

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA'S

# Health & Wellness® MAGAZINE

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## THE BASICS OF HEART HEALTH

Small Steps Can Make a Big Difference

## ENHANCING INTIMATE SEXUAL HEALTH

## HEART HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

The Link Between Cardiovascular Health and Hearing Loss

## SHOW YOUR EYES SOME LOVE

Essential Tips for Maintaining Healthy Vision

## TIMELESS RESULTS, THOUGHTFULLY DONE

Transform Your Look with Cutting-Edge Regenerative Treatments for Beautiful, Natural Results

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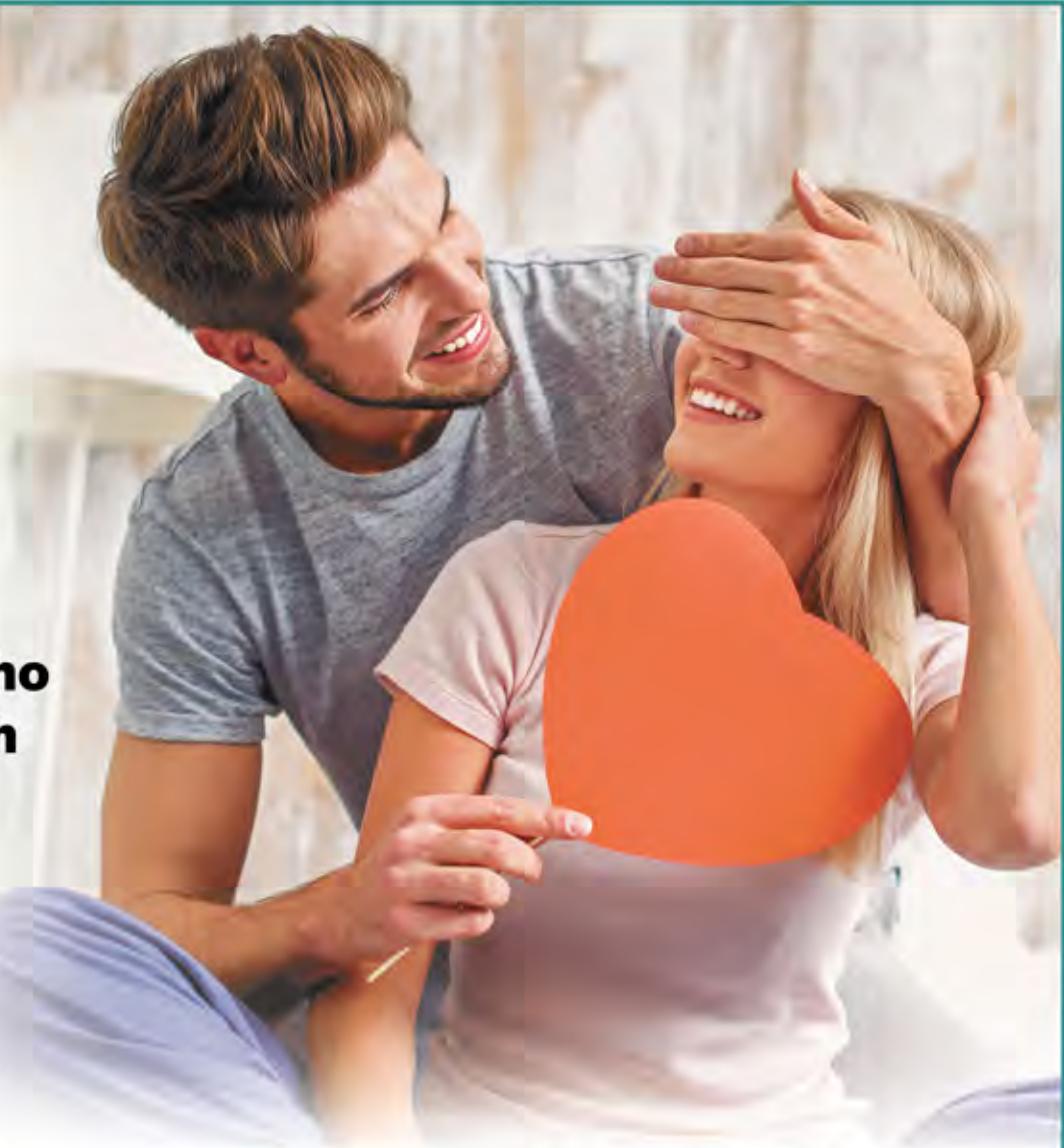
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Disclaimer: These figures are general averages and vary by cancer type. Survival rates vary significantly based on cancer type, individual health factors, and available treatments. The statistics referenced are general averages across multiple cancer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

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# A Love Story from the Dental Chair

Tony and Markeita Barnette were married 32 years before an illness took both of his legs and then eventually his life. Markeita never left Tony's side during the three years he bravely fought for his life. Tony never let Markeita's dream of having a new smile die. After his passing, Markeita discovered Tony had set aside money for Markeita to have the smile she had always wanted. Even during her grief of losing her beloved life mate, Markeita knew that she owed it to Tony to follow through with the complex procedure to show her appreciation of the life they had shared.

Dr. Tamer Eshra says, "This is one of the most emotional cases I have ever done. You should have been in the office on delivery day. It was a day of happy tears, proud tears, and rejoicing tears. All the tears!! Even the administration team felt it. A case that was treated with love, care, and mutual trust. Handing Markeita the mirror is a core memory I will never forget. This lady knew when she smiled now that it was her late husband, Tony, smiling back at her! So moving."

Terrie Kleinberg from the administrative team recalls, "When Markeita would come in, she would cover her mouth or wear a mask. She was very self-contentious about her teeth. The day her prosthesis came in, she was so full of joy. Markeita hugged everyone in the office. When she walked out the front door, she turned around and gave us the biggest smile. Markeita was grateful to finish her implant journey and knew she would always have the Park Dental Family cheering her on."

"At our initial consultation, Dr. Eshra carefully walked me through what my treatment would involve, including work needed on my sinuses and teeth. I knew I needed significant dental care, and I understood the journey wouldn't be simple. But Dr. Eshra saw things I couldn't yet see; how my oral health was impacting not only my smile, but my overall well-being.

There were moments during treatment when recovery was challenging, but each step brought me closer to healing. What this journey taught me is that it was worth every investment of time, emotion, and trust. Today, I carry the outlook on life Tony always wanted for me. I will never be ashamed to smile again." Markeita Barnette, happy patient.



Dr. Eshra and Markeita would also like to thank Park Dental team members Mariam Leon, Anita Perez and Gigi De La O from the Clinical Team. "These ladies worked tirelessly with me on the clinical and personal level to make this happen." Says Dr. Eshra. "They positively impacted Markeita and made her feel like family. They worked with the scheduling team to ensure timeliness with all the lab steps to the point where they were taking the items to the lab and picking them up from the lab themselves to expedite processing time and not wait on shipping and delivery. Markeita even trusted these ladies to help her choose the most aesthetic teeth shape and shade. Our Park Dental team cares about our patients, and it shows in Markeita's smile!"

**Understanding Implant-Supported Prostheses:**  
Implant-supported prostheses offer numerous benefits, including enhanced stability and comfort by eliminating the instability and discomfort of traditional dentures, allowing for confident eating, speaking, and smiling. Additionally, they improve oral health by replacing missing teeth and preserving jawbone structure, preventing further dental issues. These prostheses provide a natural appearance, resembling real teeth in color, shape, and texture, for a beautiful, lifelike smile. Proper care offers long-term durability, potentially lasting a lifetime and providing a lasting solution for missing teeth.

Implant-supported prostheses offer a reliable and transformative solution if you're ready to reclaim your smile and enhance your confidence. By partnering with skilled dental professionals, like the team at Park Dental, and embracing modern technology, you can enjoy the benefits of a beautiful,

functional, and healthy smile for years to come. Say goodbye to missing teeth and hello to a new era of dental wellness with implant-supported prostheses.

Markeita's journey is a powerful reminder that restoring a smile can restore far more than teeth, it can renew confidence, health, and hope. With compassionate guidance and clear expectations from Dr. Eshra, every step of her treatment was approached with understanding, trust, and care. At Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry, stories like Markeita's reflect the belief that when patients feel supported, healing becomes transformational.

For more than a generation, PFCD has proudly served the Naples community with integrity, expertise, and a patient-first philosophy. From preventive care to advanced restorative and cosmetic dentistry, this team is committed to building trust and transforming lives, one smile at a time.

## About Tamer Eshra, DDS

Dr. Tamer Eshra combines advanced training with a gentle, patient-first approach. With decades of expertise in cosmetic, restorative, bone augmentation, sinus lift and implant dentistry, he creates healthy, natural-looking smiles through precision and artistry. Licensed and offering IV, oral and nitrous sedation, Dr. Eshra helps even the most anxious patients feel calm and comfortable. His compassionate care and clear communication make every visit a positive, stress-free experience.



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# The Basics of Heart Health:

## Small Steps Can Make a Big Difference

By Socrates Perez-Rodriguez, MD, Internal Medicine at Millennium Physician Group

**M**any of us may think of heart disease as something that happens suddenly, a diagnosis that arrives without warning. In reality, your heart health is shaped quietly over time by everyday habits, personal and family history, and preventive care. Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women, but fortunately, there is a great deal you can do to protect your heart and improve your overall health.

Heart-healthy living begins with understanding your personal risk, making thoughtful lifestyle choices, and taking steps to reduce your likelihood of developing heart disease. You can start small and gradually increase preventive measures to lower your risk. What's most important is that this is not a one-time effort but something you work on every day.



### Understanding Heart Disease

Most often, when people are talking about heart disease, they are referring to the most common form: coronary heart disease, also known as coronary artery disease.

Coronary heart disease develops when the coronary arteries that carry oxygen-rich blood to the heart become narrowed or blocked. This occurs when plaque builds up inside the arteries. Several factors can contribute to plaque buildup:

- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- Elevated blood sugar levels

When plaque restricts blood flow, the heart doesn't receive the oxygen it needs to function properly. This can lead to chest pain and, in severe cases, a heart attack. Because plaque buildup happens gradually, many people are unaware of the problem until a serious event occurs, making prevention and understanding your risk essential.

### Risk Factors for Heart Disease

The first step in protecting your heart is understanding your risk and recognizing the early warning signs. Heart disease is influenced by many factors, some of which can be changed. Common risk factors include:

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Medically overweight or obesity
- Prediabetes or diabetes
- Smoking
- Lack of regular physical activity
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Family history of early heart disease

Age is also a key factor, with risk increasing for women after age 55 and men after age 45. Conditions like high blood pressure or high cholesterol often have no noticeable symptoms. That's why routine checkups and risk assessments with your healthcare provider are so important.

### Heart Disease in Women

While women tend to develop heart disease about 10 years later than men, it remains the leading cause of death among women, accounting for one in three deaths each year. Certain life stages and conditions can increase a woman's risk:

- Pregnancy-related conditions such as preeclampsia
- Early menopause, whether natural or surgical
- Menopause

After menopause, the risk of heart disease rises in part because estrogen levels decline. Women who experience early menopause are at even greater risk, developing heart disease at approximately twice the rate of women of the same age who have yet to experience menopause.

Furthermore, heart disease symptoms may differ between men and women and are often misunderstood. While chest pain is the most common heart attack symptom, women may also experience:

- Shortness of breath
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Fainting
- Pain in the lower chest or upper abdomen
- Back or jaw pain
- Extreme fatigue

Recognizing these symptoms and seeking immediate medical attention can be lifesaving.

### Daily Heart Disease Prevention

Preventing heart disease starts with small habits that support your cardiovascular health.

### Sleep

Aiming for 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep every night doesn't just help you feel rested; it lowers your heart rate and blood pressure so your heart can rest, too.

### Nutrition

Opt for meals and snacks that include lean proteins, fish, fruits, and vegetables. Read all nutrition labels to limit saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars in your diet.

### Physical Activity

Try to get at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise a week, including muscle-strengthening activities. Remember to stay hydrated!

### Other Preventions

- Stop smoking, even light smoking
- Manage your stress
- Monitor cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure
- Practice self-care

### Care For Your Heart at Millennium Physician Group

As Zenobia Brown, MD, our Florida Chief Medical Officer, often points out, "Maintaining heart health requires a holistic approach, looking beyond symptoms to the daily habits, risks, and preventive care that support long-term wellness. As primary care providers, our goal is to empower patients with knowledge and support so they can take control of their health."

Before making any lifestyle changes or starting a new health routine, it's important to talk with your provider about your risk factors and medical history, along with your personal health goals. At Millennium Physician Group, our team is your health partner, working with you to create a customized care plan that includes achievable proactive steps to reduce your risk and build sustainable, heart-healthy habits.

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

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

## Knowledge Is Your Greatest Health Asset

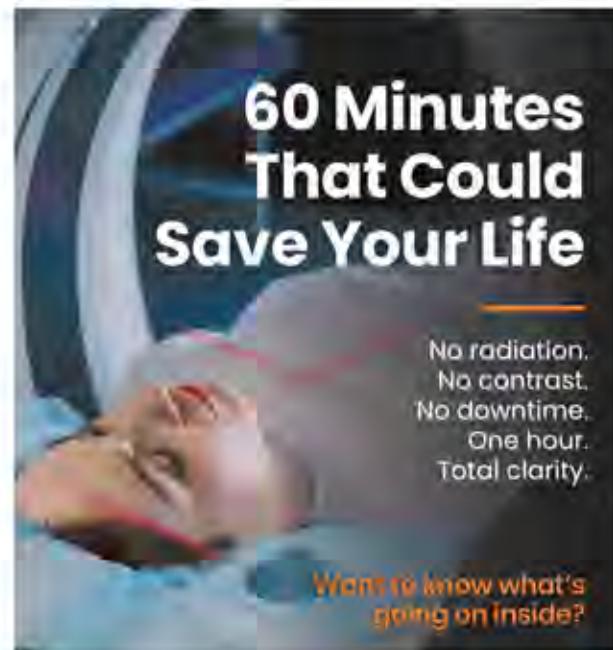
The old adage "knowledge is power" takes on profound meaning when applied to personal health. BodyView Full Body MRI empowers individuals to take charge of their wellbeing by providing detailed insights into their body's current state. This innovative screening technology transforms the traditional reactive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

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

## Comprehensive Screening Without Compromise

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

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



## The Power of Early Detection

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

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

## Safety and Convenience Combined

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

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

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

## Investing in Your Future Self

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

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

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

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# ENHANCING INTIMATE SEXUAL HEALTH:

## The Role of Labiaplasty in Women's Wellness

**L**abiaplasty, a surgical procedure focused on modifying the labia minora or majora, has emerged as an important topic in women's health care. This medical intervention addresses both functional and aesthetic concerns that can significantly impact a woman's quality of life, physical comfort, and emotional wellbeing.

### Understanding Labiaplasty

The procedure primarily involves surgical modification of the labia minora (inner vaginal lips) or, less commonly, the labia majora (outer vaginal lips). While often categorized as a cosmetic procedure, labiaplasty serves important functional purposes for many patients who experience physical discomfort or limitations in their daily activities.

### Medical Indications

Many women seek labiaplasty for medical reasons beyond aesthetic concerns. Common functional issues include:

- Physical discomfort during exercise or athletic activities
- Irritation or chafing when wearing certain clothing
- Discomfort during intimate relations
- Hygiene challenges
- Recurring infections due to excess tissue

The decision to undergo labiaplasty often stems from a combination of these functional concerns alongside personal aesthetic preferences. Medical professionals emphasize the importance of thorough consultation to understand each patient's specific needs and expectations.

### The Surgical Process

The procedure is typically performed on an outpatient basis under local anesthesia with sedation or general anesthesia, depending on patient preference and surgical requirements. Modern surgical techniques focus on preserving sensation and natural contours while addressing the patient's concerns. The surgery usually takes between one to two hours, with most patients returning home the same day.

### Recovery and Results

Recovery from labiaplasty generally requires two to four weeks, during which patients gradually return to normal activities. Initial swelling and discomfort are

managed with appropriate pain medication and cold compresses. Most patients can return to work within a week, though strenuous activities and intimate relations typically resume after four to six weeks.

### Patient Satisfaction and Outcomes

Research indicates high satisfaction rates among labiaplasty patients, with improvements reported in:

- Physical comfort during daily activities
- Confidence in intimate relationships
- Overall body image and self-esteem
- Ability to participate in athletic activities
- Comfort in wearing various clothing styles

### Medical Considerations

Potential candidates for labiaplasty should undergo comprehensive medical evaluation to ensure they are suitable for the procedure. Important considerations include:

- Overall health status
- Realistic expectations about surgical outcomes
- Understanding of recovery requirements
- Psychological readiness for the procedure
- Completion of family planning, as future childbirth can affect results

### The Role of Medical Professionals

Healthcare providers play a crucial role in guiding patients through the decision-making process. This includes:

- Conducting thorough physical examinations
- Discussing medical history and concerns
- Explaining surgical options and techniques
- Setting realistic expectations
- Providing comprehensive post-operative care instructions

### Future Developments

Advancing surgical techniques and technology continue to improve labiaplasty outcomes. These developments focus on minimizing scarring, reducing recovery time, and optimizing results while maintaining natural tissue sensation and function.

Labiaplasty represents an important surgical option for women experiencing functional or aesthetic concerns related to labial tissue. When performed by

qualified medical professionals with appropriate patient selection and counseling, the procedure can significantly improve quality of life and intimate wellness. As with any surgical intervention, success depends on careful consideration of individual needs, thorough medical evaluation, and realistic expectations about outcomes. The growing acceptance of open discussions about intimate health issues has helped reduce stigma and improved access to information about this beneficial procedure.

### What will my recovery be like?

With Dr. Kiran Gill and her team, you can be assured of personalized care at every step to ensure that you have a comfortable treatment experience and recovery. Following labiaplasty, you will have some discomfort, swelling, and bruising for a few days.

Dr. Gill, a Board Certified Plastic and Reconstructive Plastic Surgeon, will prescribe pain meds for a few days. She will recommend ice packs, loose clothes, and absorbent pads for the initial recovery period. You can expect to resume your regular routine in a week, but should avoid strenuous exercises and sexual activity for about one month.



### Your Labiaplasty Consultation

The decision to undergo labiaplasty is a personal one, and Dr. Gill will ensure that you are fully informed before moving forward through a private, one-on-one consultation in Naples, FL.

She will use this session to answer all your questions in detail and create a customized plan of action for addressing your aesthetic concerns, tailored to your wishes and goals. Call us now at 239-596-8000 to schedule a convenient appointment with Dr. Gill.



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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.

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



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# SHOW YOUR EYES SOME LOVE: ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR MAINTAINING HEALTHY VISION

In our digital age, our eyes work harder than ever before. From smartphones to computer screens, our visual system faces unprecedented challenges. Yet, many of us take our eye health for granted until problems arise. Here's how you can protect and nurture your precious vision with some practical eye care tips.

## Practice the 20-20-20 Rule

Digital eye strain is a growing concern, but there's a simple solution: the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and look at something 20 feet away. This simple habit helps reduce eye fatigue and prevents your eye muscles from becoming locked in a fixed position. Set a reminder if needed – your eyes will thank you.

## Optimize Your Work Environment

Proper lighting and screen positioning make a significant difference. Position your computer screen at arm's length and slightly below eye level. Reduce glare by adjusting room lighting and consider using an anti-glare screen protector. If possible, choose natural lighting over harsh fluorescent lights, which can contribute to eye strain.

## Protect Against UV Radiation

Sun damage isn't just bad for your skin – it can harm your eyes too. Invest in quality sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays, and wear them year-round, not just in summer. When choosing sunglasses, look for labels indicating "100% UV protection" or "UV400." Don't forget to wear them even on cloudy days, as UV rays can penetrate cloud cover.

## Nourish Your Eyes Through Diet

Your diet plays a crucial role in maintaining eye health. Include foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, zinc, and vitamins C and E. Think leafy greens, fatty fish, eggs, nuts, and colorful fruits and vegetables. These nutrients help prevent age-related vision problems and maintain overall eye health.

## Stay Hydrated and Well-Rested

Proper hydration helps maintain the natural lubrication of your eyes. When you're dehydrated, your eyes can become dry and irritated. Additionally, getting adequate sleep allows your eyes to rest and repair themselves. Lack of sleep can lead to eye strain, twitching, and even temporary vision problems.



## Regular Eye Examinations Matter

Don't wait for vision problems to schedule an eye exam. Regular check-ups can detect potential issues before they become serious. Adults should have comprehensive eye exams at least every two years, while those with existing conditions or over 60 should visit annually or as recommended by their eye care professional.

## Exercise Your Eyes

Just like other muscles, your eyes benefit from exercise. Try focusing exercises: hold a pen at arm's length, focus on it, then slowly bring it closer to your nose while maintaining focus. Another simple exercise is to roll your eyes in circles occasionally throughout the day to help relieve tension.

## Consider Blue Light Protection

While research is ongoing about blue light's long-term effects, many find that blue light filtering glasses or screen settings help reduce eye fatigue during screen time. If you spend many hours in front of digital devices, this extra protection might be worth considering.

Remember, your eyes are irreplaceable. These simple yet effective habits can help maintain your vision health for years to come. By incorporating these practices into your daily routine, you're investing in one of your most valuable assets – your sight. Start showing your eyes some love today, and they'll serve you well throughout your lifetime.



### Hunter Vittone, OD

#### Optometric Physician

Dr. Hunter Vittone is an optometrist at Center For Sight. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from The Pennsylvania State University in State College, PA, and his Doctor of Optometry degree from Nova Southeastern University College of Optometry in Davie, FL.

Prior to joining Center For Sight, Dr. Vittone completed two optometric externships and earned certifications in CooperVision MiSight Orthokeratology, Paragon CRT Orthokeratology and MoonLens Orthokeratology.

At Center For Sight, Dr. Vittone provides comprehensive eye exams, ocular disease management, glaucoma treatment, dry eye care, as well as family eye care and contact lens fittings. He also provides pre- and post-operative care.

He is a member of the American Optometric Association and the Nova Optometry Practice Management Association.

In his spare time, Dr. Vittone enjoys golfing, fishing, tennis, and taking ski trips during the winter.

Dr. Vittone will be seeing patients in our Naples, FL office.



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# TIMELESS RESULTS, THOUGHTFULLY DONE

Transform Your Look with Cutting-Edge Regenerative Treatments for Beautiful, Natural Results

By Dr. Kenzie

**F**ebruary is Heart Health Month—and if you've been thinking about refining your look or simply feeling your best in your own skin, this is the perfect time to start. At Kenzi Medical Aesthetics Group, we take a thoughtful, natural approach to aesthetic care that's designed to enhance—not change—who you are.

## A Smarter Way to Approach Heart Health with Weight Loss

Forget quick fixes. Our physician-led weight loss programs focus on sustainable, long-term health. Depending on your goals, your personalized plan may include:

- Nutritional guidance tailored to your body and lifestyle
- Medical-grade supplements to support metabolism and energy
- Movement strategies that complement your treatment plan

Patients often report feeling more energized and balanced—confidence that goes far beyond swimsuit season.

## Refined, Natural Results with Injectables

For those moments when you're reconnecting with friends and family, injectables can offer a subtle refresh:

- Botox® and Dysport® for smoothing dynamic wrinkles
- Dermal fillers for restoring volume where it's naturally diminished
- Sculptra® stimulates natural collagen production, restoring facial structure and volume—and can even be used to lift and shape the buttocks.

We focus on precision, proportion, and maintaining the facial harmony that makes you, you.

## Skin Tightening That Works Beneath the Surface

Heat-based technologies like radiofrequency, ultrasound, and laser energy can stimulate deep



collagen production to tighten skin and refine texture. These are ideal for areas where skin has begun to lose firmness over time.

## Venus Bliss MAX: A Non-Invasive Way to Tackle Stubborn Fat

Venus Bliss MAX™ is an advanced three-in-one solution for body treatments. The workstation targets fat, muscle, and skin with three distinct technologies in an effective and comfortable manner, maximizing results and patient satisfaction by tailoring the right modality for each indication.

## Why Timing Matters

Many treatments—especially body contouring and skin regeneration—take a few weeks to show full results. Starting now gives your body time to respond naturally so you're glowing, confident, and photo-ready when it matters most.

## Let's Build Your Heart Health Treatment Plan

Whether you want to target one area or take a more comprehensive approach, our team will guide you through a custom treatment strategy. We combine science, artistry, and experience to help you look like the best version of yourself—refreshed, never overdone.

Book a consultation to learn more and explore what's possible...



DR. ALDENE MCKENZIE

## Providing A Healthy, Happy and Confident Lifestyle for All

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

Reach out to book your complimentary consultation.



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# PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

## A WIDESPREAD BUT TREATABLE CONDITION

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

**C**hronic pain is a debilitating issue that impacts millions worldwide. Of the over 116 million people suffering from various chronic pain disorders, an estimated 20 million are afflicted by peripheral neuropathy specifically. However, experts believe this number could be significantly higher due to frequent misdiagnosis and underreporting of the condition.

Peripheral neuropathy results from dysfunction or damage to the peripheral nerves - the vital neural pathways that transmit sensory information from the extremities to the brain and spinal cord. These nerves extend from the central nervous system out to the arms, hands, legs, and feet. When compromised, they can produce distressing and disruptive symptoms.

### The Peripheral Neuropathy Puzzle

While peripheral neuropathy is complex, the core issue revolves around impaired nerve signaling caused by nerve damage or degeneration. A variety of potential root causes can initiate this deterioration, including chronically high blood sugar levels, poor circulation reducing oxygenation, vitamin/nutrient deficiencies, toxic exposures, and unchecked inflammation.

As the longest nerves in the body, those serving the lower extremities are often the first to manifest symptoms as the condition progresses. However, if left unchecked, the upper extremities can eventually become affected as well as the neuropathy advances through the peripheral nervous system.

### Recognizing the Signs

Peripheral neuropathy can produce a range of troubling sensory, motor, and physiological symptoms, including:

- Numbness, tingling, or "pins and needles" sensations
- Burning pain or aching in the limbs
- Joint swelling, stiffness, and diminished range of motion
- Loss of proprioception (spatial positioning awareness) leading to balance/coordination issues
- Muscle cramping, weakness, and atrophy
- Discolored, thickened, or abnormally textured skin
- Non-healing sores, rashes, or ulcers on the feet and ankles

### Avoiding the Pitfalls of Painkillers

Conventionally, nerve pain and numbness are often simply "masked" with prescription narcotic painkillers like opioids. However, this approach fails to address the underlying neuropathy while exposing patients to the grim risks of addiction and potentially fatal overdose. In fact, the opioid crisis has become so severe that certain states now lead the nation in drug abuse and overdose rates.

There is a better way. Pioneering physical medicine clinics are achieving remarkable results in treating peripheral neuropathy through integrative, non-narcotic therapies that can actually regenerate damaged nerves and restore proper functioning.

### Regenerative Neuropathy Treatments

At the forefront of this emerging treatment approach is Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute in Naples, Florida. Their comprehensive peripheral neuropathy program revolves around advanced regenerative therapies like:

- Red LED and infrared light to stimulate nerve repair
- Gentle electrical nerve stimulation to reduce pain and improve mobility
- Stem cell allografts and platelet-rich plasma injections to accelerate tissue healing
- Therapeutic shockwave to disrupt pain signals
- Targeted supplements to aid remyelination of nerve coatings

In clinical studies, a remarkable 88% of neuropathy patients experienced significant improvements after this multimodal treatment regimen. Reduced pain, numbness, tingling, temperature sensitivity, and restless legs were just some of the benefits reported. Improved sleep quality, balance, coordination, and range of motion were also frequently noted - along with lowered dependence on oral medications.

Most importantly, patients gained greater mobility and reduced fall risk by restoring protective sensation and positional awareness in their feet and ankles. This decreased risk of potentially devastating injuries.

### Embracing a Brighter Future

For over two decades, Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute has been a trusted leader in pioneering physical medicine solutions in the Naples area. By fusing compassionate care with the latest evidence-based therapies, their team of chiropractic neurology experts is helping countless neuropathy sufferers reclaim their health and vitality.

### Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute

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

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

**When you work with us, you can be sure that we are equipped to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions that include:**

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

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



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

# 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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# THE HEART-CONNECTION LINK: Why Relationships Matter as We Age

## *Carlisle Residents Enjoy Heart-Healthy Lifestyle*

By Greg Pascucci

**F**ebruary is American Heart Month, a time when attention often turns to familiar advice about diet, exercise, and routine checkups. While these factors are important, heart health is shaped by more than physical habits alone. Increasingly, researchers and aging experts point to another powerful influence: human connection.

As people grow older, social engagement and emotional well-being play a meaningful role in overall health, including cardiovascular health. Feelings of isolation and chronic stress can place strain on the heart, while regular social interaction, shared experiences, and a sense of belonging may help support healthier outcomes over time.

For older adults living in retirement communities, these connections often emerge naturally through daily life.

At The Carlisle Naples, for example, residents regularly come together through shared activities that combine movement, learning and companionship. Recently, members of The Carlisle Striders walking group participated in an outing to Clam Pass Park, where they enjoyed a guided walk along the boardwalk and the bay. Along the way, participants learned about the importance of mangroves in protecting coastal ecosystems and observed native plants and wildlife.

The experience offered gentle physical activity, fresh air and conversation, an example of how heart-supportive habits can be woven into enjoyable, social moments rather than formal exercise routines.

Physical movement remains an important component of heart health, particularly as we age. Many older adults benefit from low-impact activities that support circulation, balance and endurance. When movement is paired with social interaction, it can feel less like a task and more like a shared experience, encouraging consistency and enjoyment.

Equally important is emotional well-being. Stress and loneliness have been linked to increased cardiovascular risk, while positive social interactions can help reduce stress and promote a sense of calm. Opportunities to connect can provide emotional benefits that support heart health in subtle but meaningful ways.

Programs that encourage conversation and connection also play a role here. At The Carlisle Naples, gatherings such as Tea & Talk offer residents a chance to slow down and spend time together. Over cups of tea, residents share stories, listen and enjoy the companionship of their neighbors. These moments help foster connection and emotional comfort, both of which contribute to overall well-being.

Nutrition is another important part of heart health. Meals shared with others can encourage balanced eating habits and provide opportunities for connection. At The Carlisle Naples, residents have access to chef-prepared meals, including plant-forward options through the FreshZest menu, which complements the community's regular dining offerings.

Supporting these experiences is a wellness philosophy that looks beyond physical health alone. A full-time Zest Director helps shape programming that appeals to residents' mind, body and soul, recognizing that well-being is influenced by how people spend their days, who they spend them with and how connected they feel to their surroundings.

One resident noted that being around others makes it easier to stay engaged and that connections happen naturally by simply showing up.

This American Heart Month, remember that caring for the heart also includes laughter during a walk, conversation over tea, shared meals and the comfort of belonging. These everyday connections may not always be measured, but they play a meaningful role in supporting heart health as we age.

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



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# The Challenges of Aging in Men and Women and How Functional Medicine Can Help Address Both

By Svetlana Kogan, M.D.

**A**ging is a natural part of life, yet it brings a host of physical, mental, and emotional challenges that can affect one's overall quality of life. Fortunately, functional medicine provides a holistic, patient-centered approach that can address these age-related issues in both men and women, helping to enhance their health and well-being in their later years.

## Age-Related Challenges for Men

As men age, the most significant hormonal change they face is a gradual decline in testosterone levels, typically starting around the age of 50. This reduction in testosterone can lead to a variety of physical and emotional changes. Common symptoms associated with low testosterone include fatigue, loss of muscle mass, increased body fat, reduced libido, and diminished sexual function.

Testosterone levels are not the only factor affecting aging men. As they age, men also become more susceptible to certain chronic health conditions. Cardiovascular disease is a major concern, as the walls of blood vessels lose their elasticity over time, contributing to higher blood pressure and increasing the strain on the heart. Men are also at greater risk for conditions such as type 2 diabetes, erectile dysfunction, and prostate-related issues, such as benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) or prostate cancer, which can affect their overall health and quality of life.

Cognitive decline is another area of concern for aging men, although it may not be as widely discussed as other aspects of aging.

## Age-Related Challenges for Women

Women face a different set of challenges as they age, with the most significant change occurring during the transition to menopause. Menopause typically occurs between the ages of 45 and 55, marking the end of a woman's reproductive years and the cessation of menstruation. This phase is characterized by a decrease in the production of estrogen and progesterone, leading to a variety of physical and emotional symptoms.

Hot flashes, night sweats, weight gain, and mood swings are common complaints during perimenopause and menopause. Women may also experience



vaginal dryness, which can impact sexual health and function. Another major concern is osteoporosis and osteoarthritis.

Cognitive decline is also a prominent issue for aging women, as are general mental health concerns, including anxiety and depression.

Like men, women also experience physical limitations as they age. Reduced muscle mass, joint stiffness, and diminished endurance can significantly impact daily functioning, making it harder to remain independent and active. Additionally, chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease affect women as they age.

## The Role of Functional Medicine

Functional medicine offers a comprehensive approach to managing the challenges of aging by focusing on addressing the root causes of health problems rather than simply masking symptoms. This patient-centered approach is particularly beneficial for aging individuals, as it considers the complex interplay of genetics, environment, lifestyle, and emotional well-being. By focusing on prevention and individualized care, functional medicine helps promote healthier aging for both men and women.

One of the key elements of functional medicine is the belief that every individual is unique, and therefore, health interventions must be tailored to meet their specific needs. In the context of aging, functional medicine emphasizes the importance of understanding how various factors—such as hormonal

imbalances, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, chronic stress, and environmental toxins—can contribute to the aging process and age-related diseases.

For men, functional medicine practitioners often focus on balancing hormone levels, particularly testosterone. Since low testosterone can lead to symptoms such as fatigue, reduced muscle mass, and low libido, functional medicine approach may involve supplements, nutritional interventions, hormone replacement therapy, lifestyle changes, and stress management techniques. Through personalized nutrition plans, anti-inflammatory diets, exercise, and targeted supplements, men can improve heart health, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and maintain overall vitality as they age.

For women, functional medicine provides a holistic approach to managing the symptoms of menopause and promoting hormone balance. Through comprehensive testing, functional medicine practitioners can assess estrogen and progesterone levels and offer natural interventions, including supplement, dietary changes, and lifestyle modifications, or bioidentical hormone replacement therapy. Nutrient-dense diets, physical activity, stress management, and sleep optimization are all key components of functional medicine's approach.

Through this approach, aging individuals can feel empowered to take control of their health and well-being, ensuring that they live their later years to the fullest.



**Svetlana Kogan, M.D.**

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

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# Geniculate Artery Embolization:

## A Promising Minimally Invasive Treatment for Knee Osteoarthritis

By Russell Becker, DO

**K**nee osteoarthritis (OA) affects millions of people worldwide, causing chronic pain and significantly impacting quality of life. While traditional treatments range from conservative management to total knee replacement, a novel interventional procedure called geniculate artery embolization (GAE) is emerging as a promising minimally invasive option for patients with knee OA. This innovative treatment targets the underlying vascular pathology associated with knee osteoarthritis, offering new hope for those seeking alternatives to surgery.

### Understanding the Connection Between Inflammation and Blood Supply

The development and progression of knee osteoarthritis involve complex inflammatory processes. Research has shown that increased blood vessel formation (angiogenesis) and inflammation in the synovial membrane of affected joints play crucial roles in the pathogenesis of OA. These new blood vessels not only supply inflammatory cells and mediators but also contribute to pain through the growth of sensory nerve fibers alongside them. This understanding has led to the development of GAE as a targeted treatment approach.

### The GAE Procedure: How It Works

Geniculate artery embolization is performed by interventional radiologists under local anesthesia. During the procedure, a tiny catheter is inserted through a small puncture in the femoral artery, typically in the groin area. Using advanced imaging guidance, the catheter is navigated to the arteries surrounding the knee joint, specifically the geniculate arteries that supply the synovial membrane.

Once the target vessels are identified, small particles are injected through the catheter to block abnormal blood vessels that contribute to inflammation and pain. This embolization reduces blood flow to the inflamed synovium while maintaining adequate circulation to healthy tissues. The procedure typically takes 1-2 hours, and patients can usually return home the same day.

### Clinical Evidence and Treatment Outcomes

Several clinical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of GAE for knee osteoarthritis. Research has shown significant improvements in

pain scores and functional outcomes following the procedure. A notable study published in the *Journal of Vascular and Interventional Radiology* reported that 70-80% of patients experienced meaningful pain reduction within the first month after treatment, with benefits lasting up to two years in many cases.

The procedure has shown particularly promising results for patients with moderate to severe knee OA who have not responded adequately to conservative treatments but may not be ready or suitable for knee replacement surgery. Importantly, GAE does not "burn any bridges" – patients can still undergo other treatments or surgery if needed in the future.

### Advantages and Patient Selection

GAE offers several advantages over traditional surgical interventions:

- Minimally invasive nature with only a small puncture site
- Performed under local anesthesia
- Short recovery time with most patients returning to normal activities within days
- Preservation of native joint anatomy
- No bridges burned for future treatment options

However, not all patients with knee OA are ideal candidates for GAE. The best results are typically seen in patients who:

- Have moderate to severe knee OA with documented synovitis
- Experience pain despite conservative management
- Show evidence of inflammatory changes on imaging studies
- Have no severe mechanical deformity of the knee

### Safety Profile and Considerations

The safety profile of GAE has been encouraging, with relatively few reported complications. Most side effects are minor and temporary, such as mild bruising at the puncture site or short-term post-procedure pain. However, as with any medical procedure, proper patient selection and careful technique are essential for optimal outcomes.

### Future Perspectives and Research

While GAE shows promise, ongoing research continues to refine the technique and better understand its long-term effectiveness. Current studies are investigating optimal particle sizes for embolization, identifying the most reliable predictors of treatment success, and exploring potential applications for other joint conditions.

The development of more sophisticated imaging techniques and embolization materials may further improve the precision and effectiveness of the procedure. Additionally, researchers are studying whether combining GAE with other treatments might provide enhanced benefits for certain patient populations.

### Conclusion

Geniculate artery embolization represents an important advancement in the treatment of knee osteoarthritis, offering a minimally invasive option that targets the underlying vascular pathology of the condition. While not a cure-all for every patient with knee OA, it provides a valuable alternative in the treatment arsenal, particularly for those seeking options between conservative management and joint replacement surgery. As research continues and techniques are refined, GAE may become an increasingly important tool in managing this common and debilitating condition.

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



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# HEALTHY AGING:

## The Promise of Stem Cell Therapy

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

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

### Understanding Stem Cells and Aging

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

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

### The Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics Quarterly Program

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

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



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

### Benefits of the Quarterly Approach

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

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

### What to Expect

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

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

### The Future of Healthy Aging

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

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

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

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## WHEN GLASSES AREN'T ENOUGH — THERE'S STILL HOPE

### HOW LOW VISION CARE HELPS PEOPLE WITH VISION LOSS STAY INDEPENDENT AND LIVE WELL

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

#### WHEN VISION LOSS CHANGES LIFE

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### When Glasses and Surgery Aren't Enough

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### A Team Approach to Better Vision

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

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

#### Modern Tools for Better Vision

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

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

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



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

#### Seeing Better, Living Better

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

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

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

#### Why Trust Low Vision of Southwest Florida?

##### • Exclusively Focused on Low Vision Rehabilitation

We dedicate our practice solely to helping people with vision loss.

##### • Innovative Technology and Vision Aids

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

##### • Patient-First Approach

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

#### Dedicated to Helping You See What's Possible

**Dr. Dennis Denick, OD, Dipl ABO, FIALVS**

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



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# Hammertoes?

Michael J. Petrocelli, D.P.M., F.A.C.F.A.S., C.W.S.P.

Board Certified Ankle and Foot Surgeon and Board Certified Wound Care Specialist

**H**ammertoes are a common foot deformity that can cause significant discomfort and affect your daily activities. This progressive condition occurs when there's an imbalance in the muscles, tendons, or ligaments that normally hold the toe straight, causing one or more toes to bend or curl downward instead of pointing forward. While initially flexible, hammertoes can become rigid and permanent without proper intervention, making early treatment by a qualified board certified podiatrist essential.

## Understanding the Causes

Several factors can contribute to the development of hammertoes. Wearing ill-fitting shoes, particularly those with a tight toe box or high heels, is a leading cause as these shoes force toes into a cramped, bent position. Genetic predisposition, trauma to the toe, and certain medical conditions like arthritis or diabetes can also increase the risk. Additionally, muscle imbalances or neurological conditions affecting foot mechanics may lead to hammertoe formation.

## Recognizing the Symptoms

The most obvious sign of a hammertoe is the abnormal bend in the affected toe's middle joint, typically occurring in the second, third, or fourth toes. Patients often experience pain when wearing shoes, as the raised portion of the toe rubs against footwear. Corns and calluses frequently develop on the top of the middle joint or the tip of the toe due to friction. Some people may also experience inflammation, redness, and difficulty walking or balancing.

## Conservative Treatment Approaches

When patients first consult a board certified podiatrist about hammertoes, treatment typically begins with conservative measures, especially if the toe is still flexible. Your board certified podiatrist may recommend:

**Footwear Modifications:** The first step often involves switching to shoes with a wider, deeper toe box to accommodate the toe deformity and prevent further irritation. Your board certified podiatrist can provide specific shoe recommendations based on your foot structure and severity of the condition.

**Padding and Orthotic Devices:** Custom orthotic devices can help redistribute pressure and improve foot function. Padding and cushioning products can protect the affected area from friction and pressure, reducing pain and preventing the formation of corns and calluses.

**Toe Exercises:** Specific stretching and strengthening exercises can help maintain toe flexibility and prevent the condition from worsening. These might include picking up marbles with your toes or using your hands to manually stretch the affected digits.

**Medication:** Anti-inflammatory medications may be prescribed to reduce pain and swelling associated with hammertoes.

## Surgical Intervention

When conservative treatments fail to provide relief, or if the hammertoe has become rigid, surgical intervention may be necessary. Your board certified podiatrist will determine the most appropriate surgical procedure based on several factors, including:

- The flexibility of the affected toe
- The presence of other foot deformities
- Your age and overall health
- Activity level and lifestyle requirements

Common surgical procedures for hammertoes include tendon transfers, joint resection, or fusion. These procedures aim to realign the toe and restore normal function. Recovery typically involves wearing a special post-operative shoe and following a structured rehabilitation program.

## Prevention and Long-term Management

Preventing hammertoe progression requires ongoing attention to foot health. Your board certified podiatrist will likely recommend:

- Regular foot examinations to monitor any changes in toe position or flexibility
- Proper shoe selection and fit
- Continued use of prescribed orthotic devices
- Maintenance exercises to preserve toe flexibility



Working closely with your board certified podiatrist is crucial for successful management of hammertoes. They can provide regular assessments, adjust treatment plans as needed, and offer guidance on preventing recurrence or progression of the condition.

Early intervention is key to preventing permanent deformity and avoiding surgical intervention. If you notice signs of hammertoe development, consulting a board certified podiatrist promptly can help ensure the best possible outcome through appropriate treatment and management strategies tailored to your specific needs.

## Collier Podiatry

It's important to be evaluated by a board certified podiatrist if you're experiencing any type of foot pain. At Collier Podiatry, Dr. Michael Petrocelli has been practicing podiatric medicine for well over 30 years. He is an expert in his field and a leader to his peers, he and his staff see a countless number of patients with heel pain and injuries in the Naples area.

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

Collier Podiatry is available to answer your questions and make your appointment. Please visit their website at [www.collierpodiatry.com](http://www.collierpodiatry.com), or call them at (239) 775-0019



**COLLIER PODIATRY, P.A.**

**Michael J. Petrocelli**  
D.P.M., F.A.C.F.A.S., C.W.S.P.

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# WHEN URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS KEEP COMING BACK

## Why Recurrent UTIs Deserve Specialized Attention—and How an In-House Lab Can Help

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

If you've ever had a urinary tract infection (UTI), you know the telltale signs: burning during urination, a constant urge to go, and discomfort that can make daily life miserable. But what happens when the infection doesn't just go away—or keeps coming back? For many women, recurrent UTIs are more than an inconvenience. They're a chronic health concern that demands specialized care.

### What Is a Recurrent UTI?

According to the American Urogynecologic Society (AUGS), a recurrent urinary tract infection is defined as two or more UTIs in six months, or three or more within a year. While UTIs are more common in women due to the shorter length of the urethra, recurrent infections require a deeper diagnostic look and a personalized treatment approach.

### The Hidden Burden

Recurrent UTIs can significantly impact a woman's quality of life. Beyond the discomfort, many patients experience anxiety over when the next infection will strike. In fact, studies show that up to 30% of women who have had one UTI will experience a recurrence within 6 months, and the risk increases with age, sexual activity, hormonal changes, and certain health conditions like diabetes.

Misdiagnosis is another concern. What may feel like a UTI could actually be a different pelvic condition or bladder disorder. That's why it's critical to get the right diagnosis the first time—and this is where advanced diagnostic tools and expert care can make all the difference.

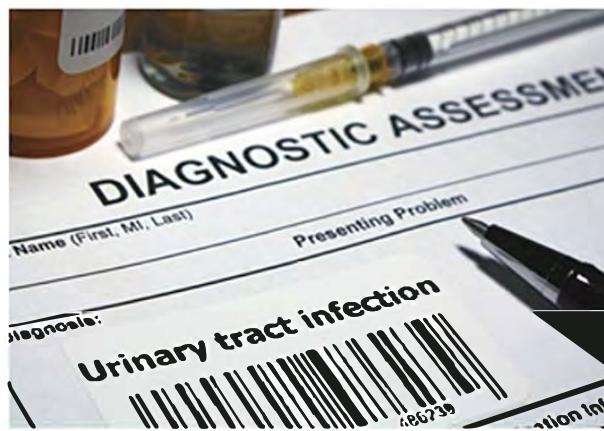
### Why Standard UTI Testing May Fall Short

Traditionally, when a patient presents with symptoms of a UTI, a provider may send a urine sample to an outside lab. Results typically take 4 to 5 days, and in the meantime, many patients are prescribed a broad-spectrum antibiotic "just in case."

The problem? Not all UTIs are caused by the same bacteria, and not all bacteria respond to the same antibiotics. In fact, antibiotic resistance is on the rise. According to the CDC, nearly 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections occur in the U.S. each year, and overuse or misuse of antibiotics for UTIs contributes to this growing problem.

### The Power of an In-House Lab

Florida Bladder Institute offers something many offices don't: an in-house urinary diagnostic laboratory. This allows for rapid and more comprehensive testing right on-site—often with results available in as little as 24 hours.



Here's why that matters:

- **Faster Results:** In-house testing eliminates the waiting period associated with external labs. Patients can begin the correct treatment much sooner, reducing discomfort and minimizing complications.
- **Accurate Identification of Bacteria:** Unlike standard culture tests, our advanced molecular diagnostic tools can detect a wider range of uropathogens, including bacteria that may not grow well in traditional cultures.
- **Personalized Antibiotic Selection:** By identifying not just the type of bacteria but also its resistance profile, we can prescribe an antibiotic that targets the specific strain, avoiding unnecessary or ineffective medications.
- **Better Follow-Up:** Repeat testing can be done quickly and easily if symptoms return, allowing us to monitor for persistence or reinfection and adjust treatment accordingly.

### Risk Factors We Consider

Recurrent UTIs aren't one-size-fits-all. At Dr. Gauta's practice, we take the time to evaluate underlying risk factors that may be contributing to repeat infections.

These may include:

- **Hormonal changes:** Especially during menopause, declining estrogen levels can thin the vaginal lining and alter urinary tract flora.
- **Sexual activity:** Intercourse can introduce bacteria into the urinary tract, particularly in younger women.
- **Incomplete bladder emptying:** Common in older adults or those with pelvic floor dysfunction.
- **Genetics:** Some women are simply more prone to UTIs due to anatomical or genetic factors.

By identifying these factors, we can offer preventive strategies that go beyond antibiotics, such as vaginal estrogen therapy, timed voiding schedules, or pelvic floor therapy if needed.

### Advanced Care from a Urogynecologic Specialist

Dr. Joseph Gauta is a board-certified urogynecologist with advanced training in female pelvic medicine and reconstructive surgery. Unlike a general practitioner, he focuses exclusively on pelvic and urinary conditions in women. This specialization allows us to address the full spectrum of causes behind recurrent urinary symptoms and offer comprehensive, targeted treatment plans.

### Don't Wait—Relief Is Possible

If you're experiencing recurrent UTIs, you don't have to settle for temporary relief or repeated rounds of antibiotics. With the help of on-site diagnostics, expert evaluation, and evidence-based care, lasting relief is within reach.

To learn more about personalized treatment for recurrent UTIs and the benefits of our in-house lab, schedule a consultation with the Florida Bladder Institute today.



Joseph Gauta, MD



Gabrielle Wright PA-C

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



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

**F**ebruary 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, selfcare, 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 Strengthener

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 Strengthener, 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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# CONTINUUM SURGERY CENTER OF NAPLES WELCOMES PATIENTS TO ITS NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART SURGERY CENTER

**N**aples, Florida welcomes a groundbreaking addition to its healthcare landscape with Continuum Surgery Center of Naples, which held its grand opening on January 29, 2026, and is now open for patient care. This state-of-the-art facility represents the future of surgical care, combining cutting-edge technology with an exclusive, patient-centered approach that sets a new standard for medical excellence in Southwest Florida.

## A Premier Private Concierge Surgery Center

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples distinguishes itself as a private concierge surgery center, offering patients an unparalleled level of personalized care and attention. Unlike traditional hospital settings, our brand-new facility provides an intimate, comfortable environment where every detail has been carefully designed with patient comfort and safety in mind.

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

## Comprehensive Specialty Services

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples proudly offers a diverse range of surgical specialties under one roof. Our services include pain management utilizing advanced interventional techniques, interventional spine programs for sophisticated treatment options, podiatry addressing complex foot and ankle conditions, plastic and cosmetic surgery combining artistry with medical expertise, otolaryngology (ENT) for ear, nose, and throat conditions, and breast surgical oncology providing specialized breast cancer surgery with comprehensive care.

## Meet Our Distinguished Surgical Team Owners



### Cliff Burmeister, DPM, DABPM, FACPAS — Podiatric Surgery

Dr. Burmeister is Double-Board Certified through the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons and the American Board of Podiatric Medicine. Dr. Burmeister specializes in foot and ankle reconstruction, revision

surgery, and is excited to offer the future of lower extremity Minimally Invasive Surgery. This groundbreaking, minimally invasive foot, hammertoe, and bunion correction technique involves a revolutionary approach which is faster, less invasive, and a less painful alternative to traditional open surgery. Minimally invasive surgery is performed with tiny keyhole incisions resulting in less swelling, allowing patients to bear weight and walk immediately after surgery and resume their daily activities sooner.

Dr. Cliff Burmeister is a Florida native and earned his Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences from the University of South Florida before obtaining his Masters of Biomedical Sciences and Doctorate from Barry University School of Podiatric Medicine and Surgery. He completed a three-year Foot and Ankle Surgical Residency at Bethesda Hospital in Boynton Beach, FL specializing in Foot and Ankle Surgical reconstruction. Dr. Burmeister has been recognized consistently by his peers as "Naples Top Doc" and is known for his caring and attentive demeanor.



### Christie McGee, MD

#### Otolaryngology (ENT)

Dr. McGee provides comprehensive ENT care for adults and children as a board-certified otolaryngologist. Her expertise covers nasal and sinus disorders, ear infections and hearing conditions, pediatric ENT procedures, airway and voice disorders, thyroid and salivary gland conditions, and sleep apnea and snoring surgery. Dr. McGee was voted a Top Doctor 2026 through Naples Illustrated Magazine.

Dr. McGee earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology from the University of Florida (Magna Cum Laude), Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences from Tufts University, and Medical Degree from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. She completed her residency in Otolaryngology at UM/Jackson Memorial Hospital. She maintains memberships in the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head & Neck Surgery, American Rhinologic Society, Gold Humanism Honor Society, and Collier County Medical Society.



### Mark Prys, MD

#### Plastic Surgery

Dr. Mark Prys is a nationally recognized, award-winning plastic surgeon specializing in cosmetic and aesthetic procedures. With a private practice since 1989, he has pioneered multiple advanced techniques and serves as a published lecturer nationally and internationally. He has been voted "Best Plastic Surgeon" by the Naples Daily News and is listed among "Best Plastic Surgeons in America."

Dr. Prys graduated Magna Cum Laude from Washington & Lee University and earned his Medical Degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine. He completed General Surgery training at UAB Hospital, Plastic Surgery residency at the University of Tennessee Medical Center, and a Cosmetic Fellowship at Vanderbilt University. He is Board Certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery and maintains memberships in the American Society of Plastic Surgeons and American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery.

## Join Our Team

We are actively seeking talented healthcare professionals including surgical nurses, radiation techs, Pre-Op and PACU nurses, surgical techs, and front desk professionals. Submit your CV to [Marisa@csc-surgerycenternaples.com](mailto:Marisa@csc-surgerycenternaples.com).

For surgeons seeking credentialing or shareholder opportunities, contact Marisa directly at 561-789-8435.

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# Compression Fractures and Kyphoplasty: An Overview of Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

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

**C**ompression fractures occur in the vertebrae, often caused by osteoporosis, trauma, or other bone-weakening conditions. These fractures can result in pain, loss of height, and decreased mobility. While conservative treatments like pain management and physical therapy are commonly used, some individuals benefit from kyphoplasty, a minimally invasive procedure designed to treat compression fractures. This article discusses the causes, symptoms, and treatment of compression fractures, focusing on kyphoplasty.

## What is a Compression Fracture?

A compression fracture occurs when one or more vertebrae collapse, usually due to weakened bone strength. The vertebrae become compressed or "crushed," causing deformities in the spinal column. These fractures most often affect the thoracic spine (middle back) but can also occur in the lumbar spine (lower back).

Osteoporosis, which weakens bones and makes them more prone to fractures, is the most common cause of compression fractures. In some cases, trauma such as a fall or car accident may cause a compression fracture in people without osteoporosis.

## Causes of Compression Fractures

- **Osteoporosis:** The most common cause, especially in postmenopausal women, older adults, and those with a family history of the disease. Weakened bones are more susceptible to fractures from everyday activities.
- **Trauma:** Falls, car accidents, and sports injuries can cause compression fractures, even in individuals without osteoporosis, especially when the trauma is severe.
- **Cancer:** Certain cancers, such as metastatic cancer and multiple myeloma, can weaken the bones and lead to fractures.
- **Corticosteroids:** Long-term use of corticosteroids for conditions like arthritis and asthma can decrease bone density, increasing fracture risk.
- **Other conditions:** Paget's disease, which causes abnormal bone growth, or vertebral infections (osteomyelitis) can also weaken the vertebrae.

## Symptoms of Compression Fractures

The symptoms vary depending on the severity and location of the fracture:

- **Back pain:** Sudden, severe pain, often localized in the back, worsens with movement, sitting, or standing.
- **Loss of height:** Recurrent fractures can cause noticeable height loss.
- **Spinal deformity:** Severe fractures can result in kyphosis, or a hunched back.
- **Pain radiating to other areas:** Pain may spread to the chest, abdomen, or legs.
- **Difficulty moving:** Patients may experience difficulty bending, twisting, or walking, and in severe cases, weakness or numbness in the lower extremities.

## Treatment Options for Compression Fractures

Initial treatment typically involves conservative approaches:

- **Pain management:** NSAIDs, opioids, or muscle relaxants may be used to alleviate pain.
- **Bracing:** A back brace can help stabilize the spine and reduce pain.
- **Physical therapy:** Exercises to improve posture, flexibility, and strength support the spine.
- **Supplements:** Calcium and vitamin D help improve bone density and prevent further fractures.
- **Bisphosphonates:** Medications that slow bone loss in individuals with osteoporosis.

If conservative treatments fail or the fracture is severe, surgery may be necessary, such as kyphoplasty.

## What is Kyphoplasty?

Kyphoplasty is a minimally invasive procedure used to treat vertebral compression fractures caused by osteoporosis, cancer, or trauma. It aims to reduce pain, restore vertebral height, and improve spinal alignment.

**Procedure Overview:** Kyphoplasty is performed under local anesthesia with the patient lying on their stomach. Steps include:

1. **Needle insertion:** A needle is inserted into the fractured vertebra through a small incision, using X-ray guidance for accuracy.

2. **Balloon inflation:** A balloon is inserted through the needle into the vertebra and inflated to restore the vertebra's height and shape, creating a cavity.

3. **Bone cement injection:** Once the vertebra is reshaped, bone cement (polymethylmethacrylate or PMMA) is injected into the cavity, stabilizing the fracture.

4. **Recovery:** The patient is monitored briefly and can usually go home the same day, with minimal recovery time. Many patients experience significant pain relief within days.

## Benefits of Kyphoplasty

- **Pain relief:** Kyphoplasty can provide near-immediate relief for many patients experiencing chronic back pain due to compression fractures.
- **Restoration of vertebral height:** The procedure may restore the vertebra's height and improve spinal alignment, reducing deformity.
- **Minimally invasive:** With small incisions, kyphoplasty is less invasive than traditional surgery, leading to faster recovery and fewer complications.
- **Improved mobility:** Reducing pain and stabilizing the spine helps patients regain mobility and independence.

## Risks and Considerations

Although kyphoplasty is generally safe, it carries some risks, including infection, bleeding, cement leakage, and nerve damage. However, complications are rare, and the procedure is usually well-tolerated.

**Conclusion:** Compression fractures are common, especially in individuals with weakened bones from osteoporosis or other conditions. Kyphoplasty offers an effective, minimally invasive treatment for those whose symptoms do not improve with conservative measures. While it may not be suitable for everyone, kyphoplasty can provide significant pain relief and improved quality of life for patients with severe compression fractures.



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# Heart Health Awareness Month: The Link Between Cardiovascular Health and Hearing Loss

By Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D

**F**ebruary is Heart Health Awareness Month, a time dedicated to highlighting the importance of cardiovascular health. While many focus on diet, exercise, and blood pressure management, recent research suggests that heart health also plays a crucial role in hearing. The connection between cardiovascular conditions and hearing loss is becoming clearer, and understanding this relationship is vital for overall well-being.

## The Cardiovascular-Hearing Connection

The cardiovascular system, including the heart and blood vessels, is responsible for delivering oxygen and nutrients throughout the body, including to the inner ear. The cochlea, the part of the ear that processes sound, relies on a consistent blood supply to function. When cardiovascular health deteriorates, the blood flow to the inner ear can be compromised, leading to hearing loss.

Several cardiovascular conditions, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol, are linked to an increased risk of hearing loss. A study published in *The Journal of the American College of Cardiology* found that people with heart disease, particularly those with high blood pressure, are more likely to experience hearing loss. This is thought to be due to the damage hypertension causes to blood vessels, including those that supply the cochlea.

## How High Blood Pressure Affects Hearing

High blood pressure, or hypertension, is one of the most common cardiovascular conditions worldwide. It occurs when blood pressure is consistently high, putting strain on the heart and blood vessels. Over time, hypertension can damage the blood vessels, including those that supply the inner ear, which may lead to hearing loss.

The cochlea is highly sensitive to changes in blood flow. When blood vessels narrow due to hypertension, the cochlea can be deprived of essential oxygen and nutrients, resulting in damage to the hair cells responsible for detecting sound. This leads to sensorineural hearing loss, which is typically permanent.

## Cholesterol and Hearing Loss

Cholesterol, particularly high levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or "bad" cholesterol, is another key factor in cardiovascular health that can affect hearing.

High cholesterol levels contribute to plaque buildup in the arteries, which restricts blood flow throughout the body, including the ears.

A study by the *American Heart Association* found that individuals with high cholesterol levels were more likely to develop hearing loss. Researchers suggest that poor circulation, due to plaque buildup, may affect the cochlea's ability to function properly. Additionally, high cholesterol can reduce the elasticity of blood vessels, further hindering circulation to the inner ear.

## Diabetes and Hearing Loss

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects both cardiovascular health and hearing. People with diabetes are more likely to develop cardiovascular diseases, such as high blood pressure and heart disease, which can, in turn, damage the blood vessels in the inner ear.

High blood sugar levels associated with diabetes can damage the blood vessels, including those supplying the cochlea, leading to hearing impairment. Studies show that people with diabetes are twice as likely to experience hearing loss compared to those without the condition. Managing blood sugar levels effectively is crucial in preventing damage to the inner ear and preserving hearing.

## Protecting Your Heart and Ears

Given the link between cardiovascular health and hearing loss, protecting both your heart and hearing is essential. Here are some strategies to maintain optimal health:

**1. Maintain a Heart-Healthy Diet:** Eating a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats can help manage cholesterol and blood pressure. Avoiding excessive salt and processed foods can also reduce cardiovascular risk.

**2. Exercise Regularly:** Regular physical activity improves circulation, lowers blood pressure, and supports heart health. Exercise also helps manage weight, which can reduce the risk of developing diabetes and other cardiovascular conditions.

**3. Control Blood Pressure and Cholesterol:** If you have high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol, work with your healthcare provider to manage these conditions. Medications, along with lifestyle changes, can help protect both your heart and ears.

**4. Monitor Blood Sugar Levels:** If you have diabetes, keeping your blood sugar levels in check is crucial. Proper diabetes management can help prevent damage to the blood vessels in the inner ear.

**5. Get Regular Hearing Checkups:** Regular hearing screenings are essential, especially for those with cardiovascular risk factors. Early detection of hearing loss can help ensure timely intervention and prevent further deterioration.

## Conclusion

Heart Health Awareness Month is a reminder of the importance of cardiovascular health in overall well-being. The connection between heart health and hearing loss is strong, and maintaining a healthy heart is crucial for protecting your hearing. By managing blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels, and getting regular hearing checkups, you can safeguard both your heart and ears, ensuring better health for years to come.

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# Unlocking Your Body's Potential: A COMPLETE GUIDE TO PEPTIDE THERAPY

**P**eptide therapy has emerged as one of the most exciting frontiers in wellness and regenerative medicine. At TheDRIPBaR, we're seeing an increasing number of clients curious about these powerful compounds and how they can optimize health, performance, and longevity. But with so many different peptides available, understanding which one is right for you can feel overwhelming.

## WHAT ARE PEPTIDES?

Peptides are short chains of amino acids that act as signaling molecules in the body. Think of them as tiny messengers that tell your cells what to do. While proteins are long chains of amino acids, peptides are smaller, typically containing between 2 and 50 amino acids. This smaller size allows them to be absorbed more easily and work more efficiently in the body.

Your body naturally produces thousands of peptides, each with specific functions. However, as we age, our natural peptide production declines, which contributes to many signs of aging and decreased vitality. Peptide therapy introduces specific peptides to target particular health goals, essentially giving your body the tools it needs to function optimally.

## POPULAR TYPES OF PEPTIDE THERAPY

- **BPC-157** is one of the most sought-after peptides for healing and recovery. Derived from a protective protein found in the stomach, BPC-157 has shown remarkable potential for accelerating the healing of muscles, tendons, ligaments, and even gut tissue. Athletes and active individuals often turn to BPC-157 to support recovery from injuries and reduce inflammation.

- **CJC-1295 and Ipamorelin** are often used together as growth hormone-releasing peptides. This powerful combination stimulates the body's natural production of growth hormone, which can support fat loss, muscle growth, improved sleep quality, and enhanced recovery. Unlike synthetic growth hormone, these peptides work with your body's natural rhythms, making them a safer alternative for those seeking anti-aging benefits.

- **Thymosin Alpha-1** is an immune-modulating peptide that supports overall immune function. It's particularly valuable for those looking to strengthen their immune

system, manage chronic infections, or support recovery from illness. This peptide helps regulate immune responses and has shown potential in supporting cellular health.

- **AOD-9604** specifically targets fat metabolism without affecting blood sugar levels or tissue growth. Originally developed as an anti-obesity treatment, this peptide fragment stimulates the breakdown of fat cells while inhibiting the formation of new fatty tissue, making it an attractive option for weight management.

- **GHK-Cu (Copper Peptide)** is a powerhouse for anti-aging and skin rejuvenation. This naturally occurring peptide complex supports collagen and elastin production, promotes wound healing, and has potent antioxidant properties. Many clients turn to GHK-Cu for its ability to improve skin texture, reduce fine lines and wrinkles, enhance skin firmness, and promote a more youthful appearance. Beyond cosmetic benefits, it also supports tissue repair and has anti-inflammatory properties throughout the body.

## WHAT'S THE BEST PEPTIDE FOR YOU?

The truth is, there's no single "best" peptide because everyone's needs are different. The optimal peptide therapy depends on your specific health goals, current condition, and individual biology.

If you're recovering from an injury or dealing with chronic pain, BPC-157 might be your best starting point. For those focused on anti-aging and overall vitality, the CJC-1295/Ipamorelin combination often delivers impressive results. If immune support is your priority, Thymosin Alpha-1 could be the answer. And for targeted fat loss, AOD-9604 offers a focused approach.

Many of our TheDRIPBaR clients find that a customized approach combining multiple peptides yields the best results. This is where working with experienced professionals becomes invaluable.

## THE TheDRIPBaR APPROACH

At TheDRIPBaR, we believe peptide therapy should be personalized, not one-size-fits-all. Our trained specialists take time to understand your unique health goals, medical history, and lifestyle before recommending a peptide protocol. We prioritize education, ensuring you understand how your chosen peptides work and what results you can realistically expect.

Safety and quality are paramount. We source only pharmaceutical-grade peptides and provide clear guidance on proper administration, dosing, and what to monitor during your therapy journey.

## MOVING FORWARD WITH PEPTIDE THERAPY

Peptide therapy represents a sophisticated approach to wellness that works with your body's natural processes rather than against them. Whether you're an athlete looking to optimize performance, someone seeking to turn back the clock on aging, or simply wanting to feel your absolute best, peptides offer targeted solutions backed by growing scientific evidence.

Ready to explore which peptide therapy is right for you? Visit TheDRIPBaR to schedule a consultation with our wellness experts and discover how these powerful compounds can help you unlock your body's full potential.

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# PRIORITIZING BRAIN HEALTH: Celebrating Self-Care Month This February

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

**F**ebruary is more than just the month of Valentine's Day and winter's final stretch—it's also Self-Care Month, a dedicated time to focus on your physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we believe that self-care is not a luxury but a fundamental component of maintaining optimal neurological health. This February, we encourage you to make your brain health a priority through intentional self-care practices.

## Understanding the Connection Between Self-Care and Neurological Health

Your brain is your body's command center, controlling everything from your thoughts and emotions to your movement and organ function. When you neglect self-care, you're not just affecting your mood or energy levels—you're potentially impacting your neurological health. Chronic stress, poor sleep, inadequate nutrition, and lack of physical activity can all contribute to neurological issues ranging from headaches and brain fog to more serious conditions.

Research consistently shows that lifestyle factors play a crucial role in brain health. Regular self-care practices can help reduce your risk of cognitive decline, improve mental clarity, enhance mood regulation, and even support recovery from neurological conditions. At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we've witnessed firsthand how patients who prioritize self-care often experience better outcomes and improved quality of life.

## Essential Self-Care Practices for Brain Health

Quality sleep is perhaps the most critical self-care practice for neurological health. During sleep, your brain clears out toxins, consolidates memories, and repairs cellular damage. Adults should aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night. Establish a consistent sleep schedule, create a relaxing bedtime routine, and optimize your sleep environment by keeping your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet.

Physical activity is another cornerstone of neurological self-care. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain, promotes the growth of new brain cells, and releases beneficial chemicals that improve mood and cognitive function. You don't need to run marathons—even 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week can make a significant difference. Whether it's walking, swimming, yoga, or dancing, find activities you enjoy and make them part of your routine.

Nutrition directly impacts brain function. A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, whole grains, and lean proteins supports cognitive health and may help protect against neurodegenerative diseases. Consider incorporating brain-boosting foods like fatty fish, blueberries, nuts, leafy greens, and dark chocolate into your meals. Stay hydrated throughout the day, as even mild dehydration can affect concentration and cognitive performance.

## Mental and Emotional Self-Care

Stress management is vital for neurological wellbeing. Chronic stress can lead to inflammation, hormone imbalances, and structural changes in the brain. This Self-Care Month, explore stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises, or mindfulness practices. Even five minutes of daily meditation can help calm your nervous system and improve brain function.

Social connection is another often-overlooked aspect of self-care. Meaningful relationships and regular social interaction support cognitive health and emotional wellbeing. Make time to connect with friends and family, join community groups, or volunteer for causes you care about. These connections provide mental stimulation and emotional support that benefit your brain.

Mental stimulation through learning and creativity keeps your brain active and resilient. Challenge yourself with puzzles, learn a new language or instrument, read diverse materials, or engage in creative hobbies. These activities build cognitive reserve, which may help protect against age-related cognitive decline.

## Making Self-Care a Sustainable Practice

The key to effective self-care is consistency rather than perfection. Start small by choosing one or two practices that resonate with you and build from there. Set realistic goals, track your progress, and be patient with yourself as you develop new habits. Remember that self-care isn't selfish—it's essential maintenance that allows you to function at your best and care for others more effectively.

At Advanced Neurology Specialists, we're committed to supporting your neurological health through comprehensive care and education. This Self-Care

Month, we encourage you to take concrete steps toward better brain health. If you're experiencing neurological symptoms or have concerns about your cognitive function, don't hesitate to reach out to our team. Together, we can develop a personalized plan that integrates medical care with self-care practices to optimize your neurological wellbeing.

This February, make a commitment to yourself. Your brain works hard for you every single day—give it the care and attention it deserves. The investment you make in self-care today will pay dividends in your health, happiness, and quality of life for years to come.

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

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

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

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



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# BACK PAIN BREAKTHROUGH: Two Technologies, One Powerful Result

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

**C**hronic back pain is one of the most common and debilitating conditions affecting adults in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 40% of adults report experiencing back pain within the past three months. While medications and surgery are often considered the next step when conservative care fails, advanced therapies are proving to be a game changer. Dr. Michael Shaffer has brought two of the most effective non-invasive treatments, non-surgical spinal decompression with the Hill DT table and the M7 MLS Therapy Laser—together to achieve optimal results.

This combination targets both the mechanical causes of spinal pain and the inflammatory response that keeps patients locked in cycles of discomfort, stiffness, and reduced function.

## Understanding Spinal Decompression Therapy

Non-surgical spinal decompression is designed to relieve pressure on the spine's intervertebral discs and nerves. Patients lie comfortably on a table where the spine is gently stretched and relaxed in computerized, controlled cycles. This process creates negative pressure within the discs, encouraging retraction of herniated or bulging material and promoting the influx of oxygen and nutrients into the disc space. Each session on the Hill DT table is considered a targeted therapeutic medical event.



Decompression therapy is especially beneficial for conditions such as:

- Herniated or bulging discs
- Degenerative disc disease
- Sciatica
- Spinal stenosis
- Facet joint syndrome
- Chronic neck or low back pain

Clinical research supports its effectiveness. In a study published in the *American Journal of Pain Management*, 71% of patients treated with spinal decompression reported significant pain reduction, and many were able to avoid surgical intervention altogether.

## The Role of MLS Laser Therapy

While spinal decompression addresses the structural cause of spinal pain, the M7 MLS Laser Therapy system targets inflammation and tissue damage at the cellular level. MLS stands for Multiwave Locked System, a patented, Class IV, dual-wavelength laser technology that delivers synchronized light energy to reduce inflammation, relieve pain, and accelerate healing.

This therapy works by stimulating cellular activity in damaged tissues—a process known as photobiomodulation. The M7 robotically scans the treatment area and delivers consistent, calibrated energy across joints, muscles, ligaments, and nerve tissue. It is FDA-cleared and widely used in both orthopedic and neurological applications.

Key benefits of MLS Laser Therapy include:

- Reduction of inflammation and edema
- Improved circulation and oxygenation
- Accelerated tissue repair
- Decreased nerve sensitivity
- No side effects or recovery downtime

In a randomized, double-blind clinical study, MLS laser therapy showed a greater than 80% success rate in reducing chronic musculoskeletal pain, particularly in patients with arthritis, neuropathy, and spinal disc injuries.

## Why These Two Therapies Work Better Together

Pain in the spine is rarely due to a single factor. It often involves disc dysfunction, nerve compression, inflammation, and muscular imbalance, all of which need to be addressed for lasting relief. By combining non-surgical spinal decompression with MLS laser therapy, patients benefit from a dual-action approach:



- Spinal decompression restores mechanical balance, reduces pressure on nerves, and promotes disc healing.
- Laser therapy reduces inflammation, calms nerve activity, and accelerates tissue regeneration at the cellular level.

Together, these therapies complement each other to treat both the cause and the symptoms of pain. In clinical practice, patients often experience faster relief, fewer flare-ups, and improved mobility when these modalities are used in conjunction.

## Who Is a Good Candidate?

Patients with the following conditions are often excellent candidates for combined decompression and laser therapy:

- Chronic low back or neck pain not responding to conventional treatment
- Sciatica or radiating nerve pain from disc bulges
- Post-surgical spine patients with lingering pain
- Degenerative joint or disc disease
- Athletes recovering from spine-related injuries

These therapies are particularly beneficial for patients who want to avoid opioids, steroid injections, or surgery, and are looking for a safe, evidence-based alternative to manage their condition.

## When to Seek Help

If you're living with persistent back pain, tingling, numbness, or reduced mobility, it's time to explore advanced non-surgical solutions. Left untreated, spinal conditions can worsen over time, potentially leading to permanent nerve damage or loss of function. Early intervention with spinal decompression and laser therapy can prevent further deterioration and restore quality of life.

Dr. Michael Shaffer's goal is to identify the root cause of your pain and provide effective, personalized care using today's most advanced technologies. Call today to schedule your consultation and discover how this powerful combination of therapies can help you move and feel better—without surgery or medication.

## Personalized Care at Michael C. Shaffer, D.C., P.A.

Dr. Michael Shaffer has been serving Collier County since 1981, specializing in spinal care, musculoskeletal conditions, and rehabilitation. Each patient receives a tailored treatment plan based on a comprehensive assessment, ensuring optimal outcomes.

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

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# What is Rhinitis?

## An In-Depth Look at This Common Nasal Condition

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

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

### The Hallmark Symptoms

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

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

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

### Two Main Types

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

### Allergic Rhinitis: The Usual Culprit

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

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

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

### The Diagnostic Process

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

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

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

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

### Treating the Nuisance

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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



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



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# THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SLEEP, TESTOSTERONE AND SEXUAL HEALTH

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

**S**leep is a fundamental aspect of our overall health, and its impact on various bodily functions is profound. One less reported area where sleep plays a crucial role is in the regulation of libido and testosterone levels. In this month's article I will try to summarize the relationship between sleep, low libido, and testosterone levels in an effort to emphasize the importance of maintaining good sleep for optimal sexual health and hormonal balance.

Testosterone is a hormone primarily produced in the testes in men and in smaller amounts in the ovaries in women. It plays a vital role in various bodily functions, including muscle mass, bone density, mood regulation, and sexual desire. In men, testosterone levels typically peak during adolescence and early adulthood, gradually declining with age. In women, testosterone levels are significantly lower but still essential for maintaining libido and overall health.

Testosterone production follows a circadian rhythm, with levels rising during sleep and peaking during the early morning hours. This natural cycle is crucial for maintaining healthy testosterone levels. Research has shown that insufficient sleep or poor sleep quality can disrupt this cycle. For instance, studies have found that men who get less than 7 hours of sleep per night may experience a drop in testosterone levels, negatively affecting their energy levels, mood, and libido.

Libido, or sexual desire, is influenced by various factors, including hormonal balance, psychological state, and overall health. Testosterone is a key hormone in regulating libido, and its levels are closely linked to sleep quality. The disruption on testosterone production caused by poor sleep could lead to a decrease in sexual desire. Additionally, sleep deprivation can increase levels of cortisol, the body's primary stress hormone, which can further suppress libido.

## The Bidirectional Relationship

The relationship between sleep and testosterone is bidirectional. While poor sleep can lead to lower testosterone levels, low testosterone can also contribute to sleep disturbances. For example, low testosterone levels have been associated with increased sleep fragmentation and reduced sleep efficiency. This creates a vicious cycle where poor sleep leads to lower testosterone, which in turn exacerbates sleep problems.



## The Connection Between Sleep Apnea and Low Testosterone

Sleep Apnea is a common sleep disorder defined by frequent stopping breathing episodes during sleep. Sleep apnea can significantly impact testosterone production by affecting your circadian rhythm. It results in frequent unconscious awakenings, preventing the body from entering the deeper stages of sleep crucial for hormone production. The repeated episodes of oxygen deprivation (hypoxia) associated with sleep apnea can also reduce testosterone production through oxidative stress and inflammation, directly impacting the testes' function and the hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis.

Additionally, low testosterone can exacerbate sleep apnea symptoms. Individuals with low testosterone often experience fatigue and weaker respiratory muscles, contributing to increased likelihood and severity of sleep apnea episodes. This creates a vicious cycle where one condition worsens the other, making management challenging.

## The Role of Testosterone Replacement Therapy

Testosterone Replacement Therapy (TRT) is frequently prescribed to men with low testosterone levels to alleviate symptoms like decreased libido, fatigue, and muscle mass loss. However, TRT's might exacerbate or even induce sleep apnea in susceptible individuals. One study found that healthy men experienced increased hypoxemia (low blood oxygen levels) and disrupted sleep breathing patterns after receiving high-dose testosterone injections. Similarly, men with hypogonadism (low testosterone) saw a rise in disordered breathing events when on TRT.

The underlying mechanisms are not entirely clear, but it is believed that testosterone might affect the body's respiratory control centers, leading to compromised airway stability during sleep. Thus, for individuals already suffering from sleep apnea, TRT could worsen their condition.

## Conclusion

The relationship between sleep, low libido, and testosterone is complex and multifaceted. Adequate sleep is essential for maintaining healthy testosterone levels, which in turn supports libido and overall sexual health.

Sleep apnea can reduce testosterone production by disrupting sleep and causing oxidative stress, while low testosterone can worsen sleep apnea symptoms by weakening respiratory muscles.

While TRT can help alleviate symptoms of low testosterone, it can also exacerbate sleep apnea in susceptible individuals. Therefore, a careful and individualized approach to TRT is necessary, particularly for those at risk or already suffering from sleep apnea. Consulting with healthcare professionals and considering both conditions together can lead to tailored treatments, improving overall health outcomes and quality of life.

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# VAGINAL REJUVENATION STEM CELL THERAPY: EMERGING ADVANCES IN REGENERATIVE GYNECOLOGY

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

**S**tem cell therapy for vaginal rejuvenation represents a groundbreaking advancement in regenerative medicine, offering new possibilities for women experiencing various gynecological concerns. This innovative treatment approach harnesses the regenerative potential of stem cells to address both functional and aesthetic concerns related to vaginal health. As the field of regenerative gynecology continues to evolve, understanding the science, applications, and implications of this therapy becomes increasingly important.

The emergence of stem cell therapy in vaginal rejuvenation stems from the remarkable ability of these cells to promote tissue regeneration and cellular repair. Stem cells are undifferentiated cells capable of developing into various specialized cell types, making them valuable tools in regenerative medicine. In the context of vaginal rejuvenation, these cells can potentially regenerate vaginal tissue, enhance blood flow, and improve overall vaginal health.

The primary sources of stem cells used in vaginal rejuvenation typically include autologous adult stem cells, particularly those derived from adipose tissue or bone marrow. These cells are harvested from the patient's own body, minimizing the risk of rejection or adverse reactions. The harvested cells undergo processing and concentration before being carefully reintroduced into targeted areas of the vaginal tissue.

The therapeutic mechanisms of stem cell therapy in vaginal rejuvenation operate through multiple pathways. When introduced into the vaginal tissue, stem cells release growth factors and cytokines that stimulate local tissue repair and regeneration. They promote angiogenesis (formation of new blood vessels), enhance collagen production, and support the development of healthy vaginal epithelium. This comprehensive approach addresses various aspects of vaginal health simultaneously.

Clinical applications of vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy extend to several conditions and concerns. Women experiencing vaginal atrophy, particularly post-menopausal women, may benefit from this treatment as it can help restore vaginal

thickness and improve natural lubrication. The therapy has shown promise in addressing stress urinary incontinence by strengthening the supporting tissues of the urethral sphincter. Additionally, women who have experienced childbirth-related trauma or age-related changes may find relief through this regenerative approach.

The procedure typically involves several steps, beginning with a thorough medical evaluation to determine candidacy. The stem cell harvesting process is performed under local anesthesia, followed by cell processing in a specialized laboratory. The prepared stem cells are then administered through precise injections into specific areas of the vaginal tissue. The entire procedure usually takes a few hours, and patients can typically return to their regular activities within a few days.

Research findings regarding the effectiveness of vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy have been encouraging, though long-term studies are still ongoing. Early clinical trials have reported improvements in vaginal tissue quality, enhanced natural lubrication, and better sexual function in treated patients. Some studies have also noted positive outcomes in treating stress urinary incontinence and vaginal atrophy symptoms.

Safety considerations remain paramount in the implementation of this therapy. While the use of autologous stem cells minimizes many risks, potential complications can include temporary discomfort, mild swelling, or infection at the injection sites. Proper patient screening, sterile technique, and adherence to established protocols are essential for optimal outcomes and safety.

The future of vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy appears promising, with ongoing research exploring new applications and refinements to existing techniques. Scientists are investigating the potential use of different stem cell sources and delivery methods to enhance treatment effectiveness. Additionally, combination therapies incorporating stem cells with other regenerative treatments are being studied to potentially optimize outcomes.

Despite the encouraging developments, it's important to note that vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy is still considered an emerging treatment option. Patients considering this therapy should consult with qualified healthcare providers who can provide detailed information about the procedure, expected outcomes, and potential risks. The decision to undergo treatment should be based on individual circumstances, medical history, and realistic expectations.

As research continues and technology advances, vaginal rejuvenation stem cell therapy may become an increasingly important option in regenerative gynecology. This innovative approach offers hope for women seeking natural, long-lasting solutions for various gynecological concerns. However, continued scientific investigation and clinical trials remain essential to fully understand the long-term implications and optimize treatment protocols for maximum benefit and safety.

## KATHY VERDES APRN, A-GNP-C

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

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# Supporting Safety and Specialized Lymphedema Care Across Southwest Florida

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

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

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

## Fall Prevention & Neurological Rehabilitation:

### Promoting Safety in the Home

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

Our fall-prevention services include:

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

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

## Neurological Rehabilitation Integrated Into Fall Prevention

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

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

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

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

## Specialized Lymphedema Management Through Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT)

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

CDT includes:

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

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

## Compression Garment Support, Simplified Through our DME Services

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

Patients receive hands-on support with:

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

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

## Clinician-Led, Patient-Focused Therapy Across Southwest Florida

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

## Helping Patients Stay Safe, Supported, and Independent

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

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

## We're Growing!

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



Jim Ferrara



Lexie Lundquist

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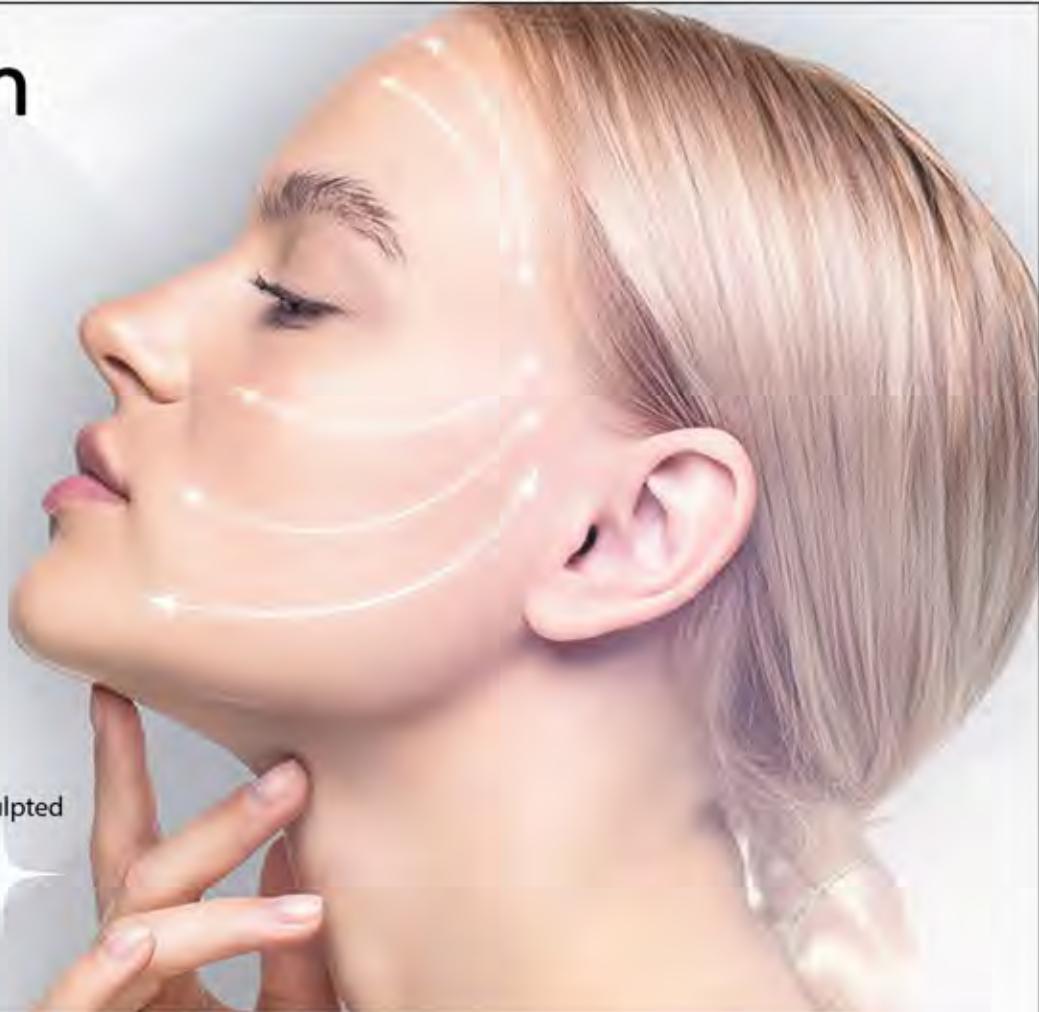
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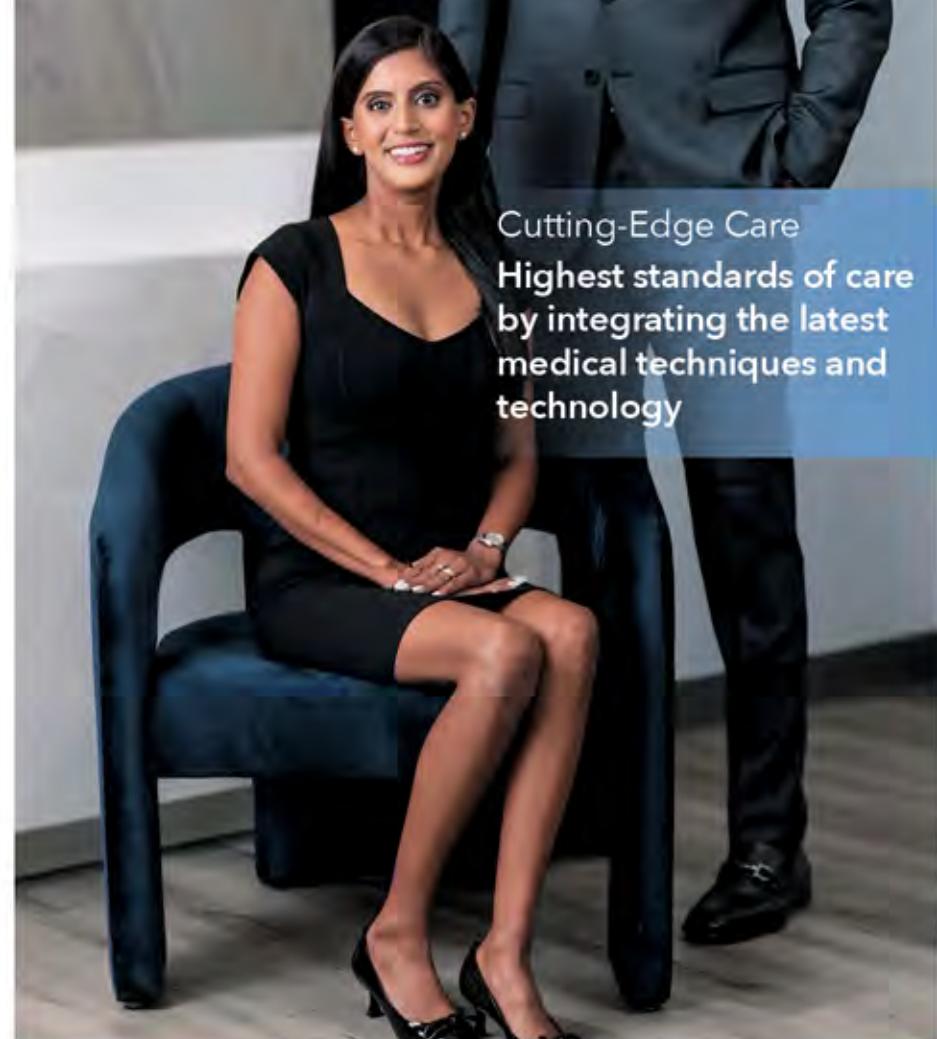
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# PROPOSED LEGISLATION COULD CHANGE THE LANDSCAPE OF FLORIDA HOA LAW

By Rachel Lane

HB 657 was introduced in the Florida Legislature on December 4, 2025, and if passed, could bring major changes to Homeowner Association's (HOA's) across the state. HOA's are subject to state statutory requirements and are self-governed by community members. Florida has the most HOA's in the country, with almost half of Floridians living in a neighborhood that is governed by an HOA. HOA's are often criticized for strict rules and sometimes mismanagement but are also praised for enhancing property values and maintaining high community standards.

## Removal of Pre-Suit Requirements

Under current law, when a homeowner and an HOA are engaging in a dispute, they are often required to complete pre-suit mediation to attempt to resolve the dispute. HB 657 proposes removing the pre-suit mediation requirement, which could expedite lawsuits against HOAs.

**Creation of Community Association Court Programs**  
HB 657 also creates "community association court programs" in each judicial circuit to address disputes that arise between community associations and members of such community associations. A circuit court may create and administer this program, while chief judges are tasked with designating at least one judge to preside over the program. The program allows the designated judge(s) to have power over disputes related to termination or enforcement of programs under Chapter 17, the Condominium Act, Chapter 719, the Cooperative Act, and Chapter 720, the Homeowners' Association Act.

**HOA Members could Petition to Dissolve their HOA**  
Arguably the biggest change HB 657 proposes is giving HOA members the power to dissolve their HOA. The Florida Legislature reasoned that if the HOA no longer serves the homeowners or community's interests, then public policy supports providing homeowners with a clear legal path to dissolve the HOA. Further, HB 657 aligns with Florida's longstanding protection of private property rights by protecting against HOAs that impair productive uses of properties, preserving property values and local property tax bases, and protecting homestead property rights.



If a homeowner wants to terminate an HOA, they must be a member of the HOA and provide the Board of Administration ("Board") a petition for a "plan of termination" that is signed by at least 20% of the voting members of the HOA. The Board has 60 days after the receipt of the petition to hold a meeting of the members. Further, the Board must provide members notice of the meeting that includes key information such as where the meeting will occur, a copy of the proposed plan of dissolution, and an explanation of how common areas and assets will be managed and transferred. The plan of termination must then be approved by at least two-thirds of the total voting interests of the HOA. However, HB 657 protects HOAs from repetitive or frivolous attempts to dissolve the HOA. For instance, if the vote fails, another plan of termination cannot be considered for at least 18 months after the date of rejection.

If the plan of termination is approved, the Board must submit the plan to a community association court program in the judicial circuit where the HOA is located, or if that program does not yet exist, a court of competent jurisdiction. Courts are required to authorize the plan of termination if the plan meets all the procedural requirements. After the plan of termination is authorized, it must be recorded in the county where the HOA is located, and the title to the HOA vests in a termination trustee. By default, the Board serves as trustee, unless another person is appointed as the trustee in the plan of termination. After the plan of termination is approved, the Board still has the power to conclude the HOA's affairs. Assets remaining after payment of all debts are equally distributed amongst members or as otherwise set out in the plan of termination.

HB 657 also provides homeowners with an alternative pathway to dissolve the HOA if the Board is not complying with the statutory requirements. For example, if the HOA fails to hold a meeting after receiving the plan of termination, an HOA member may file a petition with the community association court program or a court of competent jurisdiction. The Court will then verify that all procedural and statutory voting requirements were met and then order the Department of State to dissolve the HOA and appoint a receiver to manage distribution of assets and resolution of liabilities.

If passed, HB 657 could drastically change the landscape of Florida HOA law. HB 657 could ease the burdens of litigating against HOA's with the elimination of pre-suit mediation requirements and the establishment of community association court programs. Further, providing HOA members with a path to dissolve HOA's entirely could change not only HOA law, but drastically impact real property ownership across the state. If passed, HB 657 could go into effect as early as July 1, 2026.



## About the Author

Rachel Lane joined WPL in May 2025 as a law clerk. Rachel is a 3L at Wake Forest Law School in North Carolina. She serves as a Project Coordinator for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Project and Online Editor on the Journal of Law and Policy. Prior to law school, Rachel earned a B.S. in Criminology/Criminal Justice, with minors in Law and Business from the University of Tampa.



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

By Dr. Waldo Amadeo

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

But newer research shows something different AND more hopeful.

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

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

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

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

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

This is why people can say:

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

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

## What Hurts the Brain's Communication System?

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

### 1. Long-term stress

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

### 2. Inflammation

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

### 3. Trauma or emotional overwhelm

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

### 4. Sleep problems

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

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

### How We Support Better Communication in the Brain

The encouraging part is that the brain is remarkably adaptable. It can retrain itself when given the right stimulation.

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

#### 1. Neuromodulation (ExoMind TMS)

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

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

People often report:

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

#### 2. Nervous System Calming (Rezzimax)

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

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

### 3. Simple sensory exercises

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

### 4. Root-cause functional medicine

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

### Why This Matters for Mental Health

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

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

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

**Your brain can change — even in adulthood.**

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

### About the Author

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

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



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# Understanding Polycystic Kidney Disease

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

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

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

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

**The primary symptoms of PKD are as follows:**

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

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

## PKD Treatment

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

## How Can the Progression of Kidney Disease Be Delayed?

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

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

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## Chronic Kidney Disease Program

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

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

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

## Services Provided

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

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

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

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# Shoulder Injuries and Your Treatment Options

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

**D**riving along the beach, nearby parks or in many communities, you'll notice that people of all ages are living active lifestyles. Here in Florida, we have gorgeous weather throughout the entire year, which allows for more activities like jogging, tennis, pickleball, kayaking, pushing grandchildren on the swing, and the list goes on and on; but with all of this healthy activity, many individuals are more prone to injury and wear and tear.

One of the most common injury sites is the shoulder. The shoulder is a combination of bones, joints, ligaments, tendons, and muscles that provide an extensive range of motion in common everyday tasks, as well as in advanced athletic performance. Whether you're using a walker, picking up a heavy grocery bag, or driving the ball 200 yards, an optimal range of motion is key to healthy living. However, many times shoulder pain is due to advanced arthritis or degenerative joint disease. If you have tried pain medications, alternative methods, physical therapy and are still experiencing difficulty with range-of-motion or impingements and discomfort; it may be time to speak to your orthopedic surgeon about shoulder replacement surgery, also known as shoulder arthroplasty.

Most tears of the rotator cuff occur slowly over time as the tissue wears out, and they commonly occur in those 50 years and older. Any force strong enough to tear tendons also damages and weakens

the surrounding ligaments. Shoulder pain is multifactorial, and rotator cuff results in instability, frozen shoulder, and severe discomfort. Many rotator cuff tears can be treated nonoperatively. However, painful tears and tears that interfere with shoulder function should be treated with surgical repair.

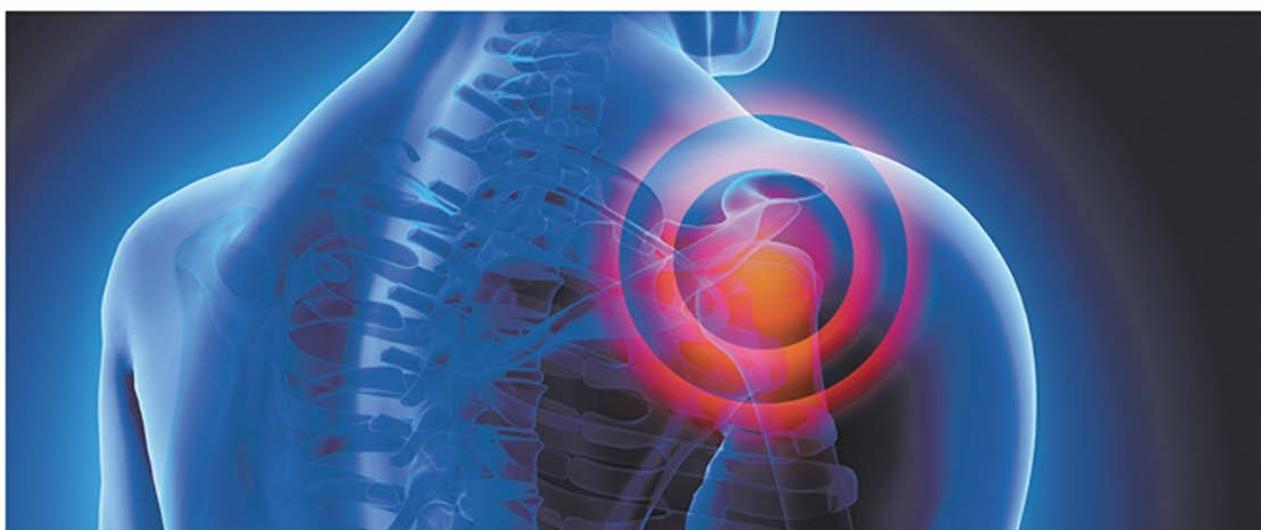
An MRI, and an evaluation of the overall shoulder stability, which is essential if the individual wants to return to their normal activities, is determined, and the best option for that specific patient is planned out, including rehab and physical therapy.

For full tears of the rotator cuff, surgery is almost always necessary, and this can be done through a standard incision or by arthroscopy. If the person can use their arm with some mobility, the tear may be partial and, in that case, arthroscopic repair may suffice.

## How is arthroscopic surgery performed?

Your surgeon begins the procedure by inserting the arthroscope through a small incision made near the treatment area. A sterile liquid is used to help open up the area, making it easier to see the joint.

Your surgeon then uses specialized miniature instruments to cut, shave, and apply stitches to the affected area. Additional incisions may be required to insert the surgical instruments. Once the joint has been treated, the incisions are bandaged, and you're off to recovery.



## Recovery

After surgery, the initial recovery time usually takes about six weeks as the tendon heals back to bone. Full recovery can take a few months up to a year. Many patients report feeling no pain, and also having an increased range-of-motion very soon after surgery. Your surgeon will also provide you with an exercise and stretching program, along with physical therapy for an allotted period of time.

Although arthroscopic surgery can be used to treat any joint in the body, it's most commonly performed on joints in the knee, shoulder, elbow, ankle, hip, and wrist. If arthritis develops in a shoulder joint, and after conservative treatment options such as physical therapy, oral medications and injections fail, shoulder replacement is a successful option.

## Shoulder Replacement Surgery

During a traditional shoulder replacement procedure, the surgeon will remove part of the top of the humerus bone, which is located in the joint of the shoulder. The surgery consists of reshaping the shoulder joint and placing a metal stem (a few inches long) into the shaft of the humerus bone. A metal or plastic plate is then attached to the glenoid socket. These two connected devices will then take the place of the "ball and socket" in the upper shoulder area. Over time, the new joint replacement will allow the shoulder to move more freely, and it will substantially alleviate the pain that the individual was accustomed to on a daily basis. This procedure is for patients with normal rotator cuff tendons.

There are several types of shoulder replacements. If you need one you may be a candidate for a resurfacing type replacement.

Finally, if you wear out your rotator cuff muscles and tendons, and also develop arthritis, you would be a candidate for a reverse total shoulder replacement.

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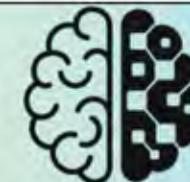


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# BEYOND BUBBLE BATHS, SPA DAYS:

## True Self-Care May Require a Deeper Approach

By Rick Weber

**R**ebecca 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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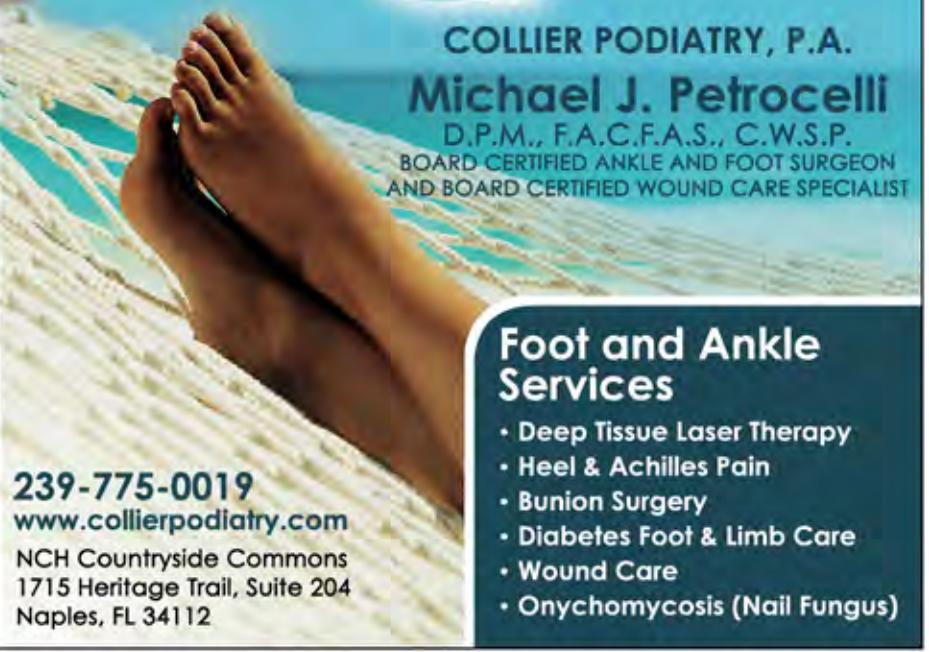
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# INTEGRATIVE / NATUROPATHIC VIEW OF BAHI THERAPY & RELATED MODALITIES FOR TBI

## Brain Rejuvenation Clinic of Naples

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

### 1. Molecular Hydrogen Inhalation

#### How it works:

Hydrogen (H<sub>2</sub>) is a selective antioxidant that neutralizes damaging free radicals and reduces neuroinflammation. It easily crosses the blood-brain barrier. Animal TBI studies show hydrogen decreases brain edema, protects neurons, and reduces microglial (Central Nervous System Immune cells) activation to reduce inflammation.

#### Potential benefits:

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

### 2. Sonic Wave / Vibration Therapy

#### How it works:

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

#### Potential benefits:

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

### 3. Photobiomodulation (Red/NIR Light Therapy)

#### How it works:

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

#### Potential benefits:

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

### 4. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)

#### How it works:

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

#### Potential benefits:

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

### 5. PEMF Therapy & Grounding

#### PEMF:

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

#### Grounding/Earthing:

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

#### Potential benefits:

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

### 6. WAVi Brain Scanning

#### How it works:

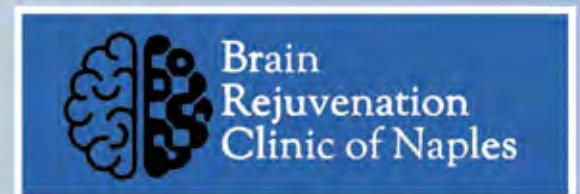
WAVi uses EEG-based metrics to assess brainwave activity, cognitive processing speed (P300), and connectivity. It helps personalize treatment and monitor improvements over time.

#### Benefits:

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

#### Overall Synergy

BAHI therapy combines therapies for oxygenation (HBOT), antioxidant/anti-inflammatory support (H<sub>2</sub>), mitochondrial repair (PBM), neuromodulation (PEMF, Ultrasonic Vibration), and objective tracking using the WAVi device. This multidimensional approach targets the major mechanisms of TBI and supports natural neuro-restoration without toxicity.



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# OPTIMIZING YOUR THYROID TO SUPPORT YOUR SEX HORMONES: EXPLORING THEIR CONNECTIONS

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

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Just like the post office workers chatting in between runs, the chemical messengers in your body—hormones—also influence each other. They're not distinct entities, and while each type of hormone may have its own list of specific tasks, its levels can affect other hormones in your body and then their ability to carry out their tasks.

Thyroid hormones and sex hormones are two well-known types of hormones, and they may have a greater influence on each other than you think. In fact, if you're seeing challenges associated with low or high levels of sex hormones, it may be due to your thyroid hormone levels.

## How Thyroid Function Relates to Sex Hormones

Research has shown that hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism (producing too little or too much thyroid hormones, respectively) have been associated with sex hormone concentrations and, more specifically, sexual dysfunction.

The reason for this connection has to do with the interrelationship between thyroid hormones and sex hormones. Specifically, thyroid hormones regulate the bioavailability of sex hormones, so if there is thyroid dysfunction, there may be an imbalance in the concentrations of bioavailable sex hormones, leading to ovulatory or erectile dysfunction. For women, this results in menstrual irregularities or menopause, while for men, it can lead to difficulty getting and maintaining an erection.

The connection exists in the opposite manner, as well. Estrogen therapy has been shown to increase the need for thyroid hormone, and this is because estrogen increases the production of thyroid-binding globulin in the liver, which causes more thyroid hormones to bind, reducing their availability and leading to symptoms of hypothyroidism.

Progesterone can also influence thyroid levels. Namely, it influences thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) levels, with studies showing that it can decrease TSH levels and increase FreeT4 levels.

As for how thyroid problems may manifest in your sex life, there are a few pathways.



First, low thyroid levels can lower vaginal lubrication, making sex uncomfortable and unsatisfying. Thyroid issues can also lower testosterone levels, lowering libido in those of either gender. Hyper- and hypothyroidism can also contribute to fatigue and depression, both of which can further lower your sex drive.

Issues with the thyroid can also affect how long it takes a man to ejaculate. Hyperthyroidism can cause premature ejaculation, while hypothyroidism can result in delayed ejaculation.

Knowing these influences, thyroid hormone issues can lead to difficulty with fertility, whether because you or your partner lack a desire to be intimate or cannot ejaculate. Issues with the thyroid can also cause irregularities in a woman's menstrual cycle, which can further cause issues with fertility.

In order to maintain optimal levels of your sexual hormones, one area to monitor is your thyroid hormone levels.

## How to Optimize Thyroid Function

Hormone levels require maintenance in an optimal range in order to communicate throughout the body as needed. If your thyroid is producing too much or too little hormone, it can manifest in your metabolism, but it can also affect your sex hormones, causing issues that extend beyond the thyroid's area of expertise.

In order to support your sex hormones, it's important to optimize thyroid function.

## Fuel Up

Within the body is the diet-gut-thyroid axis, which makes it so that nutrition and thyroid function are closely linked. As such, the foods that you eat can

influence your gut, which then impacts your thyroid as a result of immunological regulation and nutrient absorption. If your nutritional profile is imbalanced, thyroid dysfunction can occur.

Knowing this, it's important to eat a balanced diet that is rich in thyroid-boosting nutrients, such as:

- Iodine
- Magnesium
- Selenium
- Copper
- Zinc
- Vitamin B12
- Iron
- Vitamin A

These nutrients influence thyroid hormone synthesis and regulation—if they're lacking in your diet, your body may not be able to keep up its thyroid hormone levels. However, it's also important that you don't consume too much, as this can also cause issues. If you're ever curious about what nutrition to focus on, reach out to a specialist for personalized guidance.

Besides upping your intake of these key nutrients, you can also be more mindful of the foods you avoid. Namely, a higher consumption of ultra-processed foods has been associated with a higher risk of hyperthyroidism. To promote your thyroid's health, try to avoid ultra-processed foods such as packaged snacks, cereal, candy, and soda.

## Exercise Regularly

There are numerous benefits to exercising regularly, even for your thyroid. Specifically, for those whose thyroid overproduces, daily exercise may help to lower thyroid hormone levels.

Other studies have found that exercising at your maximum capacity can help raise levels of T4, fT4, and TSH. One study even found that for women with hypothyroidism, aerobic training, resistance training, and a combination of both all helped to improve T4 levels.

These studies show that your exercise type and frequency can influence how much thyroid hormone is circulating; depending on whether your thyroid is over- or under-producing, you can modify your workout schedule to support your thyroid's production, using exercise to give it a boost without overdoing it.

Beyond the direct effects of exercising, its indirect effects, such as managing weight and improving blood sugar control, can help mitigate other qualities that may negatively affect your thyroid, further optimizing its function.

While exercise can help your thyroid, it's important to ease into it, especially if you suffer from hypothyroidism, which can cause joint pain and fatigue. By starting slow, your body can adjust to the training, lowering your risk of injury.

### Get Some Sleep

Research has shown that your sleep can significantly affect your thyroid function. Specifically, sleep strongly affects your thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH), with both sleep quality and duration playing a role.

Unfortunately, problems with your thyroid can cause sleep problems, with both hyperthyroidism and hypothyroidism linked to difficulty sleeping. Knowing this, it's especially important to prioritize your sleep to break the cycle of imbalanced thyroid function and preserve its health in the days to come.

Some ways that you can improve your sleep include:

- **Find the right temperature.** Hyperthyroidism can cause night sweats, while hypothyroidism can decrease your cold tolerance, so take some time to find your ideal temperature for sleep.
- **Improve your sleep hygiene.** Set your nights up for success by following a consistent sleep/wake schedule, relaxing before bed, and avoiding electronics before bed.
- **Avoid late-night snacks.** Eating something heavy before bed can disrupt your sleep, so try to avoid snacking; if you're hungry, opt for something light.

### Have Your Thyroid Checked Regularly

Sometimes, your thyroid may be sending out warning signals that something is amiss, but they remain undetected or attributed to something else. In order to detect thyroid issues early, it's best to undergo periodic check-ups to monitor its functionality. The sooner issues are detected, the sooner you can intervene to optimize its output.

### Maintain a Healthy Body Weight

There are many advantages to keeping your body weight in a healthy range, especially for your thyroid. Specifically, the more you weigh, the more thyroid hormone your body requires, which creates opportunities for insufficiency and hypothyroidism. To help your thyroid meet your body's needs, focus on maintaining a healthy body weight through a balanced diet and regular exercise.

### When to See a Doctor

Hormone imbalances can often go undetected, causing your body to suffer unnecessarily. As such, it's helpful to know the signs of thyroid hormone imbalance so that you know when to see a doctor.

If you have any of the following symptoms, consider having your thyroid function checked:

- A lump in your thyroid gland or a swollen neck
- Anxiety or depression
- Significant weight changes despite a regular diet and exercise regimen
- Thinning of hair or skin changes
- Tremors or palpitations
- Menstrual cycle irregularities
- Constant fatigue, no matter your sleep habits
- Changes in bowel habits
- Issues with tolerating heat or cold

### Thyroid and Sex Hormones: An Unexpected Connection

While the thyroid and ovaries/testes may seem immensely different, they both produce hormones that can affect each other. Thyroid hormones can influence the bioavailability of sex hormones, creating an abundance or deficit that can then contribute to sexual dysfunction. Similarly, too much sex hormone, such as estrogen, can lower the amount of circulating thyroid hormones, while progesterone increases its availability.

Knowing the interrelationships between thyroid hormones and sex hormones, it's clear that a priority for the optimization of one should be finding balance in the other. Some ways that you can support the health of your thyroid include eating a thyroid-supporting diet, exercising regularly, getting enough sleep, and maintaining a healthy weight. It can also be helpful to have your thyroid checked periodically, especially if you display any symptoms of hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism.

By working on balancing your thyroid hormones, the other areas of your body, including your sex hormones, will have an easier time maintaining balance, as well.

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# Reconsidering Cholesterol:

## New Data on Lipids and Longevity in Older Adults

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

**C**holesterol has been a central focus of cardiovascular risk assessment for decades. In clinical practice, elevated low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) is consistently identified as a major modifiable risk factor for atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), and lipid-lowering therapies have reduced rates of heart attacks and strokes in numerous randomized controlled trials. Standard guidelines generally recommend LDL-C targets based on individual cardiovascular risk. Despite this well-established framework, recent research has prompted a nuanced re-examination of how cholesterol levels relate to longevity, particularly in individuals at very advanced age.

### The Sardinian Longevity Study: Methods and Findings

A new observational study conducted in Sardinia's Blue Zone — a region noted for an unusually high prevalence of individuals living into their 90s and beyond — explored the relationship between cholesterol levels and survival in extremely old adults. The cohort consisted of 168 nonagenarians (81 men and 87 women) with all four grandparents born within the Blue Zone. Baseline fasting lipid profiles were obtained once, including total cholesterol and LDL-C, and survival was tracked prospectively over approximately six years.

A key finding of the study was that individuals with moderate elevations in LDL-C (defined as an LDL-C level  $\geq 130$  mg/dL) demonstrated significantly longer median survival compared with those whose LDL-C was below this threshold. Specifically:

- Median survival for individuals with LDL-C  $\geq 130$  mg/dL was  $3.82 \pm 1.88$  years, compared with  $2.79 \pm 1.56$  years for those with LDL-C below this level ( $p < 0.0001$ ).
- Cox regression analysis revealed that participants with moderate LDL-C elevations had a 40% lower risk of mortality during follow-up than those with lower LDL-C (odds ratio 0.60; 95% confidence interval 0.405–0.891).

These results challenge a simplistic interpretation that *lower cholesterol uniformly confers superior survival in all age groups*.

### Interpreting the "Cholesterol Paradox"

The authors described their observations as a "cholesterol paradox" — substantial LDL-C levels that would ordinarily be considered elevated appeared correlated with greater longevity in this particular population. Several hypotheses have been proposed to explain these findings:

#### 1. Age-Specific Biology.

Cholesterol participates in foundational physiological processes including cell membrane integrity, hormone synthesis, and vitamin D metabolism. In very advanced age, higher LDL-C might reflect preserved metabolic capacity rather than pathology.

#### 2. Reverse Causality.

Lower cholesterol levels in the very old could represent a marker of frailty or underlying illness rather than a risk factor causing adverse outcomes. Some longitudinal data suggest that cholesterol values decline prior to death in older adults, indicating that low cholesterol may sometimes be a consequence — not a cause — of declining health.

#### 3. Heterogeneous Effects Across Age Spectra.

Epidemiological evidence demonstrates that in younger and middle-aged adults, high LDL-C correlates with increased risk of cardiovascular mortality. For example, the Framingham cohort showed a consistent positive association between elevated cholesterol and long-term risk of coronary and total mortality in younger populations.

In contrast, among the oldest old (e.g.,  $\geq 85$  years), some cohort studies have reported no significant association or even inverse associations between lipid levels and all-cause mortality. These observations underscore that the prognostic meaning of cholesterol measurements may differ markedly by age and health context.

### Clinical Context and Caution

While the Sardinian Blue Zone study provides intriguing evidence about cholesterol and survival in advanced age, several key limitations should be acknowledged:

- **Observational design:** The data do not establish causation, and unmeasured factors such as diet, genetic background, lifestyle, and comorbidities could contribute to observed associations.

- **Single measurement:** Cholesterol was measured only at baseline, and lifelong lipid trajectories were not captured.

- **Small sample size:** The cohort was limited to 168 individuals, primarily in a unique geographic and cultural setting, which may restrict generalizability.

Other high-quality research, including large population studies and genetic analyses, generally supports the conclusion that lifelong exposure to high LDL-C is associated with increased risk of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease and reduced lifespan in middle-aged and younger adults. Mendelian randomization studies suggest that genetically elevated LDL-C reduces lifespan across broad populations, and lipid-lowering therapies are known to improve cardiovascular outcomes in many patient groups.

### Integrating Evidence for Practice

Clinicians interpreting cholesterol data should consider:

- **Age and health status:** Risk stratification differs substantially between mid-life individuals and those of advanced age.
- **Comprehensive risk assessment:** Cholesterol values should be interpreted in the context of overall cardiovascular risk, including blood pressure, smoking status, diabetes, and family history.
- **Individualized decision-making:** Shared decision-making between patient and clinician incorporating patient values, risk tolerance, and life expectancy is essential.

Cholesterol remains an important biomarker for cardiovascular risk, but its relationship with longevity is complex and influenced by age, health status, and possibly genetic and environmental factors. Continued research, particularly large longitudinal studies across diverse populations, is necessary to refine our understanding of lipid biology and its implications for longevity.

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# NATURAL RELIEF: Estero Family Chiropractic Addresses Headaches, Anxiety, and Insomnia

In today's fast-paced world, headaches, anxiety, stress, and insomnia have become increasingly common complaints that significantly impact quality of life. While many people turn to medication for relief, Estero Family Chiropractic offers natural, effective alternatives through acupuncture and chiropractic care that address the root causes of these interconnected conditions.

## Understanding the Connection

Headaches, anxiety, stress, and insomnia often form a vicious cycle. Chronic stress triggers tension headaches and anxiety, which in turn disrupts sleep patterns, leading to insomnia. Poor sleep quality then exacerbates stress levels, perpetuating the cycle. The practitioners at Estero Family Chiropractic recognize these connections and provide comprehensive treatment approaches that address multiple symptoms simultaneously.

## Chiropractic Care for Holistic Healing

Chiropractic adjustments focus on correcting spinal misalignments that can contribute to various health issues. When vertebrae are misaligned, they can irritate nerves, restrict blood flow, and create muscle tension throughout the body. At Estero Family Chiropractic, skilled chiropractors perform precise spinal adjustments that help restore proper alignment and nervous system function.

For headache sufferers, particularly those experiencing tension or cervicogenic headaches, chiropractic care can provide remarkable relief. By addressing misalignments in the cervical spine and reducing muscle tension in the neck and shoulders, many patients experience significant reduction in headache frequency and intensity.

The nervous system plays a crucial role in stress response and sleep regulation. Chiropractic adjustments help optimize nervous system function, promoting the body's natural ability to manage stress and maintain healthy sleep-wake cycles. Many patients report feeling more relaxed and sleeping better after beginning regular chiropractic care.

## Acupuncture: Ancient Wisdom for Modern Problems

Acupuncture, an integral component of traditional Chinese medicine, involves inserting thin needles at specific points on the body to restore balance and



promote healing. Estero Family Chiropractic incorporates this timetested therapy to complement chiropractic treatments.

Research supports acupuncture's effectiveness for treating headaches, with studies showing it can reduce both frequency and severity of tension-type and migraine headaches. The treatment works by releasing endorphins, improving blood circulation, and reducing inflammation.

For anxiety and stress, acupuncture helps regulate the body's stress response system. The treatment stimulates the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which naturally improve mood and promote relaxation. Many patients describe feeling notably calmer and more centered following acupuncture sessions.

Acupuncture has shown particular promise for insomnia sufferers. By addressing underlying imbalances and promoting relaxation, acupuncture helps regulate circadian rhythms and improve sleep quality without the side effects associated with sleep medications.

## A Personalized Approach at Estero Family Chiropractic

What sets Estero Family Chiropractic apart is their commitment to individualized care. Understanding that each patient's experience with headaches, anxiety, and insomnia is unique, their practitioners develop customized treatment plans combining chiropractic adjustments and acupuncture based on specific needs and health goals.

## Conclusion

If you're struggling with headaches, anxiety, stress, or insomnia, Estero Family Chiropractic offers natural, drug-free solutions that address the

underlying causes rather than simply masking symptoms. Through the powerful combination of chiropractic care and acupuncture, patients can break free from the cycle of pain, stress, and sleeplessness, reclaiming their health and vitality naturally.



## Expert Care from Qualified Practitioners

Dr. Leila Motta, D.O.M, AP, Dipl. O.M., ADS., a Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine and board-certified licensed acupuncture physician, Dr. Motta graduated from Maryland University of Integrative Health with both Masters and Doctoral degrees in Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine.

Dr. Motta holds Diplomate Certification from the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM), maintains a Florida state license, and is a Nationally Board-Certified Acupuncturist. Her specialization in Neuro Acupuncture through the Neuro Acupuncture Institute adds advanced expertise. She is also a certified Acupuncture Detoxification Specialist.

With over 15 years in healthcare, Dr. Motta specializes in pain management and primary care. Her diverse skillset effectively treats chronic and acute pain, stress including PTSD, headaches, anxiety, digestive issues, and other health concerns. She integrates therapeutic techniques including acupuncture, herbal medicine, cupping therapy, and light therapy.



## Integrative Healthcare Approach

Dr. Larry Wallen brings a holistic chiropractic perspective to comprehensive cancer support. A Midwest native from Illinois, Dr. Wallen's passion for

helping people developed after witnessing his father's unsuccessful surgeries for chronic neck and back pain. His own positive experience with chiropractic care revealed a natural approach to addressing root causes rather than masking symptoms.

Dr. Wallen graduated from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign with a Bachelor's Degree in Integrative Biology before attending Palmer College of Chiropractic. He graduated in 2010 with highest honors including Pi Tau Delta Chiropractic Honor Society membership, Presidential Scholar status, and Summa Cum Laude honors.

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# The Advantages of Home Health Care for Seniors: A Pathway to Comfort, Safety, and Independence

**S**hopping for home health care for a senior is akin to navigating the options when purchasing a new car. Just as selecting a vehicle involves weighing factors like reliability, safety features, and comfort, choosing the right care for your loved one requires careful consideration of various factors. While opting for the cheapest model might seem tempting initially, the adage "you get what you pay for" rings true in both scenarios. Regarding senior care, home health care emerges as the premium option, offering unparalleled benefits that prioritize personalized attention, reduced risk, and enhanced independence. For caregivers and seniors alike, understanding these advantages is pivotal in making informed decisions about their healthcare journey.

## Personalized Care Tailored to Individual Needs

One of the primary advantages of home health care is its ability to provide personalized care tailored to everyone's unique needs. According to a study published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, personalized care plans crafted by home health professionals have been shown to improve health outcomes for seniors significantly. These plans encompass a comprehensive range of services, including skilled nursing, rehabilitation therapies, medication management, and assistance with activities of daily living.

**Reduced Risk of Infections and Hospital Readmissions**  
 Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveal that seniors are at a higher risk of contracting infections during hospital stays, with infections accounting for a significant portion of hospital readmissions among this demographic. Home health care mitigates this risk by providing care in the familiar and controlled environment of one's home, where exposure to infectious agents is minimized. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) found that seniors receiving home health care experienced lower hospital readmission rates than those receiving care in institutional settings.

## Promoting Independence and Quality of Life

Maintaining independence and quality of life is paramount for seniors who wish to age in place or receive extra support while residing in assisted living facilities. Home health care empowers seniors to retain a sense of autonomy and dignity by enabling them to receive care in a setting that aligns with their preferences and lifestyle choices. Research conducted by the National Institute on Aging underscores the



positive impact of home-based care on seniors' emotional well-being, social engagement, and overall satisfaction with their care experience.

## Empowering Caregivers with Support and Respite

Home health care is a vital source of support and respite for family caregivers, alleviating the physical, emotional, and financial burdens associated with caregiving responsibilities. According to the Family Caregiver Alliance, home health services provide professional assistance with caregiving tasks and offer educational resources, counseling, and caregiver support programs. This holistic approach enables caregivers to fulfill their roles more effectively while maintaining their health and well-being.

Home health care benefits for seniors and their caregivers are profound and far-reaching. By embracing this model of care, individuals can experience the comfort of familiar surroundings, reduce the risk of infections and hospital readmissions, and preserve their independence and quality of life. As the demand for home health services continues to increase, caregivers and seniors must explore this option as a viable and compassionate pathway to holistic care and support.

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# SETTING BOUNDARIES TO PROTECT YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

In the intricate tapestry of life, maintaining a delicate balance between personal and external demands is vital for mental well-being. Setting and negotiating personal boundaries is a cornerstone for creating a harmonious and stress-resistant lifestyle. As a mental health provider, Dr. Capiola understands the significance of cultivating boundaries that align with individual needs, values, and priorities. In this guide, Dr. Capiola lists steps to empower you to establish boundaries effectively. From self-reflection to assertive communication and consistent enforcement, these steps guide you toward reduced stressors, improved relationships, and enhanced mental resilience. Let's embark on this transformative exploration of boundary-setting for a healthier and more fulfilling life.

## HOW TO SET BOUNDARIES TO REDUCE STRESSORS IN YOUR LIFE:

**1. Self-Reflection:** Reflect on your needs, values, and limits. Identify areas of your life where you feel overwhelmed or stressed. Consider past situations that have caused discomfort and recognize patterns that indicate a need for boundaries.

**2. Identify Stressors:** Pinpoint specific stressors in your life, whether related to work, relationships, or other aspects. This could include excessive workload, intrusive requests, or emotional demands. Understanding the sources of stress helps in creating targeted boundaries.

**3. Clarify Your Values:** Clearly define your values and priorities. This clarity will guide you in setting boundaries that align with your core beliefs. For example, if family time is a priority, establish boundaries around work hours to ensure dedicated time for your loved ones.

**4. Communicate Effectively:** Practice open and assertive communication when setting boundaries. Clearly express your needs, feelings, and limits to others. Use "I" statements to convey your perspective without sounding accusatory. For instance, say, "I need some quiet time in the evenings to relax and recharge."

**5. Learn to Say No:** Recognize that declining requests or commitments that exceed your capacity is okay. Saying no is not a rejection; it's a healthy acknowledgment of your limitations. Prioritize your well-being by avoiding overcommitment.

**6. Set Clear Limits:** Establish clear and specific boundaries. Whether designating work hours, specifying personal time, or defining expectations in relationships, ensure that your limits are well-defined. This clarity helps others understand and respect your boundaries.

**7. Consistent Enforcement:** Be consistent in enforcing your boundaries. When others witness your commitment to maintaining limits, they are more likely to respect them. Consistency also reinforces the importance of these boundaries for your mental health.

**8. Utilize Technology Mindfully:** Set boundaries around technology use in the digital age. Designate specific times for checking emails or social media and

create technology-free zones in your home. This helps prevent the intrusion of work-related stressors into personal time.

**9. Seek Support:** Share your boundaries with trusted friends, family, or colleagues. A support system that understands and respects your limits can provide reinforcement and encouragement.

**10. Regularly Assess and Adjust:** Periodically assess the effectiveness of your boundaries. Life circumstances may change, and what worked before might need adjustments. Be flexible and willing to modify boundaries to align with evolving priorities.

**11. Prioritize Self-Care:** Make self-care a non-negotiable part of your routine. Whether it's dedicating time for relaxation, exercise, or hobbies, prioritize activities that contribute positively to your mental and emotional well-being.

Remember, setting and negotiating boundaries is an ongoing process that requires self-awareness and commitment. Establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries empowers you to create a more balanced and fulfilling life. Schedule a visit with Dr. Capiola to discuss further how to apply these principles to your situation.

If you or someone you love is exhibiting signs of depression or anxiety, there is help in SWFL. Dr. Richard Capiola, MD, is a board-certified psychiatrist with specialty certifications in addiction and forensic psychiatry and over 31 years of experience in the medical field. He graduated from Tulane University School of Medicine in 1990. Be sure to call ahead with Dr. Capiola to book an appointment.

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## Svetlana Kogan, M.D., IFMCP Functional Concierge Primary Care



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

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

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RICHARD J. CAPIOLA, MD

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## PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTATION SERVICES

Dr. Capiola focuses on the treatment of:

- Depression and Anxiety
- Mood Disorders
- Alcohol use disorders
- Substance abuse
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
- ADHD

Treatment of Adolescents and Adults, Alcohol and Substance abuse, medication assisted therapy with suboxone, and patients needing psychiatric assessments related to the court system.

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



# WHAT IS YOUR PLAN B?

By Bruce Rosenblatt, CDP - Owner/Senior Housing Expert

If aging-in-place at home is your Plan A, what happens if it no longer works? How will you protect the surviving spouse, maintain quality of life, and avoid rushed decisions? Every family needs a Plan B.

Choosing a senior living community is one of the most significant decisions older adults and their families will make. Yet too often, this decision is made reactively—after a fall, during a health crisis, or when caregiving becomes overwhelming.

A proactive approach leads to better outcomes, greater choice, and far less stress. As the saying goes, *it is better to be five years too early than five minutes too late.*

## Why Proactive Planning Matters

Waiting for a crisis severely limits options. Communities may have waitlists, preferred apartments may be unavailable, and hurried decisions can result in poor matches for lifestyle, care needs, or budget. Planning ahead allows you to choose—rather than settle.

Being proactive also preserves independence. Moving by choice instead of necessity gives older adults time to adjust on their own terms, build social connections, and feel confident in their environment. Those who plan early often experience smoother transitions and greater long-term satisfaction.

## Understanding the Continuum of Care

Senior living is not one-size-fits-all. Options include independent living, assisted living, memory care, and continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs), each designed to meet different needs. Exploring these options early helps you understand how needs may evolve and which communities can support those changes without requiring another move.

Important questions to consider include:

- What services are included today, and which might be needed in the future?
- Does the community support aging in place or offer priority access to higher levels of care?
- How are health changes assessed and managed over time?



## Financial and Legal Readiness

A strong Plan B includes financial preparation. Entrance fees, monthly costs, care charges, and future increases should be reviewed well in advance. Early planning allows time to consult financial advisors, review insurance coverage, and fully understand contracts—without pressure.

Legal readiness is just as important. Up-to-date powers of attorney, healthcare directives, and wills ensure your wishes are honored and significantly reduce stress for loved ones.

## Lifestyle Fit Matters, Too

Quality of life extends far beyond medical care. Community culture, dining, activities, wellness programs, and social opportunities all play a vital role. Visiting communities years in advance allows you to observe daily life, attend events, and speak with residents. Ask yourself: *Does this feel like home? Can I see myself thriving here?*

## Create Your Plan

Proactive planning means having a thoughtful, flexible roadmap:

1. **Start Early** – Explore options while you are healthy and independent.
2. **Educate Yourself** – Learn the terminology, care levels, and financial models.
3. **Involve Family** – Early conversations reduce conflict later.
4. **Visit and Revisit** – Communities change, and so do your preferences.
5. **Plan for Change** – Choose options that support future needs, not just today's lifestyle.

6. **Seek the Advice of an Expert** – Consult with a local senior housing advisor who has 'boots on the ground' knowledge and expertise.

## How Senior Housing Solutions Can Help

Creating a strong Plan B requires experience, objectivity, and current knowledge of local senior living options. Senior Housing Solutions helps individuals and families move from uncertainty to clarity—before a crisis occurs. Because it truly is better to be *five years too early than five minutes too late.*

We provide:

- Personalized assessments of needs
- Education without pressure
- Curated backup options
- Financial and timing guidance
- Crisis prevention and crisis support
- Ongoing assistance as needs evolve

A thoughtful Plan B protects your independence, your family, and your peace of mind—no matter what the future holds.

## Ready to start exploring senior living options in Naples?

Contact Senior Housing Solutions today for free, personalized guidance from local experts.



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[www.SeniorHousingSolutions.net](http://www.SeniorHousingSolutions.net)



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# EBOO THERAPY: A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO MYCOTOXIN DETOXIFICATION

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

**A**t Orchidia Medical Group, we understand the devastating impact mycotoxin exposure can have on your health and quality of life. Extracorporeal Blood Oxygenation and Ozonation (EBOO) represents a cutting-edge therapeutic approach that's transforming how we address mycotoxin-related illness, offering hope to those struggling with chronic symptoms that conventional treatments have failed to resolve.

## Understanding the Mycotoxin Challenge

Mycotoxins are toxic compounds produced by certain molds that can accumulate in the body through environmental exposure, contaminated food, or water-damaged buildings. These biotoxins can trigger a cascade of health problems including chronic fatigue, cognitive dysfunction, respiratory issues, and immune system dysregulation. Traditional detoxification methods often fall short because mycotoxins bind tightly to tissues and are difficult to eliminate through conventional means.

## How EBOO Therapy Works

EBOO therapy is an advanced form of ozone therapy that processes your blood outside the body, similar to dialysis but with a different mechanism. During treatment, blood is drawn from one arm, passed through a specialized filtration system where it's exposed to medical-grade ozone and ultraviolet light, then returned to the body through the other arm. This process treats approximately 1.8 to 2 liters of blood per session, making it significantly more comprehensive than traditional ozone therapies.

## Benefits for Mycotoxin Treatment

The primary advantage of EBOO for mycotoxin detoxification lies in its multi-faceted approach. The ozone exposure oxidizes toxins, breaking down mycotoxins and their metabolites into compounds that are easier for the body to eliminate. The therapy also enhances oxygen delivery to tissues, which is crucial because mycotoxin-affected individuals often suffer from cellular hypoxia.

Additionally, EBOO stimulates the immune system, helping it better recognize and eliminate fungal elements and toxins. The treatment improves circulation and cellular metabolism, supporting the body's natural detoxification pathways through the liver, kidneys, and lymphatic system. Many patients report reduced inflammation, a key benefit since mycotoxins are notorious for triggering chronic inflammatory responses.

## Clinical Outcomes and Patient Experience

At Orchidia Medical Group, we've witnessed remarkable improvements in patients undergoing EBOO therapy for mycotoxin illness. Patients frequently report increased energy levels, improved mental clarity, reduced joint and muscle pain, and better sleep quality within just a few sessions. The treatment protocol typically involves multiple sessions over several weeks, customized to each patient's specific needs and toxin burden.

## A Comprehensive Approach to Healing

While EBOO therapy is powerful, we believe in a comprehensive approach to mycotoxin treatment. We combine EBOO with proper mold remediation guidance, nutritional support, binders to capture released toxins, and lifestyle modifications that support ongoing detoxification and prevent re-exposure.

If you've been struggling with symptoms related to mycotoxin exposure and haven't found relief through conventional treatments, EBOO therapy at Orchidia Medical Group may offer the breakthrough you've been seeking. Our experienced medical team is committed to helping you reclaim your health through this innovative, science-backed approach to detoxification and healing.

Contact Orchidia Medical Group today to learn more about whether EBOO therapy is right for your mycotoxin recovery journey.



CALL TODAY!

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# 2026 Open Enrollment is Here!

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Medicare's website is [www.Medicare.gov](http://www.Medicare.gov).

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# 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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# Reversing Osteoporosis Naturally: A Comprehensive Path to Bone Strength and Wellness

By Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

Osteoporosis is no longer a condition to be passively managed—it's a challenge that can be actively confronted and overcome through innovative, holistic approaches. At Strength Lab Plus, we've developed a groundbreaking strategy that empowers individuals to reclaim their bone health naturally, without relying solely on pharmaceutical interventions.

## Understanding Bone Health Beyond Traditional Methods

Conventional approaches to osteoporosis have often been reactive, focusing on medications and minimal interventions. Our methodology represents a paradigm shift—a proactive, comprehensive strategy that addresses bone health from multiple angles. We believe that the human body has an extraordinary capacity for healing and regeneration when provided with the right tools, environment, and support.

## Precision Diagnosis: The REMS Revolution

At the core of our approach is the cutting-edge REMS (Radiation-free Electromagnetic Scanning) technology. Unlike traditional bone density scans that expose patients to radiation, REMS provides precise, detailed assessments of bone health without any harmful side effects. This state-of-the-art diagnostic tool allows us to:

- Create highly personalized baseline measurements
- Track subtle changes in bone density with unprecedented accuracy
- Develop targeted interventions based on individual physiological characteristics
- Monitor progress with minimal patient discomfort

## The bioDensity Protocol: Natural Muscle and Bone Strengthening

Central to our treatment philosophy is the bioDensity protocol, a revolutionary approach to bone and muscle strengthening that harnesses the body's natural adaptive mechanisms. This scientifically designed program focuses on:

- Targeted, progressive resistance exercises
- Stimulating bone formation through controlled, strategic loading
- Enhancing muscle strength as a critical support system for bone health
- Improving overall functional mobility and balance

The bioDensity method differs dramatically from traditional exercise regimens by creating precise, controlled stress points that trigger the body's natural bone-building responses. Clients experience gradual, sustainable improvements in bone density and muscular strength without the risks associated with high-impact activities.

## Functional Medicine: A Comprehensive Support System

Beyond physical interventions, our functional medicine approach considers the complex interplay of factors influencing bone health:

- Comprehensive hormone panel testing
- Nutritional analysis and targeted supplementation
- Assessment of lifestyle factors like sleep, stress, and diet
- Identifying and addressing underlying inflammatory processes
- Personalized nutrition plans rich in bone-supporting nutrients

Each client receives a meticulously crafted care plan that takes into account their unique genetic makeup, lifestyle, and health history. This individualized approach ensures that interventions are not just effective but optimally tailored to each person's specific needs.

## Continuous Monitoring and Refinement

Progress isn't a one-time achievement but an ongoing journey. Our commitment to our clients extends beyond initial assessments through:

- Regular REMS technology evaluations
- Adaptive treatment protocols
- Continuous performance tracking
- Collaborative client education and empowerment

## The Strength Lab Plus Promise

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

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

## Functional and Integrative Medicine with Dr. Krystyna Shepetiuk

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

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

### Services include:

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

### Why Choose Us?

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

## Strength Lab<sup>+</sup>

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# UNDERSTANDING THE ANNUAL CHECK-UP PANEL

When it comes to taking control of your health, prevention and regular monitoring are key. The Annual Check-up Panel at Any Lab Test Now offers a comprehensive screening solution that provides valuable insights into your overall health status without requiring a doctor's prescription or insurance approval.

The Annual Check-up Panel is designed to evaluate multiple aspects of your health through a single blood draw. This convenient testing package includes essential markers that healthcare professionals typically review during yearly physical examinations. The panel analyzes various components of your blood to assess organ function, detect potential health issues, and establish baseline measurements for future comparison.

One of the primary components of the panel is the Complete Blood Count (CBC), which examines red and white blood cells, platelets, and hemoglobin levels. This provides crucial information about your immune system function, oxygen-carrying capacity, and ability to fight infections. The CBC can also help identify conditions such as anemia, infections, or blood disorders.

The Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP) is another vital element of the annual check-up. This portion evaluates liver and kidney function, electrolyte and fluid balance, and blood sugar levels. By measuring proteins, enzymes, and minerals in your

blood, the CMP can reveal potential issues with major organ systems before symptoms become apparent.

Lipid profile testing is included to assess cardiovascular health by measuring cholesterol levels – both the "good" HDL and "bad" LDL cholesterol – as well as triglycerides. These results help evaluate your risk for heart disease and stroke, enabling early intervention through lifestyle changes or medical treatment if necessary.

The panel also includes thyroid function tests, which measure hormones that regulate metabolism, energy levels, and various bodily functions. Thyroid disorders are common but often go undiagnosed without proper screening.

Any Lab Test Now makes the testing process straightforward and accessible. Appointments are typically not required, and results are usually available within 24-72 hours. The company's certified laboratories maintain high standards of accuracy and confidentiality, ensuring reliable results you can trust.

Once you receive your results, you can share them with your healthcare provider for interpretation and guidance. This proactive approach to health monitoring can lead to earlier detection of potential health issues, more informed discussions with your doctor, and better-managed healthcare decisions.

The Annual Check-up Panel is particularly valuable for individuals who:

- Want to establish baseline health measurements
- Need regular monitoring of existing conditions
- Are interested in preventive healthcare
- Have family histories of specific health conditions
- Wish to track the effectiveness of lifestyle changes or treatments

Regular annual check-ups through comprehensive testing can help identify potential health concerns before they become serious issues. By providing a detailed snapshot of your health status, the Annual Check-up Panel at Any Lab Test Now serves as a fundamental tool in maintaining and optimizing your well-being through informed, proactive healthcare management.

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

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

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## Reverse Osteoporosis naturally



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# Are You Practicing Mindful Wealth?

Courtesy of Nina Azwoir, First Vice President, Investments

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

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

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

## Are You Allocating Your Time and Money with Your Intentions?

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

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

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

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

## What Expenditures Bring You Happiness?

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

## How Are You Allocating Your Precious Resources?

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

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

## What Is Your Definition of "Enough"?

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

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

## What Do You Want Your Legacy to Be?

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

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

**Nina Azwoir, First Vice President of Investments,  
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# Nurturing Pet Dental Health Amidst Chocolate Hazards

**F**ebruary marks Pet Dental Health Month, a time dedicated to the well-being of our beloved furry companions. Simultaneously, the sweet delights of candy season beckon, accompanied by the looming threat of chocolate toxicity for pets. In this delicate dance between dental care and chocolate safety, responsible pet ownership takes center stage.

## Pet Dental Health Month: A Spotlight on Smiles

Pet Dental Health Month is an annual reminder to prioritize the often-overlooked aspect of our pets' overall health – their dental hygiene. Beyond the endearing wag of tails and playful barks, a healthy smile is indicative of a thriving pet. Dental issues can impact an animal's quality of life, causing discomfort and affecting their ability to eat. Hence, this designated month encourages pet owners to take proactive steps in caring for their furry friends' teeth.

Routine dental care involves a combination of professional cleanings by veterinarians and at-home practices. Introducing pets to toothbrushes and pet-friendly toothpaste is a positive step. Additionally, dental treats and toys designed to reduce plaque and tartar buildup contribute to oral health. Pet Dental Health Month serves as an annual check-in, urging guardians to schedule vet visits for comprehensive dental examinations.

## Chocolate Toxicity: A Hidden Menace in Sweet Indulgence

Amidst the festivities, the allure of chocolates is omnipresent. However, many pet owners may not be fully aware of the potential danger chocolate poses to their animals. Chocolate contains theobromine, a stimulant that affects the central nervous system and cardiovascular system in pets. Dogs and cats metabolize theobromine more slowly than humans, making them susceptible to toxicity.

Dark chocolate and baking chocolate contain higher theobromine levels, intensifying the risk. Symptoms of chocolate toxicity include restlessness, increased heart rate, vomiting, diarrhea, and, in severe cases, seizures. The urgency in addressing chocolate ingestion cannot be overstated – immediate veterinary attention is crucial.

## Balancing Treats and Safety: A Pet-Approved Approach

As pet owners, finding the equilibrium between indulging in candy season and safeguarding our pets demands thoughtful consideration. Opting for pet-friendly treats that mimic the festive spirit without the harmful ingredients is a creative approach. Engaging pets in the celebration with safe alternatives, such as pet-friendly toys and treats, ensures they feel included without compromising their health.



Prevention becomes paramount in avoiding emergencies related to chocolate ingestion. Pet-proofing living spaces by storing chocolates securely and educating family members, especially children, about the risks associated with sharing human treats with pets is fundamental. Vigilance during festive periods can avert potential hazards and contribute to a joyous, worry-free celebration for both pets and their owners.

In conclusion, Pet Dental Health Month serves as a timely reminder to invest in our pets' smiles, promoting overall well-being. Simultaneously, navigating the risks of chocolate toxicity during candy season necessitates a vigilant and responsible approach to pet care. As guardians of these loyal companions, our commitment to their health extends beyond festivities, ensuring a lifetime of happiness and health.

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## Meet Nina Azwoir: A Financial Advisor Who Truly Wants to Know You



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# Cleaning Tips to Keep the Flu Virus at Bay and Out of Your Home

Flu season is among us and with an increase in the number of people in the area for the winter, preventing the flu and other viruses can be difficult this time of year. The muscle aches, fever, chills and fatigue that accompany the virus affect five to 20 percent of the U.S. population each year and hospitalize hundreds of thousands, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Many of us are armed with an array of physical preventatives — from flu-shots to Emergency-C packets, neti-pots to home remedies — but what are we doing to stop the illness from spreading in our own homes, amongst our families and community members?

MaidPro expert cleaners, offer these tips to help you clean for health year-round and to stop the flu virus from invading your home:

1. Wash your hands regularly in warm soapy water. For quick clean-up, use antibacterial hand sanitizer. Make an effort not to touch your mouth or nose without first washing your hands.
2. Wear rubber gloves when cleaning household items to protect yourself. By wearing gloves, you will be less likely to touch your eyes, nose or mouth, which are havens for the flu virus.

3. Spray disinfecting spray on a cloth, wipe toys, door knobs, appliance handles, keyboards, remote controls, light switches, phones and facial tissue box covers. Viruses can live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces.

4. Wash items like towels and bedding in hot water with soap if someone has been sick in the home. Be sure not to share these items until they are thoroughly cleaned.

5. Change vacuum bags monthly or more frequently.

6. Boil toothbrushes for one minute in water and vinegar, run through a dishwasher cycle or purchase new brushes.

7. Use antibacterial wipes on your keyboard, phone and pens to protect yourself from spreading germs at work.

8. Wash telephones, cabinet handles, doorknobs, light switches and refrigerator door handles using a slightly dampened cloth with a solution of mild detergent and warm water.

9. Wash mop heads in a solution of  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup bleach and one gallon water, dry thoroughly, then store. Not only will mop heads pick up germs and dirt, but they also can also grow mold and mildew if they don't dry out completely.



10. Disinfect the bathroom and kitchen, especially the faucet and toilet handles, daily. The kitchen and bathroom are the most used rooms in the home and possibly the most contaminated.

MaidPro is a residential cleaning service that uses a tried and true approach to clean each home for health, combining environmentally preferable cleaning supplies and state-of-the-art equipment to maintain the healthiest living environment possible.

If you're worried about the flu virus showing up uninvited, give MaidPro a call to schedule a cleaning.



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# What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

**W**eight-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 fulfilment,"* 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 it longing for a "perfect" relationship that often disenchants, 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 fulfilment 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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