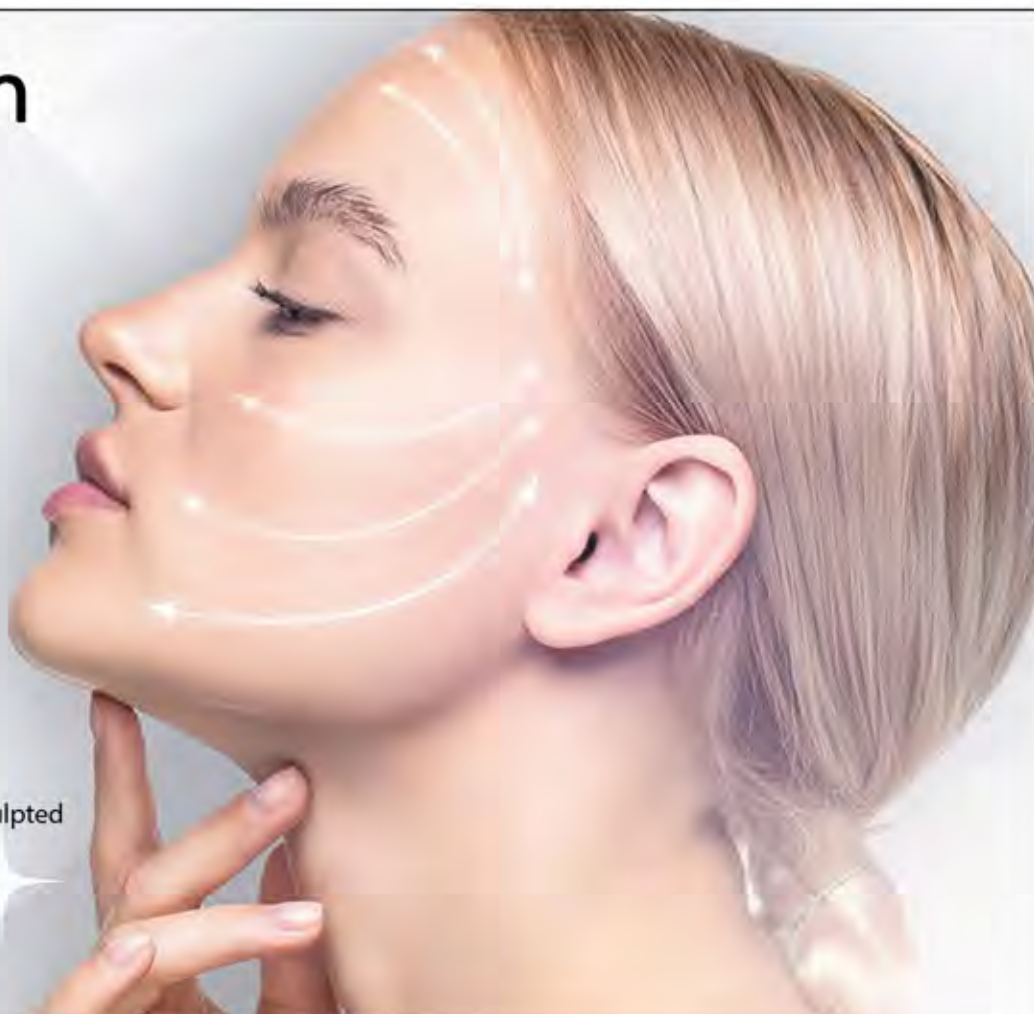


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I KNOW PAIN!

I wish I didn't. But life does not always give you a choice.

By Prof. William J. Cole, Jr., DO - Double Board-Certified in PM&R Interventions & Regenerative Medicine

There are moments when your life divides into two parts: before... and after. Mine happened when I woke up from surgery.

When I woke up from the cervical spinal decompression surgery for the large bone spurs that were crushing my right C-7 nerve root, rendering my right arm useless, and robbing me of any sleep for the last 30-days and 30-nights....

I leaned forward and felt this ripping sensation, deep in my neck, and then the shooting electrical cattle prod type pain went down to all my arms and legs with searing nerve pain.

This is NOT like any other type of pain, and those who have experienced **True Neurologic Pain** know how intense and unrelenting nerve pain can be.

I then reached up to touch my "Standard Operating Procedure Neck Safety Collar, WHICH WAS NOT THERE!"

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE?

I didn't freak out like most people... I GOT MAD AS HELL... I WAS FURIOUS!

How could this happen? Who was responsible? Why me? Am I going to be able to walk? Will I be able to work as a Doctor? Will I recover? How will I provide for my Lovely New Wife? What can I do to reverse the damage? And what the F___ Were They Thinking When They Are Operating on Another Doctor..?

That moment—right there—was the moment I realized I was potentially going to be a quadriplegic.

The difficulty became evident years before after a young girl fell asleep while driving and I was a passenger and she ran into the guardrail at 80 miles an hour where I went headfirst into the corner post with no airbag.

Of course, this was a devastating injury, which forced me to have **Multiple Surgeries** to "Decompress my bilateral Ulnar nerves" as my arms became useless, "Reattach my Bicep Tendon 3 times" within 5 weeks, "inject my Collar Bone" on Both Sides as it had been displaced one inch medial and shoved on top of my chest wall, and had "Countless Cervical Injection" due to the worsening neck pain and Endless PT that Just Did Not Work.

I survived these challenges, as "I am a Hardhead", which anyone who knows me can confirm, but then the "Real Pain" started.

I STOPPED SLEEPING ALL TOGETHER

Read that again: I stopped sleeping altogether. Not "I had trouble sleeping." Not "I was uncomfortable." I stopped sleeping.

It took a few years for this massive bone spur to develop, but after it started crushing my C7 spinal nerve and I had no choice but to have it removed.

And if you've ever been there—where your body won't let you rest—then you already know what happens next: you stop thinking clearly, you stop healing, you stop functioning, you stop being You!

Losing the use of your arms twice is devastating enough, let alone realizing that you may not be able to use your arms or legs in the future. That's why I was so upset and furious post-surgery when I realized that this was a Real Possibility.

It's one thing to be hurt. It's another thing to look into the future and realize you may never walk again or hold your loved ones. And if you've ever had that moment, then you know exactly what I mean, as "I Have Been Exactly Where You Are Now!"

I then told my partner at the time that we had this Amazing Ultra PRP treatment that he was going to perform in my epidural space and rebuild my spinal cord. He looked at me and said, "Never heard of it!" I said, "I Don't Care! That's What We're Going to do..."

The "Future Me"

So, I had a series of Ultra PRP epidural procedures performed in my cervical spinal canal, which **Rebuilt My Spinal Cord** and changed the course of my life forever.

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But the real breakthrough wasn't the procedure... it was what it forced me to understand about what all patients go through and the pain that they suffer due to the limitations of traditional medicine.

You're getting PAIN Signals. Signals are your body's warning signs. And when you decode them, you stop guessing and start making decisions that actually make sense, and this is **How I Became the Future Me.**

The "Future You"

Are You Ready to Meet the "Future You"?

Is it someone in crippling pain and dysfunction so bad that they just Gave Up? Will you stop participating in life? Will you just take another pill or schedule yet ANOTHER surgery, when the first ones didn't work?

What do you do with the frustration, anger, shame, guilt, insomnia, anxiety, depression, embarrassment, and inadequacy that comes from "Unfulfilled Dreams?"

YOUR LIFE WITHOUT PAIN

Now, instead, I want you to take a minute... Close Your Eyes, and IMAGINE YOUR LIFE WITHOUT PAIN.

Without any of the negative feedback from your body, brain, friends, or family. What would your life be like to live life to the fullest, free from endless drugs and surgeries? You are happy, healthy, pain free, and living the best life you can imagine.

Who would you be if you had no pain? What would you do? Where would you go? What would you accomplish? What does YOUR LIFE look like? Do you want to know how to get to the "Future You"?

Where is YOUR Pain...?

The body, back, brain, bones, or BioMet...? Well, THAT is what we can figure out together, along with how these problems affect every aspect of your life, now and in the future, and how to properly identify the real pain and problem generators.

Then, how to work toward resolution to live your best life—the Future You.

Pain is your body telling you that something is wrong, so **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY** as you know it better than any doctor.

Let's Decode Your Pain Signals.

Then Let's **"Have the Body Heal the Body"**®, as There is Nothing on God's Green Earth That Can Heal the Body Better Than the Body... Nothing!

We All Know This, Right?

Do you want to know how...?

"The Future You" is Waiting!

"If this excites you and would like to see more from the upcoming **"kNOW PAIN" Trilogy**, please **Join the "kNOWPAIN" Book Club waitlist today** at Info@kNOWPAIN.com. You can reserve your spot and receive the exclusive **First Editions**, in addition to **Special Offers and Discounts on these and other upcoming "kNOW" Books, Regenerative Webinars, IntelHealth AI Programs, and Stem Cell Specials.**"

Menopause:

A Powerful Journey Through Change

"It happened slowly... and then all at once," the saying goes. And just like watching a sunrise fill the sky with color in stages until it's totally changed, you may experience the signs of menopause developing over several years — until one day, you find yourself having made the transition altogether.



We're joined by AdventHealth board-certified OB/GYN Dr. Ricky Phillip Leff, who's here to shed light on the stages of menopause, what to expect during each phase, and how you can take steps to manage and improve your symptoms for a better quality of life.

The Stages of Menopause

Menopause is a natural part of the aging process for women. During this time, your ovaries stop producing eggs, your reproductive hormones decline, and your monthly period changes and then eventually stops altogether. From a health care perspective, there are three distinct stages of menopause.

Perimenopause

The beginning stages of menopause are called perimenopause. It can start years before you stop getting your period, usually in your mid- to late forties. Your hormones start to fluctuate, and your body adjusts in different ways with various perimenopause symptoms. It's important to know, however, that even though your period may stop, it's still possible to get pregnant during this stage.

Menopause

True menopause is less a stage and more a specific point in time. It happens once you haven't had a period for 12 months in a row. At that point, you no longer ovulate or menstruate, and you officially mark the end of your reproductive years by crossing into the next stage.

Postmenopause

After menopause, you stay in the postmenopausal stage for the rest of your life. And although you may

still experience some menopause symptoms for a few years, rest assured they do tend to lessen over time.

Dr. Leff advises his patients to keep a close eye on healthy eating and physical activity during this stage since postmenopausal women have a higher risk of heart disease and osteoporosis.

The Signs of Menopause

"Not all women experience menopause the same way. For some, changing hormones create many intense and uncomfortable symptoms. Others notice fewer or less bothersome symptoms," shares Dr. Leff.

The range of perimenopause and menopause symptoms may include:

- **Body changes.** Hormonal changes and general aging may affect the way your body looks and feels. You might gain weight and lose muscle or notice other differences.
- **Bladder control issues.** You might feel like you need to urinate more frequently or suddenly, or experience bladder leaks.
- **Emotional changes.** Mood swings and irritability are common. Mid-life is also a time when many women are managing many factors at once, such as caring for aging parents and growing children or making big career decisions, which adds to the potential stress load during this time.
- **Hot flashes and night sweats.** You might have repeated episodes of feeling flushed, hot and sweaty, followed by cold shivering. At night, it can be strong enough to wake you up in soaked pajamas.
- **Irregular periods.** Your period may come at a different time or be heavier or lighter than normal.
- **Vaginal health changes.** The vagina can feel drier after menopause, and it may be uncomfortable during sex. You may also have less interest in sex generally.



Dr. Leff emphasizes, "While you might experience these or other menopause symptoms, there are a wide range of treatments including lifestyle changes, hormone therapies and medications that may help."

The Age Range for Menopause Symptoms

The average age for menopause is 52, and the typical age range is between 45-55 years old. Some women will experience the stages of menopause on different timelines because of surgeries or medical conditions.

You may have perimenopause symptoms for up to ten years before it happens. The average length of time that women feel symptoms is seven years.

Finding Support When You Need It

At AdventHealth, we're always here to empower you with the support you need at every stage of life. To learn more or to schedule an appointment with Dr. Leff, visit [AdventHealthPortCharlotte.com](https://www.adventhealthportcharlotte.com) or call 941-206-0325.



Show your heart some love this Valentine's Day by quitting smoking!

We only have one heart, so we need to treat it with all the love, care, and attention we can. Quitting smoking will improve the health of your heart for many years to come.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the U.S. and can harm every organ and cell in the body. With over 7,000 toxic chemicals per cigarette, cigarette smoke damages one of the most vital parts of the body: the heart.¹

When you breathe air in, the lungs take the oxygen and deliver it to the heart, which then pumps the oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body. When you breathe in cigarette smoke, the blood that is delivered to the rest of the body is heavily concentrated with carbon monoxide. Carbon monoxide decreases the blood's ability to carry oxygen which requires the heart to work much harder to pump oxygen through the body. The extra stress on the heart can cause damage to the heart and blood vessels and can lead to cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD is responsible for 800,000 deaths annually and, consequently, is the leading cause of all deaths in the United States.¹

In addition to causing damage to the heart and blood vessels directly, cigarette smoke can also cause CVD by changing the blood's chemistry, which results in thickened blood and plaque build-up in the walls of arteries. When this happens, it becomes difficult for blood to flow through the arteries and for blood vessels to get to the vital organs, such as your heart or brain, which can result in blood clots and ultimately lead to a heart attack or stroke.¹

The best way to protect your heart from smoking-related disease and death is to never start using cigarettes, but if you are a smoker, the earlier you quit, the better. Quitting smoking benefits your heart and your cardiovascular system now and in the future:

- Twenty minutes after you quit smoking, your heart rate drops.
- Just 12 hours after quitting smoking, the carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal, allowing more oxygen to vital organs like your heart.
- Within four years of quitting, your risk of stroke drops to that of lifetime nonsmokers.¹

Although quitting smoking is difficult, it is certainly achievable, and cessation aids such as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) may be able to help you on your quit journey. Many addicted smokers find that NRT helps them get through the hardest parts of quitting by lessening cravings and symptoms of withdrawal.¹ Gulfcoast South Area Education Center (GSAHEC) provides NRT for free to every individual who attends a tobacco cessation class (if medically appropriate and while supplies last).



If you are a smoker and you are concerned about your heart health, contact GSAHEC today! GSAHEC, as part of the Group Quit option of Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way program—offers free group quit sessions to help someone quit all forms of tobacco. These group sessions held virtually and in-person, provide information about the benefits of quitting, managing stress and triggers, and will assist you with developing your own customized quit plan. Free nicotine replacement therapy in the form of patches, gum, or lozenges (*if medically appropriate and while supplies last*) is provided with the session. Attendees will also receive a participant workbook, quit kit materials, and follow up support from a trained tobacco treatment specialist.

Contact us today at 866-534-7909 or visit
www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/groupquitcalendar to schedule a class or learn more about the program!

Reference:

¹ <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/health-information/how-smoking-affects-heart-health>



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Why Consider Endolift® Before a Facelift or Facial Liposuction

By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

For patients seeking facial rejuvenation, the traditional pathway has often led directly to surgical facelift or facial liposuction. While these procedures remain appropriate in select cases, advances in minimally invasive technology now allow many individuals to achieve meaningful improvement without immediately committing to surgery. One such option is Endolift®, a laser-assisted, minimally invasive procedure that addresses skin laxity and localized fat with substantially less downtime.

This article explains why Endolift® is often worth considering first, particularly for patients with mild to moderate facial aging changes.

UNDERSTANDING THE CORE DIFFERENCES

Facelift and facial liposuction are surgical procedures designed to remove excess skin and fat and reposition deeper tissues. They can deliver dramatic results but require incisions, anesthesia, longer recovery periods, and carry higher procedural risks.

Endolift®, by contrast, is a minimally invasive procedure that uses a fine optical fiber to deliver controlled laser energy beneath the skin. The goal is to support subdermal tissue tightening, collagen remodeling, and selective reduction of small fat pockets without excisional surgery.

WHY MANY PATIENTS ARE NOT SURGICAL-READY

Many individuals seeking facial rejuvenation experience early jowling, jawline softening, or mild neck laxity without significant excess skin. These patients often want improvement but are not prepared for surgery or prolonged downtime. For this group, a surgical facelift may be more aggressive than necessary at their current stage.

KEY ADVANTAGES OF ENDOLIFT® AS A FIRST-LINE OPTION

Endolift® is less invasive and does not require surgical incisions or tissue removal. It allows for gradual, natural-looking improvement through collagen remodeling over time rather than abrupt



post-surgical changes. Downtime is significantly shorter, and most patients resume normal activities within days.

Importantly, Endolift® does not preclude future facelift or liposuction procedures. In some cases, it may improve tissue quality and reduce the extent of future surgery if it becomes necessary.

WHEN FACIAL LIPOSUCTION MAY BE PREMATURE

Facial liposuction removes fat but does not tighten skin. In patients with skin laxity, this can lead to contour irregularities or a hollowed appearance. Endolift® addresses both fat remodeling and skin tightening simultaneously, making it a more balanced option for mild submental or jowl fullness.

APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS

Endolift® is not a replacement for surgical facelift in patients with significant skin excess, advanced jowling, or severe neck laxity. However, in properly selected patients, it may delay the need for surgery or reduce the invasiveness of future procedures.

A STEPWISE APPROACH TO FACIAL REJUVENATION

Modern aesthetic care increasingly favors a stepwise strategy that begins with the least invasive option capable of addressing the concern. Endolift® fits well into this approach, allowing patients to achieve meaningful improvement while preserving future options.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Facial rejuvenation does not have to begin with surgery. For many patients, Endolift® represents a prudent first step, offering skin tightening and contour refinement with lower risk and recovery. A thorough consultation with a qualified provider can determine whether Endolift® is an appropriate initial strategy or whether surgical intervention is indicated.



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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CAN CBD SUPPORT FOOT HEALTH?

EXPLORING ITS ROLE IN PODIATRIC WELLNESS

By Sahiba Singh, DPM, AACFAS

When it comes to our daily health routines, our feet are often the most overlooked part of the body—until pain, stiffness, or inflammation make every step a challenge. We ask a lot of our feet; they bear our entire body weight, absorb the shock of every stride, and provide the balance necessary for movement. From common ailments like plantar fasciitis and arthritis to complex nerve-related discomfort, podiatric issues affect millions of people, often leading to a significant decrease in mobility and quality of life. As the trend toward natural and integrative wellness continues to grow, cannabidiol (CBD) has emerged as a compelling supportive option for those seeking to maintain foot and ankle health.

The Science of CBD and Podiatric Wellness

To understand how CBD might help, we must first look at what it is and how it functions within the human body. CBD, short for cannabidiol, is a naturally occurring compound found in the hemp plant. Unlike its cousin THC, CBD is non-intoxicating, meaning it does not produce a "high" or any form of impairment. Instead, it interacts with the body's endocannabinoid system (ECS), a complex cell-signaling network that plays a vital role in regulating a range of functions, including pain perception, immune response, and inflammation.

The feet are an intricate masterpiece of bioengineering, containing a dense network of 26 bones, 33 joints, and over 100 muscles, ligaments, and nerves. This complexity makes them particularly susceptible to the wear and tear of daily life. When the ECS is engaged by CBD, it may help the body maintain homeostasis, or internal balance. For the feet, this means CBD may help modulate the way we perceive pain and how our tissues respond to the stress of physical activity. Whether used as a systemic supplement or a targeted topical, CBD is increasingly being viewed not as a fringe remedy, but as a scientifically backed tool for managing the physical demands placed on our lower extremities.

Addressing Inflammation, Pain, and Nerve Discomfort

One of the primary reasons people turn to CBD for foot care is its potential to manage inflammation. Many of the most common podiatric complaints—such as Achilles tendinitis, plantar fasciitis,



and general overuse injuries—are rooted in inflammatory responses. When the thick band of tissue on the bottom of the foot becomes inflamed, the resulting heel pain can be debilitating. Topical CBD products, such as high-potency creams or cooling balms, can be applied directly to the site of discomfort. This allows the compound to penetrate the skin and interact with local cannabinoid receptors, potentially calming swelling and soothing the area without the systemic side effects sometimes associated with oral anti-inflammatories.

Beyond simple inflammation, CBD is also being explored for its role in managing chronic pain and arthritis. Arthritis in the small joints of the foot and ankle can lead to morning stiffness and a permanent reduction in range of motion. Regular use of CBD may influence pain signaling pathways, offering a "dampening" effect on chronic signals. Many users report that incorporating CBD into their routine helps improve flexibility and comfort, making it easier to stay active. Furthermore, there is growing interest in how CBD might support those dealing with peripheral neuropathy—a condition often characterized by burning, tingling, or "pins and needles" sensations in the feet. While research is ongoing, the calming effect CBD has on the nervous system may provide a sense of relief for those with sensitive or overactive nerve endings.

Integrating CBD into a Holistic Foot-Care Routine

For athletes, runners, or professionals who spend eight to twelve hours a day on their feet, CBD is becoming a staple for muscle recovery. After a long day, the muscles in the arches and calves can become tight and fatigued. Using a CBD-infused

massage oil or lotion can promote relaxation, increase localized circulation, and speed up the recovery process. This "targeted" approach is one of the greatest benefits of CBD in podiatry; because the feet are easily accessible, topical applications allow for concentrated relief exactly where it is needed most.

However, it is essential to remember that CBD is most effective when used as part of a comprehensive, holistic approach to foot health. It should complement, rather than replace, standard podiatric practices. A truly healthy foot-care strategy includes wearing supportive, well-fitting footwear, performing regular stretching and strengthening exercises, and maintaining proper skin hygiene to prevent issues like infections or cracking.

As with any wellness supplement, quality and safety are paramount. It is vital to source products from reputable manufacturers that provide third-party lab results to ensure purity and potency. While CBD is generally well-tolerated, individuals who are pregnant, nursing, or taking prescription medications should always consult with a healthcare professional or a podiatrist before starting a new regimen. By treating CBD as a partner in a broader health strategy, you can take a proactive step toward ensuring your feet remain strong, flexible, and pain-free for years to come.

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.

Dr. Sahiba Singh is a podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Center in Port Charlotte, Florida, specializing in complex wound care and deformity reconstruction. She is committed to helping the Charlotte County community remain active and healthy.



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THE LIFE-SAVING POWER OF REGULAR SKIN CANCER SCREENINGS: WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

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

Understanding Skin Cancer and Melanoma

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

The Power of Early Detection

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

Recognizing the Warning Signs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Screening Process

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

Who Should Get Screened and How Often?

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

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

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

Beyond Professional Screenings: The Importance of Self-Checks

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

Prevention: Your First Line of Defense

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

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

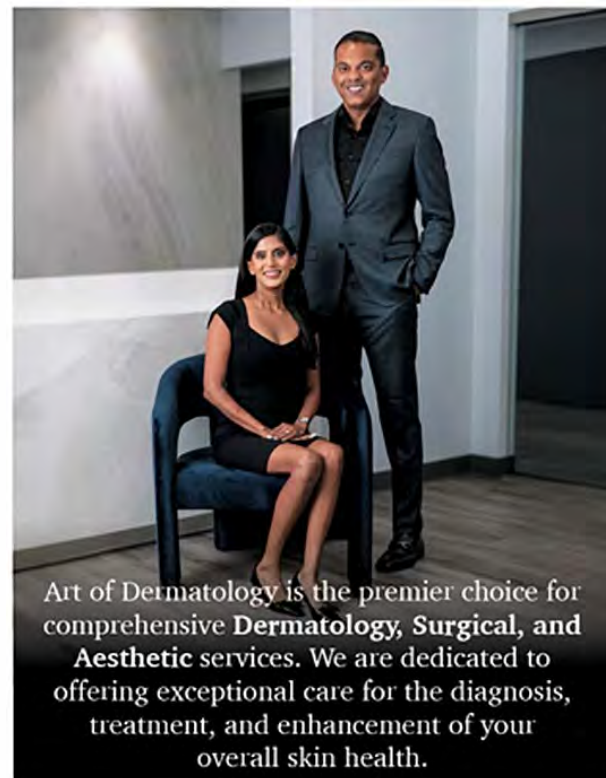
The Broader Impact of Regular Screenings

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

Conclusion: A Small Step for Significant Peace of Mind

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

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



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Blood Biomarkers for Dementia: A New Window into Brain Health

By Karen Leggett, DO

For decades, the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias relied primarily on cognitive testing, brain imaging, and—when necessary—spinal fluid analysis. While these tools remain important, medicine is now entering a new era: the era of blood-based biomarkers for dementia.

These simple blood tests are transforming how we detect, evaluate, and understand cognitive change—often years before symptoms become severe.

WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

Many people notice subtle changes long before a diagnosis is made:

- Misplacing items more often
- Trouble recalling recent conversations
- Word-finding difficulty
- Increased mental fatigue

This stage is often called **subjective cognitive decline** or **mild cognitive impairment (MCI)**. At this point, the brain may already be developing disease-related changes—especially in Alzheimer's disease—even though daily function remains mostly intact.

Identifying the *biology* behind these changes early allows us to:

- Clarify the likely cause of symptoms
- Estimate risk of progression
- Guide further testing
- Begin prevention and treatment strategies sooner

WHAT ARE BLOOD BIOMARKERS?

Blood biomarkers are proteins released into the bloodstream that reflect what is happening in the brain. In dementia, they can signal three major processes:

1. **Amyloid accumulation** – a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease
2. **Tau pathology** – the process that closely tracks nerve cell injury
3. **Neurodegeneration** – general injury to brain cells, regardless of cause

Together, these markers help us distinguish Alzheimer's disease from other causes of cognitive decline.

THE TWO MOST IMPORTANT ALZHEIMER'S BLOOD MARKERS TODAY

In current clinical studies and practice, two markers stand out.

1. AMYLOID BETA 42/40 RATIO (Aβ42/40)

Amyloid beta is a protein that accumulates in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease.

- A lower Aβ42/40 ratio suggests amyloid plaques are building up in the brain
- This change often appears years before dementia develops
- It helps identify who is likely developing Alzheimer's pathology

This marker answers the question: *Is Alzheimer-type amyloid biology present?*

2. PHOSPHORYLATED TAU 217 (P-TAU217)

Tau is a protein inside nerve cells that becomes abnormal in Alzheimer's disease.

- p-tau217 is currently the most specific blood marker for Alzheimer's disease
- Elevated levels strongly correlate with both amyloid plaques and tau tangles on brain scans
- It helps distinguish Alzheimer's disease from other dementias

This marker answers the question: *Is this cognitive change biologically consistent with Alzheimer's disease?* When both Aβ42/40 is low and p-tau217 is elevated, the likelihood of underlying Alzheimer's disease is high.

MARKERS THAT SUGGEST OTHER TYPES OF DEMENTIA

Not all cognitive decline is Alzheimer's disease.

Other causes include:

- Frontotemporal dementia (FTD)
- Vascular cognitive impairment
- Lewy body dementia
- Parkinson's disease dementia
- Inflammatory or metabolic brain injury

One important marker here is:

NEUROFILAMENT LIGHT CHAIN (NFL)

NfL is a marker of active nerve cell injury.

- Elevated in many neurodegenerative diseases
- Not specific for Alzheimer's disease
- Helps detect how active and aggressive the process is

HOW THESE TESTS ARE USED IN PRACTICE

Blood biomarkers are not used in isolation. They are combined with:

- Detailed history and cognitive testing
- Brain MRI
- Hearing, sleep, mood, and metabolic evaluation
- Review of medications and vascular risk factors

They help answer key clinical questions:

- Is Alzheimer's biology present?
- Is this more likely vascular, frontotemporal, or mixed?
- How active is the disease process?
- Who should go on to PET scanning or spinal fluid testing?

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR PATIENTS 50 AND UP

We now know that Alzheimer's disease begins 10–20 years before dementia.

This opens a new opportunity to:

- Identify risk early
- Modify lifestyle and vascular factors
- Optimize sleep, hearing, mood, and nutrition
- Consider emerging disease-modifying therapies
- Monitor progression more accurately

Brain health is no longer something we address only after memory is lost. It is something we can evaluate, protect, and preserve earlier than ever before.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Blood biomarkers are changing the landscape of dementia care. They allow us to move from: "We think this might be Alzheimer's disease" to "We can now see the biology of what is happening in your brain." For patients with memory concerns, this represents a profound shift toward earlier clarity, earlier prevention, and more personalized care.



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PATTERNS CAN GUIDE DIAGNOSIS:

Pattern	Suggests
Low amyloid + high p-tau217	Alzheimer's disease
Normal amyloid + normal p-tau + high NfL	Non-Alzheimer's neurodegeneration (such as FTD or vascular)
Mixed abnormalities	Mixed dementia (common in older adults)

MEMORY CARE, PERSONALIZED FOR YOU

Parkside's Gender-Specific Approach to Alzheimer's Treatment Sets Area Standard

Parkside Assisted Living and Memory Care has established itself as a pioneering force in dementia care by implementing a unique, gender-specific memory care model that stands alone in the area. This innovative approach recognizes that men and women with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia often experience different behavioral patterns, communication styles, and comfort levels, making gender-specific care environments potentially more therapeutic and calming.

Understanding the Gender-Specific Model

At Parkside's memory care cottage, male residents live on one dedicated floor while female residents occupy another, creating distinct living environments tailored to each gender's specific needs. This separation isn't about discrimination—it's about optimization. Research indicates that individuals with dementia often feel more comfortable and exhibit fewer behavioral challenges when surrounded by others who share similar life experiences and communication patterns.

The male-focused floor features activities and décor that resonate with traditional masculine interests and experiences. Common areas might showcase sports memorabilia, workshop-style activity spaces, and programming centered around topics like automobiles, military service, or professional trades. Meanwhile, the female-focused floor incorporates elements that often appeal to women of the residents' generation, such as kitchen-style gathering spaces, garden themes, and activities involving cooking, crafts, or family-centered discussions.

The Science Behind Gender-Specific Care

Memory care professionals understand that Alzheimer's and Dementia affects men and women differently, both neurologically and behaviorally. Women with dementia often maintain social connections longer and may feel more comfortable in nurturing, relationship-focused environments. Men, particularly those from older generations, may feel more at ease in environments that honor traditional masculine roles and interests.

This gender-specific approach can reduce anxiety, agitation, and confusion that sometimes occur in mixed-gender settings. Often, men may inadvertently intimidate women by entering their apartments uninvited while searching for their own rooms.



When individuals with dementia feel more comfortable in their environment, they often experience improved sleep patterns, better appetite, reduced sundowning behaviors, fewer non-consensual sexual encounters, and enhanced overall quality of life.

Comprehensive Memory Care Services

Beyond the unique living arrangement, Parkside provides comprehensive memory care services designed to support residents at every stage of their journey. The community employs specially trained care-partners who understand the complexities of dementia care and use evidence-based approaches to provide compassionate, dignified care.

Memory care programming includes cognitive stimulation activities, physical therapy, medication management, and behavioral support. Each Cottage maintains its own dining areas, activity spaces, and outdoor access, ensuring residents can enjoy structured routines while feeling secure in familiar surroundings.

The nursing team receives ongoing education in dementia care best practices, including techniques for managing challenging behaviors, communication strategies for different stages of cognitive decline, and methods for maintaining residents' dignity and independence as long as possible.

Family-Centered Approach

Parkside recognizes that memory care extends beyond the individual to encompass entire families. The community provides extensive family education and support services, helping loved ones understand the progression of dementia and learn effective communication techniques. Regular family meetings ensure care plans remain aligned with each resident's changing needs and preferences.

Setting the Standard for Innovation

As the only memory care community in the area to implement this gender-specific memory care model, Parkside demonstrates commitment to innovative, person-centered care. This approach challenges traditional memory care models and shows how communities can adapt their environments to better serve residents' unique needs.

The success of Parkside's model may inspire other communities to consider how gender-specific programming and environments could enhance their own memory care services. By prioritizing resident comfort and implementing evidence-based environmental modifications, Parkside has created a new standard for memory care excellence that puts individual dignity and comfort at the forefront of treatment.

For families seeking memory care options, Parkside's innovative approach represents a thoughtful alternative that recognizes the complex, individual nature of dementia care while providing the specialized support that residents and families deserve during this challenging journey.

To learn more about Parkside Assisted Living and Memory Care's groundbreaking gender-specific memory care program and how it might benefit your loved one, call 941-207-8609 today. Their experienced team is ready to discuss your family's specific needs and provide a personalized tour of their unique facilities.

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Karen Leggett, DO, is a native Floridian and board-certified family and geriatric medicine physician with over 25 years of experience. She completed her medical training at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine as well as her Family Medicine Residency and completed her Geriatric Fellowship at Advent Health Hospital in Orlando, FL. Dr. Leggett has long been called to help patients and their families receive the most up to date functional and conventional care in a creative and caring environment. She has focused on caring for patients presenting with multiple or complicated challenges that do not necessarily fit in the standard medical model. Her philosophy is to provide advanced and holistic care while building lasting relationships with patients and families. She enjoys vacations with her son, daughter in law, and 3 grandchildren, as well as having many hobbies including cooking, gardening, crafting, and spending time with her husband and their three dogs.



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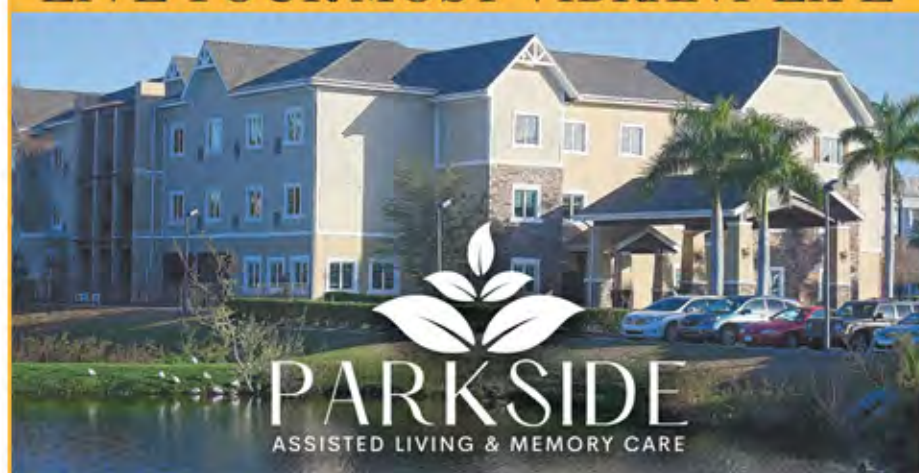


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BEYOND BUBBLE BATHS, SPA DAYS:

True Self-Care May Require a Deeper Approach

By Rick Weber

Rebecca Johnson works with many clients who are deeply capable, resilient and caring—and yet they are completely spent.

This pattern has shown her over the years how misunderstood self-care is.

"We are chronically emotionally exhausted, and what many understand about self-care is just not enough because it only addresses surface-level concerns and tension," says Johnson, a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC), private practice owner, and adjunct faculty member for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program at Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health & Human Services.

"We tend to blame ourselves when we collapse and burn out. In reality, we have been operating in an unsustainable way for years. I think that reframing self-care can reduce the shame and at the same time empower people to make choices that are healthier and maintainable."

She defines self-care as the intentional practice of protecting and taking care of one's relational, mental and emotional well-being. Rest, comfort and fun are very important, but true self-care involves aligning your decisions and actions with your authentic self—who you really are and what is important to you—in order to nourish your future self. In other words, choosing the harder, healthier path now to support lasting well-being.

"One of the biggest things I've learned is that this goes beyond bubble baths and spa days," she says. "These things are nice and enjoyable, but the exhaustion remains because often we are depleted at a deeper level due to chronic self-neglect. I love that I get to help people move from survival mode to sustainable emotional health."

Surface-level self-care has its place, but for many people, true self-care may require going deeper. That involves:

Setting boundaries.

"Setting boundaries means recognizing personal limits and communicating them clearly, kindly and consistently. In practice, this looks like saying no, reducing overcommitment or limiting emotional access to people or situations that are draining.

Boundaries protect energy and prevent resentment. For instance, saying no to additional responsibilities when your schedule is already full, rather than pushing yourself past your limits. Another example of boundaries related to self-care would be choosing not to engage in conversations that become critical, manipulative or emotionally overwhelming. And last, but not least, setting clear expectations around availability with family, friends or coworkers instead of being 'on' all the time."

Tending to emotional well-being.

"Tending to emotional well-being involves regularly checking in with yourself, noticing emotional signals and responding with self-compassion rather than judgment. It means paying attention to how you're feeling, rather than pushing emotions aside or minimizing them. Acknowledge stress, overwhelm and emotional fatigue at the onset, but then respond with care instead of avoidance or self-criticism. Tending to emotional well-being in the form of self-care is about taking your emotional signals seriously and not constantly pushing through or telling yourself you should be fine. Pause when overwhelm hits, create space to reflect or journal, step away from stimulation to process what you're feeling. You can also reach out for support when your emotions feel heavy, rather than assuming you should handle everything on your own."

Preventing burnout.

"Burnout isn't about just being tired. It is mental and emotional exhaustion. This exhaustion builds over time when there is chronic stress without much space to recover. Burnout prevention starts with awareness. Some signals to pay attention to are irritability, difficulty concentrating and a sense of emotional numbness. These signals are trying to tell you that something needs attention. When you ignore emotional exhaustion, chronic stress or ongoing overwhelm, burnout builds little by little. Preventing burnout often means slowing down, reassessing expectations and making intentional changes before the body and mind force a stop. If you can give yourself permission to adjust expectations during a busy or emotionally demanding time instead of continuing at a pressured pace, it can help alleviate burnout."

In her clinical work, she often sees people trying to take care of themselves, yet still feel depleted because the deeper sources of exhaustion such as heavy emotional and mental load, lack of boundaries and chronic giving beyond one's capacity aren't being addressed.

Self-care isn't another thing to add to our ever-growing to-do lists, but more about protecting emotional energy, creating realistic expectations and recognizing the signals of burnout.

"Emotional energy is finite," she says. "We only have so much to give. To protect this, it's important to be mindful as well as intentional with where your time and energy go. Limiting emotionally draining conversations can help. We all have those situations or people in our lives that feel like they deplete our spirit. To protect your emotional energy in these types of relationships or circumstances, it is essential to limit your exposure by setting clearer relational boundaries or limits to your participation."

She says a Licensed Mental Health Counselor can help you recognize the patterns of burnout and walk you through the process of exploring any emotional barriers that may be keeping you from establishing boundaries in your relationships, at work and in everyday life.

"Therapy is self-care because it provides not just insight but practical tools that can combat burnout," she says. "In working with a counselor, you can explore emotional blocks around boundaries or rest and develop healthier coping strategies. Therapy can provide both insight and practical tools for managing emotions better."

She also recommends two books: *Self-Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself* by Kristin Neff, PhD, and *Burnout: The Cost of Caring* by Christina Maslach, PhD.

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Game Day to Valentine's Day:

How to Navigate February's Hidden Triggers for Mental Health and Sobriety

From kickoff snacks to candlelit dinners, February looks joyful on the calendar—and still feels complicated in real life. Loud crowds,

late nights, alcohol centered gatherings, and financial or relationship pressure can stack up, especially if you're managing anxiety, depression, or a history of substance use. The good news: a few small decisions made before the big days can keep you steady without sacrificing connection.

Game Day Guardrails

Plan before you party. Decide your approach to alcohol (including "no thanks") ahead of time and tell one supportive person your plan. Bring a favorite non alcoholic drink so you're never empty handed.

Build in micro breaks. Step outside every 30–45 minutes—take 10 slow breaths, stretch, drink water, and check your body cues (tight jaw, thudding heartbeat, restlessness).

Protect sleep. A great fourth quarter isn't worth a wrecked tomorrow. Set a hard leave time and stick to it; fatigue can magnify low mood and cravings.

Valentine's Without the Pressure

Trade perfection for presence. Connection grows from micro moments: a short walk, a screens off meal, a hand written note. Big gestures are optional.

Curate your feed. If comparison scrolling drains your mood, mute certain accounts for a week.

Script your boundaries. Three phrases to keep handy: "Let's skip alcohol tonight," "I need a quieter evening," and "I'd rather keep it small this year." Boundaries protect relationships; they don't diminish them.

If a Slip Happens

A lapse isn't failure—it's information. Do a same day reset: hydrate, eat something with protein, get real sleep, and text or call one person who supports your well being. Jot down what triggered you and one change you'll try next time. If you're concerned about withdrawal, escalating substance use, or safety, reach out for professional help right away.



When It's Time to Get Help

Seek urgent care if substance use feels out of control; if you notice severe mood swings, panic, or thoughts of self harm; or if withdrawal symptoms begin. Inpatient psychiatric stabilization and medically supervised detox are designed for these situations, offering 24/7 assessment, structure, and compassionate care so you can reset safely and plan next steps.

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Quick Checklist for a Safer February

- Name your plan (alcohol/no alcohol/limit + leave time).
- Pick your person (who you'll text if you feel wobbly).
- Pack your tools (water, snacks, breath work app, exit strategy).
- Choose connection over comparison (real conversations over curated feeds).
- Call sooner, not later if mood, cravings, or safety concerns escalate.

For urgent psychiatric care or medical detox—available 24/7—North Port Behavioral Health provides assessment and stabilization close to home. Call (941) 613 5311 or visit www.northportbehavioral.com. 4501 Citizens Parkway, North Port, FL 34288.



Elevate Your Self-Care This February with Exomind Technology

By Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

February is Self-Care Month, a perfect time to explore innovative treatments that nurture both body and mind. At Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology, we're excited to introduce Exomind, a revolutionary brain wellness technology that's transforming how we approach mental self-care and cognitive health.

In our fast-paced world, stress, anxiety, and mental fatigue have become unwelcome companions for many. While traditional self-care often focuses on physical wellness through exercise, nutrition, and relaxation techniques, we're now recognizing that true self-care must also address our cognitive and neurological well-being. This is where Exomind comes in.

What is Exomind?

Exomind represents the cutting edge of neurotechnology, offering a non-invasive approach to optimizing brain function and promoting mental wellness. This sophisticated system uses advanced brainwave technology to help balance neural activity, reduce stress, and enhance overall cognitive performance. By working directly with your brain's natural rhythms, Exomind creates a personalized experience designed to restore mental clarity and emotional equilibrium.

The treatment is remarkably simple yet profoundly effective. During an Exomind session, you'll relax comfortably while the technology gently guides your brainwaves toward optimal patterns associated with calmness, focus, and mental clarity. Many patients describe the experience as deeply relaxing, similar to meditation but requiring no prior experience or effort on your part.

The Self-Care Benefits of Exomind

Self-care isn't selfish—it's essential. When we prioritize our mental and cognitive health, we're better equipped to handle life's challenges, maintain meaningful relationships, and perform at our best in all areas of life. Exomind supports these goals by addressing several key areas of brain wellness.

First, stress reduction is one of Exomind's most immediate benefits. By promoting balanced brainwave patterns, the technology helps activate your body's natural relaxation response, counteracting the harmful effects of chronic stress. Users often report feeling calmer and more centered after just one session.



Second, many patients experience improved sleep quality. In our sleep-deprived society, restorative rest is a crucial component of self-care. Exomind helps regulate the neural patterns associated with healthy sleep cycles, making it easier to fall asleep and achieve deeper, more rejuvenating rest.

Third, enhanced focus and mental clarity represent another significant advantage. Whether you're struggling with brain fog, attention difficulties, or simply want to optimize your cognitive performance, Exomind can help sharpen your mental edge and improve concentration.

Making Exomind Part of Your Self-Care Routine

At Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology, we believe that comprehensive care means addressing all aspects of health—including the often-overlooked realm of brain wellness. Our experienced team is trained in the latest neurotechnology protocols and will work with you to develop a personalized Exomind treatment plan tailored to your specific needs and goals.

This February, as we celebrate Self-Care Month, consider investing in your most important asset: your brain. Whether you're dealing with stress, seeking better sleep, wanting to enhance focus, or simply looking to optimize your mental well-being, Exomind offers a powerful tool for transformation.

Self-care is about creating sustainable practices that support your long-term health and happiness. Unlike quick fixes or temporary solutions, Exomind works with your brain's natural capacity for healing and optimization, creating lasting changes that support your wellness journey.

We invite you to discover how Exomind can elevate your self-care routine and help you achieve new levels of mental clarity, emotional balance, and cognitive vitality. Contact Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology today to schedule your consultation and experience the future of brain wellness. Because when it comes to self-care, your mind deserves the same attention and care as your body.

Your journey to better brain health starts here.

About Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

Dr. Clark has surgical skills that encompass much of the head and neck, and really enjoys a challenge. Dr. Clark loves cochlear implants and their ability to replace the function of the inner ear by directly stimulating the auditory nerve. There is just something special about watching the face of someone hear for the first time in a long time. He also preforms ossicular chain reconstruction, which repairs the tiny bones in the middle ear. It's pretty amazing, really. He removes thyroids and parotid glands that have gone awry, or tonsils that won't stop getting infected. Dr. Clark offers balloon sinuplasty in office (or in the OR if needed) that is comfortable and heals within a few weeks, giving people a whole new way to breath easy. He also offers in office insertion of ear tubes, which he places with ease. Most importantly, Dr. Clark will explain any procedure he performs in detail and makes the patient feel confident and comfortable. He will also guide you through medical and lifestyle changes that may reduce your need for surgery. He really wants to find the best solutions for you and your family.



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

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

WHEN VISION LOSS CHANGES LIFE

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

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

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

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

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

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

When Glasses and Surgery Aren't Enough
There comes a time when traditional glasses, contacts, or surgery can no longer provide the clarity needed for daily life. That's where Low Vision rehabilitation makes the difference.

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

Every Low Vision evaluation begins with one powerful question:
"What would you like to be able to do again that you've stopped doing because of your vision?"

Whether that's reading, watching TV, seeing loved ones' faces, or returning to work, Dr Denick can design a custom plan to make those goals possible.

Local Success Story: Seeing Clearly at Work Again
A 58 year old Fort Myers man who works for a local plumbing company faced losing his job after macular degeneration made it difficult to navigate the warehouse safely.

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

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

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

A Team Approach to Better Vision

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

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

Modern Tools for Better Vision

Today's Low Vision solutions go far beyond standard magnifiers or off-the-shelf glasses.

Specialized tools such as bioptic telescopic lenses, telemicroscopes, reading microscopes, and contrast-enhancing filters can dramatically improve visual performance.

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



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

Seeing Better, Living Better

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

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

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

Why Trust Low Vision of Southwest Florida?

- **Exclusively Focused on Low Vision Rehabilitation**
We dedicate our practice solely to helping people with vision loss.
- **Innovative Technology and Vision Aids**
From bioptic telescopic glasses to electronic magnifiers and digital systems, we use the latest technology to maximize remaining sight.
- **Patient-First Approach**
We take time to listen, understand your goals, and provide realistic, compassionate solutions that restore confidence and independence.

Dedicated to Helping You See What's Possible
Dr. Dennis Denick, OD, Dipl ABO, FIALVS
Fellow, International Academy of Low Vision Specialists
Low Vision of Southwest Florida



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glaucoma, and other vision-limiting
conditions.

Finding Comfort, Love, and Freedom from Foot Pain This Month

February is a month that asks us to slow down just a little. The holidays have passed, winter's chill still lingers, and everywhere you look, there's talk of love, self-care, and creating space for the things, and people, that matter most. But for millions of Americans living with daily foot pain, February's softer pace doesn't always feel gentle. Something as simple as stepping out for a brisk walk, meeting friends for dinner, or even standing long enough to cook a warm meal can feel daunting when every step sends a reminder: your feet are hurting.

Foot pain is one of the most common discomforts people face, yet strangely, we rarely talk about it. We push through. We compensate. We ignore it. And before we realize it, the pain that started in our feet begins creeping upward into our knees, our hips, even our lower back. Suddenly, foot pain isn't just a nuisance. It's something that shapes our routines, restricts our hobbies, and quietly steals joy from our everyday life.

So this February, this month of love, nurturing, and intention—maybe it's time to show a little love to the two hardest-working parts of your body: your feet.

Why Everyday Foot Pain Happens

While foot pain can stem from injuries or medical conditions, for many people it comes down to one simple culprit: misalignment. Years of standing on hard surfaces, wearing unsupportive shoes, or carrying ourselves in ways that strain our natural posture can gradually shift how our feet strike the ground. And when the foundation shifts, so does everything above it.

The result? Achy arches. Sore heels. Tired toes. Stiff ankles. And eventually, pain radiating into the knees, hips, and back, because when your feet are out of alignment, your whole body works overtime to compensate.

But the good news is that you are far from powerless. In fact, there are simple everyday habits that can make a surprisingly big difference.

Everyday Ways to Ease Foot Pain

1. Keep your calves and arches limber

Tight calves are one of the sneakiest contributors to foot pain. A daily stretch—something quick and gentle first thing in the morning and again before bed—can release tension and reduce strain on the plantar fascia.

2. Choose shoes with intention

High heels and flimsy flats? Your feet deserve better. Opt for shoes with good cushioning, a wide toe box, and enough support to keep your arches from collapsing. Even a slight improvement in shoe structure can ease pressure.

3. Pay attention to how you stand

Many people unknowingly lean forward, outward, or onto one side of their body. Practicing "neutral posture," with your weight evenly distributed through both feet, helps prevent unnecessary stress.

4. Move—mindfully

Low-impact activities like swimming, stretching, cycling, or a gentle walk can increase circulation and reduce stiffness without aggravating your pain.

5. Give your feet breaks

If you're on your feet all day, elevate them when you get home. If you sit all day, take brief standing or walking breaks. The body is happiest with balance.

None of these habits require dramatic lifestyle changes, but they can ease discomfort and help you regain some of the freedom foot pain quietly steals.

The Everyday Joys Foot Pain Gets in the Way Of

When foot pain becomes chronic, life starts shrinking in frustrating, often emotional ways. People skip morning walks they once loved. They avoid long days at a museum, the mall, or the park. They hesitate to travel. They turn down social plans. Even small joys—playing with kids, gardening, strolling through the neighborhood—start to feel out of reach.

Foot pain doesn't just limit mobility. It limits connection, inspiration, and spontaneity. It steals confidence. It chips away at independence. And it certainly doesn't feel very loving during the month when the world is urging us to show up fully for ourselves and the people around us.

Which is exactly why this month is the perfect time to seek real, lasting relief, and to start from the source.

A Ground-Up Solution: The Good Feet Store's 3-Step Arch Support System

At the Good Feet Store, foot pain isn't treated as an inconvenience; it's treated as a structural issue with a structural solution. That solution is the Good Feet 3-Step Arch Support System, a collection of three uniquely designed supports that work together to realign and stabilize your body from the ground up.

Each support plays a specific role, and together, they form a daily routine that mirrors the rhythm of your life.

Step 1: The Strengtheners

This support is firm, purposeful, and designed to gently realign your feet by training the muscles, tendons, and ligaments to hold proper position. Think of it as the foundation-building step: subtle, steady, and incredibly important.

Step 2: The Maintainer

More flexible than the Strengtheners, the Maintainer is worn throughout the day. It helps you stay aligned during your normal routine: working, walking, running errands, living your life. It's the arch support that quietly supports you.

Step 3: The Relaxer

This is your evening support: softer, more forgiving, designed to help your feet unwind without losing structural integrity. It's perfect for recovery, comfort, and those long exhale moments after a busy day.

Together, these three supports create a cycle of strengthening, stabilizing, and resting, allowing the feet to function as they were naturally designed. And because good alignment starts at the foundation, the benefits ripple upward, helping reduce not just foot pain, but knee, hip, and back pain as well.

When your feet are supported, your whole body feels the difference.

Supporting a Life, You Love

The most powerful part of the 3-Step System isn't simply that it provides foot pain relief—it's that it gives people their lives back.

People return to hiking. To long walks. To days at the amusement park with their families. They rediscover hobbies they'd abandoned. They embrace movement again. They stand taller, literally and figuratively. They feel like themselves.

And February, the month of intention and tenderness, is the perfect time to take that first step.

So if foot pain has been dimming the edges of your daily life, consider giving your feet a little love this month. Real support—structured support—doesn't just soothe discomfort. It restores balance. It restores possibility. And it restores the confidence to move through life freely, comfortably, and joyfully.

Because you deserve to walk into spring feeling supported from the ground up. Every day. Every step. Every moment.

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America's Arch Support Experts

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



BREAKING THROUGH CHRONIC PAIN:

How Myofascial Release Offers Hope When All Else Fails

By Michael Via, MSPT

For millions of people living with chronic pain, the journey to relief can feel endless. After exhausting traditional medical treatments, surgeries, medications, and conventional therapies, many find themselves trapped in a cycle of temporary fixes that never address the root cause of their suffering. However, there's a therapeutic approach that's offering new hope to those who have tried everything else: Myofascial Release.

Understanding the Hidden Culprit

Myofascial Release targets the body's fascial system—a continuous web of connective tissue that surrounds and supports every muscle, bone, nerve, and organ in your body. When trauma, inflammation, or surgical procedures damage this system, they create restrictions that can generate crushing pressures of up to 2,000 pounds per square inch on pain-sensitive structures.

The frustrating reality is that these restrictions often remain invisible on standard diagnostic tests like X-rays, MRIs, CT scans, or electromyography studies, leaving patients feeling dismissed and their pain unexplained. This diagnostic blind spot contributes to the stress and frustration experienced by countless individuals who know something is wrong but can't get concrete answers from traditional medical testing.

Think of these fascial restrictions as an internal straightjacket, creating a web of tension that pulls and compresses throughout your body. Restrictions in one area create compensatory patterns that can manifest as pain and dysfunction in seemingly unrelated parts of the body. While traditional medicine focuses on masking pain symptoms with medications, and conventional physical therapy treats only the surface effects, Myofascial Release addresses the underlying structural cause of the problem.

The Gentle Power of Sustained Pressure

The John F. Barnes' Myofascial Release Approach represents a paradigm shift in pain management that prioritizes safety, gentleness, and lasting effectiveness. This technique involves applying gentle, sustained pressure directly to fascial restrictions without oils, creams, or machinery. The direct skin contact enables therapists to accurately detect fascial restrictions and apply the appropriate amount of pressure needed for release.

The key lies in the "time element"—allowing the viscous properties of fascia to respond to low-load pressure applied slowly and consistently. During treatment, skilled therapists use their hands to detect restrictions and apply sustained pressure for extended periods, sometimes several minutes at a time. This approach leverages the piezoelectric phenomenon, where gentle, prolonged pressure allows the viscoelastic fascia to elongate and release naturally.

Unlike aggressive massage or forceful manipulation techniques, Myofascial Release works with the body's natural healing mechanisms rather than forcing change. Each treatment session is uniquely tailored to the individual, recognizing that every person's fascial restrictions and pain patterns are different.

Why Traditional Approaches Fall Short

The reason many patients experience only temporary relief with conventional treatments becomes clear when you understand fascial restrictions. Traditional physical therapy, massage, and medical interventions often treat symptoms while leaving the underlying fascial straightjacket intact. It's like trying to fix a house's foundation problems by only painting the walls—the cosmetic improvements are temporary because the structural issue remains.

Myofascial Release takes a whole-body approach, recognizing that restrictions in one area can create compensatory patterns and pain throughout the entire system. This comprehensive perspective explains why patients who have traveled from around the world seeking this treatment often find the lasting relief that eluded them through other methods.

A Beacon of Hope

The transformative power of Myofascial Release is consistently demonstrated in patient testimonials. Dawn Scheffer, who suffered from TMJ dysfunction, found success with this approach after tirelessly seeking treatment elsewhere without success. Peter Dorsa, himself a physical therapist with nearly three decades of experience who began studying Myofascial Release in 1994, describes the technique as "one of the most effective manual therapy treatments that exists."

These success stories reflect a broader pattern seen in patients who travel from around the world specifically seeking Myofascial Release treatment when traditional medicine, surgery, and conventional therapy have failed to provide lasting relief.

For those who have exhausted other options and feel trapped by chronic pain, Myofascial Release offers something precious: the possibility of authentic healing rather than temporary symptom management. By addressing the fascial system's restrictions at their source, this gentle yet powerful technique can break the cycle of chronic pain and restore the freedom of movement and quality of life that seemed lost forever.

If you're living with chronic pain and feeling hopeless about finding relief, Myofascial Release may be the comprehensive solution you've been searching for. **Call Now and SAVE \$25 OFF Initial Evaluation!**

About

Michael Via, MSPT, is a licensed Physical Therapist who brings over 29 years of comprehensive physical therapy experience to his practice, including 10 specialized years in pelvic floor rehabilitation. He graduated from the University of Miami in 1994 with his Masters of Science in Physical Therapy (MSPT) degree and has since become expert-level trained in John F. Barnes Myofascial Release, a distinction that reflects his deep commitment to this transformative treatment approach. His extensive training also includes Herman and Wallace pelvic floor assessment and treatment certification, as well as completion of Titleist Performance Institute Level 2 Medical, Level 2 Fitness, and Level 2 Junior Training programs. As the owner of Michael Via Therapy and Training Services since 2012, Mike has built his practice around a passion that drives his daily work: providing clients with the incredible feeling of chronic pain relief, particularly when other treatment avenues have previously failed them, making him a beacon of hope for those who have exhausted traditional therapeutic options.

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Cleerly Heart Scan Analysis

For more than half a century, the cardiology field has primarily operated as "sick-care," concentrating on addressing symptoms of heart disease rather than delving into the core issue—atherosclerosis. Remarkably, over a decade of clinical trial data has underscored the paramount importance of the type of atherosclerotic plaque buildup in understanding and managing cardiovascular health. The prevailing approach of waiting for signs of reduced blood flow or blockages is being redefined. It is imperative to take a proactive stance, assess the underlying disease precisely, and pioneer a new era of cardiovascular care that targets the root cause before symptoms manifest. This paradigm shift brings forth the transformative potential of technologies like the Cleerly heart scan, enabling a more comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to heart health assessment and management.

The Cleerly heart scan represents a groundbreaking advancement in cardiovascular imaging technology, offering unprecedented insight into the intricacies of atherosclerotic plaque composition. Unlike traditional methods focusing solely on identifying blockages, this innovative scan provides a detailed analysis of the type of plaque in the arteries. By characterizing plaques based on their composition and vulnerability, medical professionals can tailor interventions more precisely, addressing the specific nature of the atherosclerotic disease. This shift from a symptom-centric to a disease-focused approach marks a significant leap forward in cardiac care, empowering healthcare providers and patients with the knowledge needed to initiate targeted and proactive treatment strategies.

Cleerly goes beyond conventional cardiovascular assessments by furnishing your physician with a comprehensive analysis of your heart scan, delivering a profound understanding of your specific heart disease and individual risk factors. This invaluable insight equips your heart care team with the knowledge to make informed decisions tailored to your unique condition. By guiding them toward a more effective and personalized treatment plan, Cleerly transforms the landscape of heart health management. The innovative Track Your Plaque™ feature enables physicians to monitor the progression of the disease over time, facilitating a dynamic and adaptive approach to care.



Moreover, Cleerly recognizes the significance of empowering individuals in their journey to heart health. The Cleerly Patient Report is a user-friendly resource, offering straightforward educational materials about heart disease and presenting analysis results in understandable language. This accessible platform ensures that you receive the correct information at the right time, aiding you in adhering to the treatment plan crafted by your physician. Cleerly's commitment to patient-centric care is reflected in its ability to demystify complex medical data, fostering a collaborative and informed approach to managing heart health.

The rationale behind embracing the Cleerly heart scan is rooted in compelling statistics that underscore the limitations of traditional methods in identifying and preventing heart attacks. Shockingly, 50% of individuals who suffer a heart attack do so without exhibiting any prior symptoms, emphasizing the elusive nature of cardiovascular risks that may go undetected. Moreover, a staggering 70% of heart attack victims are categorized as low risk by conventional methods of assessing heart disease, highlighting the inadequacy of existing risk evaluation strategies.

Traditional stress testing methods also face significant shortcomings, as 75% of lesions responsible for heart attacks only result in a mild narrowing of the arteries, making them easily overlooked. This critical insight underscores the importance of adopting a more sophisticated and precise approach to cardiovascular assessment.

In response to these challenges, Cleerly offers rapid reporting of non-invasive Coronary Computed Tomography Angiography (CCTA) with turnaround times of less than one hour, available 24 hours a day. This unprecedented efficiency makes crucial diagnostic information accessible, enabling timely interventions and personalized treatment plans. Cleerly's commitment to providing rapid and accurate insights directly addresses the limitations of traditional methods, offering a transformative solution to enhance the early detection and management of heart disease.

RAVE is a radiology practice that has been active for over forty years. We currently consist of 10 board-certified radiologists, many of whom have postgraduate fellowships with subspecialty training. All of whom have years of full-time experience. Over 120 healthcare professionals are working with us to provide the best possible radiologic services in Sarasota County. In addition to our personnel, we have some of the best radiologic imaging devices available. Superior visualization helps us make your diagnoses accurate and timely, preventing potentially dangerous delays in initiating your therapy. At RAVE, you can have confidence you're getting top-notch professional assistance in your diagnosis and care.

For more information about the diagnostic imaging services available at Radiology Associates of Venice, Englewood and Sarasota. Call 941-488-7781 today.



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Hearing What Matters Most: Celebrating 20 Years of Care, Connection, and Innovation at Advanced Hearing Solutions

By Dr. Noël Crosby, Au.D. - Advanced Hearing Solutions

For many people, hearing health is something they don't think about until it starts to change. But hearing is deeply connected to how we stay engaged with loved ones, participate in our community, and enjoy everyday moments.

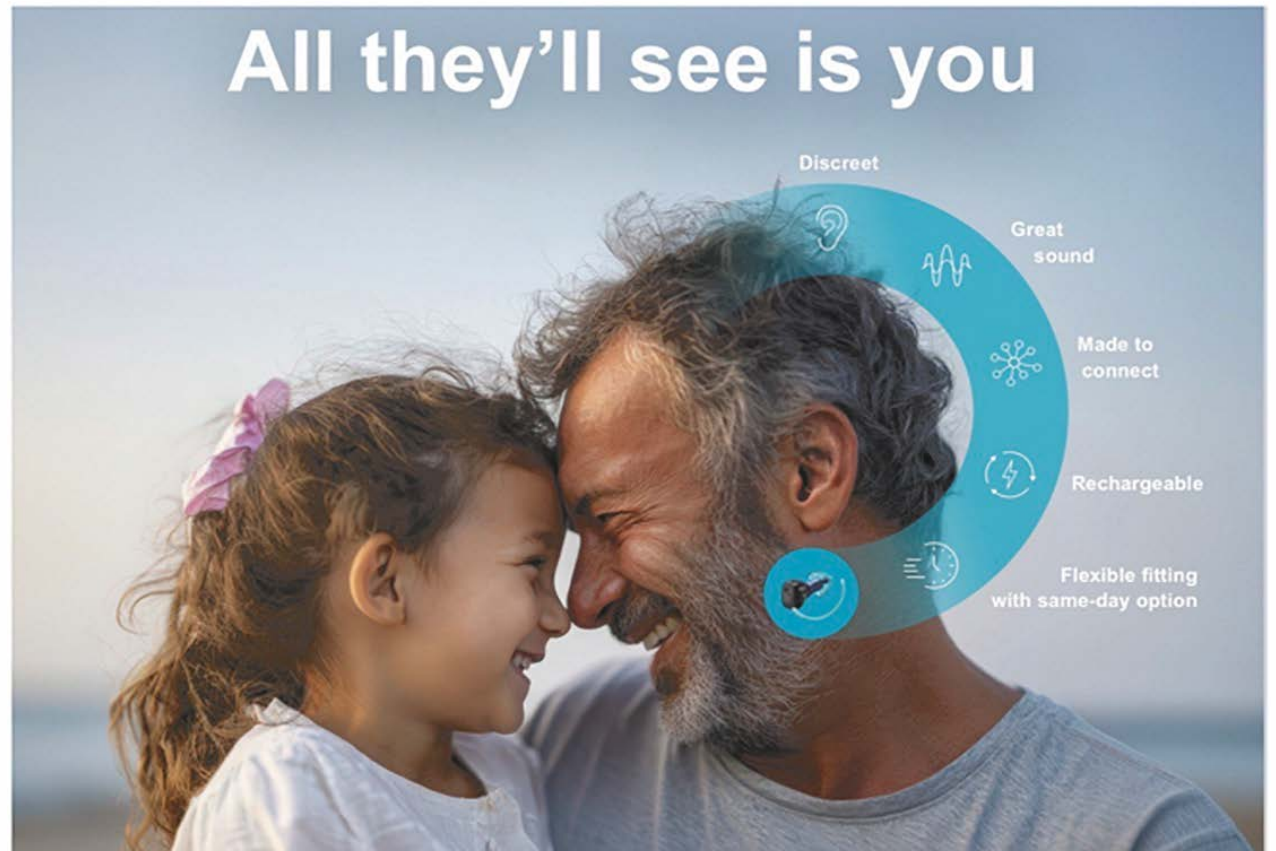
This year, Advanced Hearing Solutions & Tinnitus Center is proud to celebrate 20 years of serving Englewood and surrounding communities, helping patients hear better, feel confident, and stay connected to the world around them.

To mark this milestone, we're inviting the community to join us for a 20-Year Anniversary Celebration on February 12 from 1 to 4 pm at the Englewood Chamber of Commerce. Attendees will have the opportunity to explore some of the newest innovations in hearing healthcare, meet industry representatives, enjoy light refreshments, receive goodie bags, and enter to win prizes.

One exciting highlight of the celebration will be a live look at Oticon Zeal, Oticon's newest hearing technology designed to support clearer speech understanding and a more natural listening experience in everyday environments. Zeal features a small, discreet all-in-the-ear form factor, offering powerful performance in a nearly invisible design that fits comfortably and naturally into daily life.

Guests will also be able to learn about emerging assistive technologies and hearing solutions, including:

- Captify Glasses, which provide real-time captioning directly in your field of view, offering powerful support for people who struggle in conversations or group environments
- Nuance Hearing Aid Glasses, over-the-counter hearing devices built directly into stylish eyewear, combining amplification and vision in one wearable solution
- CaptionCall, a captioned phone service that displays spoken words on a screen while you talk
- WS Audiology products, featuring modern hearing solutions designed for comfort, clarity, and connectivity
- ReSound hearing technology, known for natural sound quality and seamless smartphone integration



These innovations reflect how hearing healthcare continues to expand beyond traditional hearing aids, offering personalized options that support communication in new and meaningful ways.

At Advanced Hearing Solutions, we believe hearing care should be thoughtful, transparent, and centered around each individual's needs. Over the past two decades, our mission has remained the same: to provide compassionate care, education, and innovative solutions that help people live fully and stay connected.

Whether you currently wear hearing aids, are curious about new technology, or simply want to learn more about hearing health, we'd love to welcome you to our celebration.

Come see what's new. Come ask questions. Come celebrate with us.

Because hearing better isn't just about sound — it's about staying connected to the moments that matter most.

Advanced Hearing Solutions 20-Year Anniversary Celebration

February 12, 2026 | 1 to 4 pm
Englewood Chamber of Commerce

What to Expect:

- Live demonstrations of Oticon Zeal (small, discreet all-in-the-ear hearing aids)
- Information on Captify Glasses, Nuance Hearing Aid Glasses, CaptionCall, WS Audiology, and ReSound
- Representatives from leading hearing-related companies
- Presentation on what's new and evolving in hearing healthcare
- Light refreshments
- Goodie bags for attendees
- Chance to win prizes

All are welcome. RSVP to 941-474-8393 or info@advancedhearingsolutions.net.

All in one

Dental Visit with CEREC

By Dr. Joseph Farag

New technologies are making our lives simpler and easier everyday and dentistry has certainly not been left behind. Thanks to a great new system called CEREC, you can now have a high-tech smile in a single visit.

In days gone by, you may have needed to visit the dentist two or three times to have a quality, white ceramic restoration. The dentist would need to take a special impression to make a plaster model for the dental laboratory to generate an extra replica of your tooth in order to hand-make your porcelain restoration. The craftsmanship of the laboratory technician is highly regarded, but generally requires a minimum turn-around time of two weeks, leaving you to function with a temporary, generally plastic, restoration.

Instead of multiple dentist appointments and weeks for a complete restoration, CEREC allows the dentist to achieve the same, if not better, results in a single visit.

CEREC is an acronym for Chairside Economical Restoration of Esthetic Ceramics. Translated, it means that a dentist can economically restore damaged teeth in a single appointment using high-quality ceramic material that matches. CEREC uses the latest Computer-Aided Design and Manufacture (CAD-CAM) technology incorporating a camera, computer and milling machine in one instrument to give you perfect, white fillings, veneers or crowns, all in a fraction of the time it used to take.



Here's how it works.

Once your dentist determines that CEREC is the correct course of treatment, your visit will begin by preparing the tooth. Any decay, if present, is removed, leaving as much possible of your healthy tooth to support the CEREC restoration. Next, your dentist will use a specially designed electronic camera that makes a digital 3D model of your tooth in seconds.

You can then watch your dentist design your new restoration on a computer screen, right beside the dental chair using the 3D image created by the camera. The virtual filling is then transferred into reality, again using CEREC. A solid block of porcelain ceramic is inserted into the CEREC milling unit. Special tools then sculpt your restoration to the finest detail based on the restoration designed on the CEREC computer.

The perfect-fit restoration is completed and placed in your mouth with the whole process only taking around an hour! CEREC fillings are natural looking, smooth, white and hard-wearing, just like the enamel surface of the rest of our teeth. The ceramic material is biocompatible and is not effected by hot or cold.

The office of Dr. Joseph Farag offers CEREC restoration. For more details and CEREC or to schedule an appointment for a check-up please call (941) 764-9555 today.



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Before and after: CEREC restorations look and feel better than amalgam (above and gold (below), and can be completed in a single appointment



MOBILE WOUND TREATMENT BRINGS HOPE TO SOUTHWEST FLORIDA PATIENTS

Stage 2 chronic wounds that refuse to heal after a minimum of 30 days of standard treatment pose a silent but deadly threat to millions of Americans. For patients in Southwest Florida struggling with these life-altering conditions, **Jean Remy, FNP-BC**, delivers an innovative solution through mobile amniotic membrane therapy—a cutting-edge treatment that transforms outcomes while eliminating the burden of weekly trips to wound care centers.

Understanding Stage 2 Chronic Wounds

Chronic wounds impact over 6.5 million Americans annually, contributing to approximately 5 million deaths from complications like severe infections, sepsis, and gangrene. Stage 2 chronic wounds requiring advanced treatment include:

- Diabetic foot ulcers unresponsive to 30+ days of conventional care
- Pressure ulcers with tissue breakdown extending into deeper layers
- Venous stasis ulcers showing minimal healing after standard therapy
- Arterial insufficiency wounds with compromised blood flow
- Non-healing surgical sites with persistent drainage
- Traumatic wounds complicated by underlying health conditions

Transitioning from Home Health to Advanced Care

Typically, home health agencies treat wounds with nursing staff providing standard protocols. However, when wounds progress to Stage 2 chronic status—failing to heal after 30 days—a comprehensive approach becomes necessary. Applying amniotic



membrane skin grafts to long-term open wounds requires multiple critical steps: thorough review of treatment notes, comprehensive wound assessment, aggressive treatment of underlying infections, methodical wound bed preparation to build healthy granulation tissue, and regular skin graft applications until complete closure is achieved.

The Science Behind Amniotic Membrane Therapy

Amniotic membrane allografts mark a paradigm shift in wound healing. Derived from human placental tissue, these bioactive grafts contain powerful growth factors, cytokines, and structural proteins that jumpstart cellular regeneration while reducing inflammation. Rather than passively covering wounds, amniotic membranes actively accelerate healing at the molecular level, creating a natural framework for tissue development and frequently preventing amputations.

Mobile Concierge-Level Care

Jean Remy's approach brings concierge-level wound care directly to patients' homes throughout Southwest Florida. This mobile service eliminates regular

weekly trips to wound care centers—a significant challenge for patients with mobility limitations or transportation difficulties. By treating patients in their own residences, he provides the convenience and dignity of receiving advanced medical care without the stress, expense, and physical toll of repeated clinic visits.

His collaborative care philosophy emphasizes partnership with primary physicians, caregivers, family members, and home health agencies. Treatment protocols are tailored to individual needs, addressing underlying factors like diabetes, peripheral vascular disease, and autoimmune conditions that contribute to delayed healing.

Accessible Treatment Options

Jean Remy maintains availability five days weekly for both office-based treatments at his downtown Naples location and mobile visits to private residences, independent living facilities, and assisted living communities. Services are covered for Cigna and Medicare beneficiaries, eliminating financial obstacles to advanced regenerative therapies.

For Southwest Florida patients confronting Stage 2 chronic wounds that have failed to heal after 30 days of standard treatment, Jean Remy's advanced mobile amniotic membrane therapy represents renewed hope for recovery, restored independence, and the comfort of healing at home.

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BOOST YOUR IMMUNE DEFENSE: HOW IV THERAPY CAN HELP PREVENT THE FLU

As flu season approaches, many people are searching for effective ways to strengthen their immune systems and ward off illness. At Ultimate IV and Wellness, we're seeing a growing interest in IV therapy as a proactive approach to flu prevention. This innovative wellness treatment delivers essential nutrients directly into your bloodstream, offering a powerful boost to your body's natural defenses.

Unlike oral supplements, which must pass through your digestive system and may lose potency during absorption, IV therapy ensures that 100% of the vitamins and minerals reach your cells. This direct delivery method allows your body to immediately utilize these immune-boosting nutrients, making it an efficient option for those looking to stay healthy during peak flu season.

Our specially formulated immune-support IV drips typically include high doses of vitamin C, a well-known antioxidant that plays a crucial role in immune function. Research has shown that vitamin C can help reduce the duration and severity of respiratory infections. We also incorporate B-complex vitamins, which support energy production and help your body manage stress—a key factor in maintaining strong immunity.

Zinc is another essential component of our flu-prevention protocols. This mineral is vital for immune cell development and communication,



helping your body mount an effective response to viral threats. Combined with other powerful antioxidants like glutathione, our IV therapy formulations create an optimal environment for your immune system to thrive.

Many clients at Ultimate IV and Wellness report feeling more energized and resilient after receiving regular IV treatments during flu season. The hydration component alone provides significant benefits, as proper fluid balance is essential for mucous membrane function—your body's first line of defense against airborne pathogens.

For those with busy lifestyles, frequent travel schedules, or high-stress jobs, IV therapy offers a convenient way to maintain peak wellness. Treatments typically take 30 to 45 minutes, making it easy to fit into your schedule. Many people choose to receive monthly sessions throughout flu season,

while others opt for more frequent visits when they feel run-down or have been exposed to illness.

It's important to note that while IV therapy can significantly support your immune system, it works best as part of a comprehensive wellness strategy. We recommend combining your treatments with adequate sleep, regular exercise, a balanced diet, and good hygiene practices for optimal protection against the flu.

At Ultimate IV and Wellness, our experienced medical professionals customize each IV therapy session to meet your individual needs. Whether you're looking to prevent illness, recover from a weakened immune state, or simply maintain optimal health, we're here to help you feel your best all season long.

Don't wait until you're already sick—take a proactive approach to flu prevention with IV therapy and give your immune system the support it deserves. Contact Ultimate IV and Wellness today at **941-588-7770** to schedule a consultation and discover how IV therapy can help you stay healthy.



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UF Graduate

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What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

Weight-watchers. Nutrisystem. Mediterranean diet. Paleo. Living healthy has become a craze, although obesity in our country, rather legitimizes it. For many people it is about looking and feeling better, living longer, stronger and disease-free. These are all important reasons for eating clean, exercising, and learning to rest our bodies sufficiently.

For Christians, however, trying to maintain healthy habits finds its motivation in more than adopting diet fads to longevity and better quality of life. Taking care of our bodies is stewardship. That is, it is a reflection of our recognition of having been created by God, and how our lives can be instruments in his hands to serve and honor him on earth. Of course, God can use both the healthy and the unfit for his purposes, including the sick, feeble, and dying. Human worth and value is not in question.

The reality is that our earthly lives are only a speck in the sands of eternity. However, Christ followers understand that life doesn't belong to them. It is a gift from a Good Father who entrusted them with a brief span of years that should be invested in loving others and making our world a better place. For those who have believed in Christ and experienced God's forgiveness of sin, the reason for taking care of their bodies goes beyond living

longer and healthier. It's about honoring Jesus Christ with all of life, including the way they take care of their bodies.

In his book, *"The Unknown God: Searching for spiritual fulfillment,"* Oxford University professor, Alister McGrath, describes the parable of Plato's Cave, a story about people enslaved inside the cave oblivious to the reality that existed on the outside beyond the flickering shadows which they knew. That is, until the day someone was able to find their way out and discover a world beyond description, a world of beauty and splendor. McGrath writes, "Our desires have become attached to things that are little more than shadows, when they are meant to be attached to something which cannot decay or disappoint" (32).

How does this relate to healthy living? Focusing on living healthier and longer, like any other pursuit we might obsess about, really reveals a spiritual longing in our souls for something more: *eternity*. Whether is it longing for a "perfect" relationship that often disenchant, earthly riches that can quickly vanish, or a healthy and strong body that is suddenly brought to a standstill due to an unexpected medical report, our hearts are longing for something beyond what this world can provide.



McGrath probes us to consider this question: "Suppose our longing for fulfillment points to something we have yet to discover? What if our yearning is a clue to the meaning of the universe?" (10). Taking care of your body and staying healthy is a good thing, but it isn't everything. The truth of the matter is, whatever we pursue in life has a way to deceive us to think that by attaining "it" our lives will be complete. They're not. Deep inside a voice continues to remind us that our longings for fulfillment are like signposts in the sky pointing us to something beyond ourselves. Could that something (Someone) be our Creator?

May you achieve physical well-being and wholeness. But may you also discover the gift of eternal life which Jesus promises to all who believe and trust in him alone. "...I have come that they may have life, and have it in abundance" (John 10:10). I would enjoy exploring with you the meaning of life and God.



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