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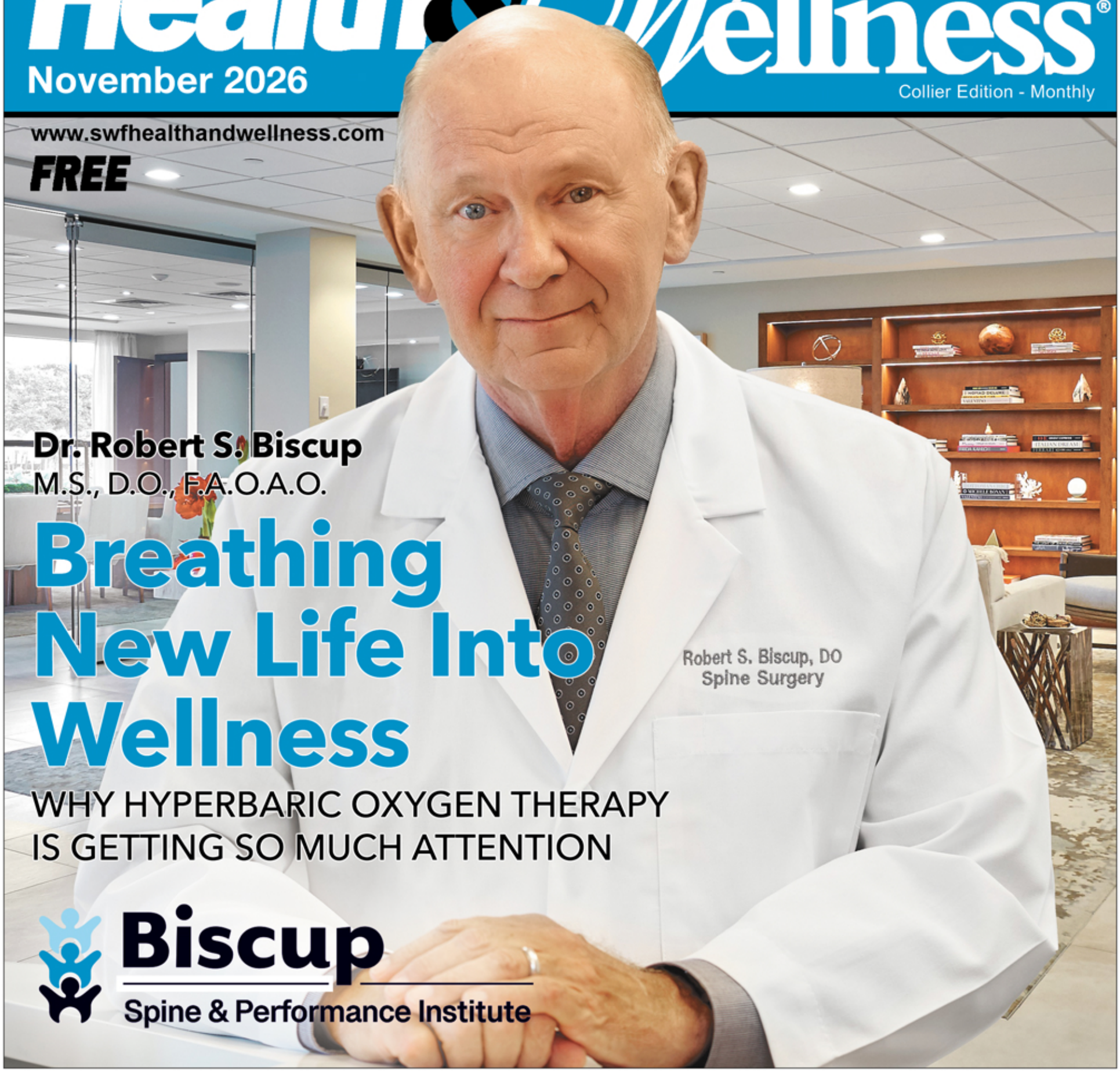
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Dr. Robert S. Biscup
M.S., D.O., F.A.O.A.O.

Breathing New Life Into Wellness

WHY HYPERBARIC OXYGEN THERAPY IS GETTING SO MUCH ATTENTION

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ONE VETERAN, ONE SMILE, A LASTING CONNECTION

Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry celebrates veteran Dick Elkin and the special trust that can grow between a patient and his dentist.



"I really don't like going to the dentist. Never did."

For Dick Elkin, those words describe a feeling he carried for most of his life. Dental visits were something to get through, not something he ever expected to feel comfortable about. But then he met **Dr. Hetienne Macedo** at Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry—and, little by little, something changed.

It wasn't one particular appointment or treatment that changed Dick's perspective. It was the relationship he developed with Dr. Macedo.

From the beginning, she took the time to listen to him, understand his concerns, and make sure he felt comfortable with the care being recommended. Dick never felt rushed or like just another patient. Instead, he felt that his concerns mattered and, most importantly, that he had found a dentist he could trust.

That trust grew with every visit. Dick became confident that Dr. Macedo would be straightforward with him, carefully guide him through his care, and always keep his best interests in mind. For someone who had spent years dreading dental appointments, that feeling made all the difference.

"Until I met Dr. Macedo," Dick continues. "She is very good to me. She takes very good care of me."

Those simple words capture the heart of Dick's experience. His connection with Dr. Macedo isn't based on a single procedure or moment—it has been built over time through consistency, communication, compassion, and the reassurance of knowing he is in the hands of someone he trusts.

Today, Dick's feelings about his dentist are very different from the way he once felt about dentistry.

"I had a great experience, and I will never go to a different dentist."

For Dr. Macedo, earning that kind of trust is one of the most meaningful parts of caring for a patient. Dentistry is not only about addressing a clinical need. It is also about understanding the person behind the smile and creating a relationship in which patients feel heard, respected, and genuinely cared for.

Honoring Those Who Served

Dick's story carries additional meaning because he is a veteran. Last year, Park Family & Cosmetic Dentistry honored him through its Smiles for Freedom event, an initiative dedicated to giving back to veterans in Southwest Florida through complimentary dental care.

With another Smiles for Freedom event coming up in November, the practice looks forward to continuing that tradition and recognizing the men and women who have served our country.

More Than a Smile

Today, Dick can smile with greater confidence and enjoy everyday life more comfortably. But perhaps the most meaningful part of his story is the relationship he found along the way.

His experience is a reminder that the strongest patient relationships are built over time—through listening, consistency, compassion, and the confidence of knowing someone genuinely cares about your well-being.

For Dick, finding Dr. Macedo didn't simply change his dental experience. It changed how he feels about going to the dentist—and created a relationship built on trust that he plans to keep.

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Breathing New Life Into Wellness:

Why Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Is Getting So Much Attention

If you have noticed more conversations about Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy lately, you are not alone. Over the past several months, Biscup Spine & Performance Institute has seen a remarkable surge in interest. Patients, families, and even other healthcare providers are reaching out to ask what HBOT is, how it works, and whether it might be right for them.

That curiosity is well placed. Hyperbaric medicine has been used in hospitals for decades, but growing research is shedding new light on its potential to support the body far beyond its traditional uses. Here is a closer look at what HBOT is, how it works, and why so many people are exploring it as part of a proactive approach to wellness.

How HBOT Delivers Oxygen to Every Cell

Every cell in your body depends on oxygen to produce energy, repair itself, and function properly. Under normal conditions, oxygen travels through the bloodstream bound to red blood cells, and the amount they can carry is limited.

During a Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy session, you relax in a pressurized chamber while breathing concentrated oxygen. The increased pressure allows oxygen to dissolve directly into the blood plasma, the fluid that flows throughout the body. Plasma can reach areas where circulation may be restricted, including tissues that are inflamed, injured, or not receiving adequate blood flow.

This is what makes HBOT a systemic approach rather than a targeted one. Instead of addressing a single symptom or area, it supports the entire body at the cellular level. Research suggests this oxygen-rich environment may stimulate the release of stem cells, encourage the formation of new blood vessels, and help the body's natural healing and regenerative processes work more efficiently. When cells have the oxygen they need, they are better equipped to repair, recover, and thrive.

What the Research Is Showing

Because HBOT works throughout the body, researchers are studying its potential across a wide range of health concerns. Results vary from person to person, but studies have shown encouraging findings in several areas:

- **Migraines and headaches:** Some research indicates HBOT may help reduce the frequency and intensity of migraine episodes.
- **Sleep quality:** Many patients report more restful sleep, and early studies suggest improved oxygenation may support healthier sleep patterns.
- **Stroke recovery:** Research has shown improvement in certain neurological functions in some stroke survivors, including people well past their initial recovery period.
- **Inflammation and swelling:** HBOT may help calm inflammation and reduce swelling, which can support comfort and healing.
- **Circulation:** By encouraging new blood vessel growth, HBOT may support improved blood flow to tissues throughout the body.
- **Neurological deficits:** Studies involving traumatic brain injury, concussion, and other injuries have demonstrated promising improvements in memory, focus, and cognitive function.
- **Dementia and Alzheimer's disease:** Emerging research is exploring whether increased oxygen delivery to the brain may support cognitive function, and early findings are promising.

HBOT is not a cure and is not a replacement for medical care. Rather, it may be a valuable complement to a comprehensive wellness plan.

Being Proactive: Living Stronger, Longer, and Healthier

As we age, our bodies naturally become less efficient at delivering oxygen and repairing cellular damage. Circulation slows, inflammation can build, and recovery takes longer. Many people wait until a problem appears before seeking help, but a proactive approach can make a meaningful difference.

Supporting your cells now may help your body maintain energy, resilience, and mental clarity in the years ahead. HBOT offers a way to invest in your health before challenges arise, helping you stay active, independent, and engaged in the things you love. The goal is not simply to live longer, but to live stronger and healthier along the way.

If you have been curious about Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, we invite you to reach out to Biscup Spine & Performance Institute. Our team is happy to answer your questions, discuss your health goals, and help you decide whether HBOT may be a good fit for you.



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.

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A NEW STANDARD IN SKIN CONTRACTION AND BODY CONTOURING:
CONTINUUM SURGERY CENTER OF NAPLES INTRODUCES RENUVION TECHNOLOGY

Advanced surgical technology offers surgeons another option for patients seeking improved body contour and the appearance of loose skin.

As surgical technology continues to evolve, physicians have more options to address concerns involving loose skin and body contour. Continuum Surgery Center of Naples has recently acquired Renuvion®, an advanced surgical technology developed by Apyx Medical that combines radiofrequency energy and helium to generate plasma. When delivered through a specialized handpiece, this technology produces a controlled thermal effect in targeted soft tissue, supporting tissue coagulation and contraction.

For individuals concerned about loose skin following weight changes, aging or other factors, understanding available treatment options is an important first step toward making informed decisions about their care.

renuvion®

How Does Renuvion Work?
Renuvion combines radiofrequency energy with helium gas to generate helium plasma. When delivered through a specialized handpiece, this energy creates a controlled thermal effect in targeted soft tissue, allowing the surgeon to coagulate tissue and support tissue contraction.

In aesthetic procedures, Renuvion can be used for specific applications involving loose skin and body contouring, depending on the handpiece, its FDA-cleared indications and the patient's treatment plan.

Unlike treatments that work at the skin's surface, the Renuvion APR Handpiece delivers energy beneath the skin. Following liposuction for aesthetic body contouring, it is intended for the coagulation of subcutaneous soft tissue. It is also indicated for use in subcutaneous dermatological and aesthetic procedures to improve the appearance of loose skin in the neck and under-chin region.

Renuvion's proprietary helium plasma and radiofrequency technology enables surgeons to deliver energy to targeted tissue. The surgeon controls its application according to the specific procedure, treatment area and applicable instructions for use.

Renuvion has been recognized by NewBeauty, receiving the publication's **"Best Minimally Invasive Skin Tightener"** award in both 2025 and 2026.

Renuvion is not a single-purpose device. Different handpieces have different indications, and the appropriate application depends on the procedure being performed, the patient's anatomy and the surgeon's treatment plan.

What Concerns Can It Address?
The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has cleared specific Renuvion handpieces for defined uses.

The Renuvion APR Handpiece is indicated for use in subcutaneous dermatological and aesthetic procedures to improve the appearance of loose skin in the neck and submental (under-chin) region. It is also intended for the coagulation of subcutaneous soft tissue following liposuction for aesthetic body contouring.

Depending on the procedure and the surgeon's treatment plan, Renuvion may be considered as part of an approach to body contouring in areas such as the abdomen, flanks, arms, thighs and back. Its use must be consistent with the applicable FDA-cleared indications and the manufacturer's instructions for the specific handpiece.

Patients experiencing changes in skin appearance after weight fluctuations, pregnancy or aging may benefit from discussing their concerns with a qualified surgeon. For patients who have experienced significant weight loss, including weight loss associated with GLP-1 medications, a consultation can help determine which surgical or nonsurgical options may be appropriate.

A separate device, the Renuvion Dermal Handpiece, is FDA-cleared for the treatment of moderate to severe wrinkles and rhytides in patients with Fitzpatrick skin types I, II or III. This is a distinct application from the APR Handpiece's subcutaneous uses.

Renuvion is not a weight-loss treatment, and it does not replace the need for appropriate patient selection or other surgical procedures when indicated.

Results vary according to individual factors, including skin elasticity, the amount of loose skin, overall health and the procedure performed. A consultation with a qualified surgeon can help determine whether Renuvion is appropriate or whether another treatment may better address a patient's goals.

Safety and Individualized Care
As with any surgical technology, Renuvion requires careful patient selection, appropriate training and adherence to the manufacturer's instructions for use. Renuvion is FDA-cleared for specific indications, and the applicable handpiece must be used according to its cleared indications and instructions.

Potential risks depend on the procedure and may include burns, infection, bleeding, scarring, changes in skin sensation or appearance, and complications associated with heat or gas. Patients should discuss the potential benefits, limitations, alternatives and risks with their surgeon before proceeding.

At Continuum Surgery Center of Naples, the introduction of Renuvion reflects an ongoing commitment to providing surgeons with advanced technology and supporting individualized surgical care. The center's outpatient setting offers patients access to a multispecialty surgical facility designed to support coordinated care before, during and after a procedure.

Start With a Conversation
Considering a procedure to address loose skin begins with understanding the available options. During a consultation, a surgeon can evaluate the areas of concern, review medical history, discuss realistic expectations and determine whether a Renuvion procedure is suitable for the individual patient.

For more information about procedures available through Continuum Surgery Center of Naples, patients can speak with their plastic or cosmetic surgeon about whether Renuvion technology may be an appropriate part of their treatment plan and whether the procedure can be performed at Continuum. Surgeons interested in using Renuvion at Continuum can contact the center directly.

WE ARE HIRING!
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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This Men's Health Month, Don't Put Off Your Urology Appointment

When it comes to health, many people are diligent about annual physicals, dental cleanings, and eye exams. Yet for countless men, scheduling an appointment with a urologist can feel intimidating. Concerns about discussing personal symptoms, uncertainty about examinations, or anxiety about what a diagnosis might reveal often lead patients to delay care.

The reality is that urological health plays a vital role in overall well-being and quality of life. Conditions affecting the urinary tract, kidneys, bladder, prostate, and male reproductive system are common and highly treatable, especially when addressed early. This Men's Health Month, rather than postponing care, consider these seven reasons why visiting a urologist doesn't need to be stressful.

1. Urologists Understand That These Concerns Can Feel Personal

Urologists know that discussing urinary symptoms, sexual health, or prostate concerns can make patients feel vulnerable. In fact, many patients arrive at their first appointment feeling nervous or embarrassed. Because of this, urologists are trained to approach these conversations with professionalism, sensitivity, and respect. Their goal is to help patients feel comfortable enough to share important information that can lead to better care and better outcomes.

2. Most of the Appointment is Simply a Conversation

Many people are surprised to learn that a large portion of a urology visit involves talking. Your physician will ask questions about your symptoms, medical history, medications, lifestyle, and overall health. As the discussion progresses, patients often realize that their symptoms are more common than they thought. Building that dialogue allows the physician to better understand concerns and helps patients feel more at ease before any examination or testing takes place.

3. Early Evaluation Can Prevent Bigger Problems

One of the most important reasons not to delay a urology appointment is that early intervention often leads to simpler treatment options. Symptoms such as frequent urination, blood in the urine, urinary leakage, kidney stone pain, erectile dysfunction, or changes in urinary habits may indicate underlying conditions that benefit from prompt evaluation. Addressing issues early can help prevent complications and may reduce the need for more extensive treatment later.

4. Today's Diagnostic Tools Are More Advanced Than Ever

Modern urology has evolved significantly over the past several decades. Many diagnostic tests are minimally invasive, highly accurate, and designed with patient comfort in mind. Advances in imaging, laboratory testing, and treatment techniques allow physicians to identify and manage conditions more effectively than ever before. In many cases, patients leave with answers and a clear plan for next steps, which can provide tremendous peace of mind.

5. Urologists Focus on Improving Quality of Life

Many urological conditions affect daily activities, sleep, relationships, confidence, and overall well-being. Frequent nighttime bathroom trips, urinary urgency, erectile dysfunction, or chronic pelvic discomfort can significantly impact quality of life. Urologists don't simply treat diseases; they help patients regain comfort, confidence, and independence. The goal is often to improve how patients feel and function every day.

6. Your "Embarrassing Problem" Is What Urologists Treat Every Day

Patients often worry that their symptoms are unusual or embarrassing. In reality, the issues that may feel uncomfortable to discuss are exactly what urologists are trained to diagnose and treat. Whether it's urinary leakage, erectile dysfunction, kidney stones, prostate concerns, or recurring urinary tract infections, chances are your physician has helped many patients with the same issue. What feels highly personal to you is a routine part of a urologist's practice.

7. Examinations Are Designed to Be as Comfortable as Possible

Another common misconception is that every urology appointment involves an uncomfortable examination. In reality, examinations are tailored to each patient's symptoms and medical needs. When an exam is necessary, healthcare teams work to make the experience efficient, respectful, and as comfortable as possible. Patients are encouraged to ask questions, voice concerns, and participate in decisions about their care throughout the process.

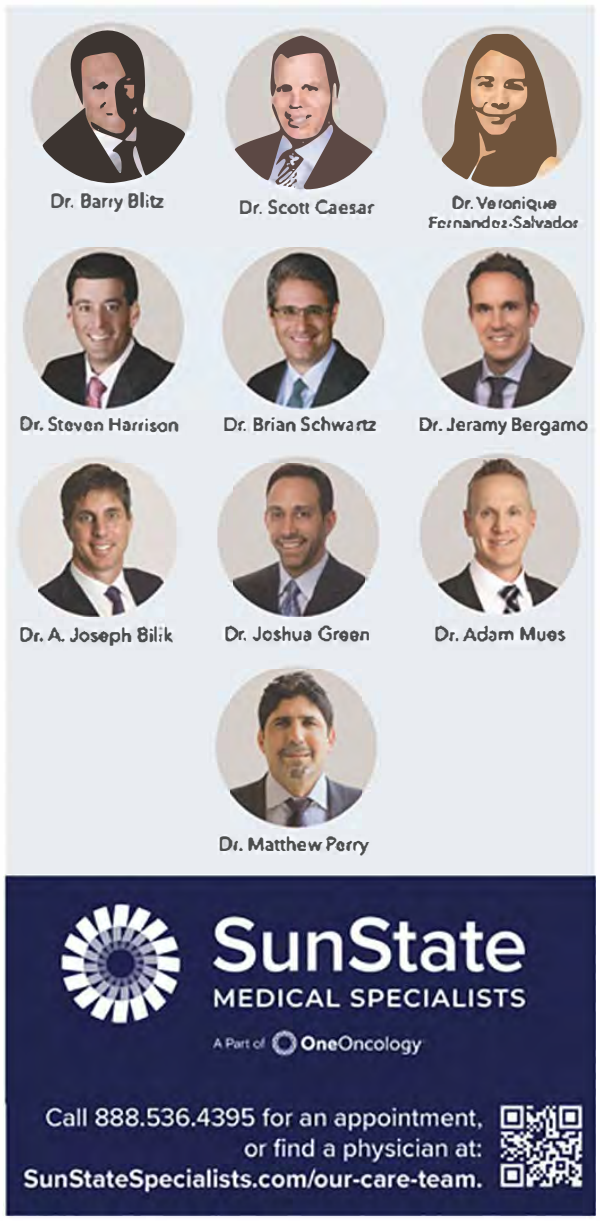
Don't Let Fear Delay Better Health

Perhaps the most common feedback urologists hear from patients is, "I wish I had come in sooner." The relief many people feel after receiving a diagnosis, understanding their condition, and beginning treatment often far outweighs the anxiety they experienced beforehand.

This Men's Health Month, remember that taking care of your urological health is an important part of taking care of your overall health. While procrastination may feel easier in the short term, timely evaluation by a board-certified urologist can provide answers, treatment options, and peace of mind. Your future self will thank you for making the appointment.

Specialized Urologic Care Across Southwest Florida

Board-Certified Urologists at SunState Medical Specialists offer comprehensive expertise throughout Southwest Florida. To make an appointment, call 888.536.4395.





THE ULTIMATE PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY RELIEF PROGRAM

By Richard Hiler, DABCN

Peripheral neuropathy is a complex condition. Finding the root cause and the extent of damage and to what types of nerves or blood vessels is how a comprehensive plan is customized to regenerate a patient's nerves cells and tissues. Conventional medicine has no answers. It's either live with it or take addicting medications for the pain, most commonly gabapentin.

Very few physicians are trained to treat the condition. Success ideally involves collaboration of medical personnel, chiropractic and or physical therapy personnel, and functional neurology. At Feel Amazing Institute this is what we offer.

What is the Ultimate Neuropathy Program?
There are several clinics in SWFL that propose a treatment for peripheral neuropathy. There are dozens of treatments that have shown to be beneficial for the diagnosis. Many clinics do one or two of these treatment options but very few can combine and offer dozens of these options.

At Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute, we were the original clinic to create a comprehensive Neuropathy program back in 2006. There was a learning curve and results varied at first. After 16 years of experience, becoming board-certified in functional neurology, and becoming medically integrated, my clinic now has it down to a science. In 2017 my office was one of the first in the country, and I believe still the only in southwest Florida, to offer regenerative medicine and natural biologics as options for peripheral neuropathy. To date this has been the most significant endeavor to enhance results for our clients.

All neuropathies are not the same and require different programs.
Because what works well for one person may not necessarily work well for another, it's never a good idea to depend on just one or two treatments. It is just as easy to combine many types of treatments to improve the chances and the amount of success. Also the treatment must be individualized and specific.

The Ultimate Neuropathy Program should include advanced technologies to be done at a physician's office as well as treatments for self-care at home. It may include vitamin and wellness infusions to



enhance the body's internal environment for healing. It may include light therapies, electrical therapies, sound and pressure wave therapies, Pulsed electro-magnetic field therapies, regenerative medicine options, as well as lifestyle and nutritional recommendations.

Many clinics do a Toronto Clinical Neuropathy assessment and score. Some will do an infrared heat map of the feet. However, without an extensive neurological training, the interpretation of the score and image is what is key.

What to do and what not to do, and when?
Is the neuropathy peripheral or central? Big nerves or small nerves? Motor, sensory, autonomic, or all the above? One nerve or many nerves? How will the treatment differ if it's both feet, both hands, equal damage bilaterally, or worse on one side? How will the treatment differ if there is burning pain, numbness, loss of balance, weakness, or complicated by back pain or stenosis? What if the neuropathy affects the entire body? Is there a treatment for that? Yes, there are several.

Our clinic has a very sophisticated computer analysis that measures peripheral nerve function, peripheral vascular function, and central nerve function with a score for each, and an extensive report breaking down the many physiological and metabolic components. The test can be repeated after a treatment regimen and the improvement measured and quantified.

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What modalities are used for improvement?
These are prescribed on an individual basis after a thorough assessment:

- Five different electrical therapies
- Four possible light therapies
- Four types of vibration therapy
- Class 4 high powered lasers
- Pulsed electromagnetic fields (PEMF)
- Soundwave/Shockwave/pressure waves
- Spinal decompression therapy (often not needed)
- Natural supplementation and/or vitamin-wellness infusions
- Injections or infusions of Stem Cell Natural Biologics including Wharton's jelly allografts, growth factors, and platelet rich plasma.

What kind of results can be achieved through the ultimate neuropathy treatment program at Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute?

Our patients report that better than 90% have excellent results. Most who undergo the treatment experience the following: reduced pain, reduced tingling and numbness, ability to experience normal touch without pain, reduce cold or burning sensations, improved balance and coordination, lowered dependency on medication, improved sleep, relief of restless legs, reduced swelling and inflammation, improved muscle function.

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

Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute is equipped to diagnose and help a wide range of conditions that include:

- ✓ Peripheral neuropathy
- ✓ Severe neck and back pain
- ✓ Shoulder, elbow, or wrist pain
- ✓ Hip, knee, ankle, or foot pain
- ✓ Headache, dizziness, vertigo, or balance problems
- ✓ Disc bulge, herniation, sciatica, or stenosis
- ✓ Auto accident, whiplash injuries

If you need a highly experienced, chiropractic neurologist in Naples, Florida, look no further than Feel Amazing Spine & Joint Institute. For more information, to schedule a free telephone consultation, or for free informational seminar or webinar, call today!

HEALTHY AGING:

Small Steps That Make a Difference

By Manrique Iriarte, MD, Internal Medicine at Millennium Physician Group

Aging is a natural part of life, but how we feel as we grow older can be influenced by the choices we make along the way. Healthy aging is about maintaining physical, mental, and emotional well-being while staying connected to the people and activities that bring meaning to our lives. And while certain changes are inevitable, adopting healthy habits can help you maintain your independence, support your overall health, and enjoy a better quality of life at every age.

For older adults, these habits become especially important. Understanding how the body changes over time and staying proactive about preventive care can help you address potential concerns early and make informed decisions about your health.

What Does Healthy Aging Look Like?
Healthy aging is not about avoiding health concerns or trying to turn back the clock. Instead, it focuses on supporting your well-being through everyday choices and consistent healthcare. The good news is that it's never too late to make positive changes.

Several key habits can contribute to healthy aging:
- Eating a balanced diet
- Staying physically active
- Keeping your mind engaged
- Maintaining social connections
- Managing stress
- Keeping up with preventive care

These habits work together. For example, physical activity can support both brain and heart health, while staying socially engaged can benefit your emotional well-being. Rather than trying to change everything at once, start with manageable steps and build a routine that works for you.

Understanding How Your Body Changes With Age
As you get older, changes in your body can affect everything from mobility to memory. Understanding what to expect can help you recognize concerns and take steps to protect your health.

Heart health and circulation
Blood vessels may become less flexible with age, increasing the risk of high blood pressure and other cardiovascular conditions. Maintaining a healthy diet, exercising regularly, avoiding tobacco, and getting enough sleep can support heart health. It is also



important to monitor conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol, which can affect your cardiovascular system when not properly managed.

Bones, muscles, and balance
Bone density and muscle strength can decline over time, potentially affecting balance and increasing the risk of falls and fractures. Weight-bearing activities and strength exercises can help maintain muscle and bone health. Getting adequate calcium and vitamin D and addressing vision concerns can also help prevent falls and fractures.

Memory and cognitive function
You may notice that recalling information or learning something new takes longer than it once did. Some changes in memory and processing speed are a normal part of aging, but significant or persistent changes deserve attention. Staying physically active, maintaining social connections, getting sufficient sleep, and managing chronic health conditions can all contribute to brain health. Talk with your healthcare provider if you notice changes that concern you.

Vision, hearing, and other changes
Age can also affect vision, hearing, digestion, bladder function, and skin health. Regular eye and hearing exams, dental visits, adequate hydration, a fiber-rich diet, and appropriate skin protection can help you address these areas of wellness. If a change interferes with your daily activities or quality of life, discuss it with your healthcare provider.

Planning for Healthy Aging & Retirement
Healthy aging also means preparing for the practical changes that may come with retirement. Leaving the workforce can create more opportunities to pursue hobbies, travel, and spend time with loved ones. At the same time, changes in income, daily routines, and health insurance may require thoughtful planning.

For many adults approaching retirement, understanding Medicare is an important part of that process. Understanding when to enroll and how different coverage options work can help you make informed decisions about your healthcare.

Take Charge of Healthy Aging with Millennium Physician Group
Healthy aging looks different for everyone, and knowing which steps to take can sometimes feel overwhelming. The team at Millennium Physician Group is here to help you navigate the process, from routine preventive care and managing chronic conditions to discussing changes in your health and answering questions about aging.

Whether you'd like to talk about your health goals, discuss your concerns, or ask a general question about aging or Medicare, we're here to guide you in the right direction. Reach out to Millennium Physician Group to find the support you need to take steps toward a healthier you.

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Guarding Your Vision:
The Essential Guide to Diabetic Eye Care

Diabetes is a chronic condition that affects millions of individuals worldwide. While managing blood sugar levels is a top priority, it's crucial to recognize that diabetes can also have a significant impact on your eye health. Diabetic eye care is a vital aspect of overall diabetes management, and in this article, we will explore the key aspects of safeguarding your vision.

Diabetic Retinopathy: A Growing Concern
Diabetic retinopathy is a common eye condition among people with diabetes. Over time, high blood sugar levels can damage the blood vessels in the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. This can lead to vision problems and even blindness if left untreated. Regular eye examinations are the first line of defense against diabetic retinopathy. The American Diabetes Association recommends annual eye check-ups for people with diabetes to catch any signs of retinopathy early.

Lifestyle Choices and Blood Sugar Control
Maintaining stable blood sugar levels is essential in preventing and managing diabetic eye complications. Healthy lifestyle choices play a crucial role in this aspect. A balanced diet, regular exercise, and proper medication management are all essential in controlling diabetes. By adhering to your healthcare provider's recommendations, you can significantly reduce the risk of eye complications.

The Importance of Regular Eye Exams
Regular eye examinations are the cornerstone of diabetic eye care. These exams can detect diabetic retinopathy and other eye conditions early, allowing for prompt treatment. If you have diabetes, don't skip your annual eye check-ups, even if your vision seems perfectly fine. Early detection and intervention can prevent further vision loss.

Medication and Treatment Options
If diabetic retinopathy is detected, there are various treatment options available, depending on the severity of the condition. These may include laser therapy, anti-VEGF injections, or surgery. Your ophthalmologist will determine the most suitable treatment based on your specific situation. It's crucial to follow through with the recommended treatment plan and attend all follow-up appointments.

Blood Pressure Management
High blood pressure is often a companion to diabetes and can exacerbate diabetic eye complications. Controlling your blood pressure through medication and lifestyle changes is crucial in preserving your vision. Regular check-ups with your healthcare provider can help you manage both your blood sugar and blood pressure effectively.

Protecting Your Eyes Daily
Aside from medical interventions, there are everyday steps you can take to protect your eyes. Wear sunglasses with UV protection to shield your eyes from harmful sun exposure. Manage your blood sugar levels consistently to reduce the risk of diabetic eye issues. Additionally, it's essential to quit smoking if you're a smoker, as smoking can worsen eye problems associated with diabetes.

Dietary Choices for Eye Health
A diet rich in certain nutrients can benefit your eye health. Antioxidants, such as vitamin C and E, zinc, and omega-3 fatty acids, can support your retinal health. Incorporate foods like leafy greens, citrus fruits, nuts, and fish into your diet to promote healthier eyes. Always consult with a healthcare professional or a registered dietitian for personalized dietary advice.

Technology and Advancements
The field of diabetic eye care has seen significant advancements in recent years. Digital retinal imaging is making it easier for individuals to receive eye care. Technology and available pharmaceuticals are improving every year for these patients.

The Bottom Line
Diabetic eye care is a crucial aspect of managing diabetes and preserving your vision. By maintaining stable blood sugar levels, attending regular eye exams, and following your healthcare provider's recommendations, you can reduce the risk of diabetic retinopathy and other eye complications. Remember that your eyes are precious, and with the right approach, you can protect your vision and enjoy a higher quality of life, even while managing diabetes.



Albert Smolyar M.D.
LASIK, Cataract & Lens Replacement Surgeon

Dr. Smolyar is a board-certified cataract and refractive surgeon with over 25 years of experience. He received his medical degree from Kursk State Medical University in the former Soviet Union. He completed an ophthalmology residency at the University of Louisville and a fellowship in Neuro-Ophthalmology at Michigan State University. He completed another ophthalmology residency at Ben Gurion University in Israel prior to coming to the United States.

Dr. Smolyar specializes in premium cataract and lens replacement surgery, as well as laser vision correction with LASIK, photorefractive keratectomy (PRK), and phototherapeutic keratectomy (PTK). He also has significant expertise in cosmetic and reconstructive eyelid surgery. Dr. Smolyar is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology. He was in private practice in Louisville, Kentucky, for many years, where he also served as a clinical Associate Professor at the University of Louisville Department of Ophthalmology.

He has been living in Fort Myers since 2018 with his wife and dogs; they have raised three children together. In his spare time, Dr. Smolyar enjoys swimming, scuba diving, kayaking, and fishing. He has dedicated time to providing free surgical eye care in underserved countries and considers that to be one of his passions.

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You Could Have Cancer Right Now and Have No Idea – This Scan Changes That

Most people don't find out something is seriously wrong with their body until they feel it. By then, the window for the easiest, most effective treatment has often already closed.

That's the uncomfortable truth about how most of us approach our health: we wait. We wait for symptoms. We wait for a doctor to order a test. We wait until we have no choice. And statistically, that waiting costs lives.

But what if you didn't have to wait?

The Scan That Sees What You Can't Feel
BodyView Full Body MRI, offered by Encore Imaging, is rewriting the rules of preventive medicine. In under 60 minutes, this single, non-invasive scan can screen for cancer and over 500 health conditions across 13 major organs, including the brain, thyroid, spine, lungs, liver, gallbladder, pancreas, spleen, kidneys, adrenal glands, bladder, ovaries, uterus, and prostate.

And here's the part that stops people in their tracks: it uses **zero radiation.**

No X-rays. No contrast dye. No exposure to anything harmful. Just powerful 3T MRI technology creating detailed, high-resolution images of your body's most vital systems, while you simply lie still.

Why Early Detection Is Everything
We've all heard "catch it early", but most people don't realize just how dramatic the difference really is. Early-stage detection of many cancers can dramatically improve survival outcomes compared to late-stage diagnoses. BodyView's advanced imaging can detect tumors and cysts as small as 0.5 cm, findings that would be completely invisible to any other routine test or physical exam.

Think about that for a moment. Something that small, something that could be growing silently inside you right now, can be identified and monitored before it ever becomes a crisis.

That's not just peace of mind. That's a potential lifesaver.



Who Should Be Getting This Scan?
The honest answer is: almost everyone. But BodyView is especially powerful for:

People with a family history of cancer or chronic disease. If your parents, siblings, or grandparents have faced serious health conditions, your risk profile is different and your approach to health monitoring should be too.

Anyone who is proactive about their health. You work out, watch what you eat, stay on top of wellness trends. This is the logical next step, a data-driven baseline that tells you what's actually happening inside.

Anyone over 40. The statistical reality is that risk for a wide range of conditions rises significantly with age, often without any outward signs.

People who just want to know. There is something genuinely powerful about getting a comprehensive look inside your own body and walking away with real information, not guesses.

How It Works — Simpler Than You'd Expect
The process begins with a preliminary consultation with a Preventive Medicine Concierge who walks you through every detail, scheduling, timing, and choosing the right program package. Then comes the scan itself, conducted using Encore Imaging's state-of-the-art 3T MRI equipment. Within one to two weeks, board-certified radiologists deliver a thorough evaluation of your results, and you receive everything through a personalized app with detailed findings and recommendations. A follow-up consultation with a healthcare practitioner walks you through what it all means.

Program Options Built Around You
BodyView offers three flexible program tiers. The ***Premier*** package covers head, neck, abdomen, and pelvis. The ***Elite*** adds either spine or chest imaging to that foundation. The ***Elite+*** goes further, allowing you to add a specific area of concern, a knee, a shoulder, for a truly customized scan. Every tier includes the full consultation, radiologist review, and app access.

The technology to look inside your own body, safely, thoroughly, without radiation, exists right now. Board-certified specialists are ready to evaluate what they find. The only thing standing between you and that knowledge is the decision to schedule it.

What would you do differently if you knew?

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TIMELESS RESULTS, THOUGHTFULLY DONE

Transform Your Look for the Holidays with Cutting-Edge Regenerative Treatments for Beautiful, Natural Results

By Dr. Kenzie

Winter is around the corner—and if you've been thinking about refining your look or simply feeling your best in your own skin, this is the perfect time to start. At Kenzi Medical Aesthetics Group, we take a thoughtful, natural approach to aesthetic care that's designed to enhance—not change—who you are.

A Smarter Way to Approach Winter Weight Loss

Forget quick fixes. Our physician-led weight loss programs focus on sustainable, long-term health. Depending on your goals, your personalized plan may include:

- Nutritional guidance tailored to your body and lifestyle
- Medical-grade supplements to support metabolism and energy
- Movement strategies that complement your treatment plan

Patients often report feeling more energized and balanced—confidence that goes far beyond swimsuit season.

Refined, Natural Results with Injectables

For those moments when you're reconnecting with friends and family, injectables can offer a subtle refresh:

- Botox® and Dysport® for smoothing dynamic wrinkles
- Dermal fillers for restoring volume where it's naturally diminished
- Sculprta® stimulates natural collagen production, restoring facial structure and volume — and can even be used to lift and shape the buttocks.

We focus on precision, proportion, and maintaining the facial harmony that makes you, you.

Skin Tightening That Works Beneath the Surface

Heat-based technologies like radiofrequency, ultrasound, and laser energy can stimulate deep



collagen production to tighten skin and refine texture. These are ideal for areas where skin has begun to lose firmness over time.

Venus Bliss MAX: A Non-Invasive Way to Tackle Stubborn Fat

Venus Bliss MAX™ is an advanced three-in-one solution for body treatments. The workstation targets fat, muscle, and skin with three distinct technologies in an effective and comfortable manner, maximizing results and patient satisfaction by tailoring the right modality for each indication.

Why Timing Matters

Many treatments—especially body contouring and skin regeneration—take a few weeks to show full results. Starting now gives your body time to respond naturally so you're glowing, confident, and photo-ready when it matters most.

Let's Build Your Winter Treatment Plan

Whether you want to target one area or take a more comprehensive approach, our team will guide you through a custom treatment strategy. We combine science, artistry, and experience to help you look like the best version of yourself—refreshed, never overdone.

Book a consultation to learn more and explore what's possible before this coming holiday season.



DR. ALDENE MCKENZIE

Providing A Healthy, Happy and Confident Lifestyle for All

I founded Kenzi Medical Aesthetics Group in 2017 with the goal of helping my clients live a life well lived through optimizing their spiritual, physical, and psychosocial wellbeing. Holistic medicine considers the whole person–meaning body, mind, spirit, and emotions–in the quest for optimal health. That's also my philosophy, as I'm passionate about helping my clients look beautiful and feel empowered and confident thanks to an array of state-of-the-art aesthetic services. From Botox and dermal fillers to fat-loss treatments and medical-grade chemical peels, I make sure that each treatment is tailored to meet my clients' beauty needs. With my caring and attentive approach towards patients, even injections turn into a pleasurable experience.

Reach out to book your complimentary consultation.

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CALMING THE ITCH: UNDERSTANDING ATOPIC DERMATITIS AND ECZEMA

Few skin conditions are as persistent, or as misunderstood, as eczema. At Art of Dermatology, we see patients of every age who have spent years cycling through over-the-counter creams, home remedies and sleepless, itchy nights. The good news: with the right diagnosis and a personalized plan, eczema can be controlled, and most patients can finally feel comfortable in their own skin again.

Eczema vs. Atopic Dermatitis: What's the Difference?

"Eczema" is an umbrella term for a group of conditions that cause inflamed, itchy, irritated skin. Atopic dermatitis is the most common form, and when most people say "eczema," this is what they mean. It is a chronic inflammatory condition that tends to come and go in flares. It often begins in infancy or childhood, but it can continue into adulthood or appear for the first time later in life. Other types include contact dermatitis, dyshidrotic (hand and foot) eczema, nummular eczema and seborrheic dermatitis, each with its own triggers and treatment approach.

What Causes Atopic Dermatitis?

Atopic dermatitis is not caused by poor hygiene, and it is not contagious. Research points to two factors working together: a weakened skin barrier and an overactive immune response. Healthy skin acts like a brick wall, keeping moisture in and irritants out. In people with eczema, that wall has gaps, often linked to genetic changes in barrier proteins such as filaggrin. Water escapes, while allergens, bacteria and irritants get in, and the immune system responds with inflammation, redness and itch.

Atopic dermatitis often runs in families and is frequently linked with asthma, hay fever and food allergies, a cluster known as the "atopic triad."

Recognizing the Signs

Symptoms vary by age and skin tone, but common signs include:

- Intense itching, often worse at night
- Dry, scaly or rough patches
- Red, brown, purple or grayish discoloration, depending on skin tone



- Small bumps that may ooze or crust when scratched
- Thickened, leathery skin from long-term scratching

In infants, eczema often appears on the cheeks and scalp. In older children and adults, it favors the inner elbows, backs of the knees, neck, wrists and hands. Beyond the skin, eczema can disrupt sleep, affect mood and concentration, and take a real toll on quality of life.

Common Triggers

Flares are often set off by everyday factors: harsh soaps, fragrances, wool or scratchy fabrics, sweat, heat, dry air, long hot showers, stress, and allergens such as dust mites or pet dander. Learning your personal triggers is one of the most powerful tools for preventing flares.

Treatment: A Personalized Approach

There is no one-size-fits-all cure, but today's options are more effective than ever. Treatment builds on a foundation of gentle skin care and steps up as needed:

- **Daily moisturizing** with fragrance-free creams or ointments, ideally within a few minutes of bathing
- **Gentle bathing habits**: short, lukewarm showers and mild, soap-free cleansers
- **Topical anti-inflammatory medications**, including corticosteroids and non-steroidal options such as calcineurin inhibitors, PDE4 inhibitors and topical JAK inhibitors
- **Phototherapy** (medical light therapy) for widespread or stubborn eczema
- **Advanced systemic treatments**, including biologic injections and oral JAK inhibitors that target the specific immune pathways behind moderate-to-severe disease

Our dermatologists also treat complications such as skin infections and rule out look-alike conditions, like allergic contact dermatitis or psoriasis, that may need a different approach.

When to See a Dermatologist

Consider an appointment if your eczema keeps you up at night, doesn't improve with over-the-counter care, covers large areas of your body, shows signs of infection (pain, pus or yellow crusting), or is affecting your daily life and confidence.

Healthier Skin Starts Here

Living with eczema can be frustrating, but you don't have to manage it alone. At Art of Dermatology, we combine the science of medicine with the art of individualized care to calm flares, protect your skin barrier and keep symptoms under control for the long term. Schedule a consultation today and take the first step toward calmer, more comfortable skin.



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A FUNCTIONAL DOCTOR'S APPROACH TO ELEVATED BLOOD PRESSURE

By Svetlana Kogan, MD, FMCP-M

It would be nice if before people get to the point where they need blood pressure medications, they would have access to preventive checkups where the root causes of any potential future hypertension would be picked up and addressed. Functional Medicine, which is a modern holistic outgrowth of Internal Medicine, starts by looking for the reasons why the patient may be developing an elevated blood pressure. Some of the causes of Hypertension we investigate are:

Medications which patients happen to be taking, like non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs), Birth Control pills, PPIs, Steroids, some anti-depressants, certain nasal sprays, some weight loss medications, and medications used for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

We also look for and treat underlying medical conditions which can prompt high blood pressures, such as:

Sleep Apnea, Thyroid or Parathyroid disease, Kidney disease, Obesity, Hyperlipidemia, Environmental exposure to Lead, cadmium, or arsenic, and disease of the adrenal glands to name a few. In functional medicine philosophy, oxidative stress poses a key clinical imbalance in the development of hypertension. What does that mean? Well, as our bodies work to disarm all the toxic substances which we encounter in our diet and environment, there are these very nasty characters forming in the blood called reactive oxygen species (ROS). It is the combination of the abundance of these nasty ROS and the shortage of our natural defenses against them which create oxidative stress.

Oxidative stress makes our blood vessels dysfunctional, promotes insulin resistance, creates inflammation everywhere and leads to higher blood pressures.

A functional medicine doctor can measure important markers of oxidative stress in your blood and nip the disease in the bud, before it has a chance to affect the end organs, like kidney,



pancreas, heart, liver, etc. We also measure micronutrient levels to assess our patients' defense antioxidant reserves. This gives us a chance to provide targeted supplementation of micronutrients to those who need it.

The result? Hypertension reversed.

Another thing that recently got functional doctors' attention is how our inappropriately triggered immunity can lead to hypertension and vascular disease, Covid 19 being the best example. When they started looking into how exactly vascular disease develops, they noticed that it starts with the disturbance of the innermost layer called endothelium. One of the major disturbances is the decreased production of the vasodilating substance called Nitric Oxide, an increase in the production of its antagonist ADMA, and another is the excess of the endogenously produced substance called Homocysteine. We can measure all these markers with simple blood tests, to confirm that these issues are present in a particular patient. You must be thinking: but what can you do if you discover these early precursors of hypertension and vascular disease? The good news is that thanks to cutting-edge research, functional doctors work to address these disturbances with professional grade supplements, botanicals, nutritional interventions, and lifestyle modifications. Here is a real-life example from my own private practice: a new patient who had signed up with my practice, was discovered during her intake examination to have newly elevated blood pressures. While going through her medications list, I discovered that she has been taking over the counter Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs). These were recommended to her by her doctor years ago to help with her gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), and she was reflexively buying these pills over the counter for years.

On in-depth testing, I discovered high levels of ADMA in her blood and wisely remembered that PPIs increase ADMA and decrease Nitric Oxide causing an impaired ability of the blood vessels to expand to maintain normal BP levels. I then carefully and gradually weaned this patient off the PPI medication and made sure that it was ok with her gastroenterologist. As a result, her blood pressure and vascular dysfunction markers have normalized within several months. I also successfully treated her GERD with appropriate non-pharmaceutical functional supplements, changes in the foods she was eating, and tweaking her daily routine.

Indeed, folks, even changing your lifestyle routines are powerful natural medicines for the elevated blood pressure. For example, regular aerobic activity like brisk walking at least 30 minutes /day decreases blood pressure anywhere between 5-10 mm. By the same token, restricting sodium intake to 2.4 g/day decreases BP by another 2-8 mm. There are many more natural functional approaches to hypertension and my hope is that someday we can at best avert and at least reverse the public health burden of Hypertension which affects 116 million Americans.



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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Shoulder Arthritis Pain Relief Without Surgery: Is Embolization Right for You?

By Russell Becker, DO

Your shoulder is the most mobile joint in your body, which is exactly why shoulder pain can be so disruptive. Reaching for a coffee mug, fastening a seatbelt, swinging a golf club, or simply rolling over in bed can become a daily reminder that something isn't right. For many Southwest Florida residents, the culprit is shoulder arthritis. For patients who have tried rest, physical therapy, and injections without lasting relief, there is a minimally invasive option worth exploring: shoulder embolization, performed at the Vascular Center of Naples.

What Causes Shoulder Arthritis Pain?

Shoulder arthritis usually develops when the smooth cartilage covering the ball and socket of the joint gradually wears down. Osteoarthritis is the most common form, but rheumatoid arthritis, old injuries, and rotator cuff disease can also damage the joint. As cartilage thins, bones rub together and the joint lining becomes inflamed.

That inflammation is where the story gets interesting. Research shows that chronically inflamed joints tend to grow abnormal new blood vessels, a process called neovascularization. These tiny vessels don't help the joint heal. Instead, they deliver a steady supply of inflammatory cells and are often accompanied by new nerve fibers that amplify pain signals. In other words, part of what you feel as arthritis pain may be driven by blood flow that shouldn't be there.

What Is Shoulder Embolization?

Shoulder embolization, also called transarterial embolization (TAE), targets those abnormal vessels directly. The procedure grew out of genicular artery embolization (GAE), a treatment for knee arthritis pain, and applies the same principle to the shoulder.

Through a tiny puncture, typically in the wrist or groin, our physician guides a thin catheter through the arteries to the shoulder using live X-ray imaging. Contrast dye reveals areas of abnormal blood flow, which often appear as a "blush" around the painful part of the joint. Microscopic particles are then delivered to reduce flow through those small abnormal vessels, while the larger arteries that nourish bone, muscle, and skin are preserved.



The procedure is performed on an outpatient basis under local anesthesia and light sedation. There are no surgical incisions or stitches, and most patients go home the same day.

Who Might Benefit?

Shoulder embolization may be worth considering if you:

- Have moderate to severe shoulder pain lasting three months or longer
- Have not found lasting relief from medications, physical therapy, or steroid injections
- Want to delay or avoid shoulder replacement surgery, or are not a good surgical candidate
- Have related conditions such as frozen shoulder (adhesive capsulitis), chronic rotator cuff tendinopathy, or bursitis

A consultation with a review of your imaging helps determine whether embolization is appropriate, or whether another treatment would serve you better.

What Does the Research Show?

Shoulder embolization is a newer treatment, and the science is still growing. The strongest early results come from patients with frozen shoulder and chronic tendon-related pain. A 2021 study in the Journal of Vascular and Interventional Radiology followed 25 patients with stubborn shoulder stiffness and found median pain scores fell from 8 to 2 on a 10-point scale six months after treatment, along with major gains in arm motion. Other small studies have reported similar improvements in pain and function with few complications.

Evidence specific to shoulder osteoarthritis remains limited, and larger controlled trials are still needed. We believe in honest expectations: embolization is not a cure for arthritis, and results vary from person to person.

Recovery and Risks

Most patients return to light daily activities within a day or two. Some notice improvement within the first week, while others experience gradual relief over several weeks as inflammation settles. Physical therapy afterward can help you make the most of reduced pain.

Embolization is generally well tolerated. Possible side effects include bruising at the catheter site, temporary skin discoloration or tenderness over the shoulder, and mild flu-like symptoms. Serious complications are uncommon.

Take the Next Step

Shoulder pain doesn't have to define your days. If arthritis or chronic shoulder pain is keeping you from the activities you love, the team at the Vascular Center of Naples can help you understand your options. Contact our office to schedule a consultation and learn whether shoulder embolization is right for you.

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*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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MACULAR DEGENERATION

"I Thought I'd Never Read Again."

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

PATIENT SUCCESS STORY

Have you been told, "There's nothing more that can be done for your macular degeneration?"

For many people, those are some of the most discouraging words they will ever hear.

The gentleman pictured above heard something very similar.

Harold, an 85-year-old Southwest Florida resident, had gradually lost the ability to comfortably enjoy one of his favorite activities—reading. Like many people living with macular degeneration, he believed he had reached the end of his options.

When Harold came to my office, I asked him one simple question that I ask every patient.

"What would you like to be able to do again?"
His answer came without hesitation.
"I'd like to read again."

Rather than focusing only on an eye chart, we focused on Harold's goals.

After carefully evaluating his remaining vision, we prescribed a customized low vision reading device designed specifically for his visual needs. Just as importantly, Harold received individualized training so he could comfortably and confidently use the device in his everyday life.

Today, Harold is reading again.

For many people, that means much more than reading words on a page. It means enjoying a favorite novel, completing crossword puzzles, reading the morning newspaper, following church bulletins, managing personal mail, or simply regaining the independence that vision loss had taken away.

One of the greatest compliments I receive isn't about helping someone read smaller print.

It's hearing a patient say,
"I got my life back."



Harold, 85, using a customized low vision reading device during a follow-up visit. After evaluation and training, he returned to reading activities he thought were lost because of macular degeneration. Individual results vary based on diagnosis and remaining vision.

More Than Magnification

Many people believe that if regular glasses, injections, or surgery can no longer improve their vision, nothing else can be done.

Fortunately, that isn't always true.

Low Vision Rehabilitation doesn't focus on curing the eye disease—it focuses on helping people make the best possible use of the vision they still have.

Depending on a person's vision and goals, specialized reading devices, telescopes, electronic magnification systems, prism glasses, contrast-enhancing filters, and other customized technology may help patients return to activities they thought were lost forever.

But the technology is only part of the solution.

The real goal is helping people regain independence, confidence, and quality of life.

What Would You Like To Do Again?

Every Low Vision evaluation begins with the same question.

- Read books or newspapers?
- Watch television more comfortably?
- Recognize the faces of family and friends?
- Sew, knit, or enjoy hobbies again?
- Read restaurant menus?
- Write checks or manage your mail?
- Attend church or sporting events with greater confidence?

Although many of my patients have macular degeneration, Low Vision Rehabilitation may also benefit people living with glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, inherited retinal diseases, albinism, optic nerve disorders, stroke-related vision loss, and many other conditions that cannot be fully corrected with ordinary glasses.

If you've been told, **"There's nothing more that can be done,"** don't assume you've reached the end of your options.

While we cannot restore normal vision or cure every eye disease, we can often help people make better use of the vision they still have—allowing them to return to the activities that give life meaning and enjoyment.

Sometimes improving vision isn't just about seeing better.

It's about living better.



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

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The Reality of Modern TRT: Accessing Testosterone Is Easy. Finding a Good Doctor Is Hard.

By Lindita Roboci Hobdari, MD

Holistic Healing, Not Hype

Everywhere you turn, someone is promising more energy, better performance, or a way to feel younger. It can be hard to know what to trust. At our practice, we start with questions—and one we hear often is, "Could my testosterone be low?"

It surprises me how easy it has become to start testosterone replacement therapy without a proper medical evaluation or ongoing monitoring. At Hobdari Family Health, our team believes the conversation before the prescription—and the follow-up afterward—are essential parts of care.

With November bringing attention to men's health, it is a good time to talk about what responsible testosterone therapy should look like.

We hear it often: "I'm tired all the time." "I've lost my motivation." "I want to feel like myself again." Those concerns deserve attention. But before reaching for testosterone, we need to ask a simple question: Why are you feeling this way?

Start with questions

Low testosterone can affect energy, strength, and sex drive. But poor sleep, stress, diabetes, thyroid problems, and certain medications can cause similar symptoms.

If you snore loudly and wake up exhausted, for example, a sleep problem may be part of the answer. Giving you testosterone would not address that underlying problem.

Our team asks about your sleep, mood, daily habits, medications, and medical history. When testosterone testing is appropriate, we generally check morning levels on two separate days. One low result does not tell us everything we need to know.

We want to understand what is happening before deciding how to help.

Feeling better is only part of the picture

Testosterone can help some men, but starting treatment should come with a plan for regular follow-up. One reason is that testosterone can cause



the body to make too many red blood cells. You may have heard this described as "thickening the blood." If that happens, treatment may need to change—even if you feel great.

A routine blood count helps us watch for this. We also follow your testosterone level, blood pressure, symptoms, and any side effects.

Patients should know who is reviewing their results, when their next blood test is due, and whom to call with concerns. Good care means someone is paying attention after the prescription is filled.

More is not always better

The goal is not to push your testosterone level as high as possible. The goal is to help you feel better while keeping treatment in an appropriate range.

Some testosterone also changes into estrogen, a hormone that men need, too. If you develop breast tenderness or other changes, tell your provider.

You may hear about anastrozole, a medication that lowers estrogen. It is not something every man taking testosterone needs. Adding another medication should be a thoughtful decision based on your symptoms and test results.

It is also important to discuss future plans for children because testosterone treatment can reduce sperm production.

These are conversations that should happen before treatment begins.

That is why our team asks about more than hormones. Have you noticed a lingering cough? Are you getting winded more easily? Do you smoke, or did you smoke in the past? Are you up to date on the screenings recommended for you?

We also talk about food, exercise, sleep, and stress. Regular walking, strength training, balanced meals, and better sleep can make a meaningful difference in how you feel.

You do not have to change everything at once. We can help you choose a practical place to start.

A team that follows through

At Hobdari Family Health, our physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners work together to understand your concerns and follow your progress. Tell us about everything you take, including hormones and supplements prescribed or purchased elsewhere. It helps us care for you.

You deserve to have your symptoms taken seriously, your questions answered, and your treatment followed carefully.

Holistic Healing, Not Hype

"Holistic Healing, Not Hype" is the principle behind our care. With so many promises about looking younger and feeling stronger, we encourage you to ask questions and expect clear answers. You deserve to understand what a treatment can realistically offer and whether it is right for you. Better health is a goal worth pursuing thoughtfully, with a team that puts your well-being first

Dr. Lindita Roboci 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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Diabetic Wound Healing:
Why is it so Challenging to Treat?

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

Podiatrists focus on the feet and everything associated with the foot and ankle, such as the tendons, muscles, ligaments, and bones. Podiatric specialists regularly treat anything that makes up the structure, function, and health of the entire foot. In the state of Florida, a podiatrist is not only able to medically treat the foot, but they also treat the lower extremity. Because the knee is in such close relation to the effects of the foot and ankle, podiatrists regularly treat bone and soft tissue disorders from the knee down. With Diabetes, the leg, foot and ankle are often affected by wounds that do not heal!

Diabetic Wound Issues:
Diabetes is a complicated condition to gain control of, but one of the most painful parts of this disease is the development of diabetic wounds. Often these wounds become "non-healing" due to the adverse effects of the systemic disorder.

Millions of people with diabetes will suffer from diabetic foot ulcers more than once in their lifetimes. Diabetes is a progressive disease that is many times, not taken seriously enough by people predisposed to the disorder.

High blood sugar damages various organs within the body, but also has a severely adverse effect on nerves. This nerve damage happens when the blood supply is limited. The small blood vessels, which supply blood and nutrients to the nerves becomes impaired. When the nerves are no longer fed nutrients, they either die, or their signals to the brain are ineffective. The lack of brain signaling from the nerve endings makes it difficult for a person to feel pain in their foot, so often injuries and these disorders are overlooked. This syndrome is called peripheral diabetic neuropathy.

Because of this nerve damage, people with diabetes are at a higher risk of developing foot ulcers. A foot wound may not sound overly alarming to most people, but foot ulcers can be life-threatening.



These small sores go undetected due to the lack of feeling. If a patient delays treatment, foot ulcers can lead to amputation, strokes, heart attacks and severe infections that can spread throughout the entire body.

At Collier Podiatry, make it a priority to provide advanced diabetic wound services. Collier Podiatry, P.A., is the practice of Dr. Petrocelli, a board-certified podiatrist who has been practicing since 1994. With over 29 years of experience, Dr. Petrocelli provides next-level care for diabetic patients with wounds and ulcers. He is board certified in wound healing and can treat any wound below the knee.

Diabetic Wounds & Vascularization
If you have ulcers and lacerations that never fully heal, you might have a chronic wound. These are most often caused by diabetes mellitus, which causes blood vessels in the feet and hands to grow smaller. The restriction of blood flow damages nerve areas and reduces sensation.

Chronic wounds can also be caused by venous stasis, a condition of the veins in the lower legs, which also deprives your feet of adequate blood flow. With both conditions, when you bump or cut your foot or when you develop an ulcer, the lack of blood flow makes it difficult for the wound to heal.

In the endothelial layer of the dermis, vascularization must take place in order to heal the wound. The neovascularization or also known as angiogenesis is when new microvessels, fibroblast, and collagen begin to proliferate and form along with an increase in oxygen uptake and micronutrients to help grow new tissue, and to build a strong vascular blood flow to supply the proper nutrients to the dermal layers.

Along with Collier Podiatry's advanced wound healing protocols, Dr. Petrocelli often works directly with vascular surgeons to find ways to restore blood flow to the affected area so that the wound can finally heal.

Collier Podiatry maps out your treatment plan by taking a meticulous culture of your chronic wound, which assists them in deciphering and implementing the best strategy for your diabetic wound care and prescribing the correct medications for your particular case. Collier Podiatry does all of this with the goal of ridding you of your painful chronic wounds once and for all.

Collier Podiatry's Wound Care Treatment:
- Antibiotics
- Grafts
- Hyperbaric oxygen treatments
- Saline debridement
- Surgery
- Therapeutic footwear
- Wound care
- Vascular Treatment

People with diabetes are encouraged to do self-checks on their feet daily. As soon as you notice any redness or wounds, it is imperative to see your podiatrist.

COLLIER PODIATRY, P.A.
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REVOLUTIONIZE YOUR LIFE WITH EMSELLA CHAIR

A Solution to Incontinence

By Joseph Gauta, MD, FACOG

Incontinence is a silent struggle faced by a third of the US population. This common condition, often stemming from causes like childbirth, weakened muscles, or the effects of aging, can disrupt daily life and self-confidence. Many of us have heard about kegel exercises as a solution, but how many actually commit to them? The Emsella Chair is here to change the game, offering the equivalent of 11,000 kegel exercises in a single session and a total of 66,000 exercises in a full 6-session treatment. If you've experienced the toll of childbirth or are starting to have those "close calls" when nature calls, it might be time to give your pelvic floor the workout it deserves.

Incontinence is not an issue to be taken lightly, as it can have a profound impact on one's quality of life. However, there is hope for those who have been struggling with this condition. The Emsella Chair is a revolutionary solution that is making waves in the world of pelvic health.

Understanding the Causes

Childbirth, weakened muscles, and the natural aging process are some of the primary factors contributing to incontinence. Childbirth can weaken the pelvic floor muscles, making it challenging to maintain control over the bladder and causing leakage. Additionally, as we age, our muscles tend to lose their strength, including those in the pelvic region. This muscle weakening, combined with the impact of hormonal changes, can lead to incontinence issues. It's a common problem that many are hesitant to discuss, but it's essential to address it for a better quality of life.

Kegel Exercises: Easier Said Than Done

Kegel exercises are often recommended as a way to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. However, despite their potential benefits, how many of us actually follow through with these exercises consistently? Life gets busy, and it's easy to forget or lose motivation. This is where the Emsella Chair comes in as a game-changer.

Emsella Chair: The Ultimate Pelvic Workout

The EMSELLA Chair is a non-surgical, non-invasive treatment that can greatly improve incontinence.



Each 28-minute session is the equivalent of 11,200 pelvic floor exercises. The EMSELLA™ chair is being touted as the Kegel throne. It produces high-frequency vibrations with thousands of contractions per session that tighten the pelvic floor muscles and the bladder sometimes as quickly as the first treatment

The full treatment, consisting of about six sessions, delivers an incredible 66,000 kegel exercises to your pelvic floor. This innovative technology is designed to strengthen your muscles, increase bladder control, and ultimately improve your quality of life.

Who Can Benefit from Emsella?

Whether you've recently given birth and are experiencing postpartum incontinence, or you've started having those "close calls" when heading to the restroom, the Emsella Chair can be a game-changer for you. It's not just for women; men dealing with incontinence issues can also benefit from this non-invasive, FDA-approved treatment.

The Future of Pelvic Health

Incontinence can be an isolating and embarrassing condition, but it's crucial to remember that you're not alone. The Emsella Chair is reshaping the way we address pelvic health issues, offering a more efficient and convenient solution than traditional exercises. You don't have to accept incontinence as an inevitable part of aging or motherhood. With the Emsella Chair, you can regain control, confidence, and, most importantly, your life.

In conclusion, the Emsella Chair is a groundbreaking solution that promises to change the lives of many who have been silently suffering from incontinence. Don't let this condition hold you back any longer; longer; take charge of your pelvic health and experience the benefits of this innovative treatment. You'll thank yourself for making the choice to improve your quality of life and regain control over your bladder.



Some comments from local users:

- I don't have to worry about peeing when I sneeze anymore
- My husband definitely notices the difference
- I just feel lighter down there.

To learn more about this technology please go to our website at www.FloridaBladderInstitute.com. ***Call 239-449-7979 to schedule your Emsella consultation today.***



Joseph Gauta, MD | Gabrielle Wright, PA-C | Kelly Medina, PA-C

It's time to start living your life to the fullest. Regain control of your life.

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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.

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FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS
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Beyond Thank You: How Recognition and Connection Support Veterans' Well-Being

By Cassie Calwell

Each November, Americans pause to recognize the men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. While Veterans Day is an opportunity to express gratitude for their service and sacrifice, it also serves as a reminder of the importance of honoring veterans throughout their lives.

For older veterans, feeling appreciated, maintaining friendships and sharing experiences with others can play an important role in emotional well-being. Research from the National Institute on Aging has linked social isolation and loneliness among older adults to increased risks of depression, cognitive decline and other health concerns. Maintaining meaningful relationships, participating in group activities and feeling valued by others can help support mental and emotional health.

For veterans, camaraderie can be especially significant. Military service often creates lasting bonds built on teamwork, shared responsibilities and mutual trust. Although veterans may have served in different branches, locations or decades, their experiences can provide common ground for conversation and friendship.

At The Carlisle Naples, where numerous residents have served in the military, these connections are encouraged through an American Veterans Association group. Members gather regularly to share experiences, support one another and participate in initiatives benefiting organizations outside the active retirement community such as food and clothing drives.

These gatherings provide opportunities for veterans to maintain friendships while continuing to contribute to causes important to them. For many older adults, having opportunities to participate and make a difference reinforces a sense of purpose and belonging.

Equally important is ensuring that veterans know their contributions have not been forgotten.

Throughout the year, The Carlisle Naples recognizes residents' military service through an Honor Wall, where their service is acknowledged. Each Veterans Day, the community also hosts a ceremony featuring a special pinning presentation honoring those who served.

Fellow residents also show their appreciation, reinforcing a sense of pride and belonging among the community's veterans. Last year, for example, resident Janet Goodhart knitted heart-shaped keepsakes for each veteran as a personal expression of gratitude.



Such gestures reflect the importance of appreciation in everyday life. Research on gratitude suggests that expressing and receiving appreciation can strengthen relationships and support positive emotions. For older adults, these interactions can help reinforce feelings of connection and personal value.

Recognition, however, does not have to be reserved for holidays or formal ceremonies. Here are a few simple ways family and friends can support veterans' emotional well-being:

- **Take time to listen:** Invite veterans to share their experiences, while respecting that some may prefer to keep certain memories private.
- **Encourage connections:** Veterans organizations, community groups and social gatherings provide opportunities to develop friendships and maintain a sense of camaraderie.
- **Recognize their contributions:** A handwritten note, thoughtful conversation or simple expression of thanks can remind veterans that their service is appreciated.
- **Support continued involvement:** Volunteering, mentoring and participating in community projects allow veterans to share their knowledge and remain engaged in meaningful activities.

"The Carlisle is home to many veterans who have proudly served our country," said Executive Director Amanda Ignasak. "While Veterans Day is an opportunity to honor their service, we want them to know how much they are valued and appreciated, not just for their past contributions, but for the difference they continue to make in our community."

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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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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Unhurried, Proactive, Personal:

Inside Wimmer Concierge Orthopedics and Our Regenerative Medicine Program

By Derek P. Wimmer, PA-C

If you've ever waited three weeks for an orthopedic appointment, only to spend ten minutes with someone you had never met, you already understand why we created Wimmer Concierge Orthopedics.

At Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics in Bonita Springs, our patients are golfers, pickleball players, boaters, executives, and seasonal residents with a lot of living left to do. They don't want care that waits for the next flare-up. They want a provider who knows their history, answers the phone, and has a plan to keep them moving. That is exactly what concierge membership is designed to deliver.

What Concierge Membership Includes

Wimmer Concierge is an annual membership that gives you a direct, ongoing relationship with Derek Wimmer, PA. Every plan includes three core benefits:

- Derek's private phone line, reachable 24/7
- Unlimited office visits
- In-office imaging when you need it

Beyond that foundation, members receive priority scheduling, longer one-on-one visits, periodic check-ins, and a personalized maintenance plan built around their activity goals. Seasonal residents also get records and imaging coordination, so their plan travels with them when they head north.

There are four membership levels:

- **Access ($4,000/year):** the core concierge relationship.
- **Foundation ($6,500/year):** adds 12 sessions of focused shockwave or spinal decompression, one PRP treatment, a quarterly Wharton's jelly wellness program, and monthly B12.
- **Restore ($11,000/year):** adds a full-dose Wharton's jelly protocol for any joint, a second PRP treatment, quarterly IV vitamins, and monthly vitamin D3.
- **Pinnacle ($17,000/year):** the complete program, with 24 shockwave or decompression sessions, four PRP treatments, an IV exosome treatment, BPC-157/TB-500 peptide joint injections, and monthly IV vitamins.



Membership is intentionally limited, and every treatment is provided only when it is clinically appropriate for you. Concierge care is not a substitute for emergency care.

Our Regenerative Medicine Treatments

Regenerative medicine aims to support the body's own repair processes rather than simply masking pain. For many patients with arthritis, tendon injuries, or chronic joint pain, it offers a way to pursue relief before considering surgery. Our program includes:

- **Platelet-rich plasma (PRP):** We draw a small amount of your blood, concentrate the platelets in an in-office centrifuge, and inject them where healing signals are needed, commonly knees, shoulders, elbows, and tendons.
- **Wharton's jelly with mesenchymal stem cells:** An umbilical-derived allograft biologic and one of our featured options for joint and tendon conditions.
- **Exosomes:** Tiny cell-derived vesicles that carry signaling molecules, offered by injection or IV where appropriate.
- **Peptide therapy:** Targeted peptides such as BPC-157 and TB-500 to support recovery and tissue repair.
- **Focused shockwave therapy:** High-energy acoustic waves aimed at stubborn tendon and soft-tissue pain, with no drugs and no downtime.
- **Spinal decompression:** Gentle, non-surgical relief for neck and back pain, sciatica, and disc-related pain.

Injections are performed with ultrasound or fluoroscopic guidance when precision matters, so treatment reaches exactly where it is intended. We also offer hyaluronic acid "gel shots," corticosteroid injections, and nerve blocks when they are the better fit.

We believe in honest counsel. Regenerative treatments don't work for everyone, results are not guaranteed, and some therapies are considered investigational. Derek reviews your candidacy individually and will tell you plainly what these treatments can and cannot do for you.

Is Concierge Care Right for You?

Concierge membership is a strong fit if you are an active retiree, an athlete recovering from or preventing injury, a busy professional, a seasonal resident, or someone managing chronic joint pain who wants steady care instead of episodic visits. If you'd rather not commit to full membership, our monthly maintenance plans bundle treatments such as quarterly PRP or shockwave sessions at a predictable rate.

Either way, the first step is the same: a private conversation about your goals.

Call 239-829-4300 or visit wimmerorthopedics.com to request confidential concierge information or book an evaluation. Wimmer Regenerative Orthopedics is located at 3380 Woods Edge Circle #104 in Bonita Springs and serves patients across Naples, Estero, and Fort Myers.

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

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Supporting Safety and Specialized Lymphedema Care Across Southwest Florida

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

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

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

Fall Prevention & Neurological Rehabilitation: Promoting Safety in the Home

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

Our fall-prevention services include:

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

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

Neurological Rehabilitation Integrated Into Fall Prevention

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

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

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

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

Specialized Lymphedema Management Through Complete Decongestive Therapy (CDT)

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

CDT includes:

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

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

Compression Garment Support, Simplified Through our DME Services

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

Patients receive hands-on support with:

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

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

Clinician-Led, Patient-Focused Therapy Across Southwest Florida

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

Helping Patients Stay Safe, Supported, and Independent

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

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

We're Growing!

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



Jim Ferrara



Lexie Lundquist

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Sound Advice:

Protect Your Hearing Today for Clearer Tomorrows

Dr. Ava Rhodes, Au.D.

When we think about staying healthy, hearing rarely tops the list. We keep up with annual checkups, exercise, and numbers like cholesterol and blood pressure, but hearing usually gets overlooked until something feels off. Restaurant conversations get harder to follow. Family members seem to mumble. The TV volume keeps creeping up.

Hearing changes tend to happen gradually, and one of the most common causes is something many of us encounter every day: noise.

As an audiologist, I often hear patients say, "I wish I had protected my hearing sooner." Many are surprised to learn that damage can begin long before they notice any symptoms. The good news is that a few practical habits can go a long way toward preserving your hearing for years to come.

How Noise Damages Hearing

Deep inside the inner ear are tiny sensory cells that turn sound into signals your brain can understand. These cells are extremely delicate, and unlike many other parts of the body, they don't grow back once they're damaged. Because the loss usually happens slowly, many people adjust without realizing what they're missing.

I like to compare it to sun exposure. One bad sunburn can cause harm, but so can years of unprotected time outdoors. Hearing works the same way. Often it isn't a single loud event that causes problems, but years of repeated exposure quietly adding up.

Common Sources of Risk

For many of us, loud environments are simply part of the routine: concerts, sporting events, lawn equipment, power tools, motorcycles, and hunting. People who work in factories, landscaping, construction, or manufacturing face even greater risk because of daily exposure over many years.

Protecting your hearing doesn't mean giving up the things you enjoy. It just means being intentional about how you enjoy them.

Concerts and sporting events. Forget the bulky foam earplugs that muffle everything. Today's high-fidelity earplugs lower harmful volume while keeping music and conversation clear. Standing farther from speakers and taking short breaks also help. If your ears ring or sounds seem muffled afterward, the noise was likely too loud.

Hunting and firearms. Gunfire is loud enough that even a single unprotected shot can cause permanent damage. Modern electronic hearing protection lets you hear conversation and your surroundings while blocking harmful impulse noise.

The workplace. Many of my patients spent years in factories, warehouses, or industrial settings without realizing the toll that daily noise was taking. Wearing protection consistently, even when it feels inconvenient, pays off years down the road.

Kids, teens, and earbuds. Many young people wear headphones for hours every day, and long stretches at high volume can quietly affect hearing. I recommend the "60/60 rule": keep the volume at or below 60% and take a break after about 60 minutes. Parents should also bring hearing protection for children at fireworks, concerts, races, and games.

Simple Habits, Lasting Benefits

Protecting your hearing mostly comes down to small, consistent choices:

- Turn down headphone volume
- Wear hearing protection during loud activities
- Take breaks from noisy environments
- Pay attention to warning signs like ringing or muffled sound

These habits help protect the sounds that matter most: conversations with loved ones, favorite songs, laughter, and the everyday moments that keep us connected.



Start With a Baseline

One of the best things you can do for your hearing is to know where it stands today. A hearing evaluation can catch changes early, often before they affect your day-to-day routine. Whether you work around noise, love concerts or hunting, or simply want peace of mind, understanding your hearing now is the first step toward protecting it for the future.

At our office, we are passionate about helping patients in Naples protect and preserve their hearing. If you have questions about hearing changes or would like a hearing evaluation, contact Dr. Ava Rhodes and our team today. Visit us online at www.AudioNova.com, or call (239) 631-5750. Protecting your hearing today can make all the difference tomorrow.

***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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Built to Last: Peptide Therapy for Men Who Want to Recover, Perform and Age Well

Men are famously good at ignoring their health. We push through the sore shoulder, blame low drive on stress, and accept a slower metabolism as the price of getting older.

But a growing conversation around peptides is changing that. Peptides are short chains of amino acids that act as signaling molecules in the body. This month at TheDRIPBar, we're focusing on three areas that matter most to the men we see: recovery, vitality and metabolic health.

Recovery: The Wolverine Blend (BPC-157 + TB-500)
If you lift, run, play a weekend sport or work with your body, you know a tendon or joint problem can sideline you for weeks. The Wolverine Blend pairs two peptides that have drawn attention for tissue repair.

BPC-157 is a fragment of a protein found in gastric juice, studied mainly in animal models for its effects on tendons, ligaments, muscle and the gut lining. TB-500 is a synthetic fragment of thymosin beta-4, a protein involved in cell migration and wound healing. Together, they're popular with active men who want to support recovery alongside rest, rehab and smart training.

An honest caveat: most of the research is preclinical, and both peptides are banned for tested athletes under World Anti-Doping Agency rules.

Vitality: PT-141
Low libido isn't only a "getting older" problem, and it isn't always about blood flow. PT-141, also called bremelanotide, works differently from medications like sildenafil or tadalafil. Instead of acting on blood vessels, it activates melanocortin receptors in the brain that are involved in desire and arousal.

It's also one of the better-studied peptides available. The FDA approved bremelanotide in 2019 as Vyleesi for low sexual desire in premenopausal women. Earlier clinical trials in men showed improved erectile response, including in some men who didn't respond well to sildenafil. Use in men is off-label, so it should only be prescribed after an evaluation by a qualified provider. Nausea and flushing are the most common side effects.

Metabolism and Aging: MOTS-c
After 40, many men notice the same pattern. Energy dips, the waistline grows, and workouts don't pay off the way they used to. MOTS-c is a small peptide encoded in mitochondrial DNA, the "power plants" of your cells, and it's being studied for its role in how the body uses glucose and fat.

In animal studies, MOTS-c has been linked to better insulin sensitivity, exercise capacity and markers of healthy aging, and natural levels appear to fall with age. Human research is still early. Think of it as a promising tool to pair with the basics, like strength training, sleep, protein and hydration, not a replacement for them.

What's Changing in Washington
Peptides have had a turbulent few years. In 2023, the FDA placed 19 peptides, including BPC-157, TB-500 and MOTS-c, on a restricted list that effectively cut off access through compounding pharmacies.

In February 2026, HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said about 14 of those peptides would be moved back. In July, an FDA advisory committee narrowly voted to recommend that BPC-157, TB-500, MOTS-c and three others be allowed for pharmacy compounding.

That's real momentum, but it isn't the finish line. The committee's vote is non-binding, and the FDA still has to issue a formal rule. None of these peptides is an FDA-approved drug. We'll keep you posted as the rules evolve.

Start With a Conversation
The best results don't come from a single vial. They come from a plan built around your goals, your labs and your lifestyle. Whether you're nursing a nagging injury, want to feel like yourself again, or are ready to take metabolic health seriously, our team can walk you through your options and what the evidence actually says.



Ready to get started? Call TheDRIPBar at 239-422-6044 to book your consultation. Peptide availability varies by location and current regulations, and every treatment starts with a medical evaluation.

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Falls Aren't Just Part of Aging

By Alain Alvarez, MD

Picture someone who has always been active. She gardens, she walks every morning, and she has never thought of herself as "at risk." One night, half asleep, she gets up for the bathroom, her slipper catches the edge of a small rug, and she falls. It takes a couple of seconds. The result is a broken hip and a very different year ahead. *(This is an illustrative example, not a real patient.)*

Stories like this are not rare. More than one in four adults over 65 falls each year, which is more than 14 million people in the United States. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death in older adults. About 280,000 Americans break a hip each year, and studies show roughly one in five people dies within a year of a hip fracture. Many survivors never fully regain their former independence.

Falls also carry a heavy cost. Medical spending on older-adult falls was estimated at about $50 billion in 2015, and one updated estimate put non-fatal falls alone near $80 billion in 2020, with Medicare paying the largest share. For one person, an average hospital stay for a fall injury cost roughly $18,000 in one national analysis, and other studies put it much higher. That doesn't count rehabilitation, home care, or family caregiving.

The encouraging news is that falls rarely have a single cause, and many of the causes can be changed. Here are six of the biggest, with a practical step for each.

The Six Risk Factors and Their Fixes

1. Weak muscles and poor balance

Exercise lowers the rate of falls by about 23 percent in a major review of 59 trials. Programs that challenge balance work best, and Tai Chi helps too. Try this at your kitchen counter: hold on for safety and stand on one leg for ten seconds, then switch. A physical therapist can build a program that fits you.

2. Medications

Sleeping pills, anti-anxiety medicines, some antidepressants, antipsychotics, opioids, and seizure medicines have been associated with roughly 40 to 100 percent higher odds of falling in studies. Never



stop a medication on your own. Instead, bring everything you take, including supplements, to your doctor or pharmacist and ask whether it could affect your balance or blood pressure. Medication review works best as part of a bigger plan.

3. Vision

Cataract surgery was linked to about a one-third lower risk of falling in trials. Get regular eye exams, keep your prescription current, and take extra care with new glasses.

4. Dizziness when you stand up

Orthostatic hypotension, a blood-pressure drop when you change position, affects about one in five older adults living at home. In one study of adults 70 and older, about two-thirds of those with it felt no dizziness at all. Ask your doctor to check your blood pressure lying down and then standing, and rise in stages: sit up, wait, let your legs dangle, then stand while holding something steady.

5. Foot pain, joint problems, and footwear

Foot pain roughly doubles the odds of falling in pooled studies, and foot-care programs that include proper footwear reduced falls by about 23 percent in trials. As a rheumatologist, I'll say it plainly: arthritis, plantar fasciitis, and bunions are treatable, so don't just put up with the pain. Choose shoes with a firm, snug fit, a low heel, a non-slip sole, and a secure fastening. Skip slippers, backless shoes, and high heels.

6. Hazards at home

In people at higher risk, home safety changes lowered falls by about 26 percent. Start with the path from bed to bathroom: add night lights, secure or remove loose rugs, clear cords and clutter, install grab bars, and check that stair handrails are sturdy.

One myth to retire

Vitamin D pills have not been shown to prevent falls in people whose levels are normal. If your level is low, that's worth treating, so ask your doctor to check.

Please tell your doctor

If you've fallen in the past year, feel unsteady, or worry about falling, soy so. The CDC reports that fewer than half of older adults who fall tell their doctor.

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ESTATE PLANNING, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, AND ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

By Ryan G. Welker of Woodward, Pires and Lombardo P.A., Attorney Licensed in Florida and Ohio

One of my wife's favorite movies—and, I will admit, one of mine as well—is *Labyrinth*, starring David Bowie and Jennifer Connelly. There is a scene where Sarah becomes frustrated because she cannot seem to get a useful answer from Hoggle. His response contains a line that, to me, captures one of the most important lessons about artificial intelligence:

"Not if you ask the right questions."
That may be one of the best ways to describe both the usefulness and limitations of AI.

AI is not going anywhere, and I do not believe it should be completely avoided. It is a tool. It is not the only tool, and I think it is **not prudent to make it your only tool**, particularly when important legal or financial decisions are involved. But it can be a useful starting point.

As an estate planning attorney, **I know how individualized legal planning can and typically is.** Two clients with similar assets may need entirely different plans because of family dynamics, beneficiaries, real estate, retirement accounts, tax concerns, creditor issues, or simply what they want to accomplish.

Even with how unique most estate planning is, **I believe AI has some usefulness.**

I enjoy the productive conversations that result when clients have used AI before an appointment. Clients can use it to educate themselves and, perhaps more importantly, **clarify their questions.** I welcome that. A client who comes prepared with questions can make the conversation more productive.

But clients also need to understand what AI is—and what it is not.

AI generally answers what it is asked. Right or wrong, it tries to provide a response. It is not necessarily equipped to identify every issue that may matter.

An experienced attorney does something different: the attorney asks the next question.

Someone might ask AI, "Should I have a revocable trust?" AI may provide a good explanation. But an estate planning attorney may immediately ask: What assets do you own? How are they titled? Are you married? Are there children from another relationship? Is homestead involved? What do your beneficiary designations say? Are there tax, creditor, or special beneficiary concerns?

The answer to one question may lead to another. Eventually, the most important issue may be something that was never part of the original question.

That is issue-spotting, and it is where experience matters. A computer can process enormous amounts of information. Experience helps an attorney recognize **which information matters, what may be missing, and what question needs to be asked next.**

There is another limitation that, at least from my perspective, is important: AI can sometimes seem like a people pleaser. It is designed to respond. Ask it a difficult question and it generally tries to give you an answer. Sometimes it can almost seem like it is responding simply **"to hear itself talk."** The answer may be polished and remarkably convincing.

But sounding convincing and being correct are two different things.

Attorneys, meanwhile, are famous for two answers:
"It depends."

And: **"I don't know."**

Those answers may be frustrating, but sometimes they are exactly right.

"It depends" usually means another fact matters. "I don't know" may mean, "I don't know yet. I need to review the document, check the statute, research the cases, or learn more facts."

Sometimes there simply is no definitive answer. The law may be unsettled, courts may disagree, or a statute may be ambiguous. A good attorney should explain that uncertainty rather than manufacture certainty simply to provide an answer.

A good attorney may also have to tell a client something the client does not want to hear. The attorney's role is to provide the answer the client **needs**, not simply the answer the client **wants**.

Law creates another particular problem for AI: **What law is it actually applying?**

Is it Florida law? Ohio law? Federal law? **Is it even the law of this country?**

The United States has fifty states with different statutes, cases, regulations, and court rules. Even appellate districts within one state may disagree, and local rules and procedures can differ.

There is no useful "average" law. **The average of fifty different legal rules may not be the law anywhere.**

AI can provide information, organize ideas, draft language, and help clients clarify questions. But an experienced attorney brings judgment, issue-spotting, context, professional responsibility, and years of seeing how legal problems actually develop.

AI may answer the question you ask. An experienced attorney may recognize that you need to be asking a different question altogether.

AI has some usefulness. I welcome clients using it to become better informed and prepared. But it remains a **tool in the toolbox—not the entire toolbox.**

Sometimes the most important skill is knowing when to say, "It depends," when to say, "I don't know," and which question needs to be asked next.

Which brings us back to *Labyrinth:*
"Not if you ask the right questions."

About the Author
Ryan G. Welker is an associate attorney with Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A., focusing his practice on estate planning, wills and trusts, guardianship, probate, and trust administration. He serves clients from the firm's Marco Island and Naples, Florida, offices and is licensed to practice law in Florida and Ohio.

About Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A.
Founded in 1971, Woodward, Pires & Lombardo, P.A. is a full-service law firm serving individuals, families, businesses, and governmental entities throughout Southwest Florida. With offices in Naples and Marco Island, the firm provides legal services in estate planning, probate and trust administration, real estate, business law, family law, local government law, community association law, litigation, and other practice areas.

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TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARD RELIEF

A patient shares his journey from chronic back pain to real relief.

[Patient's name has been changed for confidentiality]

For "Mike," a 36-year-old Marine Corps veteran and law enforcement officer, physical strain has always been part of the job. But years of pushing his body beyond its limits eventually came at a cost.

"I served five years in the Marine Corps with combat deployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan," he shares. "In Afghanistan, I was exposed to multiple blasts that caused loss of consciousness. Just navigating the terrain with heavy gear took a serious toll on my body."

After transitioning out of the military, Mike continued down a physically demanding career path, eventually landing in law enforcement. Between the two high-intensity professions, his body began to break down.

"I started developing chronic back pain and serious mobility issues. Over time, I was diagnosed with degenerative disc disease, radiculopathy in both legs, herniated discs, disc tears, and other nerve complications."

The discomfort became a part of daily life—constant, unpredictable, and limiting. "I got used to managing the pain. I became cautious with how I moved and even learned how to pop my own disc back in place using a wall," he recalls. "Eventually, I just gave up and accepted it."

A Turning Point

It wasn't until one particularly bad flare-up that Mike's wife encouraged him to seek professional care and he reached out to Dr. Michael Shaffer, in Naples, FL.

"Dr. Shaffer took the time to really understand my history and symptoms," he says. "He recom-mended a combination of non-surgical spinal decompression and therapy and the M7 laser."

Mike was skeptical—he had lived with back pain for years and had tried different treatments in the past with limited results. Soon after the first session, something changed.



"I remember driving back to work after a treatment. There's a certain bump in the road that always caused me sharp pain, so I instinctively braced myself," he explains. "But the pain didn't come. It was gone."

He was so surprised by the lack of pain that he started testing his range of motion right at his desk. "I started twisting my torso, waiting for the shooting nerve pain—but it never came. I honestly couldn't believe it.

The Power of Non-Surgical Spinal Decompression and the M7 Laser

Spinal decompression is a non-invasive therapy designed to relieve pressure on the spine by gently stretching it and creating negative pressure within the discs. This process helps retract herniated or bulging discs, promoting movement of oxygen, water, and nutrient-rich fluids into the discs to support healing.

Paired with the advanced M7 Multiwave Locked System (MLS) Laser Therapy, the results can be life-changing. The M7 laser delivers synchronized dual wavelengths of light that penetrate deeply into soft tissue, reducing inflammation, improving circulation, and accelerating the body's natural repair processes—all without medication or surgery.



Back to Living

Today, Mike is back to living and working without the burden of constant pain. While he under-stands that no therapy can erase years of trauma, he stated the treatments helped restore his quality of life.

"For someone like me—big guy, years of military and police work, chronic injuries—I never thought I'd feel this mobile again," he says. "Dr. Shaffer's approach using decompression and the laser gave me a second chance to feel normal."

"I wish I had gone sooner," he says. "If you're living with pain every day, don't wait. The right treatment can change everything."

If you're struggling with back pain, mobility issues, or nerve-related complications, the specialized care at the office of Dr. Michael Shaffer offers safe, evidence-based care, including non-surgical spinal decompression and the M7 MLS Laser. Call today to schedule a consultation and take the first step toward relief.



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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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Prediabetes Is Not Just About Sugar. Your Gut May Be Part of the Story.

By Aiste Magitman, Pharmacist & Founder of Best Gut Forever

If your doctor told you that your blood sugar was slightly elevated, chances are you received the same advice millions of Americans hear every year: eat less sugar, lose weight, and exercise more.

None of that advice is wrong. But it leaves out an important part of the conversation.

What if improving your blood sugar isn't just about eating less sugar, but also about what you're feeding the trillions of bacteria living in your gut?

As a pharmacist, I've spent years learning how medications work and how our bodies regulate blood sugar. But the more I studied the gut microbiome, the more fascinated I became by its connection to metabolic health.

The Silent Problem Affecting Millions of Americans

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately **115 million American adults have prediabetes, and nearly 80% don't even know it.**

Prediabetes develops when blood sugar levels rise above normal but haven't yet reached the threshold for type 2 diabetes. It often develops without noticeable symptoms.

When our cells become resistant to insulin, the hormone that helps glucose enter cells, the pancreas must produce more insulin to compensate. Over time, it may struggle to keep up, causing blood sugar levels to rise.

Your Gut Bacteria Do More Than Help You Digest Food

Most people associate gut health with bloating, constipation, or diarrhea. But your gut microbiome is involved in much more than digestion.

When certain gut bacteria ferment dietary fibers, they produce compounds called short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), including butyrate, acetate, and propionate.

These compounds influence inflammation, intestinal health, and metabolic signaling. They can also activate pathways involved in releasing GLP-1, a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar and appetite.

Interestingly, GLP-1 is the same hormone pathway targeted by medications such as Ozempic and Wegovy.

What Happens When We Feed Our Gut Bacteria More Fiber?

A 2018 study published in *Science* investigated how dietary fiber influences gut bacteria in people with type 2 diabetes.

Researchers found that a high-fiber dietary intervention encouraged the growth of specific bacteria that produce short-chain fatty acids.

Participants with greater increases in these bacteria experienced better improvements in HbA1c, a marker of average blood sugar levels.

The findings suggest that the metabolic benefits of dietary fiber may depend partly on how our gut bacteria respond to it.

Not All Fiber Works the Same Way

One particularly interesting fiber is psyllium.

When mixed with water, psyllium forms a gel-like substance that slows carbohydrate absorption, helping reduce sharp blood sugar increases after meals.

A 2024 meta-analysis of 19 randomized clinical trials involving 962 participants found that psyllium supplementation was associated with improvements in fasting blood glucose, HbA1c, and insulin resistance.

Other fibers, including acacia and components of baobab, can be fermented by beneficial gut bacteria, producing compounds involved in metabolic signaling.

But fibers aren't the only plant compounds worth paying attention to.

Polyphenols: An Overlooked Piece of Metabolic Health

Polyphenols are naturally occurring compounds found in colorful fruits, vegetables, herbs, and other plants. They're known for their antioxidant properties, but their potential benefits go much further.

Research suggests that certain polyphenols may help support insulin sensitivity, influence inflammation, and interact with pathways involved in glucose metabolism.

Their relationship with our gut microbiome is particularly interesting. Many polyphenols reach the large intestine, where gut bacteria transform them into smaller, biologically active compounds.

A 2025 systematic review and meta-analysis of human clinical trials found that polyphenol-rich interventions influenced gut microbial composition and certain markers associated with metabolic inflammation.

This matters because chronic low-grade inflammation and insulin resistance are closely connected to the development of type 2 diabetes.

Why I Formulated Best Gut Forever Differently

When I developed Best Gut Forever, I wanted to go beyond a traditional fiber supplement.

I wanted to make it easier for people to support their gut health without having to take several different supplements. That's why I combined three carefully selected fibers, three polyphenol-rich ingredients, and two digestive botanicals into one daily scoop.

Each ingredient was selected for a purpose.

Psyllium provides viscous soluble fiber that can help moderate carbohydrate absorption. Acacia and baobab provide additional fibers that help feed beneficial gut bacteria.

Meanwhile, polyphenols from pomegranate, grape seed, and blueberry, interact with gut bacteria and are being studied for their roles in antioxidant defenses, inflammation, and glucose metabolism.

Ginger and turmeric add another dimension to the formula. Their naturally occurring bioactive compounds, including gingerols and curcuminoids, have been studied for their potential roles in insulin sensitivity, inflammation, and glucose metabolism.

My philosophy is simple: instead of focusing only on removing sugar from our diets, let's also focus on adding the fibers and plant compounds that support our gut and metabolic health.

Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference

If your blood sugar is starting to rise, a few daily habits can make a meaningful difference:

- **Increase your fiber intake.** Aim for approximately 25–35 grams daily, depending on your needs.
- **Walk after meals.** Even 10–15 minutes can help reduce post-meal blood sugar spikes.
- **Build muscle.** Muscle tissue plays an important role in glucose utilization and insulin sensitivity.
- **Know your HbA1c.** Early detection gives you an opportunity to act.

In the landmark Diabetes Prevention Program, intensive lifestyle changes reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by **58%** over approximately three years.

Perhaps it's time we stopped thinking about blood sugar management only in terms of eating less sugar—and started thinking more about feeding our gut bacteria the right foods.

BEST GUT FOREVER®



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.

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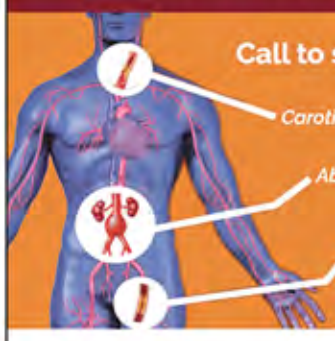
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Building Strength Before and After Surgery

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.

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ANGER MANAGEMENT 101

By Jennifer Vear Hoy, MS/MS - Specialist in Anger Management/Psychotherapist

Anger is an instinct inherited from our primal ancestors through evolution. Anger can be triggered when any creature is threatened, challenged, or denied something they want or need. Anger involves a strong response to a provocation. Facing a challenge, our response may be anger or fear, and it may be difficult to decide whether to face the challenge head-on or walk (run!) away. These are the choices in a fight-or-flight response. Yet there is a sharp distinction between anger and aggression (physical or verbal, direct or indirect). Both influence each other — anger can ramp up to aggression when it increases in intensity. This article will examine anger-induced bodily changes, types of anger, and some suggestions for keeping anger under control.

Hormones and Body Changes Once ignited, anger releases a cascade of physical, psychological, and neurological effects. Anger changes the human body by making the heart beat faster and increasing blood pressure and the levels of the hormones adrenaline and noradrenaline. These chemicals prime the body for action. Adrenaline reacts quickly to a challenge, increasing the supply of oxygen and glucose to the brain and muscles. These hormones gear up the body for action while slowing down less crucial bodily functions, such as digestion.

The Myriad Types of Anger

When it kicks in, anger becomes the body's central focus — behaviorally, cognitively, and physically. Without a physiological slowdown, the individual will not only lose their temper, they will also bypass the internal checkpoints needed to regain control. One way to address these issues is to take a closer look at some types of anger.

• **Passive Anger** — watch out for the cold shoulder or the silent treatment. It may manifest as turning one's back in a crisis, psychological manipulation, or obsessive behavior. Someone who is overly accident-prone, underachieves despite great potential, expresses major frustration over minor setbacks but ignores major ones, may be demonstrating passive anger.

• **Aggressive Anger** — characterized by unpredictability, such as explosive anger over minor frustrations, destructive behavior, risk-taking, showing off, and nasty bullying behavior. Selfishness, grandiosity, threats, and unjust blaming are other common displays of aggressive anger.



• **Assertive Anger** — used in a disciplinary context and may be appropriate under certain circumstances. Blame and punishment are common signs. Assertive anger maintains a balanced approach so that disapproval and punishment remain moderate.

Overall, the expression of anger becomes unhealthy if it exceeds mere expression and inflicts serious suffering on oneself or others. The victims of anger, whether adults or children, may also suffer from elevated stress, health problems, and increased tension.

Avoiding the Warpath Stopping anger escalation is the first step. One can learn tools and techniques to manage anger constructively — if not by yourself, then with the guidance of a skilled therapist. It is helpful to identify anger trigger points and learn to manage them. How? When you are emotionally calm, take an in-depth anger inventory and write down your findings from the past month. Include the following: Who? What? When? Where? Why? and How? Use your phone, an index card, or a daily diary to keep your trigger list handy. It should go with you everywhere. You must keep using it for it to become effective. It is an evolving document to record all future angry outbursts and will ultimately enable you to dissect them. Remember the all-important pause: if you can keep your anger in check for a minute or two, the episode may pass.

There are no shortcuts at this stage, so dig deep. What sets you off? Is there a particular circumstance that ticks you off? Is there a person, place, or thing that always grinds on your nerves? Look back at your last few outbursts and see if you can detect a pattern. Some triggers may be obvious, some not. Keep on digging and listing. Keep tabs on your physical signs, too — a dry mouth, for instance, may be your first tip-off to a potential outburst. Monitor yourself like an internal anger referee and learn to identify your triggers in their early stages. Identify your physical danger signs and your triggers, pause, try to relax, and you can now intervene. Take a few more moments for yourself to regain control. Memorize some phrases to stall the other side — examples such as "Give me a minute to understand what you are saying..." or "Did you mean to say such and such...?" Now's the time to zero in on your physical reactions to a pending outburst, too. Check yourself for a telltale sweaty brow, hot flash, shallow breathing, and other reactions. Try to counter these reactions by doing the opposite: cold water on overheated body parts, slower breathing, and a calming mental picture can all be useful tools.

Bottom line: you can walk away, say you need some air... or some space. Walk away and smile if you can, it leaves the other side wondering what you are up to!



Jennifer Vear Hoy

Jennifer Vear Hoy is a psychotherapist and the owner of Peaceful Summit Counseling. She holds a Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling and a Master of Science in Management and Organizational Behavior. She holds a deep belief in ongoing education as well as community involvement.

Jennifer spent over 20 years in business as a corporate strategist, operating her own consulting firm in Chicago. Following the death of her husband in 2006, she realized firsthand the need for professional, caring counseling. She returned to school and earned her second master's degree as a clinical mental health counselor.

"It is my passion to help others live the life they were meant to live." -Jennifer Vear Hoy

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Benefits of Cervical Disk Replacement for Radiating Arm Pain

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

If you've ever experienced a sharp, shooting pain that travels from your neck down into your arm, you know how debilitating it can be. This condition, often called radiating arm pain or cervical radiculopathy, typically stems from issues in the cervical spine. Between each vertebra in your spine sits a disk that acts like a cushion, absorbing shock and allowing flexibility. Over time, these disks can wear out, herniate (bulge out), or degenerate, pressing on nearby nerves. When that happens, the pain can radiate along the nerve path into your shoulder, arm, or even fingers, accompanied by numbness, tingling, or weakness.

For many patients, conservative treatments like physical therapy, medications, or injections provide relief. But when these aren't enough, surgery might be recommended. One increasingly popular option is cervical disk replacement (CDR), also known as cervical arthroplasty. Unlike traditional spinal fusion, which permanently joins two vertebrae together, CDR involves removing the damaged disk and inserting an artificial one that mimics the natural disk's function. This procedure is performed through a small incision in the front of the neck, under general anesthesia, and aims to relieve nerve pressure while maintaining mobility.

So, what makes CDR a compelling choice specifically for radiating arm pain? Let's explore the key benefits, drawing from medical insights and patient experiences.

Effective Pain Relief

The primary goal of CDR is to decompress the pinched nerves causing your arm pain. By removing the problematic disk and replacing it with an artificial implant, surgeons can alleviate the pressure on nerve roots. Studies and patient reports show that this leads to significant improvement in radiating symptoms. For instance, many people experience a reduction in arm pain, tingling, and numbness shortly after surgery. One study found that CDR provides comparable or better relief for patients with arm pain dominant over neck pain, with lasting results.

Unlike fusion, which can sometimes leave residual discomfort due to altered biomechanics, CDR allows for more natural movement, potentially leading to complete elimination of pain. Patients often report



less surgery-related discomfort post-CDR, including reduced trouble swallowing and throat irritation, thanks to its less invasive nature. Research indicates that the majority of patients see improved neck function and decreased pain levels overall. In fact, artificial disks can offer long-term relief, with some studies suggesting durability over many years.

Preservation of Natural Motion

One of the standout advantages of CDR is that it preserves your neck's natural range of motion. In spinal fusion, the fused segment becomes rigid, which can limit how you turn your head or look up and down. This stiffness might not only feel unnatural but could also contribute to ongoing discomfort. CDR, on the other hand, uses a prosthetic disk designed to flex and rotate like your original one, allowing you to maintain everyday activities without restriction.

For those with radiating arm pain, this motion preservation is crucial because it helps avoid compensatory strain on other parts of the spine. Patients often report feeling more "normal" after recovery, with the ability to drive, work, or exercise without the limitations imposed by fusion. This freedom enhances quality of life, enabling you to engage in hobbies, sports, or simple tasks like reaching overhead without pain.

Reduced Risk of Future Problems

Another major benefit is the lower risk of adjacent segment degeneration—a common issue after fusion where nearby disks wear out faster due to increased stress. Since CDR keeps the spine moving naturally, it distributes forces more evenly, potentially preventing the need for additional surgeries down the line. This is especially appealing for younger, active patients who want a long-term solution without repeated interventions. By maintaining spinal alignment, CDR also supports better posture, reducing strain on muscles and ligaments.

Faster Recovery and Return to Life

Recovery from CDR is often quicker than from fusion. The procedure is minimally invasive, with smaller incisions and less disruption to surrounding tissues. Many patients go home the same day or after a short hospital stay, and they can resume light activities within weeks. Physical therapy focuses on gentle strengthening, and full recovery typically takes 4-6 weeks, compared to longer timelines for fusion.

Post-op instructions emphasize wound care, avoiding heavy lifting, and gradual mobility increases. This faster return to normalcy means less time off work and quicker relief from the arm pain that's been holding you back. Patients often feel empowered to reclaim their active lifestyles sooner.

Who Might Benefit?

CDR is ideal for patients with single-level disk issues causing radiating arm pain, without severe arthritis or instability. It's not for everyone—your surgeon will assess factors like age, overall health, and imaging results. While risks exist, such as infection or implant issues, success rates are high, with many patients enjoying pain-free lives.

In summary, cervical disk replacement offers a modern, motion-preserving alternative that effectively targets radiating arm pain by relieving nerve pressure, reducing future risks, and promoting quicker recovery. If you're struggling with this condition, contact the spine specialists at Apex Brain & Spine for a consultation to see if cervical disk replacement is an option for you.

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The Retirement Tax Trap and the Ultimate Game Changer

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

For many Americans, retirement planning means saving enough to enjoy life after work. But there's another critical question: How much of your retirement savings will you actually keep after taxes?

The type of retirement account you choose today can significantly affect your future tax bill. Understanding Traditional and Roth IRA contributions can help you build a more tax-efficient retirement strategy.

The Transformative Element: Traditional IRA vs. Roth IRA Contributions

Consider a hypothetical 45-year-old deciding between a Traditional IRA and a Roth IRA.

Option 1: The Traditional IRA and the Tax Bill You May Not See Coming

Suppose you contribute $7,500 annually for 25 years, earning a hypothetical 12% average annual return. With contributions made at the beginning of each year, your account could grow to approximately $1.12 million by age 70.

If each contribution is fully deductible and your marginal federal tax rate is 22%, you could save $1,650 annually in federal income taxes—totaling $41,250 over 25 years, assuming consistent tax rates and eligibility. But those initial savings come with a heavy trade-off: withdrawals from a Traditional IRA funded entirely with deductible contributions are generally taxable as ordinary income.

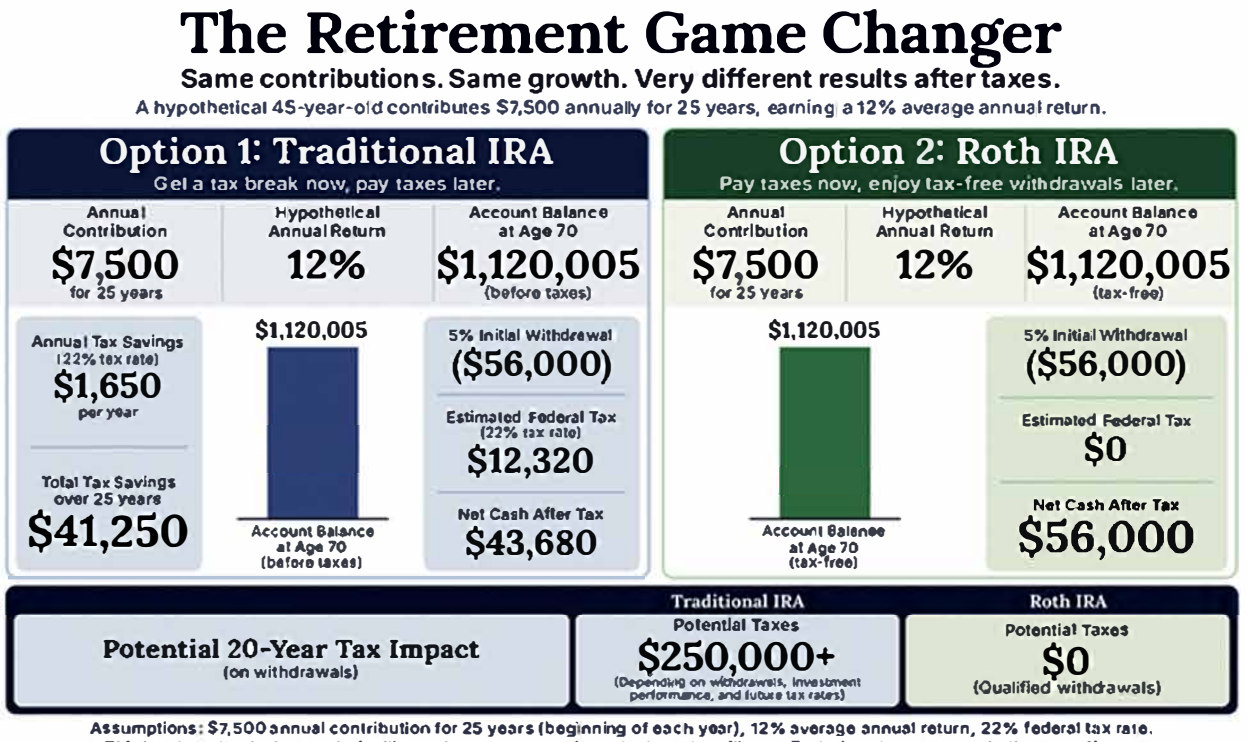
A 5% initial withdrawal from a $1.12 million portfolio would provide approximately $56,000 in the first year. At a 22% federal tax rate, that means $12,320 in federal income taxes. Over 20 years, taxes could easily exceed $250,000, depending on investment performance, withdrawals, and future tax rates.

Option 2: The Roth IRA Contribution Game Changer

With the same annual Roth IRA contributions, you would give up the immediate tax deduction and hypothetical $1,650 in annual tax savings. However, your investments could still grow to approximately $1.12 million under the same assumptions. The difference comes in retirement. Once qualified distribution requirements are met, Roth IRA withdrawals are federally income-tax-free, potentially saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in retirement taxes.

Your retirement income could go further, with greater flexibility to manage taxable income and potentially reduce income-related Medicare premiums.

The big takeaway: A Traditional IRA offers a potential tax break today, while a Roth IRA offers tax-free qualified withdrawals later. The best strategy depends on your current and expected retirement tax rates and overall financial picture. Starting earlier and choosing the right strategy could make an even greater difference in your lifetime tax bill. Coordinating your IRA with 401(k) contributions is also important to managing future taxable income as 401(k) contributions would further compound the tax burden to the strategy above.



Why Retirement Tax Planning Matters

Traditional retirement accounts can create unexpected tax burdens. Required minimum distributions (RMDs) generally require eligible retirees to withdraw taxable amounts from Traditional IRAs and many employer-sponsored retirement accounts beginning at the applicable age. These withdrawals can increase income and affect other aspects of your finances.

A Roth conversion involves moving money from a Traditional IRA into a Roth IRA and paying taxes on the converted amount that year. While conversions create an upfront tax bill, they may reduce future taxable withdrawals. Converting during lower-income years may be beneficial for some investors.

For charitably inclined retirees, qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) may offer another tax-planning opportunity by allowing eligible IRA owners to donate directly to qualifying charities under IRS rules.

The Bottom Line

Retirement planning isn't just about how much you save or how your investments grow. It's also about how efficiently you use that money. Combining Traditional and Roth accounts, conversions, and charitable strategies may help preserve more retirement income. The right approach depends on your circumstances.

At Naples Wealth Strategies, we tailor financial strategies to each client's retirement goals.

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Unless certain criteria are met, Roth IRA owners must be 59½ or older and have held the IRA for five years before tax-free withdrawals are permitted. Additionally, each converted amount may be subject to its own five-year holding period. Converting a traditional IRA into a Roth IRA has tax implications. Investors should consult a tax advisor before deciding to do a conversion.

Hypothetical examples are for illustrative purposes only.

Raymond James and its advisors do not offer tax or legal advice. You should discuss any tax or legal matters with the appropriate professional.

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WHEN HOLIDAY TRAVEL MEETS CHRONIC PAIN:
How to Make the Journey Easier

The holidays are meant to be the season of togetherness—of family, tradition, and joy. But for many of us, before the cozy gatherings and festive meals, there's the gauntlet of holiday travel to endure.

Highways clog with bumper-to-bumper traffic. Airports swell with long lines and hurried travelers. Parking lots become battlefields. Add in last-minute errands, weather delays, and the general stress of rushing from place to place, and even the calmest person can find themselves frazzled.

Now, imagine facing all of this while also carrying the weight of chronic pain in your feet, knees, hips, or back. Suddenly, holiday travel doesn't just feel stressful—it feels almost impossible.

Why Pain Feels Worse During Travel
Travel puts the body through the wringer. Hours of sitting in a cramped car or airplane seat can stiffen joints and strain the back. Standing in long security lines puts pressure on the feet and knees. Even short sprints between airport gates can trigger pain flare-ups that make you want to call the whole trip off.

For those already living with chronic discomfort, the holidays magnify the problem. Pain turns ordinary inconveniences—like waiting in line or carrying a suitcase—into daunting hurdles. Instead of focusing on family and friends, you're left calculating how much longer you can endure standing, walking, or even sitting.

And because holiday travel often comes with rushing, the body rarely gets the breaks it needs. There's no time to stretch, no room to rest, and no way to avoid the endless on-your-feet moments. That's why so many people who struggle with chronic pain dread holiday travel, even when their hearts are full of excitement about the destination.

The Role of Foot Health in Whole-Body Pain
What many people don't realize is how central the feet are to the rest of the body. When your feet lack proper support, it can throw off your entire alignment. Over time, that imbalance can lead to discomfort in the knees, hips, and lower back.



Think of it this way: if the foundation of a house isn't stable, the entire structure feels the strain. Your body works in much the same way. Poor foot alignment can cause a ripple effect of pain that follows you everywhere—including on holiday journeys.

A Solution Designed for Real Life
Your story isn't meant to be one of pain; rather, it's meant to be one of movement, freedom, and joy. The Good Feet Store can help you write that next chapter.

How Arch Supports Can Change Your Holiday Travel
Picture this: instead of wincing every time you stand in line, you feel steady and balanced on your feet. Instead of dreading the trek through a crowded terminal, you walk with more comfort and less strain. Instead of shuffling stiffly off a long flight, you step out with greater ease.

That's the promise of proper support. By improving alignment, The Good Feet Store's arch supports can help reduce the physical toll of holiday travel. You may still face traffic, crowds, and flight delays—but your body won't be screaming at you every step of the way.

And when your body feels better, your mood often follows. Instead of arriving exhausted and sore, you can arrive energized and present, ready to enjoy the holiday moments that matter most.

The Gift of Comfort
It's easy to think of arch supports as something small, but for anyone living with chronic pain, the impact can be life-changing. The holidays are stressful enough without battling through each mile or minute in discomfort.

By supporting your feet—and, in turn, your whole body—The Good Feet Store's 3-Step Arch Support System offers more than just relief. It offers the freedom to travel with greater ease, to move through the holiday rush with less resistance, and to show up fully for the people and experiences you cherish.

Taking the First Step
Holiday travel may never be seamless. Delays will happen, crowds will gather, and the season will always come with a touch of chaos. But when you don't have chronic pain slowing you down, the stress becomes easier to manage.

If you've been living with foot, knee, hip, or back pain, now may be the perfect time to see what proper arch support can do for you. At The Good Feet Store, you can get a free fitting and test walk to experience the difference for yourself.

Because the holidays should be about joy, not about how much your body can endure. And with the right support under your feet, you might just find that travel feels lighter, easier, and a whole lot brighter.

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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 S years and was awarded the Joint Services Achievement Medal after his tour in Iraq.



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



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Stress Management

By Neetu Malhotra, MD

Have you ever felt overwhelmed? Are you feeling stressed out? The holidays can sometimes be quite stressful, whether it be making the house ready, making sure you have gotten all the presents for your loved ones/friends, but you might want to take some time for yourself too. In fact, the holidays are known to bring out all sorts of ailments and health problems, more than any time of year. The stress of the holidays is real and not something to be ignored and brushed under the rug. Stress Management is truly something we all have to deal with at one point or another. Not all stress is bad, but when you start to feel overwhelmed and feel a loss of control, that's when stress can wreak havoc in your life.

The first part in managing your stress is to identify the stressor, for example-whether it be certain negative people, going through a divorce, being told of a new diagnosis or fear of losing your job. Whatever that stressor is, it's important to identify it, talk it over with a close friend/relative or perhaps write it in a stress journal. It is crucial to not keep the feelings/emotions bottled up because that in itself is truly, I believe the heart of many health problems. Stress has been linked to heart disease, depression/mental illnesses, inflammatory conditions (ie arthritis, autoimmune illnesses, etc) and even some forms of cancer.

The second part of stress management is coming up with a plan or solution to dealing with the problem that is creating the stress/turmoil in your life. This is where taking a step back for a moment can often help. Sometimes, taking a deep breath and talking out loud is all that may be needed. I also believe it is extremely important to have outlets or hobbies in your life. Some people find getting up early and meditating is a way to relax and recharge your mind. Others may find playing an instrument, listening to a Ted talk, gardening or reading a book keeps them relaxed and content. The point is, you have to find some activity that makes you happy and feel relaxed. This in itself, helps you think of the solution as a third party and coming up with a new perspective on the problem/situation creating the stress in your life.



I think it is important to have general lifestyle principles and routines embedded in your life such as the 5 steps below:

1. It is important to stay positive and surround yourself with people that will bring positivity in your life as well.

2. Exercising regularly and maintaining a healthy diet also helps with keeping the stress levels manageable.

3. Staying well hydrated and avoiding excessive consumption of caffeinated and alcoholic beverages also help you manage your stress.

4. Learn also how to say "no" to unnecessary requests. You need to know your limits and stick to them. It is important to know the difference between the "shoulds" and the "musts" and when needed to say "no" to taking on too much, whether it be in your personal or professional life. Taking on too much is indeed a recipe for disaster and the root of stress for most people.

5. Lastly, getting enough sleep is also vital to stress management. Most of us are not getting the recommended 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night.

In the end, it is always important to ask oneself, "Is this going to make a difference in the grand scheme of things?" "Is it really worth getting upset over?"

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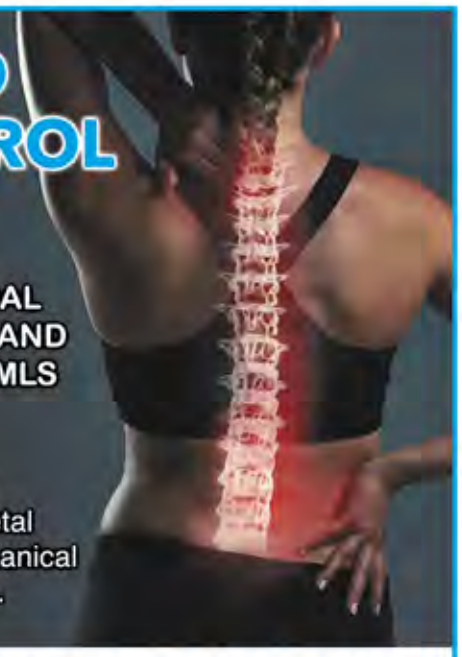
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BRINGING CARE HOME:

The Benefits of Provider Home Visits

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

For many patients, a trip to the doctor's office is more than a minor inconvenience, it can be a genuine barrier to receiving the care they need. At Top-Tier Mobile Health, we believe healthcare should meet patients where they are, literally. Home visits by qualified providers are transforming how people experience medical care, offering a solution that prioritizes convenience, accessibility, and better health outcomes.

The Convenience Factor

Traditional healthcare requires patients to navigate traffic, find parking, sit in crowded waiting rooms, and rearrange their entire day around a single appointment. For working professionals, parents juggling childcare, or anyone with a packed schedule, this time commitment often leads to delayed or skipped care altogether.

Home visits eliminate these hurdles entirely. A professional comes directly to a patient's living room, kitchen table, or bedside. This personalized approach allows healthcare appointments to fit smoothly into a person's existing routine. By offering flexible scheduling that respects a patient's time, this model ensures that working professionals, busy parents, and individuals with active lifestyles can easily prioritize their wellness and address health concerns promptly and proactively.

Enhancing Accessibility for Limited Mobility

For individuals navigating limited mobility—whether due to aging, disability, chronic illness, fatigue or pain due to acute illness, or post-surgical recovery—the home environment offers a uniquely safe and comfortable setting for medical evaluations. Home visits allow these patients to remain resting comfortably while receiving care.

This approach particularly supports elderly individuals managing multiple conditions by minimizing physical fatigue and promoting a calm, relaxed environment. This comfort encourages open, private and comprehensive conversations between the patient and provider regarding their ongoing health goals.

Breaking Down Barriers to Optimal Health

Convenience and mobility aside, home visits address deeper barriers that keep people from achieving optimal health. Caregivers responsible for children



or aging family members often cannot leave home for extended periods. Patients managing anxiety, agoraphobia, or severe pain may avoid leaving their home to visit the doctor. Patients in rural or underserved areas may lack transportation access or prefer to avoid clinical settings altogether. Home-based care expands access to quality medicine, ensuring individuals in those situations receive highly attentive, timely healthcare.

By bringing care directly into the home, healthcare providers also gain unique, valuable insights that support long-term wellness. Observing a patient's day-to-day living environment often reveals critical information, such as fall risks, medication management challenges, nutritional habits, or signs of social isolation. This comprehensive view allows for the development of highly personalized and effective care plans tailored to the patient's exact context. This holistic view allows providers to address not just symptoms, but the root causes and context of a patient's health.

A Smarter Model for Modern Healthcare

Home visits represent a deeply patient-centered approach to modern medicine. By reducing logistical barriers, supporting patients with limited mobility and prioritizing comfort and personalization, home-based care helps ensure that every individual receives high-quality, compassionate attention.

At Top-Tier Mobile Health, we are dedicated to delivering this high-quality, compassionate care exactly where our patients need it most: home. Because we believe healthcare should always revolve around the patient's schedule and convenience.



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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AVOW HONORS NATIONAL HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE MONTH, CELEBRATING THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF COMPASSIONATE CARE

Recognizing the essential role of hospice and palliative care in preserving dignity, improving quality of life, and supporting families through life's most meaningful moments.

By Scott Frazier, Avow

Behind every diagnosis is a person with a story, a family with hopes, and a life deserving of dignity, comfort, and compassionate care. Throughout November, Avow joins healthcare organizations nationwide in observing National Hospice and Palliative Care Month, recognizing the extraordinary impact of specialized care that places people, their wishes, and their quality of life at the center of every decision.

Observed annually, National Hospice and Palliative Care Month raises awareness about the vital role these services play in helping individuals navigate serious illness, manage complex symptoms, and experience meaningful moments with those they love. It also honors healthcare professionals, caregivers, and volunteers whose dedication brings reassurance and strength to families during periods of profound uncertainty.

For Avow, the observance reflects a philosophy deeply embedded in its mission: healthcare reaches its highest purpose when clinical excellence is matched by genuine human connection. It is a time to celebrate the power of compassionate care, encourage informed conversations about healthcare choices, and recognize the individuals who make comfort, dignity, and peace of mind possible.

"National Hospice and Palliative Care Month reminds us that the greatest achievements in healthcare are often found in the moments that matter most to patients and families," said Jaysen F. Roa, President and CEO of Avow. "Whether we are helping someone find relief from serious illness, honoring their personal wishes, or guiding a family through uncertainty, our responsibility is to deliver care with exceptional skill and profound compassion. Every person deserves to feel heard, valued, and supported. That commitment defines who we are at Avow and guides the future we are building for Southwest Florida."



Although closely connected, hospice and palliative care serve distinct needs. Hospice care focuses on comfort, symptom management, and quality of life for individuals approaching the end of life, while providing emotional and spiritual support for their loved ones.

Palliative care offers specialized relief from the symptoms and stresses of serious illness at any stage, including alongside treatments intended to manage or cure the underlying condition. Both approaches emphasize individualized care, informed decision-making, and the well-being of patients and families.

Since its founding in 1983, Avow has built a legacy of compassionate healthcare, providing a comprehensive continuum of services that includes hospice and palliative care, Medicare-certified home health, grief and loss support for adults and children, integrative therapies, specialized programs for veterans and individuals living with dementia, and dedicated volunteer services.

Rooted in commitment to caring for the whole person, Avow continues to advance clinical excellence while addressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of patients and families. In 2026, the organization entered a new chapter, expanding beyond Collier County into Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties and opening its Fort Myers office and LaBelle offices to bring compassionate, patient-centered care to more communities across Southwest Florida.

National Hospice and Palliative Care Month is a powerful reminder that compassionate care can transform the most challenging moments into opportunities for comfort, connection, and peace. Avow honors the extraordinary healthcare professionals and volunteers whose expertise, dedication, and humanity make this possible every day. Their commitment ensures that individuals facing serious illness are heard, their wishes are respected, and their families are surrounded by the guidance and support they deserve.

Compassion begins with understanding. Peace of mind begins with a conversation. To learn how Avow can support you or someone you love, visit www.avowcares.org or call (239) 420-9032. Because every life deserves exceptional care, and every moment deserves to be lived with dignity, comfort, and meaning.

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YOUR CARE, YOUR CHOICE:

Leveraging the Power of Advanced Care Planning

By Rick Weber

Advanced care planning has become a more salient issue than ever before because older adults are occupying a larger percentage of the population.

In 2000, older adults made up only about 12.4% of the total population, compared to nearly 19% today. And by 2034, older adults are expected to outnumber children for the first time in the nation's history, according to the U.S. Census.

While advanced age is associated with chronic-disease functional decline, science and healthcare continue to evolve and people are sometimes able to push back the onset of chronic diseases and live longer, so it is worth asking questions about how we can both add years to our life and quality to our years.



"However, at a certain point, despite our best personal lifestyle change efforts and advances in science and healthcare, there are limits to what can be done to extend life—and hard choices need to be discussed openly and honestly," says David Hage, Assistant Professor and Program Director in the Master of Social Work (MSW) program at Florida Gulf Coast University's Marieb College of Health & Human Services and an affiliate faculty member in FGCU's Shady Rest Institute on Positive Aging.

"Having worked in healthcare for so many years, I saw that people who plan ahead about their end-of-life wishes retain more options and tend to receive care more in alignment with their own values, beliefs and goals. I feel it is an imperative to champion the cause of advanced care planning to help people learn how to get access to care they would prefer where possible and to help others reduce unnecessary experiences of suffering where possible. There is always something we can do to help others, even when they are facing the end of life.

"I count it a great a great honor to be a part of someone's end-of-life journey. It can be sad to watch someone deteriorate, but it can also be life-changing to be able to demonstrate true empathy and help someone reduce the experience of suffering and finish their journey in a way that is concordant with their own wishes."

And it isn't just for older adults.

"I want to make clear that facing an end-of-life issue can unfortunately happen at any age," Hage says. "It is often recommended to begin end-of-life care planning conversations at age 16 when people begin to drive, and their morality risk increases."

It's National Hospice & Palliative Care Month—a perfect time to have high-quality advanced care planning conversations. Here's how:

Choose an appropriate medical decision maker (health care proxy).
"People should consider a wide array of issues when choosing a surrogate decision maker. One of the most important qualities in someone that might help in deciding who to pick is that they are trustworthy and will honor your values and wishes. Stress tolerance, willingness to advocate, availability, physical proximity, skills (e.g., health vs. financial aptitude), and family dynamics should all be considered. Sometimes a family member is a good choice and sometimes your neighbor might be. Everyone's life circumstances, values, resources and desires can vary. It's also relevant to know that you can update your decision maker and advanced care planning documents. It is important to periodically re-review documents. If a surrogate passes or becomes ill, you might need to make a change. It also doesn't help to have these documents locked in a safe. Your doctor, lawyer and family should all retain copies, so you have the support you need when you need it."

Decide what quality of life means to you and what is needed to support it (that is realistically possible).
"Quality of life means many different things to each person. One of the most common preferences is not to suffer, especially related to pain or shortness of breath. These are medical issues a qualified palliative care doctor, your PCP, or specialists can help you with. For others, quality means living in congruence with values—and that can look different related to what people hold true or valuable, including religious and cultural differences. Most people also want to be surrounded by people they love towards the end. This is why early planning is important, so people can clarify what is important in their lives. Sometimes it might be as simple as a bite of a last preferred dish or maybe having a conversation to attend to unfinished business before it's too late."

Choose the level of flexibility you want to assign your surrogate decision maker.
"This will vary in each case. For example, if your surrogate is competent and aligned with your wishes, because they are a nurse or CPA, for example, maybe you want to allow them more autonomy to make decisions as they have both expertise and alignment with your wishes. Maybe a more prescriptive reduction of decision making could be helpful to reduce moral burden on a decision maker or if you trust the surrogate, but aren't sure how they might react under stress, etc. These decisions should be made carefully, can prevent unwanted experiences, and can help reduce the potential for abuse. If someone has the capability to make decisions, they may also change decision makers or care preferences over time for various reasons."

Share/document your wishes with loved ones and your medical team (and also keep it accessible for emergencies).
"This is critical for many reasons. Firstly, there are legal, health-related consequences to not knowing if you have an advanced care planning document. For example, if first responders are unsure of your wishes, they often have to call medical command at the ER for guidance and often have strict legislative requirements to follow. Typically, if a health professional doesn't have documentation of your wishes, they will provide life-saving measures, which may be great, but not if you want to be a no-code. Your family/health care provider should have copies to be able to help when and where you need it so decisions are made in the way that you want. Many people also keep a copy on their refrigerator with magnets in case they need Emergency Medical Services support."

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PREVENTION IS A WOMAN'S BEST HEART MEDICINE

By Dr. Estela Thano, DO, FACC

Ask most women what health threat worries them most, and many will name breast cancer. Yet cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death for women in the United States. In 2023 alone, it claimed 433,254 women's lives, according to the American Heart Association. That is nearly half of all cardiovascular deaths in the country.

The encouraging news is that much of this risk can be prevented. Most heart disease develops quietly over decades, shaped by blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and daily habits. That long runway gives women time to act. Preventive cardiology is built on that idea: find risk early, treat it early, and keep heart disease from ever taking hold.

A Woman's Heart Speaks Differently

For years, heart research focused mostly on men. As a result, many women still picture a heart attack as crushing chest pain and a dramatic collapse. Chest pain remains the most common symptom for both sexes. But women are more likely to have subtler warning signs that are easy to dismiss.

These can include:

- Unusual or overwhelming fatigue, often the most common sign
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort
- Pain in the jaw, neck, upper back or between the shoulder blades
- Nausea, indigestion or a feeling of heartburn
- Dizziness, light-headedness or a cold sweat

Because these symptoms can mimic stress, the flu or simply being busy, women often wait longer to seek care. If you notice several of these together without another clear cause, call 911. Minutes matter.

Women also face risk factors that men do not. Pregnancy complications such as preeclampsia and gestational diabetes are now recognized as early warnings of future heart disease. Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), certain autoimmune conditions and the drop in estrogen that comes with menopause can all raise risk as well.



What Preventive Cardiology Looks Like

Preventive cardiology shifts the focus from treating a heart attack to stopping one before it happens. It starts with a conversation about your personal and family history, your pregnancies, your sleep, your stress and your goals. From there, a cardiologist builds a picture of your true risk.

Every woman should know a few key numbers:

- **Blood pressure.** High blood pressure affects about 43% of American women, yet fewer than one in three of them have it under control.
- **Cholesterol.** More than a third of women have total cholesterol of 200 mg/dL or higher.
- **Blood sugar.** Nearly one in three women has prediabetes, and many do not know it.
- **Weight and waist size.** Excess weight, especially around the middle, strains the heart.

When these numbers point to higher risk, advanced testing can reveal what is happening inside the arteries and heart muscle. Depending on your needs, this may include an echocardiogram, a stress test, a coronary calcium scan or extended heart-rhythm monitoring. These tools help your cardiologist decide whether lifestyle changes are enough or whether medication would add protection.

Lifestyle remains the foundation. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity each week, such as brisk walking or swimming. Fill your plate with vegetables, fruit, whole grains, fish and healthy fats. Do not smoke, limit alcohol, and treat seven to nine hours of sleep as non-negotiable. Small, steady changes add up to real protection.

Heart Health at Every Stage of Life

A woman's heart needs change over time. In your 20s and 30s, establish healthy habits and know your baseline numbers. If you had preeclampsia, high blood pressure or diabetes during pregnancy, tell every doctor you see, even years later. Around menopause, cholesterol and blood pressure often rise, making regular checkups more important than ever.

After 65, the focus turns to managing existing conditions, staying active and watching for irregular heart rhythms such as atrial fibrillation, which raises stroke risk. No matter your age, it is never too early or too late to start protecting your heart.

When to See a Cardiologist

You do not need to wait for symptoms. Consider a preventive cardiology visit if you have a family history of early heart disease, a past pregnancy complication, or numbers that are creeping upward.

At Thano Cardiology, care begins with listening. Dr. Thano takes time to understand each woman's story and builds a personalized plan for lifelong heart health. Your heart works for you every second of every day. Give it the same attention in return, and schedule your preventive visit today.

__Dr. Estela Thano, DO, FACC__, is a board-certified cardiologist who has served Southwest Florida for over a decade. She specializes in the prevention and treatment of heart disease, with a special interest in women's heart health. Founded on the philosophy "Practice with Heart," Thano Cardiology combines advanced technology with compassionate, personalized care.

Sources

- *American Heart Association, 2026 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics: U.S. Females and CVD*
- *Cleveland Clinic, Women and Cardiovascular Disease*

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EXOBLUE™: A NEW APPROACH TO PERSONALIZED SKINCARE

By Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy

Innovative peptide technology meets customized skincare at the compounding pharmacy.



Healthy-looking skin is influenced by many factors, including age, hydration, environmental exposure, and the natural changes that occur over time. As interest in personalized skincare continues to grow, new formulation technologies are creating additional options for individuals seeking to improve the appearance and texture of their skin.

One of the newest innovations is ExoBlue™, a topical compounding base developed by PCCA. Designed for cosmetic and dermatologic applications, ExoBlue combines several skincare technologies in one formulation, giving compounding pharmacists a new option for preparing customized topical products.

What Makes ExoBlue Different?
Traditional skincare products often highlight a single ingredient. ExoBlue takes a different approach by combining peptides, copper technology, a zinc-hyaluronate complex, and a Centella asiatica-derived component designed to support skin conditioning and visible renewal.

According to PCCA, these components work together to support hydration, improve the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, and promote smoother-looking skin.

Peptides are short chains of amino acids that play important roles in biological processes. In skincare formulations, certain peptides are used to support the appearance of smoother, healthier-looking skin.

ExoBlue contains GHK-copper peptide, a copper-associated peptide used in cosmetic formulations, along with acetyl hexapeptide-8. These ingredients are intended to support skin conditioning and improve the appearance of expression lines.

The base also incorporates zinc hydrolyzed hyaluronate, a form of hyaluronic acid technology designed to help hydrate the skin. Hydration can temporarily improve the appearance of fine lines associated with dryness and help maintain the skin's surface barrier.

Another component is a Centella asiatica-derived secretome or exosome-inspired complex. Centella asiatica is a botanical ingredient used in skincare products. PCCA incorporates a derived component into ExoBlue as part of its approach to combining complementary skincare technologies.

Although these ingredients have individual areas of cosmetic research, their inclusion in a formulation does not establish that every claimed benefit has been clinically proven. The performance of the finished preparation depends on its ingredients, formulation, and intended use.

What Does the Research Show?
PCCA reported results from an eight-week cosmetic-use evaluation of ExoBlue used alone, without additional active pharmaceutical ingredients. In that evaluation, 72% of participants showed visible improvement in the appearance of their skin after four weeks. Investigators also observed improvements in the appearance of moderate and deep wrinkles.

These findings offer an encouraging starting point for further evaluation of the formulation. However, they should be interpreted in context. The reported results concern cosmetic appearance and do not establish that ExoBlue treats a medical skin condition, reverses aging, or produces the same results for every individual.

Patients should discuss their skincare goals with a qualified healthcare professional to determine which ingredients and treatments are appropriate for their needs.

The Role of Compounding in Personalized Skincare
A compounding pharmacy prepares customized formulations based on an individual prescription when a prescriber determines that a tailored preparation is appropriate.

ExoBlue provides a topical base that can be used on its own for cosmetic skincare or incorporated into certain customized formulations with additional active ingredients. PCCA lists ingredients such as tretinoin, tranexamic acid, ketotifen, and other compounds among its potential formulation applications. Compatibility must be confirmed for the specific preparation.

This flexibility may be useful when a prescriber wants to tailor a formulation to a patient's skincare goals, medication requirements, or preferred dosage form. The base is designed for a lightweight, moisturizing feel and can be considered for different skin types, including oily, normal, and dry skin.

As with any compounded preparation, the selected ingredients, concentrations, stability, directions for use, and storage requirements must be evaluated for the specific formula.

Is ExoBlue Right for You?
The right skincare approach depends on an individual's skin concerns, medical history, current medications, and treatment goals. Fine lines, uneven texture, dryness, acne, and discoloration may have different underlying causes and may require different approaches.

A healthcare professional can help determine whether a cosmetic skincare product, prescription treatment, or customized compounded preparation is appropriate. Patients should also discuss potential irritation, ingredient sensitivities, and any existing skin conditions before starting a new topical product. ExoBlue represents a new option in the evolving field of personalized skincare by bringing several cosmetic technologies together in one topical base. For patients interested in customized skincare, a conversation with a qualified prescriber and compounding pharmacist can help clarify available options and set realistic expectations.

Interested in personalized skincare? Contact Creative Scripts Compounding Pharmacy to learn more about customized topical preparations and discuss your skincare goals with your healthcare provider.

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The #1 Muscle Responsible for Back Pain and Sciatica

By Theresa Edmunds, RPT, CHC

It's the muscle almost no one has ever heard of. The mystery muscle. The psoas muscle. Most people can't pronounce it, can't spell it, and have no idea where it is, yet it is one of the biggest drivers of lower back pain and sciatica. (It's pronounced SO-AS. The "p" is silent.)

The psoas is the only muscle that connects your legs to your spine. It attaches along the lumbar vertebrae, travels through the pelvis, and inserts on the inside of the thigh. Its job is to stabilize the hips and support the entire torso. When it works well, you move freely. When it becomes tight and shortened, it creates serious problems.

A contracted psoas pulls the pelvis out of alignment, compresses the lower spine, and can irritate the sciatic nerve. The result is often hip pain, low back pain, sciatica that shoots into the glute and leg, and even to knee. In many cases, the constant pull from a tight psoas contributes to disc compression, bulging discs, and ongoing spinal pressure that no amount of stretching or adjustment fully resolves.

So why doesn't anyone talk about the psoas? Because for years there was almost nothing that could effectively treat it. The muscle sits so deep that traditional massage, physical therapy, chiropractic adjustments, and stretching rarely reach it with enough sustained force to create lasting change. Temporary relief was common. True resolution was rare.



Robotic Muscle Therapy changed that. Using the RX2600 Therapeutic Robot, we can apply precise, sustained pressure with subtle heat and vibration directly to the psoas, something human hands cannot do consistently. As the muscle finally releases and lengthens back toward its natural state, the hips realign, the spine decompresses, and pressure comes off the SI joint and the discs and nerves. Many clients with long-standing sciatica and back pain begin noticing meaningful improvement within the first 3 sessions.

One client who had already undergone back surgery and tried multiple treatments put it this way: "I always knew there was a reason I didn't hold chiropractic adjustments and the benefits of massage didn't last. No amount of stretching was enough. Why didn't anyone ever tell me about the psoas muscle? It's like the mystery muscle. You need to tell everyone about it."

If you have been dealing with stubborn back, hip, or leg pain that keeps returning no matter what you try, the psoas may be the missing piece. Most of our clients have already tried several therapies and lived with pain for years before finding this approach.

We invite you to schedule a complimentary 15-minute phone consultation. We'll answer your questions, learn more about your issues and help you determine if this is the solution you've been searching for.

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THE LANDSCAPE OF SENIOR HOUSING IN SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

By Bruce Rosenblatt, CDP - Owner, Senior Housing Solutions – Assisted Living Advisors

Southwest Florida has long been one of America's premier retirement destinations. Communities such as Naples, Bonita Springs, Estero, Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Marco Island, and Sarasota continue attracting retirees seeking warm weather, favorable taxes, excellent healthcare, and an active lifestyle.

Today, however, the senior housing landscape is changing rapidly. The combination of an aging population, increased longevity, healthcare advances, and continued migration into Florida is creating unprecedented demand for senior living options throughout the region. Families who understand these trends are often better prepared to make informed decisions before a crisis occurs.

Southwest Florida Is Aging Faster Than Most of the Country
Southwest Florida is one of the oldest regions in the United States. Nearly one-third of residents in many Southwest Florida counties are age 65 or older, significantly exceeding both state and national averages. The region continues to attract retirees from New York, New Jersey, Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and other northern states. At the same time, many adult children are relocating to Florida to be closer to aging parents.

As Baby Boomers continue to age, the demand for senior housing and healthcare services is expected to grow dramatically over the next decade.

Understanding Today's Senior Living Options
The senior housing industry has evolved far beyond the traditional nursing home model.

Independent Living
Independent Living communities are designed for active older adults who want a maintenance-free lifestyle, social opportunities, dining services, and amenities without needing daily healthcare support.

Residents are often attracted by:
- Restaurant-style dining
- Wellness programs
- Fitness centers
- Social activities
- Transportation services
- Freedom from home maintenance

Many residents move for lifestyle reasons rather than healthcare needs.

Assisted Living
Assisted Living provides support with activities of daily living while helping residents maintain as much independence as possible.

Services often include:
- Medication management
- Assistance with bathing and dressing
- Three meals daily
- Housekeeping
- Transportation
- Social programming

Assisted Living remains one of the fastest-growing segments of senior housing in Florida.

Memory Care
Memory Care communities specialize in caring for individuals living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

These communities provide:
- Specialized dementia programming
- Secure environments
- Dementia-trained staff
- Enhanced supervision
- Cognitive engagement activities

Memory Care continues to experience some of the strongest demand and occupancy growth within the senior housing industry.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs)
Also known as Life Plan Communities, CCRCs offer multiple levels of care on one campus, allowing residents to age in place.

Many retirees are attracted to CCRCs because they provide:
- Long-term planning
- Access to future healthcare
- Predictability
- Peace of mind for families

CCRCs continue to maintain some of the highest occupancy rates in the industry.

Demand Is Outpacing Supply
One of the biggest trends affecting Southwest Florida families is the growing imbalance between supply and demand.

Senior housing occupancy rates have continued rising nationally and throughout Florida, while new construction has slowed considerably. Independent Living occupancy has surpassed 90%, and many desirable communities maintain waiting lists for preferred apartments.

For consumers, this means:
- Fewer immediate openings
- Longer wait lists
- More competition for desirable units
- Earlier planning requirements

As I often tell families:
"It's better to be five years too early than five minutes too late."

The Rise of Large Senior Living Operators
Another significant trend is industry consolidation.
Many Southwest Florida communities are now owned, operated, or managed by large national organizations. Companies such as Life Care Services (LCS), Discovery Senior Living, Brookdale Senior Living, and other major operators continue expanding throughout Florida.

Large operators often bring:
- Financial stability
- Staff training programs
- Technology investments
- Wellness initiatives
- Operational expertise

However, families should also evaluate each community's culture, leadership, and resident experience—not just the company behind it.

Staffing Challenges Continue
Like much of healthcare, senior housing faces ongoing workforce challenges.

Communities continue competing for:
- Nurses
- Caregivers
- Medication technicians
- Dining staff
- Maintenance personnel



Staffing shortages have contributed to rising operating costs and increased monthly fees across many communities. At the same time, quality providers continue investing heavily in recruitment, training, and retention efforts to maintain resident satisfaction.

Technology Is Transforming Senior Living
Today's senior living communities are increasingly using technology to enhance safety and quality of life.
Examples include:
- Telehealth services
- Fall detection systems
- Electronic health records
- Smart apartment technology
- Remote health monitoring
- AI-assisted wellness tools

These innovations are helping older adults maintain independence while improving safety and care coordination.

Why Planning Ahead Matters
Perhaps the most important trend is that seniors are moving later in life than previous generations.

Many families delay decisions until a fall, hospitalization, dementia diagnosis, or caregiver crisis forces action. Unfortunately, waiting too long often limits options.

The most successful transitions typically occur when families:
- Research communities early
- Tour before a crisis develops
- Understand financial options
- Discuss preferences in advance
- Create a long-term plan

The Bottom Line
Southwest Florida's senior housing market is stronger and more sophisticated than ever before. Demand continues to rise, occupancy remains high, and families are facing more choices—but also greater urgency to plan ahead.

Whether you're considering Independent Living, Assisted Living, Memory Care, a CCRC, or aging in place, the key is starting the conversation early.

The goal isn't simply finding an available apartment.

The goal is finding the right community, the right lifestyle, and the right plan for the future.

About the Author
Bruce Rosenblatt, CDP is the owner of Senior Housing Solutions – Assisted Living Advisors and has more than 35 years of experience in senior housing. Known as **"The Matchmaker of Senior Housing,"** Bruce helps families navigate Independent Living, Assisted Living, Memory Care, CCRCs, and home care options throughout Southwest Florida.

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HOW'S THE HEALTH OF YOUR SEAWALL, BOAT DOCK AND BOAT LIFT?

Protect Your Waterfront Investment: The Benefits of a Professional Seawall Inspection

For waterfront homeowners in Southwest Florida, a seawall does more than define the edge of a property. It helps protect the land behind it from erosion and supports the long-term stability of the shoreline. However, constant exposure to saltwater, changing tides, heavy rain, and Florida's coastal conditions can take a toll on even well-built seawalls.

That's why routine seawall inspections are an important part of maintaining your waterfront property. With a professional inspection from Collier Seawall & Dock, homeowners can better understand their seawall's condition, identify visible warning signs, and make informed decisions about maintenance and repairs.

Catch Potential Problems Before They Get Worse
Seawall damage doesn't always happen overnight. Small cracks, separating joints, or signs of soil erosion behind the wall may indicate developing problems. If left unaddressed, some issues can become more extensive and expensive to repair.

A professional visual inspection helps identify these warning signs early, giving property owners the opportunity to explore appropriate maintenance or repair options before the damage progresses. Although an inspection cannot guarantee that every hidden issue will be discovered, it provides valuable insight into the visible condition of your seawall.

Help Protect Your Property From Erosion
One of a seawall's primary jobs is to help hold the shoreline in place. When a seawall begins to deteriorate, water and soil may find their way through cracks, gaps, or weakened areas. Over time, this can contribute to soil loss and affect the ground behind the wall.

During an inspection, professionals look for visible concerns such as cracking, separation, and signs of erosion around the seawall and surrounding waterfront. Understanding these conditions can help homeowners determine whether further evaluation or repairs may be needed to protect their property.

Make Smarter Maintenance and Repair Decisions
Not every crack or sign of wear means a seawall needs major repairs. The key is understanding what is visible, what may require attention, and what steps make sense moving forward.

Collier Seawall & Dock provides an inspection report with photographs, a condition assessment, and professional recommendations. This information helps property owners understand the observations and consider their options rather than guessing about the condition of their seawall.

An inspection is also an opportunity to gain a clearer picture of your property's waterfront structures and plan for future maintenance.

Add Confidence When Buying or Selling Waterfront Property
A waterfront property is a significant investment, and its seawall is an important part of that investment. Buyers can benefit from understanding the visible condition of the seawall before completing a purchase, while sellers can use an inspection report to provide useful information about their property's waterfront features.

Realtors can also benefit from having a professional inspection performed as part of the transaction process. Clear documentation and photographs can help buyers, sellers, and agents better understand the condition of the seawall and identify concerns that may warrant additional attention.

Trust Collier Seawall & Dock for Your Seawall Inspection
When it comes to waterfront property maintenance, having experienced marine professionals assess visible conditions can make a meaningful difference. Collier Seawall & Dock serves Marco Island, Naples, and surrounding Southwest Florida communities, offering seawall and dock inspections backed by more than 20 years of marine contracting experience.

Inspections include above-water visual observations at low tide, along with an emailed condition report and supporting photographs. While an inspection is not a repair estimate or a guarantee against future problems, it gives property owners useful information to help plan their next steps.

Schedule Your Seawall Inspection Today
Don't wait for visible damage to become a bigger concern. Protect your waterfront investment by taking a proactive approach to seawall maintenance.

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The Missing Link in Modern Medicine:

Why Primary Care Matters Now More Than Ever

By Dr. Talley Sharp and Dr. Joseph Sharp, MD

Medicine has never been more capable. Diagnostics find disease earlier, and therapies unimaginable a generation ago are now routine. Yet many patients feel the system is failing them. Diagnoses come late, advanced treatments feel out of reach, and conflicting advice from specialists and the internet breeds confusion. The data reflect this. The Commonwealth Fund ranked the U.S. last among ten high-income countries in health outcomes and access in 2024 [1] and only 45% of Americans are satisfied with the quality of medical care [2].

The gap is widest when someone is sick and needs help. Who do you call? Where is the empathetic voice? Too often the emergency room becomes the default, and anyone who has phoned a doctor's office or pharmacy knows the recording: "If this is an emergency, hang up and dial 911." Now imagine the voice on the line belonging to a physician who knows you, who can triage symptoms and plan next steps. That is how medicine used to work. Good primary care can restore it, pairing that relationship with coordination and access to today's most advanced testing and treatment.

Preventive Care

The best outcome is the problem that never happens, or one caught early enough to treat it easily. When done well, primary care physicians are the main point of contact into the healthcare system and handle and coordinate preventive care, cancer screening and early diagnosis. Good prevention goes beyond an annual checkup. It includes individualized screening, careful cardiovascular risk assessment, attention to metabolic health and vaccinations, guided by a physician who knows your personal and family history.

Chronic Disease Management and Coordination

Many people with conditions like hypertension, diabetes or heart disease see several specialists who each manage one piece. Without someone viewing the whole picture, medication lists grow and instructions conflict. A primary care physician acts as quarterback: reviewing each specialist's recommendations, reconciling medications, making sure results reach the right hands, and translating it all into a plan that makes sense. When the path through the system is unclear, the primary care physician also advocates, securing the right specialist at the right time.



Sick Visits

When a fever, worsening cough or unexplained symptom strikes, a patient should not have to start over with a stranger. A physician who knows a patient's baseline can quickly judge what needs attention today and what can wait. Access matters. In a 2025 West Health-Gallup survey, long waits for appointments were the most common barrier to care, preventing or delaying it for 53% of respondents [3]. Prompt access can resolve many problems without an urgent care or emergency visit, and when higher-level care is needed, a physician can direct the patient and call ahead.

Acute Illness and Hospitalizations

Hospitalization is among the most vulnerable and fragmented times in a patient's life. Patients meet a rotating cast of clinicians who have never met them or understood their life and dignity outside the hospital. In a study of 400 patients discharged from a medical service, 76 experienced an adverse event after discharge [4]. A primary care physician who stays involved can share the patient's history with the hospital team, help patients and families understand what is happening, and be a familiar voice. After discharge, reconciling medications and confirming follow-up make the transition home safer.

Advance Care Planning

Few people enjoy thinking about serious illness, but conversations held in calm moments are far better than decisions made in a crisis. Advance care planning means discussing what matters most, naming someone to speak when the patient cannot, and putting wishes in writing. A meta-analysis of 17 randomized trials found that these conversations markedly improved agreement between patients and caregivers on end-of-life preferences, with some evidence of better bereavement outcomes [5]. A physician who has known a patient over time is well placed to guide these conversations with honesty and compassion, and to make sure wishes are honored.

Someone Who Knows You

Medicine will keep advancing, and that is worth celebrating. But technology and new treatments alone do not make care work better or feel better. Relationships do. A primary care physician is there for the routine and the unexpected, and for life's transitions: a new diagnosis, a surgery, a new baby, an aging parent, the end of life. A doctor who knows the patient, coordinates care and advocates on their behalf is how the best of modern medicine reaches real people. It is the foundation of good health care, and worth choosing carefully.

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Sciatica: What Causes It and How Is It Treated?

By Dr. Conor Sperzel

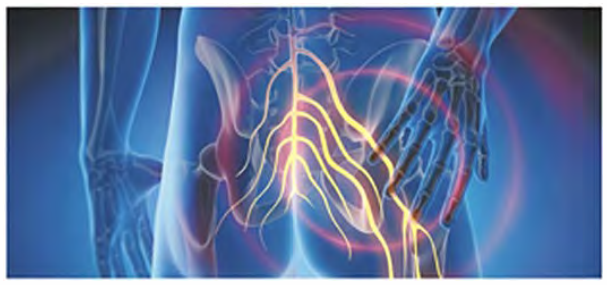
What Is Sciatica?
Sciatica is not a diagnosis in itself but a description of symptoms. It refers to pain that travels from the lower back or buttock down the back of the leg, following the path of the sciatic nerve. This happens when one of the nerve roots that form the sciatic nerve becomes irritated or compressed.

Patients often describe a sharp, shooting, or burning pain that can feel like an electric shock. Other common symptoms include numbness, tingling, or a pins-and-needles sensation in the leg or foot. In some cases, the affected leg may also feel weak. Symptoms usually affect one side of the body and may worsen with sitting, bending, coughing, or sneezing.

Common Causes
The most frequent cause of sciatica is a herniated disc. The discs between the vertebrae act as cushions, and when the soft inner material pushes through the tougher outer layer, it can press on or inflame a nearby nerve root.

Degenerative changes in the spine are another common source. As we age, discs lose height and hydration, and bone spurs can form, narrowing the space available for nerves. Spinal stenosis, a narrowing of the spinal canal or the openings where nerves exit, can also compress the nerve roots and produce leg pain, especially when standing or walking.

Because several conditions can produce similar symptoms, identifying the underlying cause is essential. A thorough history, physical examination, and imaging such as an MRI when appropriate help pinpoint the source of the problem and guide the right treatment.



When to Seek Treatment
Mild sciatica often improves within a few weeks with rest, activity modification, and over-the-counter medication. However, you should see a spine specialist if your pain persists beyond several weeks, keeps getting worse, or interferes with sleep, work, or daily activities. Increasing numbness or weakness in the leg also warrants evaluation.

Some symptoms require urgent medical attention. Seek care right away if you experience loss of bladder or bowel control, numbness in the groin or inner thighs, rapidly progressing leg weakness, or sciatica accompanied by fever or following a significant injury. These can signal serious nerve compression that needs immediate treatment.

Treatment Options
Most patients begin with conservative care. This may include anti-inflammatory medications, physical therapy focused on core strength and flexibility, heat or ice, and staying gently active rather than resting in bed. These measures help many people recover fully.

When pain does not respond adequately, minimally invasive treatments can provide meaningful relief. Epidural steroid injections are one of the most effective options. Using imaging guidance, a small amount of anti-inflammatory medication is delivered directly to the area around the irritated nerve root. This reduces inflammation, eases pain, and often allows patients to participate more fully in physical therapy and return to normal activities. The procedure is performed on an outpatient basis and typically takes only a few minutes.

Takeaway
The good news is that most cases of sciatica improve without surgery. The key is an accurate diagnosis, because understanding what is irritating the nerve allows us to choose the most effective treatment for each patient. If leg pain is limiting your life, a spine specialist can help you find relief and get back to the activities you enjoy.



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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Transitioning Home Safely:

The Essential Role of Private Duty In-Home Care After Hospital Discharge

Leaving the hospital after a serious illness, surgery, or medical event should mark the beginning of recovery—not the start of new challenges. Yet for many patients and their families, the transition from hospital to home can feel overwhelming. This is where Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty steps in, bridging the critical gap between hospital discharge and full recovery with personalized, professional care in the comfort of your own home.

The Vulnerable Post-Discharge Period

Hospital readmissions within 30 days of discharge remain a significant concern in healthcare. Many patients leave the hospital still requiring assistance with daily activities, medication management, wound care, or mobility support. Without proper care during this vulnerable period, complications can arise, leading to setbacks in recovery or even emergency room visits.

Family members often find themselves suddenly thrust into the role of caregiver, despite having little medical training or experience. The stress of managing complex care needs while juggling work, household responsibilities, and their own well-being can quickly become unsustainable.

What Private Duty In-Home Care Provides

Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty offers a comprehensive solution tailored to each patient's unique needs. Our skilled caregivers provide one-on-one attention that simply isn't possible in facility-based settings. Services include assistance with personal care such as bathing, dressing, and grooming; medication reminders to ensure proper adherence to treatment plans; meal preparation designed around dietary restrictions; light housekeeping to maintain a safe, clean environment; and companionship that addresses the emotional aspects of recovery.

For patients with more complex medical needs, our trained professionals can provide wound care, monitor vital signs, assist with physical therapy exercises, and serve as an essential communication link with physicians and other healthcare providers.

The Whitsyms Difference

What sets Whitsyms apart is our commitment to personalized care planning. We begin with a thorough



assessment of each patient's medical condition, living situation, and personal preferences. This allows us to match patients with caregivers whose skills and personalities align perfectly with their needs.

Our flexible scheduling means care is available when you need it—whether that's a few hours daily, overnight supervision, or around-the-clock support. As recovery progresses, care plans can be adjusted seamlessly, scaling up or down based on evolving needs.

Peace of Mind for the Entire Family

Perhaps most importantly, private duty in-home care from Whitsyms provides peace of mind. Family members can return to work knowing their loved one is safe and well-cared for. Patients maintain independence and dignity while receiving the support necessary for optimal recovery. The familiar surroundings of home—complete with personal belongings, established routines, and beloved pets—create an ideal healing environment that no hospital or facility can replicate.

Recovery is a journey that shouldn't be traveled alone. With Whitsyms In Home Care Private Duty, patients discharged from the hospital receive expert care, compassionate support, and the best possible foundation for returning to full health and independence.

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Navigating the Fog of Memory Changes in Aging

By Richard J. Capiola, MD

As we journey through life, our memories evolve just as we do. Memory changes are a natural part of aging, but they can also raise concerns about more serious conditions like dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Additionally, depression in the elderly can manifest as memory problems, further complicating the landscape of cognitive health. This article explores the nuances of memory changes in aging and provides guidance on distinguishing between typical age-related memory changes, dementia, and depression-related memory issues.

Normal Memory Changes with Aging

It's normal to experience some memory changes as we grow older. These changes are often characterized by:

- Slower Processing Speed: As we age, the speed at which we process information may decline, leading to mild forgetfulness.
- Difficulty with Multitasking: Juggling multiple tasks becomes more challenging, which can affect our ability to remember things.
- Recall Issues: Temporary forgetfulness about names, words, or where you left your keys may occur.
- Absent-Mindedness: Occasionally forgetting appointments or details due to distractions is common.

Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease

Dementia is not a normal part of aging. It is a group of cognitive disorders that significantly impair daily functioning. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia. Warning signs include:

- Severe Memory Loss: Profound memory deficits, particularly for recent events or familiar people.
- Confusion: Difficulty with orientation, time, and place.
- Personality Changes: Noticeable shifts in mood, behavior, and personality.
- Decline in Problem-Solving Skills: Struggles with managing finances, making decisions, or solving problems.

Depression-Related Memory Issues

Depression in the elderly can mimic dementia symptoms, creating a diagnostic challenge. Common signs include:

- Memory Complaints: Feeling forgetful, though memory tests may not show significant impairment.
- Concentration Problems: Difficulty focusing and making decisions.
- Apathy: Loss of interest in activities and social withdrawal.
- Sleep Disturbances: Insomnia or excessive sleeping.

Differentiating Between the Three

Differentiating between normal aging, dementia, and depression-related memory issues can be challenging. Consult a healthcare professional for an accurate diagnosis. Medical assessments, cognitive tests, and brain imaging can help distinguish the causes.



Managing Memory Changes

To clarify and address memory changes, regardless of their origin, consider the following:

- Lifestyle Modifications: Maintain a healthy diet, stay physically active, and engage in mental stimulation through activities like puzzles or learning new skills.
- Social Interaction: Staying socially connected can improve cognitive health and prevent depression.
- Seek Help: If memory issues persist, consult a healthcare provider to rule out underlying conditions.

In conclusion, understanding memory changes in aging and distinguishing them from dementia, Alzheimer's disease, or depression-related issues is crucial. Recognizing the signs and seeking professional guidance can make all the difference in ensuring the best possible cognitive health and quality of life as we age.

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

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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.



Understanding Alzheimer's: Separating Fact from Fiction

By Cynthia Perthuis, CDP, CADDCT, CSA

November marks National Alzheimer's Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about a disease that affects millions of people worldwide. By 2050 it is estimated that 153 million people will be diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. It is important for everyone to understand what Alzheimer's is and is not and the risk factors associated with the disease. We hope to promote understanding, compassion, and support for those living with Alzheimer's and their families; as well as critical information for you to reduce your risk of getting this horrible disease.

What Alzheimer's Is:

• A Brain Disorder: Alzheimer's is a disease of the brain, leading to the accumulation of abnormal protein deposits, which disrupt the communication between brain cells, resulting in cell death.

• **Progressive:** Alzheimer's is a progressive disease, meaning symptoms worsen over time. It advances through stages, starting with mild memory problems and eventually leading to severe cognitive impairment.

• **Not a Normal Part of Aging:** While memory changes are common with aging, Alzheimer's is not a typical part of growing older. It is a distinct disease, and not all elderly individuals will develop Alzheimer's.

What Alzheimer's Is Not:

• A Natural Part of Aging: Age-related memory changes are normal. Forgetting the name of an acquaintance or where you left your keys occasionally does not necessarily indicate Alzheimer's. If you forget something and then later remember that you forgot, that is indication you do not have Alzheimer's.

• A Transient Condition: Alzheimer's is not a temporary condition that can be treated and cured. It is a chronic, long-term illness with no known cure. Prior to an Alzheimer's diagnosis, many patients are diagnosed with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). Several studies have reported that symptoms of MCI can be reversed through diet, exercise, proper sleep habits and social activities.

• Solely About Memory Loss: While memory loss is a hallmark symptom of Alzheimer's, it also affects cognitive abilities, behavior, and personality. Individuals may experience changes in mood, judgment, and reasoning, among other symptoms.

Risk Factors for Alzheimer's

Understanding the risk factors associated with Alzheimer's is essential, as it helps you make informed decisions to mitigate those risks. While some risk factors cannot be changed, others can be influenced through lifestyle choices.

• **Age:** The most significant risk factor for Alzheimer's is age. The risk increases substantially after the age of 65, and the prevalence continues to rise with advancing age.

• **Family History:** Individuals with a family history of Alzheimer's are at a slightly higher risk of developing the disease. While it may have a genetic component, it is not guaranteed that someone with a family history will develop Alzheimer's.

• **Genetics:** Certain gene mutations, such as those related to the APOE gene, are associated with an increased risk of Alzheimer's. However, having these genes does not guarantee that an individual will develop the disease.

• **Down Syndrome:** People with Down syndrome are at a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's, often at an earlier age.

• **Cardiovascular Health:** Conditions like hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and high cholesterol can increase the risk of Alzheimer's. Maintaining good heart health may lower this risk.

• **Lifestyle Factors:** Healthy lifestyle choices, such as regular physical activity, a balanced diet, and mental stimulation, may help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. Additionally, avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol consumption can contribute to a healthier brain.



As we observe National Alzheimer's Awareness Month, it is essential to understand what Alzheimer's is and is not, recognize the risk factors, and be aware of the early warning signs. By increasing our knowledge and awareness of this debilitating disease, we can offer better support to those affected and work towards a future with improved treatments and, hopefully, a cure. Educating ourselves and others about Alzheimer's is the first step in making a difference in the lives of those living with this condition and their families.

If You Suspect a Loved One Has Alzheimer's

If your loved one is displaying signs of Alzherimer's, it is important to bring your concerns to a physician. Unfortunately, 97% of physicians admit to waiting for family members to raise the question of Alzheimer's or dementia according to the Alzheimer's Association. Do what you can do to let your doctor know in advance that you suspect your loved one is showing symptoms. It is important to have a physician check your loved one because there are many medical conditions which can mimic Alzheiemr's. Often, these conditions are treatable. For example, urinary tract infections, depression, and grief can mimic Alzheimer's.

If your loved one's condition is such that you can no longer take care of them on your own or you are considering alternative ways to care for them, please call us at (239) 330-2133. We are trained to assess the situation and provide guidance on your next steps.

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Cleaning Tips to Keep the Flu Virus at Bay and Out of Your Home

Flu season is among us and with an increase in the number of people in the area for the winter, preventing the flu and other viruses can be difficult this time of year. The muscle aches, fever, chills and fatigue that accompany the virus affect five to 20 percent of the U.S. population each year and hospitalize hundreds of thousands, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Many of us are armed with an array of physical preventatives — from flu-shots to Emergency-C packets, neti-pots to home remedies — but what are we doing to stop the illness from spreading in our own homes, amongst our families and community members?

MaidPro expert cleaners, offer these tips to help you clean for health year-round and to stop the flu virus from invading your home:

1. **Wash your hands regularly in warm soapy water.** For quick clean-up, use antibacterial hand sanitizer. Make an effort not to touch your mouth or nose without first washing your hands.

2. **Wear rubber gloves when cleaning household items to protect yourself.** By wearing gloves, you will be less likely to touch your eyes, nose or mouth, which are havens for the flu virus.

3. **Spray disinfecting spray** on a cloth, wipe toys, doorknobs, appliance handles, keyboards, remote controls, light switches, phones and facial tissue box covers. Viruses can live up to 48 hours on hard surfaces.

4. **Wash items like towels and bedding in hot water** with soap if someone has been sick in the home. Be sure not to share these items until they are thoroughly cleaned.

5. **Change vacuum bags** monthly or more frequently.

6. **Boil toothbrushes** for one minute in water and vinegar, run through a dishwasher cycle or purchase new brushes.

7. **Use antibacterial wipes** on your keyboard, phone and pens to protect yourself from spreading germs at work.

8. **Wash telephones, cabinet handles, doorknobs, light switches and refrigerator door handles** using a slightly dampened cloth with a solution of mild detergent and warm water.

9. **Wash mop heads** in a solution of ¼ cup bleach and one gallon water, dry thoroughly, then store. Not only will mop heads pick up germs and dirt, but they also can also grow mold and mildew if they don't dry out completely.



10. Disinfect the bathroom and kitchen, especially the faucet and toilet handles, daily. The kitchen and bathroom are the most used rooms in the home and possibly the most contaminated.

MaidPro is a residential cleaning service that uses a tried and true approach to clean each home for health, combining environmentally preferable cleaning supplies and state-of-the-art equipment to maintain the healthiest living environment possible.

If you're worried about the flu virus showing up uninvited, give MaidPro a call to schedule a cleaning.

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STRENGTH TRAINING AND CHRONIC DISEASE

By Julie Hoffmann, Owner & Coach

Strength training is one of the most effective forms of exercise for preventing, managing, and in some cases slowing the progression of many chronic diseases. Organizations like the American College of Sports Medicine, American Heart Association, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend it as a key component of a healthy lifestyle.

Here are some of the major benefits:

Heart Disease
- Lowers blood pressure.
- Improves cholesterol by increasing HDL ("good") cholesterol and reducing triglycerides.
- Improves circulation and blood vessel function.
- Helps maintain a healthy body weight, reducing cardiovascular risk.

Type 2 Diabetes & Prediabetes
- Increases muscle mass, allowing muscles to store and use more glucose.
- Improves insulin sensitivity.
- Helps lower A1C levels.
- Reduces the need for diabetes medications in some individuals (under medical supervision).

Obesity
- Increases resting metabolic rate by building lean muscle.
- Burns calories during and after exercise.
- Helps preserve muscle while losing fat.
- Supports long-term weight maintenance.

Osteoporosis
- Stimulates bone formation and increases bone density.
- Reduces bone loss associated with aging.
- Lowers the risk of fractures by improving strength and balance.

Arthritis
- Strengthens the muscles that support joints.
- Reduces joint pain and stiffness.
- Improves mobility and daily function.
- Can decrease reliance on pain medications.

Cognitive Decline & Dementia
- Improves memory and executive function.
- Increases blood flow to the brain.
- May reduce the risk of cognitive decline.
- Enhances independence through better physical function.

Depression & Anxiety
- Releases mood-enhancing endorphins.
- Improves self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Reduces stress and anxiety symptoms.
- Improves sleep quality.

Sarcopenia (Age-Related Muscle Loss)
- Slows or reverses muscle loss.
- Increases strength and power.
- Improves balance and coordination.
- Reduces fall risk.
- Helps older adults maintain independence.

Falls & Frailty
- Improves balance and reaction time.
- Strengthens legs and core.
- Increases confidence during walking and everyday activities.
- Significantly reduces the risk of falls.

Cancer

For many cancer survivors, strength training can:
- Reduce cancer-related fatigue.
- Preserve muscle during treatment.
- Improve quality of life.
- Enhance physical function and independence.
- Improve bone health, especially in those receiving hormone therapies.

Chronic Pain
- Reduces chronic back pain.
- Improves posture.
- Strengthens muscles that stabilize the spine.
- Decreases pain associated with many musculoskeletal conditions.

Chronic Lung Disease

For people with conditions such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease:
- Improves muscle endurance.
- Makes everyday activities easier.
- Reduces fatigue.
- Improves overall quality of life.

Why Strength Training Is So Powerful

Muscle is often called the body's "metabolic engine." More muscle helps:
- Regulate blood sugar.
- Reduce inflammation.
- Improve hormone function.
- Protect bones and joints.
- Maintain mobility and independence.
- Increase energy.
- Support healthy aging.

A Powerful Takeaway

Strength training doesn't just build muscle—it builds resilience. It helps prevent and manage many of the most common chronic diseases while improving energy, confidence, independence, and quality of life.

For adults—especially those over 50—even 2–3 supervised strength-training sessions per week can produce meaningful improvements in health, function, and longevity when combined with regular aerobic activity, good nutrition, and adequate recovery.



JULIE HOFFMANN
Owner & Coach

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

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

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

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

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

Certified Personal Trainer, American Council on Exercise (ACE)

Certified Master Fitness Specialist, Cooper Institute

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What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

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

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

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

In his book, *"The Unknown God: Searching for spiritual fulfilment,"* Oxford University professor, Alister McGrath, describes the parable of Plato's Cave, a story about people enslaved inside the cave oblivious to the reality that existed on the outside beyond the flickering shadows which they knew. That is, until the day someone was able to find their way out and discover a world beyond description, a world of beauty and splendor. McGrath writes, "Our desires have become attached to things that are little more than shadows, when they are meant to be attached to something which cannot decay or disappoint" (32).

How does this relate to healthy living? Focusing on living healthier and longer, like any other pursuit we might obsess about, really reveals a spiritual longing in our souls for something more: *eternity*. Whether is it longing for a "perfect" relationship that often disenchants, earthly riches that can quickly vanish, or a healthy and strong body that is suddenly brought to a standstill due to an unexpected medical report, our hearts are longing for something beyond what this world can provide.



McGrath probes us to consider this question: "Suppose our longing for fulfilment points to something we have yet to discover? What if our yearning is a clue to the meaning of the universe?" (10). Taking care of your body and staying healthy is a good thing, but it isn't everything. The truth of the matter is, whatever we pursue in life has a way to deceive us to think that by attaining "it" our lives will be complete. They're not. Deep inside a voice continues to remind us that our longings for fulfillment are like signposts in the sky pointing us to something beyond ourselves. Could that something (Someone) be our Creator?

May you achieve physical well-being and wholeness. But may you also discover the gift of eternal life which Jesus promises to all who believe and trust in him alone. "...I have come that they may have life, and have it in abundance" (John 10:10). I would enjoy exploring with you the meaning of life and God.

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Svetlana Kogan, M.D., FMCP-M
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Dr. Svetlana Kogan is a Cornell-educated, board-certified physician with over 25 years of experience blending traditional, functional, and holistic medicine. Trained and certified by the Institute for Functional Medicine, she brings deep expertise & compassion to every patient encounter.

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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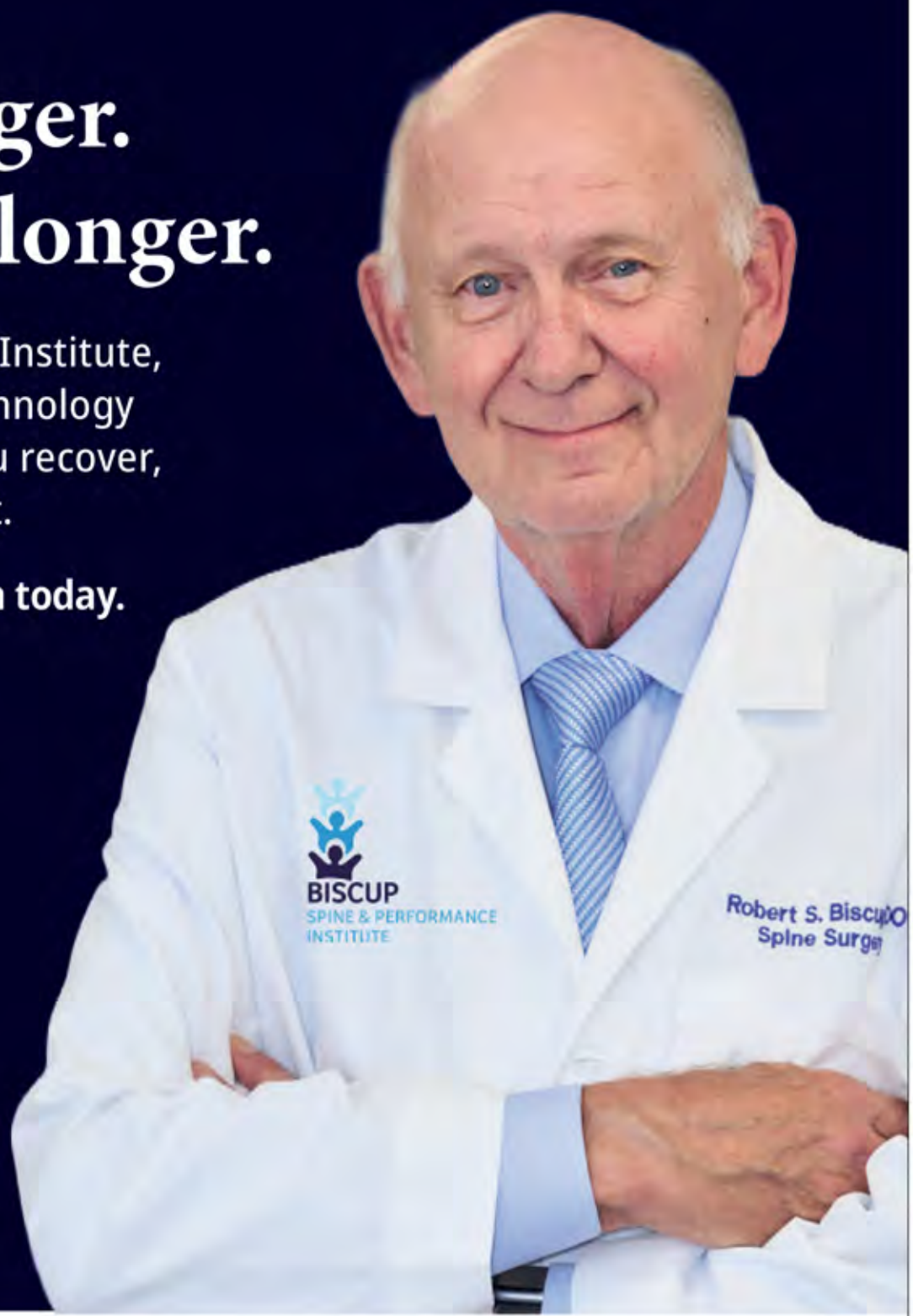
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