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Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

May 2026

Lee Edition - Monthly

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Finding Comfort and Confidence During National Physical Fitness & Sports Month

UNPLUG TO POWER UP

Why Digital Balance Matters for Mental Health

2026 PARKINSON'S DISEASE SPRING SYMPOSIUM

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Charlotte County Parkinson's Symposium

Neuro Challenge Foundation for Parkinson's in partnership
with the Parkinson's Disease Treatment Center of SWFL
proudly present the 2026 Spring Symposium.

Friday, June 5, 2026 | 8:30am - 2:30pm
Charlotte Harbor Event and Conference Center
75 Taylor St, Punta Gorda, FL 33950

Free to attend. Registration is required.
Register at NeuroChallenge.org

A light breakfast, coffee, water and lunch will be provided.

Featured Speakers:

"A Healthy Mind in a
Healthy Body - Tips for
the PD Patient and
Care Partner"



Mabel Lopez, PhD
Licensed Psychologist,
Neuropsychologist
Owner & President,
Mind and Brain Care, LLC

"Tackling Walking
and Balance
Challenges in PD"



Philip Tipton, MD
Associate Professor of
Neurology Movement Disorders
Department University of
Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

"New Answers to Old
Questions in
Parkinson's"
and
"Next is Now:
Innovating Parkinson's
Treatment with
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Ramon A. Gil, MD

Neurologist, Movement
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Director, Parkinson's Disease
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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.

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.



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2026 SWFL PARKINSON'S DISEASE SPRING SYMPOSIUM: Free Educational Event Coming to Punta Gorda This June

Affecting 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 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
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For more information, please email Lisa Gallucci: lisag@neurochallenge.org



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MAY IS BETTER HEARING AND SPEECH MONTH

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

May is a special month in the United States for those who care about communication and the senses. It is designated as Better Hearing and Speech Month, which provides an opportunity to raise awareness about communication disorders and the importance of speech and hearing health. This month-long celebration is a great opportunity to educate people about communication disorders, promote hearing and speech health, and support individuals with communication challenges.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) established Better Speech and Hearing Month in 1927 to raise awareness about communication disorders and the importance of early detection and intervention. Since then, it has become a popular annual event that promotes education, awareness, and advocacy for individuals with speech, language, and hearing disorders.

Communication disorders affect millions of Americans, both young and old. They can range from mild to severe and can significantly impact an individual's quality of life. Communication disorders can manifest in different ways, including difficulty with speech production, stuttering, difficulty understanding or using language, voice disorders, and hearing loss.

Hearing loss is one of the most common communication disorders and affects about 48 million Americans, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD). Hearing loss can be caused by various factors, including aging, exposure to loud noise, genetics, certain medications, and illnesses. If left untreated, hearing loss can lead to social isolation, depression, and cognitive decline. That's why early detection and intervention are critical in managing hearing loss and preventing further damage.

Speech and language disorders can also have a significant impact on an individual's ability to communicate effectively. These disorders can affect a person's ability to produce or understand speech, use and comprehend language, and engage in social interactions. Speech and language disorders can be caused by various factors, including neurological conditions, developmental delays, trauma,



and environmental factors. Early detection and intervention are also crucial in managing speech and language disorders and improving communication skills.

Better Hearing and Speech Month provides an opportunity to raise awareness about these communication disorders and promote hearing and speech health. It is a time to celebrate the successes of individuals with communication challenges and to support their ongoing journey to better communication.

There are several ways to get involved in Better Hearing and Speech Month. Here are a few ideas:

- 1. Spread the word:** Use social media to share information about Better Speech and Hearing Month, including facts and resources about communication disorders, hearing and speech health, and early detection and intervention.
- 2. Get screened:** Encourage family and friends to get screened for hearing and speech disorders. Many healthcare providers offer free or low-cost screenings during Better Speech and Hearing Month.
- 3. Support advocacy efforts:** Contact your elected officials and urge them to support legislation that improves access to hearing and speech services, particularly for underserved populations.
- 4. Educate others:** Host a workshop or webinar to educate others about communication disorders and the importance of hearing and speech health.
- 5. Donate to a hearing and speech organization:** Consider donating to a hearing and speech organization that supports research, advocacy, and services for individuals with communication disorders.

Better Hearing and Speech Month is a great opportunity to raise awareness about communication disorders and promote hearing and speech health. By working together, we can improve access to early detection and intervention services, support individuals with communication challenges, and empower them to communicate effectively and confidently.

If you or a loved one are struggling to hear clearly, we can help! We are located in Cape Coral and Fort Myers, FL., with our 5-star-rated hearing care. Call Nobile Hearing Aids today at 239-323-7389 for more information.

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



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SKIN CANCER OF THE FEET: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

By Dr. Lori DeBlasi, DPM, FACFAS

While we often associate skin cancer with the face or shoulders, it can develop anywhere on the body, including the ankles and feet. Because the feet are frequently overlooked during routine medical checkups, staying vigilant through regular self-exams is vital for early detection.

Common Types and Symptoms

Skin cancer on the lower extremities can be deceptive, often mimicking common conditions like warts, calluses, or fungal infections.

Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) is among the least aggressive forms and is less common on the feet than other areas. When it does appear, it typically looks like a pearly white bump or a patch of bumps that may ooze or crust over like an open sore.

Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC) is the most common form of cancer found on the skin of the feet. In its early stages, it usually remains confined to the skin, but advanced cases can become aggressive. On the feet, SCC often resembles a scaly bump, plaque, or even eczema. While usually painless, these spots may be itchy, or they might crack and bleed.

Actinic Keratosis serves as a pre-cancerous warning sign. These lesions often feel like rough, sandpaper-like spots before they are even visible. They can be flat or slightly raised, ranging in color from tan to pink, eventually developing into reddish, scaly plaques.

Malignant Melanoma is the most dangerous form of skin cancer due to its ability to spread to deeper tissues. It can appear on the tops or soles of the feet, and occasionally manifests beneath a toenail as a dark vertical line.

The ABCDEs of Melanoma

When inspecting moles or spots on your feet, remember this guide to identify suspicious changes:

- **Asymmetry:** One half of the lesion does not match the other.



- **Borders:** The edges are ragged, notched, or blurred.
- **Color:** The color is uneven, featuring shades of black, brown, tan, or even red and blue.
- **Diameter:** The spot is larger than 6 mm (about the size of a pencil eraser).
- **Evolution:** The mole is changing in size, shape, color, or symptoms (like itching or bleeding).

Prevention and Professional Care

Protecting your feet requires the same diligence as the rest of your body. Use a water-resistant, broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least SPF 30 on your ankles and feet, and try to avoid the sun during peak hours between 10 am and 4 pm. Daily inspections of your toes and the spaces between them are essential, as any mole that changes or bleeds warrants a professional examination.

Podiatrists are uniquely trained as lower extremity specialists to recognize and treat these abnormal skin conditions. If you have concerns about a spot on your foot, **Dr. Lori DeBlasi** is available for consultations. She is certified by the American Board of Foot and Ankle Surgery® and sees patients at the **Family Foot & Leg Center** in Estero.



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MEMORY MATTERS

Is it normal to have problems with our memory as we get older? Are you concerned that your memory seems to be getting worse? Do you just chalk it up to old age? Doesn't everyone have memory problems as they get older? Why is early detection so important?

These are some of the questions that are common around the topic of memory loss. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH), while age is the most important known risk factor for the disease, old age does *not* cause Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, and it's estimated that 1/9 (one in nine people) aged 65 and older have Alzheimer's. That roughly translates to approximately 6.7 million people in the United States who have Alzheimer's disease, per the 2023 Alzheimer's Association facts and figures document. Here in Florida, it is estimated that around 580,000 people are living with Alzheimer's disease.

It is quite common for people to get the terms Alzheimer's and dementia confused. The best way to describe dementia is that dementia is a syndrome, characterized by a decline in mental functioning. Thinking, remembering, and reasoning are all impacted, and these changes are typically not reversible. In addition, to have a diagnosis of dementia, these changes in cognition are significant enough to interfere with your daily life.

Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia, and estimated to be between 60 – 80% of all cases of dementia. Alzheimer's disease is progressive (it continues to get worse), neurodegenerative (nerve cells in the brain, called neurons, become damaged and lose function and die), and while there are a number of early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease, decline in short term memory is common. There are many different types of dementia. Vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, Frontotemporal dementia and mixed dementia are several of the most common types.

Why is early detection important? Currently, early detection and screening procedures are very common for a variety of illnesses. You may have



already had one or more of these types of screening. Cholesterol screening, Pap tests, fecal occult blood testing, colonoscopy, mammography, diabetes screening tests and the PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood test are all examples of screening tests. Having a memory screen should be a part of an annual health checkup.

You may be wondering why you should have a memory screen. There are a variety of reasons that having a memory screen is important. One of the main reasons is to find out why someone is experiencing memory concerns. There are a variety of different conditions that can impact one's memory that are reversible and/or treatable. Conditions such as thyroid issues, vitamin B12 deficiency, sleep apnea, depression, medication interactions, excessive alcohol use, even significant stress and anxiety can cause memory issues. These causes can be addressed. Even if you are not currently concerned about your memory, you can be proactive with your brain health by having a baseline memory screen done.

Regular memory screening may be beneficial in the early detection of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The risk of dementia increases with age. When diagnosed early enough, a combination of lifestyle changes and medical treatments

can potentially delay the progression. The information obtained from the screening is not a diagnosis but will better enable you to take charge of your brain health.

What is a memory screen? Memory screening promotes healthier aging and is one thing you can do to try to prevent or delay the onset of symptoms associated with Alzheimer's. Annual memory testing is highly recommended for adults ages fifty or older, or even earlier if you are experiencing memory problems that worry you. It is a positive, proactive step you can take right now to take charge of your brain health. You will get a free cognitive assessment, plus education about aging, memory, lifestyle factors and referrals to appropriate community resources.

To make it easy to get a memory screen, the Neuropsychiatric Research Center of Southwest Florida (NPRC) will be offering free memory screens. To schedule your free memory screen, contact our office at 239-939-7777. Please bring a list of your current medications to your appointment. The screening and all services provided at our center are at no cost to you and we do not ask for any insurance information. At the Neuropsychiatric Research center there are many cutting edge clinical studies that are focused on addressing memory issues.

References:

Lee S, Huang H, Zelen M. Early detection of disease and scheduling of screening examinations. *Stat Methods Med Res.* 2004 Dec;13(6):443-56. doi: 10.1191/0962280204sm377ra. PMID: Diagnosing Alzheimer's: How Alzheimer's is diagnosed - Mayo Clinic <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/leecountyflorida>



Contact NPRC at 239-939-7777 today for your free memory screen.



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

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

May 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.

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ALIGNMENT MATTERS: Pilates for Mental Health and Nervous System Regulation

By Shannon Willits, NPCP, FAFS

It usually starts subtly. Poor sleep. Low energy. A sense that everything takes more effort than it should.

A 2020 study published in the *Journal of Bodywork and Movement Therapies* found that individuals with mild to moderate depression who participated in regular Pilates sessions experienced measurable improvements in mood and reductions in depressive symptoms.

In practice, the change is often gradual. One participant began Pilates during a period of prolonged burnout. Sleep was inconsistent, energy was low, and movement felt like effort rather than relief.

The early sessions were simple: follow the sequence, focus on breath, complete the work. By week four, sleep improved slightly and muscle tension decreased. By week eight, the shift was clear. Not because stress disappeared, but because there was now a reliable way to process it. The goal is not to eliminate stress. It is to improve how the system responds to it.

Mental Health Is Built, Not Fixed

We tend to treat mental health like something to fix when it breaks. A hard season. A diagnosis. A moment that finally demands attention. But most mental health patterns are not built in a crisis. They are built in the background, quietly, through repetition.

Daily inputs shape the system. Sleep, light exposure, nutrition, social connection, and movement all contribute to how the body regulates stress. According to the World Health Organization, depression remains one of the leading causes of disability worldwide, while physical inactivity continues to rise.

These trends are often discussed separately. In practice, they are closely linked.

Mental health behaves more like infrastructure than intervention. Most people are trying to repair it without ever building it.

Consistent, structured movement plays a measurable role in that foundation. Pilates offers a format the body can return to, one that gradually improves how it handles stress.

Movement, Breath, and Regulation

The nervous system is constantly interpreting signals. Heart rate, breathing patterns, muscle tone, and joint position all inform whether the body perceives safety or threat. Movement changes those signals, and those signals influence mental state.



Slow, controlled movement with clear structure can shift the system toward regulation, particularly when practiced consistently. In practice, this shows up as improved focus, less mental fatigue, and a greater ability to stay present during tasks that would normally feel overwhelming.

Breath deepens that effect. The average person takes over 20,000 breaths per day, most without awareness. Yet breathing patterns directly influence stress physiology and mental health. Fast, shallow breathing is commonly associated with anxiety, restlessness, and racing thoughts. Slower, more controlled breathing supports a steadier internal state.

Pilates trains this in a practical way. Breath is paired with movement. Expansion is encouraged. Control is practiced. Over time, breathing patterns become less reactive and more consistent.

Sleep tends to improve. Attention holds longer. Thoughts feel less scattered. The goal is not to eliminate stress. It is to change how it is processed.

Awareness and Control

Mental health is also shaped by how accurately the body perceives itself.

Proprioception, the sense of joint position, and interoception, the awareness of internal signals, both contribute to regulation. When these systems are underdeveloped, tension builds without recognition. Stress accumulates without interruption.

Pilates develops both through attention to alignment and subtle muscular engagement. As awareness improves, people often begin to notice tension earlier, adjust more easily, and recognize when they are holding stress physically.

That awareness creates options.

Control becomes the next layer. Regulation is not built through predictability alone. It is built through the ability to handle challenges.

The nervous system requires exposure to load, but that load must be structured. Pilates introduces resistance in a way that allows the body to stabilize, adapt, and refine without becoming overwhelmed.

Over time, this builds capacity. The system becomes more efficient at processing stress rather than reacting to it.

Building Capacity Through Progressive Load

Mental health follows the same principle that drives physical adaptation: progressive loading.

The body adapts to what it experiences repeatedly, especially when that experience is slightly challenging but manageable. Pilates applies this through controlled resistance, sequencing, and progression. Movements are layered. The system is asked to do more, with more control, over time.

This matters because many individuals experiencing chronic stress are both underloaded and overloaded. There is often a lack of meaningful physical challenge paired with high mental and emotional demand.

Pilates bridges that gap. It provides a controlled form of stress the body can respond to successfully. Each session becomes a repeatable exposure to load followed by recovery.

That pattern builds resilience.

The Role of Consistency

Modern life is not structured for regulation. Movement is reduced. Screen exposure is constant. Stress accumulates without consistent outlets. The nervous system adapts to that environment.

Pilates does not replace therapy or medical care. It contributes to the daily inputs that support regulation. It provides controlled movement, intentional breathing, graded challenge, and improved body awareness.

Infrastructure is built through repetition. Not intensity. Repetition.

Pilates works within that model. It is not dramatic. It is consistent. And over time, consistency changes how the body responds.

Shannon Willits, Master Pilates Educator

Shannon Willits is a Master Pilates Educator with over 25 years of experience in functional movement and athletic performance. As the owner of 5 growing Club Pilates studios in Lee County, FL, she trains and certifies aspiring instructors in contemporary comprehensive Pilates. She is STOTT-certified, a Fellow of Applied Functional Science (FAFS), and a Functional Golf Specialist, bringing expertise to both rehabilitation and sport-specific training. Shannon is the creator of Pilates for Pickleball and, in her spare time, is the host of the Alignment Matters Podcast (found on YouTube).



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

Every 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.

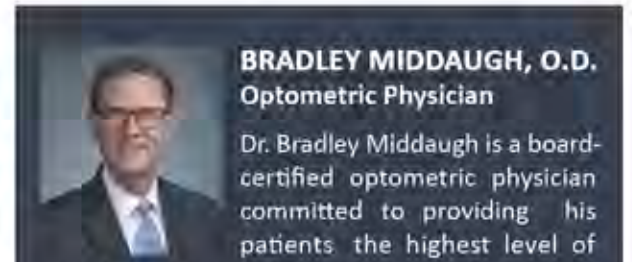
Addressing Disparities in Eye Health

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.



BRADLEY MIDDAGH, O.D.
Optometric Physician

Dr. Bradley Middaugh is a board-certified optometric physician committed to providing his patients the highest level of care through innovative technology and a focus on providing an excellent patient experience. Dr. Middaugh has extensive training in ocular disease, vision testing, eyewear prescriptions, specialty contact lenses and the diagnosis and treatment of eye disorders for patients of all ages, from pediatric to geriatric.

Dr. Middaugh graduated from Wake Forest University and earned his doctorate at The University of Alabama at Birmingham. He has been in private practice since 1988 and founded The Fort Myers Eye Center in 1993. In 2020, he joined the Center For Sight team to offer his patients direct access to the some of the finest cataract, LASIK, glaucoma, cornea, retina, and oculo-plastics specialists in Southwest Florida.

Dr. Middaugh has served on the Lee County School Board as a member of the Health Care Advisory Panel and the Early Intervention Health Care Panel. He is also an active member of the Southwest Florida Optometric Association, the Florida Optometric Association, and the American Optometric Association, and Above Board Chamber. In addition, he enjoys leading Medical Mission teams annually to El Salvador.

Dr. Middaugh and his wife, Meg, enjoy raising their two boys. The family is very active in their church, Walk to Emmaus, Kairos Prison Ministry, and enjoy serving on medical mission teams.

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

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

Understanding Skin's Aging Process

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

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

The Crucial Role of Regular Skin Checks

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

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



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

Healthy Habits for Aging Skin

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

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

The Art of Dermatology Difference

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

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

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

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

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



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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STRONG AT 50 AND BEYOND:

Why Strength Training Is the Best Thing You Can Do for Arthritis

By Julie Hoffmann, Owner & Coach

If you are living with arthritis, lifting weights might sound like the last thing your body needs. Many adults over 50 assume exercise will worsen joint pain, so they rest more and move less. But research clearly shows that strength training is one of the most powerful tools for managing arthritis, reducing pain, and preserving the active lifestyle you deserve.

Arthritis affects millions of Americans over the age of 50, making everyday tasks like climbing stairs, opening jars, or getting up from a chair feel difficult and painful. While medications and rest have their place, they do not build the physical strength your body needs to protect and support your joints long-term. Resistance training does exactly that. At EP Fitness Studio SWFL, we work with adults over 50 every day, helping them move better, hurt less, and feel more confident in their bodies.

FIVE KEY BENEFITS OF STRENGTH TRAINING FOR ADULTS WITH ARTHRITIS

1. Less Joint Pain

One of the most immediate benefits of strength training is a reduction in joint pain. When the muscles surrounding a joint become stronger, they act as natural shock absorbers, taking pressure off the joint itself. Areas like the knees, hips, hands, and lower back see the greatest relief. Rather than grinding bone on bone with every step, strong muscles cushion the load and distribute stress more evenly. Many people are surprised to discover that within a few weeks of consistent training, pain levels decrease noticeably.

2. Better Joint Stability and Function

Building the muscles around arthritic joints improves stability, balance, and movement quality. Activities that once felt difficult, such as rising from a chair, walking on uneven ground, or carrying groceries, become more manageable as supporting muscles grow stronger. Better joint function means greater independence and quality of life.

3. Improved Balance and Fewer Falls

Falls are a serious concern for adults over 50, and arthritis increases that risk by weakening muscles and disrupting coordination. Strength training directly addresses this by building stronger legs and a more stable core, both of which are essential for maintaining balance and reacting quickly when you



lose your footing. Improved reaction time and coordination mean your body is better equipped to catch itself before a stumble becomes a fall. Fewer falls means fewer injuries, fewer hospitalizations, and more years of living life on your own terms.

4. Increased Metabolism and Healthier Weight

Muscle burns more calories at rest than fat, so building muscle boosts your metabolism and supports healthy weight management. This matters deeply for arthritis because every extra pound places added stress on weight-bearing joints like the knees and hips. Even modest weight loss can reduce joint pain significantly and slow arthritis progression.

5. Improved Mobility and Flexibility

Regular resistance exercise reduces stiffness by improving circulation to the joints and keeping connective tissues supple and responsive. Over time, your range of motion improves, making everyday activities like bending, reaching, and twisting feel noticeably easier. When your body moves more freely, the activities you love become accessible again.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO THIS ALONE

Starting a strength training program with arthritis requires the right guidance, exercises, and intensity. Done correctly, it is safe, effective, and genuinely life-changing. Done without proper instruction, it can lead to unnecessary strain. That is why working with professionals who understand adults over 50 makes all the difference. At EP Fitness Studio SWFL, we help clients build strength safely, reduce pain, and reclaim an active life. If arthritis has been slowing you down, reach out today and take the first step toward moving and feeling better.



JULIE HOFFMANN

Owner & Coach

Julie Hoffmann, alongside her husband Bill, is the owner of EP Fitness Studio SWFL. Opening this studio is a lifelong dream come true for her.

Helping people improve their quality of life through movement has always been Julie's motivation. She became a certified personal trainer and fitness instructor at 18 years old during her freshman year of college, and she has remained dedicated to the field ever since.

Julie taught college-level Health, Fitness, and P.E. courses for 21 years in Illinois. She has also instructed a wide range of fitness classes for more than 30 years, including Spinning, Pilates, Step Aerobics, Kickboxing, Rhythmic Weight Training, Get Fit While You Sit, and Arthritis Foundation classes.

For the last 10 years, Julie has worked in rehabilitation hospitals—Walter Reed in Washington, DC, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in Illinois, and Encompass in Florida—where she has assisted with Physical Therapy and witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of sedentary lifestyles.

At EP Fitness Studio SWFL, Julie's mission is to meet clients exactly where they are—regardless of age or ability—and empower them to live their best lives.

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*Certified Master Fitness Specialist, Cooper Institute
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Managing Arthritis Symptoms Through Diet, Exercise, and Innovative Therapies

Arthritis affects millions worldwide, causing joint pain, stiffness, and inflammation. While there is no cure for arthritis, adopting a holistic approach that includes dietary changes, exercise, and innovative therapies can help alleviate symptoms and improve overall quality of life. Explore evidence-based strategies for managing arthritis symptoms and the potential benefits of incorporating dietary modifications, hyperbaric oxygen treatments, and nutrient IV therapy, including MSM, DMSO, and specialty compounds with Root Causes.

Understanding Arthritis: Arthritis encompasses over 100 types of joint diseases, with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis being the most prevalent. Osteoarthritis, the most common form, occurs when the protective cartilage cushions the ends of bones and wears down over time. Rheumatoid arthritis, on the other hand, is an autoimmune disorder that causes the immune system to attack the joints, leading to inflammation and joint damage.

1. Importance of Diet in Arthritis Management: Diet plays a crucial role in managing arthritis symptoms and promoting joint health. Research suggests that certain foods can either exacerbate inflammation or help reduce it. For example, a study published in the *Journal of Nutrition* found that the Mediterranean diet, rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats like olive oil, may help reduce inflammation and improve symptoms in individuals with rheumatoid arthritis. Conversely, processed foods, sugary beverages, and excessive consumption of red meat and saturated fats have been associated with increased inflammation and arthritis severity.

2. Exercise and Physical Activity: Regular exercise is essential for maintaining joint flexibility, strength, and range of motion in individuals with arthritis. Low-impact exercises such as swimming, cycling, and walking can help reduce joint pain and stiffness while improving overall physical function. According to the Arthritis Foundation, exercise can also help manage weight, reduce fatigue, and enhance mood, contributing to better arthritis management.



3. Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment (HBOT):

Hyperbaric oxygen treatment (HBOT) involves breathing pure oxygen in a pressurized chamber, which increases oxygen delivery to tissues and promotes healing. Research suggests that HBOT may have anti-inflammatory effects and help alleviate symptoms in individuals with inflammatory arthritis, such as rheumatoid arthritis.

4. Nutrient IV Therapy: Nutrient IV therapy involves administering intravenously vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients to promote overall health and well-being. In arthritis management, certain nutrients like MSM (Methylsulfonylmethane) and DMSO (Dimethyl sulfoxide) have shown promise in reducing inflammation and relieving joint pain. Additionally, specialty compounds like hyaluronic acid and glucosamine sulfate may help improve joint lubrication and cartilage health.

5. Combining Therapeutic Approaches: While each therapeutic approach offers unique benefits, combining dietary modifications, exercise, and innovative therapies can optimize arthritis management. A holistic approach that addresses inflammation, joint health, and overall well-being is key to improving symptoms and enhancing the quality of life for individuals with arthritis.

Arthritis is a chronic condition that requires comprehensive management to alleviate symptoms and improve quality of life. By incorporating dietary changes, regular exercise, and innovative therapies such as hyperbaric oxygen treatment and nutrient

IV therapy, individuals with arthritis can take proactive steps towards better joint health and overall well-being. It's essential to consult with healthcare professionals to develop a personalized treatment plan tailored to individual needs and preferences. With the right strategies, arthritis sufferers can effectively manage their symptoms and lead fulfilling lives.

Call us at 239-425-2900 to learn more about these innovative approaches and how they may contribute to improving your health and well-being.



Doreen DeStefano, PhD, APRN, DNP

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

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

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WHEN A BROKEN WRIST IS MORE THAN JUST A FALL: Understanding Osteoporosis and Distal Radius Fractures

By Dennis O. Sagini, MD

A simple slip on a wet floor, a stumble off a curb, or a misstep coming down the stairs — for millions of Americans, these everyday moments result in a distal radius fracture, commonly known as a broken wrist. While many people assume a wrist fracture is just an unfortunate accident, physicians increasingly recognize it as a critical warning sign of an underlying and often undiagnosed condition: osteoporosis. Understanding the connection between these two conditions is essential to preventing future fractures and protecting long-term health.

What Is a Distal Radius Fracture?

The distal radius is the larger of the two forearm bones, located just above the wrist. When a person falls and instinctively reaches out to catch themselves, enormous force is transmitted through the wrist, and the distal radius is frequently the first bone to give way. These fractures account for nearly one in six of all fractures treated in emergency departments, making them among the most common orthopedic injuries in adults.

Distal radius fractures range in severity from stable, minimally displaced breaks that can be managed with a cast, to complex, comminuted injuries requiring surgical fixation with plates and screws. Recovery time typically spans six to twelve weeks, though regaining full strength and range of motion can take considerably longer, especially in older patients.

The Osteoporosis Connection

Osteoporosis is a metabolic bone disease characterized by decreased bone density and deterioration of bone architecture, leading to increased fragility. The condition affects an estimated 10 million Americans, with an additional 44 million having low bone density — placing them at elevated risk. Postmenopausal women are disproportionately affected due to the sharp decline in estrogen following menopause, though men and younger individuals are by no means immune.

Osteoporosis is often called a "silent disease" because bone loss occurs gradually and without symptoms — until a fracture happens. A distal radius fracture sustained from a low-energy mechanism, such as falling from a standing height, is considered a fragility fracture. This type of fracture is a red flag that the bone was already weakened before the fall ever occurred.

Why a Wrist Fracture Demands Attention Beyond the Wrist

Research consistently shows that patients who sustain a distal radius fragility fracture face a significantly increased risk of future fractures, particularly hip fractures, which carry serious consequences including prolonged disability and elevated mortality. Despite this well-established link, a troubling reality persists: the majority of patients treated for a wrist fracture never receive a formal evaluation for osteoporosis or bone-protective treatment.

This gap in care — sometimes called the "osteoporosis treatment gap" — represents a missed opportunity to intervene at a pivotal moment. A wrist fracture should serve as a gateway, not a dead end. Every patient who presents with a fragility fracture deserves a comprehensive bone health evaluation, including a DEXA scan to measure bone mineral density, laboratory assessment to rule out secondary causes of bone loss, and a thorough review of lifestyle, nutritional, and pharmacologic factors.

Treatment and Prevention:

A Two-Pronged Approach

Managing a patient with a distal radius fracture in the setting of osteoporosis requires treating both the acute injury and the underlying bone disease. On the orthopedic side, ensuring proper fracture alignment and healing remains the immediate priority. Concurrently, addressing osteoporosis through calcium and vitamin D supplementation, weight-bearing exercise, fall prevention strategies, and when indicated, prescription anti-resorptive or bone-forming medications such as bisphosphonates or denosumab, is critical to reducing future fracture risk.

Collaboration between orthopedic surgeons, primary care physicians, endocrinologists, and rheumatologists is invaluable in delivering comprehensive care. Fracture liaison services — coordinated programs designed to identify and treat osteoporosis following a fracture — have demonstrated significant success in reducing secondary fracture rates and improving patient outcomes.

A broken wrist can be far more than a temporary inconvenience. It can be the body's first and most audible warning that bones are in distress. Heeding that warning with prompt, thorough evaluation and treatment is the most powerful step we can take to protect patients from the cascade of fractures that osteoporosis, left unaddressed, so often brings.



Dennis O. Sagini, MD

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

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

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

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



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Understanding Otolaryngologists: The Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialists

When 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

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

May 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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KIDNEY CANCER: Are You at Risk?

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

The 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.¹

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.nftr.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.

- All forms of Dialysis – Hemodialysis and Peritoneal
- Diabetic Kidney Disorder
- Dietitian Services for Kidney Patients
- Disorders of Blood Chemistry
- Electrolyte Disorders
- Fluid Overload, Edema (swelling)
- Glomerulonephritis
- Hypertension
- Injections of Aranesp for Anemia related to Kidney Disease
- Kidney Transplant Services: Patient and Donor Evaluations, Post-Transplant Follow-up Care
- Lupus Nephritis
- Nephrotic Syndrome
- Pyelonephritis
- Polycystic Kidney Disease
- Recurring kidney stones
- Renal Failure
- Renal Insufficiency

We work collaboratively with a patient's primary care physician and specialists to slow the progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD) and prevent or manage complications such as hypertension, anemia, and bone disease. Additionally, our multidisciplinary team of professionals can assist you in arranging a wide array of supportive services and 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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Marsh Cove Dental Brings Specialized Full-Arch Implant Expertise to Fort Myers

By Dr. Eugene Titov and Dr. Olga Titov

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

Specialized Full-Arch Implant Center

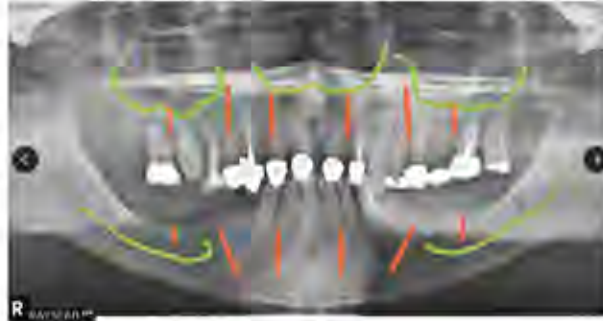
The new Fort Myers location will exclusively focus on full-arch dental implants – also known as All-On-4, Teeth-In-A-Day, or Same-Day Teeth – making them Southwest Florida's premier destination for this life-changing procedure. By concentrating solely on full-arch treatments, Marsh Cove's specialized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

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

State-of-the-Art Technology Under One Roof

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

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



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

Advanced Solutions for Complex Cases

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

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

Comprehensive Care with Patient Safety Focus

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



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

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

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



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See What Our Patients Say



REGINA M.

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



DANIEL B.

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



CHRIS S.



PAMELA F.

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



KAREN W.



CHERYL D.



JOHNNY

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

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



PAMELA

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

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



TOBY R.



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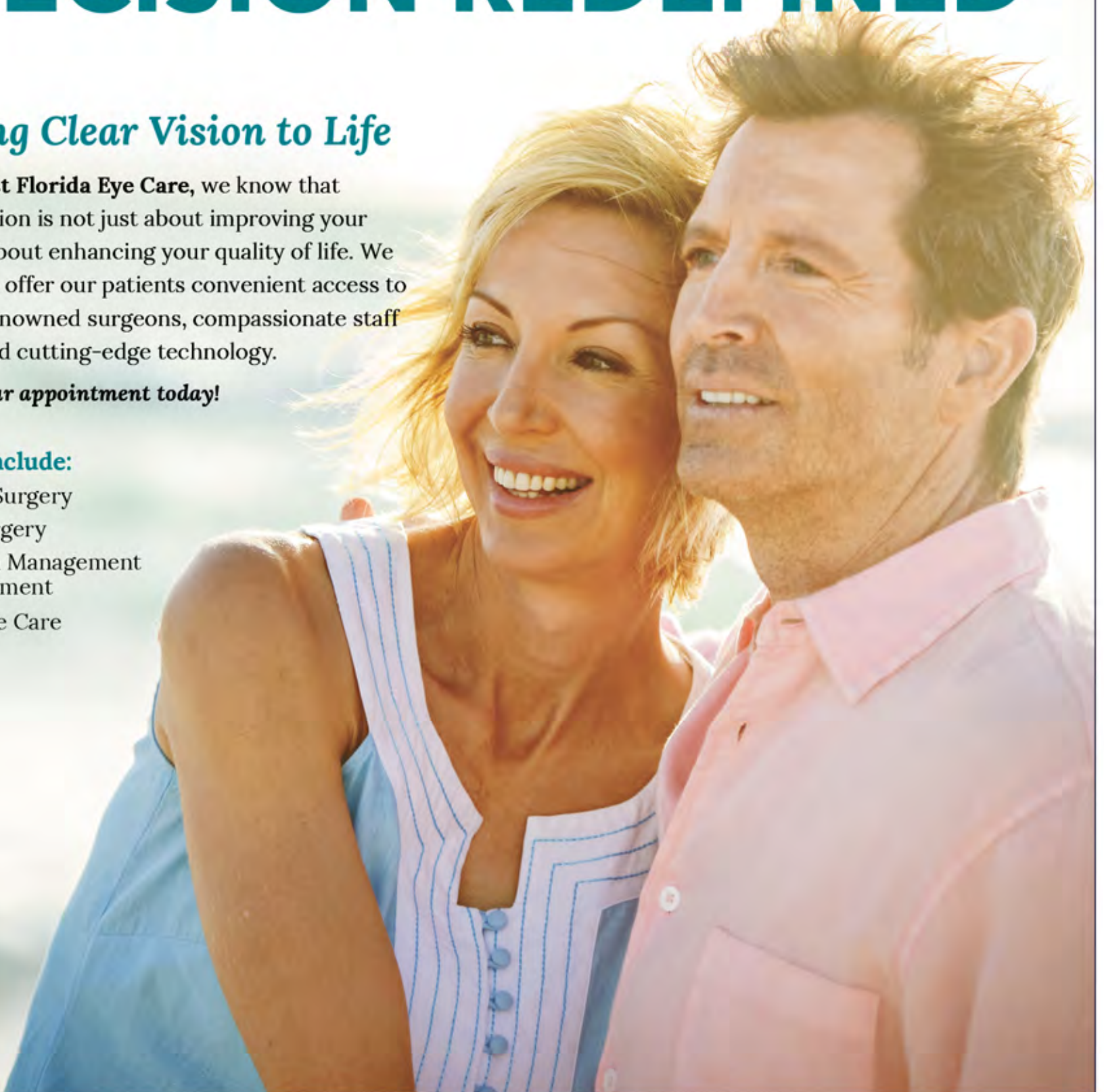
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TRADITIONAL VS. ROBOTIC LAPAROSCOPY

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

Minimally 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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By KELLY M. DAINIAK, DMD, GENERAL DENTIST

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Risk factors include any tobacco product (cigarettes, cigars, vapes, chewing tobacco), Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), age (increased with age), poor oral hygiene, sun exposure and genetics.

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2. Red and/or white spot
3. Difficulty swallowing
4. Bad breath (Halitosis)
5. Ear pain
6. Numbness or tingling
7. Rough spot around lips or inside mouth
8. Lesions do not always cause pain/discomfort
9. Alcohol Consumption

If you have any of these symptoms, do not delay in scheduling a comprehensive dental examination. Regular dental check ups are important not only for preserving teeth and healthy gums but also for cancer screening. Often it is easy to fall behind on your dental health. If you missed a dental cleaning, do not delay in calling your dental professional. Teeth can be repaired or replaced (with dental implants) but cancer detection could save your life and ultimately give you a better health span.

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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

Are 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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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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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.

CMS has made many changes for Medicare recipients. If you want to enroll or review your plan over the phone, you need to agree to be recorded, and Medicare requires us to keep the recording for 10 years. In person, appointments do not have that requirement, but you need to sign a scope of appointment that authorizes us to talk to you about Medicare Advantage or a Drug Plan. It does not allow us to do anything but talk to you about these topics.

One of the biggest changes for 2026 related to Medicare Part D Prescriptions whether withing a Part C Advantage plan or a stand-alone Part D drug Plan. Your yearly Part D out-of-pocket costs will be capped at \$2,100 in 2026. You must buy medications using your plan and the medication must be **in formulary** to go toward the cap. You will also have a payment option to pay out-pocket costs in monthly amounts over the plan year, instead of paying when you receive the medications. This is done through the insurance company that you purchased your plan.

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

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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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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REIGNITE YOUR METABOLISM: How Muscle, Hormones, and Brain Energy Work Together to Defy Aging

By Dr. Ivan Bracic, Clinical Director – Novaré® Medical and Wellness

When Energy Starts to Fade

You eat well. You stay active. But lately, your energy feels lower, your workouts seem harder, and that stubborn belly fat just won't budge. Sound familiar?

These are some of the most common frustrations we hear at Novaré® Medical & Wellness — and they're not simply a matter of willpower or age. They're signs that your metabolism and hormones have shifted out of balance.

After 40, the body's natural energy systems begin to slow down. Muscle mass declines, hormones change, and the brain's stress response becomes more dominant. The result? Less drive, more fatigue, and a metabolism that no longer keeps up with your lifestyle.

But the good news is this: your metabolism isn't broken — it can be reignited.

Understanding the Metabolic Shift

Metabolism isn't just about how fast you burn calories — it's how efficiently your body converts food, oxygen, and hormones into usable energy.

As we age:

- **Muscle loss (sarcopenia)** reduces the body's calorie-burning capacity.
- **Hormonal decline** (lower testosterone, estrogen, and thyroid) slows recovery and fat metabolism.
- **Stress and fatigue** dull brain function, reducing motivation and focus.

These combined changes create the feeling of being "stuck" — mentally and physically.

That's why simply dieting or exercising harder often fails to produce results. You have to restore the body's *energy systems* — not just reduce calories.

The Three Pillars of Metabolic Renewal

At Novaré, we approach metabolism as a whole-body system, powered by three interdependent pillars: Muscle, Hormones, and Brain Energy.

When these systems communicate effectively, you feel sharper, stronger, and younger — no matter your age.

1. MUSCLE – The Engine of Youth

Muscle is your metabolism's foundation. Every pound of lean muscle burns calories even at rest — and it also supports balance, posture, and joint health. Yet after 40, most adults lose 3–5% of their muscle mass per decade. Emsculpt Neo® helps reverse that decline by using high-intensity electromagnetic stimulation and radiofrequency energy to build muscle and burn fat simultaneously.

"Your metabolism isn't broken — it's just waiting for the right signal to reignite."

Each 30-minute session triggers the equivalent of 20,000 contractions, remodeling deep muscle fibers and improving tone and strength.

Clinical studies show:

- +25% average muscle increase
- –30% average fat reduction

Patients describe feeling more energized, stable, and confident — not just in how they look, but how they move.

"When your muscles get stronger, your metabolism gets smarter."

2. HORMONES – The Body's Energy Messengers

Hormones are your body's internal conductors. They tell your cells how to use energy, regulate mood, and support muscle maintenance.

But when levels of estrogen, testosterone, or thyroid hormones fall, the result can be weight gain, fatigue, and loss of motivation — even if diet and exercise haven't changed.

At Novaré, we evaluate and optimize hormone balance through safe, medically guided hormone therapy. Restoring these levels can improve metabolism, sleep, mood, and even mental sharpness.

Did you know?

Balanced hormones help preserve lean muscle, strengthen bones, and reduce fat storage — all essential for long-term heart and metabolic health.

3. BRAIN ENERGY – The Metabolic Control Center

Your brain drives every process in the body, including metabolism. When chronic stress, fatigue, or poor sleep take hold, your brain's energy systems slow — making it harder to stay focused, motivated, or consistent.

That's where Exomind™ comes in. This non-invasive, FDA-cleared technology uses gentle, targeted magnetic stimulation (ExoTMS™) to help the brain reset. It rebalances the regions that control stress, focus, and motivation — helping patients feel calmer, more energized, and mentally clear.

Clinical studies on Exomind™ show:

- 83% of patients felt less stressed and more positive
- 67% reported greater motivation and focus
- 88% experienced better sleep and overall well-being

When your brain is in sync, your body responds — energy improves, movement becomes effortless, and metabolism reignites.

The Novaré Advantage: Integration That Works

Unlike traditional clinics that focus on one problem at a time, Novaré treats your wellness as a connected system. We combine Emsculpt Neo®, Exomind™, and hormone optimization into one cohesive Reignite Program designed to:

- Rebuild muscle strength
- Restore hormonal balance
- Recharge brain energy

We also integrate Emsella® for core stability, chiropractic care for posture, and nutritional guidance to sustain results. This is what we call whole-body renewal — where science, technology, and care work together to restore your natural vitality.

Real Results, Real Renewal

- A 58-year-old teacher who struggled with fatigue and weight gain reported, *"I didn't just get my energy back — I got my motivation back."*
- A 65-year-old man combined EmsculptNeo and hormone therapy, saying, *"For the first time in years, I wake up ready to move."*
- A retired nurse who completed the Exomind program shared, *"My mind feels sharper, my body feels lighter, and I finally feel like myself again."*

Longevity, Reimagined

Longevity isn't just about adding years to your life — it's about adding life to your years.

When you rebuild muscle, balance your hormones, and clear mental fog, you're not just improving metabolism — you're unlocking your body's blueprint for resilience.

The secret to healthy aging isn't slowing down — it's reigniting what's already inside you.

Take the First Step Toward Renewal

This spring, give your body the reset it's been waiting for. Let our team at Novaré® Medical & Wellness design a personalized plan to help you reignite your metabolism, restore your balance, and renew your energy — from your core to your mind.

Call 239-497-9355 to schedule your complimentary consultation at our Fort Myers or Lehigh Acres locations. Follow @novare.wellness for daily tips on strength, brain health, and age-defying wellness.

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Arthritis Sufferers: Learn How Chiropractic Care and Acupuncture Can Help

May is Arthritis Awareness Month — a time to shine a light on one of the most common yet misunderstood conditions affecting millions of Americans. 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 chronic pain and disability. At Estero Family Chiropractic, we believe that awareness is the first step toward better living — and that natural, drug-free therapies can play a powerful role in managing arthritis symptoms.

Understanding Arthritis

Arthritis is not a single disease. It is an umbrella term for over 100 conditions that cause joint pain, stiffness, swelling, and reduced range of motion. The most common forms are osteoarthritis, which results from the gradual breakdown of cartilage, and rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune condition in which the body attacks its own joint tissue. While arthritis is often associated with aging, it can affect people of all ages, including children.

For many, the daily reality of arthritis means waking up stiff, struggling with simple tasks, and constantly managing discomfort. Conventional treatments often involve pain medications that come with unwanted side effects. That is why more patients are turning to holistic, integrative approaches — including chiropractic care and acupuncture — to find lasting relief.

The Role of Chiropractic Care in Arthritis Management
Chiropractic care focuses on the alignment and function of the spine and joints throughout the body.

When joints are misaligned or restricted, surrounding muscles and nerves compensate, often leading to increased pain and inflammation. Regular chiropractic adjustments can help restore proper joint mobility, reduce nerve irritation, and relieve muscle tension — all of which directly benefit arthritis sufferers.

At Estero Family Chiropractic, our approach to arthritis is gentle and individualized. For patients with osteoarthritis, spinal and joint adjustments can improve range of motion, decrease stiffness, and enhance overall function. Chiropractic care also supports better posture and body mechanics, which reduces unnecessary stress on already-compromised joints.

Beyond adjustments, our chiropractors may incorporate soft tissue therapies, therapeutic exercises, and lifestyle guidance to support long-term joint health. This comprehensive approach addresses not just the symptoms but the underlying mechanical contributors to arthritis pain.

Acupuncture: Ancient Healing for Modern Pain

Acupuncture, a cornerstone of Traditional Chinese Medicine, involves the strategic placement of thin, sterile needles at specific points throughout the body. Modern research supports what practitioners have known for centuries — acupuncture stimulates the nervous system, promotes the release of natural pain-relieving endorphins, and reduces inflammation at the cellular level.

For arthritis patients, acupuncture offers several compelling benefits. Studies have shown it can significantly reduce joint pain and improve physical

function in people with both osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. It also helps calm the stress response, which is particularly valuable for autoimmune-related arthritis, where stress can trigger flare-ups.

At Estero Family Chiropractic, acupuncture is seamlessly integrated into our patient care plans. Many patients report not only reduced pain after treatment but also improved sleep, better mood, and a greater sense of overall well-being.

A Whole-Body Approach to a Complex Condition

What makes chiropractic and acupuncture especially powerful for arthritis is their complementary nature. Together, they address structural alignment, nerve function, circulation, and the body's natural healing capacity. Neither approach masks the pain — they work with the body to resolve it.

This Arthritis Awareness Month, we invite you to explore a different path. Whether you are newly diagnosed or have been managing arthritis for years, Estero Family Chiropractic is here to help you move better, feel better, and live fuller.



Dr. Larry Wallen



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

Arthritis 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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FINDING RHYTHM IN A RUSHED WORLD

By Pastor Timothy 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.

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



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