

T A M P A B A Y ' S

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

October 2020

South Tampa Edition - Monthly

**FREE**



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# We Are The Right Place To Be Right Now

As a company that's served the best interests of seniors for nearly 30 years, we are no stranger to emergency management. Our commitment to the health and safety of our residents has long been paramount, and although COVID-19 is a new threat, it is by no means the first one we've faced head on.

In any emergency situation, it's imperative to know where trusted resources can be found. For seniors and families specifically, the importance of safeguards required for COVID-19, in many ways highlight the numerous benefits of living in a supportive community setting like the many we offer.

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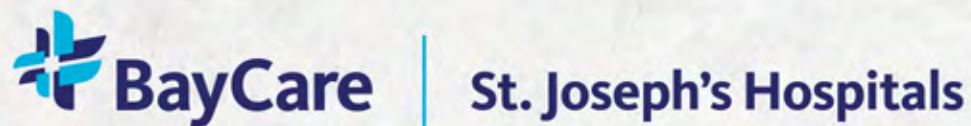
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## CONTACT US

OWNER / ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE  
**SOUTH TAMPA - (727) 515-2353**  
**BOB GUCKENBERGER**  
bobguckenberger@gmail.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
**SONNY GRENSING**  
sonny@gwhizmarketing.com

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# Lumbar Spine Pain: Symptoms, Causes & Treatments

By: Regenexx Tampa Bay, Regenerative Medicine

**T**he body is an interconnected machine with each part working together in harmony. The lumbar spine is a crucial element of this machine. The hip, knee, and foot are all controlled by spinal nerves within the low back. A problem in the lumbar spine could create problems at any point in the lower body. Common lumbar issues include arthritis, foraminal and spinal stenosis, pinched nerves, disc problems, muscle atrophy, loose ligaments, and spondylolysis. In this article, we will give you a brief overview of these common lumbar spine problems along with their potential symptoms, causes, and treatments.

First, let's take a look at the spinal column and its parts.

## The Spinal Column

The spinal column is made up of vertebrae that are stacked one on top of the other with an intervertebral disc between each level to provide cushion and absorb shock. The cervical spine consists of the neck area and is made up of seven vertebrae (C1-C7). Following the cervical spine is the thoracic spine (T1-T12), the lumbar spine (L1-L5), the sacrum (S1-S5), and the coccyx. The posterior (back) portion of these vertebrae is known as the spinous process and on either side of these, connecting one vertebra to the next, are finger-joint-sized articulations called facet joints.

Another extremely important part of the spinal column is the spinal canal. This tunnel runs down the middle of the column and houses the spinal cord, which has many nerves that transmit muscle commands and sensory information throughout the body and to the brain. There are small holes in the spinal column where the nerves exit and branch off to other parts of the body. There is one at each level of the spinal column. One of these holes is called a foramen. Any of these structures can become damaged or diseased in some way and lead to pain, discomfort, or even disability.

## Foraminal Stenosis

When the spine is healthy, spinal nerves easily traverse through the tunnels transmitting sensory information from each body part to the brain and provide impulses to the muscles so they can contract and move the body part. However, when the spine is unhealthy, the flow of information can be disrupted.

The disc or cushion in between the spine bones can bulge and/or the spine joints can get arthritis causing the foramen to narrow. This narrowing of the tunnel is called foraminal stenosis and can cause the nerves to get pinched. The pressure from a pinched nerve can cause muscle tightness, weakness, numbness, tingling,



burning, or electrical pain in the specific distribution of that nerve. For example, if there is a lower lumbar foraminal stenosis, you could experience numbness in your big toe. Sometimes the symptoms slowly manifest over time from a more subtle pinching of the nerve. If the nerve is irritated, it may release inflammatory substances into the tissue to which the nerve travels causing that tissue to degenerate more rapidly than other areas leading to painful problems such as tendinopathy.

You could have laser spine surgery to open up the hole, but this surgery can have major side effects and serious implications. Another way to surgically treat stenosis is with a spinal fusion, but the mention of a fusion should be a huge red flag to seek out other opinions. Why? Adjacent segment disease (ASD). After a fusion, the motion of the fused segments is limited and the biomechanical loads are transferred to the segments above and below the level of the fusion. These adjacent segments could get damaged and become painful over time resulting in additional surgeries.

Surgery is often performed after an MRI diagnosis of the problem. An MRI indicating stenosis is not enough to appropriately diagnose that stenosis is the cause of pain. If you do have foraminal stenosis, you should not put all your trust in MRI results. Patients may or may not have pain with foraminal stenosis. The MRI is a description of the appearance of the spine. Many people have stenosis and no noticeable problems. An experienced physician knows that it's critical to treat the person, not the MRI. This can be determined by a thorough history and physical examination. Research also shows that skilled physical therapy is as effective as surgery in relieving stenosis symptoms.

Our approach to foraminal stenosis utilizes nonsurgical solutions to treat it before it progresses. Precise image-guided injections of the patient's own platelets into the foramen and around the nerve can help manage the problem.

## Facet Joint Osteoarthritis and Instability

The facet joints that we spoke of earlier can become injured from trauma or develop arthritis from cartilage breakdown due to wear and tear. Facet joints allow for and limit movement in the spine. When bending backward, these joints become compressed and when you bend forward, they open up. When damage or arthritis occurs, facet joints can become chronically painful, especially with movement. Facet arthritis is often referred to as Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD).

For facet arthritis or injuries, doctors may recommend a radiofrequency ablation (RFA) also referred to as a rhizotomy of the small nerve that senses pain from that specific facet joint. This is a destructive process that damages the nerve. Although this can be effective in some cases, it may leave the surrounding muscles weaker which can actually be a cause of back pain.

A surgical option is a lumbar fusion to bolt two or more vertebrae of the spine together to eliminate movement and therefore, pain. The nature of this surgery can also damage the muscles that stabilize the area. This is an irreversible procedure that can cause adjacent segment disease in the vertebrae above and below. This surgery should only be considered in the most extreme cases.

Our approach for DJD often includes high-dose PRP, platelet lysate, or stem cell injections precisely targeting the facet joints, surrounding ligaments, atrophied muscles, and around the nerves. This is a tissue preservation strategy that involves no cutting, surgery, hardware, or tissue destruction helping patients avoid pain medications and damaging cortisone injections.

## Disc Problems

Within the lumbar spine, there are four

types of disc problems that can occur. A herniated disc occurs when the outer covering of the structure breaks open allowing the inner gel to herniate out. A bulging disc is when the outer covering doesn't completely break open, but the fibers are stretched and weak leading the gel to bulge. A torn disc means that the outer cover has a tear that causes or it may allow the leaking of chemicals on the associated spinal nerve. Lastly, a degenerated disc is one that has collapsed or narrowed due to insufficient living cells inside the disc not producing enough of the substances that keep the disc plump. A severely degenerated disc is usually not a source of pain unless it's





bulging or leaking onto a spinal nerve. Earlier in the degeneration process, while the disc still has plumpness to it, tears in the back of the disc can be a source of low back pain that results in severe episodes of pain with sitting, coughing, sneezing, or lifting. When a disc is severely degenerated, it usually is no longer painful itself. However, the mechanical load of the compressive forces in the spine at that level are no longer being taken up by the disc and therefore get transferred to the facet joints leading to wear and tear and DJD as described above.

Generally, disc surgeries include either back fusions or disc replacement. Regarding fusion, the vertebrae are bolted together with hardware to keep them immobile. With disc replacement, the goal is to have fewer side effects than a fusion, however, research has shown that abnormal motion with an artificial disc can also lead to ASD. The other side effects of having a device implanted include wear-and-tear ions in the blood from the breakdown of the metal or plastic device, ongoing pain, and potential revision surgeries.

With our approach, herniated and bulging discs are treated based on the problem they are causing. For pinched nerves, instilling isolated growth factors or platelet lysate around the irritated nerve can help the nerve recover and become more tolerant of its narrow space. Injection of the surrounding ligaments and muscles provides for stability with better-controlled movements taking pressures off the disc and nerves. In some cases, bulging discs may be treated with a same-day stem cell treatment to reduce the size of the bulge or heal a tear. In other cases, cultured (grown) stem cells injected in a specific way may be required. Torn discs can be treated with either stem cell or PRP injections very effectively. Symptoms respond well to a treatment protocol focused on platelet and/or stem cell technology deployed to treat undesirable disc and lumbar segment movements due to lax ligaments and arthritic facet joints.

#### **Pinched Lumbar Nerve**

Pinched nerves can be caused by foraminal stenosis from bulging or herniated discs and facet joint arthritis as discussed. A pinched lumbar nerve can cause pain, numbness, tingling, or weakness anywhere along the route that particular nerve branch supplies. Pain may or may not be present in the low back.

Chronic knee pain could actually be due to a pinched nerve in the lumbar spine. A doctor may mistakenly conclude that the knee is the source of the pain. This is exactly why we find it so important to consider the entire musculoskeletal system as a whole rather than in parts and to take an extensive history and physical.

The surgical approach to a pinched nerve depends on the root cause. For example, if a disc bulge is to blame, it could be a discectomy and graft and/or lumbar fusion. If it is a foraminal stenosis, laser surgery may enlarge the foraminal opening where the nerve is being pinched. Problems with invasive lumbar surgery are many, including long recovery times and often continuing pain. Ultimately, the structure never fully functions as it originally did.



Our approach includes examining the full musculoskeletal system to determine the source of pain and the pinched nerve and then developing an appropriate treatment plan. Treatment may consist of precise image-guided injections of healing growth factors isolated from a patient's own blood platelets, PRP, or stem cells.

#### **Steroids, NSAIDs, & Other Drugs - Not Recommended**

You may be presented with other treatments within the traditional orthopedics model for lumbar problems, including steroid shots or medications. Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) come with a long and growing list of dangerous side effects, such as sudden-death heart attacks, stroke, gastrointestinal bleeding, addiction, and overdose.

Narcotics can provide pain relief but are not addressing the issue directly and of course, can be addictive. Overdose has become an increasing public health issue.

Steroid shots have been shown to destroy local cartilage in the joint which can progress arthritis and provide no significant long term pain improvement. In fact, pain relief usually diminishes with repeated steroid injections. The list of problems with these injections is also lengthy.

There are supplements that can be a good alternative for pain and inflammation. Chondroitin and glucosamine have been shown to be effective pain relievers and can preserve cartilage. Curcumin derived from turmeric can also decrease inflammation and relieve pain from arthritis and other issues.

Our spines are tuned to precision and attempting to rearrange the spine's biomechanics with fusions and surgeries is often a bad idea. It is essential to understand that where it hurts may or may not be where the primary damage is located.

Acting on a lumbar spine problem while it's still a small problem or when the issue first appears, will be less of an issue than trying to take care of it when it becomes a larger problem that spirals out of control. Conservative options may help in some cases, but if these options have failed, we urge you to seek out interventional orthopedic solutions!



#### **Dr. James Leiber**

James Leiber, DO, is the founder and medical director of Regenexx Tampa Bay. He is a former officer, physician, and educator in the Air Force, including personal physician to the vice president and president at the White House. He is triple board certified in Neuromusculoskeletal Medicine (AOBNMM), Pain Medicine (CAQPM), and Family Medicine (ABFM), as well registered in Musculoskeletal Sonography (RMSK).

Dr. Leiber specializes in Interventional Regenerative Orthopedics with years of experience and is honored to have been the first Regenexx Network Provider in Florida. In 2012, Dr. Leiber began offering the nation's most advanced non-surgical stem cell and platelet treatments (PRP) for injuries and arthritis under image guidance utilizing ultrasound and fluoroscopy (X-ray).

He is a published author, presenter, and is currently the program director for the Interventional Orthopedic Foundation.

He lives in Sarasota, Florida with his wife and teenage daughter. Dr. Leiber travels regularly to Denver, to teach regenerative orthopedic techniques to fellow doctors, and to Grand Cayman, where he is also licensed to treat patients.

#### **The other physicians at Regenexx Tampa Bay are:**



**Ron Torrance II, D.O.** - Board Certified in Sports Medicine and recent co-author of *Exercise 2.0* for Regenexx and author of the 2018 best paper of the year on *The Concussed Athlete*. Dr. Torrance has achieved semi-professional ranking as a beach volleyball player and trains as a competitive CrossFit athlete.



**Ignatios Papas, D.O.** - Specializes in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He is a research collaborator with Columbia and Cornell University on multiple projects. Dr. Papas enjoys spending time with his wife and son, playing soccer, practicing guitar, and listening to historical podcasts.



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# St. Joseph's Hospital Opens \$126 Million Expansion, Adds 90 Private Rooms and Pedestrian Bridge Across Dr. MLK Jr. Blvd.

**A**fter expediting the early opening of some patient rooms to serve an influx of COVID-19 patients in July, St. Joseph's Hospital opened the front door of its \$126 million dollar expansion in midSeptember.

In addition to a new main entry with covered drop off, the six-story tower includes 90 private patient rooms on its three top floors. The ground floor provides easy access to patient registration and security, while the second floor features conference space for the team's ongoing education and a pedestrian bridge that connects with St. Joseph's Women's Hospital, which is located across Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd from the main campus.



*New pedestrian bridge across Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. connecting St. Joseph's Hospital to St. Joseph's Women's Hospital.*

"When we broke ground on this project in April 2018, we had no idea what 2020 would bring," said hospital President Kimberly Guy. "As it turns out, we're able to provide our community with additional resources in the midst of a global pandemic. We're following in the steps of our founders, the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, who opened the original St. Joseph's Hospital in 1934 during the Great Depression."

The expansion means increased comfort for patients and their visitors, who will enjoy private rooms not only in the new tower but also in the original building that opened at this location in 1967.

"We listened to our patients, team members and physicians, taking their suggestions to heart as we planned the new facility," Guy said. "Our goal is to



*St. Joseph's Hospital's new six-story tower includes a new main entry with covered drop off.*

enhance the patient experience in a space designed for the way we want to be cared for today. Patients will enjoy spacious rooms complete with our GetWellNetwork that offers education and entertainment. Meanwhile, our staff can stay closer to patients with 'touch down' work stations and decentralized supply storage areas that save steps."

For thousands of people who work on the campus, the most long-awaited addition is a pedestrian bridge that allows safe travel across a major thoroughfare. The bridge includes one private hall for transporting patients, who no longer need an ambulance to take them for services they may need in a different building. The other private hallway is designated for visitors and staff.

 **St. Joseph's Hospital**  
BayCare Health System  
[www.baycare.org](http://www.baycare.org)

"We have wanted to build a bridge for decades," Guy said. "The St. Joseph's Hospital Auxiliary generously pledged \$1 million to help make this dream a reality. St. Joseph's Hospitals Foundation board members Scott and Kathy Fink will be recognized in the new tower with the naming of the Fink Family Lobby for their leadership level support of St. Joseph's Hospital."



*Hospital Presidents Kimberly Guy (St. Joseph's Hospital) and Sarah Naumowich (St. Joseph's Children's Hospital and St. Joseph's Women's Hospital) cut the ribbon to open the long-awaited pedestrian bridge.*



# WHY DO MY LEGS ACHE, CRAMP, OR SWELL? DO I HAVE VEIN DISEASE?

**D**o your legs ache, cramp, or swell? Do you have spider veins below the knee, bulging varicose veins, or skin discoloration near your ankles? These are common signs of vein disease. Vein disease affects over 50% of Americans and is as common as the need for vision correction with glasses or contact lenses.

Your legs may look perfectly normal, however, varicose veins take years to develop so life-style limiting symptoms are often present long before you see veins on your skin! Only 50% of all vein disease sufferers develop visible varicose veins. So, the other 50% of patients often suffer serious and severe vein-related problems they and their physicians may be unaware of.

## What is Vein Disease?

Healthy veins have valves that prevent the backward flow of blood down into your legs. Vein disease is caused by faulty vein valves that allow backward leakage of blood. Backward blood flow causes your veins to enlarge, bulge, and twist resulting in leg discomfort of many types. Many signs and symptoms of vein disease start below the knee; however, vein valve leaks usually start at the top of your leg. This is similar to, "a leak in the attic causing a flood in the basement."



**NORMAL VEIN**  
Valves ensure blood flows in one direction



**DISEASED VEIN**  
Valves that cannot close allow blood to drain and pool



## Signs and Symptoms Vein Disease:

- Itching
- Heaviness/tiredness
- Aches/pain/tenderness
- Burning
- Cramping
- Night cramping
- Restless legs
- Spider veins -- especially below your knees or near your ankles
- Bulging, varicose veins
- Ankle swelling
- Skin discoloration -- slight or obvious darkening of your skin near your ankles
- Bleeding veins
- Ulceration

## Stages of Vein Disease

**Stage 1:** Spider Veins. Spider veins may cause symptoms such as itching and pain.

**Stage 2:** Varicose Veins. Varicose veins often cause lifestyle-limiting symptoms.

**Stage 3:** Ankle Swelling. Vein Disease is the most common cause of ankle swelling.

**Stage 4: Skin Changes.** *Skin discoloration is often the only sign of serious, hidden vein disease.*

**Stage 5 & 6:** Leg Ulcers. Vein disease is the most common cause of non-healing wounds in the legs.

## What Causes Vein Disease?

Heredity is the most common cause of vein disease. So, you can eat right and exercise regularly and still suffer from serious vein problems. Pregnancy, age, prolonged standing or sitting, obesity, surgery, and injuries also contribute to vein disease.



### Can I Prevent Vein Disease?

Unfortunately, vein disease is primarily genetic and you cannot pick your parents. You can slow the progression of vein disease, but you cannot stop or reverse vein disease without treatment. There is no evidence that any drug, vitamin or nutraceutical will slow the progression of your vein disease. However, you can take some conservative measures to slow its progression.

Two conservative measures are achieving and maintaining an ideal body weight and exercising regularly. Ideal body weight and exercise improve mind, body, spirit, and helps your vein disease! We have "3" hearts. The heart we all know about in our chest and the two we forget about in each of our calf muscles called the "calf muscle pump." Contracting your calf muscle keeps your blood and lymph fluid from pooling in your legs which can lead to damage to your veins and unwanted symptoms. Be a ballerina (point your toes repeatedly) or a NASCAR driver (pump the brakes with your feet). You can do this even while sitting. Anyone in any condition can do this.

It is also very important to sit the proper height. We often sit too high and put pressure on the back of our thighs. We should sit on our "butt bones," not our thighs. Prolonged pressure on the back of your thighs compresses venous blood outflow and lymph fluid outflow. Your knees should be about a ½ inch higher than your hips when sitting down. Most chairs are not adjustable so put something underneath your feet.

Wearing graduated compression hose is another conservative measure to slow the progression of vein disease. Ask your Vein Care Specialist at Vein911 Vein Treatment Centers for details.

### How Can I Be Evaluated for Vein Disease?

Contact Vein911 Vein Treatment Centers to schedule an evaluation. A careful history and physician exam are usually all that is necessary to make an accurate diagnosis. A 30-minute ultrasound exam of your legs is also performed which confirms evidence of vein disease.

### Why Should I Choose Vein911?

Patients travel from around the USA and the world to seek the care of Vein911 Vein Treatment Centers Vein Care Specialists. Vein911 is led by Chris Pittman M.D., FAVLS, FACR, a world-renowned vein care physician leader, providing the highest standard in diagnosis and treatment of vein disease. Vein911 offices are award-winning for both patient and employee satisfaction.

Dr. Pittman is triple board-certified in Venous & Lymphatic Medicine, Interventional Radiology, and Diagnostic Radiology. While many doctors dabble in vein care, we treat only vein patients all day and every day. We have treated thousands of patients just like you. Vein911 succeeds where others fail.

### How Does Vein11 Treat Vein Disease?

Ultrasound shows leaking vein valves and guides your non-surgical treatment. There is no role for surgery in vein care. Friends don't let friends get vein surgery! Ultrasound-guided, minimally-invasive treatments have revolutionized vein care over the last 15 years. Your vein procedure is virtually painless, takes less than an hour, and there is NO recovery time! Vein-related problems resolve after your leaking veins are treated.

The two procedures performed at Vein911 for vein disease include thermal ablation and our "secret sauce" for world-class medical and cosmetic outcomes: Ultrasound-Guided Foam Sclerotherapy!

**Thermal ablation** is the elimination of abnormal, straight veins inside the leg using a straight laser fiber or radiofrequency electrode, elegantly closing the abnormal vein and improving venous circulation in the leg. Almost every patient who is treated for lifestyle-limiting vein symptoms receives thermal ablation; however, thermal ablation can only eliminate an abnormal straight vein. Virtually every patient also needs Ultrasound-Guided Foam Sclerotherapy to properly treat invisible branch veins coming off the treated straight vein. These branch veins, hidden under the skin, ultimately feed into varicose veins that hide under the skin, as well as visible varicose veins that bulge the skin.

**Ultrasound-Guided Foam Sclerotherapy (UGFS)** is performed after thermal ablation at Vein911 and is our "secret sauce." UGFS can eliminate all abnormal veins and was refined about 30 years ago. UGFS uses ultrasound to identify hidden, abnormal veins and a tiny needle is directed into the abnormal veins and special foam is injected instantly destroying the abnormal vein. Foam is absorbed by your blood in a few seconds and nothing is left behind. Your body absorbs the treated vein over several months. No surgical incision is made with UGFS and all abnormal veins can be treated. One in 4 of our new Vein911 patients have ongoing or recurrent vein problems after prior treatment performed at

other vein practices. This is because they never received UGFS as part of their vein treatment plan, and hidden abnormal veins were left behind. See Vein911 and get treated right the first time!



### Choosing the Right Vein Care Specialist is Imperative

Not all vein doctors are equal. Modern vein treatment is not a surgical disease, and seeing a surgeon or "vascular" surgeon is no guarantee you will receive state-of-the-art vein care. What distinguishes Dr. Pittman from other "vein specialists" is the breadth of image-guided procedure experience and skill he has in working with veins. Also, there are few physicians in the country who approach our UGFS experience. Dr. Pittman manages a world-wide physician resource on LinkedIn entitled: *Foam Sclerotherapy Experts*. Vein911 customer satisfaction scores far exceed industry averages.

### C. Christopher Pittman, M.D., DABR, FAVLS, FACR



Vein911 has three locations: Tampa Near St. Joseph's Hospital, Clearwater near Mease Countryside Hospital, and Wesley Chapel near AdventHealth Wesley Chapel Hospital.

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# A 16 YEAR JOURNEY TO BACK PAIN RELIEF: What one Patient Wants Others to Know

**G**erald "Jerry" Pappa is a busy man, he traveled quite a bit years ago when he was a lobbyist in Washington, and on one trip in 2003, his back pain became unbearable. Soon after, Jerry was told that he had a degenerative spine disease. Jerry underwent TEN surgeries of the lumbar and cervical spine. He explained, "My back has a lot of hardware installed in it, from rods to plates and screws. I even had a spinal stimulator implanted in my spine to try and alleviate my pain, but unfortunately, nothing was helping long term."



Jerry's orthopedic surgery team had also administered over 50 epidurals to lessen Jerry's pain, but some of those did not work at all, and the relief he did get was only temporary. Jerry had changed

careers and became a well-established real estate broker, opening *Golf View Realty Property Management*, which alleviated his need to travel regularly, but on a daily basis, he was still in a lot of pain. That's when Jerry's orthopedic doctors recommended that he see Dr. Panchal. They told Jerry his back issues were 'complicated,' and that Dr. Panchal was an out-of-the-box-thinker and a highly-regarded physician that had unique methods and experience in spinal pain management.

In 2009 to 2010, Dr. Panchal did RF (radiofrequency) ablation treatments on Jerry's spinal nerves. With RF ablation treatments, the nerves that are damaged, narrowed, or impinged, are injected with a low-level of localized heat, causing the nerve to stop sending signals to our brain through an interruption in the nerve conduction. This procedure is entirely safe and effective. It has been used for many years with long-lasting results for people suffering from low back pain. Jerry's pain was alleviated for many years, but Dr. Panchal explained that nerves grow back, and in 2018, Jerry needed to see Dr. Panchal again to receive more RF ablations.

"I was having horrible pain in my pelvic area and lower back!" Jerry said. "It's hard to explain how excruciating the pain was, but it was debilitating."







Dr. Panchal told me that I had two options, one would be to have sacroiliac surgery, which would require more rods, plates, and screws or another alternative treatment that was helping numerous other patients of Dr. Panchal. Not looking forward to another surgery or, more hardware, I wanted to know more about the alternative treatment. Dr. Panchal explained that it was stem cells."

Jerry continued, "Interestingly, I had been researching stem cells and knew they had helped other patients with nerve pain and joint dysfunction. I decided to get a second opinion, and my wife, and I attended multiple stem cell symposiums. It didn't take long to realize that Dr. Panchal was the safest and most experienced option. I think it's important for patients to know that legitimate surgeons only do stem cells in a sterile environment such as a surgery center and they do it under fluoroscopy, not in an office. There is also a great deal of difference between the stem cells options that are available."

#### Exosomes

Jerry had his stem cell procedure in February 2019. Due to his extensive research and expertise, Dr. Panchal adds exosomes into his stem cell treatment. Exosomes are produced from the plasma membranes of cells and are best explained as extracellular vesicles. Exosomes are nano-sized particles that are released due to an immune response. Some medical professionals are reporting that they are more regenerative and effective

than stem cells. Because they act as intracellular communication messengers within the body and have the ability to move between multiple cells, they are also incredibly useful when paired with stem cell therapy.

Dr. Panchal has been committed to regenerative medicine and stem cell therapy for several years. Dr. Panchal explains exosome therapy further, "This is an exciting new approach for regenerative medicine. Unlike PRP which has limited growth factors, or bone marrow and fat aspirate, which has an unknown quantity of stem cells, or growth factors from the patient, or the use of fetal cord blood stem cells (which has unknown function after thawing and also the risk of tumor formation from foreign DNA), exosomes are a highly concentrated and reproducible source of growth factors for regenerative techniques. The other approaches typically take six months to see any results. With exosomes, I've had some patients begin to notice improvement as early as 2-3 weeks. And since this is an acellular product, there is no risk of tumor development."

After Jerry's stem cell and exosome treatment, he reports that his pain is 80 to 90% gone. Jerry told us that he knows he made the best decision to have Dr. Panchal do the exosome and stem cell treatment and that he is a firm believer in what Dr. Panchal can offer patients.

*"What Dr. Panchal did is nothing short of miraculous!" Jerry explained. "I've had a lot of doctors in my life, and Dr. Panchal takes his patient care to a whole new level. He's thorough, explains everything in great detail and even calls me on his cell to check in and follow up. Most doctors don't do that; he's a fantastic physician and one that takes great pride in helping patients find real results."*



**Dr. Sunil Panchal**

Dr. Panchal has treated patients with exosome therapy for pain in the cervical and lumbar facet joints, sacroiliac joints, knees, hips, ankles, elbows, shoulders, ligament injuries, and also degenerative discs. These tiny exosome communicators that secrete therapeutic and regenerative effects to the cells and tissues throughout the body are becoming highly-sought-after by many patients that have suffered from pain and chronic disorders. Some of the additional findings within peer-reviewed studies are as follows:

- Self-Renewing Capabilities
- Cellular Differentiating Ability
- Tissue Repair
- Anti-Inflammatory Effect
- Immunosuppression
- Neuroprotection

Although surgery is critical in certain situations, finding alternative methods to treat the underlying condition is always the first step. National Institute of Spine and Pain is a state-of-the-art facility that specializes in the treatment of spine and orthopedic conditions, as well as acute and chronic pain management. They provide the utmost quality of care for patients to address the problem directly, and if needed, provide for their pain management needs.



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[www.nationalinstituteofpain.org](http://www.nationalinstituteofpain.org)



# 5 Practical Ways to Power Up Your Immune System



**E**specially amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, we've all been inundated with the advice to practice social distancing and maintain proper hygiene. However, it's also critical to boost the immune system; after all, a robust immune system can be more effective at fighting off viruses, bacteria and illness. Here's why...

Your body acts as a host for viruses at all times, and if you're not strong enough to combat a given infection, the cells mutate and can aggressively cause you to become very ill. One way to either ward off infections completely or fight them proficiently is through a bolstered immune system. This is especially important for seniors, who may be more susceptible to infections and communicable illness.

So let's explore five (5) ways to boost immunity by focusing on certain lifestyle factors that are relatively easy to control. Take these into consideration and it's possible to make minor lifestyle changes that can give your immune system a major boost.

## Emphasize Nutrition and Dietary Supplements

A diet that's high in antioxidants is critical for immunity. Foods like fruits and vegetables, dark chocolate, olive and coconut oils, avocado, legumes, garlic, onions, cold water fish, bone broth and eggs all contain vital nutrients that can keep you healthy throughout the year.

Vitamin C, Green tea, curcumin, ginger and garlic all have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties in both supplement and food form. Glutathione is also

a great supplement to boost immunity. Glutathione is one of the most potent antioxidants and tends to be most useful for detoxifying and healing the body.

Due to the modern lifestyle and poor dietary choices, the average person has a reduced amount of "good bacteria" in their gut. Good bacteria is critical for overall health. As such, it's recommended to either consider taking a probiotic supplement or eat more fermented foods which can support your health. Those may include probiotic yogurt, cheeses, and foods like kombucha, miso, kimchi and others that are suddenly all the rage.

All of these considerations and many more factor into the meal and menu creations at upscale communities like Aston Gardens At Tampa Bay, where Chef and his culinary team turn out healthy (and delicious) meals all day, every day. From regionally inspired dishes to international specialties, and of course, old-fashioned comfort favorites, residents enjoy a diverse menu that satisfies the palette while also satiating both mind and body.

## Sleep

Getting the appropriate amount of rest is critical for both your brain and body, as it promotes well-being and regenerative functioning. Sleep can bolster the immune system, but if you're having trouble breathing while sleeping, the lack of oxygen can also lead to impaired immune function and many other issues, such as heart disease, pulmonary disorders and cognitive issues. So if you tend to have trouble sleeping, seeking help to promote more restorative rest would be a worthwhile endeavor.

Here are some additional insights and tips for getting quality rest—the kind that will offer maximum benefit to the immune system:

- Get into a routine: Going to sleep and waking up at the same time each day can help train your body to go to sleep "on time"
- Avoid making the bed a couch: By reserving the bedroom for only sleep—and romance—the body becomes better conditioned to sleep when there
- Avoid electronics and caffeine before bed: Try reading for 15 minutes instead
- Exercise early in the day, not late: Exercise releases endorphins that make it harder to rest and fall asleep
- Invest in a good mattress: Look for one that fits your personal preferences and sleep habits...and replace it every 8-10 years
- Maintain a comfortable room temperature: Generally, cooler conditions are better for more restorative sleep
- Don't stay in bed: If having trouble falling asleep, get up for a while and try again rather than stewing about it in bed
- Talk to a professional about sleeping pills: Work with your doctor to address any lingering medical issues and explore sleeping pills as a potential remedy for sleep troubles

## Exercise

Any exercise that you can fit into your daily routine is beneficial. Regular exercise improves immune function and is thought to reduce respiratory disorders as well. For the immune system and many other vital functions of the body, it's beneficial to take a brisk walk, exercise in a chair, get physical therapy, enjoy pool exercises or generally do whatever your level of fitness will safely allow you to do.

At Aston Gardens, various exercise options are available to suit residents of all fitness and experience levels. From the onsite fitness center to daily classes, which run the gamut from water aerobics to chair yoga and beyond, it's easy to fit exercise into your daily routine.





# Want Delicious Healthy Meals Delivered to Your Door?

## A Local Florida Company, ReBuilt Meals, Has The Solutions You Need

We've all been a little more stressed than normal. Many of us have fallen off the wagon concerning our healthy diets. Who can blame us, right? The last seven months of quarantining have left most people out of their regular routine, but it's time to break the bad habits. After all, what we put in our bodies is extremely crucial for our overall health.

If you prefer to eat a healthy diet, one that is full of nutrients, tasty, and fresh, but find it challenging, the following issues might sound familiar.

- Not enough time to cook or shop
- Culinary skills are lacking
- Specific diets take prep work and planning (keto, vegan, paleo, etc.)
- Several people within the home prefer or eat different diets

**REBUILT MEALS IS A LOCAL COMPANY AND DELIVERS TO ALL OF FLORIDA. THEY OFFER MEALS IN INCREMENTS OF 5 OR 7 DAYS AND YOU CAN CHOOSE FROM 1, 2, OR 3 MEALS PER DAY DEPENDING ON YOUR SCHEDULE.**

### Cook Less and Live more!

ReBuilt Meals provides natural and healthy prepared meals delivered right to your door. The only thing you have to do is heat and enjoy. All of the work has already been done for you, which leaves you with more time to work, exercise, and enjoy time with friends and family.

ReBuilt Meals has a variety of plans to fit all lifestyles as well as a weekly rotating menu so that you won't get bored with the same meals, and they also offer various types of diets to meet your specific needs.

### How it Works:

1. You choose the option and plan that fits your needs and lifestyle
2. Your meals are prepared by a world-class culinary team and delivered to your home
3. You simply heat and enjoy your meals at your convenience

### 4 DIETARY OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM

You can note any food allergies or specifications with the ReBuilt team, and you can mix and match meals from any of the plans, and if you need support, you can chat online, email or call ReBuilt Meals.



#### #1 Lifestyle Plan

(classic meals "ReBuilt")

*The Lifestyle Plan is a healthy twist on traditional meals inspired by ReBuilt Meals' skilled culinary team. It includes local menu favorites, celebrity dishes, and home cooked classics. Don't be fooled by the flavor, these meals are prepared with the freshest ingredients weekly, handpicked by their Executive Chef.*



#### #2 Keto/Low Carb Plan

(gluten and soy free)

*Keto refers to a very low-carb, high-fat diet which involves drastically reducing one's carbohydrate intake and replacing it with fat. This reduction in carbs puts your body into a metabolic state called ketosis. Which means you become incredibly efficient at burning fat for energy. This diet is said to benefit many health ailments and produce helpful results, including lowering insulin levels in the body.*



#### #3 Performance Plan

(gluten, dairy and soy free)

*These meals are prepared with a minimalistic approach and focused on pure nutrients for optimal performance in all areas of your life. Feeding your body nutrient dense foods can increase metabolism, improve brain cognition, improve muscular development, and result in higher sustained energy levels.*



#### #4 Plant-Based Plan (soy free)

*The Plant Based plan is vegetarian and vegan friendly that includes vegetables, legumes and grains. 4 out of the 6 meals in each delivery are Vegan and the other 2 are vegetarian!*



You can mix and match meals from any of the plans, and if you need support, you can chat online, email or call ReBuilt Meals.

### LOYAL CLIENTS ARE REWARDED!

ReBuilt Meals loves being able to give recurring clients multiple benefits. There are many ways you can earn points and take advantage of ReBuilt Rewards.

- Earn 1 point for every \$1.00 you spend
- Earn 100 points for sharing ReBuilt Meals on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter
- Earn 100 points on your birthday!
- Earn 400 points for referring another client
- Every 750 points you earn can be redeemed for \$50 off!
- The longer you enjoy our service the more points you will accrue, which will bump you up into higher tiers. Each tier has additional incentives to make your experience with us even better.

### THERE ARE NO LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS

You can pause, cancel, or change your ReBuilt Meals plan at any time.

ReBuilt Meals delivers to your location of choice (home, office, etc.), and they also have numerous pick up locations listed on their website for your convenience.

Don't wait any longer to get back on track, contact ReBuilt Meals today!



ReBuiltMeals.com | (813) 775-7104



# Autism Spectrum Disorder:

## Behavioral Therapy Programs Are Available to Help You and Your Child Thrive

**A**utism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) affects 1 in 54 children (18.5 per 1,000 8-year-olds). Boys are more than four times as likely to be identified with ASD than girls.<sup>1</sup> Many parents sense developmental delays or notice their child has an issue between 12 months and 2 years, but often it can go undiagnosed for many years.<sup>1</sup>

BCOTB (Behavioral Consulting of Tampa Bay) is the go-to Autism Spectrum Disorder expert and one of the first clinics of its kind in the Tampa Bay area. BCOTB has been offering services to children with autism and related disorders since 2003 and now offers services at 4 clinic locations to better serve you. BCOTB is owned and operated by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and has been recognized for numerous awards over the past decade.

BCOTB's programs are designed to address a child's skill deficits as well as problem behaviors and are created to meet the individual needs of the child. The goal of the programming is to teach children the necessary behaviors/skills to be independent and thrive in a variety of environments such as their home, school, and community settings. Skills taught during the intensive 1:1 therapy sessions include, but are not limited to, language/communication skills, social skills, academic skills, self-help skills, and independent behavior. The goals are taught using researched-based behavioral strategies and are graphed and tracked during each session to ensure success.

Kelley Prince, M.A., BCBA, President and Founder of BCOTB spoke to us about their programs, services and Autism Spectrum Disorder in general, "Parents are the experts on their own children and often have a gut feeling when they feel that there is something "different" about their child. Usually this is when the child is as young as 12 or 18 months of age. Since the signs of autism are very slight early on (social delays), a medical professional may tell the family to wait until the next appointment to see if their child makes any progress. Most families refrain from seeking a professional opinion until much later when the child isn't making the language gains of their peers. This can be anywhere from 24-36 months of age.



"I encourage caregivers to seek an evaluation from a specialist such as a psychologist or a neurologist familiar with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other developmental and behavioral conditions as soon as they feel that something may be "off". Parents should always follow their "gut" feelings and get an in-depth assessment and analysis. The younger a child is diagnosed, the better they respond to therapy. Early intervention shows better outcomes at a quicker rate.

"For example, if a child doesn't get diagnosed or doesn't receive therapy until say age seven, they have seven years of delays and behavioral habits to overcome, whereas a younger child has less of a gap to learn age-appropriate skills. 98% of our patients are diagnosed with ASD; however, we treat other conditions such as Down Syndrome and behavioral conditions, as well."

"Since Autism is a spectrum disorder, some children with ASD exhibit only a few signs of the disorder that show up in the early months of infancy while others may display multiple signs and delays that are undiagnosed until much later. What should parents look for if concerned?

Signs by age (Published by Autism Speaks):<sup>2</sup>

### By 6 months

- Few or no big smiles or other warm, joyful and engaging expressions
- Limited or no eye contact

### By 9 months

- Little or no back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles or other facial expressions

### By 12 months

- Little or no babbling
- Little or no back-and-forth gestures such as pointing, showing, reaching or waving
- Little or no response to name

### By 16 months

- Very few or no words

### By 24 months

- Very few or no meaningful, two-word phrases (not including imitating or repeating)



**At any age**

- Loss of previously acquired speech, babbling or social skills
- Avoidance of eye contact
- Persistent preference for solitude
- Difficulty understanding other people's feelings
- Delayed language development
- Persistent repetition of words or phrases (echolalia)
- Resistance to minor changes in routine or surroundings
- Restricted interests
- Repetitive behaviors (flapping, rocking, spinning, etc.)
- Unusual and intense reactions to sounds, smells, tastes, textures, lights and/or colors

Kelley added, "My best friend's son was just not quite where he needed to be developmentally. At his 18-month checkup, his doctor said these issues were nothing to worry about and to wait for his 24-month checkup. I encouraged my friend to see a psychologist that I work with regularly and, after an in-depth assessment, he was diagnosed with mild ASD."

"At BCOTB, after a child is diagnosed, we recommend and conduct a full evaluation of the child's skills and create customized plans for working with the child on a whole level, which usually includes language, social skills, self-help, problem behaviors, and communication. We also provide programs and services for children that do not have a diagnosis but may engage in problem behavior."

"Our programs depend on skill level, condition, and response of the learner. We prefer to work with children for at least 10 hours per week or more, as repetition is critical. For example, if we are teaching a child to walk next to their parent or caregiver while in a store (i.e. not running off), we see better results and quicker skill acquisition when the training is practiced 100 times per week rather than 10 times per week. Repetition and reinforcement of the target skill is a key element of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) therapy."

**BCOTB Services:**

- Verbal Behavior Program (language training)
- Feeding Therapy
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) development and support
- Social Skills/Peer Play
- Functional Behavior Assessments
- Toilet Training
- School Shadowing
- SRA Programs for Reading, Language and Math
- Problem Behavior Reduction Programs

***Most major insurance covers BCOTB services and programs but, in most cases, a diagnosis is important for reimbursement purposes.***

**President/Founder Kelley Prince, M.A., BCBA**

"My career in applied behavior analysis began in 1998 when I began providing behavioral therapy services for a family who had a child with autism. I was immediately intrigued by all of the benefits that such therapy had to offer, and I immediately knew I wanted to learn more about how I could help other children and their families. I studied Applied Behavior Analysis at the University of South Florida, graduating with a master's degree in 2004. In 2003, while in my last year of graduate school, I founded BCOTB. At the time, it was one of the only clinic of its kind in the Tampa Bay area in which Applied Behavior Analysis services were offered."

"Since 2003, BCOTB has grown to four office locations and employs 75+ people in the Tampa Bay Area. Our original location was opened in 2007, which we quickly outgrew. Since that time, the Tampa location has expanded two more times and currently resides off of Hillsborough Avenue right outside of Westchase. Knowing that BCOTB wanted to be able to reach more clients in the autism community, we opened our first satellite location in 2009 in Wesley Chapel. This location also quickly expanded and has recently relocated to a larger facility located outside the Seven Oaks subdivision and services the clients in the New Tampa, New Port Richey and Wesley Chapel area. Our third phase of expansion occurred in 2013 when we opened our Brandon facility. Located at the corner of 301 and Adamo Drive, the Brandon facility services clients from MacDill AFB, Lakeland, Valrico, Brandon and Riverview areas. And, finally, in 2018, BCOTB opened its 4th clinic location on North Dale Mabry Highway in Carrollwood and is now considered our main location."

"I am proud to say that BCOTB has had a successful past and is continuing to grow. The success of our business can be attributed to our management structure, policies and procedures and, most importantly, our therapy team."

"All of BCOTB's therapists receive training which meets the requirements for the Registered Behavior Technician credential provided by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board and successfully complete competency assessments. Staff receives ongoing performance reviews to ensure they are utilizing appropriate teaching and behavior reduction procedures in order to maximize your child's progress."



To find out more, please visit [www.bcotb.com](http://www.bcotb.com) or contact one of the BCOTB offices below:

**Brandon**  
9225 Bay Plaza Blvd., Suite 401  
Tampa, FL 33619  
(813) 440-4933

**Carrollwood**  
14497 N. Dale Mabry Hwy  
Suite 115-N  
Tampa, FL 33618  
(813) 814-2000

**Westchase/Oldsmar**  
6951 Pistol Range Road, Suite 101  
Tampa, FL 33635  
(813) 696-0700

**Wesley Chapel**  
27604 Cashford Circle  
Wesley Chapel, FL 33544  
(813) 345-8584

**References:**

1. CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/addm.html>
2. Autism Speaks, What are the Signs of autism? <https://www.autismspeaks.org/signs-autism>





# Expert Advice: Medicare

## Tips: Get the Most From Your Medicare

By Kristi Foret

**P**icking health plan coverage is important, but navigating your options is not easy. Plan choices vary by county; chronic medical conditions and your financial status affect your options; and spouses can enroll in different health plans. Medicare benefit plans change January 1. Here are some tips to help you get the most from your Medicare health plan:

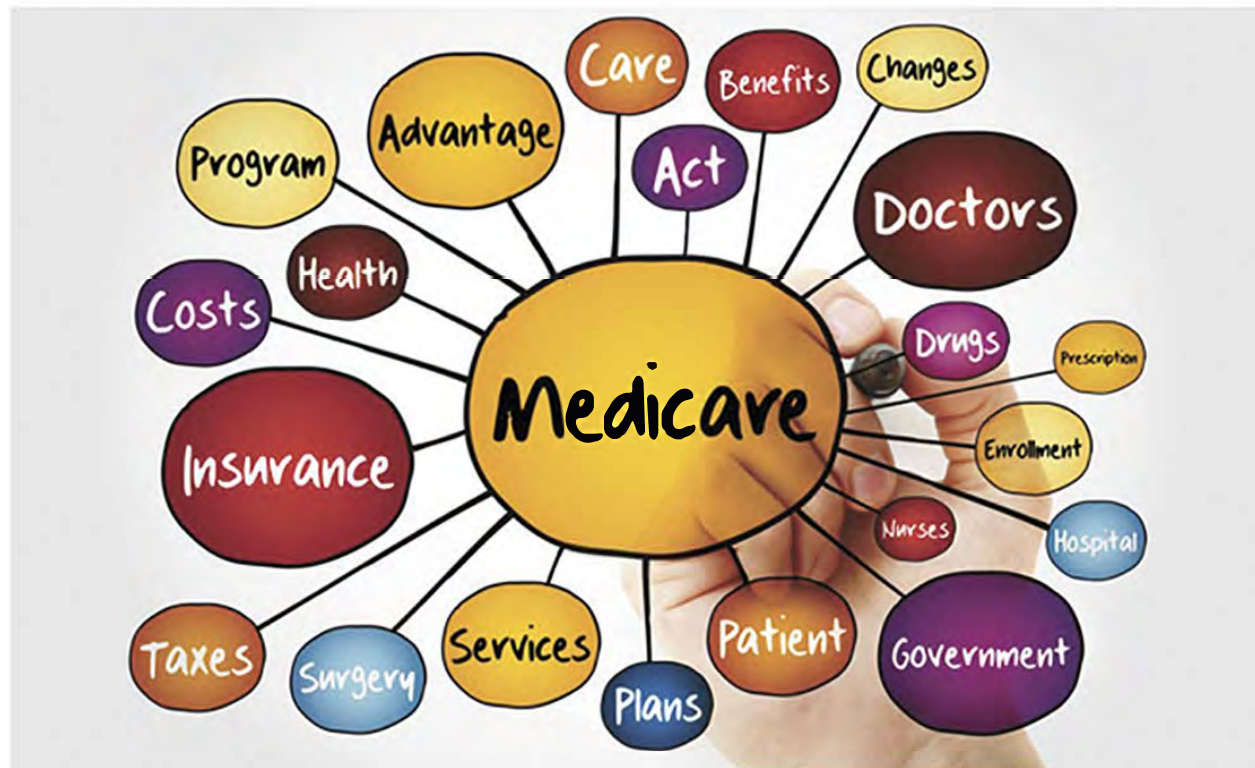
- **Get free transportation to the grocery store.** If your health plan offers transportation services, the benefit typically only covers trips to and from the doctor or pharmacy. By transferring your prescriptions to a grocery store you can use your transportation benefits to pick up some necessities.

- **Never pay for bandages again.** Over-the-counter (OTC) products are covered by many health plans. Each month you are given an allowance to order products such as bandages, cough syrups, and blood pressure monitors at no cost to you. It's a "use it or lose it" benefit so don't forget to order monthly!

- **Get a monthly rebate.** Enrollment in a health plan requires you to have both Part A and pay your monthly Part B premium. How does a \$60 to \$130 a month rebate sound? We can help you find options that will reduce your monthly payments.

- **Exercise for free.** Fitness centers usually host classes specifically designed for seniors. Health plans may offer access to fitness centers and classes to encourage its members to be active and social. If you haven't been to Zumba or yoga class, grab your sneakers and try it. All skill levels are welcomed and you'll find yourself feeling better as you meet new friends.

- **Cut your prescription costs by a third.** To encourage the use of mail order services, many health plans offer a three month supply for two month's copay. Signing up is simple and we can help you with applying for assistance with your prescription drug costs.



- **Lower copayments.** Specialist copayments are generally higher to encourage patients to first seek medical attention from their primary care provider. To save money on copayments, consider a health plan with lower specialist copayments, go to a medical center offering an in-house specialist, or select an internist with a sub-specialty as your primary care physician.

- **Veterans have options.** Veterans are not limited to healthcare coverage through the VA. Medicare plans can offer additional services such as vision and dental.

- **Not all plans are advertised.** But we can schedule an appointment where I can show you all of the plans, even those not advertised. Enrolling over the phone or internet is an option but you will not have a personal agent you can call on for help. When I help you, I become your agent and can assist you every year and help you change plans if your needs change.

- **Give your health plan an annual checkup.** It is important to review your benefits each year between October 1 and December 7. Unless there

is a special exception, this is the time you can enroll, disenroll or change your plan. If you are turning 65 years old you can enroll three months before your birthday. Let me help you avoid Medicare penalties or obtain Medicaid assistance if you qualify. Now is the perfect time to review your current options. You may decide to save time and gas by skipping all the seminars this year and go with the more personal approach in finding the perfect plan. At your request, I'd be happy to schedule a FREE in-home personalized appointment to review multiple plans, to ensure you're educated about the many options. I look forward to your call.



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*Due to COVID, I can also offer your Free Consultation by phone, video or email.*



# Cancer.

By Paula Swift, CHTP

**J**ust one word evokes a diverse response. Whether you've experienced it yourself, or walked alongside others through their crisis, fear, anger and sadness tend to dominate. So, it might sound strange when some will remark this time in their life to be the best event that ever happened to them. I am one of them.

When I reflect on my own experience with breast cancer, I find that there is one common ground with others who also claim that cancer was one of the best thing that happened in their life. And it all comes down to faith. With varying beliefs and religious practices, there is always a foundation of faith in a higher, greater power, with the majority having a very personalized relationship with God. There is incredible beauty found in each individual as their faith grows, and their spirit and life begin to flourish with profound discoveries and meaning, regardless of what their body might be doing.

Upon receiving that phone call from my doctor to confirm my cancer diagnosis, I wasn't quite sure how to feel. My immediate prayer was that God would bring to me the right people who would support me in the way that He wanted for me. He answered that prayer immediately that very night with a dear friend. I knew in my heart that I wanted to take a different direction than the standard medical protocol, and she was my first cheerleader, offering the beginning of what would be a long road of research and education that continues even today. I set my heart and eyes on my ultimate Healer, my Creator, my Heavenly Father, for this direction. And the intimacy with Him grew exponentially as He offered comfort and guidance.

Sunday morning following the diagnosis, I was on my way to church at a very early hour. During the quiet, 20 minute drive during sunrise, I was asking Him how will I know which protocol He wanted me to do. His voice was so clear that it was nearly audible with my human ears, "I've got this, Paula. I've got you". Okay, okay, I get it, Lord. One step at a time it will be. From then on, those words were



repeated countless times throughout my healing and the more I allowed the time and space to listen, the more I heard His voice and the more I recognized when His Spirit was moving me. It became very clear that the path He was leading me on was for the sole purpose of serving Him and serving others.

Reflecting on my healing experience and life since, the joy and peace that have filled my soul exceeds all I've ever known prior. The intimacy with my Heavenly Father continues to grow closer in ways that my heart had yearned for throughout my lifetime as a believer. When focus continues to be with Him, fear does not prevail and pain has purpose. It is because of all He continues to teach me, and His overflowing unconditional love, that I am able to live my life serving

others seeking whole healing of their body and spirit. Healing comes in many ways and sometimes it is not on this side of heaven. But healing the spirit is eternal, and we recognize that our days in this body are temporary, it sets our sights to what is forever. And that is where the adventure really begins!

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