

S O U T H W E S T F L O R I D A ' S

# Health & Wellness<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

May 2026

Collier Edition - Monthly

**FREE** 

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## DEEP PLANE FACELIFT

The Gold Standard in  
Facial Rejuvenation

## UNPLUG TO POWER UP

Why Digital Balance  
Matters for Mental Health

WHY WOMEN ARE  
SKIPPING SURGERY  
AND ASKING ABOUT  
PLEXR INSTEAD

NEED MORE PEP  
IN YOUR STEP?

## KNOW THE SIGNS, SAVE A LIFE

National Stroke  
Awareness Month

## RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS VS. OSTEOARTHRITIS

Two Different Diseases,  
One Important Distinction

2026 PARKINSON'S  
DISEASE SPRING  
SYMPOSIUM





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*Family & Cosmetic*

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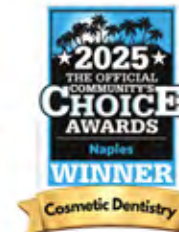
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# CONTENTS MAY 2026

**6** A Patient's Perspective: Restoring Confidence Through Advanced Cosmetic Dentistry

**7** Unplug to Power Up: Why Digital Balance Matters for Mental Health

**8** Deep Plane Facelift: The Gold Standard in Facial Rejuvenation

**9** 2026 SWFL Parkinson's Disease Spring Symposium

**10** Finding Relief from Nerve Pain: Your Guide to Neuropathy Treatment

**11** Why Women Are Skipping Surgery and Asking About PLEXR Instead

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

**13** The Art of Aging Gracefully: Why Skin Checks Matter at Art of Dermatology

**14** Nurturing Your Eyesight: The Significance of May as Healthy Vision Month

**15** Moving Forward: How Regenerative Medicine Is Changing the Way We Treat Arthritis

**16** What Your Ink Might be Saying: What We Can Learn from the Tattoo and Cancer Study

**17** What You Need to Know About Carotid Disease - May is National Stroke Awareness Month

**18** Champion Your Health: Simple Steps to Support Healthy Aging

**19** Macular Degeneration: The Hidden Impact on Daily Life-and What Can Help

**20** What is Plantar Fasciitis?

**21** Traditional vs. Robotic Laparoscopy

**22** Inflammatory Lung Conditions and the Emerging Role of Stem Cell Exosomes

**23** Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis: Two Different Diseases, One Important Distinction

**24** Discover Your Fountain of Youth with the European Liquid Facelift - The Art and Science of Facial Rejuvenation for GLP-1 Weight Loss Patients

**25** Trusted Care, Real Results

**26** Exomind™: A Breakthrough Approach to Mental Health that Goes Beyond Medication

**27** Know the Signs, Save a Life: American Stroke Awareness Month

**28** A New Era in Body Contouring: Velo Med Spa Unveils alloClae® Filler

**29** Beyond Wellness: The Science of Longevity and Reversing the Clock

**30** Better Hearing Starts with You: Why May is the Perfect Time to Prioritize Your Hearing Health

**31** Need More Pep in Your Step? Re-Energize at The Brain Rejuvenation Clinic of Naples

**34** Continuum Surgery Center of Naples: Your Preferred Multi-Specialty Ambulatory Surgery Center Evolving Hospital-Based Care for Your Advantage

**38** Moving Well for Life: Finding Comfort and Confidence During National Physical Fitness & Sports Month

**40** High Blood Pressure Education Month: Taking Control of the Silent Killer

**42** Understanding Osteoporosis and Spine Compression Fractures

**44** Understanding Otolaryngologists: The Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialists

**46** How Your Sex Hormones Can Support (or Hinder) Your Weight Loss Journey

**48** Kidney Cancer: Are You at Risk?

**50** Florida House Bill 971: Proposed Family Law Reform Bill

**52** Arthritis... Help!

**54** Anyone Can Suffer a Stroke

**56** Supporting Safety and Specialized Lymphedema Care Across Southwest Florida

**57** Ozone Therapy: Nature's Most Powerful Tool for Removing Heavy Metals from Your Body

**58** Creatine for Brain Health: Why Dosing Matters More Than You Think

**59** Caring for Caregivers: Nurturing Mental Health Amidst the Demands of Dementia Care

**60** Whitsyrs In Home Care Private Duty Makes Aging in Place a Reality

**61** Take Control of Your Health with Any Lab Test Now

**62** Understanding Depression: Diagnosis and Expert Management

**63** High Blood Pressure in Pets: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

**64** Health Insurance

**65** 6 Household Cleaning Supplies New Homeowners Should Have

**66** Spiritual Wellness: Slowing the Pace of Your Life

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## A PATIENT'S PERSPECTIVE:

### Restoring Confidence Through Advanced Cosmetic Dentistry

Featuring Dr. Long Huynh

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** Stephanie, thank you for sharing your experience. To begin, what led you to seek care at Park Family and Cosmetic Dentistry (PFC) with Dr. Long?



**Stephanie Pierce:** I was influenced early on by a close friend whose husband is a maxillofacial specialist. He emphasized the importance of board certification and advanced training. That stayed with me. When I began researching cosmetic dentistry, I knew it wasn't a

formally recognized specialty, but I believed that dentists committed to excellence would pursue additional credentials. I specifically looked for membership with the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD). After consulting with two other dentists who charged premium fees but lacked those affiliations, I ultimately found Dr. Long through the AACD website. That gave me confidence in his level of expertise and dedication to the craft.

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** What factors motivated you to move forward with treatment?

**Stephanie Pierce:** There were both functional and personal reasons. I had significant wear on my bottom teeth due to long-term grinding, and my upper veneers were about 20 years old. Over time, I had also lost multiple mouth guards, which contributed to the deterioration. My lower teeth had become noticeably worn, and then I developed a crack in one of my upper front teeth that became increasingly visible.

At the same time, I had just gone through approximately a year and a half of cancer treatment. That experience changed my perspective. I had been postponing dental care for years, and after everything I had been through, I decided this was something I wanted to do for myself. It became a meaningful step in reclaiming my health and confidence.

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** Can you describe the treatments you received and the outcome?

**Stephanie Pierce:** Dr. Long recommended a comprehensive approach, which included crowns and porcelain

veneers. The goal was to restore both the function of my bite and the appearance of my smile. The process was thorough and carefully planned

The results have been life-changing. I now have a smile that looks natural and feels strong. Functionally, I feel more stable when I chew, and aesthetically, I feel much more confident. It's something I had put off for far too long, and I'm very grateful for the outcome.

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** Many patients are concerned about the durability and effectiveness of procedures like crowns and veneers. What does current evidence suggest?

Porcelain veneers and dental crowns are widely used in restorative and cosmetic dentistry, with strong clinical outcomes. Studies indicate that porcelain veneers have a survival rate of approximately 90–95% over 10 years when properly maintained. Similarly, modern dental crowns demonstrate survival rates exceeding 90% over a decade, depending on the material used and patient-specific factors such as oral hygiene and bite forces.

These restorations not only improve aesthetics but also play a critical role in protecting damaged teeth, restoring structural integrity, and improving function. In cases involving bruxism (teeth grinding), as in Stephanie's situation, careful treatment planning and protective measures—such as custom night guards—are essential to prolong the lifespan of restorations.

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** Stephanie, you mentioned a long gap in routine dental care. Can you speak to that experience?

**Stephanie Pierce:** Yes, I moved to Florida in August 2022, and my last dental cleaning before returning to care was in May 2022. Between relocating, procrastination, and then my cancer diagnosis in May 2024, I went nearly four years without a cleaning. It's not something I'm proud of, but it's my reality.

Coming back into care was a huge relief. I recently had a cleaning with Judith, the hygienist, and she was absolutely amazing—both in skill and personality. Now I feel like I'm back on track and committed to maintaining my oral health with regular cleanings every six months.

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** Preventive care is a key component of long-term oral health. Clinical guidelines recommend professional dental cleanings and examinations every six months for most patients, although frequency may vary based on individual risk factors. Regular visits allow for early detection of issues such as periodontal disease, which affects nearly 42% of adults in the United States to some degree, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** Was there anyone on Dr. Long's team who made a particular impact on your experience?

**Stephanie Pierce:** Absolutely. The front desk staff were incredibly warm and welcoming from the start, which made a big difference. Dr. Long himself was very attentive—he even called to check on me after my first major appointment, which I really appreciated. And as I mentioned, Judith, the hygienist, was exceptional. Overall, the entire team made me feel supported and cared for.

**Health & Wellness Magazine:** What would you say to others who may be delaying similar care?

**Stephanie Pierce:** I would say don't wait as long as I did. Whether it's due to fear, time, or other life circumstances, it's easy to put dental care on the back burner. But addressing these issues sooner can prevent more complex problems down the line. For me, this was about more than just my smile—it was about taking care of myself after a very difficult period.



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# UNPLUG TO POWER UP:

## WHY DIGITAL BALANCE MATTERS FOR MENTAL HEALTH

By Elizabeth Dosoretz, LCSW

### *We live in a world that rarely slows down.*

Between packed schedules, constant notifications and the pressure to stay informed and connected, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Many of us move from one thing to the next without ever stopping to take a breath.

There is often an unspoken expectation to always be on, available, responsive and productive. That expectation is not realistic or sustainable. Feeling tired or overwhelmed does not mean you are failing. Not every day will feel productive, and that is okay. Taking care of your health, mentally and physically, should remain the top priority.

Sometimes what we really need is permission to pause. Setting thoughtful boundaries, especially around technology, can help reduce stress and support both our mental and physical well-being.

Digital overstimulation plays a major role in burnout and stress. Screen time adds up quickly through online shopping, group chats, social media, emails and documenting everyday life. At the same time, we are constantly exposed to curated content from companies, colleagues, friends and even family. Over time, this can quietly shape expectations and fuel comparison, making it feel as though everyone else is doing more or coping better.

At the same time, digital balance does not mean eliminating technology or disconnecting completely. It means being intentional about how, when and why we engage with digital tools. When technology use is unregulated, it can increase mental load, disrupt focus and keep the nervous system in a constant state of alert. When balanced, it can support connection and productivity.

### **Finding Your Balance**

Part of what makes these patterns so difficult to change is how our brains are wired. Behavioral science research, including the work of Katy Milkman, shows that we naturally default to what is easy, familiar and immediately rewarding, such as scrolling or checking notifications.

Insight alone is rarely enough to create change. When our surroundings encourage constant engagement, even the best intentions can be overridden by habit. Real and lasting change happens when we make small adjustments to our environment and routines, making healthier choices more natural.



These changes reduce friction, lower decision fatigue and help new behaviors stick without requiring constant self-monitoring or discipline.

It's why creating intentional digital boundaries can be so powerful. It does not mean deleting apps or giving up devices altogether. It means pausing long enough to ask yourself why you are reaching for your phone. Is it habit, boredom, stress or a genuine desire to connect?

When possible, replace mindless scrolling with something restorative. This might include writing a few thoughts down, spending time with someone you love or engaging in a favorite activity. Many types of activities can help reset your nervous system. These moments do not need to be long to be effective.

Small and well-timed changes are often far more sustainable than sweeping resolutions. A recent study published in *Jama Network Open* found that even short reductions in social media use can significantly reduce mental health symptoms in young adults. Less screen time has been associated with lower anxiety, improved sleep, better focus and more space for emotional processing that often gets buried in a constantly moving, digital world.

A healthier relationship with technology is possible, even if it feels difficult right now. After all, building digital balance does not mean giving something up forever. It means learning how to use technology in a way that supports your mental health rather than draining it. With the right support, new habits can be formed and sustained over time.

Remember, the goal is not perfection. Simple steps like putting your phone away during meals, setting a tech free window before bed, turning off nonessential notifications or taking a short break

from social media can create meaningful shifts. All of this is progress. Designing your environment to support these choices, rather than relying on willpower alone, makes change more realistic and lasting.

As you reflect on your habits, consider how technology truly makes you feel. What adds value, and what drains you? The digital world can be an incredible tool for connection and information, but it works best when used intentionally and balanced with other healthy habits. With consistency and self-compassion, it is possible to build a healthier relationship with technology.

Looking for support as you work on finding your digital balance? At Elite DNA Behavioral Health, we help individuals build healthier routines that support emotional well-being in a demanding, always-connected world. As one of the fastest-growing mental health providers in the Southeast, Elite DNA provides accessible, affordable mental healthcare through in-person and virtual services across Florida, Virginia, and Alabama. To learn more or request an appointment, visit [EliteDNA.com](https://www.EliteDNA.com).

### **About the Author**

Elizabeth Dosoretz, LCSW, is the founder and CEO of Elite DNA Behavioral Health. As a mother of three, her personal journey through the challenges of postpartum depression inspired her to found Elite DNA Behavioral Health in 2013 with a goal to provide accessible, affordable mental health care to everyone. Now one of the fastest-growing mental health providers in the Southeast, Elite DNA provides in-person and virtual behavioral health services from more than 40 locations across Florida, Virginia, and Alabama. For more information, visit [EliteDNA.com](https://www.EliteDNA.com).



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# DEEP PLANE FACELIFT: The Gold Standard in Facial Rejuvenation

When considering facial rejuvenation options in Naples and Fort Myers, Florida, the deep plane facelift represents the most advanced surgical technique for comprehensive facial restoration. This sophisticated procedure addresses the underlying causes of facial aging by repositioning deeper facial structures, delivering natural-looking results that can turn back the clock by 10–15 years.

Dr. Kiran Gill at Naples Aesthetic Institute specializes in deep plane facelift surgery, combining her fellowship training in aesthetic surgery with more than a decade of experience serving patients throughout Southwest Florida. Her approach focuses on creating harmonious, natural results that enhance your inherent beauty while maintaining facial expression and character.

## Understanding Facial Aging: The Science Behind Deep Plane Correction

Facial aging occurs through multiple interconnected processes that affect different layers of facial anatomy. According to research published in the *Journal of Aesthetic Surgery*, facial aging involves skin elasticity loss, volume depletion in fat compartments, and gravitational descent of the superficial musculoaponeurotic system (SMAS) layer.

The deep plane facelift technique addresses these changes by working beneath the SMAS layer, repositioning facial muscles and connective tissues as a unified structure. This approach provides more comprehensive correction compared to traditional skin-only lifts, which often create an artificial or “pulled” appearance.

Key anatomical changes addressed include:

- Descent of cheek fat pads creating nasolabial folds
- Jowl formation along the jawline
- Marionette lines extending from mouth corners
- Loss of neck definition and platysmal banding
- Hollowing of the midface and temple regions

## Dr. Gill's Deep Plane Facelift Technique

The deep plane facelift represents a significant evolution in facial rejuvenation surgery. Unlike traditional SMAS facelifts that work above the muscle layer, this technique operates in the deeper anatomical plane, allowing for more extensive tissue repositioning and longer-lasting results.



before

after

During the procedure, Dr. Gill creates carefully planned incisions that follow natural facial contours, typically beginning in the temporal hairline and extending around the ear. The key distinction lies in the surgical dissection plane, which occurs beneath the SMAS layer, preserving important facial nerves while achieving comprehensive tissue elevation.

*“The deep plane technique allows us to restore facial volume and contour in a way that looks completely natural,” explains Dr. Gill. “By working in the deeper anatomical layers, we can achieve dramatic improvements while maintaining the patient’s unique facial characteristics.”*

## Ideal Candidates for Deep Plane Facelift Surgery

The ideal candidate for a deep plane facelift is typically between 45 and 75 years of age and presents with moderate to significant facial sagging that cannot be effectively addressed with non-surgical treatments alone. Patients who experience deep nasolabial folds, pronounced jowls, and visible laxity in the neck region are among those who benefit most from this comprehensive approach.

Good overall health, non-smoking status, and realistic expectations are equally important factors. Dr. Gill conducts thorough consultations to evaluate each patient’s facial anatomy, skin quality, and personal aesthetic goals before recommending the most appropriate surgical plan. For some individuals, combining the deep plane facelift with complementary procedures such as blepharoplasty, CO2 laser and fat grafting may yield the most harmonious outcome.

## Recovery and Long-Term Results

Recovery following a deep plane facelift typically spans two to three weeks, during which patients may experience swelling, bruising, and mild discomfort managed with prescribed medications. Most patients feel comfortable returning to social activities within two to three weeks, with residual swelling gradually subsiding over the following months.

One of the most compelling advantages of the deep plane technique is the longevity of its results. Because the procedure repositions deeper structural tissues rather than simply tightening the skin, patients typically enjoy improvements that last 10 to 15 years or more. The natural-appearing rejuvenation achieved by Dr. Gill’s approach means that patients look refreshed and well-rested rather than surgically altered.

## Why Choose Naples Aesthetic Institute?

Patients throughout Southwest Florida choose Naples Aesthetic Institute for deep plane facelift surgery because of Dr. Gill’s exceptional qualifications, meticulous surgical technique, and commitment to individualized care. The institute’s state-of-the-art facility and dedicated support team ensure a seamless experience from initial consultation through post-operative recovery.

If you are ready to explore how a deep plane facelift can restore a more youthful, natural appearance, we invite you to schedule a personalized consultation with Dr. Gill at Naples Aesthetic Institute. Discover why discerning patients in Naples, Fort Myers, and across Southwest Florida trust our practice for the most advanced facial rejuvenation available.



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# 2026 SWFL PARKINSON'S DISEASE SPRING SYMPOSIUM:

## Free Educational Event Coming to Punta Gorda This June

**A**ffecting more than a million Americans and over 10 million worldwide, Parkinson's disease (PD) is the second-most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's and is the 14th-leading cause of death in the United States. The major signs of PD include progressive motor problems with slowness of movements, shaking or tremor, rigidity or stiffness, reduced facial expression and changes in gait/balance. Patients with PD also experience non-motor symptoms (e.g., sleep disturbances, depression and anxiety, low blood pressure and cognitive problems, among others). The treatment of PD is remarkably better than it was just 15 years ago. Novel drugs and new formulations of old drugs provide patients with a much better response to treatment. The incidence of PD is rapidly increasing around the world. It is estimated that 90,000 new cases are diagnosed each year in the United States alone.



Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's in partnership with the Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL proudly presents our **2026 Spring Symposium**. It will be held on **Friday, June 5th, 2026**. Admission is **FREE**, but registration is strongly recommended, as seating is limited. Those attending the program will enjoy three interesting and educational presentations.



**Mabel Lopez, PhD** will open the program with a lecture on "A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body - Tips for the PD Patient and Care Partner." This presentation will provide the audience with the most useful information regarding the benefits of good

nutrition and physical exercise. The treatment of PD would be incomplete without a regimen of exercise and healthy lifestyle. You will see the evidence of this in Dr. Lopez's presentation.



**Ramon Gil, M.D.**, will be lecturing on "New Answers to Old Questions in Parkinson's Disease. With the advances in the understanding of PD as well as with the increased number of medications and other treatments to treat PD many old questions have new answer. We will receive those from Dr. Gil's talk.



**Philip Tipton, M.D.**, Associate Professor of Neurology, Movement Disorders Department at the University of Tennessee, in Knoxville will be presenting "Tackling Walking and Balance Challenges in PD." We are honored to bring Dr. Tipton back to our program. He was part of the Faculty in one of our previous Symposiums a few years ago. Within the field of movement disorders, he has special interests in gait and balance disorders and will bring most useful information for patients to improve these challenging and at times disabling problems.

Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's is excited to partner with the Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL and Dr. Gil with this first of many Charlotte County based symposiums.

Neuro Challenge is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created in 2008 to improve the quality of life of people with Parkinson's disease and their caregivers today. Neuro Challenge provides individualized care advising, community resource referrals and education, therapeutic and support programs both online and in Southwest Florida including Sarasota, Manatee, Pinellas, Highlands, Marion and Charlotte counties. Neuro Challenge hosts The Parkinson's Expo, the largest single day free PD event in the U.S., held annually in Manatee County, FL.

**All Neuro Challenge services and programs are offered at no cost to people with Parkinson's disease and their loved ones. Visit [NeuroChallenge.org](http://NeuroChallenge.org) or call 941-926-6413 to learn more.**



Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL & Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's present **2026 SWFL Parkinson's Disease Spring Symposium**

**Friday, June 5, 2026, 8:30AM – 2:30 PM**  
Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center  
75 Taylor St., Punta Gorda, FL 33950

### Agenda/Speakers

8:30 AM: On site Registration/Light Breakfast Visit with Vendors & Sponsors

9:00 – 9:15 AM: Welcome/Remarks / New Partners  
Dr. Gil & Jennifer Bitner, CEO, Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's

9:15 – 10:00AM: "A Healthy Mind in a Healthy Body - Tips for the PD Patient and Care Partner"  
Speaker: Mabel Lopez, PhD

10:00 AM: BREAK

10:15 – 11:00 AM: "New Answers to Old Questions in Parkinson's Disease" Speaker: Ramon A. Gil, M.D.

11:00 AM: LUNCH  
Visit with Vendors & Sponsors

12:00 – 12:45 PM: Speaker provided by Amneal Pharmaceuticals

1:00 – 1:45 PM: "Tackling Walking and Balance Challenges in PD".

Speaker: Philip Tipton, M.D. Associate Professor of Neurology Movement Disorders Department University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

1:45 PM: Q&A. Faculty

2:15 – 2:30 PM: Recognition and Prize Drawing

2:30 PM: Adjourn  
Visit with Vendors/Sponsors



**To Register:**  
Scan QR Code  
Visit [NeuroChallenge.org](http://NeuroChallenge.org)  
Or Call 941-926-6413.



**For more information, please email Lisa Gallucci: [lisag@neurochallenge.org](mailto:lisag@neurochallenge.org)**



Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center  
4235 Kings Hwy, Suite 102, Port Charlotte, FL 33980



# FINDING RELIEF FROM NERVE PAIN:

## Your Guide to Neuropathy Treatment at Feel Amazing Spine and Joint Institute

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

**P**eripheral neuropathy affects millions of Americans, causing burning sensations, numbness, tingling, and debilitating pain that can make even the simplest daily activities feel overwhelming. For residents in Naples, Florida, and the surrounding communities, relief from this complex condition is closer than you think. At Feel Amazing Spine and Joint Institute, Dr. Richard Hiler and his experienced team have spent over two decades helping patients reclaim their lives through comprehensive, drug-free neuropathy treatment.

### Understanding Peripheral Neuropathy

Peripheral neuropathy occurs when the peripheral nerves — the vast communication network that connects your brain and spinal cord to the rest of your body — become damaged or dysfunctional. These nerves control sensation, movement, and automatic functions like heart rate and digestion. When they malfunction, the results can range from mildly uncomfortable to severely life-altering.

Common causes of peripheral neuropathy include diabetes, chemotherapy, autoimmune diseases, nutritional deficiencies, infections, and physical injury. Many patients are told there is little that can be done beyond managing their symptoms with prescription medications. At Feel Amazing Spine and Joint Institute, we believe otherwise.

### Why Patients Choose Feel Amazing Spine and Joint Institute for Neuropathy Care

When searching for the best care for nerve pain in Naples, patients consistently turn to Dr. Richard Hiler and our experienced team. Here is why:

#### Board-Certified Expertise You Can Trust

Dr. Hiler is a board-certified chiropractic neurologist, a specialized designation that requires extensive post-doctoral training in the diagnosis and treatment of neurological conditions. This advanced qualification means your care is guided by a clinician with deep, specific expertise in how the nervous system functions — and how to restore it when things go wrong.

#### Over 20 Years of Clinical Experience

Experience matters enormously in neuropathy treatment. With more than two decades of successful clinical outcomes in peripheral neuropathy care, our



team has treated a wide spectrum of patients — from those recently diagnosed to individuals who have struggled with nerve pain for years without adequate relief. That depth of experience translates into a more accurate understanding of your condition and a more effective path to recovery.

#### Comprehensive, Drug-Free, Non-Surgical Solutions

Prescription medications for neuropathy often come with significant side effects and rarely address the underlying cause of nerve damage. Surgery carries inherent risks and is not appropriate for most neuropathy patients. At Feel Amazing Spine and Joint Institute, we specialize in comprehensive, drug-free, non-surgical solutions that work with your body's natural healing capabilities. Our approach is designed to stimulate nerve regeneration, improve circulation, and reduce inflammation without the dependency or risks associated with pharmaceutical interventions.

#### Customized Treatment Plans for Long-Term Results

No two patients experience neuropathy in exactly the same way, and no single treatment approach works for everyone. That is why we develop customized treatment plans tailored to each patient's unique condition, health history, and goals. Rather than providing a one-size-fits-all protocol, our team conducts thorough evaluations to understand the specific nature and severity of your nerve damage before crafting a personalized roadmap toward lasting relief.

#### State-of-the-Art Equipment and Therapies Under One Roof

Our Naples clinic is equipped with advanced, state-of-the-art technology and therapies specifically chosen for their effectiveness in treating nerve

conditions. From low-level laser therapy and electrostimulation to infrared light therapy and specialized rehabilitative techniques, you have access to multiple treatment modalities in a single, convenient location. This integrated approach allows us to combine therapies synergistically for maximum benefit.

#### A Whole-Body Approach to Healing

Neuropathy rarely exists in isolation. Many patients also experience related conditions such as spinal issues, balance problems, and muscular dysfunction that compound their nerve pain. Our clinic takes a whole-body perspective, addressing not just the neuropathy itself but the interconnected systems that influence your recovery.

Patients who need additional support can also benefit from our Spinal Decompression services, which relieve pressure on compressed nerves along the spine, or our Auto Injuries Rehabilitation programs for those whose neuropathic symptoms emerged following a vehicle accident. This comprehensive range of services means that whether you are dealing with a single condition or multiple overlapping concerns, our Naples clinic can provide the integrated care you need for complete recovery.

#### Take the First Step Toward Relief

Living with neuropathy does not have to be your permanent reality. At Feel Amazing Spine and Joint Institute, we have helped countless Naples-area patients reduce or eliminate their nerve pain and return to the activities they love — without drugs or surgery.

If you are ready to explore a personalized, evidence-based approach to neuropathy treatment, contact our Naples office today at 239-330-1000 to schedule a comprehensive evaluation. Our dedicated neuropathy care team is here to listen, evaluate, and build a treatment plan designed around one goal: helping you feel amazing again.



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# Why Women Are Skipping Surgery and Asking About PLEXR Instead

By Dr. Aldene McKenzie

**A**s women move through different stages of life, many begin to notice subtle changes in the skin that can make them look more tired, heavier, or less refreshed than they feel. Often, the concern is not about wanting a dramatic change. It is about wanting to look more like themselves again.

That is one reason interest in PLEXR continues to grow.

After my previous article on PLEXR, I noticed increased interest from patients wanting to better understand whether it might be appropriate for their concerns. Many were asking thoughtful questions about upper eyelid heaviness, fine lines, textural changes, and other areas where the skin may begin to appear less firm over time. Most were not looking for an extreme result. They were looking for a more refined, non-surgical option and wanted to know whether it was the right fit for them.

In aesthetic medicine, the most important step is not choosing a treatment too quickly. It is choosing the right treatment for the right patient. A procedure may be effective, but that does not mean it is appropriate for everyone. Good outcomes depend on anatomy, skin quality, treatment goals, tolerance for downtime, and realistic expectations.

PLEXR has become an appealing option for patients seeking a more targeted, non-surgical approach in carefully selected areas. What makes it valuable is not simply the treatment itself, but the importance of proper evaluation and patient selection. In medicine, discernment matters.

**Treatments should be recommended because they make clinical sense for the patient in front of you, not simply because they are popular.**

In my practice, many of the women asking about PLEXR are balancing busy lives, professional responsibilities, family demands, and the natural effects of time. They are often looking for improvement that feels elegant and proportionate, something that restores a more rested appearance while preserving their natural features.



This is one reason the conversation around aesthetic medicine continues to evolve. More patients are not asking how to look different. They are asking how to look refreshed, how to make thoughtful decisions, and how to approach treatment in a way that still feels like themselves.

That conversation is especially relevant the weeks leading up to Mother's Day, when many women are reminded to care for everyone else first and themselves last. For some, that may mean finally taking the time to schedule a consultation and learn about options they have been considering for quite some time.

A consultation should answer the questions that matter most. Is the patient a good candidate? What degree of improvement is realistic? What does recovery involve? Is PLEXR the best option, or would another modality better address the concern? Those are physician-level questions, and they deserve physician-guided answers.

The goal in aesthetic medicine should never be to overdo. It should be to recommend carefully, treat appropriately, and help patients achieve results that feel natural, balanced, and consistent with their goals.

For the right patient, PLEXR can be a valuable part of that plan.

If you have been curious about PLEXR and want to know whether it may be appropriate for your concerns, a personalized consultation is the best first step. Careful evaluation remains the foundation of any good aesthetic outcome. ***Mother's Day Glow Week is a good place to start the conversation.***

In celebration and recognition of Mother's Day, Kenzi Medical and Aesthetics Group will host **Mother's Day Glow Week from May 4 through May 8, 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM daily**, offering women an opportunity to experience personalized aesthetic guidance, thoughtful self-care, and select seasonal offerings in a refined setting. The week will conclude with a special **Mother's Day event on May 8 from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM**, where patients interested in learning more about PLEXR and other physician-guided treatment options can explore which approach may best align with their goals.

This elevated in-office experience will include personalized consultations, exclusive event offerings, giveaways and raffles, a photo booth, games, special promotional savings, and curated refreshments.

Consultations are available year round. Call or visit [kenzispacom.com](http://kenzispacom.com) to book yours.

To learn more about Glow Week or reserve a consultation, contact Kenzi Medical and Aesthetics Group by calling or texting 239-544-5469 or via our website at [kenzispacom.com](http://kenzispacom.com).



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

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

## Knowledge Is Your Greatest Health Asset

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

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

## Comprehensive Screening Without Compromise

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

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



## The Power of Early Detection

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

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

## Safety and Convenience Combined

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

In less than an hour, patients receive a comprehensive health screening followed by a virtual consultation with a physician to review the results in detail, which would traditionally require multiple appointments, various specialists, and extensive testing. This efficiency makes preventive screening accessible to busy professionals and anyone who values their time while prioritizing their health.

## Investing in Your Future Self

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

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

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

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

**O**ur 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.



Art of Dermatology is the premier choice for comprehensive **Dermatology, Surgical, and Aesthetic** services. We are dedicated to offering exceptional care for the diagnosis, treatment, and enhancement of your overall skin health.

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# NURTURING YOUR EYESIGHT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MAY AS HEALTHY VISION MONTH

**E**very May, the United States observes Healthy Vision Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of maintaining good eye health. With the prevalence of eye conditions and vision problems on the rise, this annual campaign serves as a reminder for individuals to prioritize their eyesight and take proactive steps towards preserving it. From regular eye exams to lifestyle adjustments, here's why May is a crucial month for nurturing your vision.



## The Importance of Healthy Vision

Our eyes play a fundamental role in how we experience the world around us. From appreciating breathtaking landscapes to connecting with loved ones through eye contact, vision is integral to our daily lives. However, many individuals overlook the significance of eye health until they encounter issues or discomfort.

## Preventative Care Through Regular Eye Exams

One of the most effective ways to maintain healthy vision is through regular eye examinations. These comprehensive assessments not only evaluate visual acuity but also screen for potential eye diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, and macular degeneration. Detecting these conditions early can significantly improve treatment outcomes and preserve vision.

## Understanding Vision Risks

Certain factors can increase the risk of developing vision problems, including age, family history, and lifestyle choices. Older adults are particularly susceptible to age-related eye diseases, highlighting the importance of regular screenings as individuals grow older. Additionally, habits such as smoking, excessive screen time, and poor nutrition can contribute to vision decline over time.

## Promoting Eye-Friendly Lifestyles

Healthy Vision Month encourages individuals to adopt habits that support optimal eye health. This includes maintaining a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and omega-3 fatty acids, which can benefit both overall health and eye function. Furthermore, practicing good eye hygiene, such as taking breaks from digital devices and protecting eyes from harmful UV rays, can help reduce strain and prevent damage.

## Empowering Individuals Through Education

Education plays a pivotal role in empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their eye health. Through community outreach programs, informational resources, and public campaigns, Healthy Vision Month raises awareness about common eye conditions, risk factors, and available treatments. By equipping people with knowledge, they can take proactive steps towards preserving their vision and seeking timely care when needed.

## Advancements in Eye Care Technology

Advances in technology continue to revolutionize the field of eye care, offering innovative solutions for diagnosing and treating various eye conditions. From sophisticated imaging techniques to minimally invasive surgical procedures, these advancements enhance the accuracy, safety, and effectiveness of eye care interventions. Healthy Vision Month serves as an opportunity to celebrate these breakthroughs while encouraging individuals to leverage them for their benefit.

## Addressing Disparities in Eye Health

Despite the progress made in eye care, disparities in access to services and treatment persist, particularly among underserved communities. Healthy Vision Month advocates for equitable access to eye care services, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to receive timely screenings, treatment, and vision correction. By addressing these disparities, we can work towards a future where eye health is a priority for all.

## Taking Action for Healthy Vision

As Healthy Vision Month unfolds, individuals are encouraged to take proactive steps towards safeguarding their eyesight. Whether it's scheduling a comprehensive eye exam, adopting healthier lifestyle habits, or spreading awareness within their communities, every action contributes to the collective effort of preserving vision for generations to come.

May serves as a reminder of the importance of healthy vision and the proactive steps individuals can take to maintain it. By prioritizing regular eye care, adopting eye-friendly lifestyles, and advocating for equitable access to services, we can ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy a lifetime of clear, vibrant vision. As we celebrate Healthy Vision Month, let us commit to nurturing our eyesight and embracing a future where healthy vision is within reach for all.



## Hunter Vittone, OD Optometric Physician

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

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

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

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

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

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



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# Moving Forward: How Regenerative Medicine Is Changing the Way We Treat Arthritis

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

**M**ay is Arthritis Awareness Month — a time dedicated to shining a light on one of the most common yet misunderstood conditions affecting Americans today. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 58 million adults in the United States live with some form of arthritis, making it a leading cause of work disability and chronic pain. At Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics, we believe that awareness is just the beginning. Our mission is to offer patients innovative, science-backed solutions that go beyond masking pain — solutions that target the root cause and support the body's natural ability to heal.

## What Is Arthritis?

Arthritis is not a single disease — it is an umbrella term for more than 100 different conditions that cause joint pain, stiffness, swelling, and reduced range of motion. The two most prevalent forms are osteoarthritis, which results from the gradual breakdown of cartilage between joints, and rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disorder in which the body mistakenly attacks its own joint tissue. Whether in the knees, hips, shoulders, or hands, arthritis can significantly diminish a person's quality of life, limiting everyday activities such as walking, climbing stairs, or even holding a cup of coffee.

Traditional treatment options have long included pain medications, corticosteroid injections, physical therapy, and — in advanced cases — joint replacement surgery. While these approaches offer relief for many patients, they do not address the underlying biological damage to joints. That is where regenerative medicine steps in.

## Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy: Harnessing Your Own Healing Power

Platelet-Rich Plasma therapy, commonly known as PRP, is one of the most exciting advancements in regenerative orthopedics. The treatment uses the patient's own blood to promote healing at the cellular level. During a PRP procedure, a small sample of blood is drawn and placed in a centrifuge, which separates the plasma and concentrates the platelets — tiny blood cells packed with growth factors that play a critical role in tissue repair. This highly concentrated plasma is then injected directly into the affected joint.



For arthritis patients, PRP injections can help reduce inflammation, slow cartilage deterioration, and stimulate tissue regeneration. Clinical research has shown that PRP therapy may be particularly effective for mild to moderate osteoarthritis of the knee, offering longer-lasting pain relief compared to traditional corticosteroid injections. Because the treatment uses the patient's own biological material, the risk of allergic reaction or rejection is minimal, making it a safe and natural alternative for many individuals seeking to avoid surgery or long-term reliance on pain medication.

At Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics, our PRP protocols are tailored to each patient's unique condition. We use advanced imaging guidance to ensure precise delivery of PRP to the target area, maximizing therapeutic benefit.

## Stem Cell Therapy: Rebuilding from the Inside Out

Stem cell therapy represents the frontier of regenerative orthopedics. Stem cells are undifferentiated cells with the remarkable ability to develop into specialized cell types — including the chondrocytes that make up cartilage. In the context of arthritis treatment, mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), often harvested from the patient's own bone marrow or adipose (fat) tissue, are processed and injected into damaged joints to encourage tissue repair and regeneration.

Unlike treatments that only manage symptoms, stem cell therapy aims to restore structural integrity to joints that have been compromised by arthritis. Research continues to evolve rapidly in this field, with studies suggesting that stem cell injections can reduce pain, improve joint function, and potentially slow or even reverse cartilage degradation in select patients. The anti-inflammatory properties of MSCs also make them a promising option for patients with inflammatory forms of arthritis.

The team at Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics carefully evaluates each patient to determine candidacy for stem cell therapy, taking into account the severity of joint damage, overall health, and individual treatment goals. Our commitment to evidence-based regenerative care means patients receive treatments grounded in the latest orthopedic science.

## Is Regenerative Treatment Right for You?

Not every arthritis patient is an ideal candidate for PRP or stem cell therapy, which is why a thorough consultation and evaluation is essential. Regenerative treatments tend to be most effective in patients with mild to moderate joint damage who wish to delay or avoid surgery, those who have not found adequate relief with conventional therapies, and active individuals looking to maintain mobility and function over the long term.

## Take the First Step This Arthritis Awareness Month

This Arthritis Awareness Month, we invite you to explore what regenerative orthopedics can do for your joints and your life. At Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics, we are passionate about helping patients reclaim their mobility, reduce pain, and live fuller, more active lives — without always resorting to surgery.

If you or a loved one is living with arthritis, contact our office today to schedule a consultation. Together, we can assess your condition and develop a personalized regenerative treatment plan that puts you on the path toward healing. Because arthritis awareness is not just about knowing the facts — it is about knowing your options.

Call today for more information.



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# WHAT YOUR INK MIGHT BE SAYING:

## What We Can Learn from the Tattoo and Cancer Study

By Svetlana Kogan, MD, IFMCP

**T**attoos have long been a form of self-expression, storytelling, and artistry. From intricate sleeves to tiny symbols, body art has become a cultural norm—especially among younger generations. But as tattoos grow in popularity, researchers are beginning to ask important questions about their long-term effects. A new study out of Denmark suggests there might be more to consider when it comes to tattoo ink—particularly its possible connection to certain types of cancer.

The Danish Twin Tattoo Cohort study, recently published in *BMC Public Health*, explored whether exposure to tattoo ink is linked to higher risks of skin cancers and lymphoma. Using an innovative design that included both a general cohort and twin-pair comparisons (where one twin had cancer and the other didn't), the researchers found concerning results. For individuals with large tattoos—especially those covering more skin than the size of a palm—the risk of skin cancer and lymphoma increased significantly.

Why is this study such a big deal? For starters, it's one of the first of its kind to combine robust epidemiological data with a unique twin-study design, which helps control for shared genetics and lifestyle factors. The researchers found:

- Tattooed individuals had a 1.6 to nearly 4 times higher risk of skin cancer and basal cell carcinoma.
- Large tattoos—especially those bigger than a palm—were linked to higher cancer risks than smaller ones.
- The risk was especially notable in individuals who had received their tattoos years before their diagnosis, indicating a potential long-term effect of ink exposure.

While the study doesn't claim tattoos cause cancer, it raises serious questions about chronic inflammation, ink composition, and the body's long-term response to foreign substances.

### What's in Tattoo Ink?

Tattoo ink is more than colored liquid. Black ink, the most common, often contains carbon black, a substance classified as "possibly carcinogenic" by the International Agency for Research on Cancer.



Colored inks may include heavy metals and azo compounds, some of which can break down into carcinogenic amines when exposed to sunlight or laser removal.

The body doesn't just leave the ink in place. Studies have shown that ink particles can travel through the lymphatic system and even reach internal organs like the liver. The Danish study builds on that evidence, suggesting these migrating particles may play a role in cancer development by triggering chronic immune responses.

### What Can We Learn—and Do?

Let's be clear: This study isn't here to shame anyone with tattoos or spark panic. Instead, it's a reminder that even the most culturally accepted practices can come with hidden risks. Here's how we can take this research and apply it in practical, thoughtful ways:

#### 1. Ask Before You Ink

Before getting a tattoo, ask your artist about the inks they use. Do they meet current safety standards? Are they free of known carcinogens or heavy metals? Reputable tattoo studios should have this information readily available. It's your body—don't hesitate to ask questions.

#### 2. Size (and Location) Matters

The study found that larger tattoos, and possibly those located on sun-exposed areas, were more strongly associated with cancer risk. If you're planning body art, consider keeping designs smaller and avoiding frequent exposure to direct sunlight—or make sunscreen a permanent part of your tattoo care routine.

#### 3. Rethink Removal

Ironically, removing tattoos may present its own risks. Laser removal breaks ink into smaller particles that can migrate more easily through the body. If you're considering tattoo removal, consult with a dermatologist about safer approaches, and weigh the risks and benefits carefully.

#### 4. Monitor Your Skin

If you already have tattoos, the takeaway isn't to panic—but to be proactive. Regularly check tattooed areas for any changes, like unusual bumps, discoloration, or new growths. Tattoos can mask early warning signs, so it's important to be extra vigilant. If anything seems off, get it checked by a healthcare provider.

#### 5. Push for Better Regulation

Tattoo inks are surprisingly under-regulated in many countries. Public health experts are calling for stricter oversight, clearer ingredient labeling, and long-term safety testing. Supporting these efforts—by raising awareness or contacting your local health authorities—can lead to safer practices for everyone.

### The Bigger Picture

This study also reminds us of a broader truth: our choices, however small, can have long-term impacts on our health. Tattoos may be art, but they're also a chemical commitment. Understanding what goes into our bodies—and how our bodies respond over time—is part of being informed and empowered consumers.

As the researchers concluded, more studies are needed to fully understand how tattoo ink interacts with our biology. But their findings are enough to spark caution—and hopefully, more conversation about how we can enjoy tattoos safely.

Whether you're inked from head to toe or just considering your first piece, knowledge is power. Ask questions, be informed, and keep your skin—and your whole self—safe.



**Svetlana Kogan, MD, IFMCP**

*The author of 'Diet Slove No More!', Svetlana Kogan, MD, IFMCP is a Board-Certified Internal Medicine, Holistic & Functional Medical Doctor with 25 years of experience. She has appeared as a health expert on prime-time TV and radio stations*

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# What You Need to Know About Carotid Disease

## May is National Stroke Awareness Month

By Russell Becker, DO

**E**very 40 seconds, someone in the United States has a stroke. It is the fifth leading cause of death in America and a primary driver of long-term disability. Yet many of the strokes that devastate lives each year are preventable. At the Vascular Center of Naples, we believe that knowledge is one of the most powerful tools in stroke prevention — and that starts with understanding carotid artery disease.

### What Is Carotid Artery Disease?

The carotid arteries are two large blood vessels that run along either side of your neck, supplying oxygen-rich blood to your brain. When plaque — a buildup of fat, cholesterol, and other substances — accumulates along the walls of these arteries, the condition is known as carotid artery disease, or carotid artery stenosis.

Over time, this plaque can narrow the arteries and restrict blood flow to the brain. Worse, pieces of plaque can break off and travel to smaller vessels in the brain, causing a blockage — and a stroke.

### Why It Is Called a "Silent" Disease

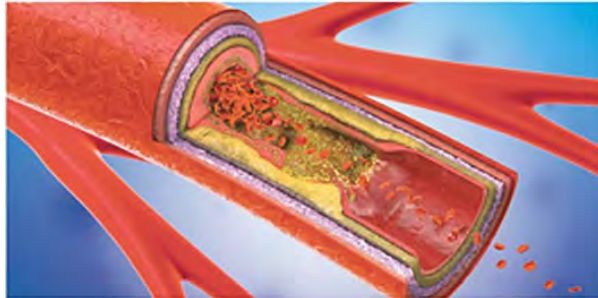
One of the most dangerous aspects of carotid artery disease is that it often produces no symptoms in its early stages. Many patients have significant narrowing of their carotid arteries without ever feeling a thing. This is why the disease is so often called a silent threat.

In some cases, a transient ischemic attack (TIA) — commonly called a "mini-stroke" — serves as the first warning sign. Symptoms of a TIA may include sudden numbness or weakness on one side of the body, trouble speaking or understanding speech, temporary vision loss, dizziness, or loss of coordination. A TIA typically resolves within minutes to hours but should be treated as a medical emergency. It is often a precursor to a full stroke and demands immediate evaluation.

### Who Is at Risk?

Carotid artery disease shares many of the same risk factors as other cardiovascular conditions. You may be at increased risk if you:

- Are over the age of 65
- Have a history of high blood pressure (hypertension)



- Smoke or have a history of tobacco use
- Have high cholesterol or triglyceride levels
- Live with diabetes
- Are overweight or physically inactive
- Have a personal or family history of heart disease or stroke

Men are slightly more likely to develop carotid disease, though women who have the disease often face worse outcomes following a stroke.

### Diagnosis and Screening

Because carotid artery disease frequently has no symptoms, screening plays a critical role in detection. At the Vascular Center of Naples, our specialists use carotid duplex ultrasound — a painless, noninvasive imaging test — to evaluate blood flow through the carotid arteries and detect any narrowing or plaque buildup. This simple test can be life-saving, particularly for patients with multiple risk factors.

If significant narrowing is detected, additional imaging such as CT angiography or MR angiography may be recommended to get a more complete picture of the vascular anatomy before determining the best course of treatment.

### Treatment Options

Treatment for carotid artery disease depends on the severity of the narrowing and the patient's overall health. Mild to moderate disease is often managed with lifestyle modifications — including a heart-healthy diet, regular exercise, smoking cessation, and blood pressure control — along with medications such as statins and antiplatelet agents.

For patients with more advanced stenosis, especially those who have already experienced a TIA or stroke, procedural intervention may be necessary.

Carotid endarterectomy (CEA) — a surgical procedure to remove plaque from the artery — remains the gold standard for many patients. Carotid artery stenting (CAS) is a minimally invasive alternative that may be appropriate for certain individuals who are not ideal surgical candidates.

Our team at the Vascular Center of Naples individualizes every treatment plan based on each patient's unique anatomy, medical history, and risk profile. We take a collaborative approach, working closely with referring physicians and neurologists to ensure seamless, comprehensive care.

### Take Action This Stroke Awareness Month

Stroke is largely preventable when risk factors are identified and managed early. This May, we encourage anyone with cardiovascular risk factors — or anyone over 65 — to speak with their doctor about carotid artery screening. Early detection can mean the difference between a full life and a devastating neurological event.

At the Vascular Center of Naples, our board-certified vascular surgeons are dedicated to protecting the vascular health of our community. If you or a loved one has risk factors for carotid artery disease, do not wait for symptoms to appear. Schedule a consultation today and take the first step toward a healthier, stroke-free future.

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



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# CHAMPION YOUR HEALTH: SIMPLE STEPS TO SUPPORT HEALTHY AGING

By Cassie Calwell

**M**ay is Older Americans Month, and this year's theme, "Champion Your Health," is a reminder that taking charge of your well-being doesn't require major changes. In fact, some of the most powerful ways to support healthy aging come from small, consistent habits that add up over time.

## Start with Movement

Regular movement is one of the most effective ways to maintain strength, balance and independence. It doesn't have to mean intense exercise. Walking, stretching or participating in group activities can make a meaningful difference.

Many older adults find success with walking groups like The Carlisle Striders. At The Carlisle Naples, a luxury senior rental community, the group has become a simple way to stay active and connected. Even outings, such as a recent Earth Day visit to Cambier Park, offer opportunities to stay moving while enjoying the outdoors.

## Fuel Your Body Well

Nutrition continues to play a key role in energy, immunity and overall health. Focus on balanced meals that include lean proteins, whole grains, fruits, vegetables and plenty of hydration. Small shifts like adding more color to your plate or choosing whole foods can support long-term wellness without feeling restrictive.

At The Carlisle Naples, residents also have access to FreshZest®, a plant-forward dining program offered in addition to the community's extensive menu options. This approach allows residents to enjoy both traditional favorites and nutrient-rich choices that support overall wellness.

## Stay Socially and Mentally Engaged

Health also includes emotional and cognitive well-being. Staying connected to others helps reduce isolation and keeps the mind active. Intergenerational experiences, in particular, offer unique benefits.

Carlisle residents recently welcomed students from Community School of Naples along with their parents for National Mahjong Day, creating a rare three-generation experience around the table. Moments like these foster connection, learning and a sense of shared purpose.



## Be Proactive About Your Health

Preventive care and easy access to healthcare can make a significant difference in managing long-term wellness. Having support close by helps residents stay on top of routine care and address concerns early.

Through a partnership with Curana Health, residents at The Carlisle Naples have access to on-site primary care services, including preventive visits, chronic condition management and same-day care when needed. This type of integrated approach allows older adults to be more proactive and confident in managing their health.

In addition, The Carlisle's ECC (Extended Congregate Care) license provides an added layer of support and peace of mind, allowing residents to receive additional care services if their needs change.

## Choose Environments That Support Wellness

Where you live can play a powerful role in how well you age. Environments that encourage activity, connection and access to care make it easier to stay consistent with healthy habits. One often-overlooked factor is the people who make up that environment. At The Carlisle Naples, many team members have been part of the community for years.

"We believe longevity matters," said Executive Director Amanda Ignasak. "The experience and knowledge gained from long-tenured team members create a strong foundation of support and connection. We are a team that sticks together and supports one another through the years."

That consistency helps foster relationships, build trust and create a sense of stability, all important elements of overall well-being.

## Start Small, Stay Consistent

Championing your health doesn't mean doing everything at once. Start with one or two simple changes such as taking a daily walk, drinking more water, connecting with a friend or scheduling a preventive check-up.

Over time, these small steps can lead to meaningful improvements in how you feel, move and live each day. Healthy aging isn't about perfection. It's about making choices that support your well-being and help you continue living life on your terms.

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



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# MACULAR DEGENERATION

## The Hidden Impact on Daily Life—and What Can Help

Practical solutions to maintain independence, confidence, and connection

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

### WHEN VISION LOSS CHANGES MORE THAN WHAT YOU SEE

For many people living with macular degeneration, the biggest changes aren't always what they see—they're what they stop doing.

Macular degeneration—along with conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, stroke-related vision loss, retinitis pigmentosa, and albinism—doesn't just affect eyesight; it can change how people live their daily lives.

*"If your glasses no longer help and you've been told 'nothing more can be done,' there may still be options to help you see and function better."*

Many patients begin to notice difficulty with everyday activities like reading, recognizing faces, watching television, or driving. Even when objects are still visible, they may be harder to process clearly and efficiently.

As these challenges increase, people often begin to adjust their routines—sometimes without realizing it. Activities become less frequent, outings are limited, and confidence may begin to decline.

### THE SUBTLE CHANGES THAT ADD UP

One of the earliest changes is often reading. You may still see the words, but they don't come together as smoothly. Reading becomes slower and more tiring. You may lose your place more often or begin to avoid it altogether.

Other common challenges include:

- Difficulty recognizing faces
- Trouble following television programs
- Reduced confidence in unfamiliar environments
- Avoiding driving due to safety concerns

Over time, these changes can lead to less activity, fewer social interactions, and a gradual loss of independence.

### MORE THAN AN EYE CONDITION

Vision plays a key role in how we stay engaged with the world around us.

As vision declines, people may begin to withdraw from activities they once enjoyed—whether it's reading, attending events, or simply running errands. This reduced engagement can affect overall well-being and quality of life.

Addressing functional vision challenges early can help people stay active, involved, and connected.



### A FORT MYERS SUCCESS STORY

Joseph B., an 82-year-old Fort Myers resident, enjoyed attending his grandchildren's sporting events but began to struggle as his vision declined.

He found it increasingly difficult to distinguish his grandchild from the other players on the field, which took away much of the enjoyment of those moments. At the same time, he lost confidence in driving and began avoiding trips to the grocery store, where navigating the aisles became challenging.

As his activities became more limited, he felt less connected to the people and routines that were important to him.

After a comprehensive low vision evaluation, Joseph was prescribed a custom bioptic telescope to assist with distance vision. With proper fitting and training, he experienced a meaningful improvement in his ability to see detail.

He is now able to follow his grandchildren more easily during their games, drive with greater confidence, and move through the grocery store more comfortably.

*"I can finally pick my grandchild out on the field again," he said. "That means everything to me."*

Joseph reports feeling more independent, more confident, and reconnected to the activities he enjoys most.

*Individual results may vary based on diagnosis and remaining vision.*

### WHAT CAN HELP?

When glasses or surgery are no longer enough, low vision rehabilitation focuses on improving how you use your remaining vision.

A key part of the process is identifying your goals—what you want to be able to do again. For some, it's reading comfortably. For others, it's recognizing faces, watching television, or continuing to drive.

With specialized optical devices, improved lighting, and personalized strategies, many patients are able to return to meaningful daily activities.

### MODERN TOOLS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Today's low vision options go far beyond simple magnifiers.

Solutions may include bioptic telescopic glasses, telemicroscopes for near tasks, electronic magnification, and contrast-enhancing filters.

With the right tools and training, many patients experience meaningful improvements in what they can see and do.

### A TEAM APPROACH TO CARE

Low vision care works alongside your eye doctor's medical treatment.

While your ophthalmologist and optometrist focus on preserving eye health and managing disease, low vision rehabilitation focuses on helping you function more comfortably and effectively in daily life.

### STAYING ACTIVE, STAYING CONNECTED

Vision loss can change how you see the world—but it doesn't have to mean stepping away from it.

With the right evaluation, tools, and guidance, many people are able to stay active, independent, and connected to the people and activities that matter most.

With the right support and tools, many of those activities don't have to be given up—they can be regained, helping people stay connected to what matters most.

### SCHEDULE YOUR COMPREHENSIVE LOW VISION EVALUATION - Dr. Dennis Denick, OD, Dipl ABO, FIALVS



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If you have been told "nothing more can be done," a Low Vision evaluation may help you explore additional options.

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# What is Plantar Fasciitis?

Michael J. Petrocelli, D.P.M., F.A.C.F.A.S., C.W.S.P.  
Board Certified Ankle and Foot Surgeon and Board Certified Wound Care Specialist

If you suffer from heel pain, you are well accompanied by over a million others that see their doctor for heel pain each year. The most common foot and heel discomfort is caused by a painful disorder known as plantar fasciitis.

The foot is comprised of many different bones, joints, tendons, and ligaments; these include the plantar fascia. The plantar fascia is a band of ligament tissue. It stretches from the heel of your foot to the middle, and it is responsible for reinforcing and supporting your arch. When this area becomes inflamed due to extreme tension on the ligament, pain erupts every time you take a step, and if left untreated, many people will even experience discomfort while at rest.

Because plantar fasciitis is one of the most common foot issues; one in ten people will experience it at some time in their life. Usually, the pain is concentrated in the heel area, and it is generally caused by small injuries that occur over an extended period of time. It's quite common for heel spurs, which are bony protrusions under the heel bone to coincide with plantar fasciitis.

There are many treatment options that you can do at home with the guidance of your podiatrist to try and alleviate the painful symptoms of plantar fasciitis. But, because of weight bearing, this area of the foot, in particular, is challenging to heal on its own, The key to getting your foot health back to normal, and you free from pain is to have medically based procedures provided by your podiatrist.

## TREATMENT OPTIONS

### Rest

Rest is one of the most important aspects of healing plantar fasciitis. It can take between 6 and 18 months for the issue to resolve completely. Taking it easy on the arches which you are healing is important.



### Arch Supports & Orthotics

Arch taping or using orthotics can help to alleviate pressure and some of the pain associated with plantar fasciitis.

### Stretching Exercises

Dynamic stretches can be very helpful to relax and create more flexibility within the tendon. Your podiatrist will give you a detailed list of exercises that you can safely do at home.

### Anti-Inflammatory Medications

Ice and NSAIDs such as ibuprofen can help to reduce inflammation. These work best in conjunction with other treatments.

### Ultrasound- Guided Corticosteroid Injections

This is an innovative treatment available from Collier Podiatry. It allows the podiatrist to view the precise placement of the cortisone injectable via an advanced ultrasound machine to make certain that all of the pain and tension relieving material is placed accurately.

### Laser Treatment

Laser therapy is one of the top methods to reduce your pain and inflammation. Deep tissue laser therapy uses a process called photobiomodulation, which penetrates deep into the muscles tissues using photon energy. This therapy increases cellular metabolism while decreasing inflammation and pain.

Collier Podiatry sees great results in their patient's foot health with this treatment option. The best part is that there are no side effects, no harmful medications and more importantly, long lasting results.

### Collier Podiatry

Dr. Michael Petrocelli has been practicing podiatric medicine for well over 29 years. He is an expert in his field and a leader to his peers. If you are experiencing any foot pain or foot conditions, please contact Collier Podiatry. Their kind and well-trained staff are ready to answer your questions and concerns and get you back on your feet again.

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



**COLLIER PODIATRY, P.A.**  
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# TRADITIONAL VS. ROBOTIC LAPAROSCOPY

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

**M**inimally invasive surgical techniques have revolutionized urogynecology and pelvic medicine. At the Florida Bladder Institute, Dr. Joseph Gauta has been performing laparoscopic surgery for over 30 years. While experienced in both traditional and robotic techniques, Dr. Gauta primarily utilizes traditional laparoscopy for compelling reasons that directly benefit his patients. This article explores why traditional laparoscopy often provides superior benefits compared to robotic alternatives.

## TRADITIONAL LAPAROSCOPY:

### The Preferred Approach

Traditional laparoscopy (also known as "straight-stick" laparoscopy) has been a cornerstone of minimally invasive surgery for decades. Dr. Gauta has refined his technique over three decades of practice.

### Significantly Fewer Incisions

One of the most significant advantages of traditional laparoscopy as performed by Dr. Gauta is the dramatically reduced number of incisions required. While robotic surgery (using the da Vinci system) typically requires 5-6 puncture sites in the abdomen, Dr. Gauta's traditional laparoscopic approach needs only 1-3 holes. Fewer incisions mean less trauma to the body, potentially faster healing times, and reduced scarring.

### Proven Track Record

Traditional laparoscopy has decades of clinical data supporting its safety and efficacy. Dr. Gauta has performed thousands of successful procedures using conventional laparoscopic approaches, refining his techniques to maximize patient outcomes.

### Superior Setting: Outpatient Surgery Centers

Traditional laparoscopic procedures can be performed in outpatient surgery centers, where infection rates are nearly zero. In contrast, robotic procedures must be performed in hospital settings, which typically have higher infection rates. For patients, this difference can significantly impact recovery and overall surgical experience.

### Cost-Effectiveness for Patients

Traditional laparoscopy is substantially more cost-effective than robotic alternatives. Not only is the equipment less expensive, but avoiding hospital

facilities in favor of outpatient surgery centers dramatically reduces costs for patients. The hospital setting required for robotic surgery adds considerable expense without necessarily improving outcomes.

### Tactile Feedback

Surgeons performing traditional laparoscopy maintain direct control of the instruments, allowing them to feel tissue resistance and tension. This tactile feedback is invaluable during delicate procedures and cannot be replicated by robotic systems, regardless of technological advances.

### Improved Ergonomics for the Surgeon

While robotic systems are often promoted for their ergonomic benefits, Dr. Gauta has found that traditional laparoscopy provides superior comfort for his surgical style. The standing position and ability to use his body more naturally during traditional laparoscopic procedures has proven less taxing, particularly on his neck, compared to the seated, more static position required for robotic surgery. This translates to better surgeon performance during procedures.

### Shorter Setup and Procedure Time

Traditional laparoscopic procedures typically require less preparation time compared to robotic systems. This efficiency translates to shorter overall procedure times and reduced anesthesia exposure for patients.

## WHEN ROBOTIC SURGERY MAY BE CONSIDERED

While Dr. Gauta prefers traditional laparoscopy for most procedures, he acknowledges that robotic-assisted surgery does have specific applications in certain cases:

### Enhanced Visualization in Complex Cases

The robotic platform provides "three-dimensional" visualization, which can be beneficial for certain highly complex procedures. However, for the majority of urological and gynecological procedures that Dr. Gauta performs, traditional laparoscopic visualization provides excellent views without the added costs and complications.

### Potential Benefits in Limited Circumstances

For certain specific procedures, robotic assistance may offer advantages. However, patients should carefully weigh these potential benefits against the increased costs, additional incisions, hospital setting requirements, and associated infection risks.

## Dr. Gauta's Approach at Florida Bladder Institute

At the Florida Bladder Institute, Dr. Joseph Gauta's extensive experience with both traditional and robotic laparoscopy has led him to strongly favor the traditional approach for most procedures. His expertise allows him to perform procedures with precision that rivals or exceeds robotic alternatives, while offering patients fewer incisions, lower costs, and the safety of an outpatient surgical environment.

As with any surgery, patients should do their homework and understand all available options. When evaluating laparoscopic versus robotic approaches, consider these important factors:

- Number of incisions required (1-3 for traditional vs. 5-6 for robotic)
- Setting where surgery will be performed (outpatient center vs. hospital)
- Risk of infection (nearly zero in outpatient centers vs. higher in hospitals)
- Overall cost of the procedure
- Surgeon's experience and preference
- Recovery time expectations

For most patients requiring procedures that Dr. Gauta specializes in, traditional laparoscopy provides excellent outcomes with distinct advantages over robotic alternatives. His extensive experience ensures that patients receive the benefits of minimally invasive surgery without unnecessary complications or expenses.



Joseph Gauta, MD



Gabrielle Wright PA-C



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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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# Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis:

## Two Different Diseases, One Important Distinction

**A**rthritis is one of the most misunderstood words in medicine. Most people use it as a catch-all term for joint pain, but not all arthritis is the same. Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and osteoarthritis (OA) are two of the most common forms — and while they share some surface-level similarities, they are fundamentally different diseases with distinct causes, progressions, and treatments. Understanding the difference could change the way you approach your care.

### What Is Osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent form of arthritis, affecting over 32 million adults in the United States alone. It is a degenerative joint disease — meaning it develops as cartilage, the protective cushion between bones, gradually wears down over time. As that cushion erodes, bones begin to rub against each other, causing pain, stiffness, and reduced range of motion.

OA is primarily driven by mechanical wear and tear. Risk factors include age, excess body weight, previous joint injuries, and repetitive physical activity. It most commonly affects the knees, hips, hands, and spine. Symptoms tend to worsen with activity and improve with rest, and joint stiffness in the morning typically resolves within 30 minutes.

OA does not affect the whole body — it is a localized disease. There is no widespread inflammation, no immune system attack, and it does not damage organs beyond the joints.

### What Is Rheumatoid Arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis is an entirely different condition. It is an autoimmune disease, meaning the body's immune system mistakenly attacks the lining of its own joints — a tissue called the synovium. This triggers chronic inflammation that can destroy cartilage, erode bone, and cause permanent joint deformity if left untreated.

Unlike OA, RA is a systemic disease. It can affect the eyes, lungs, heart, and skin in addition to the joints. It typically presents symmetrically — if the right knee is affected, the left knee usually is too. Morning stiffness in RA often lasts longer than an hour, sometimes throughout the entire day. Fatigue, fever, and a general feeling of illness are also common.

RA can affect people at any age, including children (juvenile idiopathic arthritis), though it most commonly develops between the ages of 30 and 60. Women are two to three times more likely to be diagnosed than men.



### Key Differences at a Glance

#### OSTEOARTHRITIS (OA):

- Degenerative joint disease caused by cartilage wear and tear
- Develops gradually, most often after age 50
- Morning stiffness typically resolves within 30 minutes
- Affects joints asymmetrically and locally
- Blood markers usually appear normal
- Rarely causes systemic (whole-body) effects

#### RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS (RA):

- Autoimmune disease where the immune system attacks joint lining
- Can develop at any age, most commonly between 30–60
- Morning stiffness lasts over an hour, sometimes all day
- Affects joints symmetrically (both sides of the body)
- Elevated blood markers: RF, anti-CCP, and CRP
- Frequently causes systemic effects including fatigue, fever, and organ involvement

### Why the Distinction Matters

Misidentifying one condition as the other can lead to delayed or ineffective treatment. OA is managed primarily through lifestyle changes, physical therapy, pain relief, and in advanced cases, joint replacement surgery. RA, on the other hand, requires disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (DMARDs) and often biologic therapies to halt immune system damage — treatments that are completely unnecessary and inappropriate for OA.

Early, accurate diagnosis is critical for RA in particular. Joint damage from RA can begin within the first year of disease onset, and early intervention dramatically improves long-term outcomes.

### When to Seek Help

If you are experiencing persistent joint pain, swelling, or stiffness — especially if it is symmetric, accompanied by fatigue, or accompanied by morning stiffness

lasting more than 30 minutes — do not assume it is simply “wear and tear.” A rheumatologist can perform blood tests, imaging, and a clinical evaluation to determine exactly what type of arthritis you have and create a personalized treatment plan.

At RheumCare™, our specialists are dedicated to helping patients navigate complex rheumatic conditions with precision, compassion, and the latest evidence-based care. Because knowing what you have is the first step to feeling better.



### Dr. Alain Alvarez

Bilingual in English and Spanish, Dr. Alvarez was born in Havana, Cuba and was raised in Miami, Florida. Dr. Alvarez graduated Phi Kappa Phi with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Microbiology and Immunology, and a medical degree from the University of Miami.

He completed his residency in internal medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida and completed his rheumatology fellowship training at the University of Minnesota.

An avid sports fan, especially college football, Dr. Alvarez has a keen interest in providing non-surgical orthopedic alternatives to his patients. He also holds a special interest in musculoskeletal ultrasound for which he has undergone additional training to be certified both nationally and internationally in the application of this technology for the treatment of rheumatic diseases. His practice consists of general adult rheumatology with a focus on inflammatory arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, lupus, polymyalgia rheumatica, ankylosing spondylitis, and vasculitis. He is also a willing participant and sub-investigator for numerous clinical trials.

Dr. Alvarez is a member of the Florida Society of Rheumatology, American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine, American College of Rheumatology, Collier County Medical Society and Florida Medical Association.

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# Discover Your *Fountain of Youth* with the *European Liquid Facelift* The Art and Science of Facial Rejuvenation for GLP-1 Weight Loss Patients

By: Alina Stanciu, MD, FACS, FAAO, FASRS - Founder & Medical Director, Naples Eye & Aesthetics Institute and MediFace Spa

If you're on a GLP-1 medication like Ozempic, Wegovy, or Mounjaro, you're likely celebrating real, meaningful weight loss — and you should be. But many patients are noticing an unexpected side effect: rapid facial volume loss, skin laxity, and the appearance of premature aging. This phenomenon, often called "Ozempic Face," happens because as the body sheds fat quickly, the face loses the natural padding and collagen support that keeps it looking youthful and lifted.

The good news? Dr. Alina Stanciu has developed the perfect solution.

### Why GLP-1 Users Need Collagen Support

GLP-1 medications accelerate fat loss throughout the body — including the face. This rapid change depletes the structural collagen and volume that give skin its firmness and elasticity. The result can be hollowed cheeks, sagging jowls, deepened folds, and a gaunt appearance that doesn't match how energized and healthy you feel inside.

This is why proactively stimulating collagen production is critical for anyone on a GLP-1 weight loss program. Without it, the skin simply cannot keep pace with the body's transformation.

### The European Liquid Facelift: Built for Your Transformation

Dr. Stanciu recognized the need for a gentler, more refined approach to facial rejuvenation — one that enhances your natural beauty rather than altering it, with no downtime and exceptional results. This insight led to the creation of The European Liquid Facelift, an innovative, non-surgical procedure developed exclusively by Dr. Stanciu to lift, contour, and rejuvenate the face with precision and artistry.

Unlike traditional facelifts, her technique uses strategic injections of advanced bio-stimulatory fillers — including Sculptra and diluted Radiesse — that do far more than fill. These treatments actively trigger your body's own collagen production, rebuilding the structural foundation that GLP-1 medications can erode. The results restore lost volume, redefine facial structure, and smooth fine lines — from the inside out.



Before

After

For GLP-1 patients, this collagen stimulation isn't a luxury. It's essential maintenance for your skin to stay healthy and vibrant as your body continues to change.

### Science Meets Artistry

Dr. Stanciu's method combines multi-layered filler placement with advanced sculpting techniques to achieve natural lift and contour while minimizing bruising and swelling. Treatments take less than an hour, with visible results immediately and continued collagen rebuilding over the following weeks and months.

Her treatments are further enhanced by Bella Piel MD, her proprietary medical-grade anti-aging skincare line developed exclusively to support post-procedure healing and ongoing collagen health — a critical companion for GLP-1 patients whose skin needs continuous nourishment during their weight loss journey.

Drawing from over 20 years of oculo-facial surgical expertise, Dr. Stanciu approaches each patient's face as a unique canvas. "My goal is to restore the natural harmony of the face, not change it," she explains. "Patients should look rested, youthful, and refreshed — not done, puffy, or pulled."



Before

After

### Your Weight Loss Win Deserves a Radiant Face to Match

You've worked hard for your transformation. The European Liquid Facelift ensures your face reflects the vibrant, confident person you've become — not the collagen loss left behind. With personalized treatment plans and slight touch-ups over time, you can stay forever young while your body continues its journey.

Every patient is treated personally by Dr. Stanciu herself at the Naples Eye & Aesthetics Institute and MediFace Spa — where medicine truly meets art.

*Schedule your consultation today!*

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# TRUSTED CARE, REAL RESULTS

**S**pinal conditions can profoundly affect daily life, leading to chronic pain, reduced mobility, and diminished quality of life. At the office of Dr. Michael C. Shaffer, we utilize advanced, non-invasive therapies to address these challenges, notably the M7 MLS® Therapy Laser and Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression. These treatments aim to alleviate pain and promote healing without the need for surgery.

## Common Spinal Conditions:

Spinal conditions can result from various causes, including:

- **Sprains and Strains:** Caused by overstretching or tearing of ligaments and muscles.
- **Herniated Discs:** Occurs when disc material protrudes, pressing on spinal nerves.
- **Degenerative Disc Disease:** Age-related wear and tear causing disc deterioration.
- **Sciatica:** Compression of the sciatic nerve, resulting in leg pain.
- **Spinal Stenosis:** Narrowing of the spinal canal, leading to nerve compression.
- **Repetitive Stress Injuries:** From prolonged poor posture or repetitive motions.



## M7 MLS® Therapy Laser

The M7 MLS® Therapy Laser is an FDA-cleared, Class IV laser system designed to reduce pain and inflammation while promoting tissue repair. It utilizes synchronized dual wavelengths to penetrate deep into tissues, stimulating cellular activity and enhancing the healing process.

**Regeneration is not a concept- it's a cellular reality.** Every stage of repair depends on energy, specifically ATP. When energy production falters, healing slows. When energy improves, **biology responds.**

## MLS Laser Therapy Supports Regeneration By:

- Increasing mitochondrial ATP production.
- Enhancing microcirculation and nutrient transport.
- Modulating inflammatory responses.
- Accelerating tissue repair pathways.

Studies indicate that approximately 85–90% of patients experience significant relief from musculoskeletal pain following MLS laser therapy. It is non-surgical, there are no known side-effects, it is drug free and has rapid results.



## Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression

Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression is a therapy aimed at relieving pressure on spinal discs and nerves. By gently stretching the spine, it creates negative pressure within the discs, encouraging retraction of herniated material and promoting nutrient-rich fluid influx for healing.

### Procedure:

- **Setup:** The patient is secured on a specialized table with a harness.
- **Decompression:** A computer controlled, actuator specific movement is applied to the spine.
- **Duration:** Sessions typically last 20-30 minutes, with a recommended course of 20–28 sessions over several weeks.

### Conditions Treated:

- Herniated or bulging discs
- Degenerative disc disease
- Sciatica
- Spinal stenosis

Clinical studies have demonstrated that combining spinal decompression with laser therapy can achieve success rates up to 86%.

## Combined Therapeutic Approach

Integrating the M7 MLS® Therapy Laser with Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression offers a comprehensive treatment strategy. While decompression addresses structural issues by relieving disc and nerve pressure, the laser therapy promotes cellular repair and reduces inflammation.

### Advantages:

- **Enhanced Pain Relief:** Targeting both mechanical and inflammatory sources of pain.
- **Improved Functionality:** Restoring mobility and reducing discomfort.
- **Accelerated Recovery:** Facilitating faster healing through synergistic effects. This combined approach is particularly effective for conditions where nerve compression and inflammation coexist.



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

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

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# EXOMIND™: A BREAKTHROUGH APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH THAT GOES BEYOND MEDICATION

By Dr. Waldo Amadeo

**F**or millions of people living with depression, anxiety, OCD, and a host of related challenges, traditional treatments don't always offer a complete answer. Exomind™ is changing that — offering a clinically validated, drug-free option that treats the full spectrum of mental health and cognitive wellness concerns.

Mental health care has long relied on a narrow toolkit: medication, therapy, or some combination of both. While these approaches help many, significant gaps remain. Antidepressants fail to produce adequate relief in a large portion of patients. Anxiety and OCD often prove stubborn against standard treatments. And emerging concerns like burnout, cognitive fog, and emotional overeating rarely receive the attention they deserve. Exomind™ was developed to address precisely these shortcomings — delivering meaningful results for conditions that have historically been difficult to treat.

## What Is Exomind™?

Exomind™ is an FDA-cleared neurostimulation therapy that harnesses the brain's natural capacity for change — a property known as neuroplasticity. Rather than flooding the body with pharmaceuticals, Exomind™ uses targeted, non-invasive stimulation to recalibrate the neural circuits that govern mood, cognition, impulse control, and stress response. The result is a treatment that works with the brain's own biology, producing improvements that tend to be durable and meaningful across a wide range of conditions.

At Heal Thy Self Institute, Exomind™ is offered as a powerful complement to — or alternative to — conventional care, particularly for individuals who have not found adequate relief through medication alone.

## Primary Conditions Treated

The conditions addressed by Exomind™ span both clinical diagnoses and everyday functional challenges that diminish quality of life.

## MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

One of Exomind™'s primary FDA-cleared applications. Particularly effective for those seeking drug-free alternatives or who haven't responded to antidepressants.



## ANXIETY & PANIC

Helps stabilize mood and reduce the persistent anxiety and sudden panic episodes that disrupt daily functioning.

## OCD

Targets the intrusive thoughts and compulsive behaviors at the root of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, offering relief where medication often falls short.

## EATING & ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS

Addresses binge eating, food cravings, and impulsive patterns by modulating the brain's reward and impulse-control pathways.

## PTSD

Helps regulate the hyperactive threat-detection systems that drive trauma-related symptoms, supporting recovery and emotional stability.

## COGNITIVE FOG & DECLINE

Sharpens focus, improves mental clarity, and supports memory — benefits felt even by those without a formal diagnosis.

*"Exomind™ represents a fundamental shift in how we can approach treatment-resistant and multifaceted mental health challenges — addressing not just symptoms, but the underlying neural patterns that drive them."*

## Wellness and Lifestyle Benefits

What sets Exomind™ apart from purely diagnostic-focused treatments is its meaningful impact on the broader landscape of mental wellness. Burnout — that state of chronic exhaustion that has become endemic in modern life — responds well to Exomind™'s stress-regulation effects. Patients report reduced fatigue, renewed energy, and a restored sense of mental resilience after a course of treatment.

Sleep, too, is an area of notable benefit. Many patients struggling with insomnia or disrupted sleep quality see measurable improvement, which in turn supports every other dimension of mental health. And for individuals transitioning off GLP-1 weight loss medications — a group with unique psychological and behavioral needs — Exomind™ provides crucial mental support, helping to maintain the behavioral and emotional changes that sustain long-term wellness.

## Why Exomind™ Matters Now

The mental health landscape is at an inflection point. Awareness is higher than ever, yet access to effective, personalized care remains limited. Exomind™ fills a genuine gap — offering clinically credible, non-pharmacological treatment for a broad range of conditions, from the clinical to the everyday. For those who have tried other approaches without success, or who simply want a different path forward, Exomind™ represents something genuinely new: a treatment designed for the full complexity of the human mind.

To learn more about Exomind™ and whether it may be right for you, contact Heal Thy Self Institute for a consultation.

## About the Author

Dr. Waldo Amadeo is a chiropractic physician with advanced training in functional neurology and integrative brain-based care. In his practice, Heal Thyself Institute in Naples, Florida, he specializes in complex neurological conditions, brain injury recovery, and nervous system regulation. His approach integrates structural rehabilitation, neuromodulation, and metabolic strategies to support long-term neurological resilience.



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# KNOW THE SIGNS, SAVE A LIFE: May Is American Stroke Awareness Month

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

Every May, Advanced Neurology Specialists joins healthcare providers and communities across the nation in observing American Stroke Awareness Month — a time dedicated to educating the public about one of the most devastating and yet preventable neurological emergencies. Stroke remains the fifth leading cause of death in the United States and a leading cause of long-term disability. Despite its prevalence, many people are unaware of the warning signs, risk factors, and the critical importance of acting fast when a stroke occurs.

This month, we want every patient, family member, and community member to walk away with one powerful truth: time is brain.

## What Is a Stroke?

A stroke occurs when blood flow to a part of the brain is suddenly interrupted. Without a steady supply of oxygen-rich blood, brain cells begin to die within minutes. There are two main types of stroke: ischemic strokes, which are caused by a blood clot blocking an artery and account for about 87% of all strokes, and hemorrhagic strokes, which occur when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures and bleeds. A transient ischemic attack (TIA), often called a "mini-stroke," produces stroke-like symptoms that resolve quickly — but it should never be ignored, as it is often a warning sign of a full stroke to come.

**Recognize the Warning Signs: Remember BE-FAST**  
When a stroke happens, rapid recognition can mean the difference between full recovery and permanent disability. Medical professionals recommend using the BE-FAST acronym to identify stroke symptoms:

**B** — **Balance:** Sudden loss of balance or coordination

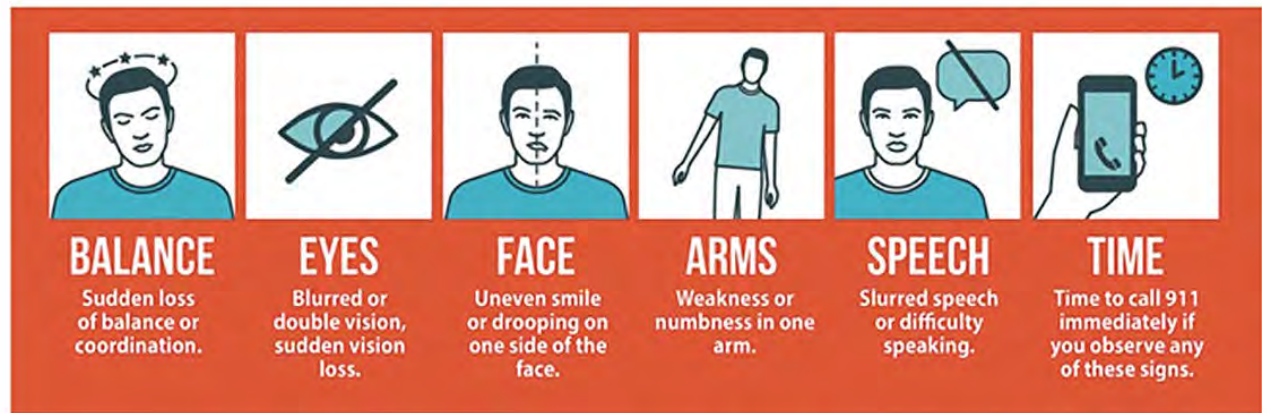
**E** — **Eyes:** Sudden vision changes or trouble seeing in one or both eyes

**F** — **Face Drooping:** Is one side of the face drooping or numb? Ask the person to smile — is it uneven?

**A** — **Arm Weakness:** Is one arm weak or numb? Ask them to raise both arms — does one drift downward?

**S** — **Speech Difficulty:** Is speech slurred, strange, or hard to understand?

**T** — **Time to Call 911:** If you observe any of these signs, call 911 immediately. Note the time symptoms began.



## Understanding Your Risk Factors

Stroke does not discriminate — it can happen to anyone at any age. However, certain conditions and lifestyle factors significantly increase risk. The most common risk factors include:

- High blood pressure (hypertension) — the single most controllable risk factor
- Atrial fibrillation (irregular heartbeat)
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Obesity and physical inactivity
- Smoking and excessive alcohol use
- Family history or prior stroke or TIA

Many of these risk factors are manageable with proper medical care, lifestyle changes, and consistent monitoring. Our team at Advanced Neurology Specialists works closely with patients to develop personalized treatment plans that address these underlying conditions and lower stroke risk.

## Prevention Is Possible

Up to 80% of strokes are preventable. Prevention starts with awareness and proactive healthcare. Here is what you can do today:

- Schedule regular checkups to monitor blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar
- Follow a heart-healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week
- Quit smoking and reduce alcohol consumption
- Take prescribed medications as directed and report any new neurological symptoms promptly

## Why Specialized Neurological Care Matters

At Advanced Neurology Specialists, our board-certified neurologists are experienced in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of stroke and related neurological conditions. Whether you have had a stroke, experienced TIA symptoms, or simply want to understand your personal risk, our team provides comprehensive, compassionate care tailored to your needs. From advanced imaging and diagnostic testing to rehabilitation planning and ongoing management, we are here to guide you at every step.

## Take Action This May

American Stroke Awareness Month is more than a date on the calendar — it is a call to action. Share what you have learned with a friend or family member. Talk to your doctor about your stroke risk. And if you ever suspect a stroke, do not wait. Call 911 immediately. Quick action saves lives and preserves the quality of life for stroke survivors.

To schedule an appointment with a specialist at Advanced Neurology Specialists, contact our office today at 239-667-5878. Together, we can make this May — and every month — a step toward a healthier, stroke-free future.



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# A NEW ERA IN BODY CONTOURING: Velo Med Spa Unveils alloClae® Filler

The landscape of aesthetic medicine is shifting once again, moving further from the scalpel and closer to the syringe. Velo Med Spa, a prominent center for advanced aesthetics in Southwest Florida, today announced its adoption of alloClae® Structural Adipose Filler, a first-of-its-kind treatment poised to redefine non-surgical body enhancement.

Developed by tissue engineering firm Tiger Aesthetics, alloClae® represents a significant leap forward from traditional fillers and invasive surgical procedures. It is an injectable filler composed of sterilized, donor-derived human adipose (fat) tissue. This innovation offers a new pathway for individuals seeking to restore volume, smooth contours, and add natural-looking shape to areas like the hips, buttocks, and breasts without undergoing liposuction or surgery.

For years, patients seeking body contouring faced a binary choice: synthetic fillers, which often have limited longevity and can lack a natural feel, or autologous fat grafting, a surgical procedure that requires harvesting fat from one part of the body to inject into another. Velo Med Spa's introduction of alloClae® signals the arrival of a compelling third option that could democratize body enhancement for a broader audience.

## The Science Behind the Shape

At the heart of alloClae®'s innovation is its unique composition and processing. Unlike synthetic products, it is a biologic filler derived from real human tissue. The donor adipose tissue undergoes a meticulous proprietary process that removes cellular components, including DNA and other materials that could trigger an immune response from the recipient. What remains is the essential structural framework of the fat tissue—the extracellular matrix (ECM), rich in collagen and other vital proteins.

This preserved natural "honeycomb" structure acts as a biological scaffold. Upon injection, it provides immediate, stable volume. More importantly, over the following months, it encourages the patient's own cells to infiltrate the matrix, promoting the generation of new blood vessels (angiogenesis) and fat cells (adipogenesis). A six-month study in an animal model demonstrated this integration, showing stable graft retention and the formation of new, healthy tissue within the alloClae® framework.



Tiger Aesthetics Medical, LLC, the company behind the product, is a subsidiary of Tiger Biosciences, a Pennsylvania-based firm specializing in regenerative medicine. The development of alloClae® is a direct application of tissue engineering principles to the aesthetics market, which is increasingly focused on regenerative and biologically harmonious solutions. The product is regulated by the FDA under its guidelines for human tissue products, requiring strict donor screening and terminal sterilization to a sterility assurance level (SAL) of  $10^{-6}$  to ensure safety.

## Bridging a Critical Gap in Aesthetic Medicine

Experts see alloClae® as a game-changer because it effectively bridges the gap between existing treatments. The global body contouring market, projected to reach \$2.24 billion in 2026, has been dominated by a growing consumer demand for non-invasive options with minimal downtime.

Previously, the gold standard for natural-looking volume enhancement was autologous fat grafting, often used in procedures like the Brazilian Butt Lift (BBL). However, this method is inherently surgical, requiring liposuction that involves anesthesia, recovery time, and potential complications. Furthermore, it is not an option for lean individuals who lack sufficient donor fat to harvest.

alloClae® circumvents these hurdles entirely. As an "off-the-shelf" product, it comes pre-packaged in syringes, ready for in-office injection. This eliminates the need for a harvesting procedure, drastically reducing downtime and making body contouring accessible to patients with a low BMI. While results from synthetic fillers can be temporary, lasting from several months to a year, alloClae® is designed for greater longevity, with clinical observations suggesting results can last 12 to 18 months or longer before a touch-up may be desired.

"Velo Med Spa is committed to bringing the most advanced, results-driven treatments to our patients," a representative of Velo Med Spa stated in the official press release. "The introduction of alloClae® aligns perfectly with our mission of helping clients look like themselves, only better through innovative, non-surgical solutions."

## Velo Med Spa's Strategic Embrace of Innovation

For Velo Med Spa, adopting alloClae® is a strategic move that reinforces its brand as a leader in regenerative aesthetics. The spa is integrating the filler into its signature treatment protocols, including the Velo Breastlyft™ for subtle breast enhancement and the Velo Peach Collection for contouring the hips and gluteal region. This allows them to offer highly customized, natural-looking results that align with their philosophy of enhancing, not altering, a client's appearance.

The decision positions the Bonita Springs provider at the forefront of a major market trend. The non-surgical aesthetic sector continues to outpace its surgical counterpart, driven by a clientele that values safety, convenience, and natural outcomes. By being an early adopter of this technology, Velo Med Spa not only differentiates itself in the competitive Southwest Florida market but also caters directly to this modern consumer ethos.

While the concept of using donor-derived tissue may initially give some patients pause, aesthetic practitioners report that concerns are typically alleviated once the stringent safety and sterilization protocols are explained. The process is akin to other well-established medical procedures that utilize donor tissue, such as bone grafts. As with any medical aesthetic procedure, a personalized consultation with a qualified professional at Velo Med Spa is required to determine a patient's candidacy and discuss their aesthetic goals, ensuring a safe and effective treatment plan. The introduction of alloClae® ultimately expands the toolkit available to both practitioners and patients, heralding a more sophisticated and accessible future for body contouring.

Visit us today and see why VELO is the top location for aesthetic services.



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# BEYOND WELLNESS: THE SCIENCE OF LONGEVITY AND REVERSING THE CLOCK

**M**ost people think of health as simply the absence of disease. But a growing movement in modern medicine is pushing that definition far further — not just to feel good today, but to genuinely slow, and even reverse, the biological aging process. At TheDRIPBaR Naples, we distinguish between two powerful but distinct goals: wellness and longevity. Understanding the difference is the first step toward transforming how you age.

## Wellness vs. Longevity: What's the Difference?

Wellness is about slowing aging — making your RealAge younger. It means reducing your risk of disability and death at any age, and changing your epigenes to keep your cells as young as possible. Think of it as putting the brakes on time. Longevity, on the other hand, is about reversing aging altogether — turning back the biological clock so that your body functions younger than your chronological age suggests. While wellness preserves, longevity restores. Together, they form the foundation of a comprehensive, science-backed approach to a longer, more vibrant life.

## Blood Pressure Control: The Silent Accelerator of Aging

Uncontrolled blood pressure is one of the most aggressive accelerators of cellular aging. When blood pressure remains elevated, it strains blood vessels, promotes inflammation, and damages organs over time — quietly aging you from the inside out. One of the most effective modern tools for blood pressure management is weight loss, and GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLPs) have emerged as a breakthrough solution. By supporting meaningful, sustained weight reduction, GLPs help bring blood pressure into a healthier range, reducing cardiovascular risk and protecting the longevity of your cells. At TheDRIPBaR Naples, we recognize that true blood pressure control isn't just about medication — it's about addressing root causes.

## Stress Control: Calming the Aging Nervous System

Chronic stress is a biological wrecking ball. Elevated cortisol and stress hormones accelerate cellular damage, shorten telomeres — the protective caps on your DNA — and disrupt sleep, immune function, and metabolism. Managing stress is not optional in a longevity plan; it is essential. TheDRIPBaR Naples offers targeted solutions including CBD therapies and specially formulated Soother drips designed to calm



the nervous system, reduce inflammation, and restore biochemical balance. These aren't just relaxation tools — they are precision interventions that help protect your cells from the cumulative damage that chronic stress inflicts over a lifetime.

## Diet, Vitamins, and Exercise: The Timeless Triad

No longevity strategy is complete without the fundamentals. A nutrient-dense, anti-inflammatory diet reduces oxidative stress and supports healthy gene expression. Strategic supplementation — targeted vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants — fills the gaps that even the best diet can leave behind. And regular exercise remains the single most well-documented intervention for extending both lifespan and healthspan. Resistance training preserves muscle mass and metabolic function, while cardiovascular exercise strengthens the heart and improves circulation. Together, these three pillars create the cellular environment where longevity becomes possible.

## NAD+: The Longevity Molecule

At the cellular level, one molecule stands out as a cornerstone of longevity science: NAD+ (nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide). NAD+ plays a critical role in energy production, DNA repair, and the activation of sirtuins — proteins that regulate cellular aging. Unfortunately, NAD+ levels decline significantly with age, and this decline is directly linked to decreased cellular resilience and faster aging. The DRIP BaR's NAD+ drips and NR (nicotinamide riboside) supplementation work by replenishing this key molecule, restoring cellular function, improving mitochondrial efficiency, and supporting the biological processes that keep cells — and you — younger for longer.

## Your Longevity Journey Starts Here

Aging is inevitable — but how you age is increasingly within your control. Whether your goal is to slow the clock through optimized wellness or to actively reverse the biological markers of aging, TheDRIPBaR Naples provides the science-driven tools to help you get there. From GLP-assisted weight management and stress-relief drips to NAD+ infusions and personalized supplementation, every service is designed with one purpose: to help your cells, and your life, thrive longer. The future of aging well isn't just possible — it's available to you today.



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# Better Hearing Starts with You:

## Why May Is the Perfect Time to Prioritize Your Hearing Health

By Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D.

**E**ach May, we celebrate Better Hearing Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about hearing loss and encouraging people to take a proactive approach to their hearing health. As an audiologist, I couldn't be more excited about this annual reminder—because hearing is one of our most powerful connections to the world around us, and yet it's often overlooked until it starts to slip away.

### Hearing is Health

When I talk to patients at AudioNova/Decibels Audiology, many are surprised to learn that hearing loss doesn't just affect how we perceive sound—it also plays a major role in our cognitive function, mental well-being, balance, and even heart health.

The ears may be small, but they are part of a much bigger system. When hearing begins to decline, the brain has to work harder to process sound. This increased mental strain has been linked to memory issues, faster cognitive decline, and even early signs of dementia. Additionally, untreated hearing loss has been associated with higher risks of depression, social isolation, and falls in older adults.

That's why hearing health is not just about communication—it's a key part of your overall wellness.

### The Signs Are Easy to Miss

One of the biggest challenges with hearing loss is how gradually it tends to happen. You may find yourself turning up the TV volume more often, asking people to repeat themselves, or avoiding noisy restaurants because conversations feel too difficult to follow. You may even think others are mumbling more than they used to.

These are all signs that your hearing may be changing—but many people chalk it up to "getting older" or don't realize how much they're missing until they're tested.

Better Hearing Month is the perfect reminder to schedule a baseline hearing screening, especially if you're over 55. Just like an annual eye exam or a check-up with your primary care provider, hearing evaluations should be a regular part of your preventive health care.

### Hearing Loss Is Treatable

The good news? Hearing loss is manageable, and the solutions today are better than ever. At AudioNova/Decibels Audiology, we prescribe medical-grade hearing devices from all major manufacturers. That means we don't take a one-size-fits-all approach—we take time to understand your hearing needs, your lifestyle, and your budget.

Whether you spend your time golfing, traveling, volunteering, or simply enjoying family time, we can help you find a solution that keeps you hearing your best in the moments that matter most.

One of my favorite parts of this job is watching someone light up when they realize what they've been missing. A patient recently told me, "I didn't realize how quiet my world had become until I could hear the birds again." That's what hearing care is all about—restoring your connection to life.

### Don't Wait—Your Brain Won't

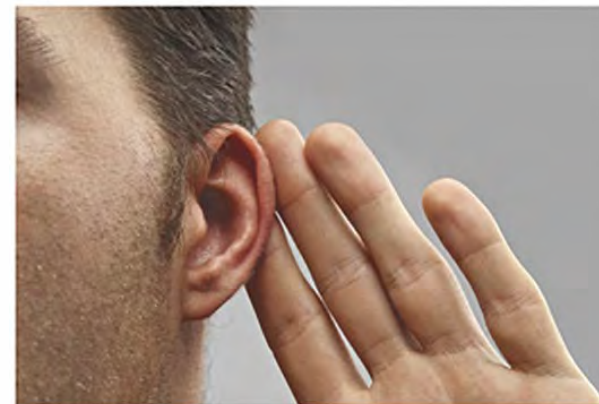
Some people hesitate to take the first step because they think their hearing loss "isn't that bad yet." But studies show that the longer hearing loss goes untreated, the harder it can be for your brain to adapt to sound again. Early intervention not only helps you hear better now—it protects your cognitive health and keeps those vital neural pathways strong.

The sooner you start, the better your outcomes. And no—hearing aids are not bulky or embarrassing anymore! Today's technology is discreet, smart, and designed to fit seamlessly into your life.

### Start with a Conversation

If you're not sure where to begin, start by talking with your loved ones or your primary care provider. Or better yet, call us directly! A simple hearing screening takes less than an hour and gives us a clear picture of your hearing health. From there, we'll guide you through your options—real answers and real care.

At AudioNova/Decibels Audiology, we're here to build a lifelong partnership with you. That means helping you every step of the way—from your first test to follow-up adjustments and annual check-ins.



### Let This May Be Your Moment

If you've been putting off your hearing test, now is the time. Make Better Hearing Month the moment you finally prioritize your hearing just like you would your heart, eyes, or joints. Because hearing isn't just about sound—it's about connection, confidence, and living life fully.

We invite you to schedule a free hearing screening at one of our two convenient locations in Naples. Let's work together to protect one of your most precious senses and keep you hearing—and thriving—for years to come.

### Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D.

Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D. is a Florida native with a passion for helping patients reconnect with the world through better hearing. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders from the University of Central Florida in 2020 and completed her Doctorate in Audiology at the University of South Alabama in 2024.

Dedicated to improving her patients' ability to communicate, Dr. Rhodes takes pride in providing compassionate, personalized care. Outside of work, she enjoys soaking up the Florida sunshine at the beach with her goldendoodle, Fez.

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# NEED MORE PEP IN YOUR STEP? RE-ENERGIZE AT THE BRAIN REJUVENATION CLINIC OF NAPLES

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Photobiomodulation (light therapy) uses specific wavelengths of red and near-infrared light to stimulate mitochondrial function. Since mitochondria produce ATP—the body's energy currency—this therapy may help improve cellular efficiency and reduce fatigue over time.

## Hyperbaric Chamber



Hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT) involves breathing oxygen in a pressurized environment, allowing more oxygen to dissolve into the bloodstream. This increased oxygen delivery can support tissue repair, reduce inflammation, and enhance overall vitality, especially in individuals with chronic fatigue or poor circulation.

Molecular hydrogen inhalation is a newer modality gaining attention for its antioxidant properties. Hydrogen acts as a selective antioxidant, helping to neutralize

## Photo-Biomodulation



harmful free radicals without disrupting beneficial cellular processes. This may reduce oxidative stress, a common contributor to low energy states.

## PEMF- Pulsed Electromagnetic Field



PEMF (Pulsed Electromagnetic Field) therapy works by gently stimulating the body's natural electrical processes. By improving cellular communication and circulation, PEMF may help reduce pain, enhance recovery, and support more consistent energy levels.

## Ultrasonic Vibration Device



Together, these modalities aim not just to mask fatigue, but to restore the body's natural energy production systems—helping individuals feel more resilient, balanced, and energized in a sustainable way.



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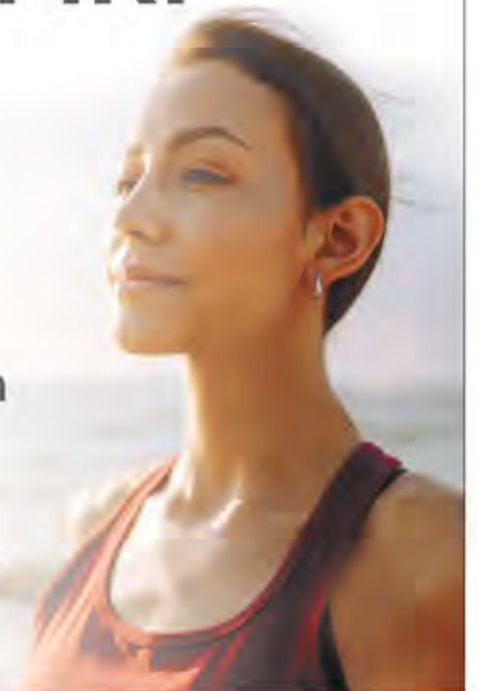
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Disclaimer: These figures are general averages and vary by cancer type. Survival rates vary significantly based on cancer type, individual health factors, and available treatments. The statistics referenced are general averages across multiple cancer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

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## CONTINUUM SURGERY CENTER OF NAPLES

### WE HAVE THE SPECIALISTS TO CARE FOR YOU

**M**ay is a month rich with purpose. Communities, clinicians, and patients come together to raise awareness for some of the most impactful health conditions affecting millions of Americans. At Continuum Surgery Center of Naples, we are proud to honor these observances — and to remind our community that we have the specialists ready to help.

#### May Health Awareness Observances

This May, we recognize a few national health initiatives:

**Arthritis Awareness Month** — Early intervention can dramatically improve mobility and quality of life for the 54 million Americans living with arthritis.

**Better Hearing and Speech Month** — Communication disorders often go undiagnosed; this month encourages timely evaluation and care.

**Melanoma and Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month** — The most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S. is also one of the most preventable with early detection.

**High Blood Pressure Awareness Month** — Nearly half of all American adults have hypertension, significantly elevating the risk of heart attack and stroke.

**National Osteoporosis Awareness Month** — Bone health is often overlooked until a fracture occurs. Prevention and treatment start with awareness.

**American Stroke Month** — Recognizing stroke warning signs and acting fast can be the difference between full recovery and lasting disability.

#### We Are Raising the Standard of Surgical Care in Naples

Traditional hospital settings, while comprehensive, can often mean lengthy wait times, impersonal experiences, and higher out-of-pocket costs. Continuum Surgery Center of Naples addresses these challenges head-on. As a private concierge ambulatory surgery center, Continuum delivers the surgical precision and advanced technology of a hospital with the intimacy and attentiveness of a boutique practice. From the moment patients walk through the doors, every detail — from the welcoming environment to the streamlined scheduling — is designed with their comfort and safety at the forefront.

What truly sets Continuum apart is its mission to evolve hospital-based care for the patient's advantage. This means more coordinated communication, shorter wait times, a dedicated surgical team, and a recovery experience that feels genuinely supported. Patients are not just cases — they are individuals receiving distinguished care at every step of their surgical journey.

#### Comprehensive Specialty Services

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples proudly offers a diverse range of surgical specialties under one roof, making it a true one-stop destination for complex and routine surgical needs alike.

#### Our Specialists Are Here for You

Whether this May's health awareness observances have inspired you to take action or you are already managing a diagnosis, our team is ready. Continuum offers a comprehensive range of surgical specialties under one roof — a true destination for both routine and complex care.

#### Pain Management

Our specialists deliver advanced interventional treatments — nerve blocks, joint injections, spinal cord stimulation — to provide lasting relief and improved quality of life.

#### Interventional Spine

Minimally invasive spine treatments that relieve pain and restore function, with faster recovery and less disruption to your daily routine.

#### Podiatry

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# Moving Well for Life: Finding Comfort and Confidence During National Physical Fitness & Sports Month

**M**ay is recognized nationwide as National Physical Fitness & Sports Month, a time dedicated to encouraging people of all ages and abilities to move more and care for their overall health. While images of intense workouts and competitive sports often come to mind, the true message of this month is much simpler: consistent, comfortable movement improves quality of life.

Regular physical activity supports heart health, strengthens muscles and bones, improves balance, reduces stress, and enhances mental well-being. Yet for many individuals, increasing activity isn't limited by motivation — it's limited by discomfort. Foot pain, fatigue, or joint strain can make even everyday movement feel challenging.

That's why physical fitness isn't only about how much we move. It's also about how well our bodies are supported while we do it.

## The Role of Your Feet in Everyday Fitness

Our feet carry us through thousands of steps each day. They absorb impact, maintain balance, and help keep the body aligned from the ground up. When the arches of the feet aren't adequately supported, that stress can travel upward, sometimes contributing to discomfort in the ankles, knees, hips, or lower back.

Many people simply adapt to these aches, assuming they are a normal part of aging or staying active. However, comfort plays a major role in maintaining long-term physical activity. When movement feels better, people tend to move more, and consistency is where lasting health benefits begin.

This perspective is central to the philosophy behind The Good Feet Store, which focuses on supporting everyday mobility rather than promoting quick fixes.

## Understanding the 3-Step System

One approach The Good Feet Store uses is its 3-Step System of arch supports, a method designed to support the foot in different ways throughout daily activities. Rather than relying on a single insert for every situation, the system recognizes that our feet have different needs depending on how we move and how long we're on them.



- The **Strengthener** encourages the foot's natural positioning and helps support the arch structure during activity.
- The **Maintainer** is intended for longer periods of walking or standing, helping sustain alignment and distribute pressure more evenly.
- The **Relaxer** provides comfort during rest or recovery periods, helping reduce fatigue after a busy day.

The idea behind the system is not to change how people live their lives, but to make everyday movement — walking the dog, grocery shopping, exercising, or working on one's feet — feel more manageable.

## Small Steps Toward Better Health

National Physical Fitness & Sports Month emphasizes achievable goals. Health experts often recommend starting with simple habits:

- Taking short walks throughout the day
- Stretching regularly
- Choosing activities you genuinely enjoy
- Gradually increasing daily movement

These small adjustments can lead to improved energy, mobility, and confidence over time. Supportive footwear and proper arch support can play a quiet but important role in helping individuals maintain these habits, particularly for those who spend long hours standing or who have experienced foot discomfort in the past.

When physical activity feels approachable rather than overwhelming, it becomes easier to build routines that last beyond a single month.

## Fitness That Meets You Where You Are

One of the most encouraging aspects of modern fitness thinking is the shift away from "all or nothing" exercise. Physical wellness looks different for everyone. For some, it may mean returning to recreational sports. For others, it may simply mean walking comfortably around the neighborhood or staying active enough to keep up with family and daily responsibilities.

Tools like arch supports are not about performance enhancement; they are about comfort, stability, and supporting the body's natural mechanics. By reducing unnecessary strain, they can help people stay engaged in the activities that matter most to them.

## A Month That Leads to a Lifetime

As May invites us to focus on physical fitness, it also offers an opportunity to reflect on sustainability. The goal isn't to push harder for 31 days; it's to create habits that support lifelong movement.

Sometimes the path toward better health begins with surprisingly small changes: a daily walk, a gentle stretch, or addressing the discomfort that has quietly limited activity for years.

By paying attention to foundational elements like foot support and body alignment, individuals can build confidence in movement and maintain the freedom to stay active at every stage of life.

This National Physical Fitness & Sports Month, consider celebrating progress over perfection. Comfortable movement, supported from the ground up, can help turn everyday activity into a lifelong investment in health and well-being.

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# HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE EDUCATION MONTH: TAKING CONTROL OF THE SILENT KILLER

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

**E**ach May, healthcare providers, advocacy groups, and communities across the nation unite for High Blood Pressure Education Month. This annual observance serves as a critical reminder about the dangers of hypertension—often called the "silent killer" because it typically presents no symptoms while quietly damaging vital organs.

## Understanding the Scope of the Problem

Nearly half of American adults—an estimated 116 million people—have high blood pressure, with only about 24% having their condition under control. This widespread health issue is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke, the first and fifth leading causes of death in the United States, respectively.

High blood pressure doesn't discriminate. It affects people of all ages, races, and backgrounds, though certain groups face heightened risks. Black Americans develop high blood pressure more frequently and at earlier ages than white Americans, while Hispanic and Asian populations show varying rates depending on specific heritage.

## The Science Behind the Numbers

Blood pressure readings consist of two measurements: systolic pressure (the force when the heart beats) and diastolic pressure (the force when the heart rests between beats). Normal blood pressure falls below 120/80 mm Hg. Readings between 120-129 systolic with diastolic under 80 are considered elevated, while 130/80 or higher indicates hypertension.

Our understanding of blood pressure management has evolved significantly. Current guidelines emphasize earlier intervention and lifestyle modifications, recognizing that even modest elevations increase long-term health risks.

## Prevention and Management Strategies

High Blood Pressure Education Month highlights practical steps everyone can take to prevent or manage hypertension:



**Dietary Approaches:** The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) eating plan emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins while limiting sodium, saturated fats, and added sugars. Research consistently shows this approach can lower blood pressure by 8-14 points—comparable to some medications.

**Physical Activity:** Regular exercise strengthens the heart, allowing it to pump more efficiently and reducing strain on arteries. Even modest activity—30 minutes of brisk walking five days weekly—can reduce blood pressure by 5-8 mm Hg.

**Limiting Sodium:** The average American consumes about 3,400 mg of sodium daily, far exceeding recommendations. Reducing intake to 2,300 mg or less can significantly lower blood pressure in salt-sensitive individuals.

**Medication Adherence:** For those prescribed anti-hypertensive medications, taking them as directed is crucial. Yet nearly half of patients stop taking their medication within a year of starting—a concerning statistic that education campaigns aim to address.

## The Role of Regular Monitoring

Self-monitoring has emerged as a powerful tool in blood pressure management. Home monitoring devices provide valuable data between medical visits and can help detect white coat hypertension (elevated readings only in clinical settings) or masked hypertension (normal readings in clinical settings but elevated elsewhere).

Most importantly, regular monitoring increases patient engagement. When people actively track their numbers, they become more invested in the lifestyle choices affecting those readings.

## Community Impact and Policy Solutions

Effective high blood pressure management requires more than individual action. Community-based programs offering free screenings, education, and resources have successfully identified undiagnosed cases and improved control rates in underserved populations.

Policy initiatives addressing food deserts, promoting physical activity through urban planning, and ensuring affordable access to medications also play vital roles in population-level blood pressure control.

## The Path Forward

As we recognize High Blood Pressure Education Month this May, the message is clear: hypertension is both preventable and manageable. Through increased awareness, regular screening, lifestyle modifications, and when necessary, proper medication use, we can reduce the burden of this common but dangerous condition.

By making blood pressure control a national priority, we take significant steps toward healthier communities and reduced rates of heart disease, stroke, and other hypertension-related complications.

## Are you ready for a consultation?

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## KATHY VERDES APRN, A-GNP-C

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



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# Understanding Osteoporosis and Spine Compression Fractures: CAUSES, RISKS, AND TREATMENTS

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

**M**ay is Osteoporosis and Awareness Month. Osteoporosis, often called the "silent disease," is a condition in which bones become weak and brittle due to the loss of bone density and mass. This weakening can progress without symptoms until a bone breaks—often from a fall or, in severe cases, from something as minor as a sneeze. One of the most common and serious consequences of osteoporosis is spine compression fractures, which can lead to chronic pain, loss of height, and reduced quality of life.

## What is Osteoporosis?

Osteoporosis is a skeletal disorder characterized by low bone mineral density and deterioration of bone tissue. It primarily affects older adults, especially postmenopausal women, but can also affect men and younger individuals under certain conditions. Bone is living tissue that constantly breaks down and regenerates. When bone loss outpaces the formation of new bone, the skeleton becomes porous and fragile.

Risk factors include aging, hormonal changes (particularly the drop in estrogen in women after menopause), family history, poor nutrition (especially low calcium and vitamin D), sedentary lifestyle, smoking, and excessive alcohol use. Certain medications and medical conditions—like corticosteroids, rheumatoid arthritis, or thyroid disorders—can also increase the risk.

## What Are Spine Compression Fractures?

Spine compression fractures occur when one or more vertebrae (the bones in the spine) collapse or are compressed. These fractures can happen suddenly or develop over time and are most often caused by osteoporosis. In people with weakened bones, even minimal stress—like lifting a light object, coughing, or twisting—can cause a vertebra to crack or collapse.

These fractures are most common in the thoracic spine (the middle portion of the back), but they can occur anywhere along the spine. Often, patients are unaware they have suffered a fracture, attributing the pain to general back issues or aging.

## Symptoms and Diagnosis

The most telling symptom of a spine compression fracture is sudden back pain, particularly in the middle or lower back. The pain can be sharp and debilitating or present as a persistent, dull ache. Other signs include:

- Loss of height over time
- Stooped posture or kyphosis (a curved, hunched back)
- Limited spinal mobility
- Pain that worsens with standing or walking and improves with rest

In severe cases, multiple fractures can compress nerves, leading to numbness, tingling, or weakness in the limbs.

Diagnosis typically involves a physical exam followed by imaging tests. An X-ray can often reveal the collapsed vertebrae, while a DEXA (dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry) scan is used to measure bone density and confirm osteoporosis. In some cases, an MRI or CT scan may be used to evaluate the severity of the fracture and rule out other causes of back pain, such as cancer or infection.

## Treatment Options

The treatment for spine compression fractures depends on the severity of the fracture and the degree of osteoporosis. It usually includes a combination of pain management, activity modification, and bone-strengthening interventions.

### 1. Conservative Treatment

Most compression fractures can be managed conservatively:

- **Pain Relief:** Over-the-counter pain medications like acetaminophen or NSAIDs can help. In some cases, stronger prescription pain relievers may be necessary.
- **Bracing:** A spinal brace or orthotic may be used to limit motion and provide support during healing.
- **Activity Modification:** Bed rest may be recommended initially, followed by gradual reintroduction of movement and physical therapy to restore mobility and strength.

### 2. Medical Treatment for Osteoporosis

Treating the underlying osteoporosis is critical to prevent future fractures. This may involve:

- **Calcium and Vitamin D Supplements:** Essential for bone health.
- **Bisphosphonates:** Medications that slow bone loss and help rebuild bone density.
- **Other Medications:** Such as denosumab, teriparatide, or romosozumab, depending on the patient's profile and response to initial therapies.
- **Lifestyle Changes:** Incorporating weight-bearing exercises, quitting smoking, reducing alcohol intake, and improving diet.

### 3. Surgical Treatment

In cases where conservative treatment is ineffective or the pain is severe and persistent, minimally invasive surgical procedures may be considered:

- **Kyphoplasty:** A procedure which involves inserting a balloon to create space which can help restore vertebral height before bone cement is injected into the fractured vertebra to stabilize it.

## Prevention

Preventing osteoporosis and spine compression fractures starts early. Building strong bones through adequate calcium and vitamin D intake, regular physical activity (especially weight-bearing and resistance exercises), and avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol can go a long way. For those at risk, regular bone density screenings and early medical intervention are key.

## Living with Osteoporosis

Though osteoporosis and spine compression fractures can be life-altering, many people live well with proper management. A multidisciplinary approach involving primary care physicians, endocrinologists, orthopedists, and physical therapists can help optimize outcomes. Education and support—through patient groups or community resources—also play a vital role in maintaining both physical and emotional well-being.



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# Understanding Otolaryngologists: The Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialists

**W**hen health issues arise involving your ears, nose, or throat, you may be referred to a medical specialist known as an otolaryngologist. Often simply called an ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) doctor, these physicians possess specialized training to diagnose and treat a wide range of conditions affecting some of our most vital sensory organs and communication pathways.

## What is an Otolaryngologist?

An otolaryngologist is a physician who specializes in diagnosing and treating disorders of the ears, nose, throat, and related structures of the head and neck. The term "otolaryngology" combines three Greek words: "oto" (ear), "laryngo" (larynx or throat), and "logy" (study). These specialists complete four years of medical school followed by at least five years of specialized residency training, making them highly qualified to handle complex conditions affecting these interconnected areas of the body. Many further specialize in areas like pediatric ENT, neurotology, or facial plastic surgery.

## Areas of Expertise

Otolaryngologists provide comprehensive care for various body systems that affect our ability to communicate, breathe, taste, and hear. Their expertise spans several key areas:

**Ear Conditions:** ENT doctors diagnose and treat hearing loss, ear infections, balance disorders, tinnitus (ringing in the ears), ear pain, and congenital disorders. They perform surgical procedures such as cochlear implants for severe hearing loss, tympanoplasty to repair damaged eardrums, and procedures to address chronic ear infections or Ménière's disease.

**Nasal and Sinus Conditions:** They manage allergies, sinusitis, nasal obstruction, smell disorders, polyps, and deviated septums. Procedures like endoscopic sinus surgery, septoplasty, and turbinate reduction help patients breathe more freely and reduce chronic inflammation. They also address issues related to the sense of smell and taste that originate in the nasal cavity.

**Throat Disorders:** Otolaryngologists treat voice and swallowing problems, throat cancer, tonsillitis, and sleep-related breathing disorders like sleep apnea.



They might perform tonsillectomies, vocal cord surgeries, or other procedures to restore proper function. Voice rehabilitation is another important aspect of their practice.

**Head and Neck Issues:** They handle thyroid disorders, facial trauma reconstruction, cancers of the head and neck, and facial plastic surgery needs. This may include removing tumors, performing reconstructive surgery, addressing cosmetic concerns, or managing salivary gland diseases.

## When to See an Otolaryngologist

Patients are typically referred to an ENT specialist when primary care physicians identify concerns requiring specialized attention. Common reasons for referral include persistent sinusitis, chronic ear infections, hearing difficulties, voice changes lasting more than two weeks, difficulty swallowing, unexplained lumps in the neck, or recurrent dizziness and balance problems.

## The Collaborative Approach

Many otolaryngologists work collaboratively with other specialists like audiologists, speech pathologists, allergists, neurologists, and oncologists to provide comprehensive care. This multidisciplinary approach ensures patients receive treatment addressing all aspects of their condition, from diagnosis through rehabilitation. For complex cases, ENT specialists often participate in tumor boards where various experts discuss treatment options.

Otolaryngologists blend medical knowledge with surgical expertise to address conditions affecting some of our most essential functions—hearing, breathing, speaking, and swallowing. Their specialized training makes them invaluable healthcare providers for conditions affecting quality of life and vital sensory experiences throughout all stages of life, from newborns to elderly patients.

## Expert Care You Can Trust

If you're experiencing symptoms related to your ears, nose, throat, or head and neck region, seeking specialized care is essential for proper diagnosis and treatment. Dr. Price Sonkarley and his dedicated team provide comprehensive otolaryngology services with a patient-centered approach. Their expertise spans the full spectrum of ENT conditions, ensuring you receive the highest standard of care for your specific needs. Don't let persistent symptoms affect your quality of life—schedule a consultation with Dr. Sonkarley's office today by calling 239-495-6200.



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

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



Kathleen Rocuant, Au.D FAAA received her Doctorate from the Arizona School of Health Sciences and is Board Certified by the American Board of Audiology. She specializes in Hearing Evaluations

Hearing Aids and Hearing Solutions. She is a Fellow American Academy of Audiology and a member of the American Academy of Audiology and the Florida Academy of Audiology.



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# How Your Sex Hormones Can Support (or Hinder) Your Weight Loss Journey

By Dr. Melissa (Mel) Irvine, DNP - Clinical Sexologist - Specializes in Sexual Medicine and Beauty

**A**re you aware of the role your sex hormones play in regulating glucose and promoting weight loss? While thyroid hormone plays a role in regulating the metabolism and how the body burns calories, sex hormones play a role in distribution of fat stores and water retention.

Have you ever put in all the effort to lose weight—modifying your diet, adding in exercise—only to have the numbers on the scale stay the same? It can be aggravating to feel as though all your efforts are going to waste, but it may not be because you're not doing enough; it could be because your hormones are unbalanced, causing your body to hold onto glucose.

With high blood sugar leaving your body in a perpetual state of fat-storing instead of fat-burning, it's no wonder why weight loss becomes exceptionally challenging.

Let's further explore the role some crucial hormones have in blood sugar management and weight loss and what the key is to finally seeing those numbers on the scale go down.

## Estrogen: A Glucose Reducer

Estrogen, the female hormone known for regulating the menstrual cycle and promoting the development of female characteristics, also plays a crucial role in directing glucose to the right areas of your body. Namely, estrogen encourages muscle cells to take in glucose.

Estrogen accomplishes this by stimulating the cells lining your blood vessels to deliver insulin to muscles, with insulin then encouraging the muscle to take in glucose and use it. The result? Thanks to estrogen, your blood sugar level lowers.

Researchers have long known the protection offered by estrogen against Type 2 diabetes, a disease where insulin becomes less effective in the body organs responsible for controlling blood sugar, resulting in high blood sugar. They've seen that women undergoing menopause have a significantly higher risk of Type 2 diabetes, meaning Type 2 diabetes risk increases when estrogen levels



decrease. Additionally, it's been shown that this risk of diabetes becomes less drastic when menopausal women are given hormone replacement therapy to restore their estrogen levels.

While women have more estrogen circulating through their bodies, men still require this hormone, and its declining numbers can also increase their risk of insulin resistance.

In short, it's clear that estrogen is crucial for regulating glucose levels in the body.

However, these benefits of estrogen can reverse if the amounts are too high. Some research has found that high concentrations of estradiol, a form of estrogen, can cause insulin resistance, which can cause blood sugar levels to rise.

## Progesterone: An Insulin Inhibitor

While estrogen is crucial for helping your body deliver insulin where needed and increase glucose uptake—lowering blood sugar levels—progesterone does the opposite.

Progesterone, a hormone that supports menstruation and, if a woman is pregnant, supports the pregnancy, can also affect insulin signaling in a type of fat

cell, 3T3-L1 adipocytes. This can lead to higher blood sugar levels because progesterone keeps these cells from up taking glucose, which then allows the glucose to continue circulating in the blood.

Progesterone increases significantly during pregnancy, and given its influence over insulin, this increase in progesterone may be what contributes to gestational diabetes in pregnant women.

Everything is about balance in the body and progesterone is the counterbalance to the negative side effects of estrogen. When estrogen is in excess it may also lead to insulin resistance and in turn weight gain. Progesterone is also a natural diuretic and keeps both estrogen and testosterone in check when maintained within the right levels.

## Testosterone: The Baby Bear of Hormones

Do you know how, in the fairy tale, Baby Bear has everything that is “just right?” This is how testosterone levels need to be, with studies showing that both high and low testosterone are associated with insulin resistance. This data shows the importance of finding the ideal target range for each person and keeping hormones within these personalized bounds to ensure the other parts of the body work as needed.

Additionally, testosterone regulation and its influence can vary based on gender. Studies have shown that increased testosterone levels in males (if they are low) can cause a more favorable metabolism of glucose, lowering glucose levels and improving insulin sensitivity. However, increased testosterone was not shown to influence glucose metabolism in women.

Hormone replacement therapy has traditionally taken a very cookie cutter approach, and everyone is treated as if they are the same. This evidence showcases the importance of a customized approach to hormonal management, as not everybody will respond in the same way or need the same alterations.

### Blood Sugar And Weight Loss: How Are They Connected?

We've spent a lot of time discussing how various hormones affect our body's ability to manage blood sugar levels, but how does blood sugar influence our weight loss journey? It's simple: your blood sugar levels can either make it easier or harder to lose weight, and it's all because of how your body signals within itself.

If your insulin levels are high, your body never receives a signal to run through glycogen (a form of glucose and a primary energy source) and then burn fat stores for energy. Instead, your body will remain in fat-storing instead of fat-burning mode. As you can expect, this makes weight loss challenging—not impossible, but much harder than it could otherwise be.

Insulin is what unlocks the insulin receptors on your cells. They're like a gate; once it's open, your cells can let in glucose and convert it into energy. If the gate remains shut, though, which can occur if your blood sugar is too high, the cells don't open, and glucose stays in the bloodstream, making your blood sugar rise even more. This phenomenon is referred to as insulin resistance.

When insulin resistance occurs, your body produces more insulin to try and unlock the cells, but it only makes matters worse. So, the key to making fat-burning possible is to ensure your body has stable sugar levels and that insulin never goes into overdrive; otherwise, those gates will stay shut.

### Hormone Optimization: A Necessary Element of Weight Loss

Society places diet and exercise as the two key components of losing weight, but there's a hidden factor

that many people don't consider despite it making all the difference for your weight loss journey: your hormonal balance.

The most current and hottest weight loss trend are peptide injections of Semaglutide (Ozempic®/Wegovy®/Rybelsus®) and Tirzepatide (Mounjaro®/Zepbound™). While these therapies are effective and individuals will lose weight, once the weight loss goals are met and the medication is discontinued the weight lost will return if the hormones are not optimized.

Blood sugar levels that are too high, or insulin that is not receptive enough, can cause your body to stay in fat-storing mode, and the culprit of these high blood sugar levels and insulin sensitivity may be your hormones.

So, even if you revamp your diet or add in an exercise routine, if your hormones are imbalanced and affecting your blood sugar, your body will fight to hold on to its fat stores. This means that the numbers on the scale might not change or will change very slowly, no matter how many healthy habits you adopt.

Ultimately, the key to weight loss is ensuring your hormones are properly balanced. This not only means that your hormone levels, individually, should be within your body's ideal range—which can be different from the standard recommendations—but your hormones need to be balanced with each other. For instance, blood sugar levels are best managed when your estrogen is higher than your progesterone, so you need to check the levels of each hormone, how they compare to each other, and which ratio produces the best results.

This is a challenging balance to find, which is why working with a hormone specialist is so crucial—they can find the balance that helps you regain control of your hormones and encourages your body to finally release its hold on glucose and fat.

### Can Weight Loss Medications Replace the Need for Hormone Optimization?

Even if you take medication for weight loss, you still need hormonal balance if you want to maintain your weight loss.

To better understand why, we need to look at how blood sugar levels become fat.

Your body requires energy from food to complete all its processes, but if you eat more than your body needs, glucose will be left floating around in your bloodstream. When your body has excess glucose, it stores it as fat, leading to weight gain.

Weight loss medication often suppresses your appetite, which lowers blood glucose levels and encourages your body to instead break down fat for energy. However, once you come off the medication, your blood sugar can once again rise if your hormones are imbalanced, causing the excess glucose to once again become fat.

When your hormones are optimized, though, your body will use glucose more efficiently, which can keep your blood sugar levels normal. This puts you in the right place to maintain your weight loss even when you stop taking medication.

If you're looking to lose weight, diet and exercise are crucial components of any healthy lifestyle, but to truly see success, you need to take a closer look at your hormones and ensure that they're setting your body up for success.

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# KIDNEY CANCER: Are You at Risk?

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

**T**he kidneys are a major part of our detoxifying system. These two small bean-shaped organs clean the blood and filter waste products and toxins from the body through the urine. Kidney cancer is one of the ten most prevalent cancers. The lifetime risk for developing kidney cancer is about 1 in 46 in men and 1 in 82 in women.<sup>1</sup>

The symptoms of kidney cancer often go unnoticed or don't begin to show until the tumor(s) has grown. However, some of the key indicators are as follows:

- Blood in the urine
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Fever or infection
- Swollen abdomen
- Lump on the side of the abdomen (with or without pain)
- Anemia
- Swollen legs and ankles
- Chronic inflammation
- High blood pressure
- Shortness of breath

If you have symptoms or your physician finds a lump during a physical examination, they will order diagnostic testing such as a renal arteriogram, MRI, CT Scan, blood and urine analysis, and a needle biopsy may be necessary.

There are some increased risk factors, which make some individuals more susceptible to renal cancer. The risks factors included:

- Being over the age of 40
- Being male
- Being black
- Smoking
- Obese
- Overuse of NSAIDs and other prescription medications
- Family History
- Chemical Exposures
- Kidney disease

Most kidney cancer appears first in the tubules of the kidneys. When the malignant cells form a tumor(s) the growth rate is typically slow, so the

likelihood of an early diagnosis is increased, and the treatment can usually be performed before the tumor has metastasized into any other organs.

### Treatment

Depending on the stage and size of the tumor(s), your physician will develop a specific treatment plan tailored to your needs.

Typically, performing a nephrectomy treats kidney cancer. There are three main types of this surgical option. The first is a Partial nephrectomy, which removes the tumor and some of the surrounding tissue. The second is a Simple nephrectomy, which removes the entire kidney, and the third treatment method is a Radical nephrectomy, which removes the kidney, adrenal glands, lymph nodes, and any questionable surrounding tissue margins. These procedures can usually be done laparoscopically. Some patients may also require radiation or chemotherapy treatments.

### Associates in Nephrology

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

### Chronic Kidney Disease Program

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

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

Source:

1. [https://www.nfcr.org/cancer-types/kidney-cancer/?gclid=CjwKCAIAYc2BBhAaEiwA44-wW9qTM7gXbIKsBU1dxNN-rM7OKwmg3j43bZni6h175MIIQCzwNsKORoCE5QQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.nfcr.org/cancer-types/kidney-cancer/?gclid=CjwKCAIAYc2BBhAaEiwA44-wW9qTM7gXbIKsBU1dxNN-rM7OKwmg3j43bZni6h175MIIQCzwNsKORoCE5QQAvD_BwE)

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

### Services Provided

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

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

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# FLORIDA HOUSE BILL 971

## Proposed Family Law Reform Bill

By Derek Di Crescenzio

**O**n January 5, 2026, Congresswoman Dana Trubuly filed House Bill 971 ("HB 971"). HB 971 requires that at least one judge be available in each judicial circuit court on weekends, holidays, and after hours on weekdays to hear motions to enforce certain orders and agreements. HB 971 additionally requires the chief judge to assign circuit court judges to preside over specific hearings. Moreover, it prioritizes certain time-sharing matters on the court's docket. When Congresswoman Trubuly filed this bill she stated, "[t]his bill is about making sure families are not stuck in limbo." Florida family law courts are significantly backed up, primarily still due to the pandemic-era delays that precipitated six years ago. This means that parties who filed motions for hearings will not have their day in court until potentially four to five months later.

The purpose of HB 971 is to ensure expedited court attention for urgent child-related time-sharing matters while attempting to reduce the backlog of domestic relations cases sitting idle on court dockets. Especially for time-sharing matters, it is crucial that the chief judge prioritize these hearings on the court's docket. This is due to the fact that if one parent still has time-sharing while allegations arise that the other parent is not acting in the best interest of their child, courts can address the matter expeditiously. The sooner courts hear and rule on these allegations, the sooner they can provide clarity to the concerned parent and promote stability along with a nurturing environment that prioritizes the best interests of the children. Additionally, this can help reduce any long-term trauma a child may experience due to a parent's inadequate parenting.

On January 12, 2026, HB 971 was referred to the Florida House of Representatives Civil Justice and Claims Subcommittee, Justice Budget Subcommittee, and Judiciary Committee. HB 971 was read aloud in the Florida House of Representatives on January 13, 2026. HB 971, however, failed to pass through its assigned committees before the end of the legislative session. The bill was left on the Civil Justice and Claims Subcommittee's desk without receiving a vote. The legislative session ended on March 13, 2026. Trubuly has yet to make a statement whether she intends to refile HB 971 in the next legislative session.



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

*Derek Di Crescenzio is a Legal Intern at WPL and a third-year student at Ave Maria School of Law. In his role, he supports attorneys with legal research and writing as part of his ongoing legal training. Derek is currently completing his Juris Doctor and continuing to develop his skills in preparation for a career in the legal field.*



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# ARTHRITIS... HELP!

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

**A**rthritis is a group of disorders that cause inflammation and pain in the joints. It affects millions of people worldwide, and it is one of the leading causes of disability. There are over 100 types of arthritis, and each one has unique symptoms, causes, and treatments. While there are many types of healthcare professionals that can help manage arthritis, an orthopedic surgeon is an essential part of the treatment plan for certain types of arthritis.

Orthopedic surgeons specialize in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disorders of the musculoskeletal system. This includes bones, joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments, and nerves. Arthritis affects the joints, which makes an orthopedic surgeon a crucial part of the treatment team for certain types of arthritis.

One of the most common types of arthritis is osteoarthritis. This type of arthritis is caused by the wear and tear of the joints over time. Osteoarthritis can affect any joint in the body, but it most commonly affects the hands, hips, knees, and spine. While there is no cure for osteoarthritis, there are many treatment options available to help manage the symptoms. An orthopedic surgeon can provide surgical options such as joint replacement, which can greatly improve the quality of life for people with osteoarthritis.

Another type of arthritis that may require the expertise of an orthopedic surgeon is rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disorder that causes the immune system to attack the joints, resulting in inflammation, pain, and damage to the joints. The most commonly affected joints in rheumatoid arthritis are the hands, wrists, and feet. While there are many medications available to help manage the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis, some people may require surgery to help improve joint function. An orthopedic surgeon can perform procedures such as joint fusion or joint replacement to help alleviate the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis.

Psoriatic arthritis is another type of arthritis that may require the expertise of an orthopedic surgeon. This type of arthritis is characterized by joint pain,



stiffness, and swelling, and it often occurs in people with psoriasis. The most commonly affected joints in psoriatic arthritis are the fingers, toes, and spine.

While medications can help manage the symptoms of psoriatic arthritis, some people may require surgery to help improve joint function. An orthopedic surgeon can perform procedures such as synovectomy or joint replacement to help alleviate the symptoms of psoriatic arthritis.

In addition to the types of arthritis mentioned above, there are many other types of arthritis that may require the expertise of an orthopedic surgeon. These include gout, ankylosing spondylitis, and reactive arthritis, among others. An orthopedic surgeon can provide a comprehensive evaluation of the joints and recommend the best course of treatment based on the individual's specific needs.

Arthritis is a complex and varied group of disorders that affect millions of people worldwide. While there are many types of healthcare professionals that can help manage arthritis, an orthopedic surgeon is an essential part of the treatment plan for certain types of arthritis. With their specialized training and expertise in the musculoskeletal system, orthopedic surgeons can provide surgical options that can greatly improve the quality of life for people with arthritis. If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with arthritis, it is important to work with a healthcare team that includes an orthopedic surgeon to ensure that you receive the best possible care.

Everyone has a busy life and being hurt or injured can get in the way of the enjoyment of life." Dr. Swift believes that movement gets us back to enjoying our lives. Our goal is to restore pain free motion to the injured spine, shoulder, knee, elbow, hip and ankle using the most modern, innovative and safety proven techniques available in orthopedic surgery today. My practice uses state of the art procedures that treat injured joints. It doesn't matter if you are an accomplished athlete, a weekend warrior, a busy professional, an active parent, or grandparent, our goal is to keep you active and get you moving. I believe it is important to spend time together and understand how we can accomplish your goals.

**Robert D. Swift, DO** is a board-certified orthopedic surgeon and a Fellow of the American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics and the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. He has subspecialty and advanced training in minimally invasive surgery of the shoulder, knee, hip, ankle, and elbow. He has additional orthopedic trauma training to better manage fractures and Training in Robotic Knee and hip replacement. He has been an adjunct professor of Orthopedics at Vanderbilt University and at Upstate University Medical Center. Dr. Swift attended medical school at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. He completed a general surgery internship with the US Army at Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center and was then stationed in Europe. As a physician he supported missions and troops throughout Europe. He was asked to be the military physician for medical support to the White House Mission to Chernobyl. Dr. Swift completed his orthopedic residency training at UMDNJ-SOM/Copper Medical Center. He rejoined the military after residency and was stationed at Ft. Campbell, KY. He deployed to Afghanistan as the Chief of Orthopedics at Bagram. His service was decorated by the Bronze Star Medal, and the Meritorious Service Medal. Dr. Swift is accomplished in his field; he has been the Team Physician for Division I Athletic programs, been a course instructor, presenter, and author on fracture care and on minimally invasive shoulder and knee surgery. While in Michigan he was selected as a Top Doctor for 2019-2021.

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# ANYONE CAN SUFFER A STROKE:

## Beware of falling into trap of thinking there's a 'stereotypical high-risk patient'

By Rick Weber

Anyone can suffer a stroke. Literally *anyone*.

Stroke is not confined to a specific age group or a stereotypical "high-risk" patient. While there is a tendency to associate stroke with older adults or individuals with obvious health issues, that framing is incomplete—and a bit misleading.

"Yes, there are well-established risk factors like hypertension, diabetes and smoking, but stroke can also occur in individuals who don't fit that profile at all," says Megan Walsh, DPT, NCS, a Clinical Assistant Professor in Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health and Human Services who is recognized as a Board Certified Neurologic Clinical Specialist by the American Board of Physical Therapy.

"Younger, otherwise healthy people can experience strokes due to less obvious mechanisms like embolic events, cardiac rhythm disturbances, vascular abnormalities or even spontaneous arterial injury. In some cases, there isn't a clear, immediately identifiable cause. What complicates this further is that stroke doesn't always present in the dramatic way people expect. It's not always a sudden collapse or complete paralysis. It can be subtle, such as sudden dizziness, difficulty with balance, changes in vision or mild speech disturbances."

Those presentations are easy to dismiss, especially when the person doesn't "look like" someone at risk. So the idea that "anyone can suffer a stroke" is less about creating alarm and more about correcting that bias.

"It's a reminder that stroke is fundamentally a neurological emergency defined by its presentation, not by the person it happens to," says Walsh, who is certified in Neurodevelopmental Treatment (NDT) by the Neurodevelopmental Treatment Association (NTA). "If symptoms appear suddenly and don't make sense, they deserve to be taken seriously, regardless of age or perceived health status."

Walsh speaks from painful experience. She did not realize that babies could have a stroke—until her second daughter, Piper, was born full-term in 2009. Within 24 hours, doctors discovered that she was experiencing seizures that necessitated admission to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). A battery of tests determined that she had suffered a large stroke affecting the left side of her brain in an area known to control right-sided movement and speech.

Walsh begged the neurologist in the NICU to tell her and her husband that Piper would still be OK and be able to live a normal life. Of course, he could not do that, instead saying, "She will be anything from profoundly disabled to relatively normal. Time, early intervention and neuroplasticity will dictate her outcome."

Piper made a phenomenal recovery. Now in 10th grade, she has participated in Irish dance, played club-level soccer and graced her school's Honor Roll on several occasions.

Even before Piper's ordeal, Walsh had developed a passion for helping people through difficult and often unforeseen circumstances. She became interested in stroke rehabilitation while working at the Rehab Hospital of the Pacific in Honolulu from 2005 to 2008. But it was not until Piper was born that she expanded that passion to include awareness and research.

From a healthcare provider and professor's perspective, she believes stroke prevention is one of the areas where they can have the most meaningful impact in the community, because so many of the major risk factors are actually modifiable.

"Hypertension is still the leading contributor, so consistent blood pressure management—through medication when needed, but also through movement and lifestyle—is fundamental," she says. "What we see clinically, though, is that these risks rarely exist in isolation. Physical inactivity, impaired glucose control and high cholesterol tend to cluster, creating a cumulative strain on the vascular system over time. Tobacco use and excessive alcohol intake further accelerate that process."

"What I consistently emphasize, both in the classroom and in practice, is that movement is not just a general wellness recommendation, but it is a targeted, evidence-based intervention. Regular aerobic activity and strength training directly improve blood pressure, insulin sensitivity and lipid profiles, which are all central to reducing stroke risk."

"There is also increasing recognition of the role that sleep quality and chronic stress play, particularly in conditions like obstructive sleep apnea, which often go under-identified. Ultimately, stroke prevention is not about a single behavior change. It is the cumulative effect of managing cardiovascular health over

time. The encouraging part is that even small, consistent changes in these modifiable factors can meaningfully reduce long-term risk."

She says that when we talk about who is more susceptible to stroke, it's important to frame it less as a specific "type" of person and more in terms of non-modifiable risk factors layered on top of an individual's overall risk profile. Age remains the most significant non-modifiable factor, with risk increasing over time, but it's critical to recognize that stroke is not exclusive to older adults.

"We are continuing to see strokes in younger populations, often because modifiable risks are present but under-recognized," she says. "There are also important sex-based considerations. Women, for example, have unique risk periods related to pregnancy and the postpartum state, as well as considerations with hormonal contraception and migraine with aura, all of which can influence stroke risk through vascular and clotting mechanisms."

"In addition, race and ethnicity play a role, as African American adults in the United States experience higher stroke incidence and often at younger ages, which reflects both biological predispositions and broader social and healthcare access factors. Genetics and family history are also key non-modifiable contributors, particularly in individuals with inherited clotting disorders or early cardiovascular disease in first-degree relatives. These factors can increase baseline risk even in individuals who appear otherwise healthy."

"That said, these non-modifiable risks don't act in isolation. They interact with modifiable factors like hypertension, physical inactivity, diabetes, dyslipidemia and tobacco use, which ultimately drive the majority of stroke risk. So while we can't change age, sex, race or genetics, understanding how they influence baseline risk allows us to be more proactive and aggressive in managing the factors we *can* modify."

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# Supporting Safety and Specialized Lymphedema Care Across Southwest Florida

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

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

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

## Fall Prevention & Neurological Rehabilitation: Promoting Safety in the Home

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

Our fall-prevention services include:

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

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

## Neurological Rehabilitation Integrated Into Fall Prevention

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

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

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

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

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

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

CDT includes:

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

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

## Compression Garment Support, Simplified Through our DME Services

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

Patients receive hands-on support with:

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

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

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

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

## Helping Patients Stay Safe, Supported, and Independent

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

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

## We're Growing!

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



Jim Ferrara



Lexie Lundquist

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# Ozone Therapy: Nature's Most Powerful Tool for Removing Heavy Metals from Your Body

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

Every day, we are exposed to heavy metals — through the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink, and even the products we use. Lead, mercury, arsenic, cadmium, and aluminum quietly accumulate in our tissues, disrupting cellular function, impairing neurological health, and fueling chronic inflammation. Conventional detox approaches can be slow and incomplete. At Orchidia Medical Group, we believe in a smarter, more powerful solution: Ozone Therapy.

## What Is Ozone Therapy?

Ozone therapy is a cutting-edge, integrative medical treatment that harnesses the healing power of ozone — a naturally occurring molecule composed of three oxygen atoms (O<sub>3</sub>). When introduced into the body under controlled medical conditions, ozone acts as a potent biological catalyst. It stimulates the immune system, enhances oxygen utilization at the cellular level, and — critically — activates the body's own detoxification pathways.

This therapy has been used in clinical settings across Europe for over a century, and its application in heavy metal detoxification is one of its most compelling and well-documented benefits.

## How Ozone Therapy Removes Heavy Metals

Heavy metals cause damage largely through oxidative stress — they generate harmful free radicals that damage cells, mitochondria, and DNA. This is where ozone therapy becomes uniquely powerful.

When ozone is administered, it triggers a controlled, mild oxidative response in the body. This response activates a cascade of antioxidant enzymes — including glutathione, superoxide dismutase, and catalase — which are the body's primary agents for binding and neutralizing toxic metals. Glutathione, often called the "master antioxidant," directly chelates heavy metals, escorting them safely out of tissues and into the bloodstream for elimination through the kidneys and liver.

Additionally, ozone therapy improves microcirculation and lymphatic flow, ensuring that mobilized toxins are efficiently transported away from organs and tissues rather than being redeposited elsewhere in the body — a common limitation of traditional chelation methods.

## The Orchidia Medical Group Approach

At Orchidia Medical Group, ozone therapy is never a one-size-fits-all treatment. Our specialists begin with a comprehensive heavy metal toxicity panel, identifying the specific metals present and their concentration levels in your body. This allows us to design a personalized protocol combining ozone administration methods — such as EBOO ( Extra-corporeal Blood Ozonation and Oxygenation), IV infusions of Ozonated Glycerin and Rectal Ozone Insufflation. We also offer Chelation as an excellent add on to the Ozone therapy for heavy metal treatment.

Our protocols are medically supervised, safe, and designed to work with your body's biology, not against it.

## Who Can Benefit?

If you experience chronic fatigue, brain fog, joint pain, hormonal imbalances, or unexplained neurological symptoms, heavy metal burden may be a contributing factor. Ozone therapy offers a gentle yet highly effective pathway to reclaim your energy, mental clarity, and overall vitality.

## Take the First Step

You don't have to carry the toxic load of modern life. Ozone therapy at Orchidia Medical Group gives your body the tools it needs to cleanse itself at the deepest level — restoring function, balance, and long-term wellness.

Contact Orchidia Medical Group today to schedule your heavy metal assessment and discover how ozone therapy can transform your health from the inside out.



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# CREATINE FOR BRAIN HEALTH: Why Dosing Matters More Than You Think

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

**C**reatine has long been positioned as a performance supplement for muscle strength and athletic recovery. That characterization is incomplete. Emerging clinical data now demonstrates that creatine plays a measurable role in brain energy metabolism, cognitive performance, and potentially neurodegenerative disease support.

At Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy, the focus is shifting toward therapeutic dosing—because subclinical dosing may not deliver neurological benefit.

## Creatine is a brain fuel—not just a muscle supplement

Creatine functions as a substrate for adenosine triphosphate (ATP) production, the primary energy currency of the cell. While skeletal muscle stores the majority of creatine, the brain is also a high-energy-demand organ, consuming approximately 20% of the body's total energy at rest.

In states of cognitive stress—aging, sleep deprivation, or neurodegeneration—brain energy metabolism becomes impaired. This is particularly relevant in conditions like Alzheimer's disease, where disrupted energy utilization is considered a core mechanism of decline.

According to Rhonda Patrick, standard low-dose creatine (e.g., 5 grams daily) may be insufficient for brain uptake because skeletal muscle preferentially absorbs available creatine. Higher dosing appears necessary to saturate peripheral stores and increase central nervous system availability.

## Clinical evidence: the 8-week Alzheimer's study

A recent pilot trial evaluated creatine monohydrate supplementation at 20 grams daily over an 8-week period in patients with Alzheimer's disease. The findings were clinically significant:

- Brain creatine levels increased by approximately **11%**
- **85%** of participants demonstrated measurable increases in brain creatine
- Statistically significant improvements were observed in global cognition, memory, attention, and processing speed

Participants improved in functional domains including list sorting, reading recognition, and executive function—areas commonly impaired in neurodegenerative disease.

As summarized in published analysis, the intervention resulted in improved performance on multiple standardized cognitive assessments, indicating that creatine supplementation may enhance neuronal efficiency and cognitive processing.

This aligns with mechanistic data showing that creatine crosses the blood-brain barrier and supports ATP regeneration in neural tissue.

## Dr. Perlmutter: targeting brain energy directly

David Perlmutter has emphasized the metabolic component of brain health, noting that impaired energy production is a defining feature of neurodegenerative disease.

In reviewing this research, the conclusion is direct: increasing brain creatine may help address this energy deficit. Creatine provides a rapid phosphate donor to regenerate ATP, effectively supporting neuronal function under stress conditions.

Clinical observations from the study demonstrated improvements in both “global” and “fluid” cognition—measures associated with reasoning, processing speed, and working memory.

## Why higher dosing is being discussed

The standard 3–5 gram daily dose widely marketed for fitness is designed to saturate muscle stores—not the brain.

Emerging evidence suggests:

- Peripheral tissues (muscle) absorb the majority of creatine at lower doses
- Higher dosing increases circulating creatine available for brain uptake
- Neurological benefits appear more pronounced under conditions of stress, fatigue, or aging

This is consistent with observations discussed by Rhonda Patrick, who notes that higher intake may be required to impact brain creatine levels, particularly when targeting cognition rather than muscle performance.

## Cognitive outcomes: what patients may notice

While large-scale randomized trials are still needed, early clinical and mechanistic data suggest potential improvements in:

- Mental clarity and processing speed
- Word-finding and verbal fluency
- Attention and task-switching
- Perceived alertness and cognitive endurance

These findings are supported by objective improvements in standardized cognitive testing in the Alzheimer's pilot study, including attention and executive function measures.

## Important clinical context

It is critical to interpret these findings within appropriate clinical boundaries:

- The Alzheimer's study was a small pilot trial (n=20) without a placebo control
- While statistically significant, findings are considered preliminary
- Larger, randomized controlled trials are required to establish definitive clinical recommendations

Additionally, not all patients will respond identically to supplementation. Factors such as age, renal function, comorbidities, and concurrent medications must be considered.

## Safety and dosing considerations

Creatine monohydrate is one of the most extensively studied supplements, with a strong safety profile in healthy individuals when used appropriately. However, higher dosing protocols—such as 10 grams twice daily—should be medically supervised.

Potential considerations include:

- Renal function monitoring in at-risk populations
- Gastrointestinal tolerance at higher doses
- Hydration status

Clinical oversight ensures that supplementation is appropriate, individualized, and integrated into a broader care plan.

## Why compounding pharmacies are part of this conversation

Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy is positioned to support precision dosing strategies that go beyond over-the-counter, one-size-fits-all supplementation.

This includes:

- Customized dosing protocols
- Pharmaceutical-grade sourcing
- Integration with provider-directed care plans

As research evolves, compounding allows for flexibility in applying emerging data to individual patient needs.

## The clinical takeaway

Creatine is no longer limited to athletic performance. It is increasingly recognized as a metabolic support compound with measurable effects on brain function. Early evidence demonstrates that higher-dose creatine supplementation may:

- Increase brain creatine levels
- Improve cognitive performance metrics
- Support neuronal energy metabolism in aging populations

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# CARING FOR CAREGIVERS:

## Nurturing Mental Health Amidst the Demands of Dementia Care

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

**M**ay is Mental Health Month, shining a spotlight on a critical aspect of caregiving often overlooked: the mental health of dementia caregivers. Understanding this topic is crucial, given the high stakes for both caregivers and those with dementia. Experts estimated in 2020 that there were around 7 million people over 65 with Alzheimer's, just one form of dementia. By 2040, this number is expected to rise to 12 million or more.

Most people with dementia do not reside in nursing homes but live with spouses, adult children, or close family friends who provide care. Unpaid family caregivers, predominantly daughters, dedicate substantial time to caring for loved ones with dementia. According to statistics, daughters provide 39% of unpaid care hours, followed by spouses (25%), sons (17%), and other family members and friends (20%).\*

The care provided at home by these individuals is typically unpaid. According to the CDC, 16 million Americans provided over 17 billion hours of unpaid care for family and friends with dementia-related diseases. This immense responsibility leads to significant stress, making it easy for caregivers to neglect their mental health.

Caregiver burnout is a genuine risk, creeping up unexpectedly due to the constant stress, worry, and emotional strain of caregiving. Prioritizing



self-care is not just a luxury but a necessity for both the caregiver's well-being and their ability to provide quality care.

Self-care varies for each caregiver but involves finding activities that nourish the soul and provide grounding. Whether it's meditation, baking, running, or talking to a friend, any activity that rejuvenates you is beneficial. Setting boundaries is crucial; it's okay to say no to overwhelming responsibilities. Taking time to recharge is vital, benefiting both the caregiver and the person with dementia.

Seeking support is another essential aspect of self-care. Caregivers should not attempt to navigate this journey alone. Friends, family, support groups, or therapists can offer the emotional support and guidance needed. Sharing struggles with others who understand can be empowering and reassuring. There is strength in vulnerability. If you do not

have supportive friends or family, there are valuable community groups which meet online, and you can join them any time day or night.

Guilt is a common feeling among caregivers, but it's important to remember that self-care is not selfish but selfless. By caring for their own mental health, caregivers are better equipped to care for their loved ones. Research consistently shows that caregivers of people with dementia have higher rates of depression, anxiety, and physical health issues. This can look like becoming easily agitated and frustrated, feeling hopeless, poor sleep, loss of energy, difficulty thinking and concentrating, and more. Physically, caregivers have higher rates of high blood pressure, diabetes, and cognitive impairment. Caregivers also experience more physical pain and discomfort. Prioritizing self-care is not just beneficial; it's essential for maintaining good health and providing quality care.

Self-care is important because caregivers deserve it. Caregiving is one of the hardest jobs there is, and it should be done with love, compassion, and grace. Caregivers must treat themselves with the same kindness and compassion that they show to others.

In conclusion, self-care is not a luxury but a necessity for dementia caregivers. By prioritizing their mental health, caregivers can prevent burnout, improve their well-being, and provide the best possible care for their loved ones.

Sources:

\*<https://www.prb.org/resources/fact-sheet-u-s-dementia-trends/>

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# Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty Makes Aging in Place a Reality

**T**he desire to age gracefully in the comfort of one's own home is universal. For millions of seniors and their families, maintaining independence while ensuring safety and quality care represents the ideal balance between dignity and security. Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty understands this delicate balance, offering comprehensive solutions that transform aging in place from a hopeful wish into a practical reality.

## The Power of Personalized Home Care

Unlike institutional care settings, Whitsyms In Home Care provides truly individualized attention tailored to each client's unique needs and preferences. This personalized approach goes beyond basic assistance, encompassing everything from skilled nursing and rehabilitation therapies to medication management and daily living support. Research published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* demonstrates that such customized care plans significantly improve health outcomes for seniors, proving that one size definitely does not fit all when it comes to elder care.

The company's diverse team of care providers includes Certified Nursing Assistants, Companions and Homemakers, Home Health Aides, and Registered Nurses, ensuring that clients receive the appropriate level of professional care for their specific circumstances. Whether someone needs post-operative care, Alzheimer's and dementia support, or simply companionship, Whitsyms matches the right caregiver to the individual's needs.

## Safety Without Compromise

One of the most compelling arguments for home-based care lies in its safety advantages. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that seniors face heightened infection risks during hospital stays, with infections contributing significantly to readmission rates. By receiving care at home, seniors minimize exposure to infectious agents while maintaining the comfort of familiar surroundings.

Studies published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* confirm that seniors receiving home health care experience lower hospital readmission rates compared to those in institutional settings. This reduction in medical complications

translates not only to better health outcomes but also to reduced healthcare costs and emotional stress for families.

## Preserving Independence and Dignity

Aging in place allows seniors to maintain their routines, relationships, and sense of autonomy. The National Institute on Aging emphasizes that home-based care positively impacts emotional well-being, social engagement, and overall life satisfaction. Whitsyms recognizes this, offering services that support independence rather than replacing it.

Their comprehensive service menu includes specialized programs like Alzheimer's and dementia care, which requires particular sensitivity to maintaining dignity while ensuring safety. Live-in and 24-hour care options provide peace of mind for families while allowing seniors to remain in their cherished homes.

## Supporting the Entire Family

Whitsyms In Home Care understands that aging in place affects the entire family system. Their respite care services provide essential breaks for family caregivers, while their Client Care Liaisons, led by professionals like David Ruiz, serve as dedicated points of contact throughout the care journey. This support network alleviates the physical, emotional, and financial burdens often associated with caregiving responsibilities.

The Family Caregiver Alliance notes that professional home health services don't just assist with caregiving tasks—they provide educational resources, counseling, and support programs that enable family members to maintain their own health and well-being while caring for their loved ones.

## A Pathway Forward

As healthcare evolves and the senior population grows, aging in place represents more than preference—it's become a practical necessity. Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty offers specialized programs including Veterans' Aid & Attendance support and even Workers' Compensation services, demonstrating their commitment to serving diverse community needs.

### SERVICES

- Alzheimer's & Dementia Care
- Companion Care
- Live In & 24 Hour Care
- Personal Care
- Post-Operative Care
- Respite Care
- Skilled Nursing

### PROGRAMS

- Veteran's Aid & Attendance
- Welcome Aboard

### TYPES OF CARE PROVIDERS

- Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)
- Companions & Homemakers
- Home Health Aides (HHAs)
- Registered Nurses (RNs) and Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs)

### SUPPORT SERVICES

- Workers' Compensation



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## Take Control of Your Health with Any Lab Test Now

**R**esidents of Naples, Florida now have a convenient new option for getting affordable lab tests right in their neighborhood. *Any Lab Test Now* has opened a new location on Immokalee Road, bringing their extensive selection of professional lab tests to the Naples area.

Any Lab Test Now allows individuals to order their own lab tests without requiring a doctor's order. This puts patients in control of their own health monitoring and screening. The retail lab testing model provides an easy and affordable way to get lab work done for wellness, prevention, treatment, and management of existing conditions.

"We're excited to open our doors in Naples and provide this level of access to lab testing services," said the local owner. "Our goal is to empower people to be proactive about their health by making it simple and affordable to get the lab tests they need."

At Any Lab Test Now, patients can get tested for a wide range of health concerns from routine wellness panels to highly specialized biomarker tests. Some of the most popular tests offered include:

- **Annual Check-Up Panel:** A comprehensive array of tests that screen for a variety of potential health issues like diabetes, liver and kidney problems, anemia and more.

- **Paternity Informational (Non-Legal):** For those needing to determine biological relationships through DNA testing for personal knowledge.
- **STD Panel, Comprehensive:** Screens for all major sexually transmitted infections like HIV, syphilis, hepatitis B & C, herpes, chlamydia and more.
- **Cholesterol (Lipid) Panel:** Checks HDL, LDL, triglycerides and total cholesterol levels to assess heart disease risk.
- **5 Panel Rapid Drug Screen (Urine):** Detects recent use of marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines, opiates and PCP.
- **Weight Management Hormone Test Panel:** Looks at levels of hormones like cortisol, thyroid, testosterone and more that can affect weight.
- **Hemoglobin A1C:** Used to monitor average blood sugar levels over 2-3 months for diabetes management.
- **Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA):** Screens for prostate cancer and other prostate disorders in men.
- **Basic Thyroid Panel:** Checks TSH, T4 and T3 levels to identify thyroid disorders.
- **Testosterone, Free & Total:** Measures free and total testosterone levels in men and women.



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

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

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# UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION: Diagnosis and Expert Management

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

**D**epression is a pervasive mental health condition that affects millions of people worldwide. It is a complex and often debilitating illness that requires comprehensive diagnosis and expert management to improve the quality of life for those affected. In this article, we will explore the diagnosis and management of depression from the perspective of a psychiatrist, shedding light on the importance of professional intervention.

## Diagnosing Depression

The first step in managing depression is an accurate diagnosis. Psychiatrists, as medical doctors with specialized training in mental health, are uniquely qualified for this task. They employ a combination of methods, including clinical interviews, psychological assessments, and the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) criteria to evaluate a patient's symptoms. This thorough assessment helps determine the severity and type of depression, ensuring that treatment is tailored to the individual.

## Differentiating Depression Types

Psychiatrists play a crucial role in distinguishing between various types of depression, such as major depressive disorder, persistent depressive disorder (dysthymia), bipolar disorder, and seasonal affective disorder. Each type may necessitate distinct management strategies, underscoring the importance of precise diagnosis.

## Medication Management

Once diagnosed, psychiatrists can recommend medication as part of the treatment plan. Antidepressant medications, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), are commonly prescribed. Psychiatrists carefully select the appropriate medication and dosage based on the patient's symptoms, medical history, and potential side effects.

## Therapeutic Interventions

In addition to medications, psychotherapy plays a vital role in managing depression. Psychiatrists often provide therapy themselves or collaborate with clinical psychologists and therapists to offer



evidence-based approaches like cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT), and dialectical behavior therapy (DBT). These therapies help patients understand and cope with their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, ultimately promoting recovery.

## Monitoring and Adjustments

Regular follow-up appointments with a psychiatrist are crucial during depression management. They monitor medication efficacy, side effects, and overall progress, making necessary adjustments to the treatment plan. This ongoing relationship helps ensure that patients receive the most suitable care throughout their recovery journey.

## Addressing Co-occurring Conditions

Psychiatrists are trained to identify and address co-occurring conditions that may exacerbate depression, such as anxiety disorders, substance use disorders, or medical conditions. Treating these comorbidities is essential for comprehensive depression management.

## Preventing Relapse

Depression can be a recurring illness, and psychiatrists help patients develop relapse prevention strategies. This may involve continuing therapy, adjusting medications, and incorporating lifestyle changes to reduce stress and support mental well-being.

## Supporting the Family

Depression affects not only the individual but also their loved ones. Psychiatrists often work with families to educate them about depression, improve communication, and provide guidance on how to support their loved one's recovery.

Depression is a challenging mental health condition, but with the expertise of a psychiatrist, it can be diagnosed accurately and managed effectively. Through a combination of medication management, psychotherapy, ongoing monitoring, and a holistic approach to mental health, individuals living with depression can find hope and healing on their journey to recovery. Consulting a qualified psychiatrist is a vital step in this process, as they possess the knowledge and experience to provide the comprehensive care needed for those battling depression.

*Dr. Richard J. Capiola* is the Chief of Psychiatry for Physicians Regional Medical Center. He received his medical degree from Tulane University School of Medicine and has been in practice for more than 30 years. Call Dr. Capiola today at 239-649-7494.

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# High Blood Pressure in Pets: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment

**T**here are several factors that can contribute to hypertension in pets. Some of the common causes include:



**Obesity:** Just like in humans, obesity is a leading cause of high blood pressure in pets. Extra weight puts extra strain on the heart, leading to an increase in blood pressure.

**Kidney Disease:** Kidney disease can cause hypertension in pets by affecting the kidneys' ability to regulate blood pressure.

**Hyperthyroidism:** Overactive thyroid glands can cause hypertension in cats.

**Cushing's Disease:** This condition, which causes an overproduction of cortisol hormone, can lead to hypertension in dogs.

**Aging:** As pets age, their blood vessels become less elastic, and their blood pressure tends to increase.

## Symptoms of High Blood Pressure in Pets

High blood pressure in pets can be asymptomatic, meaning there are no obvious signs of the condition. However, in some cases, pets may exhibit the following symptoms:

- Seizures
- Blindness or other vision problems
- Disorientation or confusion
- Nosebleeds
- Difficulty breathing
- Weakness or lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Increased thirst and urination

If you notice any of these symptoms in your pet, it is essential to take them to a veterinarian immediately. Early detection and treatment can prevent complications and improve your pet's quality of life.

## Treatment of High Blood Pressure in Pets

The treatment of high blood pressure in pets depends on the underlying cause of the condition. In some cases, managing the underlying condition can resolve the hypertension. For example, weight loss can help manage hypertension in obese pets, and treating kidney disease can help regulate blood pressure in pets with kidney problems.

In other cases, medication may be necessary to control hypertension. There are several medications available to treat high blood pressure in pets, including angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and calcium channel blockers. These medications work by relaxing the blood vessels, which lowers blood pressure.

In addition to medication, lifestyle changes can also help manage hypertension in pets. For example, feeding your pet a healthy diet, ensuring they get regular exercise, and reducing stress can help manage hypertension.

High blood pressure is a common condition that affects pets, and it can lead to serious complications if left untreated. As a pet owner, it is essential to be aware of the causes, symptoms, and treatment of hypertension in pets. Regular veterinary checkups can help detect hypertension early, and early treatment can prevent complications and improve your pet's quality of life. By making lifestyle changes and working with your veterinarian to manage your pet's hypertension, you can help ensure that your furry companion lives a long and healthy life.

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# Health Insurance

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

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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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**Travel Insurance –** Did you know that most health insurance does NOT cover you outside of the country and that includes a cruise, in international waters (4 miles out). Travel insurance is not just about trip cancelation but most importantly what if you got sick or had an accident on your trip. Medical Trip insurance is very important and most of the time not very costly when you are out way the benefits.

**Life Insurance –** You are never too young to have life insurance, and many types offer living benefits. As an example, I purchase life insurance for my grandchildren almost as soon as they are born. Their policy continues to build cash value that they can use during their lives, for education, wedding or even a 1st home purchase. The younger you are the lower the cost. There are many types of life insurance, and it is important to understand the differences between them. You also have payment options, such as 10-Pay, this type of policy you can pay the premium in full in 10 years, there are other terms available as well.

**Long Term Care Insurance –** Overall, 48.7% of older adults with ADL difficulties (or an estimated 3 million persons aged 70 and older) reported needing some sort of personal assistance with one or more ADLs, and, of those individuals with need, 20.7% (or an estimated 629,000 persons) had an unmet need. Long Term Care Insurance helps pay for in-home or facility-based needs, such as assistance with acts of daily living or help with paying for a facility. Start shopping for this insurance in your 40's, but it's never too late to try. Your overall health will pay a major roll in the cost of the plan's premium. The sooner than later for affordability. You have payment options such as a single payment, 10-Pay where the premium is paid-in-full in 10 years. You also get a discount with most companies doing a joint policy with your spouse. Remember Medicare is NOT meant for Nursing Home Care/Skilled Nursing.

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# 6 Household Cleaning Supplies New Homeowners Should Have



**M**oving into a new home is an exciting and stressful experience. There are so many moving parts, and the task of cleaning can easily fall to the side. Don't let this happen by hiring the professional cleaners at MaidPro. We can ensure your new home starts and stays clean. That way, you have more time to purchase the cleaning essentials. This new homeowner cleaning supply list of six items will help you have the basics to keep your home clean.

## 1. Microfiber Towels

The versatility of microfiber cloths makes them essential in your new home. The gentle fibers make them suitable for a broad range of surface types. They are also effective at disinfecting your home. When one gets dirty, you can throw them in the wash and use them again.

## 2. Vacuum

You need to be able to clean the floors of your new home. A vacuum can work on various surfaces, making it the perfect solution for your new home. Look for a vacuum with the ability to adjust for different floor types. That way, you can easily transition from carpet or rugs to tile or hardwood flooring.

## 3. All Purpose Cleaner

An all-purpose cleaner is a versatile cleaning product that you can use on surfaces all over your home. This makes it an essential first cleaning product for your new home. Use this cleaner with a microfiber cloth in every room in your home.

## 4. Glass Cleaner

One surface where all-purpose cleaner doesn't work is on glass or mirror. You need a specific glass cleaner that will clean while also leaving the surface streak-free. Use glass cleaner in the bathroom to clean the mirror and glass around the shower. Then wipe down the inside of the windows in the rest of the home. This cleans them and increases the amount of natural light coming in.

## 5. Wood Cleaner

Protect your wood furniture by using a specialized cleaner. All-purpose cleaners can cause damage to your wood, so using a specialized cleaner is a must. Look for one that can clean, condition, and protect. This will ensure your wood furniture stays looking beautiful for years to come.

## 6. Toilet Brush and Cleaner

The other items on this list are general purpose and can be used throughout the home. However, they aren't suitable for cleaning the toilet. Instead, you need a toilet brush and cleaner. This lets you clean the inside of the toilet bowl.

## Hire the Cleaning Pros

You have plenty to think about when moving into your new home. Don't let cleaning fall through the cracks. Having these six essential items will make a strong start to establishing your cleaning kit. Another great option is to hire a professional cleaner. The professionals at MaidPro can take on the cleaning responsibility so that you can focus on other tasks. That way, your new home starts clean and stays clean.



## Cleaning Is Deeper With MaidPro

Whether you hire us just once or we see you every week, our PROs are committed to ensuring our services go above and beyond your expectations, each and every time. Our locally owned cleaning company takes the time needed to give your home the clean it deserves, guided by our 49-Point Checklist.

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# FINDING RHYTHM IN A RUSHED WORLD

By Pastor Tim Neptune

In our fast-paced culture, calendars overflow, to-do lists never end, and we race from one commitment to the next. We long for weekends only to collapse before Monday's demands return. Many of us live as prisoners of the clock, pushing ourselves to burnout. But what if this isn't how we were designed to live?

God built rest into our very DNA. Science confirms we need roughly eight hours of sleep per 24-hour cycle—about one-third of our lives in “recharge mode.” The ancient practice of Sabbath, rooted in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11), reminds us that even the Creator rested after six days of work—not because He needed to, but to model a healthy rhythm for us.

Jesus affirmed this truth: *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”* (Mark 2:27). Rest isn't a luxury or sign of laziness; it's a gift that sustains us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

We need to rest our body. Downtime boosts health, focus, productivity, and creativity. Yet, too often we stay “always on,” tethered to devices that steal our recovery time. Turn them off. Protect one full day each week as a true Sabbath—clear of obligations. Embrace simplicity by eliminating clutter and unnecessary commitments. Prioritize family over endless striving for more money or success. Practice contentment, remembering that life doesn't consist in an abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15).

As the Harvard Business Review notes, silence and breaks restore the nervous system and help us navigate complex demands. Don't feel guilty for a “do nothing” day—sleep in, stay in pajamas, and recharge. Your body was designed for it.

We need to rest our minds. Racing thoughts, anxiety, and mental overload plague many of us. The Apostle Paul offers a powerful antidote in Philippians 4:4-9: rejoice, pray instead of worrying, and focus on what is true, noble, pure, and lovely. Shift from negativity and over-responsibility to trust in God.

Jesus modeled healthy boundaries by withdrawing from crowds to pray and recover (Matthew 14:23). Adopt Rick Warren's rhythm: divert daily (a short walk, music, reading, or hobby), withdraw weekly



(a full recharge day), and abandon annually (a real vacation). Even simple acts like playing piano—switching songs freely—create mental space. As Mozart observed, the beauty of music lies in the rests between notes. The same holds for life.

We need rest for our souls. True, deep rest comes from surrender. Jesus invites the weary: *“Come to me... and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me... and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:28-30). When we relinquish control and trust God with our worries—finances, health, relationships, future—we experience supernatural peace.

King David, no stranger to stress, declared, *“In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety”* (Psalm 4:8). We cannot control everything, but we can entrust everything to a sovereign, loving God.

You are important—but not that important. The world will keep spinning if you step off the treadmill. Schedule rest intentionally. Protect your Sabbath. Divert, withdraw, and abandon. Most importantly, come to the One who offers soul-deep rest.

Your body, mind, and spirit will thank you. In the silence between the notes, you just might rediscover the abundant life for which you were created.

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