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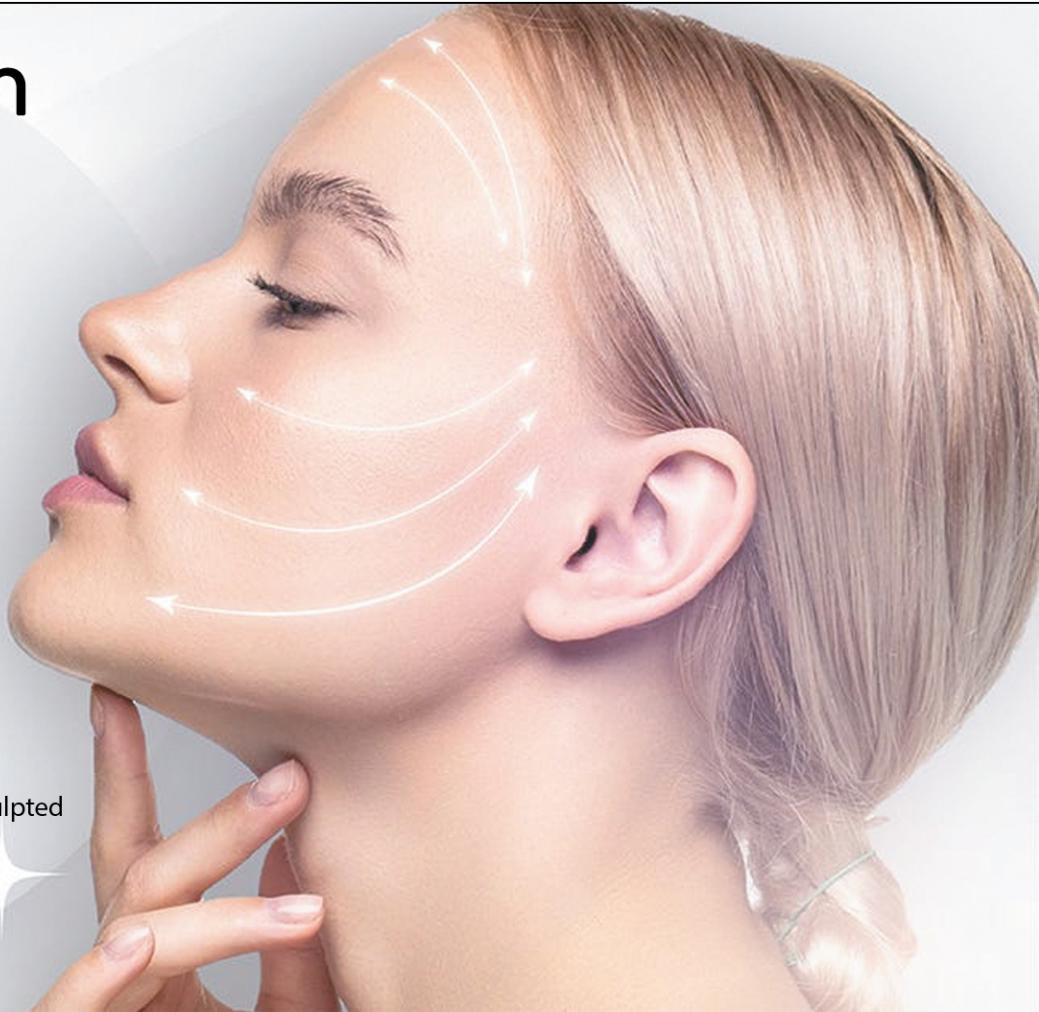
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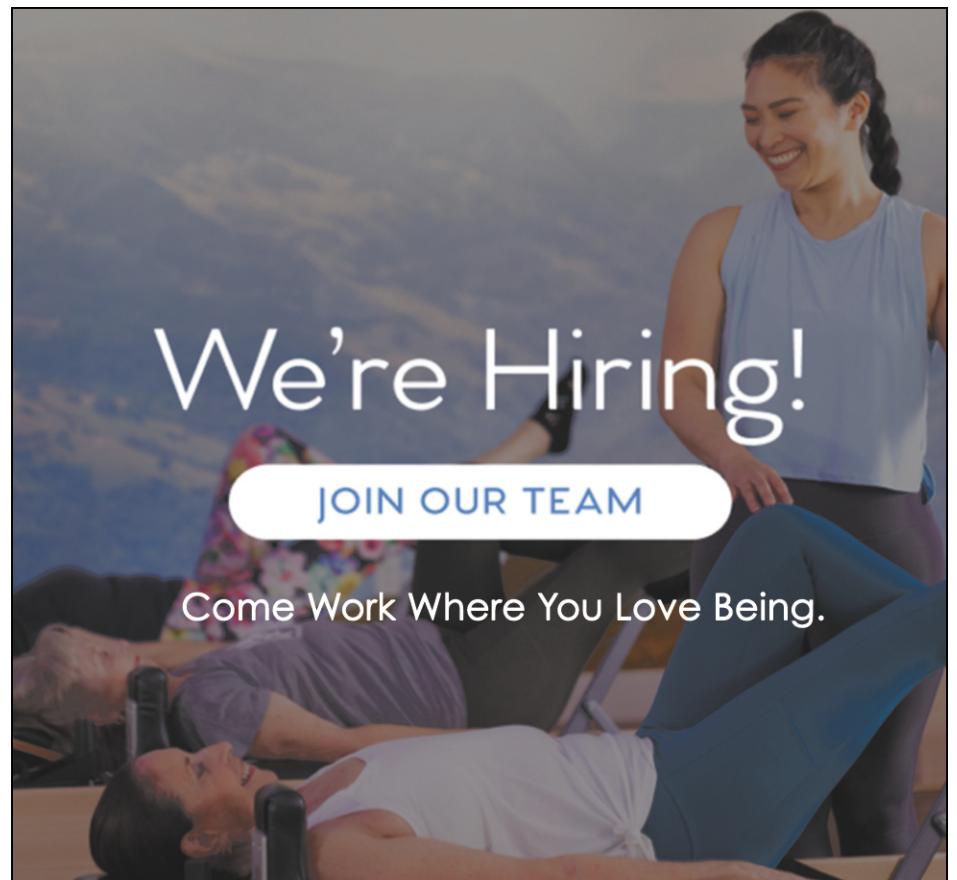


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SHOW YOUR EYES SOME LOVE:

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.



BRIAN MARHUE, O.D.

Optometric Physician

Dr. Marhue is a board-certified optometric physician that provides a wide variety of primary eye care to patients. He completed his bachelor's degree and Doctor of Optometry degrees at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He completed externships at Omega Eye Care Center, Piedmont Medical Center, Birmingham V.A. Medical Center and the Sparks Center for Developmental Vision Clinic.

Dr. Marhue's present and past memberships include Students of Optometry Serving Humanity, the Trinidad and Tobago Optometrists Association, Florida Surgical Eye Expeditions, the American Optometric Association, the Florida Optometric Association and the Southwest Florida Optometric Association.

He served as the president of the Southwest Florida Optometric Association for over four years and has participated in multiple eye mission trips to Trinidad, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Born in Trinidad, he completed high school and started college in Toronto and completed his last years of undergraduate and professional training at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He served as the Director of Optometry at the Eye Centers of Florida for 14 years before joining Southwest Florida Eye Care as a partner which is now part of Center For Sight.

Dr. Marhue has lived in Fort Myers since 1991. He loves spending any time he gets with his two wonderful adult children, Aaron and Brittnie. He and his wife Tricia enjoy their families, hiking, cycling, soccer and fishing.



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UNDERSTANDING HEART DISEASE: A Silent but Preventable Killer

Heart health affects everyone, yet many of us overlook the warning signs our bodies send us until it's too late. In America, heart disease is the No. 1 killer of men and women and the leading cause of death for people of most racial and ethnic groups.



But here's the empowering news: many heart conditions are preventable through lifestyle changes and early intervention, according to **Karla Quevedo, MD, FACC**, a board-certified cardiologist with the Lee Health Heart Institute.

Understanding risk factors

"When it comes to significant risk factors for heart disease, there are modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors," Dr. Quevedo says. "There are things you can change through your lifestyle, like high blood pressure (hypertension), high cholesterol (hypercholesterolemia), diabetes, obesity and chronic kidney disease. At the same time, there are some risk factors you can't change, like your family history, gender or age."

The power of prevention

Prevention is where you have the most power. Simple lifestyle modifications can dramatically reduce your risk of heart disease, Dr. Quevedo notes. She encourages lifestyle changes, such as regular physical activity, a heart-healthy diet rich in whole grains and lean proteins, maintaining healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and avoiding tobacco.

"Think of these changes not as restrictions, but as investments in your future health and longevity," Dr. Quevedo says.

Heart medications that can help

When lifestyle changes like diet, exercise, and stress management aren't enough to manage certain health conditions, medications can play a crucial role. Dr. Quevedo says.

Many options exist to reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke, thanks to advances in medicines. If you're at risk for or currently have heart disease, one or more of these medications may become a part of your daily routine.

Statins: The first line of defense

Statins are prescription medications that help lower cholesterol levels in the blood. They're one of the most often prescribed medications for heart health and cardiovascular disease prevention. They can help lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or bad cholesterol) and triglycerides, though they're primarily known for their impact on LDL.

Statins are effective, but they work best as part of a comprehensive approach to cardiovascular health, including lifestyle modifications, Dr. Quevedo emphasizes.

Talk with your doctor about what heart medications may be right for you. In addition to statins, other medicines can treat and prevent heart disease as well.

Healthy Eating

Next time you are food shopping, consider these food types to create a well-balanced diet perfect for heart health:

- Fruits and vegetables. Aim to fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables at every meal. They are rich in vitamins, minerals, and fiber, which are essential for heart health. Try adding a variety of colorful produce to your diet to ensure you're getting a broad spectrum of nutrients.

- Whole grains. Whole grains like oats, brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat provide more fiber and nutrients than refined grains. Fiber is known to help reduce cholesterol levels and improve heart health. Replace white bread, pasta, and rice with their whole-grain counterparts.

- Lean proteins such as fish, beans, nuts, and low-fat dairy. Fish, especially fatty fish like salmon and mackerel, are high in omega-3 fatty acids, which benefit heart health. Legumes and nuts are also excellent sources of protein and healthy fats.

- Healthy fats from sources like olive oil, avocados, and nuts. Not all fats are bad for your heart. Healthy fats can help reduce bad cholesterol levels and improve heart health. For instance, use olive oil for cooking and dressings, and snack on nuts and seeds for a nutritious boost.

- Limit processed foods and those high in added sugars and salt.



Other tips

For the last time: Just quit smoking. The benefits of quitting smoking begin to appear after only a few months and reach that of a nonsmoker in several years.

Ease into exercise. Commit to 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise each week and 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise each week. If you have other health conditions that limit your capacity for exercise, you should stay as physically active as your condition allows.

Peek at that belly fat. Abdominal obesity is defined as a waist circumference greater than or equal to 102 centimeters—or 40 inches—in men and greater than or equal to 88 centimeters—or 35 inches—in women. Belly fat increases your risk of heart disease.

How stressed are you? Do you get mad a lot? Hold onto grudges? Are you stressed at work? Constantly worried? Can't sleep? Your heart is feeling that weight. Talk to your doctor about how to manage stress.

Discover how lifestyle changes and medication can improve your heart health, lifespan, and quality of life at the Lee Health Heart Institute.



LeeHealth.org/heart

UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TINNITUS AWARENESS MONTH

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

Tinnitus Awareness Month sheds light on the persistent ringing, buzzing, or hissing sounds that millions around the world grapple with daily. Beyond the noise lies a silent struggle that often goes unnoticed, making it crucial to dedicate a month to raising awareness and fostering understanding.*

The Impact of Tinnitus

Tinnitus, characterized by the perception of noise in the absence of an external sound source, can take a toll on one's mental and emotional well-being. For those living with it, the constant ringing or buzzing can lead to stress, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating. Tinnitus Awareness Month aims to unravel the layers of this condition and underscore its impact on individuals' quality of life.

Raising Awareness

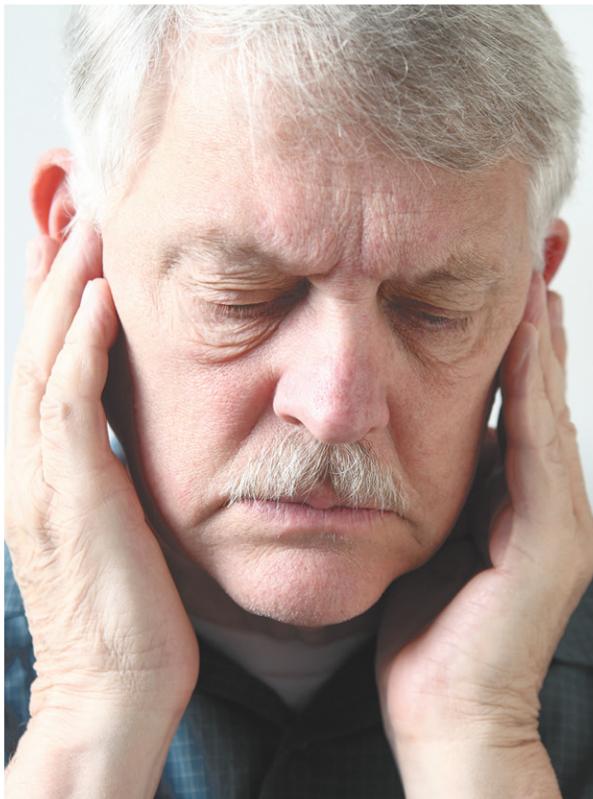
Creating awareness about tinnitus is a pivotal step toward fostering empathy and support. Initiatives during this month include educational campaigns, outreach programs, and online resources. These efforts aim not only to inform the public about the prevalence of tinnitus but also to debunk myths and misconceptions surrounding the condition.

Available Treatments

While tinnitus may not have a one-size-fits-all cure, awareness month serves as a platform to explore available treatments and management strategies. From therapeutic interventions and counseling to sound therapy and innovative technologies, individuals with tinnitus can discover options that suit their unique needs. Promoting awareness extends beyond understanding the condition itself; it involves recognizing the diverse range of solutions that can make a significant difference in the lives of those affected.

The Importance of Support

Tinnitus Awareness Month is not just about disseminating information but also about building a supportive community. Friends, family, and colleagues can play a crucial role in the well-being of



someone with tinnitus. Understanding the challenges they face and offering empathy can contribute to a more compassionate society that recognizes the importance of mental health.

Personal Stories

Highlighting personal stories of individuals living with tinnitus humanizes the experience. Sharing narratives of resilience, adaptation, and triumph over adversity brings a face to the condition. This storytelling aspect can inspire others facing similar challenges and promote a sense of solidarity within the community.

Advocacy and Research

Advocacy efforts during Tinnitus Awareness Month aim to influence policies that support individuals with tinnitus. Additionally, the month serves as a catalyst for increased research funding, fostering a deeper understanding of the condition and advancing innovative treatments. By advocating for tinnitus research, we can contribute to the collective efforts aimed at improving the lives of those affected.

Conclusion

As we navigate through Tinnitus Awareness Month, it is crucial to recognize the multifaceted nature of this condition and the importance of creating a supportive environment. By amplifying the silence that tinnitus sufferers endure, we can contribute to a world that is not only aware of the challenges posed by this condition but actively works towards alleviating its impact. Let us use this month as an opportunity to listen, learn, and lend a helping hand to those silently battling the persistent sounds that only they can hear.

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



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Why Consider Endolift® Before a Facelift or Facial Liposuction

By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

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

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

UNDERSTANDING THE CORE DIFFERENCES

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

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

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

KEY ADVANTAGES OF ENDOLIFT® AS A FIRST-LINE OPTION

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



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

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

WHEN FACIAL LIPOSUCTION MAY BE PREMATURE

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

APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS

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

A STEPWISE APPROACH TO FACIAL REJUVENATION

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

FINAL THOUGHTS

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



ABOUT AXEL RUIZ MD, DABFP, CWS

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

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

He is known for his ability to explain conditions thoroughly and build strong, trusting relationships with his patients. Practices in Naples, Fort Myers and Lehigh Acres, FL. His commitment to ongoing learning and patient-centered treatment makes him an invaluable partner in your health journey.

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ALIGNMENT MATTERS:

Improving Pain Through Movement, Alignment, and Pilates

By Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

Pain is often treated like a broken smoke alarm.

It's loud. It's disruptive. The instinct is to silence it quickly. Sometimes that works, at least temporarily.

Other times, the noise simply moves. A shoulder quiets down, only for the neck to flare. Low back pain eases, and the hips begin to complain. The original problem feels "handled," yet the body continues to signal distress elsewhere.

People who live with chronic pain recognize these patterns. Medications, injections, and short-term fixes may reduce symptoms in one area, yet discomfort often resurfaces in another. Many pain management conversations focus on isolated structures rather than the systems responsible for coordinating movement and protection.

Modern pain science offers clearer insight. Pain functions as a protective output of the nervous system, shaped by movement history, stress, context, and perception. Persistent pain often reflects an overly sensitive protective system rather than structural damage.

This distinction shapes how clinicians and movement professionals approach care.

Pain Is the Message

The nervous system operates like a sophisticated security system. Its role is to detect threats and maintain safety. When danger is perceived, the system responds with pain, tension, guarding, and restricted movement. In acute injury, this response supports healing by encouraging rest and caution.

Chronic pain follows a different pattern.

In long-standing pain conditions, the alarm system becomes hypersensitive. The threshold for danger lowers. Everyday stimuli such as movement, posture changes, or light touch can trigger pain responses. This process, known as central sensitization, is well documented in pain neuroscience research. Tissue healing may be complete, while protective signaling remains elevated.

From a medical perspective, this reframes pain management. The focus shifts from eliminating pain to retraining the system producing it.

Fascia, Load, and Movement Clarity

Pain emerges from how the body senses load and distributes force across systems. Fascia, the connective tissue network that surrounds and links muscles, joints, and organs, plays an important role in this process. It transmits force and delivers constant sensory feedback to the nervous system.

When pain or fear limits movement, fascial tissues adapt by stiffening and losing elasticity. Sensory input becomes less clear. Protective signaling increases.



Pilates introduces controlled load across multiple planes of motion. Exercises emphasize length with support, elastic rebound, and smooth transfer of force through the body. These inputs improve tissue resilience while reducing perceived threat. Movement becomes smoother and more predictable.

The system grows stronger and calmer at the same time.

Where Movement Fits In

This is where Pilates becomes a powerful tool.

The effectiveness of Pilates in pain management depends on adherence to the method itself. True Pilates emphasizes precision, sequencing, and thoughtful progression. When these principles are preserved, Pilates functions as movement education. When they are diluted, the work shifts toward trend-driven exercise without the same regulatory benefit.

Pilates Method movements are selected and layered to support nervous system regulation rather than overwhelm it. Exercises are introduced with intention, allowing the body to process sensation, adjust effort, and build tolerance gradually. In this context, movement becomes a dialogue with the body rather than a demand placed upon it.

Pilates also offers a movement environment designed to reduce unnecessary compression while increasing mobility. Many exercises are performed with the body supported by equipment such as the Reformer, allowing joints to move more freely through space. Reduced gravitational load creates an opportunity for the spine, hips, and shoulders to explore range with less strain. Mobility often improves here because the body feels supported enough to allow motion.

Springs add another critical layer. They do more than provide resistance. Springs offer continuous feedback, assisting movement in one direction while responding dynamically in another. This creates rich sensory input for the nervous system. Each repetition delivers information about speed, control, and effort, helping the brain refine how movement is organized. For individuals living with pain, this feedback often restores confidence and clarity.

Fundamental Pilates principles guide this process. Breath is coordinated with movement to support rib cage mobility and reduce excess tension. Attention to rib cage and pelvic organization helps distribute load more evenly through the trunk. Shoulder mobility is developed alongside stability, allowing the arms to move freely without overloading the neck or upper back. Pelvic positioning provides a stable base, improving efficiency and reducing compensatory strain.

These elements are often described collectively as alignment. In practice, alignment refers less to posture and more to how the body organizes itself under load. When alignment improves, movement requires less effort. Sensation becomes clearer. Protective guarding softens.

For the nervous system, this matters. Supported, predictable movement builds trust. Over time, the system learns that motion can occur without threat, and pain responses gradually lose intensity.

Pain, Stress, and the Brain

Pain is shaped by life outside the body.

Psychological stress, disrupted sleep, and emotional load directly influence pain perception. The brain processes physical and emotional threats through overlapping pathways. Pain often intensifies during periods of stress, even without new injury.

Pilates' emphasis on breath, focus, and controlled attention supports cortical processing and vagal tone. Improved interoception helps individuals sense internal states accurately without escalating concern.

Clinically, this matters. People who feel agency within their bodies experience reduced pain intensity, even when physical findings remain unchanged.

Restoring Proportion

Protective systems function best when responses match the level of threat. Restoring appropriate sensitivity allows the nervous system to respond proportionally.

As movement feels safe again, breathing improves, and load is reintroduced thoughtfully, protective responses soften. Tension decreases. Motion expands. Confidence returns.

This reflects the future of pain management. Intelligent movement supports clarity, resilience, and safety.

Pilates, grounded in science and applied with intention, holds a meaningful place in that future.

Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

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



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WALKING ON YOUR BONES: UNDERSTANDING FAT PAD ATROPHY

By Dr. Lori DeBlasi, DPM, FACFAS

As a podiatrist, I often view the human body through the lens of the feet. They are our foundation, yet they are often the last place As we age, our bodies undergo many changes, but one of the most significant—yet often overlooked—occurs right beneath our feet. **Fat pad atrophy** is the medical term for the thinning and shifting of the natural cushioning on the bottom of the feet. This occurs because the collagen and elastic fibers that give our foot pads their "bounce" naturally degrade over time.

Most commonly affecting the heel and the ball of the foot (the metatarsal area), this condition can make simple daily activities feel like a trial. Patients often describe the sensation as "walking on pebbles" or "walking directly on bone," sometimes accompanied by a persistent burning sensation.

The Impact of Lost Cushioning

The fat pads serve as the body's built-in shock absorbers, protecting the heel bone and metatarsal heads. When this padding thins:

- **Pressure Lesions:** Without protection, the underlying bone creates excessive pressure against the skin, often resulting in painful calluses.
- **Heightened Sensitivity:** Symptoms are typically worse when walking barefoot or during prolonged periods of standing.
- **Secondary Issues:** While not a direct cause, fat pad loss can exacerbate the symptoms of a neuroma (a pinched nerve), as there is less buffer between the nerve and the ground.

The High-Heel Factor

For women, footwear choices can significantly impact comfort. Wearing a heel greater than one inch shifts the majority of body weight onto the ball of the foot. With the loss of natural padding, this extra pressure on the metatarsal heads quickly leads to inflammation and lesion formation.

Managing the Discomfort: 5 Key Strategies

While fat pad atrophy is a natural part of aging and is not reversible, you can successfully manage the symptoms with these practical adjustments:



1. **Stop Barefoot Walking:** Always provide an artificial layer of protection between your feet and hard surfaces.
2. **Use External Cushioning:** Look for gel metatarsal cushions, gel heel cups, or full-length neoprene inserts. Note: Despite marketing claims, memory foam is often too soft to provide the structural support needed to replace lost fat pads.
3. **Lower Your Heels:** Stick to shoes with a heel height of one inch or less to keep weight distributed evenly across the foot.
4. **Modify Your Activity:** High-impact activities like running or jogging put immense force on the forefoot. Consider switching to lower-impact exercises such as cycling or swimming.
5. **Check Shoe Flexibility:** Avoid shoes that are excessively flexible in the forefoot. If a shoe bends too easily at the toes, it forces the metatarsal heads to press harder into the ground.

Medical Intervention

Currently, medical treatments such as fat grafting or injectable dermal fillers have not shown consistent long-term benefits for fat pad restoration. Therefore, conservative management through lifestyle and footwear changes remains the gold standard for care.

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

Lori DeBlasi, DPM, FACFAS

Dr. Lori DeBlasi is certified by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery®. Dr. DeBlasi works at Family Foot & Leg Center at the Estero office. She is accepting new patients. To make an appointment, call 239-430-3668 or visit www.NaplesPodiatrist.com.



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

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

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

WHEN VISION LOSS CHANGES LIFE

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

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

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

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

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

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

When Glasses and Surgery Aren't Enough

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

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

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

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

Local Success Story: Seeing Clearly at Work Again

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

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

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

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

A Team Approach to Better Vision

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

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

Modern Tools for Better Vision

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

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

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



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

Seeing Better, Living Better

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

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

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

Why Trust Low Vision of Southwest Florida?

• Exclusively Focused on Low Vision Rehabilitation

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

• Innovative Technology and Vision Aids

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

• Patient-First Approach

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

Dedicated to Helping You See What's Possible

Dr. Dennis Denick, OD, Dipl ABO, FIALVS

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



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

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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MEMORY MATTERS

By Neuropsychiatric Research Center of SW Florida

February is American Heart month. Heart disease is the number one cause of death in the United States. The American Heart Association is a wonderful source of information and resources and is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Over the past fifty years, death rates from heart disease are declining, due in part to healthier habits of Americans as well as new treatments, medication and approaches to heart health.

Here in our monthly column, we focus on brain health and other brain related issues. So why are we even bringing up heart health? Did you know that heart and brain health are closely related? If you do things that are good for your heart, it will also help your brain! It is a two for one benefit. Let's dig into the heart/brain connection a bit more.

As the Alzheimer's Association points out, more evidence is supporting a close link between our hearts and our brains. The brain has a vast network of blood vessels, and with each heartbeat, approximately 20–25% of the blood is pumped to the head. The brain needs this oxygen rich blood to function normally. The average resting heart rate is between 60 and 100 beats per minute. So, the brain is taking between one fifth and one fourth of each heartbeat to stay nourished and to function effectively.

The Association goes on to report that some autopsy studies show that as many as 80 percent of individuals with Alzheimer's disease also have cardiovascular disease. In addition, the National Institute of Health (NIH) reported in a 2017 article that problems in the cardiovascular system may contribute to the development of dementia. It was also found that diabetes, hypertension, prehypertension and smoking during midlife increased the risk of developing dementia.

In a study originally published in June of 2023, researchers found that cognitive impairment, which includes difficulty remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or decision making is common in individuals with cardiovascular disease. It's estimated that one in three individuals who present at a cardiology clinic have some degree of cognitive impairment. With the data reflecting the connection between our heart and our brain, we need to focus on keeping both healthy.



The great news is that many things that you can do to keep your heart healthy, also keep your brain healthy! Here are some things that many of us may already know and hopefully practice to keep our hearts healthy. The CDC has some tips for heart health.

Choose healthy food and drink. Eliminating foods high in saturated and trans-fat, as well as limiting your salt (sodium) intake are good approaches. Eat foods that are high in fiber, low in saturated fats and trans fats and cholesterol. Processed foods are best avoided. If it comes in a package, it's likely processed. Fresh fruits, vegetables, fish, nuts and legumes are a better bet.

Stay hydrated by drinking 8 glasses or bottles of water a day. Alcohol should be used in moderation, no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two drinks a day for men. Too much alcohol can lead to high blood pressure among other health issues and high blood pressure is a risk factor for heart disease.

Don't smoke, or quit smoking. The hazards of smoking have been well researched, and if you don't smoke, don't start. Your healthcare practitioner can provide you with information and resources on how to stop smoking.

Manage any other medical conditions with your health care provider. Conditions such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes are all risks for heart disease and are not good for your brain.

With appropriate intervention, these conditions can be managed effectively, and doing so helps your heart and your brain.

Keeping a healthy weight and getting regular exercise are also ways to love your heart and brain. The US Surgeon General recommends two hours and thirty minutes of moderate intensity exercise a week. That is the equivalent of 30 minutes of exercise, five times a week. Brisk walking, bicycling and other activities that get your heart pumping are ways to get started. Be sure to discuss any new exercise with your health care provider.

By practicing approaches that are good for your heart, you are helping your brain! Add in just a few more activities and you have both your heart and brain covered. Making sure you are getting adequate sleep, staying connected to family and friends, learning new things and protecting your head by wearing a bike helmet and using your seat belt, when added to your heart health strategy, will go a long way to having a well loved heart and brain.

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

References:
[Dementia and Heart Health: Are They Related? | Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)
[Cognitive Impairment in Patients With Cardiac Disease: Implications for Clinical Practice | Stroke \(ahajournals.org\)](#)
[Heart Health and Brain Health - Public Health Spotlight \(alz.org\)](#)
[Risk factors for heart disease linked to dementia | National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#)
[History of the American Heart Association | American Heart Association](#)



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HEALTHY AGING: The Promise of Stem Cell Therapy

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

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

Understanding Stem Cells and Aging

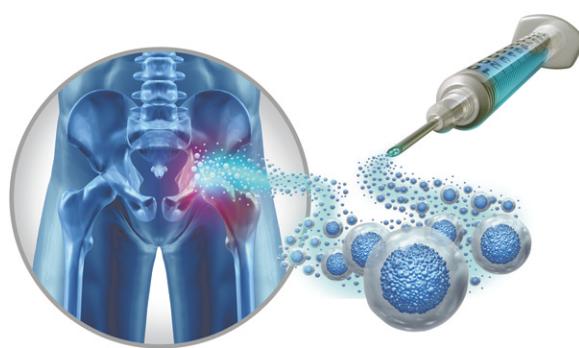
Stem cells are the body's master cells, possessing the unique ability to differentiate into various cell types and repair damaged tissues. As we age, our natural stem cell populations decline, contributing to the physical manifestations of aging such as decreased muscle mass, joint stiffness, reduced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

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

The Wimmer 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.

"Concierge treatment without the concierge price."

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Education and Navigation

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MIND & BODY PROGRAM

*Class Passes Available for Purchase

**Tuesdays:
(February 3, 10, 17, 24)**

Outdoor Chair Yoga

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Instructor: Molly

**Thursdays:
(February 5, 12, 19, 26)**

Outdoor Chair Yoga

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Instructor: Molly

**Fridays:
(February 6, 13, 20, 27)**

Self Guided Walking Club

9-10 a.m. RSVP

Outdoor Stretch, Balance & Strength

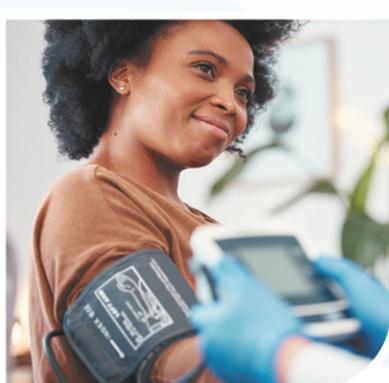
10:30-11:30 a.m. RSVP

Instructor: Meredith

Free Blood Pressure Screenings

9 a.m.-noon

Walk-ins welcome



IN-PERSON EVENTS

**Lee Health Coconut Point
23450 Via Coconut Point, Estero, FL 34135**
To register for these events, call 239-468-0050.

Friday, February 6

MyChart Support

10 a.m.-noon

Walk-Ins welcome

Monday, February 9

Senior Blue Book: Fitness & Mobility for Healthy Aging

Noon-1:30 p.m. RSVP

Lunch provided

Tuesday, February 10

Self, Soul and Love

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Wednesday, February 11

**Essential Oils 101:
Make and Take**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

**Prioritizing Your Health:
Small Habits, Big Changes**

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

Thursday, February 12

**Cooking Demo:
Fuel for Recovery**

1-2 p.m. RSVP

Fee: \$5

Saturday, February 14

Free Community Yoga at Lakes Regional Park

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

7330 Gladiolus Dr.

Ft. Myers, FL 33908

Meet in parking lot #3

Cooking Demo: Veggie-Packed Lucky Noodles

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

Fee: \$5

Tuesday, February 17

Safe Bicycling in Southwest Florida

11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. RSVP

IN-PERSON EVENTS

**Lee Health Coconut Point
23450 Via Coconut Point, Estero, FL 34135**
To register for these events, call 239-468-0050.

Wednesday, February 18

**Heart Healthy Cooking Demo:
Flavor That Loves You Back**

Noon-1 p.m. RSVP

Thursday, February 19

Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group

10 a.m.-noon RSVP

Plant-Powered Kitchen: A Monthly Cooking & Learning Experience

Noon-1 p.m. RSVP

Fee: \$5

Friday, February 20

Monthly Grief Support Group

1-2 p.m. RSVP

Monday, February 23

Movement Matters: How Exercise Helps Parkinson's

3-4 p.m. RSVP

Tuesday, February 24

**Dementia Caregiving and You:
Finding Connection in the Journey**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Wednesday, February 25

**Road to Recovery:
Journey Back to Independence**

10-11 a.m. RSVP

Thursday, February 26

Dips, Dressings & Delicious Add-Ins

Noon-1 p.m. RSVP

Fee: \$5

Friday, February 27

Music Therapy: Groovy Group!

10-11 a.m.

Healthy Life Center

Education and Navigation

FEBRUARY 2026

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Tuesdays, (February 3, 10, 17, 24)
Walking Club
 9-10 a.m. RSVP

Tuesday, February 3
Walk-in MyChart Support
 10 a.m.-noon RSVP

Wednesday, February 4
All About Heart Failure
 10-11 a.m.

Monday, February 9
Learn the Different Types and Stages of Dementia Related to Lewy Body
 10-11 a.m. RSVP

Thursday, February 12
Self, Soul and Love
 10-11 a.m. RSVP

Friday, February 13
Music Therapy: The Groovy Group!
 10:30-11:30 a.m. RSVP

Monday, February 16
Senior Blue Book: Grief and Loss Support for Older Adults
 Noon-1:30 p.m. RSVP
 Lunch provided

Special Walking Edition:

Tuesday, February 10
Walk with a Doc: Heart Talk
 9-10 a.m. RSVP
 Andrea Kuiper, PA

Tuesday, February 17
Essential Oils 101: Make and Take
 10-11 a.m. RSVP

Wednesday, February 18
Road to Recovery: Journey Back to Independence
 10-11 a.m. RSVP

Thursday, February 19
Skin Cancer Screening
 9 a.m.-2 p.m.
 Call for appointment 239-468-0050

Food as Medicine: Nutrition for Heart Health
 11 a.m.-noon RSVP

Wednesday, February 25
The Time is Now, Take it to Heart
 10:30-11:30 a.m. RSVP

Movement Matters: How Exercise Helps Parkinson's
 2:15-3:15 p.m. RSVP

Thursday, February 26
Prioritizing Your Health: Small Habits, Big Changes
 10-11 a.m. RSVP

Friday, February 27
Monthly Grief Support Group
 10-11 a.m. RSVP

WELLWAY

NEW! WA-KE HATCHEE RECREATION PARK AND RECREATION CENTER

16760 Bass Rd., Fort Myers, FL 33908

Friday, February 27
Movement Matters: How Exercise Helps Parkinson's
 11 a.m.-noon RSVP



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

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LeeHealth.org/Events



Fit for Life: Find Your Happiness

We can all use a shot of happiness while being isolated at home. Hopefully, you've now settled into your modified normal routine of living. I've read a lot of funny sayings over the past few weeks that gave me a great laugh. Some people are getting up in the morning and changing out of their nighttime pajamas and into their daytime pajamas. Others are telling me that if they shut the schools for too long, the mothers are going to find a solution for the virus before all the scientists. And my favorite one is: "This is the first time in history we can save lives by laying in front of the T.V. and doing nothing. Let's not screw this up!"

Hopefully, you're a glass half full person, and you're surviving by being creative with your time. Try to commit daily to give your mood a natural boost and make yourself happy. Here are a few mood-boosting ideas (American Council on Exercise, ACE).

Exercise. Boost your immune system and your mood by releasing the feel-good chemicals (endorphins) that come from exercise. You can participate in an exercise class online or on T.V. There's a lot of options when it comes to choosing exercise videos. Choose the exercise routine appropriate for your fitness level.

Eat nutritiously. It's so easy to eat junk foods while being stuck at home. There's nothing wrong with treating yourself once and a while to the junk foods. But it's wise to eat foods with nutrients that help our emotional health. Foods with magnesium-rich seeds like pumpkin and sunflower, leafy greens, blueberries, and dark chocolate help to boost our emotional health. Dark chocolate, anybody? I'll have a piece.

Practice gratitude. Take time to write down a few things every day that you're grateful for. If you start to feel down, look at what you wrote, and maybe it will help to change your thinking and boost your mood.

Unplug and get outside. It's so easy to get caught up in the drama going on all around us. Take time during your day to turn everything off, sit quietly, read a positive book, or go outside. We're fortunate to be in the spring season, where we can see the trees bloom and hear the birds. We need mental breaks in our day, and being online and connected on social media is not a mental break. Social media is good, but it's also a stimulant and could cause additional stress. Be wise with your technology usage.



Make sure your glass is halffull. Here's to your continued happiness during these unusual times.

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Unveiling the Heart: A Holistic Approach to Heart Health

At Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine, our commitment to your well-being goes beyond alleviating symptoms we strive to uncover the root causes of health issues and guide you toward optimal wellness. Embracing a holistic perspective, we view every patient as an entwined complex puzzle, addressing lifestyle factors, nutrition, and natural therapies to promote balance and well-being. As we head into February, recognized as Heart Health Month, we embark on a journey to explore the profound impact of holistic practices on cardiovascular health, including a spotlight on the groundbreaking TACT-2 study and the benefits of chelation in promoting heart health.

The TACT-2 Study: Unlocking the Power of Chelation Therapy

Historical Context: The TACT-2 (Trial to Assess Chelation Therapy) study builds upon the foundation laid by the original TACT study, initiated in 2003. TACT aimed to explore the potential benefits of chelation therapy, a process designed to remove heavy metals, in individuals with coronary artery disease.

Motivation Behind the Study: Recognizing that heavy metals like lead and cadmium may contribute to vascular damage and play a role in cardiovascular diseases, the TACT study delved into the potential cardiovascular benefits of chelation therapy. This treatment, already known for addressing heavy metal poisoning, became a subject of interest for its potential to benefit cardiovascular health.

TACT-2: Advancing Scientific Understanding: Building on the insights gained from the TACT study, TACT-2 seeks to further our understanding of chelation therapy in the realm of cardiovascular health. Specifically, the study investigates whether chelation, combined with high-dose oral vitamins, can reduce the risk of major adverse cardiovascular events in individuals with a history of myocardial infarction.

Randomized Controlled Trial: TACT-2 adheres to a robust randomized controlled trial design, recognized as the gold standard in clinical research.

This design allows for a rigorous comparison of outcomes between the group receiving chelation therapy and the group receiving a placebo.

- Inclusion Criteria:** Participants in the TACT-2 study are individuals who have previously experienced a heart attack and are at risk for subsequent cardiovascular events. This focused selection aims to evaluate the potential benefits of chelation therapy in a specific high-risk population.

- Holistic Integration:** Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine integrates evidence-based practices, including chelation therapy, into its approach to cardiovascular health. The goal is to empower individuals with holistic solutions that complement traditional medical interventions, recognizing the potential of chelation therapy as part of a comprehensive strategy for heart health.

Holistic Heart Health Practices: Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine advocates for a comprehensive approach to heart health beyond conventional treatments. Here are the critical components of our holistic strategy:

- Lifestyle Management:** Empowering individuals to make sustainable lifestyle choices, such as regular physical activity, stress management, and adequate sleep, forms the foundation of our holistic heart health approach.

- Nutrition:** A well-balanced and heart-healthy diet is paramount. We guide individuals in making nutritional choices that support cardiovascular health, emphasizing whole foods and nutrient-dense options.

- Naturally Occurring Compounds and Therapies:** Root Causes explores the benefits of naturally occurring compounds and therapies to enhance heart health. Our approach includes evidence-based interventions that align with the principles of holistic medicine.

As we navigate Heart Health Month 2024, Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine is a beacon of holistic care, addressing the root causes of cardiovascular issues. The TACT-2 study sheds light on

the potential benefits of chelation therapy, and our commitment to balance and wellness is evident in our holistic heart health practices. Let us embark on a journey toward heart health together, embracing the power of holistic approaches to achieve optimal well-being.

Root Causes Holistic Health & Medicine

Root Causes Holistic Health and Medicine is committed to helping you achieve optimal health. Our mission is to find the root cause of your symptoms and help you achieve wellness through correcting any contributing factors that can be corrected. We look at you as a whole person, and not just a collection of symptoms to be corrected. We strive for balance and wellness through lifestyle management, nutrition and naturally occurring compounds and therapies whenever possible.



Doreen DeStefano, NhD, APRN, DNP
Dr. DeStefano came to Fort Myers in the early 1980's, leaving and coming back again several times until finally settling here in 2001. She has a lifelong background in health and wellness that began in middle school when she started running.

Dr. DeStefano is also a lifelong student. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing, and another in exercise physiology. She has a Masters (ABT) in criminology, a Master's in public business administration and a Master's in nursing. She holds a doctorate in natural health and is a licensed Advanced Practice Registered Nurse. She holds numerous licenses and certifications from advanced practice training. She continues to attend educational seminars in integrative and functional medicine twice a year to stay abreast of the most recent, cutting edge therapies available.

Her practice is centered on naturopathic principles that include healing the whole person on various levels and avoiding pharmaceutical intervention unless absolutely necessary. She believes your health is within your control. Her goal is to help you achieve maximum health.



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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

Compression 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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THE CONNECTION BETWEEN SLEEP, TESTOSTERONE AND SEXUAL HEALTH

By Dr. Ernesto Eusebio

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

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

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

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

Why Everyday Foot Pain Happens

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

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

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

Everyday Ways to Ease Foot Pain

1. Keep your calves and arches limber

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

2. Choose shoes with intention

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

3. Pay attention to how you stand

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

4. Move—mindfully

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

5. Give your feet breaks

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

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

The Everyday Joys Foot Pain Gets in the Way Of

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

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

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

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

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

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

Step 1: The 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 Strenghtener, 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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Marsh Cove Dental Brings Specialized Full-Arch Implant Expertise to Fort Myers

By Dr. Eugene Titov and Dr. Olga Titov

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

Specialized Full-Arch Implant Center

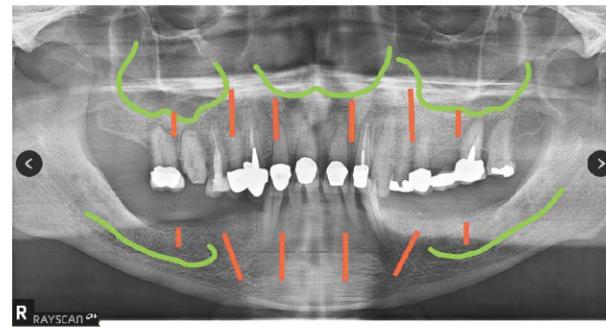
The new Fort Myers location will exclusively focus on full-arch dental implants – also known as All-On-4, Teeth-In-A-Day, or Same-Day Teeth – making them Southwest Florida's premier destination for this life-changing procedure. By concentrating solely on full-arch treatments, Marsh Cove's specialized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

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

State-of-the-Art Technology Under One Roof

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

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



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

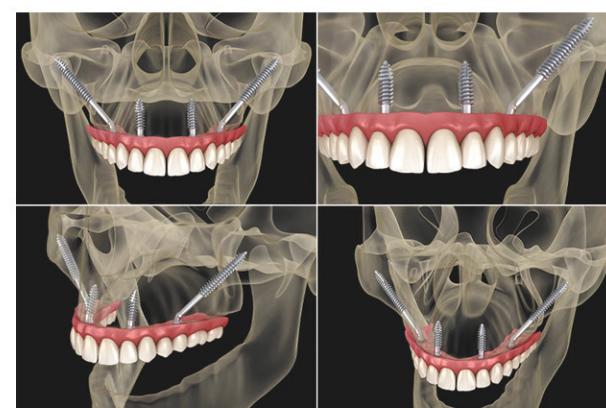
Advanced Solutions for Complex Cases

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

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

Comprehensive Care with Patient Safety Focus

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



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

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

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



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See What Our Patients Say



REGINA M.

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



DANIEL B.

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



CHRIS S.



PAMELA F.

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



KAREN W.



CHERYL D.



JOHNNY

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



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



PAMELA

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

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



TOBY R.



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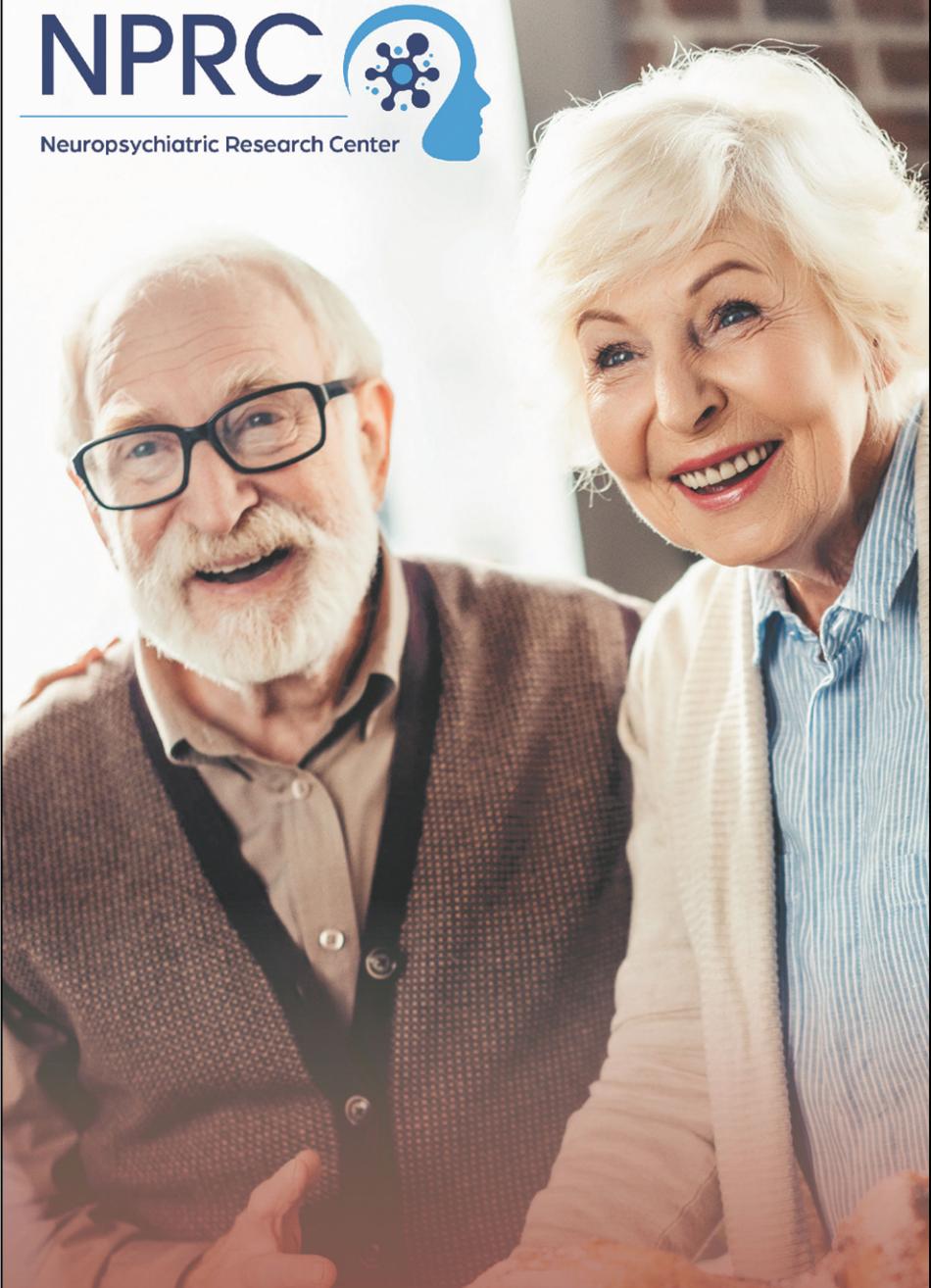


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BEYOND BUBBLE BATHS, SPA DAYS: True Self-Care May Require a Deeper Approach

By Rick Weber

Rebeca 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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Understanding Polycystic Kidney Disease

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

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

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

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

The primary symptoms of PKD are as follows:

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

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

PKD Treatment

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

How Can the Progression of Kidney Disease Be Delayed?

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

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

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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.

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- Polycystic Kidney Disease
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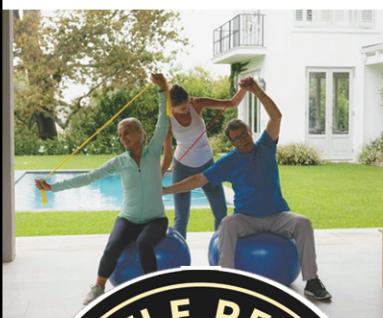


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What is Rhinitis?

An In-Depth Look at This Common Nasal Condition

Rhinitis 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.



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



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



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UNDERSTANDING DE QUERVAIN'S TENDINITIS: A MODERN EPIDEMIC OF THE DIGITAL AGE

By Dennis O. Sagini, MD

In my years of practice, I've witnessed a significant increase in patients presenting with a sharp, stabbing pain at the base of their thumb that radiates up their forearm. This condition, known as de Quervain's tendinitis, has become increasingly common in our smartphone-dominated society, earning it the nickname "mother's thumb" or "texting thumb."

What Is De Quervain's Tendinitis?

De Quervain's tendinitis is an inflammatory condition affecting the tendons on the thumb side of the wrist. Specifically, it involves the abductor pollicis longus and extensor pollicis brevis tendons, which control thumb movement and pass through a narrow tunnel called the first dorsal compartment. When these tendons become swollen or irritated, they struggle to glide smoothly through this tight space, causing pain and restricting movement.

The Modern Triggers

While this condition was first described by Swiss surgeon Fritz de Quervain in 1895, today's triggers are distinctly contemporary. The repetitive thumb movements required for texting, gaming, and smartphone use have made this condition remarkably prevalent among younger demographics. New mothers are particularly susceptible due to hormonal changes during pregnancy and the repetitive lifting motions required when caring for infants.

Other common causes include repetitive wrist movements in occupations such as carpentry, gardening, or assembly line work. Athletes involved in racquet sports or rowing may also develop this condition due to repetitive gripping motions.

Recognizing the Symptoms

Patients typically describe a gradual onset of pain and swelling near the base of the thumb. The pain often worsens with thumb and wrist movement, particularly when making a fist, grasping objects, or turning the wrist. Many report difficulty performing simple tasks like opening jars, turning door handles, or even holding their morning coffee cup.

The hallmark diagnostic test is Finkelstein's test, where patients make a fist with their thumb tucked inside their fingers, then bend their wrist toward their little finger. A positive test reproduces the characteristic sharp pain along the thumb side of the wrist.



Treatment Approaches

Early intervention is crucial for optimal outcomes. Initial treatment focuses on rest and activity modification. I often recommend patients avoid repetitive thumb movements and consider ergonomic adjustments to their workspace or device usage patterns.

Conservative treatment includes ice application during acute phases, followed by gentle stretching exercises. Thumb spica splinting can provide significant relief by immobilizing the affected tendons. Anti-inflammatory medications may help reduce swelling and pain.

For persistent cases, corticosteroid injections into the tendon sheath can provide dramatic relief. However, when conservative measures fail after several months, surgical release of the first dorsal compartment may be necessary.

Prevention and Prognosis

Prevention centers on ergonomic awareness and activity modification. Taking regular breaks from repetitive activities, maintaining neutral wrist positions, and strengthening exercises can significantly reduce risk.

With proper treatment, most patients experience complete resolution of symptoms. The key is early recognition and appropriate intervention, preventing this manageable condition from becoming a chronic, debilitating problem that affects daily quality of life.

If you're experiencing thumb or wrist pain that may be related to de Quervain's tendinitis, don't let it progress to a more serious condition. Early diagnosis and treatment are essential for the best outcomes. Contact our office at 239-302-3216 to schedule a consultation and take the first step toward pain-free movement and improved quality of life.



Dennis O. Sagini, MD

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

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

Dr. Sagini is a member of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the American Medical Association, the Florida Medical Association, and the American Society for Surgery of the Hand.

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



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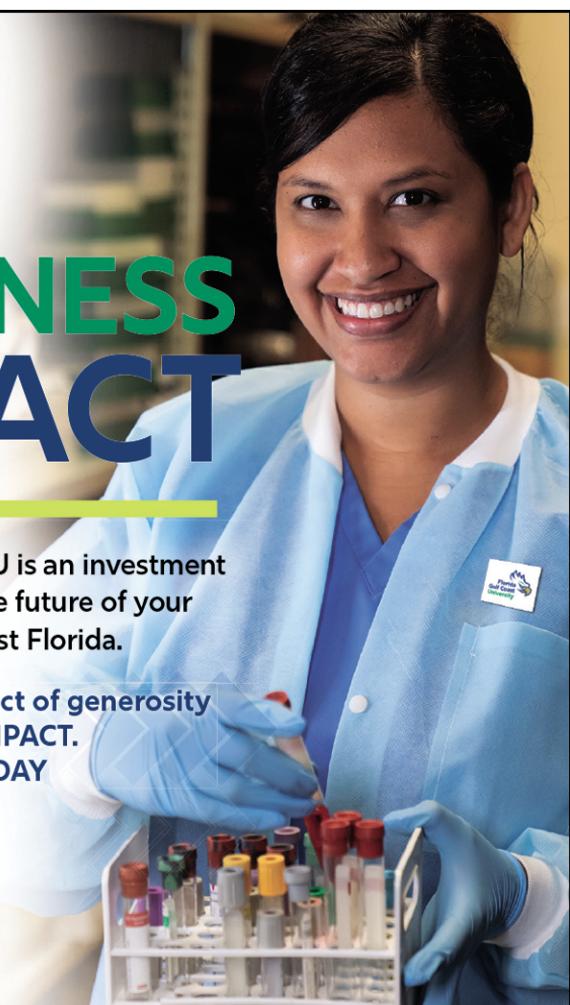
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WHEN URINARY TRACT INFECTIONS KEEP COMING BACK

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

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- **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

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MAKE YOUR SMILE YOUR NEW YEARS RESOLUTION!

By KELLY M. DAINIAK, DMD, GENERAL DENTIST

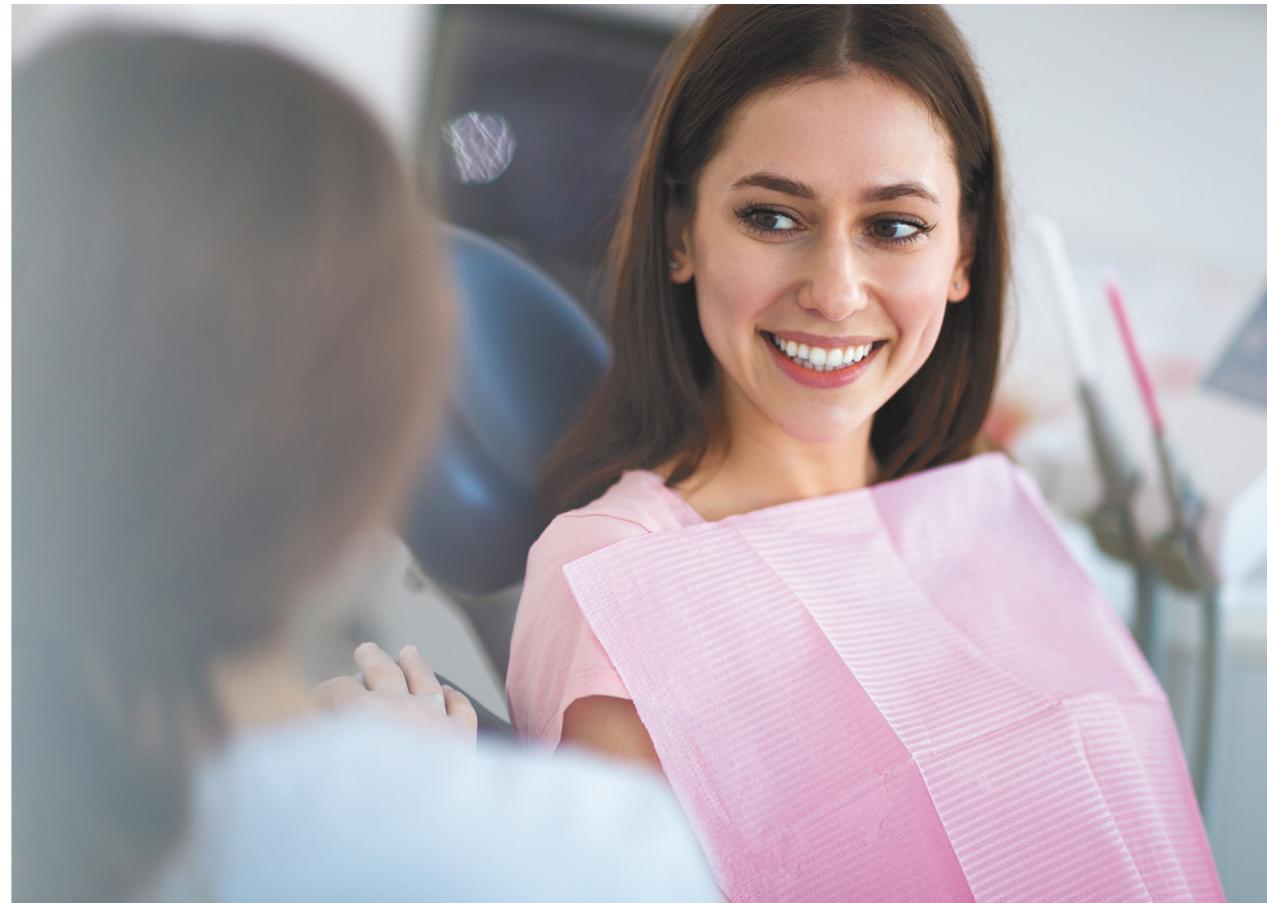
By now, we've made a good start to the New Year 2026. If you are like many out there you forget how important your teeth are in your life. Make 2026 the year you take care of your dental health!

Every day we rely on our teeth to communicate, to nourish and to express ourselves. We take for granted our teeth that have been with us since we were 6+ years old. Your mouth is the beginning portion of your digestive tract. Foods are mechanically broken down with your teeth and chemically broken down with saliva and enzymes, we abuse our teeth with harsh liquids, hard foods, bad chemicals (cigarettes) and sometimes paroxysmal habits (clenching or grinding). Our teeth are significant when speaking (phonetics) and expressing our emotions. A smile goes a long way!

If you are like many out there, this new year, make 2026 the year we start to take care of our teeth! The consequences of no teeth are significant. A little TLC goes a long way to preserve your quality of life.

- 1. Start by getting a thorough dental exam and healthy dental cleaning.**
- 2. Take care of any gum disease or dental caries.**
- 3. Repair any fractured or broken teeth.**
- 4. Brush and floss at least twice a day.**
- 5. Limit sugary and carbonated drinks.**
- 6. Stop smoking and using all nicotine products.**
- 7. Brighten your smile with dental office whitening.**

What to look for in a competent dental provider: a doctor who takes the time and listens to your concerns, a doctor who is thorough and not rushed, a doctor who cares about your medical and dental needs and a doctor who does what is right for you (after explaining the diagnosis and treatment options).



Dr. Kelly M. Dainiak is a Hospital Residency trained General Dentist who takes pride in caring for her patients' well-being.

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

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

Specializes in Sexual Medicine and Beauty

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

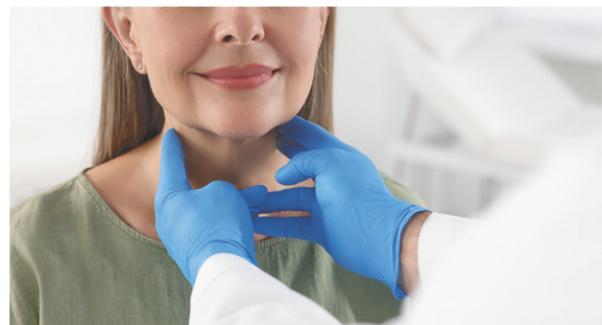
Research has shown that hypothyroidism and hyperthyroidism (producing too little or too much thyroid hormones, respectively) have been associated with sex hormone concentrations and, more specifically, sexual dysfunction.

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
- Selenium
- Zinc
- Iron
- Magnesium
- Copper
- Vitamin B12
- 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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COMPASSIONATE HOME CARE:

Empowering Independence in Southwest Florida

By Dennis Agrusti

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

A Philosophy Rooted in Compassion

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

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

Personalized Care That Adapts to Life's Changes

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

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



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

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

The Extended Family Approach

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

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

Supporting Independence Through Dependable Care

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

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

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

About Dennis Agrusti, Owner

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

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

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



Making Life Easier®



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STRESS AND THE SILENT STRAIN: HOW CALMING YOUR MIND PROTECTS YOUR HEART

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

The Hidden Link Between Stress and Heart Health

When most people think of heart health, they picture diet, exercise, or blood pressure — but not necessarily stress. Yet stress may be one of the most overlooked risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

When you feel anxious, overextended, or emotionally tense, your body releases a flood of stress hormones like cortisol and adrenaline. In the short term, this helps you push through a tough moment. But when those stress signals never shut off, your heart and blood vessels stay on constant alert — leading to higher blood pressure, inflammation, and strain on the cardiovascular system.

This is what we call the “**silent strain**”: the hidden wear-and-tear that builds up in the background of our busy lives.

The good news? You can train your brain to break that cycle — naturally.

How the Brain and Heart Work Together

Your brain and heart are in constant communication. Every heartbeat is influenced by signals from your nervous system, which responds to your emotional state. When the brain’s stress circuits stay overactive — particularly in the **amygdala** and **hypothalamus** — they send a steady stream of “fight-or-flight” messages through the body.

Over time, this constant tension can:

- Keep blood pressure elevated
- Increase heart rate variability (HRV) instability
- Interfere with deep sleep
- Reduce recovery after exercise
- Accelerate arterial aging

That’s why emotional wellness is essential to physical wellness. You can’t fully protect your heart without also caring for your mind.

A New Approach to Heart Health

At **Novaré® Medical & Wellness**, we help patients care for both their body and their brain.

One of the most innovative tools we use is **Exomind™**, a non-invasive therapy that helps calm the mind, balance the nervous system, and reduce the effects of chronic stress.

Exomind uses a technology called **ExoTMS™** (Targeted Magnetic Stimulation). It gently activates areas of the brain responsible for regulating mood, focus, and emotional control — especially the prefrontal cortex, which

helps quiet the body’s stress response. The therapy is **FDA-cleared, drug-free**, and completely painless.

Each session lasts about 20 minutes, and many patients describe it as a deeply relaxing experience — almost like giving their mind permission to exhale.

The Science of Stress Relief

In multiple studies, Exomind™ has shown measurable improvements in mental and emotional wellness:

- **83% of participants** reported feeling less stressed and more positive.
- **82%** reported improved mood.
- **88%** experienced better sleep and relaxation.

When the brain returns to balance, the body follows. Patients often notice their blood pressure stabilizing, sleep improving, and energy returning — all important factors in long-term heart health.

These results align with broader research on transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS), which has been shown to reduce overactivity in the amygdala and strengthen pre-frontal control — helping the body exit the chronic “fight-or-flight” mode that keeps the heart under strain.

Stress: The Modern Heart Risk

Even if you eat well and stay active, ongoing emotional stress can quietly undermine your efforts. After age 45, the body’s resilience to stress declines — cortisol levels remain elevated longer, and blood vessels become more sensitive to tension. That’s why managing emotional stress isn’t just a mental health issue — it’s a longevity strategy.

Consider this: The American Heart Association now recognizes chronic stress, anxiety, and depression as independent risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

Yet most people still approach stress as something they just have to “push through.” At Novaré, we help patients replace that cycle of strain with one of restoration — teaching the body and brain how to recover, rest, and renew.

Restoring Balance: A Whole-Body Perspective

Our approach to wellness is integrative by design. Exomind™ focuses on the **neural balance** that supports calm and clarity, while our other advanced therapies help the body build strength, stability, and circulation.

- **EmsculptNeo** improves muscle tone and metabolism, helping regulate blood sugar and heart function.

“You can’t separate mental stress from physical heart strain — but you can retrain your brain to protect both.”

- **Emsella** strengthens the pelvic core, improving posture and circulation.

- **Chiropractic and regenerative therapies** help maintain alignment, reducing nerve interference and physical tension.

Together, these therapies support a system-wide sense of vitality — what we call our **Core-to-Mind™ philosophy**. When your body feels strong and your brain feels balanced, your heart naturally thrives.

Real Stories of Renewal

Our patients often say that Exomind™ gave them back a sense of calm they didn’t realize they’d lost.

- One man in his 60s noticed that his blood pressure began to drop within weeks as his stress level normalized.
- A woman managing long-term anxiety described her sessions as “the first time my mind stopped racing.”
- Another patient shared, “*I feel lighter — like my whole body can finally relax again.*”

When the brain learns to let go, the body follows suit. That’s the true essence of wellness — not just the absence of disease, but the presence of balance.

This February, Put Your Heart First

Your heart does more than keep you alive — it reflects how you live. If chronic stress, anxiety, or fatigue have taken their toll, it’s time to take care of your most important muscle from the inside out.

At **Novaré® Medical & Wellness**, we offer complimentary consultations to help you explore how Exomind™ and our integrated programs can help protect your heart, calm your mind, and restore your energy.

Call **239-497-9355** to learn more. Let this February be the month you reconnect with peace, balance, and your heart’s natural rhythm.



NovareWellness.com

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Fort Myers, FL 33908



2026 Open Enrollment is Here!

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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At Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics, we believe expert rehabilitation should be both accessible and convenient. Serving Southwest Florida, our licensed occupational and physical therapists provide personalized, one-on-one care in the comfort of your home. Our services include general OT and PT, advanced neuro-based treatments for conditions such as stroke and Parkinson's disease, and now, specialized lymphedema therapy.

We are proud to offer treatment through the internationally recognized Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT) approach—the gold standard for managing lymphedema. This comprehensive method combines manual lymphatic drainage, compression wrapping, exercise, and skin care to effectively reduce swelling, improve mobility, and protect long-term health.

Our team treats lymphedema caused by a variety of conditions, including breast cancer treatment, chronic venous insufficiency, surgery, and trauma. Every plan is customized to meet the unique needs of the patient, with a focus on improving daily function and overall quality of life.

To help patients maintain results, we also provide in-house Durable Medical Equipment (DME) services. Our therapists measure, fit, and order compression garments tailored to each individual, ensuring the right solution for long-term management. By handling fittings directly, we simplify the process and remove common barriers to care.

At the heart of Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics is a mission to deliver evidence-based, compassionate care—where it matters most: at home. Whether you are recovering from surgery, managing a neurological condition, or living with lymphedema, our goal is to support your independence, confidence, and comfort every step of the way.



WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM OUR SERVICES?

Perfect for:

- Stroke survivors and Parkinson's patients
- Cancer survivors with lymphedema
- Post-surgical patients with swelling
- Those with mobility or transportation challenges
- Seniors preferring home-based care
- Anyone needing specialized rehabilitation in Southwest Florida

Experience gold-standard therapy in the comfort of your own home.

Meet the Co-Owners:

Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics is co-owned by James Ferrara, OTR/L, CLWT, and Lexie Lundquist, OTR/L, CLWT, who bring a powerful blend of experience, innovation, and dedication to patient care.



Jim Ferrara received his Master's Degree in Occupational Therapy from Spalding University in 2006, and has been a certified lymphedema therapist for over six years. As a seasoned business owner for

more than five years, he integrates advanced wound care and lymphedema management into effective therapy, helping patients achieve meaningful recovery even in complex cases.



Lexie Lundquist earned her Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from the University of Florida in 2022 and became a certified lymphedema therapist in 2023. Lexie is passionate about empowering patients through providing education, hands-on treatment, and personalized plans of care, and making a difference for her patient's lives.

Together, Jim and Lexie lead Mobile Rehab & Lymphatics with a shared vision: to bring gold-standard, patient-centered therapy directly to the people of Southwest Florida. CALL 239-558-0216 TODAY!

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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 time-tested 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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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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What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

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

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

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

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

In his book, *"The Unknown God: Searching for spiritual 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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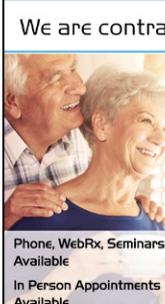
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