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Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

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FREE 

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YOUR HEART
HEALTH AT
EVERY AGE**

**THE ART
OF AGING
GRACEFULLY**

**STEPPING INTO
THE UNKNOWN**

**Parkinson's Disease From
My Perspective**

**RESTORING
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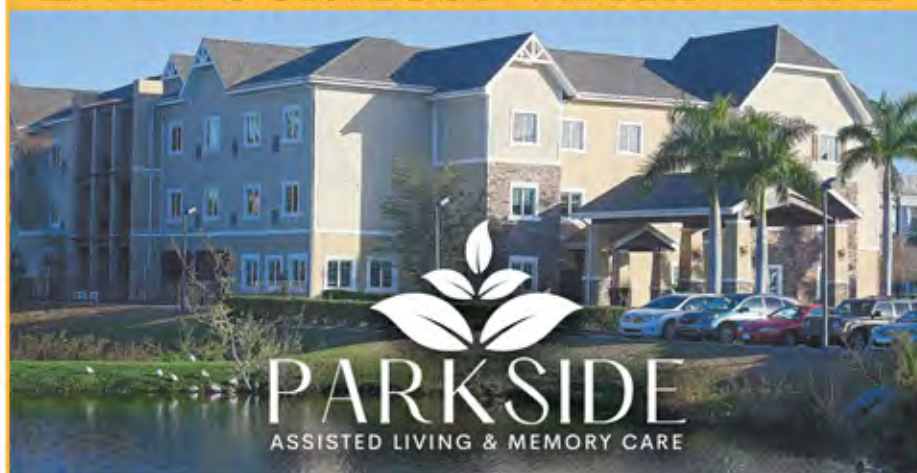


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NICOTINE'S EFFECT ON THE BRAIN

Mark Twain once said “quitting smoking is easy. I should know, I have done it a thousand times.” Many tobacco users may be able to relate to this statement as it often requires multiple attempts to kick the habit for good.

There are several reasons quitting smoking is challenging. First, it is legal for adults to use tobacco products; therefore, there is less legal risk with tobacco than with other illegal substances. Second, nicotine is available for purchase at many convenient locations. The third and most significant reason is due to nicotine's effect on the brain. In fact, research has shown that nicotine is as addictive as alcohol, heroin, and cocaine and is often more difficult to quit.¹

When an individual smokes a cigarette, nicotine is delivered to the brain within seven seconds. Once in the brain, nicotine activates seven different neurotransmitters – many of which are responsible for pleasure, appetite suppression, reduction of tension and anxiety and increased focus. These outcomes can be perceived as positive and rewarding which strengthens the addiction to nicotine. It is important that individuals find other ways to get these same benefits without the tobacco products when quitting. Quitting tobacco involves “retraining” the brain's reward pathway as nicotine levels are reduced during the quit process.

The addiction to nicotine itself accounts for the biological component of addiction; however, addiction can happen on the psychological and cultural level as well. Tobacco can be used as a coping mechanism during challenging situations and as self-medication. Developing a dependence on tobacco during the tough times can make quitting even harder. Tobacco may also be promoted as part of social activities and norms.

Although quitting tobacco can be challenging, it can be done! According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, more than three out of five adults who have ever smoked cigarettes have quit. It is important to seek out support when quitting tobacco as those that attempt to quit on their own have a success rate of about 5-7%. **Group sessions** through Gulfcoast South AHEC and Tobacco Free Florida address all aspects of nicotine addiction, in addition to helping you develop a quit plan and identify your quit date. Studies have shown that group sessions plus the use of Nicotine Replacement Therapy can more than double your chances of quitting and staying quit.²

Quitting tobacco for good comes with many benefits to your **physical** and **psychological** health. These benefits are numerous and will greatly improve the quality of life for individuals who quit for many years to come.



*Help quitting tobacco is free! Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center (GSAHEC), as part of the Group Quit option of Tobacco Free Florida's Quit Your Way program—offers free group quit sessions to help someone quit all forms of tobacco. These group sessions held virtually and in-person, provide information about the benefits of quitting, managing stress and triggers, and will assist you with developing your own customized quit plan. **Free** nicotine replacement therapy in the form of patches, gum, or lozenges (if medically appropriate and while supplies last) is provided with the session. Attendees will also receive a participant workbook, quit kit materials, and follow up support from a trained tobacco treatment specialist. Contact us today at **866-534-7909** or visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/groupquitcalendar to schedule a class or learn more about the program!*

References:

1 https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/smoking-cessation-fast-facts/index.html

2 Tools to Quit: Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Cessation Program Participant Toolkit. Area Health Education Centers. 2018.



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Caring for Your Heart Health at Every Age

Your heart works hard for you every day, and taking care of it is a lifelong commitment. The steps you take in each decade of life can make a big difference in reducing your risk of heart disease and improving your overall well-being. Here's how to keep your heart healthy from young adulthood through your 60s and beyond.

Building Healthy Heart Habits in Your 20s

It's never too early to start caring for your heart. If you don't already have one, establish a relationship with a primary care provider. This can be a doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant who specializes in either internal medicine or family medicine. In addition to getting care when you're sick, visit your primary care provider annually for wellness exams, and to talk about your diet, lifestyle and any health concerns you may have. They'll also be able to monitor your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar to get a good glimpse of your general heart health.

Staying physically active is another beneficial tool to support your heart health, and it's a lot easier to maintain an active lifestyle when you start at an earlier age. Aim for aerobic exercise three to four times — about 75 minutes of vigorous activity or 150 minutes of moderate activity — per week, in addition to strength training. You can start slower if you're just beginning and work your way up to regular exercise, if needed.

Navigating Stress, Blood Pressure and Cholesterol in Your 30s

It's not uncommon to experience many big life changes throughout your 30s. This is often a time when many people start a family, purchase their first home or work their way up a career ladder. While these milestones are all great accomplishments, they often lead to increased stress, less sleep and, for some, anxiety or depression — all of which cause higher blood pressure, inflammation and increased risk of heart disease.



To combat these negative side effects, adequate sleep and routine exercise are vital. It's also a good idea to have your cholesterol checked during your 30s, even if you feel healthy, and as often as annually if you have risk factors like diabetes or a family history of heart disease. Detecting high cholesterol or blood pressure early can help you make lifestyle changes before they become bigger issues. Consider incorporating stress-reducing activities like yoga, prayer or simply taking time for hobbies you enjoy — these small steps can make a big difference for your heart.

Your 40s: Time for a Midlife Health Check-In

By your 40s, your metabolism may slow down and weight can creep up more easily, which can impact your heart health. This is the perfect time to schedule a comprehensive checkup that includes blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar screenings. If you haven't already, talk to your health care provider if you have a family history of heart disease, as genetics can play a significant role in your risk.

Maintaining a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and whole grains becomes even more important now. Pair that with regular physical activity and limit processed foods and added sugars. If you smoke, quitting is one of the most powerful steps you can take to protect your heart.

Prevention and Management in Your 50s

Your 50s are often when heart disease risk factors become more pronounced, so prevention and management are key. Continue with annual wellness visits and ask about additional screenings for conditions such as diabetes, which can increase the risk of heart disease. If you've already been diagnosed with high blood pressure or high cholesterol, work closely with your provider to manage these conditions through medication, lifestyle changes or both.

This is also a good time to evaluate your stress levels and sleep habits. Chronic stress and poor sleep can accelerate heart problems, so prioritize relaxation techniques and aim for seven to eight hours of quality sleep each night.

Heart-Healthy Aging in Your 60s and Beyond

In your 60s and later, heart health becomes even more critical. Regular checkups should include discussions about any new symptoms, such as shortness of breath or chest discomfort, and ongoing monitoring of blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar. Staying active is still important — even light activities like walking, swimming or gardening can help keep your heart strong.

Nutrition plays a significant role at this stage, so focus on heart-healthy foods and watch your portion sizes. Social connections and mental health also matter; loneliness and depression can negatively affect heart health, so it's important to stay engaged with family, friends and community activities.

Your Heart Is in Good Hands

Small, consistent changes in diet, exercise, stress management and routine checkups can add up to big health benefits over time. No matter your age, it's never too late to start caring for your heart. Talk to your health care provider about your risk factors and create a plan that works for you, so you can enjoy a healthier, stronger heart for years to come.

To learn more about our heart and vascular care visit AdventHealthPortCharlotte.com.

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STEPPING INTO THE UNKNOWN: PARKINSON'S DISEASE FROM MY PERSPECTIVE

By Dr. Sahiba Singh, DPM - Family Foot & Leg Center

By the time many patients with Parkinson's disease reach my clinic here in Port Charlotte, they aren't typically thinking about their brain. They are thinking about their feet.

As a podiatrist at Family Foot & Leg Center, I occupy a small but significant corner in the multidisciplinary care of those living with Parkinson's. While the condition is widely recognized for tremors and stiffness, its impact on the lower limbs is frequently overlooked. Yet, for many of my patients, it is foot pain, a loss of balance, or a sudden fall that first disrupts their daily life in a tangible, frightening way.

The Ground-Level Impact of a Neurological Disorder
Parkinson's is a progressive neurological disorder that results from the gradual loss of dopamine-producing cells. We often talk about the "classic" symptoms—resting tremors, rigidity, and bradykinesia (slowness of movement). But what does this actually mean for your feet?

In simple terms: **everything.**

Walking is a complex symphony of neurological signals and musculoskeletal coordination. Every step requires precise timing, muscle activation, joint flexibility, and sensory feedback. When Parkinson's interferes with these systems, I see gait become altered in distinctive and sometimes dangerous ways.

Common Challenges I See in the Clinic

There are several hallmark patterns I look for when evaluating a patient with Parkinson's:

- **The "Shuffling Gait":** Patients take small, hesitant steps, often with reduced arm swing. When the heel doesn't strike the ground properly, it leads to increased pressure on the forefoot. Over time, this causes painful calluses and metatarsalgia (pain under the ball of the foot).
- **Freezing of Gait:** This is the sensation that your feet are "glued" to the floor. From a podiatric perspective, this sudden hesitation shifts weight unpredictably, which is a major contributor to fall risk.
- **Dystonia (Toes Curling):** Rigidity can cause the toes to curl or "claw" involuntarily. This makes wearing shoes incredibly uncomfortable and leads to secondary issues like corns, ulcers, or nail trauma.



Why Foot Health is a Safety Issue

The feet are rich in sensory receptors that tell your brain about surface changes and body position. When Parkinson's affects your processing speed, a loose rug or a slightly uneven sidewalk becomes a major hazard.

I also see many patients struggling with basic nail care. Tremors and reduced dexterity make it difficult to trim nails safely, leading to ingrown toenails or fungal infections. Left untreated, these "minor" issues cause pain that further alters your gait, creating a cycle of declining mobility and increasing fatigue.

How We Can Help: Practical Interventions

At Family Foot & Leg Center, our goal is to address these mechanical consequences at ground level. Some of the most effective tools we use include:

- **Strategic Footwear:** I often recommend shoes that are lightweight but supportive, with firm heel counters and non-slip soles. For those with tremors, Velcro or elastic laces are much safer and easier to manage than traditional laces.
- **Custom Orthotics:** These can redistribute pressure and improve alignment, making every step more stable.

- **Medication Windows:** I always encourage my patients to schedule their appointments during their "on" periods—the window after taking their medication when rigidity is lowest. This allows us to get the most accurate assessment of their movement.

Restoring Autonomy and Confidence

What strikes me most is the psychological dimension of foot problems. When walking becomes uncertain, confidence erodes. Patients often withdraw from social activities in Port Charlotte because they are afraid of falling.

By addressing foot pain and instability, we aren't just treating a limb—we are restoring a measure of independence. In my chair, Parkinson's isn't just defined by a tremor; it's seen in the worn patch on a shoe or the relief a patient feels when a painful corn is eased.

Mobility begins where the body meets the ground. Ensuring your feet are healthy isn't a minor detail—it is the foundation of staying active and maintaining your dignity.

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

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



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THE ART OF AGING GRACEFULLY: WHY SKIN CHECKS MATTER AT ART OF DERMATOLOGY

Our skin tells the story of our lives—every laugh line, sun-kissed moment, and year of experience. As we age, maintaining skin health becomes increasingly important, not just for aesthetics but for overall wellbeing. At Art of Dermatology, we believe that healthy aging skin begins with proactive care and regular professional assessment.

Understanding Skin's Aging Process

Skin ages through two distinct processes: intrinsic aging (determined by genetics) and extrinsic aging (influenced by environmental factors). While we cannot control our genetic timeline, we can significantly impact how external factors affect our skin.

With age, our skin naturally produces less collagen and elastin, leading to thinner, less resilient skin. Cell turnover slows, and moisture retention diminishes. Meanwhile, years of sun exposure, pollution, and lifestyle choices accelerate these changes, potentially leading to premature aging and increased risk of skin conditions, including cancer.

The Crucial Role of Regular Skin Checks

Regular dermatological examinations serve as the cornerstone of proactive skin health management. These checks provide much more than peace of mind—they can be lifesaving. Consider these compelling reasons to schedule regular visits to Art of Dermatology:

- **Early Detection of Skin Cancer:** With over one million Americans diagnosed with skin cancer annually, early detection dramatically improves treatment outcomes. Professional dermatologists can identify suspicious changes that might go unnoticed during self-examinations.
- **Personalized Aging Management:** Everyone's skin ages differently. Regular assessments allow dermatologists to craft personalized treatment plans that address your skin's unique needs, from addressing sun damage to managing age-related conditions like rosacea or seborrheic keratosis.
- **Tracking Changing Moles and Spots:** What appears as a harmless freckle today could develop concerning characteristics over time. Consistent monitoring creates a valuable baseline for detecting meaningful changes.



- **Expert Guidance on Products and Treatments:** The skincare industry overwhelms consumers with countless anti-aging products. Your dermatologist can recommend evidence-based solutions truly appropriate for your skin type and concerns.

Healthy Habits for Aging Skin

Between professional visits to Art of Dermatology, maintaining these daily habits supports optimal skin health:

- **Sun Protection:** Apply broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen daily, regardless of weather conditions. Wear protective clothing and seek shade when possible.
- **Hydration:** Both internal hydration (drinking water) and external moisturizing help maintain skin's barrier function and elasticity.
- **Gentle Cleansing:** As skin becomes more delicate with age, harsh products can cause irritation. Opt for gentle, pH-balanced cleansers.
- **Antioxidant-Rich Diet:** Consuming foods high in vitamins C, E, and omega-3 fatty acids supports skin's natural repair processes.
- **Quality Sleep:** During deep sleep, skin undergoes essential regeneration and repair processes critical for healthy aging.

The Art of Dermatology Difference

At Art of Dermatology, we combine medical expertise with aesthetic sensibility. Our comprehensive skin examinations include advanced technologies

for detecting subtle changes invisible to the naked eye. Our dermatologists take time to understand your concerns, family history, and lifestyle factors affecting your skin health.

Rather than simply treating visible problems, we partner with you in preventative care—identifying risk factors and potential issues before they manifest. This approach not only supports graceful aging but potentially prevents serious health complications.

Don't wait for visible problems to appear. Schedule your comprehensive skin check at Art of Dermatology today and take the first step toward lifetime skin health. Remember, healthy aging isn't about fighting time—it's about supporting your skin's natural processes with expert care and attention.

Your skin's journey deserves the art of professional dermatology.



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Inflammatory Lung Conditions and the Emerging Role of Stem Cell Exosomes

By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

Inflammatory lung diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, post-viral respiratory syndromes, pulmonary fibrosis, and environmental hypersensitivity pneumonitis pose ongoing challenges for patients and clinicians alike. Traditional treatments such as bronchodilators, corticosteroids, and biologic therapies are effective for managing symptoms and acute exacerbations, but many individuals continue to experience persistent inflammation and impaired lung function.

In recent years, researchers and clinicians have explored next-generation biologic approaches that aim to influence the underlying immune and tissue responses in the lung. One area of interest is stem cell-derived exosomes — microscopic vesicles released by stem cells that carry regulatory molecules involved in intercellular communication.

What Are Exosomes?

Exosomes are tiny extracellular vesicles that carry microRNAs, growth factors, and signaling proteins between cells. Unlike living stem cells, they are not capable of replicating but can influence the behavior of other cells by modulating immune responses and tissue repair processes.

Routes of Delivery: Systemic and Local Approaches

Two principal methods of administering exosome-based therapies are under investigation:

- **Intravenous delivery:** Introduces exosomes into the bloodstream, where they may interact with systemic immune pathways and support vascular and inflammatory regulation throughout the body.
- **Nebulized delivery:** Converts exosomes into an aerosol that can be inhaled directly into the airways, potentially enabling local interactions with airway epithelial cells and the surrounding immune environment.

Inflammatory Lung Conditions of Interest

- **COPD:** COPD extends beyond airflow obstruction; it encompasses chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, and progressive structural changes in the lungs. Exosome-based approaches are being investigated for their capacity to influence immune signaling and support tissue homeostasis in this context.



- **Asthma:** Adult-onset and difficult-to-control asthma involve complex immune hypersensitivities. There is emerging interest in whether exosomes might help regulate aberrant immune signaling without broad suppression.

- **Post-Viral Lung Syndromes (Post COVID Syndrome):** Persistent respiratory symptoms following viral infections — including long-term post-viral inflammatory states — may be linked to ongoing immune activation even after the virus has cleared. Immune modulatory signals from exosomes are under study in this setting.

- **Pulmonary Fibrosis:** In fibrosis, chronic inflammation can lead to irreversible structural changes in lung tissue. Exosomes are not expected to reverse established fibrosis but may interact with inflammatory pathways associated with early or ongoing fibrotic processes.

- **Environmental Hypersensitivity Pneumonitis:** This immune-mediated inflammatory response to inhaled antigens highlights the need for environmental management. Biologic modulators like exosomes are being examined for their potential to support immune recalibration once triggers are removed.

Scientific Context and Future Direction

It is important to emphasize that stem cell-derived exosomes are an area of scientific exploration, not established therapies. Rigorous clinical trials and regulatory evaluation are needed to clarify safety, efficacy, appropriate delivery methods, and long-term

outcomes. Current research draws from preclinical models and early clinical investigations demonstrating the biological activity of exosomes in immune regulation and tissue response.

As research continues, the concept of biological regulation — influencing how cells communicate and respond to stress and injury — may offer new avenues for understanding and potentially supporting lung health in inflammatory conditions.

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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Transform Your Body Goals with EmSculpt Neo

By Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

Many people set ambitious goals to transform their health, fitness, and overall well-being — yet achieving lasting body transformation through traditional means alone can feel like an uphill battle. Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology offers a revolutionary solution that can help you achieve your body goals without the usual struggle: EmSculpt Neo.

Why Traditional Fitness Approaches Fall Short

The path to achieving your ideal physique through traditional means requires unwavering dedication to countless hours at the gym, strict dietary restrictions, and often yields frustratingly slow results. Life's demands — work commitments, family responsibilities, and unexpected challenges — can quickly derail even the most determined individuals. Many people find themselves caught in a cycle of setting goals, experiencing initial motivation, then gradually losing momentum as visible results remain elusive.

This is where EmSculpt Neo changes the game entirely. This FDA-cleared treatment represents a paradigm shift in body contouring, offering results that would typically require months of intensive training and strict dieting, achieved instead through innovative technology.

What Makes EmSculpt Neo Revolutionary

EmSculpt Neo is the first and only non-invasive body shaping procedure that simultaneously builds muscle and burns fat. Using a groundbreaking combination of radiofrequency heating and high-intensity focused electromagnetic energy (HIFEM), this treatment delivers something truly remarkable: an average of 30% reduction in subcutaneous fat and a 25% increase in muscle volume.

During a single 30-minute session, EmSculpt Neo induces approximately 20,000 supramaximal muscle contractions — something impossible to achieve through voluntary exercise. These intense contractions force your muscles to adapt and grow stronger while the radiofrequency energy heats fat cells to the point of destruction. Your body then naturally eliminates these damaged fat cells over the following weeks.

Perfect for Your Body Transformation

What makes EmSculpt Neo particularly effective is its ability to target stubborn areas that resist traditional diet and exercise. Whether you're focused on sculpting defined abs, lifting and toning your buttocks, strengthening your arms, or firming your thighs and calves, EmSculpt Neo can help you achieve visible results.

The treatment is especially beneficial for individuals who are already relatively fit but struggle with stubborn pockets of fat or want to enhance muscle definition. It's also excellent for those who have plateaued in their fitness journey and need an effective boost to reach their goals.

The Island ENT Wellness Spa Difference

At Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology, your body transformation goals are supported by experienced professionals who understand that true wellness encompasses multiple dimensions of health. The practice combines medical expertise with aesthetic innovation, ensuring you receive safe, effective treatments in a comfortable, welcoming environment.

The team takes a personalized approach to each client, developing customized treatment plans based on your specific goals, body type, and desired outcomes. Most patients benefit from a series of four sessions scheduled over two weeks, though your provider will recommend the optimal treatment protocol for your unique needs.

What to Expect from Your EmSculpt Neo Journey

One of the most appealing aspects of EmSculpt Neo is its convenience. There's no downtime, no anesthesia, and no recovery period required. You can schedule a session during your lunch break and return to work immediately afterward. Many patients describe the sensation as an intensive workout, feeling muscle contractions without the exhaustion.

Results begin appearing approximately two to four weeks after your final session, with continued improvement over the following months as your body builds muscle and eliminates fat cells. Patients report feeling stronger, looking more toned, and experiencing a significant confidence boost.

Start Your Transformation Today

Instead of another cycle of ambitious goals followed by disappointment, consider a smarter approach. EmSculpt Neo at Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology can help you achieve measurable, visible results while complementing your existing healthy lifestyle efforts.

Your transformation doesn't require superhuman willpower or endless hours at the gym — it requires smart, strategic choices that work with your body's natural processes. Contact Island ENT Wellness Spa and Audiology today to schedule your consultation and discover how EmSculpt Neo can help you achieve the body confidence you've been seeking.

About Dr. Michael Jonathan Clark

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



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RETHINKING STRESS: AWARENESS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

April is Stress Awareness Month

Stress is often talked about as something to “reduce,” “manage,” or “push through.” But what if stress isn’t the problem we think it is?

April is Stress Awareness Month, and it arrives during a season that looks calm on the surface—bright skies, warmer evenings, longer days. In Florida, spring can feel like an invitation to do more, be outside more, and enjoy what winter held back. Yet for many people, stress doesn’t disappear with sunshine. Sometimes it becomes harder to recognize.

Stress isn’t always loud. Often, it shows up quietly—in disrupted sleep, irritability, difficulty concentrating, increased substance use, or a sense of emotional numbness. Awareness doesn’t begin with eliminating stress; it begins with understanding how stress lives in the body and mind.

Stress Isn’t a Weakness — It’s a Signal

We tend to treat stress as a personal failure: *I should be handling this better.* But stress is actually a biological response, not a character flaw. It’s the nervous system trying to protect you.

The challenge today isn’t stress itself—it’s **chronic stress**. When the body stays in a constant state of alert, even without immediate danger, it starts to affect mood, memory, immune function, and coping behaviors. Over time, people may rely more heavily on alcohol, medications, or avoidance just to get through the day.

Instead of asking, “How do I get rid of stress?” a more helpful question may be: “What is my stress trying to tell me?”

A New Way to Think About Stress Awareness

Traditional stress advice often focuses on doing more—more exercise, more mindfulness, more productivity hacks. But awareness can also mean **doing less**, and listening more closely.

Consider these less conventional but effective stress-awareness practices:

- **Track energy, not time.** Pay attention to when you feel mentally drained versus restored. Stress often hides in overcommitment, even to good things.

- **Notice body cues before emotions.** Jaw tension, headaches, stomach discomfort, or shallow breathing are often earlier stress indicators than anxiety or sadness.

- **Observe coping shifts.** Changes in how often or why you drink, use substances, or disengage socially can signal rising stress long before a crisis point.

- **Question “normal.”** Just because feeling exhausted or overwhelmed has become common doesn’t mean it’s healthy—or sustainable.

Awareness is not about self-criticism. It’s about curiosity.

Florida’s Unique Stress Landscape

Living in Florida brings its own blend of stressors and strengths. Heat, seasonal population shifts, hurricane preparation, caregiving for aging family members, and work schedules that don’t slow down just because it’s sunny—all of these can quietly add pressure.

At the same time, Florida’s environment offers natural opportunities for regulation. Exposure to daylight, access to water, and outdoor movement can help calm the nervous system when used intentionally. Even brief moments—like stepping outside between tasks or grounding yourself near open water—can support emotional balance.

The key is not assuming that stress should vanish just because the weather improves.

When Stress Starts to Spill Over

Unchecked stress often shows up sideways. It may look like anger when it’s actually overwhelm, isolation when it’s burnout, or substance use when it’s exhaustion.

Signs stress may be crossing into something more concerning include:

- Feeling emotionally “on edge” most days
- Increased reliance on alcohol or medications to relax or sleep
- Trouble functioning at work or home
- Loss of interest in activities that once felt grounding
- Feeling disconnected, hopeless, or out of control

These aren’t signs of failure. They’re signs that your system needs support.

Support Is a Strategy, Not a Last Resort

One of the biggest myths about stress is that you should handle it alone. In reality, humans regulate best with support.

Sometimes that support looks like lifestyle adjustments or trusted conversations. Other times, it means professional care—especially when stress intersects with anxiety, depression, or substance use.

Inpatient psychiatric care and medically supervised detox exist for moments when stress has overwhelmed usual coping strategies. These services provide structure, safety, and stabilization—allowing people to reset without judgment and without waiting for things to worsen.

Stress Awareness Is About Choice

Stress Awareness Month isn’t about eliminating stress entirely. It’s about recognizing when stress is no longer serving you—and knowing that options exist.

If you or someone you care about feels overwhelmed, stuck, or out of balance, help is available.

For urgent psychiatric care or medically supervised detox—available 24/7—North Port Behavioral Health provides compassionate assessment and stabilization close to home.

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Stress may be part of life—but facing it alone doesn’t have to be.

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TOP
DOCTOR
MAGAZINE

William J. Cole, Jr., DO, FAASCP

Double Board-Certified in Regenerative Medicine & Interventional PM&R | Founder | TheStemCellDoctors.com® | RegenaMed® | kNOWPAIN® Institute

There are moments in life when everything changes.

Sometimes it's a diagnosis that stops you in your tracks.

Multiple Sclerosis.
Parkinson's.
Alzheimer's.
Dementia.
Traumatic Brain Injury.
Long-COVID Brain Fog.

Other times, it begins quietly,

You walk into a room and forget why.
You lose your train of thought mid-sentence.
You search for a word you've used your entire life.
Your sleep becomes fractured.
Your mood shifts.
Your clarity fades.

And eventually the question rises inside you:
Is this my new normal?
Let me say something bold.
Your brain is not broken.

It just has a short in the wiring that needs fixed,
as "The Body Was Designed to Be Rebuild."

For decades, patients were told the brain does not regenerate.
That neurons do not grow back.
That degeneration is permanent.

Manage it.
Medicate it.
Slow it down.
Prepare for decline.

But what if decline is not destiny?

The brain was engineered to adapt, reorganize, and regenerate.

And I know this not just as a physician... but as a patient.

There are moments when life divides into before... and after.

Traditional neurosurgeons recommended a four-level cervical fusion with a low projected success rate. That surgery would likely have ended my career.

Mine happened when I woke up from cervical spinal decompression surgery for massive bone spurs crushing my right C-7 nerve root.

For 30 days and 30 nights before that surgery, I did not sleep.

Not "poor sleep."
Not "interrupted sleep."

I did not sleep.

If you've ever been there, you know what happens next:
You stop thinking clearly.
You stop healing.
You stop functioning.
You stop being You.

When I leaned forward post-surgery, I felt a ripping sensation deep in my neck. Then electric, cattle-prod neurologic pain shot down my arms and legs with searing intensity.

True neurologic pain is different.
It is relentless.
It is merciless.

I reached up to touch my Standard Operating Procedure neck safety collar.

It wasn't there.

And in that moment I asked:
Is this the end of my career and my ability to walk?
Will I be able to hug My Lovely Wife and kids again?

That was not a physician thinking.

That was a husband.

A father.

A man staring into uncertainty.

Instead, I chose regenerative intervention.

A series of Ultra-PRP epidural procedures rebuilt my spinal cord.

It restored function.

It restored sleep.

It restored hope.

It restored my life.

And that experience forced me to ask a bigger question:

If we can rebuild the spinal cord... why not rebuild the brain?

Millions suffer from neurological disorders labeled "progressive."

Multiple Sclerosis.
Parkinson's disease.
Alzheimer's and Dementia.
Traumatic Brain Injury.
Post-concussive syndrome.
Long-COVID neurological dysfunction.
Age-related cognitive decline.

Traditional medicine suppresses symptoms.

We activate regeneration.

At TheStemCellDoctors.com®, our mission is clear:

"Have the Body Heal the Body®."

There is nothing on God's green earth that can heal the body better than the body... Nothing.

Rebuild Your Brain™ utilizes Advanced Regenerative Technologies combined with Proprietary Procedures, Protocols, and Products designed to:

- Remove and replace dead or dying cells
- Activate reserve regenerative cells
- Enhance neurovascular circulation
- Reduce neuro-inflammation
- Stimulate synaptic reconnection
- Strengthen neural network communication
- Build Shortcuts that yield Higher Brain Functions and Core Intelligence

Brain reconstruction follows biological phases,

Phase One: Cranial Nerves Reawaken.

Sight sharpens.
Smell returns.
Taste improves.
Sound clarifies.
Balance stabilizes.

Phase Two: Brainstem Stabilizes.

Critical in Parkinson's and motor disorders.
Motor control improves.
Sleep patterns regulate.
Autonomic function recalibrates.
Balance returns.

Phase Three: Frontal Lobe Reengages.

Memory sharpens.
Focus strengthens.
Executive function improves.
Families often say, "You seem like yourself again."

Phase Four: Nano Biologics reach every corner of the brain.

At the cellular level, regenerative signaling extends into deeper neural networks as brain rewired is achieved — supporting complete transformation of mental capacity.

This is not about survival.

It is about restoring Quality in Life.

With over 100,000 interventional procedures performed throughout my career, our "Customized Regenerative" programs have helped thousands reclaim clarity, confidence, and independence.

Patients report improved cognition, stronger memory, reduced tremors, better balance, deeper sleep, stabilized mood, and renewed purpose.

No outcome is guaranteed.



But precision, placement, protocol, and patient-first care are guaranteed every time.

The brain is not a machine.

It is a living, adaptive, electrical, biochemical miracle with built-in neuroplasticity that facilitates brain regeneration.

When inflammation decreases and neural signaling strengthens, the brain does what it was designed to do:

It rebuilds.

Medicine must evolve.

Not more pills.
Not more decline.
Not more fear.

Find it.
Fix it.
Restore function.
Restore "Quality in Life."

If you or someone you love is facing MS, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, Dementia, TBI, or Long-COVID Brain dysfunction — do not accept decline as destiny.

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The Future You is waiting....As am I, so Don't Wait. Make your consultation for your "Better Brain" with Dr. Cole now.

Regulatory Disclaimer: This article is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. A proper doctor-patient relationship and evaluation are required before treatment. Some regenerative therapies may not be FDA-approved for specific indications. Individual results vary.

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STRESS BUSTERS: Focus on Mindfulness, Emotion Regulation, Distress Tolerance, Self-Compassion

By Rick Weber

The word “stress” has a negative connotation. But stress can be good—to a certain point.

Stress motivates us to take action and perform at an optimal level. As the Yerkes-Dodson law dictates, performance increases with physiological or mental arousal. Moderate stress is ideal for peak performance. If we don’t have enough stress present, we may be less likely to take action or be a little too comfortable. If we have too much stress present, we may be more likely to become overwhelmed and anxious—and our performance declines.

“Developing habits to manage stress takes time and experimentation to see what works best for you,” says Dr. Allison Jedinak, PsyD, Senior Director of the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) unit in Florida Gulf Coast University’s Marieb College of Health and Human Services.

“You may also find you need different tools in different environments. When we approach change, we may become discouraged when we don’t see immediate results. Change is difficult! We tend to engage in familiar patterns as a comfort even if these patterns are dysfunctional or unhelpful. Progress will not likely be linear. Consider what you can do to become 1% better each day. (Check out *Atomic Habits* by James Clear for more on becoming 1% better every day!) Focus on tried-and-true strategies for general health and stress management, including proper sleep, nutrition and physical movement.”

April is Stress Awareness Month, and that is one of CAPS’ main jobs on campus for FGCU students. Incorporating techniques from person-centered, cognitive-behavioral and dialectical behavior therapies, Jedinak specializes in working with college students and has experience treating anxiety, depression and relational concerns.

But many of the practices being utilized with her students for their successful academic journeys could also be applied to everybody’s lives.

“An important first step in developing emotional and relational intelligence is awareness,” she says. “Can you name what you are feeling in the moment? What might this emotion signal to you? If you are feeling angry, reflect on what may be happening for you on a deeper level.

“For example, if someone cuts you off in traffic, you may feel angry and frustrated. This may connect to deeper values related to fairness, or past experiences of being ignored or dismissed. In relationships, consider what makes you engage versus retreat. What relationship conditions make you more likely to communicate openly and honestly? Thriving relationships tend to involve emotional safety, active listening and presence, ability to resolve conflict, reliability, empathy and validation.”

There are many approaches to therapy. One modality, used in college counseling centers, is Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), developed by Dr. Marsha Linehan. We can learn about ways to manage stress through:

- **Mindfulness.** “According to DBT, mindfulness is intentionally living in awareness of the present moment and not judging or rejecting the present moment. To increase your ability to be in the moment, consider grounding yourself using the five senses. What can you see, feel, hear, smell and taste?”

- **Emotion regulation.** “Emotion regulation is understanding, managing and reducing the intensity of overwhelming emotions to improve resilience. Be aware of emotion myths such as: emotions are bad/weak and should be avoided; there is a ‘right’ way to feel in a given situation; and being emotional means being out of control. To manage emotions, which can lead to increased stress, check the facts. Emotions are set off by our thoughts and interpretations of events instead of the events themselves.

How to check the facts:

1. What is the emotion I want to change?
2. What is the event prompting my emotion?
3. What are my interpretations, thoughts and assumptions about the event?
4. Am I assuming a threat?
5. What’s the catastrophe?
6. Does my emotion and/or its intensity fit the actual facts?

- **Distress tolerance.** “At times, we may need to rapidly shift our emotions from a heightened or crisis state to function in a present moment. TIPP skills from DBT may help: temperature change, intense exercise, paced breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. To engage in temperature change, use cold water or ice packs on your face/eyes for 20-30 seconds to trigger the dive reflex, which instantly lowers heart rate and brings calm. An example of intense exercise is to do jumping jacks to dissipate adrenaline and stress. Paced breathing activates our parasympathetic nervous system. Consider the 4-7-8 method or box breathing methods.

- **4-7-8:** inhaling through the nose for four seconds, holding the breath for seven seconds and exhaling fully through the mouth for eight seconds, repeated four times to reduce stress, anxiety and aid sleep.

- **Box breathing:** inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling and holding again, typically for four seconds each, creating a 16-second cycle.

- **Self-compassion.** Self-compassion is the act of being kind to oneself. It is a muscle we must exercise. Self-talk tends to be critical and may connect to messages that were communicated about us or our performance from our parents, teachers, coaches, bosses, etc. Self-compassion involves three components, self-kindness, acknowledging common humanity and mindfulness. Put self-compassion into action by using kind and comforting words toward oneself when struggling, recognize that failure is a part of being human, balance perspective instead of over-identifying problems and proactively comfort and soothe yourself.” She recommends checking out more information about self-compassion, including resources for practice, on Dr. Kristin Neff’s website (self-compassion.org).

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MEMORY CARE, PERSONALIZED FOR YOU

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

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

Understanding the Gender-Specific Model

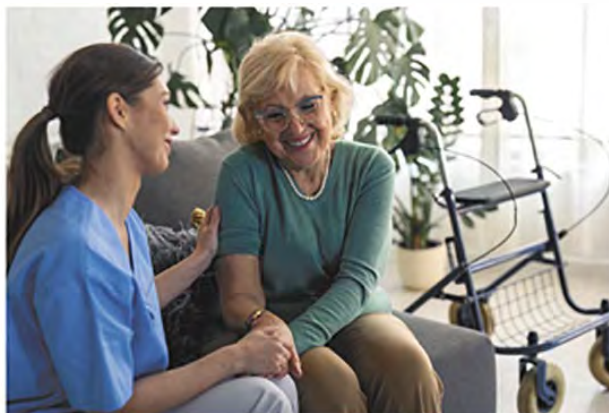
At Parkside's memory care cottage, male residents live on one dedicated floor while female residents occupy another, creating distinct living environments tailored to each gender's specific needs. This separation isn't about discrimination—it's about optimization. Research indicates that individuals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

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

The Science Behind Gender-Specific Care

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

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



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

Comprehensive Memory Care Services

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

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

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

Family-Centered Approach

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

Setting the Standard for Innovation

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

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

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

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

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RESTORING FUNCTION AND STRENGTH: A GUIDE TO UPPER EXTREMITY EXERCISE AND THERAPY

By Dennis O. Sagini, MD

The upper extremities—comprising the shoulders, arms, elbows, forearms, wrists, and hands—are essential for nearly every activity we perform throughout the day. From typing on a keyboard to lifting groceries, cooking meals to embracing loved ones, our upper limbs enable us to interact with the world around us. When injury, surgery, or chronic conditions compromise upper extremity function, targeted exercise and therapy become crucial for recovery and maintaining quality of life.

Understanding Upper Extremity Dysfunction

Upper extremity problems can arise from various sources. Rotator cuff injuries, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel syndrome, and arthritis are among the most common conditions affecting these structures. Additionally, stroke, nerve injuries, fractures, and post-surgical rehabilitation often necessitate comprehensive therapeutic intervention. Without proper treatment, these conditions can lead to decreased range of motion, muscle weakness, chronic pain, and significant functional limitations.

The Role of Therapeutic Exercise

Upper extremity exercise therapy focuses on restoring strength, flexibility, coordination, and functional capacity. A well-designed program addresses multiple components simultaneously. Range of motion exercises help maintain or improve joint flexibility, preventing stiffness and contractures. Strengthening exercises rebuild muscle power, enabling patients to perform daily activities with greater ease and confidence. Proprioceptive training enhances spatial awareness and coordination, which is particularly important after neurological injuries.

Key Components of Upper Extremity Therapy

Effective therapy begins with a thorough assessment by qualified healthcare professionals. Physical and occupational therapists evaluate strength, range of motion, pain levels, and functional abilities to develop individualized treatment plans. Early mobilization, when appropriate, helps prevent complications such as frozen shoulder or muscle atrophy.

Progressive resistance training forms the cornerstone of strengthening programs. Starting with gentle exercises using minimal resistance, patients



gradually advance to more challenging activities as their condition improves. Resistance bands, light weights, and therapeutic putty are commonly employed tools that provide adjustable resistance levels.

Flexibility exercises are equally important. Gentle stretching routines maintain tissue elasticity and joint mobility. For conditions like adhesive capsulitis or post-fracture stiffness, dedicated stretching protocols can significantly improve outcomes.

Functional Training and Real-World Application

The ultimate goal of upper extremity therapy extends beyond isolated exercises. Functional training incorporates activities that mirror real-life tasks, ensuring that improvements translate into practical benefits. Reaching overhead to retrieve objects, manipulating buttons and zippers, writing, and food preparation are examples of functional activities integrated into therapy sessions.

Home Exercise Programs and Long-Term Success

Consistency is paramount in rehabilitation. While supervised therapy sessions provide expert guidance and motivation, home exercise programs empower patients to take an active role in their recovery. Compliance with prescribed exercises accelerates healing and helps maintain gains achieved during formal therapy.

Conclusion

Upper extremity exercise and therapy represent powerful tools for restoring function and improving quality of life. Whether recovering from injury, managing chronic conditions, or regaining abilities after surgery, a comprehensive approach that combines professional guidance with patient dedication yields the best outcomes. If you're experiencing upper extremity limitations, consult with your healthcare provider to determine whether therapeutic intervention could benefit you.

With proper treatment and commitment, most individuals can achieve significant functional improvements and return to the activities they value most. 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 Bachelors of Science in Microbiology from the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma in 1998 and his Doctor of Medicine at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA in 2002. It was during medical school training that Dr. Sagini developed an interest in orthopaedic surgery. His residency in orthopaedic surgery was completed at Howard University Hospital, Washington, DC. Dr. Sagini completed his fellowship training in Hand and Upper Extremity surgery at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in Pittsburgh, PA.

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

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



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THE LINK BETWEEN PARKINSON'S DISEASE & HEARING LOSS

By Dr. Noël Crosby, Au.D.

Parkinson's disease is a neurodegenerative disorder that primarily affects movement, causing symptoms such as tremors, stiffness, and impaired balance. However, recent research suggests that Parkinson's may also be associated with other health conditions, including hearing loss. While the connection between these two conditions is still being investigated, understanding their relationship could lead to better management and treatment for individuals living with Parkinson's.

Hearing loss is not typically considered a primary symptom of Parkinson's disease. However, studies have shown a higher prevalence of hearing impairment among individuals with Parkinson's compared to the general population. One study published in the journal JAMA Neurology found that people with Parkinson's were more likely to experience hearing loss, particularly in higher frequencies, even after controlling for age-related factors.

The exact mechanism linking Parkinson's disease and hearing loss remains unclear, but several theories have been proposed. One possibility is that both conditions share underlying pathological processes, such as inflammation and oxidative stress, which can damage both the auditory and motor systems. Another theory suggests that certain neurotransmitter imbalances associated with Parkinson's may also affect auditory function.

Furthermore, some researchers believe that certain medications used to treat Parkinson's could contribute to hearing loss. For example, dopamine agonists, agonists, which are commonly prescribed to alleviate

motor symptoms, have been associated with auditory side effects in some cases. However, more research is needed to determine the extent of this potential association.

The impact of hearing loss on individuals with Parkinson's disease can be significant. Communication difficulties can exacerbate social isolation and decrease quality of life for those already coping with the challenges of a progressive neurological disorder. Additionally, hearing impairment may complicate the management of Parkinson's symptoms, as it can affect a person's ability to follow instructions from healthcare providers and participate in rehabilitation programs effectively.

Recognizing the potential link between Parkinson's disease and hearing loss underscores the importance of comprehensive healthcare for individuals with Parkinson's. Routine hearing screenings should be integrated into the standard care protocol for Parkinson's patients to detect any auditory issues early on. Moreover, healthcare providers should be vigilant in addressing hearing-related concerns and providing appropriate interventions, such as hearing aids or auditory rehabilitation, when necessary.

In addition to clinical implications, understanding the relationship between Parkinson's disease and hearing loss may also have broader implications for research and treatment development. Investigating common underlying mechanisms could lead to the

identification of novel therapeutic targets that address both motor and auditory symptoms simultaneously. Furthermore, insights gained from studying the intersection of these conditions could inform our understanding of neurodegenerative processes more broadly, potentially paving the way for innovative approaches to managing Parkinson's and related disorders.

In conclusion, while the connection between Parkinson's disease and hearing loss requires further investigation, emerging evidence suggests that there may be a meaningful association between these two conditions. By exploring this relationship, healthcare providers can better support individuals living with Parkinson's by addressing their auditory needs alongside their motor symptoms. Moreover, continued research in this area holds promise for advancing our understanding of both Parkinson's disease and hearing loss, ultimately improving outcomes for affected individuals.

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MOVING TOWARD ANSWERS: RAVE IMAGING RECOGNIZES PARKINSON'S AWARENESS MONTH

Every April, the Parkinson's community comes together to raise awareness about one of the most common neurological disorders in the world. At RAVE Imaging, we are proud to stand alongside patients, caregivers, and medical professionals during Parkinson's Awareness Month by offering advanced diagnostic imaging services — including DaTscan imaging — that play a vital role in the early and accurate diagnosis of Parkinson's disease.

Understanding Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease is a progressive neurological condition that affects the dopamine-producing neurons in the brain. It is estimated that more than one million people in the United States are living with Parkinson's, with approximately 90,000 new diagnoses made each year. Symptoms commonly include tremors, stiffness, slowed movement, and balance difficulties. While Parkinson's is not yet curable, early and accurate diagnosis is critical — it allows patients and their care teams to begin treatment sooner, manage symptoms more effectively, and plan for the future with greater confidence.

One of the greatest challenges in managing Parkinson's disease is that its early symptoms can closely resemble those of other neurological conditions, including essential tremor and drug-induced movement disorders. This overlap can lead to diagnostic uncertainty, delayed treatment, and unnecessary procedures. That is why advanced imaging tools have become an invaluable part of the diagnostic process.

DaTscan Imaging: A Clearer Picture for a Complex Diagnosis

RAVE Imaging is pleased to offer DaTscan imaging as part of our comprehensive suite of diagnostic services. DaTscan is an FDA-approved nuclear medicine imaging technique that uses a small amount of radioactive tracer to evaluate dopamine transporter activity in the brain. By visualizing how dopamine transporters are functioning, DaTscan helps physicians determine whether a patient's symptoms are consistent with Parkinson's disease or a related dopaminergic disorder, as opposed to conditions that do not involve dopamine loss.

April is Parkinson's Awareness Month — a time to educate, advocate, and connect those affected with the resources they need.

For patients who have been experiencing confusing or conflicting symptoms, a DaTscan can be a turning point. The scan provides objective evidence that helps neurologists make more informed decisions about diagnosis and treatment — bringing clarity to what is often a long and uncertain diagnostic journey. The procedure is safe, non-invasive, and typically completed in a single outpatient visit at our imaging center.

RAVE Imaging: Your Partner in Neurological Health

At RAVE Imaging, we understand that a Parkinson's diagnosis — or even the suspicion of one — can be a deeply emotional experience for patients and their families. Our team is committed to providing compassionate, high-quality imaging services in a welcoming and supportive environment. We work closely with referring physicians and neurologists to ensure that our imaging results are delivered with precision, clarity, and speed, so that care plans can move forward without unnecessary delays.

In addition to DaTscan imaging, RAVE Imaging offers a full range of neurological imaging services, including MRI and CT scans, to support the comprehensive evaluation of patients with movement disorders and other neurological conditions. Our state-of-the-art technology and experienced staff ensure that every scan is performed with the highest standards of accuracy and patient care.

Take the Next Step This Awareness Month

This Parkinson's Awareness Month, we encourage anyone experiencing unexplained movement symptoms — or those whose loved ones are struggling with a neurological diagnosis — to speak with their physician about whether DaTscan imaging may be appropriate. Early answers lead to earlier action, and at RAVE Imaging, we are here to help provide those answers.

To learn more about DaTscan imaging and our full range of diagnostic services, contact RAVE Imaging today. Together, we can take meaningful steps toward better understanding and managing Parkinson's disease — one scan at a time.



Parkinson's disease is a chronic, progressive brain disorder that affects movement and can cause other health issues. It's caused by a loss of dopamine-producing brain cells, which leads to nerve cell damage and death.

DaTscan Imaging offered at RAVE:

DaTscan is a Nuclear Medicine brain scan used to assist in the evaluation of adults with suspected Parkinson's disease.

DaTscan can differentiate essential tremors from tremors due to Parkinson's disease.

RAVE utilizes DaTQuant software to even further evaluate the patient's scan by comparing the patient's images with an age-matched database. It automatically calculates striatal binding ratios, putamen/caudate ratios, and asymmetry. A report is generated which combines visual AND quantitative results.

Ask your Healthcare provider For Scheduling or Question please call 941-488-7781



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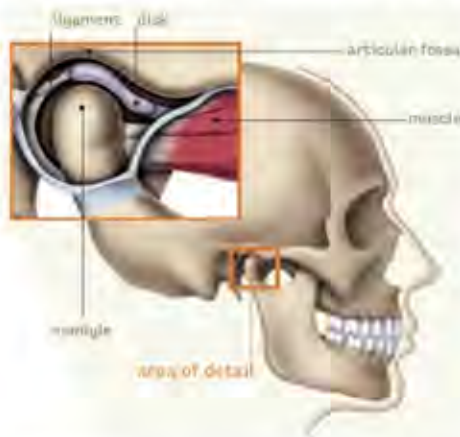
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The Daily "Grind"

By Dr. Joseph Farag

Too much stress can contribute to a wide range of health problems. From a dental perspective, stress often plays a role in the development of Temporomandibular Disorders, or TMD. Grinding of teeth which causes headaches, jaw soreness and pain, among many other symptoms can be exacerbated during times of high stress. The temporomandibular joint (TMJ) is the hinge joint that connects the lower jaw to the temporal bone of the skull, which is immediately in front of the ear on the side of your head. The cause of TMD is not clear, but dentists believe that symptoms arise from problems with the muscles of the jaw. Severe cases can be caused by injury to the jaw. In more common cases, grinding or clenching of the teeth puts a lot of pressure on the TMJ and people feel tooth sensitivity, earaches, and neck tension and pain.



Treatment Options

If stress is causing you to grind your teeth, ask your doctor or dentist about options to reduce your stress. Also, avoid foods and drinks that contain caffeine, alcohol, and do not chew gum. Relax your jaw muscles at night by holding a warm washcloth against your cheek. When these

options do not relieve your pain, your dentist can offer a variety of treatment modalities for your specific case. An occlusal guard, often called a nightguard, can be fabricated by your dentist to allow your muscles to rest and protect your teeth from further wear.

Patients who present with TMD should also have an occlusal analysis

This helps determine if there are any bite discrepancies that may be corrected with a simple procedure to reshape how the teeth come together when you bite. Medications such as over the counter ibuprofen are helpful because they reduce inflammation to aid in the healing process. Occasionally, a mild muscle relaxant may be prescribed for a few days or weeks to help relieve pain. Surgery for TMD should only be considered after all other treatment options have been tried and you are still experiencing severe, persistent pain.

Relaxation Techniques May Help Alleviate TMJ Symptoms

Simply becoming more aware of tension-related habits — clenching your jaw or grinding your teeth — will help you reduce their frequency. Because stress can contribute to TMJ disorders, relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation and deep breathing may also help alleviate TMJ symptoms.

This season, survive the holiday grind with a little planning, prioritizing and perhaps a trip to your dentist. To learn more about TMD or to schedule an appointment, please call Dr. Joseph Farag at Port Charlotte Dentalcare, 941-764-9555.



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Step Into Spring: Celebrate National Foot Health Awareness Month

April is here, and with it comes National Foot Health Awareness Month, a reminder that the foundation of your body deserves attention. Your feet carry you through every step of life, yet they're often the last thing on your mind until discomfort strikes. This spring, it's time to give your feet the care—and support—they truly deserve.

Everyday Steps Toward Healthy Feet

Healthy feet start with small, simple habits. Wash them daily, keep nails trimmed, and moisturize to avoid cracks and dryness. Choose shoes that support your arches and rotate them to give both your feet and your footwear a break. Socks matter too: moisture-wicking pairs prevent friction and fungal infections, especially as temperatures rise.

Movement is essential. Stretch your calves, wiggle your toes, roll your feet over a tennis ball, or take short walking breaks during the day. These little practices improve circulation, release tension, and help prevent common foot problems.

But sometimes, even with the best habits, aches linger, and not just in your feet, but in your knees, hips, and back. That's where arch support comes in.

Why Good Feet Is Different

Not all arch supports are created equal. The Good Feet Store offers something different: our 3-Step Arch Support System, designed to build a strong, stable foundation. Unlike off-the-shelf inserts, our arch supports are:

- Semi-rigid and structured, not soft and collapsible
- Made from a proprietary, medical-grade polymer blend
- Designed for long-term biomechanical support
- Personally fitted as part of a multi-stage system
- Backed by a lifetime warranty

This isn't a quick fix or a one-size-fits-all product; it's a foundation built for your unique feet. When your foundation is properly supported:

- Movement feels more stable
- Stress is better distributed
- The kinetic chain functions more efficiently

We don't sell alignment. We sell support that holds. Alignment happens because of it.



A Foundation That Supports Your Whole Body

Generic inserts may give temporary relief, but they often collapse under pressure. Good Feet arch supports, with their semi-rigid structure, provide lasting support that lets your feet function naturally. This stability carries up through your knees, hips, and back, easing aches and making daily movement more comfortable.

The 3-Step Arch Support System ensures that each support is personally fitted and integrated into your life. From your first step into the store to your first walk with your new supports, the experience is personal, human, and focused on results that last. When your feet are properly supported, simple things like walking around the office, running errands, or enjoying a spring hike feel easier. Your posture improves naturally, your body functions more efficiently, and your aches begin to ease.

This April, Put Your Feet First

National Foot Health Awareness Month is the perfect excuse to prioritize your foundation.

Combine daily foot care, gentle movement, and custom arch supports from Good Feet, and you're giving your body the stability it needs to thrive.

Your feet carry you everywhere. Give them the care, support, and attention they deserve. With Good Feet, you're not just supporting your arches, you're supporting your whole body, naturally, efficiently, and for the long haul.

This spring, step into comfort, step into confidence, and step into life with feet that are truly ready to carry you forward.

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FINDING A HEALTHY TEMPO FOR LIFE

By Pastor Tim Neptune

In today's fast-paced world, everyone seems constantly busy and exhausted. Technology, meant to simplify life, has only accelerated our schedules, allowing us to pack even more into each day. We are not only busy—we are tired.

Many can relate to Job's ancient words: "I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil" (Job 3:26). What many of us need to do is discover a sustainable rhythm for life. It is time to step off the merry-go-round of overcommitment and find a pace we can maintain for the long haul.

Jesus' words to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:25-26 remind us that internal health matters as much as external appearance. We spend hours perfecting our looks—clothes, hair, makeup, workouts—yet often neglect the soul and spirit that define who we are. Just as musicians use a metronome to set the proper tempo, our lives need a balanced rhythm. Living life at full throttle leads to burnout; our bodies require rest.

The story of Martha and Mary in Luke 10:38-42 illustrates this truth perfectly. As Jesus visited their home, Martha hurried about with preparations while Mary sat at the Lord's feet, listening. Frustrated, Martha complained that her sister had left her to do all the work alone. Jesus replied gently, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha was doing good things—serving and hosting—but at the wrong time. In the presence of Jesus, the most important priority was sitting and listening to Him. This encounter was the last time Jesus would visit their home on earth. Sometimes we must choose between two good options, and the better choice is the one that draws us closer to God.



An unhealthy pace affects more than our bodies. It drains us mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, making it difficult to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30). Solomon warned, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it" (Proverbs 4:23).

Who is setting the tempo of your life? Cultural expectations, family pressures, and personal ambitions can push us into unsustainable rhythms. If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed, stressed, or exhausted, ask yourself: What is truly important now? Eliminate non-essentials and focus on what matters most.

If we lose our "why," we eventually lose our way. Busyness can lead to barrenness, leaving us empty inside. The invitation is to slow down, guard our internal life, and choose the better part—like Mary did.

Take a moment to ponder whether your current pace is healthy and sustainable. Put away distractions, especially phones, and make the most of precious moments with family. Technology is useful, but it should never replace real connection. Finding a healthy tempo allows us to endure for the long haul and experience the full life Jesus offers.

Tim Neptune is the Lead Pastor of Venture Church located at 14601 Tamiami Trail E. Naples. For service times, visit venturenaples.com or call (239) 775-5323.



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