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October 2026

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Family & Cosmetic

DENTISTRY

Established 2009



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+ WHERE NAPLES COMES TO UNWIND +

WORTH CELEBRATING

**ONE SMILE LED TO ANOTHER, AND
NAPLES' FAVORITE WATERFRONT
HANGOUT IS THE PERFECT PLACE
TO SHOW THEM OFF**

CAMILLE KIELTY | WILLIAM CAMPBELL, DMD | ROBIN FORBES

See Page 6



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CONTENTS OCTOBER 2026

6 Worth Celebrating: One Smile Led to Another, and Naples' Favorite Waterfront Hangout is the Perfect Place to Show Them Off

7 Why Flu Prevention Matters More as We Age

8 Breast Cancer and Reconstruction: Understanding Your Surgical Options

9 When Back Surgery Doesn't Work: Understanding Failed Spine Surgery and the Path to Revision

10 Fall Into Your Best Skin: A Physician's Holistic Guide to Seasonal Renewal

11 Focusing on Eye Safety: Contact Lens and Eye Injury Prevention

12 Understanding Joint Injuries and Abnormalities: Why Early Imaging Matters

13 The Life-Saving Power of Regular Skin Cancer Screenings: Why Early Detection Matters

14 A New Name, The Same Hands

15 The Patient Wanted to Play Tennis Again. I Wanted to Know Why He Couldn't.

16 Looking for a Functional Doctor? Read This First

17 Say Goodbye to Heel Pain: How Plantar Fasciitis Embolization Is Changing Lives

18 Stubborn Knee or Joint Pain? Surgery is Not the Only Option

19 Pursuing Passions Can Be an Important Part of Healthy Aging

20 Understanding Bunions: Causes, Treatment, and The Path to Relief

21 Pain, Dryness & Irritation: How Women Are Rejuvenating Their Lives

22 On a GLP-1? Your Gut Needs Attention, Too

23 Aging Well, Worry Less How SafeWell55 Brings Peace of Mind to Life After 55

24 2027 Medicare Annual Enrollment is Here!

25 Helping Loved Ones Hear Better: Practical Ways Families Can Support Better Communication and Stronger Connections

26 Learn How You Can Find Relief from the Debilitating Pain of Peripheral Neuropathy Without Addictive Drugs

27 Understanding Pediatric Ear Infections: Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment Options

28 Fighting Back: How High-Dose Vitamin C Is Supporting Breast Cancer Patients - And What Else Is Worth Knowing

29 For a Common Liver Condition, Lifestyle Beats the Medicine Cabinet, Research Shows

30 Robotic Spine Surgery for Spinal Stenosis: A New Era of Precision and Safety

31 The Power of Two

32 Building Strength Before and After Surgery

33 Learn How to Align Your Financial Health Long Term with Roth Conversions

36 The Dog Gone Truth: Understanding Service and Emotional Support Animals

38 Exomind™ for Adult ADHD: Supporting Focus, Attention and Motivation

40 Hormonal Imbalance and Its Effect on Skin Health

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

44 Coming to a Provider Near You: MSK Ultrasound Imaging is Rising as Unit Costs Are Falling

46 Physical Therapy Month: How Proper Arch Support Enhances Physical Therapy Outcomes

48 Neuroplasticity-Driven Physical Therapy: Advanced Neurology's Approach to Stroke Recovery

50 Kidney Cancer: Are You at Risk?

52 Surviving Grief and Loss

53 When Pain Starts Limiting Your Independence

54 Dine, Discover & Connect: Exploring Senior Living One Community at a Time

56 Join Senior Care Authority for the 2026 Walk to End Alzheimer's

58 Whimsy in Home Care Private Duty: Specialized COPD Care at Home

59 Robotic Muscle Therapy: A New Approach to Lasting Pain Relief

60 What Is Concierge Medicine, and Is It Right for You?

61 Visceral Fat: What You Eat and What Your Doctor Can Do

62 Orchidia Medical Group Introduces EBOO Therapy: The Most Advanced Detox Treatment Is Here

63 Any Lab Test Now! Take Control of Your Health with Any Lab Test Now

64 Getting Back on the Golf Course: Common Causes of Back and Hip Pain

65 Recognizing the Signs: Diagnosing Adult ADD and Exploring Treatment Options

66 How to Enjoy Having Your Home Professionally Cleaned

67 Spiritual Wellness: Better Spiritual Health

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WORTH CELEBRATING

One smile led to another, and Naples' favorite waterfront hangout is the perfect place to show them off

Every great celebration needs a few essentials: a waterfront view, a band warming up as the sun drops over the bay, something delicious rolling out of a food truck window, and a smile you don't think twice about flashing when someone raises a glass your way.

Robin Forbes and her business partner, Camille Kielty, have all four covered. As general managers of Celebration Park, they run the East Naples spot where the sign out front promises it's where Naples comes to unwind. And thanks to Dr. William "Bill" Campbell at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry, they both have more to smile about.

The smile Robin was tired of hiding

Robin came to Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry on a referral from another patient, and she didn't waste a minute. "I made my appointment right away because I was very unhappy with my smile," she says. "I hated my eye teeth and had some discoloration."

If you've ever tilted your head in a photo to hide one tooth, you know that feeling. It shows up everywhere: every picture, toast, and first hello.

The first visit changed that. "I was greeted by an incredible staff," Robin recalls. "Once I met with Dr. Campbell and his assistant James, I was totally delighted with their knowledge and confidence they could give me the smile I wanted."

And now? "My smile is exactly what I had hoped for, and I love to show it off," she says. "Alissa, my hygienist, keeps my smile looking great."

Then it was Camille's turn

A smile you love gets noticed, especially by those who see it often. "I trusted them," Robin says of recommending Dr. Campbell to Camille. "They were knowledgeable, confident and made me feel comfortable."

Camille wanted a better smile without it looking "done." "I wanted my smile to look natural," she says. Dr. Campbell restored it with porcelain crowns, custom restorations that protect a tooth while blending with the teeth around it.



What she remembers most is the conversation. "He explained what he was doing and made me feel comfortable throughout the process," Camille says. "I appreciated that he took the time to make sure I understood everything."

The details you'd never notice

The best cosmetic work is the kind nobody can spot. Dr. Campbell starts with the whole smile, not a single tooth.

"With porcelain crowns, we're matching the shape, size and color to the rest of the smile, so the result looks natural," Dr. Campbell explains. "Whenever a patient is referred to us by someone they trust, it's a responsibility we take seriously," he says. "We want that trust to be well placed."

Is your smile due for a grand reopening?

Do you smile with your lips closed in photos? Do old crowns or fillings look darker than they used to? Do your teeth look longer than they did five years ago? Have you been saying "someday" for more than one season? Any one of those is worth a conversation.

The celebration returns

Speaking of grand reopenings: after a season of renovations, Celebration Park is back, reopening October 1 with a block party for the whole family.

The fun doesn't stop there. The park fills its year-round calendar with family-friendly events, live music on the water, chef-driven food trucks and handcrafted cocktails. Car lovers, take note: Celebration Park is also the newest host of the Cars on 5th celebration, bringing some of Naples' most head-turning cars to the waterfront.

If you spot Robin or Camille, ask about their smiles. They love to show them off.

One smile, then another

One person found a team she trusted, and that trust brought her business partner to the same chair. Camille's advice for anyone nervous about getting started: "I would tell them to talk to Dr. Campbell. He made the process comfortable for me, and I am glad I decided to do it."

CELEBRATION PARK

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Reopening Block Party: October 1

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www.celebrationparknaples.com

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Why Flu Prevention Matters More as We Age

By Felipe Gascon, DO, Primary Care at Millennium Physician Group

Staying protected from the flu is an important part of staying healthy throughout the year. For older adults, influenza can be much more serious. As we age, changes in the immune system can make it harder to fight infections. At the same time, chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) can increase the risk of complications.

That makes flu prevention essential to your overall wellness – especially as another flu season approaches. The good news is that a few simple steps, beginning with an annual flu vaccination, can help reduce the risk of serious illness.

Flu Season Is Coming. How Can You Prepare?

Flu is a highly contagious respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. It spreads easily when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks, and you can also pick up the virus from contaminated surfaces before it reaches your eyes, nose, or mouth.

For the 2026-2027 flu season, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual flu vaccination for everyone 6 months and older. Flu activity generally increases in fall and winter, although the timing and severity can vary each season. For most people, September and October are the ideal months to get vaccinated. The timing is particularly important for older adults because the body needs about two weeks after vaccination to develop its protective immune response.

This doesn't mean the opportunity to protect yourself passes after October. If you haven't received your flu vaccine, it is still worthwhile to get vaccinated later in the season while flu viruses are circulating and the vaccine is still available.

And if you've already had the flu this season, vaccination is still beneficial. Flu vaccines protect against multiple influenza strains, so having one strain does not necessarily provide protection against others that may circulate later.

Why Older Adults Face Greater Flu Risks

Adults 65 and older are more likely than younger adults to experience serious complications from influenza. One reason is immunosenescence, the natural change in immune function that occurs with age. The immune system may not respond to infections as strongly as it once did, making recovery more difficult.



The risk can be even greater for older adults living with certain chronic health conditions. Influenza can worsen existing heart and lung conditions, and may contribute to complications such as pneumonia, hospitalization, and, in several cases, death.

Recent flu seasons demonstrate why prevention matters. During the 2024-2025 season, flu-related hospitalizations and outpatient visits reached their highest levels in 15 years, with more than an estimated 710,000 hospitalizations and more than 45,000 deaths reported, according to the CDC.

Is There a Different Flu Vaccine for Older Adults?

Because the immune response can become less robust with age, the CDC recommends that adults 65 and older receive one of three types of flu vaccines when available:

- A high-dose vaccine
- An adjuvanted vaccine
- A recombinant vaccine

These vaccines are designed to produce a stronger immune response in older adults than a standard-dose flu vaccine. However, if a preferred vaccine isn't readily available, getting a standard flu vaccine is still better than delaying vaccination.

Pneumococcal Protection Matters, Too

Flu isn't the only respiratory illness worth preventing. Pneumococcal infections can cause serious conditions, including pneumonia, meningitis, and bloodstream infections, and pneumonia can also be a complication of influenza.

The CDC recommends pneumococcal vaccination for adults 50 and older, as well as for certain individuals at increased risk. If you're unsure whether you are up to date, your healthcare provider can review your vaccination history and determine which vaccine(s) is appropriate for you. In some cases, flu and pneumococcal vaccines can be given during the same visit.



A Flu Shot is One Part of Staying Well

Vaccination is an important step you can take to reduce your risk of seasonal flu, but it works best alongside everyday precautions:

- Wash hands regularly
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay home when you're ill to limit spread

It's also important to recognize when you may need medical attention. Flu symptoms often begin suddenly and can include:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Body aches
- Headache
- Intense fatigue

Older adults do not always develop a fever, so any sudden change in how you feel during flu season is worth paying attention to.

Get Ready for Flu Season with Millennium Physician Group

You don't have to navigate flu season alone. Millennium Physician Group can help you understand your vaccination options, determine which prevention plan is right for you, and answer questions about protecting yourself and loved ones from influenza and other respiratory illnesses. A conversation with your healthcare provider today can help you take a proactive approach for your health throughout flu season.

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BREAST CANCER AND RECONSTRUCTION:

Understanding Your Surgical Options

A breast cancer diagnosis can bring a long list of questions, and one of the most personal may be, "What will my body look like after treatment?" For many patients, breast reconstruction can be an important part of the breast cancer journey.

At Continuum Surgery Center of Naples, breast cancer surgery and reconstructive procedures are among the surgical services available to patients. The center's breast cancer program includes surgical options such as lumpectomy, mastectomy and reconstructive surgery, with care designed around each patient's individual diagnosis and treatment plan.

Understanding Breast Cancer Surgery

Breast cancer surgery is not the same for every patient. Depending on the type, size and location of the cancer, as well as other individual factors, surgery may involve removing the tumor while preserving the breast, known as a lumpectomy, or removing the breast tissue through a mastectomy.



Elizabeth Arguelles, MD, FACS, is a board-certified breast surgeon and surgical breast oncologist listed among Continuum's breast cancer specialists. Her training includes some oncoplastic surgery, an approach that combines cancer surgery with plastic surgery techniques to help preserve the natural shape of the breast when appropriate. She also holds Hidden Scar Certification, which focuses on strategically placing incisions to minimize visible scarring while maintaining appropriate cancer treatment.

For some patients, breast reconstruction may be performed at the same time as mastectomy. This is called immediate reconstruction. Others may choose delayed reconstruction, which is performed after cancer treatment or at a later time. The appropriate approach depends on factors such as the type of cancer surgery, radiation or chemotherapy needs, overall health and the patient's personal preferences.

What Is Breast Reconstruction?

Breast reconstruction is surgery designed to restore the shape and appearance of the breast after breast cancer surgery. Reconstruction may use a breast implant, the patient's own tissue, or a combination of techniques.

There is no single reconstruction method that is right for everyone. A plastic and reconstructive surgeon can discuss the available options and explain how factors such as body type, previous surgeries, planned cancer treatments and personal goals may influence the surgical plan.



Continuum's surgical team includes several plastic and reconstructive surgeons, including Andrew M. Bonett, MD, Aaron M. Jacobs, MD, and Mark Walsh, MD, who collectively provide a broad range of reconstructive, cosmetic, breast, and body procedures.

In some cases, breast-conserving surgery may also incorporate oncoplastic techniques. These procedures combine removal of the cancer with reshaping of the remaining breast tissue. The goal is to address the cancer while considering breast shape and symmetry.

A Team Approach to Breast Cancer Care

Breast cancer treatment often involves more than one type of specialist. Depending on the diagnosis, treatment may include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy or targeted therapy. Continuum describes its breast cancer services as including multidisciplinary treatment planning, with surgeons, oncologists and other healthcare professionals working together to develop an individualized plan.

The surgical environment is another consideration. Continuum Surgery Center of Naples is a 10,000-square-foot multispecialty ambulatory surgery center with four operating rooms, one procedure room and 11 pre-operative and recovery bays. The center emphasizes coordinated care, efficiency and personalized attention throughout the surgical experience.

For appropriate procedures, an ambulatory surgery setting may allow patients to complete their procedure and recovery without an overnight hospital stay. Whether breast cancer or reconstruction surgery is appropriate for an outpatient setting is determined by the surgeon based on the patient's procedure and individual medical needs.

Start the Conversation Early

If you have been diagnosed with breast cancer or are considering a mastectomy, ask your breast surgeon about reconstruction as early as possible. Meeting with a reconstructive surgeon before surgery can help you understand your options and determine whether immediate or delayed reconstruction may be appropriate.

Every breast cancer diagnosis is different. Your surgical team can explain the benefits, limitations, risks and expected recovery associated with your specific treatment plan.

Continuum Surgery Center of Naples is currently accepting patients for its surgical services and has contracted with several commercial insurance plans:

NOW ACCEPTING:	COMING SOON:
Florida Blue	Aetna
Medicare	OWCP Expected Mid-October
Florida Medicaid	Humana Medicaid Effective 11/1
TRICARE	Cigna Effective 12/1
Workers' Comp	EXPECTED 12/1/2026-2/1/2027
Meritain (CHP)	- MultiPlan
Allegiance (CHP)	- HealthSpring
	- Humana Medicare
	- Claritev
	- First Health

Patients should verify coverage with their individual insurance provider and with Continuum Surgery Center before scheduling surgery, as coverage can vary by plan and procedure.

For more information about breast cancer surgery, reconstruction or other surgical services, contact Continuum Surgery Center of Naples at 239-504-0004.

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Continuum Surgery Center of Naples seeks talented, compassionate healthcare professionals for our growing team. Enjoy a dynamic environment, competitive pay, and the chance to transform patient care in Southwest Florida. We also welcome surgeons to credential with us and become shareholders. Join our surgical excellence community—contact us today!

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When Back Surgery Doesn't Work:

Understanding Failed Spine Surgery and the Path to Revision



For many patients, spine surgery is supposed to end a long stretch of pain. When symptoms continue or come back after an operation, it can feel devastating. Doctors often call this "failed back surgery syndrome." It does not have to mean you're out of options. At Biscup Spine & Performance Institute, patients who were told nothing more could be done often find a new path forward.

Why Failed Spine Surgery Happens

Spine surgery can fall short for many reasons. Sometimes the original diagnosis missed the true source of pain. Other times the procedure didn't fully fix the problem, for example by not relieving all the pressure on a pinched nerve. Screws and rods can loosen or shift. A fusion can fail to heal, which is called pseudarthrosis. Scar tissue can also form around nerve roots. Smoking, diabetes and weak bones can slow healing too.

Why Symptoms Continue After the Initial Procedure

Ongoing pain doesn't always mean the surgery was done poorly. A nerve that was pinched for a long time may be damaged in ways surgery can't fully undo. Fusing one section of the spine can put extra

stress on the sections above and below it, a problem called adjacent segment disease. A disc can herniate again, or the spinal canal can narrow (new stenosis) over time. Finding the true cause is the key to the right treatment.

Why Revision Surgery Is More Complex

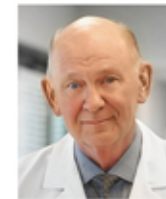
A second operation is rarely as simple as the first. The surgeon has to work through scar tissue, which hides normal anatomy and raises the risk of nerve injury or spinal fluid leaks. Existing screws, rods or cages may need to be removed or replaced. The bone may be weaker, and the spine's overall alignment may need correcting. Revision surgery takes careful planning and deep experience in reconstructive techniques.

Is Another Operation Always Necessary?

Not every patient with ongoing pain needs another surgery. A thorough evaluation may show that targeted physical therapy, nerve blocks, changes to medication or other non-surgical care can bring real relief. At Biscup Spine, MRI scans, nerve blocks and comprehensive blood work help pinpoint where the pain is really coming from before any treatment is recommended. Surgery is advised only when it offers a clear path to improvement.

Why a Second Opinion Is Important

If your first surgery didn't give you the results you hoped for, getting a second opinion is one of the most valuable steps you can take. Look for a surgeon who specializes in complex and revision cases. A fresh set of eyes may catch a problem that was missed, confirm whether revision surgery is truly needed, or suggest a less invasive approach.



ABOUT DR. BISCUP

Dr. Robert S. Biscup, M.S., D.O., F.A.O.A.O., is a board-certified, fellowship-trained orthopaedic surgeon with over 35 years of experience.

Dr Biscup has earned international recognition for his developments in minimally invasive spine surgery, major reconstructive, and failed spine surgery. Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Biscup has remained at the forefront of innovation, continually integrating advanced surgical techniques with the latest developments in regenerative medicine and integrative therapies to help patients achieve optimal outcomes.

Dr. Biscup's approach to whole body wellness includes a focus on regenerative medicine, such as PRP and Exosome therapies, along with integrative medicine including hyperbaric oxygen, IV nutrient, and advanced light therapies to support the body's natural healing processes, reduce inflammation, optimize recovery, and promote long-term health and function.

Dr. Biscup's commitment to clinical excellence, innovation, and individualized treatment has established Biscup Spine & Performance as a premier concierge practice dedicated to restoring function, improving quality of life, and helping patients achieve their highest level of health and performance.



Biscup

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FALL INTO YOUR BEST SKIN: A Physician's Holistic Guide to Seasonal Renewal

By Dr. Aldene McKenzie (D.O.), Board-Certified Family Medicine Physician and Medical Director of Kenzi MedSpa

As the Naples heat gives way to cooler mornings, many of us feel a natural pull toward renewal. When it comes to skin health, that instinct is well founded. Autumn is one of the most strategic times of year to care for your skin, and true renewal happens on two levels: what we do in the treatment room and how we care for ourselves every day.

The Science of Firmness

Collagen is the structural protein that gives skin its strength and resilience. Beginning in our mid twenties, the body produces roughly one percent less collagen each year, and the decline accelerates for women around menopause. Here in Southwest Florida, sun exposure speeds the process further, breaking down existing collagen and leaving fine lines, uneven tone, and a loss of definition along the jawline, neck, and body.

The encouraging news is that collagen can be reawakened. When deeper layers of skin receive controlled energy, the body responds with a natural repair process, producing new collagen and elastin over the following weeks and months. Because this unfolds gradually, treatments started in early fall typically peak right around the holidays, while lower UV intensity makes recovery easier.

Understanding Your Options

Today's aesthetic medicine offers far more than creams or surgery.

Surface renewal treatments such as IPL and fractional radiofrequency address sun damage, pigmentation, and texture.

Radiofrequency microneedling remodels deeper tissue to improve firmness, scarring, and laxity.

Subdermal radiofrequency delivers heat directly beneath the skin to tighten tissue and reduce localized fat, offering a meaningful middle ground between noninvasive treatments and surgery.



Before and 30 days after Quantum RF. Individual results vary.

Biostimulators such as Sculptra and Radiesse prompt the body to build its own collagen over time.

The most natural results often come from combining approaches thoughtfully, guided by your goals and lifestyle.

The best way to know which approach is right for you is a consultation with a physician who can evaluate your skin in person and design a plan around your goals.

Nourishing Your Skin From Within

Healthy skin begins long before any treatment. Your diet supplies the raw materials for collagen.

Protein provides the amino acids collagen is built from. Include fish, poultry, eggs, Greek yogurt, or beans at every meal.

Vitamin C is essential for stable collagen formation. Enjoy citrus, bell peppers, berries, and broccoli.

Zinc and copper support tissue repair and are found in shellfish, pumpkin seeds, and cashews. Stone crab season offers a delicious local source.

Omega-3 fatty acids from salmon, walnuts, and flaxseed strengthen the skin barrier and calm inflammation.

Limit sugar and alcohol. Excess sugar stiffens collagen through a process called glycation, and alcohol dehydrates skin and disrupts sleep.

Collagen supplements may modestly improve hydration and elasticity, but they complement a balanced diet rather than replace it.

Beyond the Plate

Protect your sleep, since seven to nine hours supports tissue repair and hormone balance. Wear broad spectrum SPF 30 or higher daily, even in October. Stay active to boost circulation, manage stress to keep cortisol in check, and keep up with routine checkups. Your skin often reflects what is happening throughout the body.

A Season for You

Fall invites us to slow down and reset. Caring for yourself inside and out allows results to unfold naturally, just in time for the moments that matter most. Ready to begin? Schedule your consultation by calling or texting 239-544-5369.

Join Us: Kenzi MedSpa Fall Open House

Kenzi MedSpa invites readers to its Fall Open House on Saturday, October 17, 2026, featuring the launch of Quantum RF, a minimally invasive treatment for tightening and contouring. Guests can also explore Morpheus8, Venus Bliss MAX, Venus Versa, Venus Viva, PLEXR, and a full menu of injectables, with personalized consultations, live demonstrations, and a prize drawing between 2:00 and 3:00 PM, with a grand prize of \$1,000 toward Quantum RF and additional prizes including a Morpheus8 treatment, an IPL photofacial, and Dysport. Guests must be present to win.

Time: 12:00 to 4:00 PM

Location: 900 6th Ave S, Suite 303, Naples, FL

RSVP: Call or text 239-544-5369, or visit kenzispaspa.com

Reader Exclusive: Mention this article when you call or text to receive 25 percent off your treatment through October 30, 2026.

Individual results vary. A consultation is required to determine candidacy for any treatment.

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About the Author

Dr. Aldene McKenzie (D.O.) is a board-certified family medicine physician and the owner and Medical Director of Kenzi MedSpa, a physician-owned aesthetic practice serving Naples for over a decade. She also hosts the podcast Beauty Rx with Dr. Kenzi. To schedule your personal consultation, call or text 239-544-5369 or visit kenzispaspa.com.



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FOCUSING ON EYE SAFETY: CONTACT LENS AND EYE INJURY PREVENTION MONTH

As we observe Contact Lens and Eye Injury Prevention Month, it's crucial to shine a spotlight on the importance of maintaining optimal eye health and safety. Our eyes are irreplaceable organs that deserve utmost care and attention. This month-long awareness campaign serves as a reminder to both contact lens wearers and the general public about the significance of proper eye care practices and injury prevention measures.

Contact lenses have revolutionized vision correction for millions of people worldwide. However, improper use and care of these tiny optical devices can lead to serious eye problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 45 million people in the United States wear contact lenses. While these lenses provide excellent vision correction, they also come with responsibilities.

One of the primary focuses of this awareness month is educating contact lens wearers about best practices. Proper hygiene is paramount when handling contact lenses. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before touching your lenses or your eyes. This simple step can significantly reduce the risk of introducing harmful bacteria into your eyes.

It's also essential to follow the recommended wear schedule for your lenses. Overwearing contact lenses, especially sleeping in them when not approved by your eye care professional, can increase the risk of eye infections and corneal ulcers. Always remove your lenses before sleeping, swimming, or exposing your eyes to water, as these activities can introduce harmful microorganisms to your eyes.

Regular cleaning and disinfection of contact lenses are crucial. Use only the solutions recommended by your eye care professional, and never reuse or top off old solution. Replace your lens case every three months to prevent bacterial buildup. These habits can go a long way in preventing eye infections and ensuring the longevity of your lenses.

Beyond contact lens care, this month also emphasizes the importance of preventing eye injuries in various settings. Whether at work, home, or during sports activities, eye protection should always be a priority. According to the American Optometric Association, about 90% of eye injuries are preventable with proper safety eyewear.

In the workplace, especially in industries involving construction, manufacturing, or laboratory work, wearing appropriate safety goggles or face shields is crucial. At home, be cautious when using cleaning products, performing DIY projects, or working in the yard. Simple precautions like wearing safety glasses can prevent devastating eye injuries.

Sports enthusiasts should also take note. Activities like basketball, baseball, and racquet sports pose significant risks to the eyes. Wearing sports goggles or protective eyewear can prevent traumatic eye injuries and potential vision loss.

This awareness month also serves as a reminder for everyone, regardless of whether they wear contact lenses, to schedule regular comprehensive eye exams. These check-ups can detect early signs of eye diseases and ensure your vision prescription is up to date.

As we navigate through Contact Lens and Eye Injury Prevention Month, let's commit to making eye safety a year-round priority. By adopting proper contact lens care habits, using appropriate eye protection, and staying vigilant about potential eye hazards, we can significantly reduce the risk of eye injuries and maintain healthy vision for years to come.

Remember, your eyes are windows to the world – treat them with the care and respect they deserve. Whether you're a contact lens wearer or not, take this month as an opportunity to reassess your eye care routine and make any necessary improvements. Your future self will thank you for the gift of clear, healthy vision.



JENNA GETMAN, O.D.
Optometric Physician

Dr. Jenna Getman earned her Doctor of Optometry degree from the Southern College of Optometry in Memphis, Tennessee, before completing a residency in Ocular Disease at the Eagle Square Veterans Affairs Eye Clinic in Rhode Island. During her residency, she gained extensive experience managing a wide range of complex eye conditions, building a strong foundation in medical optometry.

Originally from Naples, Florida, Dr. Getman is board-certified and has been practicing since 2024. She is passionate about providing personalized, compassionate care to every patient she meets and is dedicated to helping people achieve their best possible vision. Her inspiration to become an optometrist stemmed from a deep appreciation for how vision impacts every aspect of life—from learning and working to connecting with others. For Dr. Getman, optometry is a meaningful way to make a lasting difference in her patients' lives.

Beyond the clinic, Dr. Getman finds fulfillment in volunteer work, having provided eye care to communities in Belize and to athletes at the Tennessee Special Olympics.

Outside of work, she enjoys live music and musicals with her husband and loves spending quality time with her family, friends, and her cat, Lila.



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Understanding Joint Injuries and Abnormalities: WHY EARLY IMAGING MATTERS

Joint pain is one of the most common reasons people seek medical care, and for good reason. The back and knees bear the brunt of daily wear, athletic activity, and the natural aging process, making them especially prone to injury and degeneration. At Encore Imaging, we see firsthand how timely, accurate diagnostic imaging can make the difference between a quick recovery and a prolonged struggle with chronic pain. Understanding the most common joint conditions and how imaging helps identify them, can empower patients to seek care sooner and make informed treatment decisions.

THE BACK:

A Complex Structure Under Constant Stress

The spine is a remarkable system of vertebrae, discs, nerves, and connective tissue that supports nearly every movement we make. Unfortunately, this complexity also makes it vulnerable to a wide range of problems. Herniated or bulging discs occur when the soft cushioning between vertebrae shifts or ruptures, often pressing on nearby nerves and causing pain that radiates into the legs. Degenerative disc disease, a natural consequence of aging, gradually wears down these discs, reducing flexibility and increasing discomfort. Spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal canal, can compress the spinal cord or nerve roots, leading to numbness, weakness, or pain during standing or walking.

Compression fractures, often linked to osteoporosis, and spondylolisthesis, where one vertebra slips forward over another, are additional conditions that frequently go undiagnosed without proper imaging. Because back pain can stem from so many different sources, guesswork is rarely sufficient. Advanced imaging is often essential to pinpoint the exact cause.

THE KNEE:

A Hinge Under Heavy Load

The knee joint absorbs enormous force with every step, jump, and pivot, which explains why it's among the most frequently injured joints in the body. Ligament injuries, particularly to the anterior



cruciate ligament (ACL) and medial collateral ligament (MCL), are common among athletes and active individuals, often resulting from sudden twists or direct impacts. Meniscus tears, involving the cartilage that cushions the knee, can occur from acute trauma or gradual degeneration over time.

Osteoarthritis remains one of the leading causes of chronic knee pain, particularly among older adults, as cartilage breaks down and bones begin to rub against one another. Patellar tracking disorders, tendonitis, and bursitis round out the list of conditions that can significantly limit mobility and quality of life if left untreated.

Why Imaging Is the Key to Accurate Diagnosis

Physical exams and patient-reported symptoms provide valuable starting points, but they rarely tell the whole story. X-rays remain excellent for identifying fractures, bone spurs, and joint space narrowing associated with arthritis. MRI scans offer a more detailed view of soft tissues, making them indispensable for diagnosing ligament tears, disc herniations, and cartilage damage.

At Encore Imaging, our state-of-the-art equipment and experienced radiologists work closely with referring physicians to ensure every scan delivers the clearest possible picture. Accurate imaging doesn't just confirm a diagnosis, it shapes the entire treatment plan, whether that means physical therapy, medication, minimally invasive procedures, or surgery.

Don't Wait to Get Answers

Joint pain that persists for more than a few weeks, worsens with activity, or is accompanied by swelling, numbness, or instability warrants professional evaluation. Early imaging can catch problems before they progress, often opening the door to less invasive and more effective treatment options.

If you're experiencing back or knee pain, don't leave your diagnosis to guesswork. Contact Encore Imaging today to schedule a scan and take the first step toward understanding and resolving the source of your discomfort.

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THE LIFE-SAVING POWER OF REGULAR SKIN CANCER SCREENINGS: WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

In a world where health consciousness is on the rise, one critical aspect of preventive care often goes overlooked: regular skin cancer screenings. With skin cancer being one of the most common types of cancer worldwide, the importance of early detection through routine check-ups cannot be overstated. This article delves into why staying vigilant about your skin health, particularly in checking for melanomas, could be a life-saving decision.

Understanding Skin Cancer and Melanoma

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells grow abnormally, often due to damage from UV radiation. While there are several types of skin cancer, melanoma is the most dangerous. Melanoma develops in the melanocytes, the cells responsible for producing skin pigment. Although it's less common than other skin cancers, melanoma is far more likely to spread to other parts of the body if not caught early.

The Power of Early Detection

The key to successfully treating skin cancer, especially melanoma, lies in early detection. When caught in its initial stages, the five-year survival rate for melanoma is an impressive 99%. However, this rate drops dramatically to 27% for melanomas that have spread to distant parts of the body. These statistics underscore the critical importance of regular skin checks and professional screenings.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

While professional screenings are crucial, being aware of your own skin and any changes is equally important. The "ABCDE" rule is a helpful guide for identifying potential melanomas:

Asymmetry: One half of the mole doesn't match the other half.

Border: The edges are irregular, ragged, or blurred.

Color: The color is not uniform and may include shades of brown, black, or tan.

Diameter: Melanomas are usually larger than 6mm (about the size of a pencil eraser).

Evolving: The mole changes in size, shape, or color over time.

Any mole or skin growth exhibiting these characteristics warrants immediate medical attention.

The Screening Process

A professional skin cancer screening is a quick, painless procedure that can be performed by a dermatologist or trained healthcare provider. During the screening, the doctor will thoroughly examine your skin, paying close attention to areas frequently exposed to the sun. They may use a dermatoscope, a special magnifying tool, to get a closer look at suspicious spots.

Who Should Get Screened and How Often?

While everyone should be mindful of their skin health, certain factors increase the risk of skin cancer:

- Fair skin
- History of sunburns or excessive sun exposure
- Multiple or atypical moles
- Family history of skin cancer
- Weakened immune system

For those at average risk, an annual skin check is recommended. However, individuals with higher risk factors may need more frequent screenings. It's best to consult with a healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate screening schedule for your specific situation.

Beyond Professional Screenings: The Importance of Self-Checks

In between professional screenings, monthly self-examinations are crucial. These self-checks allow you to become familiar with your skin's normal appearance and help you spot any changes quickly. Use a full-length mirror and a hand mirror to examine your entire body, including hard-to-see areas like your back, scalp, and between your toes.

Prevention: Your First Line of Defense

While regular screenings are vital, prevention remains the best strategy against skin cancer. Protect your skin by:

- Applying broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 daily
- Wearing protective clothing, including wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses
- Seeking shade, especially during peak sun hours (10 am to 4 pm)
- Avoiding tanning beds and sun lamps

The Broader Impact of Regular Screenings

Regular skin cancer screenings don't just benefit individuals; they have a broader societal impact. Early detection reduces the overall burden on healthcare systems by catching cancers when they're most treatable. It also helps raise awareness about skin cancer, encouraging others to prioritize their skin health.

Conclusion: A Small Step for Significant Peace of Mind

In the grand scheme of health maintenance, skin cancer screenings are a relatively small investment of time that can yield enormous benefits. By making these screenings a regular part of your health routine, you're taking a proactive step in protecting yourself against one of the most prevalent forms of cancer. Remember, your skin is your body's largest organ and its first line of defense against the environment. Treating it with the care and attention it deserves isn't just about aesthetics—it's about preserving your overall health and potentially saving your life.

Don't wait for a problem to arise. Schedule a skin cancer screening today and empower yourself with the knowledge and vigilance needed to keep your skin healthy for years to come. Your future self will thank you for this simple yet powerful act of self-care.



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A NEW NAME, THE SAME HANDS:

Introducing Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics and Our New Concierge Membership

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

For years, our patients have trusted us with their knees, hips, shoulders and spines. They've trusted us to help them stay on the golf course, on the tennis court, on the boat, and on their feet through every season of life. Today, we're proud to announce a new chapter: our practice is now Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics. Along with the new name comes a new way to receive care: Wimmer Concierge Orthopedics, a membership program built for patients who want more access, more time and a proactive plan to keep doing what they love.

Why the Change?

The new name reflects what our practice has become. We focus on non-surgical, regenerative orthopedic care, using treatments designed to support the body's own healing. Those include PRP, Wharton's Jelly Stem Cells, Mesenchymal Stem Cells, Exosomes, Peptide Therapy, Focused Shockwave Therapy, Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression and Precise Image-Guided Injections.

Our philosophy hasn't changed. Derek Wimmer, PA, built this practice on three principles: see clearly, explain honestly and treat precisely. As Derek puts it, "I built this practice so patients aren't shuffled through a system. You get my time, my hands, and a plan made specifically for the life you want to keep living." The rebrand simply makes that promise clearer.

What Is Concierge Orthopedics?

Most people know how traditional orthopedic care works. You wait weeks for an appointment, spend a few minutes with a provider, and leave with a plan that reacts to pain after it has already taken over your life. Concierge orthopedics turns that around.

For an annual membership, you get direct, ongoing access to your provider and a care plan designed to keep you ahead of problems. We don't wait for them to get worse. Here's what that means for you.

Direct access to Derek, 24/7. Every member gets Derek's private phone line. If you tweak your back on the course, feel a new twinge in your knee or have a question about your recovery, you don't have to go through a call center or wait for a callback. You reach the person who knows your case.

Unlimited office visits. There's no need to decide whether something is "worth an appointment." If something doesn't feel right, come in. Catching small issues early is one of the best ways to keep them from becoming big ones.

Unhurried visits. Concierge visits are longer by design. You can talk through several concerns in one visit, ask every question on your list, and leave understanding your plan, not just holding a prescription.

In-office imaging included. Imaging is part of your membership, so your care is guided by what we can actually see. Decisions get made faster and with more precision.

Priority scheduling. Members come first. When you need to be seen, you'll be seen quickly.

A personalized maintenance plan. Your membership is built around your goals, whether that's playing 18 holes three times a week, keeping up with your grandkids or staying active through retirement. We map out regenerative treatments and check-ins throughout the year to help keep your joints and tissues working for you.

Four Membership Levels to Fit Your Goals

Wimmer Concierge Orthopedics has four annual tiers, so you can choose the level of care that matches your needs:

- **Access:** Derek's private 24/7 line, unlimited office visits and in-office imaging.
- **Foundation:** Everything in Access, plus a year of scheduled treatments, including shockwave or spinal decompression sessions, PRP, quarterly Wharton's Jelly Stem Cells, Mesenchymal Stem Cells and monthly B12.
- **Restore:** A deeper regenerative program with additional PRP, a full-dose Wharton's Jelly protocol, quarterly IV vitamin therapy and monthly vitamin D3.
- **Pinnacle:** Our most comprehensive level, with the highest treatment frequency, IV exosome therapy, peptide joint injections and maximum-frequency wellness support.

Because concierge care depends on time and attention, **membership is intentionally limited.**

Updated Annual Maintenance Plans

We've also redesigned our Annual Maintenance Treatment Plans. Starting at \$125 per month, they offer bundled treatments at a predictable monthly cost for patients who want ongoing care without full concierge access. They're a great option for many patients, and they can be a first step toward membership later.

Who Is Concierge Care For?

Our concierge program is a natural fit for:

- Active retirees who want to stay on the course, the court or the water
- Busy executives and professionals who can't afford long waits or lost time
- Seasonal residents who want reliable, continuous care while in Southwest Florida
- Recreational and competitive athletes focused on performance and recovery
- Patients managing chronic joint or back pain who want a proactive, long-term plan

What Stays the Same

If you're a current patient, don't worry. There's no obligation to join, and your care continues exactly as it always has. You'll find the same provider, the same office at 3380 Woods Edge Circle in Bonita Springs, and the same commitment to honest, personal care.

Take the Next Step

If you've ever wished your orthopedic care felt more like a partnership and less like a transaction, concierge membership may be the right fit. Call us at 239-829-4300 or visit wimmerorthopedics.com to learn more about Wimmer Concierge Orthopedics and schedule a conversation about your goals.

Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics: proactive care, so you can keep doing what you love.



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The Patient Wanted to Play Tennis Again. I Wanted to Know Why He Couldn't.

By Dr. Lindita Hobdari

"My tennis game is becoming a challenge. I get short of breath," a patient told me. Someone had told him it was just part of getting older. But he knew something had changed, and I believed him. We looked into it. A cardiac evaluation found serious coronary disease, and he ultimately needed four stents.

I still think about that visit. I have been a physician for more than 27 years, and I have cared for Naples families for nearly two decades. When a patient tells me something has changed, I pay attention. He wanted to play tennis again. That was his goal. My responsibility was to understand why he could not. I listen to the patient's goal first, and then I look at the whole person. Sometimes the answer is straightforward. Sometimes, as it was for him, the story takes us somewhere much more serious.

When a patient asks me about weight loss

Patients ask me about weight loss injections all the time, and I understand why. GLP-1 medicines can be very helpful for the right person. What concerns me is how easy it is to buy into a promise before anyone has really looked at your health. The FDA has warned about misleading promotion of some unapproved products and dosing errors with compounded semaglutide. A medicine that affects your body deserves more attention than an online checkout.

When we sit down together, I want to know your medical history, the medicines you take and what you have tried before. Some GLP-1 products should not be used if you or a family member has had medullary thyroid cancer, or if you have MEN2. We also discuss problems to watch for, including pancreatitis and gallbladder symptoms. Then we make a plan for dosing, nutrition, maintaining muscle and checking in as treatment goes on.

I start by asking, "What are you hoping to change?" For one person it is keeping up with grandchildren; for another it is getting blood sugar under control or feeling strong again. Then I look at what may be getting in the way. If we decide a GLP-1 medicine is appropriate, I want to know how you are tolerating it, whether you are eating enough protein and how we are protecting your muscle. That follow-up is part of the treatment.



A conversation about testosterone

The same is true of testosterone. Patients bring me products a friend recommended or hormones they started elsewhere, sometimes without anyone checking how they are responding. I ask them to show me everything they take. There is no judgment; I want to know what is happening in their bodies. In men, testosterone can raise the red blood cell count, and breast symptoms may call for an estradiol assessment. A blood donation or anastrozole is not an automatic answer. In women, too much testosterone can cause acne, facial hair, scalp hair loss or even a deeper voice. We look at the dose, symptoms and labs together. I do not want a patient left guessing whether a treatment is helping or causing harm.

When I refer you to a specialist

I built Hobdari Family Health around that kind of attention. We care for children, adults and older family members, and our physicians and advanced practice providers share my belief that you must listen before you decide what to do. We manage chronic conditions and preventive care and offer on-site diagnostic and laboratory services. When I refer someone to a cardiologist or surgeon, I do not consider my job finished. I want to know what the specialist found, make sure the patient understands the next step and continue caring for the rest of their health. That is the standard I ask of our whole team.

Why I brought functional medicine into the picture

As a family physician, I also hear patients say, "My tests are normal, but I do not feel like myself." I do not dismiss that. I want to understand their sleep, nutrition, stress, hormones and everything else that might be affecting how they feel. That is why I built Naples Functional Medicine Healing. It gives us room to explore those questions in depth, while Hobdari Family Health continues to be the patient's medical home. For me, primary care and functional medicine belong in the same conversation.

Depending on the person, that care may include medically supervised weight loss, hormone replacement therapy, acupuncture, selected peptide therapies, hyperbaric oxygen therapy in our FDA-cleared chamber, or wellness infusions such as Myers' cocktail, NAD⁺ and glutathione. I do not expect every patient to need these services. We talk through which options, if any, fit your goals and health history.

"Holistic Healing, Not Hype" grew out of the conversations I have with patients every day. I am interested in new approaches, but I always ask: What does the research actually show? Is this safe for this particular patient? Who is following the results? If you have heard about a treatment and want to discuss it, bring it to me. I would much rather talk it through with you than have you try it alone.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, so let me ask you what I ask my patients: When was your last mammogram? If you've been putting it off, tell me. Maybe life got busy, or maybe you're worried about what it might find. We can talk through that together. I also want to know if you've noticed a change in your breasts or if breast cancer runs in your family. We'll decide what screening makes sense for you, and if anything needs a closer look, I'll help you with the next step.

Come talk with us

Hobdari Family Health has offices in Naples and Bonita Springs. We welcome eligible Lee Health employees and their families through the Best Care Alliance network. When our participation with Blue Cross and Blue Shield ended this past February, I didn't want patients who had trusted us for years to feel they had to leave, so we offered \$100 self-pay visit option for anyone who wanted to continue their care with us. We also offer self-pay, fee-for-service visits for uninsured patients and same-day appointments when openings are available. Our team can help you confirm plan benefits, provider participation or self-pay pricing when you schedule. You can come to us with a symptom that has been brushed aside, a treatment you have questions about or simply the feeling that something is off. Tell me what you want to be able to do again. We will listen, look carefully and make a plan together. And when the next step involves a specialist or a new treatment, we will stay part of the conversation.

Dr. Lindita Hobdari is a family physician and founder of Hobdari Family Health and Naples Functional Medicine Healing. Hobdari Family Health serves patients in Naples and Bonita Springs.

Learn more at hobdarihealth.com and naplesfunctionalhealing.com.



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LOOKING FOR A FUNCTIONAL DOCTOR? READ THIS FIRST

By Svetlana Kogan, MD, FMCP-M

There was a time when choosing a doctor was relatively simple. You asked your neighbor. You called the office. You made an appointment.

Today, you open Google and encounter an impressive collection of functional doctors, holistic doctors, wellness experts, longevity specialists, health coaches, hormone gurus and someone somewhere who can diagnose your thyroid by looking at your aura. Confusing!

So, what exactly is Functional Medicine—and how do you know you're getting the real thing? Functional Medicine emerged more than 30 years ago from a beautifully simple idea: instead of asking only, "What medication treats this disease?" perhaps we should also ask, "Why did this person develop the problem in the first place?"

The Institute for Functional Medicine (IFM), founded in 1991 became a mothership which helped develop a system-oriented, patient-centered approach to chronic illness.

In plain English? We look at the whole person.

Your blood pressure matters. But so do your sleep, nutrition, stress, hormones, medications, exercise, gut health, family history, environment and that mysterious third glass of wine you forgot to mention on your intake form.

Functional Medicine doesn't reject conventional medicine. Quite the opposite. At its best, it adds another layer to it. And this is precisely why I believe a physician trained in both worlds can make an excellent primary care doctor.

Your PCP is supposed to see the big picture. She needs to recognize when fatigue might simply require better sleep—and when it could represent anemia, thyroid disease, sleep apnea, medication side effects, depression or something considerably less charming.

She should be comfortable discussing nutrition and exercise while also knowing when you need a statin, an antibiotic, an MRI or a cardiologist.

Functional Medicine asks 'why?'. Conventional medicine is very good at asking 'what is dangerous right now?'

I want my doctor to ask both.

But There's a Catch:

The word "functional" is not a medical degree.

It has become enormously popular, and popularity has an unfortunate side effect: everyone wants to join the party.

A practitioner may have studied Functional Medicine without being certified in it. And a person practicing Functional Medicine may be a nurse practitioner, physician assistant, chiropractor, or a nutritionist.

These professions can all have legitimate and valuable roles in healthcare. But they are not interchangeable.

If you are like me and specifically want a Functional Medicine physician as your primary care doctor, make sure the doc is actually an MD or DO.

Yes, I realize this sounds absurdly obvious, and yet here I am writing about it, because truly people have no idea.

Fortunately, checking credentials is much easier than investigating your latest romantic prospect.

Start with the Institute for Functional Medicine website IFM.org and select 'Find a Practitioner'.

Read the practitioner's profile carefully, to make sure they are an MD or a DO. In addition, look for the FMCP-M certification credential on the right hand side, rather than assuming that appearing in the directory means the practitioner is certified.

Obtaining an FMCP-M Certification requires rigorous education and passing a comprehensive examination. It represents substantially more than attending a weekend seminar and returning Monday morning with a new set of letters after your name. I would also recommend verifying a physician's license independently through your state's

medical licensing board. You can usually do this online in less time than it takes to decide what to watch on Netflix.

Another very important thing to consider: is the Functional doctor only consulting on a visit-by-visit basis, or can they be your Primary Care doctor?

For me the Functional MD who can be your PCP is the best and most powerful combination. Why? Because you get someone trained to diagnose disease, prescribe medications, interpret imaging, recognize emergencies and coordinate specialty care—but who is also willing to spend time thinking about nutrition, metabolic health, sleep, stress, exercise, hormones, environmental exposures and prevention. In other words, the goal isn't alternative medicine. It is better-integrated medicine.

I practiced holistic medicine for decades before discovering IFM, and what attracted me wasn't the promise of replacing conventional medicine. It was the opportunity to expand it—to combine everything I had learned as an internist with a deeper exploration of why my patient became ill and what we might do to improve health before another diagnosis appears on the problem list.

Perhaps the best doctor isn't the one carrying the largest prescription pad—or the largest suitcase of supplements.

Perhaps it's the one who knows when you need either one.

And, more importantly, when you need neither.



Svetlana Kogan, MD, FMCP-M

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

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Say Goodbye to Heel Pain:

How Plantar Fasciitis Embolization Is Changing Lives

By Russell Becker, DO

Chronic heel pain can be relentless. For millions of Americans living with plantar fasciitis, every morning begins the same way, that sharp, stabbing sensation the moment their foot hits the floor. Stretching, orthotics, cortisone injections, and months of physical therapy may offer some relief, but for many patients, the pain keeps coming back. At the Vascular Center of Naples, a minimally invasive procedure called plantar fasciitis embolization is offering a breakthrough solution for patients who have run out of options, and run out of patience.

What Is Plantar Fasciitis?

The plantar fascia is a thick band of tissue that runs along the bottom of your foot, connecting your heel bone to your toes. When this tissue becomes inflamed or develops microscopic tears, often from overuse, prolonged standing, or biomechanical stress, the result is plantar fasciitis, the most common cause of heel pain in adults.

While the condition typically responds to conservative treatments, studies suggest that roughly 10% of patients develop chronic plantar fasciitis that persists beyond six months. For these individuals, the pain is not just uncomfortable, it limits mobility, disrupts sleep, and significantly reduces quality of life.

A Vascular Solution to a Common Problem

It may seem surprising that a vascular center would treat a foot condition. But plantar fasciitis embolization, also known as genicular artery embolization adapted for the plantar region, or more specifically, **Micro-Transcatheter Arterial Embolization (TAME)**, is rooted in vascular medicine. Research has shown that chronic musculoskeletal pain is often driven by the abnormal growth of tiny blood vessels and accompanying nerve fibers into damaged tissue. These neovessels flood the injured area, amplifying pain signals and perpetuating inflammation.

By targeting and blocking these abnormal vessels, interventional vascular surgeons can interrupt the pain cycle at its source, without surgery, without stitches, and without a lengthy recovery.

How the Procedure Works

At the Vascular Center of Naples, the embolization procedure is performed by our board-certified interventional vascular surgeons using advanced imaging technology. Here's what patients can expect:

Before the procedure: A thorough evaluation is conducted, including a review of imaging such as MRI or ultrasound to confirm the diagnosis and identify the abnormal blood vessel activity in the plantar fascia.

During the procedure: Using a tiny catheter inserted through a small nick in the skin, typically in the wrist or groin, the physician navigates to the arteries supplying the inflamed tissue. Tiny microspheres (embolic particles) are then delivered precisely into the abnormal neovessels, cutting off their blood supply.

After the procedure: Patients are typically discharged the same day. There is no general anesthesia required, no surgical incision, and most people return to normal activity within days, not weeks or months.

Who Is a Candidate?

Plantar fasciitis embolization is best suited for patients who:

- Have been diagnosed with plantar fasciitis confirmed by imaging
- Have experienced chronic heel pain lasting six months or more
- Have not found lasting relief from conservative treatments such as physical therapy, orthotics, steroid injections, or shockwave therapy
- Are seeking a non-surgical alternative to procedures like plantar fasciotomy

Our team at the Vascular Center of Naples conducts a comprehensive consultation to determine whether embolization is the right path for each individual patient.

Results Patients Can Feel

Clinical studies on arterial embolization for chronic musculoskeletal conditions have reported significant and sustained pain reduction, with many patients experiencing meaningful improvement within four to eight weeks. Unlike steroid injections, which provide temporary relief, embolization targets the underlying vascular cause of the pain, making results more durable.

Patients consistently describe feeling a noticeable difference not just in pain levels, but in their ability to walk, exercise, and engage in daily activities they had previously given up.

Take the First Step Toward Relief

At the Vascular Center of Naples, our interventional vascular surgeons are at the forefront of minimally invasive vascular treatments. We believe no patient should accept chronic pain as a permanent condition when effective, evidence-based solutions are available.

If you or someone you love has been struggling with persistent heel pain, we invite you to schedule a consultation. Relief may be closer, and simpler than you think.

Contact the Vascular Center of Naples today to learn more about plantar fasciitis embolization and find out if you're a candidate.

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



Vascular Center
of Naples

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STUBBORN KNEE OR JOINT PAIN? SURGERY IS NOT THE ONLY OPTION

Exploring Regenerative Medicine and Non-Surgical Adjunctive Therapies

By Axel Ruiz, MD, DABFP, CWS

Could You Be a Candidate for a Regenerative Medicine Evaluation?

Regenerative and non-surgical treatment options may be worth discussing if you are experiencing:

- Persistent knee or back pain
- Osteoarthritis of the knee, hip, shoulder, or spine
- Meniscus tears
- Ligament injuries, including MCL or LCL injuries
- Cartilage damage or degeneration
- Tendon inflammation or degeneration
- Persistent joint pain that has not improved with conventional treatment
- Joint stiffness or reduced range of motion
- Pain when walking, climbing stairs, exercising, or participating in sports
- Difficulty returning to normal activities because of chronic joint discomfort

Exploring Options Beyond Surgery

For appropriately selected patients, a comprehensive regenerative medicine program may incorporate exosome-based or stem cell-based biologic injections together with supplemental treatments such as shockwave therapy, therapeutic laser, red-light or near-infrared therapy, and rehabilitation.

Regenerative Biologic Injections

Exosome-based and stem cell-based products are being investigated for their potential roles in cellular communication, inflammatory modulation, and tissue-repair signaling. These approaches should be considered only after an appropriate medical evaluation and review of the patient's diagnosis, imaging, and treatment history.

Shockwave Therapy

Extracorporeal shockwave therapy uses targeted acoustic energy and may be incorporated into a musculoskeletal treatment program to support local tissue response and address certain sources of chronic pain. It can be used as a supplemental modality when clinically appropriate.

Therapeutic Laser Therapy

Therapeutic laser uses selected wavelengths of light as a non-invasive adjunct. Depending on the device



and clinical indication, it may be incorporated to support pain management, circulation, and cellular activity.

Red-Light & Near-Infrared Therapy

Photobiomodulation uses red or near-infrared wavelengths of light. Research is evaluating its effects on cellular energy production, inflammatory signaling, and pain pathways. It may be included as part of a broader rehabilitation program.

Why Combine Therapies?

Chronic joint and back pain can involve multiple structures and biological processes, including cartilage degeneration, inflammation, tendon or ligament dysfunction, muscle weakness, and altered biomechanics. For this reason, an individualized program may combine biologic procedures with supplemental shockwave, laser or red-light therapy and appropriate rehabilitation rather than relying on a single modality.

The Goal: Preserve Function and Explore Your Options

Not every painful joint requires surgery, and not every patient is a candidate for regenerative procedures. The first step is a comprehensive evaluation to identify the source and severity of the problem. Depending on the diagnosis, imaging findings, overall health, and degree of joint degeneration, an individualized non-surgical strategy may be considered before proceeding to major surgery.

BEFORE YOU DECIDE ON SURGERY, KNOW YOUR OPTIONS.

A personalized approach combining regenerative medicine, shockwave therapy, therapeutic laser, red-light therapy, and appropriate rehabilitation may offer selected patients another avenue to explore for persistent musculoskeletal pain.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: This material is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice or guarantee clinical outcomes. Exosome products and many stem cell/cellular or tissue-derived products offered for orthopedic applications are investigational and are not FDA-approved to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent osteoarthritis or other orthopedic diseases. Results vary, and no outcome can be guaranteed. These therapies are not substitutes for medically necessary surgery. A qualified medical evaluation is required to determine appropriate treatment options.

ABOUT AXEL RUIZ MD, DABFP, CWS

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

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

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

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



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FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS

By appointment only

PURSuing PASSIONS CAN BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF HEALTHY AGING

By Cassie Calwell

Retirement can offer older adults something they may not have had enough of during their working years: time to pursue the things they enjoy.

Whether returning to a longtime hobby, learning a new skill or using years of experience to help others, staying engaged in meaningful activities can play an important role in overall well-being. Hobbies and other purposeful activities provide opportunities to remain socially connected, mentally engaged and, depending on the interest, physically active.

For some, retirement means finally having time to read the stack of books that has been waiting for years or take an art class. Others may return to music, travel more frequently, volunteer with a favorite organization or share their knowledge by mentoring someone younger.

More Time for Longtime Interests

One benefit of senior living is having fewer household responsibilities competing for that time. With an entire team providing services such as housekeeping, maintenance and chef-prepared meals, residents can spend less time taking care of a home and more time deciding what they would like to do that day.

At The Carlisle Naples, an active retirement community, that might mean attending a fitness class, joining an outing, volunteering, leading an activity or pursuing a hobby independently.

"We believe the best chapters of life are still being written," said Executive Director Amanda Ignasak. "At The Carlisle Naples, our 'Fountain of You' campaign reflects the idea that the passions, purpose and wisdom developed over a lifetime don't simply disappear with age. Having opportunities for meaningful connections and new experiences allows those parts of a person to continue to grow."

For Carlisle resident Nick Thomas, that passion is music.

Thomas began playing the accordion at age 14 and says music became like a "second job." Over the decades, he played more than 100 weddings and performed with other musicians at restaurants and



venues throughout the area. At 93, he is still performing. Only now, some of his audiences are his neighbors at The Carlisle.

He's also teaching. For the past year and a half, Thomas has been giving weekly accordion lessons.

"It's been very meaningful to be able to teach," he said. "I love being able to pass along my style and techniques."

Turning Experience Into Purpose

Not every passion has to be a traditional hobby. Retirement can also provide time to put decades of knowledge and experience to work for others.

Older adults can mentor young people, tutor students, volunteer for nonprofit organizations or support causes important to them. Within a senior living community, residents may lead clubs and activities, help neighbors, teach a skill or organize charitable projects.

And an interest doesn't have to be lifelong. Trying something new can be just as valuable. A class, club, volunteer opportunity or outing can introduce a new interest and lead to new friendships. The goal isn't to create a packed schedule. Some people thrive with activities every day; others would rather devote their time to one or two things they truly enjoy.

Healthy aging is often discussed in terms of nutrition, exercise and preventive care. Those remain important, but so are the things that give each day meaning.

A senior community can put the "life" in lifestyle by creating the time, opportunities and connections that allow older adults to continue doing what they love. It may also help discover something they never knew they'd love in the first place!

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

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UNDERSTANDING BUNIONS: CAUSES, TREATMENT, AND THE PATH TO RELIEF

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

Bunions are a common and painful foot condition that affects millions of people regardless of gender. These bony protrusions at the base of the big toe not only cause discomfort but can significantly impact quality of life when left untreated. For those suffering from bunions, understanding this condition is the first step toward finding relief.

What Are Bunions?

A bunion (hallux valgus) is a progressive deformity that occurs when the big toe begins to angle toward the other toes, causing the joint at its base to protrude outward. This creates the characteristic bump on the side of the foot that often becomes inflamed and painful, especially when wearing shoes.

Many people notice bunion development after age 40, when the joint begins to hurt and, in moderate to severe cases, visibly protrudes. Once this happens, painful sores can form where shoes rub against the bunion, and the joint may begin to swell, causing increasing discomfort.

Causes: Not Just a Fashion Problem

While tight, narrow shoes can certainly exacerbate bunion pain, the misconception that bunions are solely caused by footwear choices is incomplete. Heredity plays a significant role in bunion development. Many patients report family members—mothers, fathers, siblings, or aunts—who also suffered from bunions, indicating a genetic component to this condition.

Bunions represent one of several inflammatory arthritic conditions that can affect the feet, and they are equally problematic for both men and women, though women may experience symptoms more frequently due to certain footwear choices.

Conservative Treatment Options

When bunions begin causing discomfort, several non-surgical approaches may provide temporary relief:

- Wearing more accommodating, comfortable shoes with adequate toe space
- Using gel toe spacers or bunion pads to maintain proper toe alignment
- Applying ice to reduce inflammation
- Taking non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen to manage pain



However, it's crucial to understand that bunions NEVER heal on their own. These conservative measures can help manage symptoms, but they cannot reverse the progressive nature of the condition.

When Surgery Becomes Necessary

As bunions progress, conservative treatments often become less effective at controlling pain and maintaining mobility. At this point, surgery becomes the definitive solution.

Modern bunion surgeries are tailored to each patient's specific condition. The procedures vary in complexity depending on the severity of the deformity:

- For mild to moderate bunions, the surgeon may simply cut the bone and use a small screw for stabilization
- More severe cases, particularly where the joint has become arthritic, might require plates and screws for proper correction

At Collier Podiatry, Dr. Petrocelli uses advanced surgical techniques that include numbing behind the knee (providing 24 hours of pain relief) combined with anesthesia for maximum comfort during the procedure.

Recovery and Rehabilitation

Recovery from bunion surgery typically spans several months, with the initial two to four weeks requiring protection via a special boot or cast. During this time, patients can remain mobile but must take precautions to protect the surgical site and allow proper healing.

Following the initial recovery period, a gradual return to normal activities is possible as the foot continues to strengthen and adapt to its corrected alignment.

Expert Care Makes the Difference

With over 29 years of podiatric practice, Dr. Michael Petrocelli at Collier Podiatry brings extensive experience to bunion treatment. His approach begins with a comprehensive evaluation of each patient's symptoms and pain levels, from which he creates individualized treatment plans.

Dr. Petrocelli emphasizes the importance of addressing bunions proactively, before they progress to advanced stages that cause severe pain and limitation. Early intervention often means simpler surgical procedures and faster recovery times.

Taking the First Step Toward Relief

If you're experiencing bunion pain, don't wait for the condition to worsen. Unlike many foot problems that may resolve with time and conservative care, bunions are progressive and require proper medical attention.

The team at Collier Podiatry is ready to answer your questions and help you find the relief you deserve. Their kind and well-trained staff understand the impact foot pain can have on your daily life and are dedicated to helping you get back on your feet. Contact Collier Podiatry today to schedule your evaluation with Dr. Petrocelli.

Visit www.collierpodiatry.com or call (239) 775-0019 to take the first step toward living free from bunion pain.



COLLIER PODIATRY, P.A.
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Pain, Dryness & Irritation:

How Women Are Rejuvenating Their Lives

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

Who doesn't want to feel better and more confident about their sexual health? Many women try to hide their condition from their partner, or suffer in silence because they believe it's "normal" for them. That couldn't be further from the truth. Whether your pain is caused by endometriosis, pelvic conditions, vulvovaginal atrophy, hormonal dysfunction, or from medications, there are answers.

Female Sexual Dissatisfaction Has Many Causes

Natural processes like aging, childbirth and menopause can have deleterious effects on a woman's sexual well-being and sensations. Since we all tend to avoid anything that doesn't feel good, a woman's sexual desires and success in achieving them are inversely related to the atrophy and scarring in the vaginal canal that these life-events can create, like tearing of the vagina during childbirth, dryness of the vaginal tissues after menopause, and the laxity of the vagina causing decreased sexual sensation. Sexual satisfaction can be negatively impacted by hormonal changes after menopause, but many women cannot take vaginal estrogens or do not find this treatment to be effective or convenient enough. This is where laser energy comes in: CO2 laser energy has been proven to regrow normal collagen (a necessary protein found in all of our organs) in the vaginal and vulvar tissues leading to improved "accommodation" and "stretchiness" of the vagina which in turn leads to greater sexual satisfaction and lubrication and a decrease in discomfort during and after sex.

CO2RE Intima

Although, hormone therapy can be used to treat vaginal vulvar atrophy and dyspareunia (painful intercourse), sometimes it isn't enough. The CO2RE Intima procedure has helped countless women enjoy life like they used to. It is noninvasive, nonsurgical and is performed in your physician's office.



You don't have to live with pain and dryness any longer. There is a better way to age well, enjoy intimacy again and regain your life.

CO2RE Intima Benefits:

- CO2RE Intima is an in-office, non-surgical laser procedure to restore vaginal health, by improving hydration and promoting healthy vaginal pH
- Each CO2RE Intima treatment relieves symptoms of vulvovaginal atrophy, rejuvenates vaginal tissue and treats exterior tissue to improve vaginal cosmetic appearance.
- 100% showed significant improvement in vaginal health (elasticity, fluid volume, pH level, epithelial integrity and moisture)
- 91% reported an improvement in dryness

CO₂RE[®] Intima
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CO2RE Intima might be for you if:

- You want to relieve the signs of childbearing and aging in the vaginal area.
- You desire enhancement in sexual functioning and a better sexual experience.
- You seek vaginal cosmetic improvement and you want to feel more confident about your feminine health.

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To discuss CO2RE Intima or any other options that are best for you, please call 239-449-7979



Joseph Gauta, MD



Gabrielle Wright, PA-C



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On a GLP-1? YOUR GUT NEEDS ATTENTION, TOO

By Aiste Magitman

GLP-1 medications such as Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro and Zepbound have changed the lives of many people. But as a pharmacist, I'm also seeing another side of the story.

People taking these medications are reaching for laxatives because they're constipated, antacids because they're experiencing reflux, and sometimes even hemorrhoid creams because they're straining.

It makes sense when you look at how GLP-1 medications work. They reduce appetite and can slow gastric emptying, helping you feel full sooner and eat less.

But there's something we don't talk about enough:

When you eat less, you may also be feeding your beneficial gut bacteria less.

A smaller appetite can mean less fiber, fewer plants and less variety. Some people may also drink less because they feel full more easily. Combine that with changes in gastrointestinal motility, and constipation, bloating and unpredictable bowel habits aren't so surprising.

And this is where the **gut microbiome** comes in.

Your gut is home to trillions of microorganisms that depend, in part, on what you eat. Certain gut bacteria ferment fiber and produce beneficial compounds called **short-chain fatty acids**, including butyrate. Butyrate provides energy to the cells lining your colon and helps support your gut barrier—the protective lining that helps absorb what your body needs while keeping potentially harmful substances and microbes from crossing where they don't belong.

Your gut microbes also interact with your immune system, metabolism and nervous system. Some bacteria can produce certain B vitamins and vitamin K, while microbial activity can influence how nutrients and other compounds are processed in the gut.

So supporting your gut is about much more than bowel regularity. You're supporting an entire ecosystem.

Different gut microbes thrive on different fibers and plant compounds, which is why dietary variety matters. Prebiotic fibers provide food for gut microbes, while polyphenols can influence which bacteria thrive. Research has linked polyphenol-rich foods and supplements with beneficial bacteria such as *Akkermansia*, *Bifidobacterium* and *Faecalibacterium*.

This is exactly what inspired me to create **Best Gut Forever**.

As a pharmacist, I didn't want to focus only on managing one digestive symptom after another. I wanted to create a simple daily formula designed to support the gut from several angles.

That became my **3-3-2 formula**: three prebiotic fibers—psyllium, acacia and baobab; three polyphenol sources—pomegranate, grape seed and blueberry; and two digestive botanicals—ginger and turmeric.

Each group has a purpose. The fibers help support stool consistency and regularity while providing food for gut microbes. The polyphenol-rich ingredients provide plant compounds that can help beneficial bacteria thrive and support a diverse microbiome. Ginger and turmeric add another layer of digestive support, with ginger particularly studied for its role in gastrointestinal motility.

Instead of focusing on just one digestive symptom, the idea behind my 3-3-2 approach is simple: **support regularity, nourish your gut bacteria and support digestion—all at the same time.**

If you're taking a GLP-1, eating less may be part of the goal—but nourishing your gut still matters. Focus not only on how much you eat, but on what you're giving your gut each day: adequate hydration, fiber and a variety of plant foods.

Your GLP-1 can support your weight-management journey. **Don't forget to support your gut along the way.**



Aiste Magitman is a licensed pharmacist and founder of Best Gut Forever. This article is for educational purposes and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent disease.

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Aging Well, Worry Less

How SafeWell55 Brings Peace of Mind to Life After 55

Life after 55 can be some of the richest years of a person's life — more time for family, hobbies, travel, and doing things on your own terms. But it also comes with new realities: health can change unexpectedly, living situations shift, and the world can feel a little less predictable than it used to. For many adults in this stage of life, and for the adult children who worry about them, the question isn't whether something might happen — it's whether help will be there when it does.

That's the problem SafeWell55 was built to solve. It's a personal safety and wellness app designed specifically for adults 55 and older, bundling emergency response, everyday health care, prescription savings, cybersecurity protection, and more into a single, easy-to-use membership. Rather than juggling multiple different services — a medical alert device, a telehealth subscription, a prescription discount card, an identity theft monitor, a pet health subscription — SafeWell55 folds them into one program, accessible from a smartphone.

Help at Your Fingertips

At the core of SafeWell55 is personal safety. With a single tap, members can alert family and friends in an emergency, contact law enforcement if needed, or activate a virtual companion feature that keeps a caring eye on them during a walk, an errand, or any outing where they'd simply feel better knowing someone is watching out for them. It's the kind of quiet reassurance that lets someone head out the door with confidence instead of hesitation.

Privacy is built into the design, not an afterthought. Location is only shared with the people a member chooses, and only while safety features are actively in use — so the app supports independence rather than constant surveillance.

A companion feature, "I'm OK / I'm Not OK," gives members an easy way to check in with loved ones on their own schedule. Instead of relying on loved ones to call and check in — or worse, not hearing from someone for days and fearing the worst — members can send a quick daily update about how they're doing. They decide how often to check in and exactly who receives those updates, keeping the family circle informed without feeling like they're being monitored.

Health Care Without the Hassle

One of the more compelling parts of the SafeWell55 program is virtual care. Members get access to licensed doctors and mental health counselors 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, from the comfort of home — with \$0 copay for primary care visits, urgent care needs, and behavioral health sessions. That means a nagging cough, a medication refill, a stressful week that calls for someone to talk to — all of it is a video call away, without the cost, the waiting room, or the drive.

For many older adults, prescription costs are one of the biggest recurring expenses in a monthly budget. SafeWell55 addresses this directly through its Generic Prescription Program. Depending on the plan selected, members get \$0 copay access to over 200 common acute-care generic medications, or broader coverage that includes over 2,500 chronic condition medications with no copays and no deductible. A digital card can be used at pickup, and the benefits are honored at more than 65,000 pharmacies nationwide, including major chains like CVS, Costco, Rite-Aid, and Walgreens, as well as national grocery store pharmacies. For a household managing several prescriptions a month, that kind of savings can add up quickly.

Even the family pet is covered. Through the program's pet telehealth benefit, members can consult a licensed veterinarian through the app at no additional cost — a convenient way to get guidance on a pet's symptoms before deciding whether an expensive in-person vet visit is really necessary.

Protecting More Than Physical Safety

Physical safety is only part of the picture. Adults 55 and older are frequently and disproportionately targeted by online scammers and hackers, and the financial and emotional toll of a cyberattack or identity theft can be devastating. SafeWell55's cybersecurity features monitor for threats, alert members to risks, and provide support to recover if an attack does happen — adding a layer of digital protection alongside the app's physical safety tools.

There's also a rewards component that quietly pays members back for spending they're already doing. Through SafeWell Rewards, members can earn cash back — an average of 5% instantly — at more than 300 retailers, restaurants, and travel partners, including grocery stores and pharmacies. Linking rewards to a cash-back credit card can boost those savings even further, turning routine shopping into a small but steady financial benefit.

For those who want an extra layer of protection, SafeWell55 also offers an optional wearable device that can be connected to the app. If a member falls, feels unwell, or faces another emergency, the wearable can instantly alert their loved ones — giving families additional peace of mind, especially for members who live alone or spend significant time outdoors.

Plans Built for Real Life

SafeWell55 offers two membership tiers, and both can be extended to cover a spouse:

Plan 1 — \$27.95/month individual, or \$38.95/month for individual plus spouse — includes \$0 copay acute generic prescription coverage alongside all core safety, telehealth, and wellness features.

Plan 2 — \$37.95/month individual, or \$52.95/month for individual plus spouse — expands prescription coverage to include acute and chronic condition generic medications with no copays and no deductible.

Both plans include the full suite of personal safety tools, virtual care, pet telehealth, cybersecurity protection, and rewards, with the wearable device available as an add-on for those who want it.

Why It Matters

What makes SafeWell55 stand out isn't any single feature — it's the way the pieces work together. A fall, a scam attempt, a skipped medication because of cost, a lonely stretch without a family check-in — these are often separate problems handled by separate services, if they're handled at all. SafeWell55 brings them under one roof, with one app, one monthly cost, and one goal: helping people over 55 move through their day with confidence, knowing that help — medical, financial, or personal — is never more than a tap away.

For adults navigating this stage of life, and for the families who care about them, that kind of consolidated peace of mind can be worth far more than the modest monthly cost. It's not just a safety app. It's a way to keep living fully, with a safety net quietly in place underneath. Start now and watch our informational video at www.SafeWell55.com today.



www.SafeWell55.com





2027 MEDICARE ANNUAL ENROLLMENT IS HERE!

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

VERY IMPORTANT: Regarding Medicare it is illegal for an insurance agent to call, text, e-mail, knock on your door, hang anything on your door or vehicle or approach you without your consent. If they do ask for their National Producer Number NPN, and you will hear a click and removed from their list. If they don't hang up, get their number and report them to Medicare. There is so much fraud where people are being switched to plans that they never approved or they were miss led. Shop local, do background checks before you give anyone your personal information. You can google them, google reviews, check their Facebook, etc. Make sure that if you are working with someone you can call them personally if you have any questions or concerns.

Medicare Annual Enrollment is October 15 - December 7th for January 1st, 2027, effective. What can be changed at this time is Medicare Part D Drug Plans and Medicare Part C (Advantage Plans). You should have received your Notification of Change from your current insurance plan. This outlines the current year to the new year changes, as an example if your specialist provider costs \$20 now it might say \$35 in 2027 (no correlation just an example).

Medicare Part C / Advantage Plans, most carriers have raised out of pocket limits and copays along with decreased extra value benefits for 2027. Annually Medicare Advantage Plans make changes. They must all include the same features as Original Medicare but not at the same cost share. They can have a premium, Medical and or Prescription deductible, copays and coinsurance can change. Extra Value such as Vision, Dental, Over the Counter, Part B Give Back, transportation, etc. can all change or be eliminated. Medicare sets the annual in-network out of pocket maximum; in 2026 it is \$9,250 for in-network and \$13,900 out-of-network services combined (2027 this will increase). However, individual insurance plans may set lower limits.

The old saying if it is not broken do not fix it DOES NOT apply to Annual Enrollment. Every year I see many people that have not checked/compared their current plan to what is new. I have saved so

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

If your plan was CANCELLED/DROPPED for 2027, you have a guaranteed issue into a Medigap/Medicare Supplement. This is huge and very important, know your options!

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

Medicare Part D "most insurance carriers have taken away insurance agents' ability to help you with your Part D Only drug plans this does not apply to most Advantage plans", standalone drug plans as well as Advantage Plans, you won't have to pay more than \$2,400 in out-of-pocket drug costs, which include deductibles, co-pays, coinsurance. It is especially important to check your plans formulary as medication must be in formulary to be capped. 2027 RX deductible will be capped at \$715.00. As a reminder the cost of the plan is not as important as the cost plus your medications, that is what you look at, the total cost. It is important to know what the medication is used for to determine if it is covered by the plan. Example Wycovy may be covered but to be covered it must be used for certain heart conditions or diabetes, Medicare does not cover weight lose medications at this time. As a reminder if you choose NOT to ENROLL in a Part D

drug plan and in later years you want one you will have to wait for Annual Enrollment and then you will assed a penalty for every month you did not have a drug plan, that penalty will last for the REST OF YOUR LIFE!

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 Medicare 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 issues; you may need to medically qualify. You can purchase a Medigap Plan during your 1st 6 months on Medicare Part B without medical underwriting. There are a lot of things you need to know. Again, work with an agent you can trust! **Especially important:** when you *move* you need to know your options. Can you keep the same plan? Do you need to make a change and what does that look like?

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

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Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D.

Helping Loved Ones Hear Better

Practical Ways Families Can Support Better Communication and Stronger Connections

Watching someone you love struggle to hear can be frustrating, especially when communication begins changing the rhythm of everyday life. Maybe conversations are repeated more often. Maybe the television volume keeps getting louder. Perhaps family dinners feel different because someone begins withdrawing or avoiding conversation altogether.

If you have ever found yourself thinking, “Why won’t they just get their hearing checked?” you are certainly not alone.

As an audiologist here in Naples, I often meet family members who are deeply concerned about a loved one’s hearing. What many people do not realize is that hearing loss affects more than the person experiencing it. It can impact relationships, communication, patience, and even emotional connection within families. The encouraging news is that there are ways to help that feel supportive rather than frustrating.

One of the most important things to understand is that hearing loss often happens gradually. Many people do not realize how much they are missing because changes occur slowly over time. Instead of hearing clearly, the brain begins filling in gaps. It may seem like someone is ignoring conversations or not paying attention, when in reality they simply did not hear everything that was said.

For many adults, acknowledging hearing changes can also feel emotional. Hearing loss may bring feelings of aging, embarrassment, frustration, or fear of losing independence. That is why how families approach the conversation matters so much.

One of the biggest mistakes loved ones make is turning hearing concerns into repeated criticism. Statements like, “You never listen,” “You need hearing aids,” or “We are tired of repeating ourselves,” often lead to defensiveness rather than action. Even when those comments come from a place of love, they can feel discouraging.

Instead, try approaching the conversation with empathy and curiosity. Focus on what you are noticing rather than assigning blame. For example, you might say, “I noticed restaurants seem more frustrating lately,” or “I feel like conversations have become harder, and I want to help.” Gentle, caring conversations are often much more effective than pressure or frustration.

There are also simple communication strategies families can use right away to make conversations easier.

First, try getting your loved one’s attention before speaking. Saying their name first or making eye contact can help prepare the brain to focus on speech.

Second, avoid talking from another room. Hearing becomes much harder when people cannot see facial expressions or are trying to understand speech through walls, background noise, or distance.

Speaking clearly is helpful, but shouting usually is not. Many people assume talking louder solves the problem, but shouting can actually distort speech and increase frustration. Slowing down slightly, speaking naturally, and facing the person often improves understanding far more than volume alone.

Background noise also plays a major role. Restaurants, televisions, crowded family gatherings, and multiple conversations happening at once can make communication much harder for someone with hearing loss. Choosing quieter seating areas or reducing competing noise when possible can make conversations feel more enjoyable again.

Patience matters too. Hearing loss can be exhausting. Many people work incredibly hard to follow conversations, often using extra mental energy to piece together words and meaning. What may look like withdrawal or distraction is sometimes simple listening fatigue.

At the same time, families should not ignore signs that hearing changes may be affecting quality of life. If a loved one frequently asks people to repeat themselves, struggles in noisy environments, turns up the television volume, misunderstands conversations, or begins pulling back socially, those may be signs it is time for a hearing evaluation.

One thing I often remind families is that hearing care is not simply about hearing louder. It is about staying connected. Better hearing supports conversations with grandchildren, dinners with friends, church services, favorite hobbies, and everyday moments that bring meaning to life.

Sometimes the hardest step is simply getting started. Offering to attend an appointment together, helping ask questions, or framing the visit as gathering information rather than committing to treatment can help ease anxiety.

If someone you love may be struggling with hearing, you do not have to navigate it alone. At our office, we work closely with patients and families to better understand hearing changes and create solutions that feel comfortable and supportive.

Dr. Ava Rhodes and our team are proud to help families throughout Naples improve communication and stay connected. To schedule an appointment, visit us online at www.AudioNova.com, or call (239) 631-5750. Better hearing can help bring families closer, one conversation at a time.

Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D., is a licensed Doctor of Audiology at AudioNova in Naples, Florida. She is passionate about compassionate hearing care, sunshine, and finding the perfect scoop of ice cream in Naples (original vanilla, if you’re wondering).

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LEARN HOW YOU CAN FIND RELIEF FROM THE DEBILITATING PAIN OF PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY WITHOUT ADDICTIVE DRUGS

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

Over 116 million people suffer from various types of chronic pain disorders, and 20 million of those individuals have peripheral neuropathy; that number is speculated to be much higher due to patients not getting a proper diagnosis. Peripheral nerves run from the spinal cord to the arms, hands, legs and feet.

UNDERSTANDING PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

Peripheral Neuropathy is a complex condition, but nerve damage and signaling are the issue, finding the root cause is how a comprehensive plan is customized to regenerate a patients nerves, cells and tissues. Having high blood sugar levels, along with low blood oxygen supply, nutrient deficiency, high toxicity and inflammation damages the nerves throughout the body. This damage generally affects the long peripheral nerves that feed sensations to the legs, feet, and toes from the spinal cord, through communication with the brain. If your condition has progressed, you may feel nerve damage sensations in your upper extremities as well.

PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY SYMPTOMS

- Numbness
- Tingling
- Burning sensations
- Painful aching
- Joint inflammation
- Joint damage
- Balance issues
- Skin discoloration & texture changes
- Muscle cramps
- Feelings of stiffness
- Non-healing foot & ankle ulcers

STOP MASKING SYMPTOMS AND PAIN

The most common treatment for nerve pain and numbness is to mask it with narcotic prescription pain medications. Narcotics like Opioids are highly addictive, and our state is currently leading the country in abusing the drug and overdose episodes.

There are better alternatives to Peripheral Neuropathy that do not include addictive drugs.



Physical medicine provides alternative therapeutic and rehabilitating procedures can significantly improve the condition, offer pain relief and limit drug dependency.

FEEL AMAZING SPINE & JOINT INSTITUTE'S ALTERNATIVE CARE

- Red LED and Low Level Infrared Light Therapy help to heal and regenerate the small nerve endings that are damaged in peripheral neuropathy
- Gentle electrical stimulation therapy improves nerve function, reduces pain, and improves movement.
- Stem Cell Allografts Biologics
- Platelet Rich Plasma
- Spinal Decompression Therapy
- Ozone Therapy
- Peptide Therapy
- Therapeutic Shockwave/Soundwave
- Natural supplementation to regenerate myelin sheath

WHAT KINDS OF EFFECTS CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE NEUROPATHY TREATMENT AT FEEL AMAZING SPINE & JOINT INSTITUTE?

Clinical studies show that 88% of the people who undergo the treatment experience excellent results with one or more of the following: Reduced pain and cramps, reduced tingling and numbness, ability to experience normal touch without pain, reduced cold or burning sensations, improved balance and coordination, lowered dependency on medications, improved sleep, reduced sensation of restlessness in

the legs. Several people also experience reduced local swelling and inflammation, increased range of motion, increased blood flow to the extremities, decreased tension, and decreased muscle spasm.

An important side benefit to the treatment is that it reduces the risk of falls significantly by improving balance and position awareness of the feet.

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

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- Arm or leg pain, or numbness
- Peripheral Neuropathy pain or numbness
- Restless Leg Syndrome
- Headaches, dizziness, vertigo, or balance problems
- Disc bulge or herniation, sciatica, or stenosis
- Auto Accident, Whiplash Injuries

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UNDERSTANDING PEDIATRIC EAR INFECTIONS:

Causes, Symptoms, and Treatment Options

By Joshua D. Galloway, MSN, APRN, FNP-C

Few things are more distressing for a parent than a child who is crying in pain and can't explain why. Ear infections are one of the most common reasons children visit a healthcare provider, and most children will have at least one before their third birthday. Understanding what causes them, how to recognize the signs, and what treatment involves can help you respond quickly and confidently.

What Causes Ear Infections?

The most common type of ear infection in children is acute otitis media, an infection of the middle ear, the air-filled space behind the eardrum. These infections usually begin after a cold, flu, or allergy flare-up causes swelling and congestion in the nose and throat.

The key player is the eustachian tube, a small channel that connects the middle ear to the back of the throat. It helps drain fluid and balance pressure. In young children, these tubes are shorter, narrower, and more horizontal than in adults, so they clog more easily. When fluid becomes trapped behind the eardrum, bacteria or viruses can multiply and cause infection.

Several factors increase a child's risk, including:

- Age between 6 months and 2 years
- Attending daycare or group childcare
- Exposure to secondhand smoke
- Bottle-feeding while lying flat
- Seasonal allergies or frequent colds
- A family history of ear infections

Recognizing the Symptoms

Older children can often tell you their ear hurts, but infants and toddlers rely on behavior to communicate. Common signs include:

- Tugging or pulling at the ear
- Fussiness, irritability, or unusual crying
- Trouble sleeping, especially when lying down
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Fluid or drainage from the ear
- Difficulty hearing or responding to sounds
- Loss of balance or decreased appetite

Because these symptoms can overlap with other illnesses, an ear examination by a qualified provider is the only reliable way to confirm an infection.

Treatment Options

Not every ear infection requires antibiotics. Many mild cases, particularly those caused by viruses, improve on their own within two to three days. Treatment is tailored to your child's age, symptom severity, and health history.

Pain relief. Age-appropriate doses of acetaminophen or ibuprofen can ease discomfort and reduce fever. A warm compress held against the ear may also provide comfort. Always follow dosing guidance from your provider.

Watchful waiting. For children over six months with mild symptoms, your provider may recommend monitoring for 48 to 72 hours before starting antibiotics. This approach helps prevent unnecessary antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance.

Antibiotics. When symptoms are severe, persistent, or occur in very young infants, antibiotics such as amoxicillin are often prescribed. It's important to complete the full course, even if your child feels better after a few days.

Ear tubes. Children who experience frequent, recurring infections or persistent fluid affecting hearing may be referred to an ear, nose, and throat specialist to discuss small tubes that help the middle ear drain.

Prevention Tips

You can lower your child's risk by staying current on vaccinations, including the flu and pneumococcal vaccines, practicing good handwashing, avoiding secondhand smoke, and holding infants upright during feedings.

When to Seek Care

Contact a healthcare provider if your child has ear pain with a high fever, symptoms lasting more than two days, drainage from the ear, or is younger than six months with any signs of infection.

At Top-Tier Mobile Health, we bring expert care directly to your home, making it easier to get your child evaluated and feeling better, without the waiting room.



Meet Joshua D. Galloway, MSN, APRN, FNP-C
Joshua D. Galloway, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, is an experienced Autonomous Florida Family Nurse Practitioner with more than 30 years in healthcare and a career dedicated to caring for patients in some of the most challenging and time-sensitive medical environments.

His extensive clinical background includes emergency medicine, critical care, air medical transport, paramedicine, surgical assisting, trauma care, and community-based acute care. As a former Flight RN/Paramedic, Joshua spent years providing advanced critical care to critically ill and injured patients while working in high-acuity, rapidly changing environments where experience, sound judgment, and compassion were essential.

Joshua also served honorably in the United States Navy as a Hospital Corpsman, with experience in occupational health and aviation medicine. His military and emergency medical background helped shape his commitment to service, discipline, preparedness, and putting the patient first.

As a Family Nurse Practitioner, Joshua brings that same philosophy to every patient encounter. He believes quality healthcare should be accessible, personal, convenient, and centered around the individual—not simply the diagnosis.

Through Top-Tier Mobile Health, Joshua pairs experienced medical care with the ultimate in home comfort and privacy. His mission is to deliver exceptional, tailored health solutions on a flexible schedule that puts the patient's lifestyle first.

After more than three decades in healthcare, Joshua understands that excellent medicine is about more than treating an illness. It is about listening, earning trust, and treating every patient with the dignity and respect they deserve.

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Fighting Back: How High-Dose Vitamin C Is Supporting Breast Cancer Patients — And What Else Is Worth Knowing

A breast cancer diagnosis changes everything, and for many patients, the question isn't just "what treatment will fight this?" but "what else can I do to support my body through it?" At TheDRIPBar, we're seeing more women ask about high-dose intravenous vitamin C, and for good reason. It's one of the most researched complementary approaches in integrative oncology today.

Why High-Dose Vitamin C Is Different

Here's the key distinction: the vitamin C you get from oral supplements or food never comes close to the blood concentrations used in clinical research. Your gut simply can't absorb enough. When vitamin C is delivered intravenously, it bypasses digestion entirely, allowing plasma levels to climb to a range that isn't achievable any other way, levels researchers believe may behave differently in the body than everyday dietary vitamin C.

At these pharmacologic concentrations, laboratory and preclinical studies suggest vitamin C can act almost like a pro-oxidant in cancer cells, generating hydrogen peroxide in a way that appears to stress and damage malignant cells, while healthy cells, which are better equipped to neutralize it, are largely unaffected. Several clinical studies have explored high-dose IV vitamin C alongside standard chemotherapy and radiation in breast cancer patients, with encouraging early findings around quality of life, treatment tolerance, and fatigue. The National Cancer Institute has funded ongoing research into this exact question, and interest in the medical community continues to grow.

It's important to be clear about what this therapy is and isn't. High-dose vitamin C is not a replacement for surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, or any treatment prescribed by an oncologist. The most promising research treats it as a complementary therapy, used alongside conventional care, not instead of it. It should always be coordinated with your oncology team, since IV vitamin C isn't appropriate for everyone (patients with G6PD deficiency or certain kidney conditions, for example, need to be screened first). This is exactly why professional administration matters, dosing, screening, and monitoring should be handled by trained clinicians, not attempted at home.



Other Complementary Options Worth Discussing With Your Care Team

High-dose vitamin C is where most of our patients start, but it isn't the only complementary therapy being studied for breast cancer support. Two others come up often enough that they're worth a brief mention:

Mistletoe therapy (often known by the brand name Iscador) has a decades-long history in European integrative oncology, particularly in Germany and Switzerland, where it's among the most widely used adjunct therapies for breast cancer. Research, including systematic reviews, has linked mistletoe extract to improvements in quality of life and treatment tolerability during conventional care.

High-dose ozone therapy is a newer area of interest, with early research exploring its potential to support oxygenation and immune response in cancer patients. The evidence base here is much earlier-stage than vitamin C or mistletoe, so it's best approached as an emerging option to discuss rather than a well-established one.

We intentionally don't lead with these therapies, because when patients are handed too many options at once, it can create more confusion than clarity. High-dose vitamin C has the deepest and most consistent research base of the three, which

is why it's our starting recommendation for most breast cancer patients exploring complementary IV support.

Building Your Plan, Together

No two breast cancer journeys look the same, and no complementary therapy should be added to your treatment plan without a conversation with your oncologist. At TheDRIPBar, our role is to work alongside your medical team, not around it, to help you feel supported, resilient, and informed at every stage.

You don't have to navigate this alone, and you don't have to figure it out from a blog post. Our team can walk you through exactly what a high-dose vitamin C session looks like, answer your questions honestly, and help you decide if it belongs in your care plan. A single phone call is often the easiest first step toward feeling more in control of your treatment journey. Give TheDRIPBar a call today at 239-422-6044 and let's talk about what support could look like for you.

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For a Common Liver Condition, Lifestyle Beats the Medicine Cabinet, Research Shows

By Alain Alvarez, MD

An estimated quarter of the world's adults are living with a liver condition many have never heard explained clearly: fat quietly accumulating in the liver, unrelated to alcohol use. In 2023, international liver societies gave it a new name — metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease, or MASLD — to better reflect its real cause: the same metabolic issues behind obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

There is no approved medication that reverses the condition for everyone. But a growing body of clinical trial evidence shows that lifestyle changes — diet, weight loss, and exercise — can meaningfully improve, and in some cases resolve, the disease.

"This is one of the few chronic conditions where the first-line treatment is genuinely in the patient's hands," said Dr. Alain Alvarez, a rheumatologist who has been following the research as it relates to his own patients with metabolic and inflammatory conditions. "That's not a consolation prize. In the right doses, it works better than most of what's on a supplement shelf."

Dr. Alvarez's interest in the topic isn't incidental to his specialty. Many of the drugs rheumatologists prescribe for autoimmune and inflammatory conditions — including methotrexate and leflunomide — are metabolized by the liver or carry some risk of liver toxicity. A patient's liver health can influence which medication a rheumatologist chooses, the starting dose, and how routine liver-enzyme monitoring on treatment gets interpreted.

The weight-loss dose-response

The most consistent finding across studies is also the simplest: how much weight a person loses tracks closely with how much their liver improves. In a widely cited study of nearly 300 patients with confirmed liver inflammation, those who lost 10% or more of their body weight over a year saw resolution of their disease 90% of the time on repeat biopsy, and nearly half had improvement in liver scarring. A separate analysis found that every kilogram lost independently raised the odds of disease resolution by about 7% — and that weight gain reversed those gains just as reliably.



Diet quality matters, even without calorie counting

Diet composition plays a supporting role. In a randomized trial published in the journal *Hepatology*, researchers compared an unrestricted Mediterranean-style diet — rich in olive oil, vegetables, legumes, and fish — against a standard low-fat diet. Neither group counted calories, yet both saw significant reductions in liver fat, with the Mediterranean pattern showing particular benefit for insulin resistance in follow-up studies.

Exercise counts on its own

Perhaps the most surprising research finding: exercise appears to benefit the liver independent of weight loss. In one early trial, four weeks of stationary cycling with no dietary change produced no change in body weight — but liver fat, measured directly by MRI, fell by 21%. A larger 2023 meta-analysis pooling 14 randomized trials and more than 550 patients confirmed the pattern, finding that structured exercise made patients three and a half times more likely to achieve a clinically meaningful reduction in liver fat. The effective threshold was about 150 minutes of brisk walking a week, matching general physical activity guidelines — lower doses did not show the same benefit.

What the research says about coffee and supplements

Coffee drinkers can take some comfort: while coffee does not appear to prevent the disease from developing, multiple meta-analyses have found

that people who already have it and drink coffee regularly have 30–35% lower rates of significant liver scarring compared with non-drinkers.

Vitamin E is the one supplement with real trial data behind it. A major National Institutes of Health-funded study found that 43% of patients with confirmed liver inflammation improved on a high daily dose of vitamin E, compared with 19% on placebo. But the same dose has been linked, in a separate large cancer-prevention trial, to a 17% increased risk of prostate cancer with long-term use — a trade-off physicians say should be discussed individually rather than self-prescribed.

The takeaway

Medical guidelines from the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases continue to list lifestyle modification — not medication — as the foundation of treatment for the condition. For patients, doctors say, that means the most effective prescription may be the one they can write for themselves: a walk, a plate of vegetables, and a conversation with their physician about the rest.

This article is intended for general health education and is not a substitute for individualized medical advice. Readers with questions about liver health should consult their physician



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Robotic Spine Surgery for Spinal Stenosis: A New Era of Precision and Safety

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

Spinal stenosis is one of the most common and debilitating conditions affecting the aging population in the United States. Characterized by a narrowing of the spinal canal that compresses the spinal cord and nerves, it can lead to chronic back pain, numbness, weakness, and difficulty walking. For many patients, when conservative treatments such as physical therapy, injections, and medications fail, surgery becomes the most effective option to restore mobility and quality of life.

Traditionally, spinal stenosis surgery—often in the form of laminectomy, decompression, or spinal fusion—has been performed using open surgical techniques or with the aid of fluoroscopic guidance. While effective, these methods carry risks such as blood loss, longer recovery times, and potential inaccuracies in implant placement. Today, robotic spine surgery is revolutionizing how spinal stenosis is treated, offering patients safer, more precise, and less invasive procedures.

Understanding the Role of Robotics in Spinal Stenosis Surgery

Robotic spine surgery integrates advanced imaging, navigation systems, and robotic technology to enhance a surgeon's ability to operate with unmatched accuracy. Before surgery, high-resolution imaging such as CT scans is used to create a three-dimensional map of the patient's spine. Surgeons then plan every detail of the procedure, including the exact placement of screws, rods, and decompression pathways.

During the operation, a robotic arm guides instruments along these preplanned trajectories. Unlike autonomous machines, the robot does not act independently; the surgeon remains in full control. The robotic system simply ensures that every movement is executed with submillimeter precision. This guidance is particularly critical in spinal stenosis cases, where the spinal canal is already narrowed and the margin for error is extremely small.

Benefits of Robotic Spine Surgery for Spinal Stenosis

1. Improved Accuracy and Safety

Spinal stenosis surgery often involves decompression of the nerves combined with stabilization of the spine using screws and rods. Incorrect placement of implants can risk nerve damage or instability, which may worsen symptoms rather than improve them.



Robotic assistance significantly increases the accuracy of screw and implant placement, reducing the risk of complications and improving long-term stability.

2. Minimally Invasive Approach

Many patients with spinal stenosis are older and may have other medical conditions that increase surgical risk. Robotic systems make it easier for surgeons to perform minimally invasive procedures, which require smaller incisions and cause less disruption to muscles and soft tissue. For patients, this translates into reduced blood loss, shorter hospital stays, less postoperative pain, and faster recovery.

3. Reduced Radiation Exposure

Traditional spinal stenosis surgeries often rely heavily on fluoroscopy, exposing both the patient and the surgical team to significant amounts of radiation. With robotic guidance, the need for continuous fluoroscopy is dramatically reduced. This is particularly beneficial in multi-level stenosis cases, which otherwise require prolonged imaging.

4. Consistent, Reproducible Results

Robotic technology helps eliminate some of the variability that naturally occurs in traditional surgery. Every spinal stenosis case is unique, with differences in anatomy, severity of stenosis, and presence of instability. Robotics allows surgeons to consistently execute the surgical plan, regardless of these variations, leading to more predictable and reliable outcomes.

Patient Outcomes and Quality of Life

For patients suffering from spinal stenosis, the goal of surgery is straightforward: relieve pressure on the nerves, reduce pain, and restore mobility. Robotic-assisted spine surgery is delivering on these goals more effectively than ever before.

Patients undergoing robotic-assisted decompression and fusion procedures for stenosis often report quicker improvements in leg pain and walking tolerance

compared to traditional surgery. Shorter hospital stays and faster return to daily activities are especially valuable to older patients, who may otherwise face prolonged recovery periods. Moreover, by improving surgical accuracy and reducing complications, robotic systems help lower the likelihood of revision surgeries, sparing patients from additional procedures and recovery time.

Growing Adoption Across the United States

Robotic spine surgery was once limited to a handful of specialized centers, but it is now spreading rapidly across the United States. Systems such as the Globus ExcelsiusGPS are increasingly available in both academic hospitals and community medical centers. As more surgeons become trained and proficient in robotic techniques, the option of robotic-assisted treatment for spinal stenosis is becoming more widely accessible to patients. Last year, Physician's Regional Collier Boulevard Hospital became the first hospital in the county to have a robotic neurosurgery program with the acquisition of the Globus ExcelsiusGPS system.

The Future of Spinal Stenosis Treatment

Looking ahead, the role of robotics in treating spinal stenosis will only expand. Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning may allow robotic systems to adjust surgical plans in real-time, further personalizing procedures for each patient's anatomy. Integration with augmented reality could enhance surgeon visualization during decompression, while improvements in robotic hardware will make systems more compact and efficient.

Most importantly, patients are increasingly aware of robotic options and are seeking out surgeons and centers that offer this technology. As awareness and demand grow, robotic spine surgery will continue to shape the future of spinal stenosis care in the United States.



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THE POWER OF TWO

Chronic back pain is one of the most common and debilitating conditions affecting adults in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 40% of adults report experiencing back pain within the past three months. While medications and surgery are often considered the next step after conservative care fails, advanced non-surgical therapies are proving to be a game-changer for many patients. Now, two of the most effective non-invasive treatments—spinal decompression therapy and the M7 MLS Therapy Laser—are being used together to achieve optimal results.

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

Understanding Spinal Decompression Therapy

Spinal decompression is a specialized form of motorized traction designed to relieve pressure on the spine's intervertebral discs and nerves. Patients lie comfortably on a table where the spine is gently stretched and relaxed in controlled cycles. This process creates negative pressure within the discs, encouraging retraction of herniated or bulging material and promoting the influx of oxygen and nutrients into the disc space.



Decompression therapy is especially beneficial for conditions such as:

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

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



The Role of MLS Laser Therapy

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

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

Key benefits of MLS Laser Therapy include:

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

Why These Two Therapies Work Better Together

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

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

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

Who Is a Good Candidate?

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

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

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

When to Seek Help

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

Call today to schedule your Complimentary Consultation and MRI Review and discover how this powerful combination therapy can help you move and feel better—without surgery or medication.



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



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Building Strength Before and After Surgery

How EMSculpt NEO® May Support Recovery Following Knee and Shoulder Procedures

By Robert Swift, D.O. Blue Sky Orthopedics at Sage Wood Institute.

Orthopedic surgery is only one step on the road to recovery. Whether you're preparing for a knee replacement, recovering from a rotator cuff repair, or rehabilitating after another shoulder or knee procedure, restoring muscle strength is one of the most important factors in achieving a successful outcome.

Unfortunately, many patients begin losing muscle long before surgery. Pain often causes people to become less active, leading to weakness and muscle loss. After surgery, temporary swelling, discomfort, and limited activity can make rebuilding strength even more challenging.

Today, innovative technology is giving physicians another tool to help patients support their rehabilitation journey.

What Is EMSculpt NEO?

EMSculpt NEO® is a non-invasive treatment that combines two advanced technologies:

- **High-Intensity Focused Electromagnetic (HIFEM®) energy** to stimulate powerful muscle contractions.
- **Radiofrequency (RF) energy** to gently warm the treatment area while therapy is delivered.

Each treatment lasts approximately 30 minutes, requires no surgery or needles, and involves no recovery time.

When used under the guidance of your physician, EMSculpt NEO may complement a comprehensive rehabilitation program that includes physical therapy and home exercise.

There are cohort studies that have demonstrated patients that under go EMSculpt Neo treatment weeks before surgery, and two weeks after have a faster recovery, better motion and less postoperative pain.

Preparing for Surgery

Orthopedic surgeons now recognize the importance of prehabilitation—improving muscle strength before surgery whenever possible.

Patients with chronic arthritis, torn rotator cuffs, ACL injuries, or meniscus tears often experience significant muscle weakness and loss before they ever enter the operating room.

EMSculpt NEO may help support muscle activation and conditioning before surgery, allowing patients to begin rehabilitation from a stronger foundation.

Supporting Recovery After Surgery

Following surgery, muscle weakness can persist for weeks or months. Even when healing progresses normally, inactivity can lead to loss of muscle strength and endurance.

After surgery it is appropriate to consider using EMSculpt NEO to be incorporated into your rehabilitation plan to help support:

- Muscle activation
- Strength rebuilding
- Improved muscle engagement
- Recovery from muscle deconditioning due to inactivity

EMSculpt NEO is not a replacement for physical therapy, but it may serve as an additional tool to complement a physician-directed rehabilitation program. Stimulate muscle grow decrease pain, and increase functional recovery.

Who May Benefit?

Patients recovering from procedures such as:

Knee Procedures

- Total knee replacement
- Partial knee replacement
- ACL reconstruction
- Meniscus repair
- Patellar stabilization surgery

Shoulder Procedures

- Rotator cuff repair
- Shoulder replacement
- Reverse shoulder replacement
- Labral repair
- Shoulder stabilization procedures

Come in for an evaluation and we will determine whether treatment is appropriate based on your individual condition, stage of healing, and overall rehabilitation goals.

What Does Treatment Feel Like?

Most patients describe the treatment as feeling like an intense workout for the targeted muscles. There are no incisions or injections, and patients typically return to normal daily activities immediately after each session.



Recovery Is a Team Effort

The best outcomes are achieved when advanced technology is combined with proven rehabilitation strategies, including:

- Orthopedic care
- Physical therapy
- Home exercise programs
- Healthy nutrition
- Consistent follow-up with your healthcare team

Working together, these approaches help patients regain strength, improve function, and return to the activities they enjoy.

Did You Know?

Muscle loss can begin within days of reduced activity. Maintaining muscle strength before and after surgery is an important part of recovery.

Prehabilitation matters. Patients who enter surgery in with better muscle strength are often better prepared to begin rehabilitation and have a faster recovery.

Physical therapy remains essential. EMSculpt NEO is designed to complement—not replace a prescribed rehabilitation program.

Ask Blue Sky Orthopedics

If you're planning knee or shoulder surgery, or are currently recovering, ask whether EMSculpt NEO may be an appropriate addition to your individualized treatment plan.

About Our Practice

At Blue Sky Orthopedics, we are committed to providing innovative, evidence-informed therapies that support patient recovery. Our goal is to help every patient return safely to the activities that matter most through personalized care and comprehensive rehabilitation.

To learn more or schedule a consultation:

Contact Blue Sky Orthopedics at 239.877.4662

Email for an appointment:

visna@blueskyorthopedics.com

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Learn How to Align Your Financial Health Long Term with Roth Conversions

By Rick Walker, Financial Planner & CPA, and Kimberlee Clark, Financial Planner - NaplesWealthStrategies.com

Throughout our careers as financial planners & all of Rick’s years as a CPA, we have regarded the payment of taxes as an awful byproduct of success in life. Whether it is earning a sizeable income, or having a large gain on investment, writing that check to the IRS can make you cringe, bringing stress and anxiety.

Today, we are addressing a tax problem that has been brewing for several years. More & more people are seeing their traditional IRA & 401(k) balances grow to larger amounts. Years down the road, whether withdrawing during your lifetime, or passing on to heirs, the taxes imposed can be shockingly enormous.

WHY CONVERSIONS MATTER MORE THAN EVER!
A Roth conversion is one of the most powerful tools available for creating long-term tax efficiency. It allows investors to move money from pre-tax accounts—like a Traditional IRA or 401(k)—into a Roth IRA. Taxes are paid upfront on the converted amount, unlocking substantial long-term benefits.

First, we will address the impact during your lifetime, and secondly, we will address the impact to your heirs under the 10 Year Rule for beneficiaries.

During your lifetime:

Tax-Free Growth and No RMDs
Once assets enter a Roth IRA, investments compound without future income taxation, and qualified withdrawals are entirely tax-free. Paying taxes today on a smaller balance is often far more advantageous than paying taxes later on a much larger account value. Additionally, Roth IRAs eliminate lifetime Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), which force Traditional account holders to take taxable withdrawals starting at age 73 or 75. These mandatory distributions can create a "tax snowball," pushing retirees into higher tax brackets, increasing Medicare premiums (IRMAA surcharges), and causing more Social Security income to become taxable.

Strategic Execution
A Roth conversion acts as a hedge against future tax increases. Investors can proactively recognize income during "sweet spot" years when their tax bracket is temporarily lower, such as:

- * Early retirement before Social Security begins
- * Temporary drops in income
- * Stock market downturns

Below are two examples of an average couple retiring in Florida at age 65 with 1 million dollars in their 401Ks, small pensions of \$1500/mo each, average social security income and expenses.

Year	Age	Social Security	Pension	Without ROTH Conversions			With ROTH Conversions			
				Total Income Inflows	RMDs	Ending 401K Balance	RMDs	401(k) / 403(b)	Roth IRA	Total Portfolio
2026	65/65	\$42,000	\$36,000	\$78,000	\$0	\$1,107,282	\$0	\$1,062,991	\$44,294	\$1,107,285
2030	69/69	\$79,475	\$39,600	\$119,075	\$0	\$1,664,532	\$0	\$1,331,626	\$332,910	\$1,664,536
2035	74/74	\$89,918	\$44,100	\$134,018	\$0	\$2,770,667	\$0	\$1,662,400	\$1,108,272	\$2,770,672
2040	79/79	\$101,734	\$48,600	\$150,334	\$168,476	\$3,767,764	\$73,164	\$1,480,833	\$2,694,479	\$4,175,312
2045	84/84	\$115,103	\$53,100	\$168,203	\$277,180	\$4,879,007	\$63,578	\$922,005	\$5,594,468	\$6,516,473
2050	89/89	\$130,228	\$57,600	\$187,828	\$441,768	\$5,868,448	\$0	\$0	\$10,611,654	\$10,611,654
2051	90/90	\$133,484	\$58,500	\$191,984	\$481,020	\$6,017,010	\$0	\$0	\$11,750,099	\$11,750,099

Projections are based on a portfolio allocated toward growth. Projections are never a guarantee of future performance.

Generational Wealth Transfer
Effective beginning January 1, 2020, when a person passes away and leaves their retirement account balances to a non-spousal heir, the entire sum must be withdrawn by the 10th year after death.

This area of estate planning is where Roth conversions provide tremendous value with regard to taxes. Since non-spousal beneficiaries inheriting traditional accounts must fully distribute those funds within 10 years, it can result in paying very large amounts of ordinary income tax during their peak earning years. Conversely, inherited Roth IRAs are distributed tax-free, allowing families to transfer wealth across generations far more efficiently.

Just a quick example: A surviving spouse passes at age 89, leaving a \$3 million IRA equally to two children, ages 58 & 60. Each of these children would have to withdraw their half within the 10 years after death. If the balances didn’t grow and equal amounts were taken each of the ten years, which would be additional ordinary income of \$150,000 to recognize each year, generally at an effective tax rate above 22%. But that isn’t realistic, because the balances tend to grow and heirs tend not to withdraw in the early part of the 10 year window. A more likely situation is that the money is not withdrawn in the first 5 years. Rather it grows from the original \$1.5 million, and each child is withdrawing \$3 million over the last 5 years of the window. That becomes \$600,000 and will bridge the 35% tax bracket. (Approximately and additional \$185,000 in federal tax just on the IRA withdrawal amount of \$600,000). If your heirs live in a location that imposes

State Income Tax, we would suggest looking at Florida residency. It may be worthy the consider as it just may pay for itself!

Why Guidance Matters
Timing and execution are critical. At Naples Wealth Strategies, we build personalized, multi-year strategies tailored to your unique retirement timeline, income needs, and long-term goals. We help you convert the right amount at the right time, maximizing lifetime tax savings and keeping you in control of your financial future.

The most important thing to understand is that your situation is unique, and will be different from your brother, sister, neighbor, or best friend. That is why you must look at a customized analysis & financial projection that incorporates your income, assets, & family structure.





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

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THE DOG GONE TRUTH: UNDERSTANDING SERVICE AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT ANIMALS

By Lenore T. Brakefield and Sophia Truong

Many individuals fail to recognize the legal distinction between service animals and emotional support animals. Understanding these differences is critical to navigating access rights in public accommodations such as restaurants and grocery stores, as well as in housing contexts. However, some individuals knowingly misrepresent their pets as service animals or emotional support animals, undermining protection for those who legitimately require such assistance. The discussion below examines the legal framework governing each category and the rights attached to them.

What are Service Animals?

Under Chapter 413 of the Florida Statutes, a service animal is trained to do work or perform specific tasks for an individual with a disability, including physical, sensory, intellectual, or other mental disability. Examples include guiding individuals with visual impairments, alerting individuals who experience seizures, or interrupting destructive behaviors in individuals with psychiatric disabilities. The tasks performed must be directly related to the individual's disability. In Florida public accommodations, service animals are generally limited to a dog or miniature horse, and most importantly, service animals are considered working animals and not pets.

What are Emotional Support Animals?

In contrast, under Chapter 760 of the Florida Statutes, emotional support animals do not need any specialized training. Its sole function and presence are to provide comfort or therapeutic emotional support that alleviates effects of a person's symptoms or effects of a disability. Therefore, emotional support animals do not qualify as service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Florida's public-accommodation law.

What are the Main Differences?

Under the ADA, service animals are allowed to be with their individuals and enter places that do not generally allow animals. For example, service animals are allowed to enter stores, restaurants, hospitals, hotels and other places open to the public. When entering a business or state/local government facility and when the animal's role is not obvious, employees may ask certain information using two questions: "[i]s the dog a service animal required because of a disability? What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?"

However, employees may not demand a certificate, identification card, special vest, or even proof of professional training. Additionally, under Chapter 413 of the Florida Statutes, employees may not demand the individual's diagnosis or require the animal to demonstrate its task.

Service animals' access is not unlimited. The handler must keep the service animal under control using a leash, harness, or tether, unless a disability prevents their use, in which case the handler must use voice commands, signals, or other effective controls. However, a business may require the service animal to leave if the animal is out of control and the handler does not use corrective measures to control it, if it is not housebroken, or if its behavior poses a direct threat to others.

Florida emotional support animal laws are based on federal protections, particularly the Fair Housing Act (FHA), which requires landlords to make reasonable accommodations for tenants with emotional support animals. Housing providers may request reliable supporting information when the disability or need is not apparent. Additionally, emotional support animals do not receive an automatic right to enter grocery stores, retail stores, indoor restaurants, or other public businesses. They are primarily protected in housing. Outside of housing accommodations, they are considered pets and do not qualify for additional rights.

This distinction is especially important in places where food is sold or prepared. Restaurants must generally allow legitimate service animals in public dining areas despite ordinary restrictions on animals. Florida also permits local governments to authorize emotional support animals in specifically designated outdoor restaurant areas, subject to permits and sanitation safeguards. Outside those exceptions, emotional support animals are prohibited, particularly from indoor food-service areas.

Penalties for Misrepresentation

A person cannot turn a pet into a service animal merely by purchasing a vest or certificate online. Under Chapter 413 of the Florida Statutes, a person who knowingly misrepresents themselves as using

a service animal or being qualified to use a service animal commits a second-degree misdemeanor. Penalties can include (1) a fine of up to \$500.00, (2) up to 60 days in jail, and (3) 30 hours of community service for an organization that serves individuals with disabilities to be completed within 6 months.

Respecting and understanding these distinctions serve multiple critical functions: it protects public health and safety, ensures compliance with business policies, and upholds both state and federal laws. Maintaining these boundaries preserves essential access rights for individuals with disabilities whose professionally trained service animals enable them to participate safely and independently in their daily lives.



About the Authors

Lenore Brakefield is a Partner at Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. and a Naples native. She focuses her practice on civil and commercial litigation, local government law, real estate law, community association law, and transactional matters.

Sophia Truong is a law clerk at Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. and co-writer of this article. She is entering her second year at Cleveland State University College of Law and has a strong interest in real estate law and business law.



Have questions about service animals, emotional support animals, or your legal rights? Contact our attorneys at Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. at (239) 649-6555 or our Marco Island office at (239) 394-5161 to schedule a consultation and learn how we can help protect your rights and interests.



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Exomind™ for Adult ADHD: SUPPORTING FOCUS, ATTENTION AND MOTIVATION

By Dr. Waldo Amadeo

For many adults with ADHD, the struggle isn't knowing what needs to be done. It's getting their brain to cooperate long enough to actually do it.

Starting a task. Staying focused. Ignoring distractions. Organizing the steps. Maintaining motivation. Following through.

These are all functions that depend heavily on the brain's executive networks—which is exactly why Exomind™ has become such an exciting addition to the way we approach adult ADHD at Heal Thyself Institute.

Exomind is a non-invasive brain stimulation technology that uses magnetic pulses to stimulate targeted areas of the brain. One of the primary regions we can target is the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC), an area involved in attention, working memory, planning, executive function, cognitive control and goal-directed behavior.

In other words, many of the functions adults with ADHD tell us they struggle with every day.

It's Not Just About "Paying Attention"

Adult ADHD is often described as a problem with attention, but that description misses a huge part of the experience.

Someone may be able to focus intensely on something interesting while feeling almost incapable of beginning a mundane task. They may have great ideas but struggle to organize and execute them. They may procrastinate until urgency finally creates enough momentum to act.

That's why motivation and task initiation are such important pieces of the ADHD conversation.

Exomind gives us a way to directly stimulate brain regions involved in these executive processes without medication, needles or surgery. A typical Exomind session lasts approximately 24 minutes, and patients remain awake and alert throughout treatment.



Exomind + Functional Neurology

At Heal Thyself Institute, however, we don't look at Exomind as a stand-alone answer to ADHD.

Two adults can have the same diagnosis and very different brains.

Our functional neurological evaluation allows us to look beyond the label and examine how an individual's nervous system is actually functioning. We may assess areas such as eye movements, balance, coordination, reaction time, sensory processing and other neurological functions.

We can then incorporate Exomind into a broader, individualized plan when appropriate.

That may mean combining Exomind with specific neurological exercises, movement, nutritional and lifestyle support, sleep optimization, or other therapies designed around what we find during the evaluation.

A Different Way to Think About Adult ADHD

For adults who have spent years asking themselves:

Why can't I just start?

Why do I lose focus so easily?

Why do I need a deadline before my brain finally kicks into gear?

Why can I focus for hours on one thing but not ten minutes on another?

There may be more to the story than willpower.

By targeting the neurological networks involved in focus, attention, executive function and motivation, Exomind gives us another tool for helping the brain function differently.

And for adults with ADHD, that can open up an entirely different conversation—one focused not simply on managing symptoms, but on understanding and supporting the brain behind them

About the Author

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

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



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Hormonal Imbalance and Its Effect on Skin Health

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

The skin is no unsubstantial organ. In fact, it's the body's largest and a significant defender from outside contagions. Beyond the protection it offers your body, the skin also offers a unique ability for you to gauge your internal health purely by looking at it.

However, with an organ so large, many things can affect it, one of which is your hormones or, more accurately, an imbalance in them.

Hormonal Imbalance

Much as the name suggests, a hormonal imbalance occurs when your hormones are no longer balanced, either because a hormone is secreted too much or too little.

Hormonal imbalance can be disastrous for your well-being because your hormones regulate many different processes in the body, including your development, metabolism, and reproduction. So, if you're producing too much or too little hormones, it can also affect these processes.

Some of the impacts of hormonal imbalance include primary ovarian insufficiency, early menopause, and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) in women, and prostate cancer in men.

Symptoms of Hormonal Imbalance

While the symptoms of hormonal imbalance can vary based on the hormone out of balance, some of the general symptoms of hormonal imbalance include:

- increased stomach issues
- sudden weight loss/gain
- weakness
- skin dryness
- fatigue
- body aches
- increased urination
- persistent thirst
- anxiety
- mood swings
- changes in appetite
- hair loss
- infertility

If you notice any of these symptoms, it's best to visit a doctor specializing in hormones to pinpoint the cause of the imbalance and correct it. Often, hormonal imbalance can be an indicator of an even bigger issue, and choosing to ignore the symptoms may cause life-threatening risks, which is why it is always recommended to address hormonal imbalances as soon as you notice them.

Luckily, hormonal imbalance can often manifest on your skin, helping you see if something is unbalanced internally. If you're aware of what to look for, and what skin conditions may be due to hormonal imbalances, you have the advantage of knowing when there is a need to look more closely into your hormone levels.

How Hormonal Imbalance Affects Your Skin

As we know, the skin is the largest organ in your body, so its health relies on many things. However, one of the most important components of your skin comes from the sebaceous glands under your skin that produce sebum, a natural oil secreted through the pores of your skin.

Sebum helps protect the skin from UV radiation, locks in moisture, and transports fat-soluble antioxidants to the surface of the skin, which can then help prevent oxidative skin damage.

However, as with all things, too much can be a problem. In fact, too much sebum production is often the cause of various skin issues like inflammation and acne. One reason for excess sebum production? An imbalance of androgen, or male sex hormones that are present in those of both genders.

Sebum is not the only important part of the skin, either. Your skin is composed of the protein collagen, which is a building block of your skin. It is collagen that helps to give your skin a youthful appearance, and when your collagen production is down, your skin may start to sag.

Estrogen, a female sex hormone, is crucial in producing collagen and helps keep your skin thick and hydrated. If your estrogen levels are low, such as the case with older women entering menopause, skin can become thinner and more sensitive.



It's not just those entering menopause who see these results of low estrogen, though. A survey found that 2 out of 5 women still getting a period each month report unusually sensitive skin before and during their menstruation, which is generally the time when estrogen levels drop. Many women also notice an increase in sebum production before and during their menstrual cycle, which can contribute to acne.

When we look at the effects of hormonal changes on the body, it's clear that hormonal imbalance can manifest in changes to your skin.

Hormonal Imbalance as Skin Manifestations

Let's take a look at the different skin imperfections that can result from hormonal imbalances.

Under Eye Dark Circles

The constant companion for college students staying up all night to study, under eye dark circles are a skin problem resulting most often from adrenal fatigue.

When you experience more stress, your body produces more of the stress hormone cortisol. However, excess cortisol production can cause poor sleep at night because it tends to make people feel restless. If you continually suffer from poor sleep, dark circles can appear around your eyes.

Furthermore, if you're suffering from low estrogen levels, the skin under your eyes can become thinner, which can make the darkness even more prominent.

Dry Skin

While common during the dry and cold winter months, dry skin can also occur to those with hormonal imbalances, specifically if hormones such as estrogen decline. This is because a reduction in estrogen can cause a decrease in sebum production. Sebum is essential for retaining moisture in your skin, so if your body is not producing enough sebum, it will not stay hydrated enough and can experience dryness, roughness, and flakiness.

In addition to estrogen, thyroid hormones also stimulate the oil glands, but instead of increasing sebum production, they reduce it. So, if you suffer from hyperthyroidism, or an overproduction of thyroid hormones, you may experience dry skin.

Acne

It can be frustrating to experience acne in your 20s and 30s, with most people assuming it is an affliction only for teenagers. However, hormones can significantly influence your body's sebum production, leading to acne, regardless of age.

For women, estrogen and progesterone, which are key players in your menstrual cycle, can increase the amount of sebum produced, clogging your skin's pores and leading to acne. As for men, an excessive amount of testosterone can also produce excess sebum.

For those experiencing acne due to hormonal imbalance, they most often appear on the chin, forehead, and nose.

Skin Tags

Skin tags are small skin-colored growths on the skin of your neck or eyelids, resulting from a compromise in your insulin and glucose hormonal balance. When these hormones start changing, estrogen can dramatically reduce, which affects your skin's elasticity and can cause overlapping in your skin layers. When these skin layers experience constant friction, skin tags can occur.

In general, skin tags are most often associated with metabolic syndrome, PCOS, and diabetes.

Pale or Yellow Skin

Hormonal imbalance can affect your blood vessels, making your skin appear pale and waxy. However, hormonal imbalance is not the only cause of this appearance, with liver failure also lending itself to pale or yellow skin. If you notice that your skin or eyes appear yellow, check in with a doctor to determine the cause.

Balancing Hormones and Regulating Skin Health

If your skin is suffering from imbalanced hormones in the form of dry, thin, sensitive, or pale skin, correcting the hormonal imbalance is the best way to address the root of the problem and see improvements in your skin as a result.

The following are some of the possibilities for correcting a hormonal imbalance:

Oral Contraceptives

Oral contraceptives can help correct hormonal imbalance in women and, in some cases, are prescribed to treat acne. Oral contraceptives help to target the hormones that peak at ovulation, which is generally when those experiencing hormonal acne may see an increase in breakouts. Oral contraceptives keep hormone levels more even, lessening breakouts.

However, oral contraceptives are not for everyone, with those with a history of breast cancer, high blood pressure, or blood clots potentially unfit for this treatment. Talk to your doctor to determine if this is an adequate treatment for your skin and hormonal needs.

Anti-Androgen Drugs

As discussed, high levels of androgens, such as testosterone, can increase sebum production in some people, increasing the odds of clogged pores and acne breakouts. Anti-androgen drugs help to keep androgens from rising too high, which can help manage skin issues.

Testosterone Replacement

On the opposite end of the spectrum are medications that help address low testosterone, including testosterone gels and patches. These therapies help to fight the decline in testosterone production seen in some in men.

Check Your Lifestyle

While medications and therapies can help with hormonal imbalance, it is also best to ensure your lifestyle reflects healthy habits aimed at keeping your hormones balanced. Some of these habits include:

- exercising regularly
- getting enough sleep each day
- having a balanced diet
- drinking enough water
- managing stress levels
- reducing alcohol consumption
- avoiding smoking

These habits help keep your hormone levels regular while also supporting healthy skin.

The Influence of Hormones on Your Skin

Hormones are chemical messengers used throughout your body, and one area they can impact is your skin. Stress hormones such as cortisol and sex hormones like estrogen, progesterone, and testosterone can all cause unwanted skin reactions if unbalanced, such as acne, dry skin, sagging skin, or increased sensitivity.

If you're noticing skin problems and can't determine their cause, it might be something more internal. Reach out to a hormone specialist to get a reading on your hormone levels, see if there is an imbalance, and devise a treatment plan to help restore the equilibrium that your entire body, including your skin, will benefit from.

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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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COMING TO A PROVIDER NEAR YOU:

MSK Ultrasound Imaging is Rising as Unit Costs are Falling

By Rick Weber

You've likely had an MRI at some point in your life. But you probably haven't experienced musculoskeletal (MSK) ultrasound imaging.

MSK ultrasound imaging was first used in the United States in the 1970s for investigating the rotator cuff, then the Achilles tendon in the 1980s. Its popularity plateaued, likely because of the lack of physicians and sonographers trained in its use, lower reimbursement rates and the advent of the MRI.

Although it remains a specialized service that is more commonly available in large hospitals, ultrasound imaging is gaining traction and popularity, and is becoming more widely available.

"It was initially used for research purposes, but it became clear that it could be used for diagnostic and treatment purposes," says Arie van Duijn, a professor of Physical Therapy in the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences at Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health & Human Services. "Research started to show that the reliability and validity for diagnosing common superficial structures was in many cases comparable to the MRI, and with the rapid decline of the cost of ultrasound imaging equipment, this led to the gradual increase in use of this technology.

"Portable ultrasound imaging units can now be bought for as low as \$5,000, making it accessible to many healthcare providers, and this has led to a rapid increase in its use, especially in the last five years. Equipment manufacturers have also started to develop specialized MSK software for their units, also making it easier for providers to start using it in practice."

Van Duijn says MSK ultrasound imaging provides a low-cost, high-quality, reliable alternative to traditional imaging modalities such as MRI and CT for MSK health care providers to examine superficial MSK structures that can show these structures moving in real time.

It can assist providers when targeting structures for injections or dry needling by visualizing needle placement, and can provide information about effectiveness of treatment. It can be used for biofeedback purposes, such as allowing patients to learn how to

contract muscles that they can't see with the naked eye. And because it is a very safe imaging modality that does not require radiation, it is used in obstetrics (OB) for visualizing fetuses.

There are some downsides to MSK ultrasound imaging:

- Only superficial structures can be seen. Since sound waves cannot penetrate bone, structures that are covered by bone cannot be seen by ultrasound imaging (for instance the ACL or meniscus in the knee are both deep structures largely covered by bone so are difficult to visualize with ultrasound imaging).
- There is a learning curve for providers, so continuing education is needed to teach the technical skills needed.
- Unit cost can be a barrier, but the cost is coming down rapidly.

Facilities such as emergency rooms already had the equipment that was used for other diagnostics (such as OB and vascular), so there was early adoption there for MSK purposes. There is a rapid increase in the equipment in orthopedic physician offices and physical therapy practices now that the cost of the equipment is coming down.

Hand-held portable units are now starting to be used outside the office at what is referred to as POCUS (point-of-care ultrasound), such as in athletics, where athletic trainers, physical therapists and/or physicians use it on the sidelines. Those portable units are simply probes that connect to a phone or tablet that has the image-display app.

Van Duijn, along with FGCU Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) program faculty and graduate students, has been using MSK ultrasound imaging in ongoing projects with FGCU athletics to evaluate how tendon and ligament structures behave during the course of a season in various sports and identify tissue changes that may indicate a higher injury risk.

They have measured the thickness of tendons and ligaments of baseball players and golfers at multiple times throughout the season to understand how those tissues change, and also looked at the presence of fluid in the tendon/ligament to determine what is normal.

"Once we understand the normal course that can be expected, we hopefully can identify if an athlete has abnormal changes that may indicate an increased risk for injury such as a rotator cuff or elbow ligament tear," he says. "We recently acquired the technology to also measure tissue stiffness—called shear wave elastography—that may show abnormal tissue changes that are not yet showing in a change in thickness.

"Decreased tendon or ligament stiffness means that those tissues are less able to withstand the high forces placed on those tissues by overhead throwing, etc., and may also indicate an increased injury risk. Once an athlete tears a tendon or ligament, they are usually looking at surgery (Tommy John elbow surgery) and a good number of those athletes will never be able to come back to the level they were before the injury, so it is important to try to prevent these devastating injuries.

"We are also using ultrasound measurements to evaluate other injuries such as fractures, and to evaluate to outcomes of physical therapy interventions such as manual therapy, exercise, cold water immersion, etc.

"We now are starting to understand what we can normally expect throughout the season. The next phase of these projects is to identify what kinds of deviations from those normals are associated with increased injury risk."

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PHYSICAL THERAPY MONTH

How Proper Arch Support Enhances Physical Therapy Outcomes

Every October, Physical Therapy Month reminds us to celebrate the power of movement and the professionals who help us heal, recover, and live more active lives. Whether you're recovering from an injury, managing chronic pain, or working to improve mobility and balance, physical therapy often serves as a lifeline. But here's something many people overlook: the health of your feet—the foundation of your body—plays an essential role in how effective physical therapy can be. And one of the simplest yet most transformative tools in the process? Proper arch support.

Why Feet Matter More Than We Think

It's easy to forget just how much our feet do for us. They carry the weight of our entire body, absorb shock, and keep us balanced as we walk, run, or even just stand still. Each foot contains 26 bones, 33 joints, and more than 100 muscles, tendons, and ligaments—an intricate system working tirelessly every single day.

But when your arches aren't properly supported, this delicate system can quickly become unbalanced. Flat feet, high arches, or even slight misalignments in the way your feet hit the ground can ripple up through the body, leading to pain in the ankles, knees, hips, and lower back. That's where arch support comes in. By restoring proper alignment and distributing pressure evenly, supportive inserts or orthotics give your body a stable foundation to heal and thrive—especially during physical therapy.

The Missing Piece of the Puzzle

Many patients begin physical therapy because they're dealing with pain: maybe a knee that's been sore for years, a stubborn case of plantar fasciitis, or a back that flares up after long days of sitting. Physical therapists do an incredible job helping people strengthen muscles, improve flexibility, and retrain movement patterns. But when poor foot mechanics are part of the problem, exercises alone may not fully resolve the issue.

Arch support addresses the root cause, complementing the therapist's work. For example, if you're doing strengthening exercises for your quads and hips to relieve knee pain, but your arches collapse every time you take a step, that knee is still under extra stress. By adding arch support, you're reinforcing the foundation so the therapy work "sticks." It's a one-two punch: support plus movement training.

Better Alignment, Better Results

One of the key benefits of arch support is improved alignment. Think of it like building a house: if the



foundation is crooked, no matter how much work you do on the walls or roof, the structure won't be stable. Your body is the same way. Proper arch support helps your ankles stay in a neutral position, which in turn keeps your knees, hips, and spine aligned.

This alignment doesn't just reduce pain—it also allows the muscles you're strengthening in physical therapy to function as they're supposed to. For instance, if your glutes are weak, your therapist might give you targeted exercises. But if your feet roll inward with every step, those glutes will keep over-compensating. Supportive arches remove the extra strain, letting your therapy progress more smoothly and effectively.

Relief That Encourages Consistency

Let's be honest: physical therapy requires commitment. The exercises work, but only if you stick with them. Pain can make it tempting to skip sessions or put off doing your at-home program. Proper arch support can provide relief that makes it easier to stay consistent. When every step feels more comfortable, motivation to keep moving naturally increases.

Patients often report that when their feet are supported, they're able to walk farther, exercise longer, and engage more confidently in their therapy routines. This kind of momentum is exactly what makes recovery possible.

Beyond Recovery: Preventing Future Problems

Physical therapy isn't just about fixing what hurts—it's also about preventing future injuries. Arch support plays a role here too. By correcting imbalances before they lead to wear and tear, supportive orthotics reduce the likelihood of recurring issues. For athletes, that could mean fewer shin splints or stress fractures. For older adults, it could mean improved balance and a reduced risk of falls. For anyone, it simply means moving through life with less pain and more ease.

Finding the Right Support

Not all arch supports are created equal. The best results usually come from supports that are personally fitted to your feet, ensuring that they match your unique arches and activity level. Your physical therapist can often guide you toward the right type of support, whether that's a custom orthotic, an over-the-counter insole, or a specialized shoe.

What matters most is making sure your feet get the attention they deserve. Just like you wouldn't ignore your core strength or posture, foot health should be part of your overall wellness strategy.

The Takeaway

Physical therapy gives people their lives back—helping them move with less pain, more confidence, and greater freedom. But like any powerful tool, it works best when paired with the right support system. Proper arch support provides the stable foundation your body needs to get the most out of every stretch, every exercise, and every step toward recovery.

This Physical Therapy Month, take a moment to honor the professionals guiding us on the path to healing. And while you're at it, don't forget to look down: your feet just might be the key to unlocking even better outcomes in your journey to health and mobility.

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NEUROPLASTICITY-DRIVEN PHYSICAL THERAPY: Advanced Neurology's Approach to Stroke Recovery

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

As we age, maintaining cognitive health becomes increasingly important for preserving independence, quality of life, and stroke recovery represents one of the most complex challenges in rehabilitation medicine, requiring sophisticated understanding of brain function and targeted therapeutic interventions. Advanced neurology specialists are revolutionizing stroke recovery through evidence-based physical therapy protocols that harness the brain's remarkable capacity for neuroplasticity—the ability to reorganize and form new neural connections throughout life.

THE NEUROLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF RECOVERY

When stroke occurs, whether ischemic or hemorrhagic, brain tissue damage can result in devastating motor, sensory, and cognitive impairments. However, advanced neurological research has revealed that the brain possesses extraordinary adaptive capabilities. Neuroplasticity allows undamaged brain regions to assume functions previously controlled by damaged areas, but this process requires precise, intensive stimulation through specialized physical therapy techniques.

Advanced neurology specialists understand that effective stroke recovery depends on activating specific neural pathways through repetitive, task-oriented movements. This approach differs significantly from traditional rehabilitation methods, focusing instead on evidence-based protocols that maximize neuroplastic potential during critical recovery windows.

CUTTING-EDGE PHYSICAL THERAPY INTERVENTIONS

Modern stroke recovery incorporates several advanced physical therapy modalities. Constraint-induced movement therapy (CIMT) forces patients to use affected limbs by restraining unaffected ones, promoting neural reorganization in motor cortex areas. Research demonstrates that CIMT can significantly improve upper extremity function when implemented within optimal timeframes.

Robotic-assisted gait training represents another breakthrough intervention. Devices like the Lokomat provide precise, repetitive leg movements that stimulate spinal cord circuits and cortical motor areas. This technology allows patients with severe mobility impairments to practice walking patterns safely while their nervous systems relearn complex movement coordination.



Functional electrical stimulation (FES) combines physical therapy with targeted electrical impulses that activate paralyzed muscles. This dual approach not only prevents muscle atrophy but also provides sensory feedback that facilitates motor learning and neural pathway reconstruction.

TASK-SPECIFIC TRAINING PROTOCOLS

Advanced neurology specialists emphasize task-specific training that mirrors real-world activities. Rather than focusing solely on isolated muscle strengthening, modern protocols integrate complex movement patterns that challenge multiple neural systems simultaneously. Patients practice reaching, grasping, walking, and balance activities that directly translate to improved daily functioning.

Mirror therapy utilizes visual feedback to trick the brain into believing both limbs are moving normally. This technique has shown remarkable success in reducing phantom limb sensations and improving motor function in stroke survivors with hemiplegia.

TIMING AND INTENSITY CONSIDERATIONS

Neurological research indicates that recovery potential varies significantly based on timing post-stroke. The acute phase (first three months) represents a critical window when neuroplasticity is heightened. Advanced specialists design intensive therapy protocols during this period, often requiring 3-5 hours daily of structured intervention.

However, recovery continues well beyond acute phases. Chronic stroke survivors can still achieve meaningful improvements through appropriately designed programs that account for individual neurological profiles and remaining neural capacity.

PERSONALIZED RECOVERY STRATEGIES

Advanced neurology specialists employ sophisticated assessment tools including functional MRI, diffusion tensor imaging, and electroencephalography to map individual brain damage patterns and remaining neural resources. This information guides personalized physical therapy protocols that maximize each patient's unique recovery potential.

Treatment plans integrate motor learning principles with neural stimulation techniques, creating comprehensive programs that address not only physical impairments but also cognitive and perceptual deficits that commonly accompany stroke.

THE FUTURE OF STROKE RECOVERY

Emerging technologies including virtual reality environments, brain-computer interfaces, and targeted pharmacological interventions promise to further enhance physical therapy outcomes. Advanced neurology specialists continue pushing boundaries, combining cutting-edge technology with deep understanding of neural mechanisms to help stroke survivors reclaim independence and quality of life.

The integration of advanced neurological expertise with innovative physical therapy techniques offers unprecedented hope for stroke recovery, transforming what was once considered permanent disability into opportunities for meaningful rehabilitation and renewed function.

If you or a loved one is navigating stroke recovery, don't wait to access the specialized care that can make all the difference. Take the first step toward reclaiming independence and improved quality of life. Call 239-667-5878 today to schedule your comprehensive stroke recovery consultation and discover how cutting-edge neuroplasticity-driven therapy can accelerate your healing journey.



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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.nfcr.org/cancer-types/kidney-cancer/?gclid=CjwKCAIAyc2BBhAaEiWAA44-wW9qTM7gXbIKsBU1ldxNN-rM7OKwmG3l43bZnl6h175MIICZwNsKORoCE5QQAVD_BWE

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

Services Provided

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

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- Kidney Transplant Services: Patient and Donor Evaluations, Post-Transplant Follow-up Care
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- 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 educations 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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SURVIVING GRIEF AND LOSS

By Jennifer Vear Hoy, MS/MS

Grief can be overwhelming—a series of seemingly endless attacks of sorrow rooted in profound loss and expressed in various (and often disconcerting) ways. In the midst of such an emotional war zone, how does one learn to survive...and hopefully one day thrive...after the loss of a love?

It helps to remind us that grief is universal in time and space. There is no easy replacement for love and loss. Like death and taxes, as the saying goes, it comes to us all. As one Russian lady told me, he who was never born can never die. As human beings, we are hard-wired to grieve after a major loss. It has been this way forever.

And yet, the expression of grief is unique to each individual and deeply personal. No two people grieve the same way. There is no handbook to follow or "right" way to grieve. Our expression of grief is as unique as our fingerprints, as is its impact upon our body, mind, and spirit. Our bodies may erupt in illness or unusual pain. Headaches, insomnia, digestive problems, lack of appetite, or even over-indulgence in food or drink are common. Mentally, the bereaved person may be deeply emotional, depressed, unable to concentrate, or make routine decisions. Spiritually, mourners may feel a sense of disconnect from their regular religious practices or seek new spiritual avenues to try and cope with the depth and disruption of their grief. No wonder many mourners find the grief experience overwhelming!

Looking at the wisdom of the ages may help the mourner to gain a perspective on grief. A review of Ecclesiastes from the Old Testament is one such example. From the Old Testament scribes to the Pete Seeger song popularized by the Byrds in the 1960's, its teachings transcend time and space, as this extract demonstrates:

To Everything There is a Season:

—A time to be born, a time to die,
—A time to sow, a time to reap,
—A time for tearing down, and a time for building up,
—A time for sorrow, and a time for joy,
—A time for mourning, and a time for dancing,
—A time for finding, and a time for letting go,
—A time for silence, and a time to talk,
—A time for love, and a time for hate,
And in the powerful words of the Byrd's musical rendition:
—A time for peace, I swear it's not too late.

Ecclesiastes describes the lessons of life, as true today as it was ages ago. Change is inevitable in the human condition and grief is a natural part of that cycle.

This perspective on grief is another reflection of its universality. The teachings of Ecclesiastes transcend the limits of time and space. It also provides an apt summary of human nature.

Now that we have gained a bit of perspective, let's take look at the underlying scholarship pertaining to grief. Elizabeth Kubler Ross was one of the first academics to investigate this area. In her classic book *On Death and Dying*, Kubler Ross focuses upon the following stages of grief. Recent scholars have underscored that these stages may vary, and some mourners may experience them in order while others do not. Modern science has amplified and expanded upon the original Kubler Ross stages.

1. Shock/Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance.

Let's take a look at these stages, one by one.

Shock/Denial

The first phase often helps the mourner deal with trauma when learning of the loss. "Oh no, this can't be so!" This phase enables the grieving party to begin to believe and process the loss.

Anger

Anger is also an early grief stage that may have no rationale, rhyme, or reason. It may be directed at the lost love, the Fates, or even the medical profession. Some mourners direct their grief and anger at God. Why God? WHY??? Why did you take my loved one from me? WHY? TELL ME WHY???? Some grieving folks are enraged that the loss of the beloved means that cherished goals or plans together will now never be realized.

Bargaining

At times, some mourners seek to exert control over a situation with negotiation. As any theologian will attest, trying to drive a hard bargain with the Almighty is fruitless. Nevertheless, some mourners attempt to curry favor in the cosmic gamble of life and death offering something...anything!...to stave off the inevitable.

Depression

The mourner may sink into depression with realization that the loved one will never return. Such depression may manifest itself through profound sadness, lack of energy, over/under eating or drinking, inability to enjoy activities one previously found pleasurable, as well as finding oneself mired in the blues and the blahs.

Acceptance

At long last, acceptance means putting grief in its proper perspective and taking steps to move on in one's life. Acceptance does not cancel out grief. Rather, it enables mourners to honor and cherish the memory of the departed loved one while beginning to focus upon the future. Acceptance does not diminish the love the mourner feels for the departed loved one. Rather, it enables the grieving person to address their own future

while treasuring memories of their past. Reflecting upon the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, acceptance is the realization that there is a time for sorrow and a time for joy. So, make today count!

Understanding the dynamics of the grief experience is helpful, but sometimes one needs more concrete suggestions as how to survive the loss of a love. Here are a few suggestions which a person struggling with grief may want to add to their emotional tool kit.

Tips and Techniques

- Hold a conversation with your departed loved one to express how you feel without them in your daily life.
- Write a letter to your Beloved about how you are living your life now.
- Play music the two of you enjoyed together whether it is middle-aged makeout music, jazz, senile rock and roll, or the classics.
- Travel to places the two of you had always wanted to visit and cherish the experience, as you are doing it for both of you.
- Prepare a favorite dinner for two of you and set a special place for your departed "guest." Perhaps crack open a bottle of wine and reminisce about the joy of your life together.
- Exercise to get those endorphins circulating when you are having a rough day.
- On truly tough days, close the windows, shut the doors, and beat the heck out of a pillow. Yell, scream, shout as loud as you need to achieve a release.
- Participate in a fundraiser or make a donation to your Beloved's favorite charity.
- On truly difficult days—such as your loved one's birthday or your anniversary—consider donating your time at a local foodbank or other outreach area.
- And finally, be patient and gentle with yourself. Understand that it takes time, effort, and energy to survive the loss of a love. Remember this: there are only a few different letters between the words SURVIVE AND THRIVE.



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DINE, DISCOVER & CONNECT: EXPLORING SENIOR LIVING ONE COMMUNITY AT A TIME

By Bruce Rosenblatt, CDP - Owner/Senior Housing Expert

Choosing the right senior living community can be one of the most important decisions a senior or family will ever make. Yet many people begin their search feeling overwhelmed by the number of options available. To help make the process easier, **Senior Housing Solutions** created Dine, Discover & Connect, a monthly educational luncheon series that allows seniors and their families to learn about senior living in a comfortable, welcoming environment.

Hosted by **Bruce Rosenblatt, CDP**, Founder of Senior Housing Solutions® and known as "**The Matchmaker of Senior Housings**," these events provide an opportunity to tour local senior living communities, enjoy a complimentary lunch, and gain valuable insights about aging, care options, and senior living lifestyles. A Different Approach to Learning About Senior Living Unlike traditional sales presentations, Dine, Discover & Connect focuses on education rather than pressure. The goal is to help seniors and their families become informed consumers before they face a crisis.

Each event is held at a different senior living community, giving attendees the opportunity to experience various communities firsthand. Guests can see the accommodations, dining venues, activity spaces, and amenities while meeting staff members and learning about available services.

Many attendees are surprised to discover how much senior living has changed over the years. Today's communities often feature restaurant-style dining, fitness programs, educational activities, transportation services, social events, and wellness programs designed to support an active and engaging lifestyle.

Why Planning Ahead Matters

Families often begin researching senior living after a hospitalization, medical diagnosis, or other unexpected event. Unfortunately, decisions made during a crisis are frequently rushed and stressful.

One of the core messages of Dine, Discover & Connect is the importance of planning ahead.

As Bruce Rosenblatt often tells families: "**It's better to be five years too early than five minutes too late.**"

By exploring senior living options before they are needed, families can make thoughtful decisions, compare communities, and develop a plan that provides peace of mind for everyone involved.



Experience a Community Firsthand

Reading brochures and browsing websites can only tell part of the story. One of the biggest benefits of attending Dine, Discover & Connect is the opportunity to experience a community in person.

Guests can:

- Tour the community
- Meet leadership and staff
- Learn about care and lifestyle options
- Sample the dining program
- Ask questions in an informal setting
- Observe residents enjoying daily life

This firsthand experience often helps families better understand the culture and personality of a community—factors that can be just as important as amenities and services.

Building Connections

The events are also designed to bring people together. Attendees often include seniors planning for the future, adult children researching options for loved ones, and local professionals who serve older adults.

These gatherings create opportunities to:

- Share experiences
- Learn from others
- Ask questions
- Build relationships
- Discover valuable resources

Many attendees leave not only with information but also with new connections and friendships.

Expert Guidance from Senior Housing Solutions

With more than 35 years of experience in senior housing, Bruce Rosenblatt brings a unique perspective to every event. As a former senior living executive, Certified Dementia Practitioner, and Eldercare

Advocate, he understands both the operational side of senior living and the concerns families face when exploring their options.

His mission is simple: help seniors and families make informed decisions that lead to greater safety, independence, and peace of mind.

Join Us at a Future Event

Whether you are actively searching for senior living or simply planning ahead, **Dine, Discover & Connect** offers a valuable opportunity to learn, explore, and connect in a relaxed setting.

The events are educational, informative, and enjoyable—and they provide a unique way to discover what today's senior living communities have to offer.

About Senior Housing Solutions

Senior Housing Solutions® helps seniors and families navigate independent living, assisted living, memory care, skilled nursing, and continuing care retirement communities throughout Southwest Florida. Through personalized guidance and local expertise, Senior Housing Solutions helps families find the right solution for their unique needs.



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Join Senior Care Authority for the 2026 Walk to End Alzheimer's

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

Southwest Florida families are once again invited to step up, literally, for one of the year's most meaningful causes. This fall, the Alzheimer's Association's Walk to End Alzheimer's returns to both Lee and Collier Counties, and Senior Care Authority is proud to take part in these powerful community events. As a company that works every day with families navigating dementia and other cognitive challenges, we know firsthand how much this cause matters, and we're inviting our clients, partners, and neighbors to walk alongside us.

What Is the Walk to End Alzheimer's?

The Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest event dedicated to raising awareness and funds for Alzheimer's care, support, and research. Held annually in hundreds of communities nationwide, it brings together caregivers, families, healthcare professionals, and advocates who have all been touched by Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia in some way. More than 7 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's, and millions more serve as unpaid caregivers for a parent, spouse, or friend. The Walk exists to support all of them, through direct services, education, and cutting-edge research toward prevention, treatment, and ultimately a cure.

Every dollar raised stays close to home and also fuels national research initiatives. Funds help the Alzheimer's Association provide its free 24/7 Helpline, support groups, care consultations, and educational programs to families across Florida, one of the states hit hardest by this disease. Florida is home to hundreds of thousands of residents living with Alzheimer's, and Southwest Florida's large retiree population makes this cause especially close to our community.

2026 Fort Myers Walk — Lee County

The Lee County event kicks off the season on **Saturday, October 24, 2026**, at Florida SouthWestern State College, 13350 FSW Parkway, Fort Myers. Registration and festivities begin at 8:00 a.m., with the Promise Garden ceremony and walk beginning at 8:45 a.m. Participants of all ages

are welcome, and the event is free to join, though fundraising is strongly encouraged to help the local chapter reach its \$160,000 goal.

2026 Naples Walk — Collier County

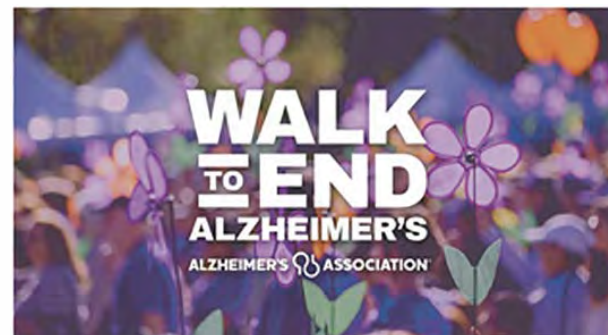
Just a few weeks later, the Collier County community will gather on **Saturday, November 14, 2026**, at the scenic Baker Park along the Gordon River in downtown Naples. The event begins at 8:00 a.m., with the opening ceremony and walk following at 9:00 a.m. This year's Naples campaign has set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$230,000, and past walks here have drawn hundreds of participants and dozens of teams from across the community.

Both events feature the signature Promise Garden ceremony, where participants carry colored flowers representing their personal connection to Alzheimer's, blue for those living with the disease, purple for those who have lost someone, yellow for caregivers, and orange for supporters of the cause and the Alzheimer's Association's vision. It's a simple but moving moment that unites everyone on the walk route, regardless of why they showed up.

Why Senior Care Authority Walks

At Senior Care Authority, we spend our days helping families find the right care solutions for aging loved ones, many of whom are living with Alzheimer's or related dementias. We see the toll this disease takes, not just on the person diagnosed, but on spouses, adult children, and entire families trying to navigate an uncertain and often overwhelming journey. Supporting the Walk to End Alzheimer's is one tangible way we can give back to the community we serve every day, while also standing shoulder to shoulder with the families we work with.

Our team has participated in past Naples and Fort Myers walks, forming teams, raising funds, and connecting with other local caregivers and organizations. We know that a single walk won't cure Alzheimer's, but the cumulative effect of thousands of people across the country lacing up their shoes for the same cause has already driven real progress in research and support services.



How to Get Involved

Whether you've been personally affected by Alzheimer's or simply want to support a cause that touches nearly every family eventually, there are several ways to participate:

Register to walk as an individual or join a team at your chosen location.

Start or join a team, including reaching out to see if Senior Care Authority has a team you can join.

Make a donation to support a participant or the overall campaign goal.

Volunteer on event day to help with setup, registration, or logistics.

Registration is free for both the Fort Myers and Naples walks, and information can be found at act.alz.org. If you or someone you love is facing a dementia diagnosis and you're unsure where to turn for care guidance, Senior Care Authority is also here to help year-round, not just on Walk day.

We hope to see you at Baker Park in Naples or on the Florida SouthWestern campus in Fort Myers this fall. Every step brings us closer to a world without Alzheimer's.



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The company's specialized team includes Registered Nurses trained in respiratory care, Certified Nursing Assistants with pulmonary experience, and Home Health Aides skilled in COPD management techniques. Whether a patient needs post-exacerbation care, daily breathing treatment assistance, or help managing the anxiety often associated with COPD, Whitsyms matches the right caregiver to individual respiratory needs.

Safety and Infection Prevention

COPD home-based care offers significant infection prevention advantages. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that COPD patients face heightened risks during hospital stays, with respiratory infections contributing to frequent readmissions and disease progression. By receiving specialized respiratory care at home, COPD patients minimize exposure to airborne pathogens while maintaining familiar, controlled environments.

Studies published in the Journal of the American Medical Association confirm that COPD patients receiving home health care experience 30% lower hospital readmission rates compared to those



relying solely on institutional care. This reduction translates to better respiratory outcomes, reduced healthcare costs, and decreased anxiety for patients and families.

Independence and Quality of Life

Managing COPD at home allows patients to maintain routines, energy conservation strategies, and autonomy while receiving expert respiratory support. The American Lung Association emphasizes that home-based COPD care positively impacts emotional well-being, reduces depression rates, and improves overall quality of life.

Whitsyms' comprehensive COPD services include oxygen therapy management, nebulizer treatments, breathing exercise instruction, and medication compliance support. Live-in and 24-hour care options provide peace of mind for families while ensuring COPD patients have immediate access to respiratory expertise when breathing difficulties arise.

Supporting Families

Whitsyms understands that COPD affects the entire family system, often creating stress around emergency situations and daily management challenges. Their respite care services provide essential breaks for family caregivers who may feel overwhelmed by constant vigilance COPD care requires. Client Care Liaisons serve as dedicated respiratory care coordinators throughout the treatment journey.

Professional home respiratory services provide education on disease management, emergency planning, and breathing techniques that enable family members to confidently support their loved ones. As respiratory diseases continue affecting millions of Americans, specialized home-based COPD care has become essential for optimal disease management.

SERVICES

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Robotic Muscle Therapy: A New Approach to Lasting Pain Relief

By Theresa Edmunds, RPT, CHC

If you've ever dealt with lingering back pain, sciatica, tight hips, or that nagging discomfort that just won't go away no matter what you try, you're not alone. Many people spend months, sometimes years, cycling through stretches, massage, physical therapy, chiropractic care, medications, or injections and even surgery. The relief is often temporary. The pain returns, or it simply shifts to another area.

Why does this happen? Because most treatments focus on the symptom rather than the source. Your body is a connected system. When certain muscles become chronically tight and shortened, they pull on joints, compress nerves, and force other muscles to compensate. Over time, this creates imbalance. Chase the symptom, and you keep chasing it. Correct the imbalance, and the symptom resolves.

That's where Robotic Precision Therapy comes in.

At Naples Robotic Pain Relief, we deliver something human hands cannot: gentle, static pressure combined with subtle heat and vibration, applied to a specific area of muscle. This allows contracted muscle fibers to fully release and lengthen back toward their natural resting length. When the muscle returns to its proper state, pressure is taken off the joints, bones, vertebrae and nerves. The result is not just temporary comfort, but meaningful, lasting relief.



Unlike traditional massage or manual therapy, this therapy can maintain consistent pressure for the exact amount of time needed to create real change in deep or stubborn muscles. Treatment is non-invasive, medication-free, and virtually painless. Most clients find the sessions surprisingly comfortable.

This approach is especially helpful for common issues we see every day in our Naples clinic: lower back pain, sciatica, hip and knee discomfort, neck and shoulder tension, and recovery from sports or overuse injuries. It's also valuable for active adults,

golfers, pickleball players, and anyone who simply wants to stay mobile and pain-free as they age. Many clients come to us after trying "everything else." Most people begin noticing positive changes within 1-3 sessions.

Robotic Precision Therapy is an FDA-cleared Class II medical system that is a targeted, non-invasive, technology-assisted way of addressing the muscular imbalances that so often underlie chronic pain. With over 25 placements, we treat most pain conditions, including sciatica, hip, shoulder, neck, back, knee pain, as well as headaches, tennis elbow, carpal tunnel and plantar fasciitis. By restoring proper muscle length and function, we help the body move the way it was designed to move.

If you've been managing pain instead of resolving it, it might be time to consider what's actually causing it. We invite you to schedule a complimentary phone consultation with our therapist. We'll listen to your history, answer your questions, and help you determine whether this is the solution you've been searching for.



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What Is Concierge Medicine, and Is It Right for You?

By Joseph Sharp, MD and Talley Sharp, MD — Sharp Health MD, Naples

Concierge medicine is a model of primary care built to restore what traditional practice has largely lost: the ability to choose your own physician, and the time, access and continuity that good medical care requires.

What medicine has lost

Most patients don't realize how much the conventional system has changed. They often see whichever provider happens to be available that day, whether that is their doctor, another doctor or a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant. Appointments are frequently limited to ten or fifteen minutes. When something urgent comes up after hours, they reach an automated phone line, get sent to the emergency room, or are told to wait until the next business day. The result is care that is mostly reactive rather than proactive. It limits the time physicians can spend with patients and how well they can get to know them, and those limits affect outcomes.

How the model works

In a concierge practice, patients pay an annual membership fee directly to the practice. That fee lets the physician care for far fewer patients, often around 200 instead of the 1500+ more common in a traditional practice. The fee pays for time, access and services that insurance doesn't typically cover. Most concierge patients keep their health insurance for labs, imaging, specialists and hospital care.

Practices vary, but concierge care usually includes:

- **Longer, unhurried visits**, with same-day or next-day appointments
- **Direct access to your physician**, often including a personal cell phone number, evenings, weekends and while traveling
- **Comprehensive annual exams** that go well beyond a standard physical
- **Care coordination**, where your physician helps arrange specialist referrals and follows up with them

Doctors as teachers

The model also restores the physician's role as an educator. The word *doctor* comes from the Latin *docere*, "to teach." A physician's original job was not only to diagnose and prescribe but also to help patients understand how to protect and improve their own health.



A fifteen-minute visit barely covers the problem in front of you. It leaves no room to go through your cardiovascular risk, what your lab results actually mean, or the habits that will shape the next twenty years of your health. Concierge medicine gives physicians and patients that time back.

Access when it matters

Illness doesn't keep a Monday-through-Friday schedule. A concern that comes up on a Saturday evening, a holiday weekend or during a trip can often be handled with a direct call to a physician who already knows your history. That can mean faster answers, fewer unnecessary ER visits, and more peace of mind. Access combined with time is what makes a higher standard of care possible.

Who benefits most?

Concierge medicine isn't for everyone, but it tends to fit certain patients well:

- **People managing chronic conditions** such as diabetes, heart disease or anyone on multiple medications, who benefit from close follow-up and coordinated care
- **Those focused on prevention and longevity** who want an in-depth look at their risk factors and a long-term plan, not just a yearly checkup
- **Busy professionals and frequent travelers** who value prompt appointments and being able to reach their doctor from anywhere
- **Adult children coordinating care for aging parents**, who need a physician who is reachable and engaged
- **Anyone who wants a real relationship with their doctor**, where their physician knows them well

Questions to ask before joining

If you're considering concierge care, ask what the membership includes and what it doesn't. Ask how many patients the physician cares for, and how after-hours access works in practice. Ask whether the practice bills your insurance for covered services, and how it coordinates with specialists and hospitals.

At its best, concierge medicine is less a luxury than a return to how primary care was meant to work: a trusted physician who has the time to listen, teach and be there when you need them.

Joseph Sharp, MD, and Talley Sharp, MD, are board-certified physicians and co-founders of Sharp Health MD, a concierge primary care practice in Naples focused on prevention and longevity.



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VISCERAL FAT: WHAT YOU EAT AND WHAT YOUR DOCTOR CAN DO

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

Not all body fat is the same. Some fat lies just beneath the skin, while visceral fat is stored deeper inside the abdomen, surrounding vital organs. Because of where it is located, visceral fat can have a greater impact on metabolic health. Research has linked excess visceral fat with inflammation, insulin resistance and increased cardiometabolic risk.

The good news is that lifestyle habits can play an important role in managing abdominal fat. While no single food can magically "burn" visceral fat, choosing nutrient-dense foods regularly can support a healthier metabolism.

Build Your Plate Around Nutrient-Dense Foods

A diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, seeds and other minimally processed foods provides fiber, vitamins, minerals and other compounds that support overall health. Research examining dietary patterns has found that higher-quality eating patterns are generally associated with lower amounts of visceral adipose tissue.

Some foods that can be part of a visceral-fat-conscious eating pattern include:

- Berries and other colorful fruits
- Leafy greens and other non-starchy vegetables
- Beans and lentils
- Oatmeal and other whole grains
- Nuts and seeds
- Fatty fish such as salmon
- Avocado and other sources of unsaturated fats

Fiber-rich foods can also help promote fullness and support healthy blood sugar and cholesterol levels. Instead of focusing on one "superfood," think about creating an eating pattern that emphasizes whole, nutrient-dense foods while limiting highly processed foods and sugar-sweetened beverages.

Food is only part of the equation. Regular physical activity is also associated with lower visceral fat. Research suggests that exercise can reduce visceral adipose tissue even when changes on the scale are modest.

When Lifestyle Changes Aren't the Whole Story

For some individuals, lifestyle changes may not be enough to address excess abdominal fat or underlying metabolic concerns. This is where a conversation with a healthcare provider can be valuable.

One prescription therapy that has received FDA approval specifically for reducing excess abdominal fat is tesamorelin. Tesamorelin is a growth hormone-releasing factor analog. The FDA-approved indication is for reducing excess abdominal fat in adults with HIV-associated lipodystrophy.

Tesamorelin works by stimulating the body's growth hormone pathway, which increases growth hormone and subsequently affects levels of insulin-like growth factor-1 (IGF-1). Clinical studies have demonstrated reductions in abdominal fat in the population for which the medication is approved. Importantly, the FDA labeling states that tesamorelin is not indicated for weight-loss management.

That distinction matters. Reducing visceral or abdominal fat is not necessarily the same thing as simply lowering body weight. A comprehensive approach considers body composition, metabolic health, medical history, medications, nutrition, physical activity and other individual factors.

A Personalized Approach to Metabolic Health

There is no single strategy that works for everyone. Eating more whole foods, getting regular physical activity and maintaining healthy sleep habits can provide an important foundation. For individuals with specific medical concerns, prescription therapies may also be considered when appropriate.

Tesamorelin requires medical evaluation because it is not appropriate for everyone. FDA prescribing information includes important warnings and contraindications, including concerns involving active malignancy, pregnancy, hypersensitivity and elevations in IGF-1.

If you are concerned about abdominal fat, metabolic health or changes in body composition, talk with your healthcare provider. A medical professional can evaluate your individual health history, laboratory results and goals and determine whether lifestyle changes alone or a medical treatment approach may be appropriate.

The goal isn't simply a smaller number on the scale. It is supporting a healthier body from the inside out.

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ORCHIDIA MEDICAL GROUP INTRODUCES EBOO THERAPY: The Most Advanced Detox Treatment Is Here

By Dr. Viviana Cuberos

Orchidia Medical Group is proud to announce the launch of an groundbreaking wellness service that represents the cutting edge of detoxification and regenerative medicine: Extracorporeal Blood Ozonation and Oxygenation (EBOO) Treatment. This innovative therapy offers patients access to one of the most advanced and powerful detox treatments available in modern medicine today.

What Makes EBOO Therapy Revolutionary?

EBOO therapy stands apart from traditional detox methods and standard ozone treatments through its sophisticated approach to blood purification and oxygenation. Unlike conventional therapies that work indirectly, EBOO directly treats your blood outside the body in a controlled, medical-grade environment.

The process involves extracting blood from the patient and passing it through a specialized dialyzer while simultaneously infusing it with a continuous flow of medical-grade oxygen and ozone. During each treatment session, approximately 2-3 liters of blood are filtered and enriched with these therapeutic gases before being safely returned to the patient's circulatory system. This creates a complete systemic reset that many patients describe as transformational.

Comprehensive Health Benefits

The therapeutic effects of EBOO therapy extend far beyond simple detoxification. Clinical evidence demonstrates its effectiveness in treating peripheral artery disease and coronary artery disease, making it valuable for cardiovascular health. The treatment works by removing harmful substances including heavy metals, mold toxins, microplastics, and other environmental toxins that accumulate in our bodies over time.

Patients frequently report significant improvements in energy levels, mental clarity, and overall vitality after just one session. The therapy naturally boosts immune system function while reducing chronic inflammation throughout the body. Enhanced circulation and improved oxygen delivery to tissues support the body's natural healing processes and may contribute to anti-aging effects.



Who Can Benefit from EBOO Therapy?

EBOO therapy has shown promising results for patients struggling with various chronic conditions and wellness challenges. Those experiencing chronic fatigue syndrome, persistent brain fog, or fibromyalgia often find significant relief through this advanced treatment approach.

The therapy has proven particularly beneficial for individuals dealing with autoimmune conditions such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis, where inflammation reduction and immune system modulation are crucial. Patients recovering from Long COVID or those suffering from recurring infections may experience improved recovery and enhanced immune resilience.

Additionally, EBOO therapy offers hope for individuals battling Lyme disease, mold-related illness, or other complex chronic conditions that traditional medicine often struggles to address effectively. The treatment's ability to address multiple systems simultaneously makes it valuable for patients with overlapping health concerns.

The EBOO Treatment Experience

Safety and personalization are paramount in EBOO therapy administration. Each patient begins with a comprehensive consultation with one of Orchidia Medical Group's experienced physicians. This initial evaluation ensures that EBOO therapy is appropriate and safe for the individual patient's health profile.

Required laboratory testing includes a complete blood count (CBC), comprehensive metabolic panel (CMP), and glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) testing. These tests help identify any contraindications and allow physicians to customize the treatment protocol for optimal results and safety.

The actual EBOO session is conducted in a comfortable, clinical environment with continuous monitoring by trained medical professionals. The procedure is generally well-tolerated, with many patients using the treatment time to rest and relax.

A New Era of Integrative Medicine

Orchidia Medical Group's introduction of EBOO therapy represents a commitment to offering patients the most advanced treatment options available. This therapy bridges the gap between traditional medicine and cutting-edge regenerative treatments, providing hope for patients who have struggled to find effective solutions through conventional approaches alone.

The addition of EBOO therapy to Orchidia Medical Group's comprehensive service offerings reinforces their position as a leader in integrative and regenerative medicine. For patients ready to experience deep detoxification and support their long-term health through this revolutionary treatment, the journey toward optimal wellness begins with a simple consultation.

Ready to feel better, detox deeply, and support your long-term health? Schedule your EBOO consultation today at 239-333-8809.



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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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GETTING BACK ON THE GOLF COURSE: Common Causes of Back and Hip Pain

By Dr. Conor Sperzel

As seasonal residents return to Southwest Florida, tee times fill up and the courses come back to life. For many golfers, though, the return to the fairway also brings back an old complaint: back or hip pain. Pain in this region can come from several different structures, and identifying the correct pain generator is the key to choosing the right treatment.

FOUR COMMON SOURCES OF PAIN

Lumbar facet arthritis

The facet joints are small joints at the back of the spine that guide and limit motion. When they become arthritic, they typically cause an aching low back pain that worsens with twisting, arching backward, or standing for long periods. The golf swing, with its repetitive rotation, can aggravate these joints round after round.

Sacroiliac (SI) joint pain

The SI joints connect the base of the spine to the pelvis. Pain from these joints is often felt in the low back and buttock, frequently on one side. Rotation, shifting weight from one leg to the other, and even getting in and out of a golf cart can provoke symptoms.

Hip osteoarthritis

Many people are surprised to learn that hip arthritis often causes pain in the groin. It may also be felt in the hip, the thigh, or sometimes the buttock. Because a good swing depends on the hips rotating freely, arthritis can limit the turn and shift extra stress onto the spine.

Lumbar radiculopathy (sciatica)

When a nerve in the lower spine becomes irritated, often by a disc herniation or spinal stenosis, pain can travel down the leg. It may come with numbness, tingling, or weakness. Symptoms that extend below the knee are often a clue that a nerve is involved.

WHY THE RIGHT DIAGNOSIS MATTERS

Back, hip, and SI joint conditions can produce overlapping symptoms. Buttock pain, for example, may come from the spine, the SI joint, or the hip. Treating the wrong structure can lead to frustration and delay recovery.

A careful evaluation starts with a focused history: where the pain is, what makes it better or worse, and whether it travels into the leg. A physical examination with specific maneuvers helps isolate the hip, SI joint, or spine. Appropriate imaging, such as X-rays or MRI, adds further detail. Occasionally, a diagnostic injection, which numbs a specific joint to see whether the pain improves, helps confirm the true source.

A STEPWISE APPROACH TO TREATMENT

The goal of treatment is to keep patients active. Care generally begins with the simplest effective measures and progresses only as needed:

- Activity modification, such as adjusting swing mechanics, shortening practice sessions, or playing fewer holes

- Physical therapy and exercise to build core strength and improve hip mobility and flexibility
- Medications, when appropriate, to manage pain and inflammation
- Image-guided injections that deliver medication precisely to the joint or nerve causing the pain
- Other minimally invasive treatments for pain that persists despite these measures

THE TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

Back or hip pain does not necessarily mean giving up golf. Determining where the pain is actually coming from is the first step toward treating it appropriately and safely returning to the course and the activities you enjoy. To learn more or schedule a consultation, contact Vanguard Spine & Pain in Naples.



Dr. Conor Sperzel is a Harvard-fellowship-trained Interventional Pain Management physician and founder of Vanguard Spine and Pain in Naples, FL. His background in Physiatry (Rehabilitation Medicine) shapes his approach to interventional pain care. Rather than focusing on pain alone, he emphasizes restoring function and helping patients return to the activities that matter most to them. He treats a wide range of conditions including sciatica, neck and back pain, arthritis-related pain, and other musculoskeletal and nerve disorders using precise, minimally invasive techniques performed in an outpatient setting. His practice emphasizes individualized care, detailed functional evaluation, and timely access to treatment.

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Svetlana Kogan, M.D., FMCP-M Functional Concierge Primary Care



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

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- Anti-Aging • Longevity Coaching • Mind-Body Techniques
- Exercise & Movement

Recognizing the Signs:

Diagnosing Adult ADD and Exploring Treatment Options

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), now commonly referred to as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), predominantly inattentive type, is a neurodevelopmental disorder that can persist into adulthood. While often associated with childhood, many adults struggle with undiagnosed ADD, facing challenges in their personal and professional lives. Recognizing the signs and seeking proper diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve quality of life for those affected.

Diagnosing Adult ADD

Diagnosing ADD in adults can be complex, as symptoms may manifest differently than in children and can overlap with other conditions. Common signs of adult ADD include:

1. Difficulty concentrating and staying focused
2. Procrastination and trouble completing tasks
3. Forgetfulness in daily activities
4. Poor time management and organizational skills
5. Impulsivity in decision-making
6. Restlessness or feeling "on edge"
7. Mood swings and low frustration tolerance
8. Difficulty multitasking or prioritizing

To receive a diagnosis, adults should consult with a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist or psychologist, who specializes in ADHD. The diagnostic process typically involves:

- A comprehensive clinical interview
- Review of medical and psychiatric history
- Standardized rating scales and assessments
- Gathering information from family members or close friends
- Ruling out other potential causes of symptoms

It's important to note that many adults with ADD have developed coping mechanisms over time, which may mask some symptoms. A thorough evaluation by a professional is crucial for an accurate diagnosis.

Treatment Options

Once diagnosed, there are several treatment options available for adult ADD. A comprehensive treatment plan often involves a combination of approaches:

1. Medication: Stimulant medications, such as methylphenidate or amphetamines, are often prescribed to improve focus and reduce impulsivity. Non-stimulant options, like atomoxetine, may also be considered.

2. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT): This form of psychotherapy helps individuals develop coping strategies, improve time management skills, and address negative thought patterns associated with ADD.

3. Psychoeducation: Learning about ADD and how it affects daily life can empower individuals to better manage their symptoms and advocate for themselves.

4. Lifestyle modifications: Implementing structure, creating routines, and using organizational tools can significantly improve functioning for adults with ADD.

5. Mindfulness and meditation: These practices can help improve focus and reduce stress associated with ADD symptoms.

6. Coaching: ADD coaches can provide practical strategies for managing symptoms in personal and professional settings.

7. Support groups: Connecting with others who have ADD can offer emotional support and practical advice.

It's essential to work closely with healthcare providers to find the right combination of treatments, as what works best can vary from person to person. Regular follow-ups and adjustments to the treatment plan may be necessary to achieve optimal results.

While living with adult ADD can be challenging, proper diagnosis and treatment can lead to significant improvements in daily functioning, relationships, and overall quality of life. With increased awareness and understanding of how ADD manifests in adulthood, more individuals are seeking help and finding effective ways to manage their symptoms.

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

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

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

How to Enjoy Having Your Home Professionally Cleaned

Your house is a mess. You have no free time. You hate to clean. If this sounds familiar, you're not alone. Over 100 million people in the US and Canada feel the same way. As you plan to hire house cleaning services, here are some tips that will make your experience even better.

Remember that you're hiring human beings

If you plan on every speck of dust being gone after your clean, you're most likely setting yourself up for disappointment. You'll enjoy your service more if you are realistic about what you're getting. While professional house cleaners are exceptional at what they do, they are not super human. They can't clean your master bathroom in 5 minutes. Humans also make mistakes. If something isn't done well, relax, call the house cleaning service at the office, and let them know. Depending on the type of issue, most professional house cleaning companies will send someone out to re-clean the area and make sure to correct the situation.

Leave your home while it's being cleaned

Do you like when someone looks over your shoulder while you work? Neither do housecleaners. Relax. Professional house cleaning services screen their employees, conduct background checks, and are bonded and insured. Get the most out of your cleaning service by getting out of your house during the cleaning process. Not only will you enjoy the great feeling of walking into a clean

home, but the cleaning staff will be better able to focus on their job. While leaving isn't a requirement, you just might find out how great it feels to abandon all thoughts of cleaning!

Leave a tip

Tipping service professionals is nothing new. Everyone tips their server at a restaurant, the bellboy, the valet. Tipping your cleaning professional is a good thing. Think about this; a professional cleaner is in your home, touching virtually all of your possessions. Cleaning is a physically demanding job. House cleaners are constantly bending down, scrubbing, walking up and down stairs, reaching up high, and moving heavy things around. And if hard work isn't enough, remember that they're dealing with all your dirty stuff! It's well worth a few extra dollars to say thank you. And who doesn't love a tip? Remember, a happy cleaner is a great cleaner.

To clean or not to clean

It's a question most people grapple with. Should I clean my house before the cleaning person comes? This is really up to you and there is no right answer. If you have hired a cleaning person for a set amount of time, the cleaner will be able to provide a deeper clean if your home is very tidy before their arrival. But, some people don't like even tidying up. If that's you, then letting the house cleaner do that might be well worth it. In the end, you have to decide how you want the house cleaner spending their time.

I clean my home in 1 hour... they should too

People always think a professional house cleaner should be able to clean their home faster than they clean it themselves. This is a misconception. When most homeowners clean their homes, they clean very differently than someone they hire. Homeowners know what areas they can skip and usually don't clean all the areas that professionals do. For example, many homeowners may skip the toilet when cleaning the bathrooms, only wiping down the counter and mirror. And even if they do tackle the toilet, they usually don't get the floor behind it. Professional home cleaners must clean everything, which, in the end, usually takes longer.

If you're realistic about your house cleaning service, you'll be much happier. And if there is something you're not happy with, simply call the office. You'll be much better off working through a few small issues than constantly jumping from one cleaning service to the next. Once you and the professional company get it right, having your home professionally cleaned is on.



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BETTER SPIRITUAL HEALTH

By Pastor Tim Neptune

As the years accumulate, many of us notice a quiet tendency to settle. What once demanded excellence now receives a polite “good enough.” That drift appears in our exercise routines, our closest relationships—and often in the condition of our souls.

Holistic wellness is incomplete without the spiritual life. Nothing in us stays fixed. Bodies change, circumstances shift, and so does our inner world. Jesus described His purpose in terms that reach far beyond mere survival: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). The word translated “abundantly” points to a life that exceeds what we anticipated—more, beyond measure.

Author Jim Collins captured a truth that applies as readily to the soul as to a company: good is the enemy of great. Contentment with an adequate prayer life, a functional marriage, or average health can quietly close the door on something richer. Greatness in any domain is largely a matter of choice followed by consistent work.

A vibrant relationship with God does not happen by accident. It requires the same kind of intentionality we already apply to nutrition, sleep, and movement. Three practices make the difference.

Clear what competes.

Before adding more spiritual activity, identify what to stop. Hebrews 12:1 urges us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.” Screen time that crowds out quiet, over-commitment that leaves no margin, a hobby that has become an idol, or a habit that dulls the spirit all steal the capacity we need. Discipline is the bridge between good and great. People who grow spiritually do what they do not always feel like doing.

Protect a daily appointment.

Small choices repeated over time compound. Seeking first God’s kingdom (Matthew 6:33) often looks like a few unhurried minutes with Scripture and prayer even when motivation is low. Feelings come and go; habits remain. Consistency produces the inner strength that supports every other area of wellness—physical energy, emotional resilience, and relational patience.



Walk with people who want the same thing.

Isolated effort rarely lasts. Hebrews 10:24–25 calls us to spur one another on toward love and good deeds and not to neglect meeting together. Community is God’s design both for loneliness and for growth. A handful of people who know you well and will tell you the truth keep laziness from winning.

The aim is not religious performance. It is an abundant life that overflows into the rest of who we are. This week, name one distraction to release, one daily slot to protect, and one person or group with whom you will walk. Been thinking about visiting a church? Why not start this Sunday?

God is “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (Ephesians 3:20). Settling for good is optional. Better is available. But great is worth the extra effort.

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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