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September 2024

Marion Edition - Monthly

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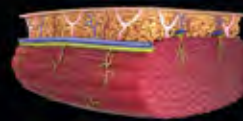
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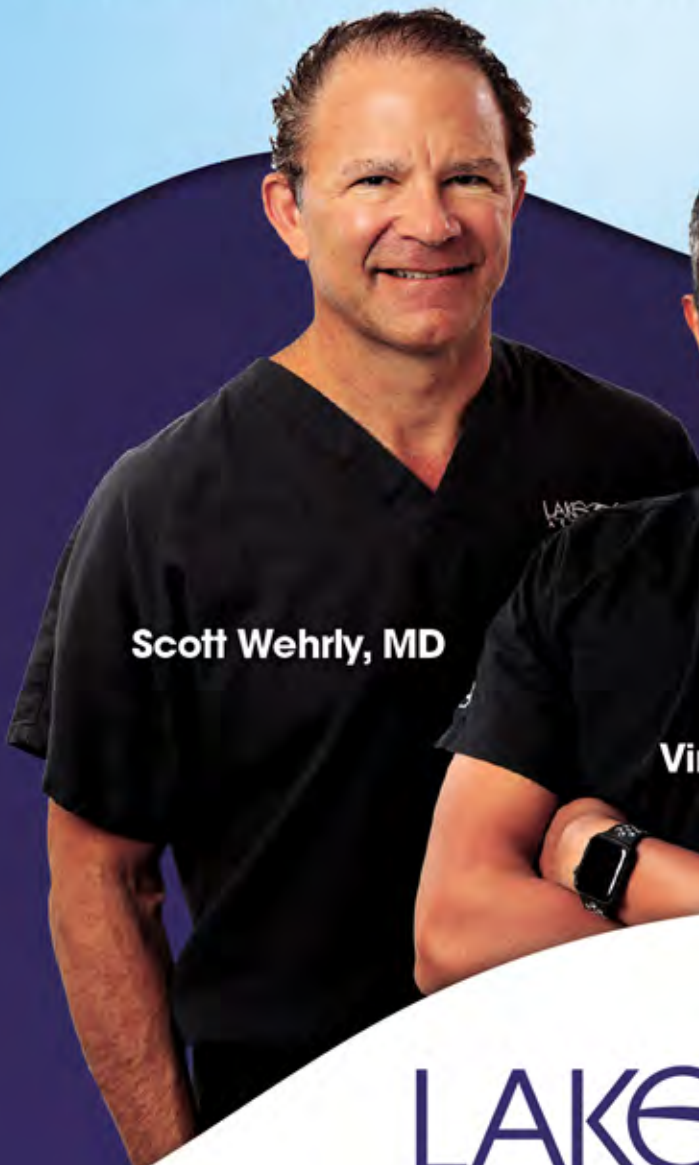


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# BLUE LIGHT AND YOUR EYES: SEPARATING FACTS FROM MYTHS

**W**ith computers, cell phones, tablets and other digital screens becoming a routine part of our daily lives, digital eye strain is on the rise. A recent survey revealed that 65% of Americans experience symptoms of eye strain, and the more digital devices they use, the greater the severity and frequency of symptoms.

Naturally, there are some who are quick to blame this on the blue light emitted by digital devices. But is digital blue light really worse for your eyes than the blue light from sunlight? And how much of the bias against blue light is related to its actual effects, and how much is based on rumor and myth? First, let's look at how digital blue light differs from natural sunlight.

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN BLUE LIGHT AND SUNLIGHT

**1. Spectral composition.** Sunlight contains a full spectrum of color wavelengths, including blue light, which is balanced by complementary wavelengths like red and infrared. Digital devices, however, emit predominantly blue wavelengths without the warm, balancing colors. Adding to it, our devices' LED backlighting concentrates this blue light directly at our eyes.

**2. Timing of blue light exposure.** The sun's full spectrum of light is a key part of circadian rhythm regulation, which affects our sleep quality and overall health. The sun delivers more blue light in the morning and daytime, promoting alertness. The blue light gradually wanes as night approaches, enabling our brains to wind down in preparation for sleep. Digital devices emit blue light continuously, disrupting this natural cycle and diminishing sleep quality, which can further burden eyes.

**3. Distance and length of exposure.** Even though the blue light from the sun is much stronger than what is emitted by digital screens, its power is suffused by mitigating colors and the great distance it travels. The closeness of digital screens, and the often-long hours spent staring at them, can lead to significant cumulative, concentrated blue light exposure.

## BLUE LIGHT AND YOUR EYE HEALTH: SEPARATING FACT FROM FICTION

Now that we understand how sunlight and the blue light from digital screens differ, let's compare the myths and facts about blue light and its effects on the eyes using a little quiz.

### 1. True or false: Blue light is always harmful to the eyes.

**False.** As stated previously, blue light is a natural part of the sun's light spectrum and plays an important role in regulating our circadian rhythms and daytime alertness. Obviously, staring directly at the sun can be hazardous to your eyes, but diffuse sunlight is part of everyday life. It is the excessive exposure to blue light from digital devices, particularly close to bedtime, that is generally responsible for eye strain.

### 2. True or false: Blue light from digital devices causes permanent eye damage.

**False.** While you may have heard that a few studies on lab animals suggest excessive blue light exposure could potentially damage the cells of the retina, there is no current scientific evidence that blue light from digital devices is powerful enough to cause serious or permanent eye damage. However, eye strain is a real problem, so using these devices mindfully is always a good idea.

### 3. True or false: Digital eye strain relates more to how we use our devices than to the blue light they emit.

**True.** Using our devices for prolonged periods, often without blinking enough or taking regular breaks, and using them too close to bedtime, is what causes the majority of eye strain conditions. You can ease your exposure to blue light by adjusting your device's settings, including enabling "night mode" warmer color tones, and reducing screen brightness to match room lighting to cut down on glare.

### 4. True or false: Specialized glasses can protect against blue light-related eye strain.

**Maybe.** However, the science on this is mixed. Most blue light filtering glasses block about 10-25% of blue light wavelengths, which is relatively low. While some people report some relief with prolonged use of high-quality blue light filtering glasses, the overall evidence of eye strain reduction, melatonin protection, and sleep improvement is narrow and inconsistent.

Before you go out and buy blue light filtering glasses to help ease eye strain, talk to your eye doctor about what type of lens technology they recommend. Specialty computer glasses designed to reduce glare actually do help ease eye strain, so they may be a better investment for your overall eye comfort.

And remember, protection from the powerful and potentially harmful rays of the sun is crucially important. So, invest in high-quality sunglasses providing 100% UV protection, and wear them whenever you're outside during daylight hours.

### 5. True or false: Blue light from digital devices can suppress melatonin production.

**True.** Melatonin is the hormone that regulates the normal sleep-wake cycle. Blue light exposure from staring at digital screens can reduce melatonin production, adversely impacting healthy sleep patterns. In fact, multiple studies have shown that exposure to blue light before bedtime makes it harder to become drowsy and fall asleep, limits important REM cycles, and causes more incidents of waking up throughout the night.

So, once the sun sets, switch to night settings (or set them to auto), reduce your screen's brightness, and, if you can manage it, stop using your screens 2-3 hours before you plan to hit the hay. Of course this can be difficult, but try it out. You might be surprised by how much better your sleep quality is, and how soothed your eyes feel as a result.

## GIVE YOUR EYES REGULAR BREAKS FROM SCREENS

To help prevent and reduce eye strain, follow the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes of screen time, stare 20 feet into the distance for at least 20 seconds. In addition, be sure to deliberately blink 10-20 times every minute to spread your tear film across your eyes. It might seem odd to have to remind yourself to blink, but staring at close-up devices often disrupts normal blinking, leading to dryness, irritation and eye strain.

By adopting healthy screen habits, you can do a lot of help reduce or even eliminate related eye strain. However, if excessive dryness, redness or irritation persist, contact your local Lake Eye for common sense ways to keep your eyes and vision clear, healthy and oh-so comfortable.



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# UNDERSTANDING CANCER RISK AS WE AGE: Tips for Prevention During Healthy Aging Month

“With age comes wisdom” is a well-known saying reflecting the common belief that we gain valuable knowledge and insight as we get older. However, as we add more candles to our birthday cakes, we also increase our risk of developing cancer.

While cancer can occur at any age, the likelihood of developing the disease rises as we get further into adulthood. According to the National Cancer Institute, the rate of cancer diagnosis for Americans ages 45 to 49 is 350 cases per 100,000. That rate nearly triples for adults ages 60 and older to 1,000 cases of cancer per 100,000 people.

While scientists continue to research for a clearer understanding as to why this occurs, several factors are known to contribute to this phenomenon:

- **Cellular damage:** Over time, cells accumulate damage to their DNA. While the body has mechanisms to repair this damage, their efficiency can decrease with age, leading to an increased likelihood of mutations that can cause cancer.
- **Weakened immune system:** As we age, our immune system's ability to detect and destroy cancerous cells diminishes, making it easier for cancer to develop and spread.
- **Exposure to carcinogens:** The longer a person lives, the more they are exposed to potential carcinogens, such as tobacco smoke, ultraviolet (UV) radiation and certain chemicals. These exposures can accumulate and contribute to cancer risk.
- **Chronic inflammation:** Over time, infections or autoimmune diseases, environmental factors and even our diets can damage tissues and promote cancer growth.
- **Hormonal changes:** Changes in hormone levels can influence the risk of developing certain types of cancer, such as breast and prostate cancer.

National Healthy Aging Month is observed every September in the United States. It was established to focus national attention on the positive aspects of growing older. The goal is to inspire adults, particularly those over 45, to take charge of their health, maintain active lifestyles and pursue activities that promote physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Although we can't stop the physical aging process, here are some key strategies for reducing cancer risk:

- Regular physical activity can be a powerful tool. However you choose to keep moving, you'll help boost the immune system and enhance its ability to detect and destroy cancer cells, regulate hormones such as insulin and estrogen, reduce inflammation, aid digestion and maintain a healthy weight. Obesity is a significant risk factor for various cancer types.



- Maintain good mental health and seek help if you experience prolonged periods of stress, anxiety or depression. Exercise can also help reduce stress and support healthy lifestyle choices.
- Smoking and vaping are linked to various types of cancer, including lung, throat, mouth and bladder cancer. Avoid tobacco and exposure to harmful chemicals.
- Protect your skin. Wear sunscreen even on cloudy days. Wear protective clothing, find shade when in the sun and avoid tanning beds to avoid skin cancer, the number one cancer among men and women (and the most preventable cancer type).
- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Limit processed foods, red meats and foods high in fat and sugar. Also, limit your intake of processed meats like hot dogs and deli meats, which are linked to an increased risk of certain cancers.
- Participate in recommended health screenings. Certain cancer types are much easier to treat when detected early, preventing thousands of cancer cases and deaths. Thanks to ongoing research, screening tests are now available for many types of cancer. These tests are effective at finding cancer, often before signs or symptoms appear. Early diagnosis and treatment are a substantial factor in surviving the disease.
- Have regular medical checkups with your health care provider to monitor your overall health and discuss any concerns or changes. Review your family history of cancer to understand your risk and explore preventive measures that may be appropriate.

Implementing these practices at any age can significantly reduce cancer risk and contribute to overall health and well-being. That can help make blowing out those birthday candles even more enjoyable!

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# What is Cholesterol: Its Role, Health Risks, and Management

Cobra Chamblee, D.O.

**C**holesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in every cell of the body. It plays a crucial role in building cell membranes, producing hormones like estrogen and testosterone, and synthesizing Vitamin D. While cholesterol is essential for various bodily functions, high levels of certain types of cholesterol can pose significant health risks, including heart disease and stroke. It's important to understand the intricacies of cholesterol, including the different types. By understanding cholesterol and what it is, you can determine its potential health risks and ways to maintain safe and healthy levels.

## What is Cholesterol?

Cholesterol is carried through the bloodstream by lipoproteins, which are essentially a combination of fats (lipids) and proteins. There are two primary types of lipoproteins that carry cholesterol:

**1. Low-Density Lipoprotein (LDL):** Often referred to as "bad" cholesterol, LDL cholesterol is considered harmful because it can lead to the buildup of plaque in the arteries, causing atherosclerosis—a condition characterized by narrowed and hardened arteries. You want your LDL cholesterol to be low.

**2. High-Density Lipoprotein (HDL):** Known as "good" cholesterol, HDL cholesterol helps remove LDL cholesterol from the arteries and transport it to the liver for disposal. High levels of HDL are associated with a lower risk of heart disease.

**Tip:** Remember that LDL cholesterol is bad by thinking of the "L" for low, while HDL is good with the "H" for high.

## Health Risks Associated with High Cholesterol Levels

Elevated levels of LDL cholesterol are a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. When LDL cholesterol builds up in the walls of arteries, it can form plaque, which narrows the arteries and restricts blood flow. This increases the risk of blood clots, heart attacks, and strokes. Additionally, high levels of triglycerides, another type of fat found in the blood, can also contribute to cardiovascular disease.



Here are some of the primary health risks associated with high cholesterol levels:

**1. Atherosclerosis:** The buildup of plaque in the arteries can lead to atherosclerosis, a condition that restricts blood flow and increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.

**2. Heart Disease:** High cholesterol levels are a significant risk factor for coronary artery disease, which occurs when plaque builds up in the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle.

**3. Stroke:** Blocked or narrowed arteries due to plaque buildup can impede blood flow to the brain, increasing the risk of stroke.

**4. Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD):** Atherosclerosis can also affect arteries outside of the heart and brain, leading to PAD, which causes reduced blood flow to the limbs, particularly the legs. This is a common risk factor for people who also suffer from diabetes.

## Maintaining Healthy Cholesterol Levels

Managing cholesterol levels is crucial for reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke. Here are some strategies to help maintain healthy cholesterol levels:

**1. Healthy Diet:** Adopting a diet low in saturated and trans fats can help lower LDL cholesterol levels. Instead, focus on consuming foods rich in unsaturated fats, such as avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil. Increasing dietary fiber intake from fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can also help lower cholesterol levels.

**2. Regular Exercise:** Engaging in regular physical activity can help raise HDL cholesterol levels and lower LDL cholesterol levels. Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking or cycling, each week.

**3. Maintain a Healthy Weight:** Being overweight can contribute to elevated cholesterol levels. Losing excess weight through a combination of diet and exercise can help improve cholesterol levels.

**4. Quit Smoking:** Smoking can lower HDL cholesterol levels and damage the walls of blood vessels. Quitting smoking can help improve cholesterol levels and overall cardiovascular health.

**5. Limit Alcohol Consumption:** Excessive alcohol intake can raise triglyceride levels and contribute to weight gain. Limit alcohol consumption to moderate levels, which is defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.

**6. Medication:** In some cases, lifestyle changes alone may not be sufficient to lower cholesterol levels adequately. In such instances, healthcare providers may prescribe cholesterol-lowering medications.

## Manage Cholesterol Levels for Better Health

Cholesterol plays a vital role in various bodily functions, but elevated levels of LDL cholesterol can significantly increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. Managing cholesterol levels through lifestyle modifications, including diet and exercise, is essential for reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. Additionally, it's important to work with a primary care provider to establish a wellness plan to monitor and manage your cholesterol. Contact a VIPcare provider today and start your journey to lower cholesterol and *Better Health!* Call 352-558-6759 to schedule your appointment.



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# Work(out) Smarter, Not Harder with Emsculpt NEO

By Dr. Tina Chandra

If you could lose fat and gain muscle without working out and see results in around 2 months, would you do it? Is it possible? Is there technology that can sculpt the body and make us look better? It's not a dream. The day has finally arrived!

Emsculpt NEO is a nonsurgical body contouring device that combines high-intensity focused electromagnetic (HIFEM) technology with radiofrequency (RF) energy. It strengthens and builds muscles while burning fat at the same time. It can be used to treat the abdomen, buttocks, biceps, triceps, and calves.

## How does Emsculpt NEO work?

As mentioned above, Emsculpt NEO uses a combination of RF and HIFEM. The radio frequency is used to heat the muscles and the electromagnetic energy then builds muscles. The heating of the muscles is what causes the reduction of fat in the area being treated. While the HIFEM simultaneously causes thousands of muscle contractions in order to improve strength and muscle tone. Combining these two treatments offers optimal results.

The heating of the muscles from the RF raises the temperature of the muscles by several degrees. It is similar to what one would do in a warm-up activity before exercising, but much faster. This part of the procedure lasts less than 4 minutes. When the temperature of the fat is increased, apoptosis occurs. This means that fat cells are permanently damaged and are removed from the body.

The HIFEM energy contracts the muscle fibers in the area being treated at intensities that are not possible in regular exercise. This stress forces the muscles to adapt and results in increased growth of muscle fibers and cells.

## What can I expect in an Emsculpt NEO session?

During a 30-minute session, an applicator is strapped to the area being treated, the abdomen, for example. The technician then slowly increases the RF heat and the HIFEM pulsing depending on the client's comfort level. Throughout each session and in future sessions, the applicator will get warmer and the pulses will increase in intensity.

Clients will normally have one session a week for four consecutive weeks. Each session lasts 30 minutes and there is no down-time afterwards. The client can return to work or go to dinner immediately following a session.

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According to the brand website, Emsculpt NEO is intended to be used on the "abdomen. It is cleared for improvement of abdominal tone, strengthening of the abdominal muscles and development of firmer abdomen, along with the strengthening, toning and firming of buttocks, thighs and calves, and improvement of muscle tone and firmness for strengthening muscles in the arms."

## What results can be expected?

Studies of the product have shown that clients see an average of 30% fat loss and an increase of 25% in muscle mass leaving a smaller waistline. The brand boasts a satisfaction rate of 88-100%.

## Is Emsculpt NEO too good to be true?

EMSCULPT NEO and the embedded high intensity magnetic field (HIFEM) technology have been clinically tested for safety and efficacy through seven clinical studies. Moreover, 30 scientific publications make HIFEM the most intensively researched body contouring technology since its introduction in 2018.

If you are interested in learning more about Emsculpt NEO from trusted professionals with years of experience, contact Chandra Wellness Center today.



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# The Importance of Bladder Wellness as We Age

**A**s we celebrate Healthy Aging Month, it's crucial to focus on the key aspects of aging well. While many of us pay attention to heart health, brain function, and joint mobility, one often overlooked yet essential component of overall health is bladder wellness. As we age, maintaining bladder health becomes increasingly important for preserving our quality of life and independence.

## Understanding the Aging Bladder

The bladder, like other organs in our body, undergoes natural changes as we age. These changes can include decreased bladder capacity, weakened bladder muscles, and alterations in bladder lining and nerve function. While these changes are a normal part of aging, they can lead to various bladder-related issues that become more common in older adults.

Some of the most prevalent bladder-related problems in seniors include urinary tract infections (UTIs), overactive bladder (OAB), and, in men, benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). Understanding these conditions and taking proactive steps to maintain bladder health can significantly impact overall well-being and quality of life.

## Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

UTIs become more common as we age due to several factors. A weakened immune system, incomplete bladder emptying, and post-menopausal changes in women all contribute to an increased risk of UTIs in older adults. These infections can cause discomfort, pain, and if left untreated, can lead to more serious complications.

Fortunately, there are several preventative measures that can help reduce the risk of UTIs. Staying well-hydrated and maintaining proper hygiene are essential first steps. Additionally, natural supplements like Utiva Cranberry PACs can provide extra support in maintaining urinary tract health. Regular check-ups with healthcare providers and early treatment of any symptoms are also crucial in managing UTIs effectively.

## Overactive Bladder (OAB)

Overactive bladder is another common issue that affects many older adults. Symptoms of OAB include a frequent and sudden urge to urinate, often accompanied by involuntary urine leakage. This condition can significantly impact daily life, causing sleep disturbances due to nocturia (night-time urination) and leading to social embarrassment and isolation.



Managing OAB often involves a combination of lifestyle changes and medical interventions. Bladder training exercises and pelvic floor strengthening can help improve bladder control. Adjusting fluid intake, particularly reducing caffeine and alcohol consumption, can also alleviate symptoms. For some individuals, medications may be necessary. Natural supplements like Utiva Bladder Health can also provide support in managing OAB symptoms.

## Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH)

For aging men, benign prostatic hyperplasia is a common concern. This condition involves the enlargement of the prostate gland, which can lead to various bladder issues. Symptoms of BPH include a weak urine stream, increased urgency to urinate, and incomplete bladder emptying.

Addressing BPH starts with regular screenings and tests to monitor prostate health. Lifestyle changes, including a healthy diet, regular exercise, and stress management, can help manage symptoms. Treatment options range from medications to minimally invasive procedures, depending on the severity of the condition. Natural supplements like Utiva Prostate Health can also play a role in supporting prostate function and overall urinary health in men.

## The Importance of Proactive Bladder Care

Taking a proactive approach to bladder health is essential as we age. Early detection and intervention can prevent complications and help preserve quality of life. By incorporating bladder wellness into our daily routines, we can make a significant difference in our overall health and well-being.

Simple steps like staying hydrated, practicing good hygiene, and maintaining a healthy diet can go a long way in supporting bladder health. Regular exercise, including pelvic floor strengthening exercises, can also help maintain bladder function.

Natural supplements can play a valuable role in supporting bladder health. Products like those offered by Utiva provide safe and effective options for both prevention and management of common bladder issues. These supplements can complement other healthy lifestyle choices and medical treatments when necessary.

It's important to emphasize the connection between bladder health and overall well-being. Bladder issues can impact sleep, social interactions, physical activity, and mental health. By prioritizing bladder wellness, we're not just addressing a single aspect of health – we're contributing to our overall quality of life.

As we observe Healthy Aging Month, let's remember to include bladder health in our conversations about aging well. By understanding the changes our bodies undergo, recognizing common bladder-related issues, and taking proactive steps to maintain bladder wellness, we can enjoy a higher quality of life as we age. Remember, it's never too late to start prioritizing your bladder health – small changes today can lead to significant benefits in the years to come.

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# High Cholesterol = High Risk for Debilitating Diseases

**C**holesterol is a natural substance that the body produces through the liver. It's waxy and circulates through the blood stream, feeding the heart and brain. But when cholesterol is derived from foods like saturated fats and trans fats, the body over produces LDL, which is the "bad" cholesterol.

HDL is the "good" cholesterol. If we did not have HDL, our brains would not work properly, and we would suffer from other bodily disorders. The same holds true for too much bad, LDL cholesterol. If we have too much LDL, then it adversely affects our overall health.

### What numbers are healthy?

Your total Cholesterol is made up of LDL and HDL. There are blood tests that your physician will order to check your cholesterol level. The best combination of both types of cholesterol is HDL (good) around 40 and LDL (bad) around 100.

| TOTAL CHOLESTEROL LEVEL |               |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| NORMAL                  | <150          |
| BORDERLINE              | 150-200       |
| HIGH                    | 200 or higher |

### What are the Risk Factors?

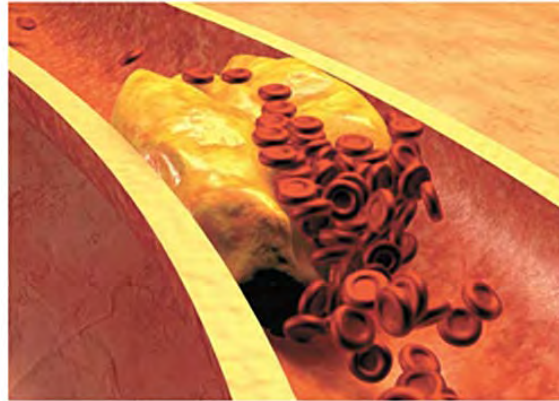
Cholesterol along with another substance in the blood can form atherosclerosis, which is the plaque that builds up in the arteries. If you have excessive plaque, then you are at high risk of having a coronary heart attack, heart disease, stroke and other disease related issues. Triglycerides are the fat that is stored in the bloodstream from the excess fat in our diets. Triglycerides are what combine with the high LDL level and create harmful plaque build up.

### What you can do

Because much of the high degree of cholesterol is associated with our food intake and our body's inability to burn fat, you can do many things to help lower your cholesterol naturally.

- Eating healthy diet
- Stop smoking (contributes to atherosclerosis)
- Start an exercise program
- Cut back on alcohol and processed foods

You should have an annual exam with your physician to check your cholesterol levels on a regular basis. If you have a high lipid count, your doctor will prescribe medication (statins) for you to help lower the total level. In addition to statins, you can change your diet to get your levels to drop more rapidly.



### Foods to incorporate

A big part of lowering your LDL or low-density lipoprotein is through adding soluble fiber, omega 3 fatty acids, monounsaturated fatty acids or MUFAs, powerful antioxidants and lutein to your diet. Some of the following foods listed below can literally lower your "bad" cholesterol levels by 5-10% within just a few weeks. But in order for these nutrients to make the most efficient decrease in your cholesterol, you must adhere to an overall healthy diet. You can't eat fried chicken and then eat an apple and think you'll get the benefit. You'll need to make a plan to eliminate the processed foods in your diet.

### Cholesterol Lowering Foods

- Garlic
- Oatmeal and Oat bran
- Pears
- Apples
- Prunes
- Beans
- Red wine
- Fat ty fish (salmon and sardines)
- Nuts
- Black tea
- Spinach
- Olive Oil

It's always best to speak directly with your physician before completely changing your diet or exercise program. Your doctor will construct a precise plan to suit your specific needs and incorporate some of the foods mentioned above along with a coordinated lifestyle strategy.

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# A Healthy Body = A Healthy Mind

By Brooklynn Curley, APRN-C

**L**ong ago; Hippocrates, an ancient Greek physician, once said, "let thy food be thy medicine". This is a powerful quote that still holds true today. One of the few things in this life that we have control over is what we choose to fuel our bodies with. This decision alone can affect us in so many ways including our health, energy, performance, mind, body, and spirit. So let's dive in on some tips to help you become the best version of yourself.

## Digest This!!

Eating is one of America's favorite social pastimes. However, what we don't think about is what we consume and the digestion process that follows. Did you know the acid in our stomach is powerful enough to dissolve most metals? Our stomach is a chemical and mechanical machine. Its job is to break down the food for absorption of nutrients and storage for fuel. Water helps soften food and assists with easier digestion. Our body has a circadian clock that helps regulate our daily behaviors including but not limited to the sleep/wake cycle, hormone release, and heart function. Our body expects certain fuels like fats and sugars at certain times of the day. Random eating and mindless snacking overwork your stomach and can cause bloating and indigestion. Fiber for the win, as it passes through our body undigested and can help regulate our hunger sensation. This can be found in oats, peas, beans, carrots, etc. **KEY TIPS:** Eat every 3-5 hours smaller meals to process food and fuel the body. Chew your food since the chewing motion mixes with saliva (packed with digestive enzymes) and helps your body absorb the greatest amount of nutrients.

## Drink your Water!

When you want to reach for the diet coke, energy drink, sweet tea, or coffee....think again. Water is vital to the human body. It aids in the livelihood of cellular functions, digestion, and both mental and physical performance. The human body is roughly made up of 60% water. We are constantly losing water through urine, sweat, and even breathing. Assuring we have adequate water intake helps ensure all cells, tissues, and organs are functioning optimally. Adequate water intake energizes you and helps flush toxins out of your body. H2O is a lubricant for all joints helping produce synovial fluid



and cartilage which helps maintain healthy joints and smooth movements. The smallest amount of dehydration which amounts to a loss of water at 1-2% of your body weight can affect cognitive function, concentration, alertness, and physical performance and endurance. **KEY TIP:** Within 30 minutes of waking up, drink 12 oz water, which will help kick-start your metabolism for the day. Also, here in the Dermatology world...hydration is key for your immune system, and it can even help prevent acne. Adequate water helps keep your skin's microbiome strong and helps fight off acne-causing bacteria.

## Our health is in our hands. What does this mean?

Don't let 2024 be the year you fall into the fad diets and the crash diets. The theme for this year's national nutrition campaign is "Beyond the Table". I love this idea that addresses the farm-to-fork aspect of nutrition. This campaign helps address food production and distribution, how to navigate grocery stores and farmers markets, and how to implement home food safety and storage practices. Meal prepping, smart snacking, and tips and tricks to choosing foods is a great way to get your nutrition under control for you and your family. Here are some easy-to-follow guidelines. Be sure to choose salt-free seasoning and liquid aminos for flavor. Celery, carrots, and cucumbers are foods that you can eat as much as you want as they are full of fiber and help keep you full. Do not drink your calories, meaning say no to juices, milk, or sodas. With that being said, there is nothing wrong with balancing your nutrition and enjoying life. Alcohol consumption stops your body from burning fat. It decreases the digestive enzymes and inhibits the absorption of nutrients and the breakdown of food. Hence why, it is sometimes

forced to be stored as fat. **KEY TIP:** No sugary drinks and avoid drinking more than 1 night a week. Shop the outside of the grocery store first. Why? The outside perimeter of a grocery store is where you tend to find the freshest foods including produce, meat, and dairy. Your processed foods are typically in the center aisles. By shopping this way, you have better control over your diet's fat and sodium intake. Remember, processed foods contain preservatives or chemicals and additives to maintain shelf life.

## Midstate Skin Institute: Here for you.

What can we offer you to help you meet your 2024 goals? A former trainer of mine once said, "You can't workout a bad diet". That has stuck with me for years. Nutrition is the key to a healthier, longer, and more fulfilling life. I truly believe that having a supportive team behind you, you can achieve anything you want in life. We are happy to offer the latest and greatest lasers, ultrasounds, and medication management to help you get closer to your "health" goals. One of our services includes EMSCULPT NEO. This uses radio frequency and high-intensity electromagnetic energies to help with fat reduction and muscle growth. The main mechanism is heat, think about an intense warm-up before a workout. Clinical studies have shown a 30% reduction in subcutaneous fat. It is non-invasive and is only 30 minutes! Another service offered is Sofwave. This is a skin-tightening ultrasound approach. This can be used on all skin types and is also noninvasive. It is FDA-approved for short-term improvement of cellulite. This machine helps stimulate the production of new collagen and elastin helps reduce fine lines and wrinkles. We would love to consult with you and come up with a plan to help you achieve success.

## To sum it up...

As you can see, I am very passionate about nutrition and taking control of your life. It could be the former personal trainer in me but I LOVE helping others change their lives and feel their best from the inside out. This is why I LOVE Dermatology because our skin's health truly starts on the inside. Knowledge is power. Feed your brain, feed your soul, feed your body and you will be unstoppable. Until next time.... Brooklynn.



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# CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR HEALTH

Submitted by Hospice of Marion County

**A**ccording to the 2023 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures, the Alzheimer's Association reported that more than 11 million Americans provided unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's or other dementias. These caregivers provided an estimated 18 billion hours valued at \$340 billion. Additionally, 59% of these caregivers report that their own health has suffered due to care responsibilities with high or very high levels of emotional stress.

## Health of Caregivers Impacted

Most caregivers receive little or no support from their own families or other organizations and are basically on their own. There's been a growing trend over the last few decades of closing mental health facilities, early discharge of hospital patients, and implementation of managed care practices which causes a shift and burden to families and caregivers. This often results in financial loss, strain among families, and caregiver health issues that manifest due to increased stress.

Studies consistently show the following impacts on a caregiver's health:

- Higher levels of depression and depressive symptoms than in non-caregivers
- Depressed caregivers are more likely to have coexisting anxiety disorders, substance abuse or dependence
- Chronic stress in caregivers sometimes is associated with an increase in hypertension, inflammation and decreased immune function
- Caregivers who experience chronic stress may be at a greater risk for cognitive decline
- Caregivers report having a higher incidence of stress, weight gain, headaches, and back strain among other physical ailments and pain associated with caregiving

Women tend to be, more often than not, the primary caregivers. However, being a caregiver whether male or female affects your quality of life and increases the challenge of balancing your personal schedule with that of the intense, demanding focus needed to be a caregiver.



## Resources and Tips Available

Caregivers tend to put others first and themselves last. It's not uncommon to see the impact of ongoing stress from caregiving sometimes results in anger and resentment. It's vitally important for caregivers to make sure they are taking care of themselves mentally, physically and socially. How can a caregiver take care of a loved one, if they are not being mindful of their own needs and health? Below are some resources and tips:

- Don't be afraid to ask for help from family members or close friends who could run errands
- Practice meditation and exercise to help relieve stress—set aside early morning or evening for yourself
- Do something socially just for you—see a movie, have lunch with friends
- Check into your office policies to see if you have family leave benefits

Call Hospice of Marion County for support from these programs:

**Transitions Program at (352) 854-5200** – This is a community supported volunteer-based resource with caregiver support groups, respite for the caregiver, providing assistance whether in homes or assisted living facilities.

**Nancy Renyhart Dementia Education Program at (352) 291-5138** – This program provides education for those caring for someone with dementia. It is provided at no charge and provides a three-hour workshop with tips and helpful caregiving resources, along with a Virtual Dementia Tour® that lets the caregiver experience dementia through the eyes of their loved one.

 **empath**  
**HOSPICE OF MARION COUNTY**

## Blood pressure ranges are as follows:



**Normal blood pressure:**  
120/80 mm Hg or lower.



**Elevated blood pressure:**  
The top number ranges from 120 to 129 mm Hg, and the bottom number is *below* 80 mm Hg.



**Stage 1 hypertension:**  
The top number ranges from 130 to 139 mm Hg OR the bottom number is between 80 - 89 mm Hg.



**Stage 2 hypertension:**  
The top number is 140 mm Hg or higher OR the bottom number is 90 mm Hg or higher.

### What are these studies about?

Researchers want to see what effect investigational medicines will have on blood pressure in qualified study participants.

### Why take part in clinical research?

There remains an unmet need for safe and effective therapies. Synexus needs your help to advance world medicine. By volunteering, you may help get us one step closer to developing effective medications.

### Meet Dr. Okolie: A Leader in Hypertension Research

Leading our hypertension research efforts at Synexus is Dr. Okolie, the current Medical Director of Synexus Clinical Research in The Villages. Dr. Okolie graduated from medical school in Ghana in 2005 and initially worked as a general practitioner. In 2009, she moved to the United States to further her specialty training. She became board certified in Internal Medicine and Obesity Medicine, demonstrating her commitment to providing comprehensive care in these areas.

Dr. Okolie brings more than 20 years of medical experience to her role at Synexus. Her extensive background as a hospitalist and medical director of a hospital-based home care agency has provided her with a well-rounded understanding of various medical conditions and treatment approaches. She is known for her patient-centered approach and exceptional oversight of multi-phase studies, particularly in therapeutic areas such as vaccines, neuro/Alzheimer's and general medicine.

*"Come take advantage of our complimentary testing and explore all of the wonderful studies we have to offer at Synexus Clinical Research."*

**Angela Okolie, MD**  
Principal Investigator



## Together for *the Future* of Health

### Understanding hypertension

Hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, is a pervasive health condition affecting nearly half of all adults in the United States. Despite the availability of medications, managing this condition remains a significant challenge for many individuals. At Synexus Clinical Research, we understand the critical need for innovative solutions to address this widespread issue. We are excited to announce our complimentary testing services aimed at tackling hypertension through clinical trials. This initiative not only offers participants access to cutting-edge treatments but also contributes to the advancement of medical research.

### Complimentary testing services (hypertension and memory)

Synexus is offering complimentary testing services for individuals struggling with high blood pressure and memory loss. Our goal is to provide accessible, no-cost study-related care and medication to eligible participants. By doing so, we aim to alleviate the financial burden often associated with managing chronic conditions.

To qualify for our complimentary testing services, participants must be 18 years or older and have difficulty maintaining a healthy blood pressure range or a history of memory loss. Those who meet these criteria will receive payment for their participation, no-cost study-related care from local doctors, and no-cost study medication. This comprehensive support ensures that participants receive the best possible care throughout the trial period.

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# ASSISTED LIVING FOR MEMORY CARE: UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS

**A**ssisted living communities are designed to provide a comfortable and supportive environment for seniors who need assistance with daily activities. Memory care, which is a specialized form of assisted living, is designed for individuals who have been diagnosed with memory-related conditions such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease. Here at AdviniaCare at Paddock Ridge, we provide a secure and structured environment that is tailored to meet the unique needs of residents with memory loss.

AdviniaCare at Paddock Ridge offers many benefits to seniors with memory-related conditions, including:

## A Safe and Secure Environment

We provide a secure environment that is designed to prevent residents from wandering or getting lost. AdviniaCare at Paddock Ridge has locked doors and security features that prevent residents from leaving the community without assistance. This provides peace of mind for family members who may worry about their loved one's safety.

## Specialized Care

We provide specialized care that is tailored to meet the unique needs of residents with memory loss. Staff members are trained to provide assistance with activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, and grooming, as well as specialized care for individuals with memory-related conditions.

## Structured Activities

We provide structured activities that are designed to engage residents and promote cognitive function. These activities may include memory games, music therapy, art therapy, and other activities that are specifically tailored to meet the needs of individuals with memory loss.

## Nutritious Meals

We provide nutritious meals that are designed to meet the unique dietary needs of residents with memory loss. Many memory care facilities also offer snacks and hydration stations throughout the day to ensure that residents are properly nourished.

## Socialization Opportunities

We provide socialization opportunities that are designed to promote social interaction and engagement. Many communities have common areas where residents can gather, as well as planned activities and events that promote socialization and community.

## 24/7 Monitoring

We provide 24/7 monitoring to ensure that residents are safe and secure at all times. Staff members are trained to recognize the signs of memory-related conditions, such as confusion or disorientation, and to provide appropriate support and care.

## Peace of Mind for Family Members

AdviniaCare at Paddock Ridge provides peace of mind for family members who may worry about their loved one's safety and well-being. Knowing that their loved one is receiving specialized care and support can alleviate the stress and worry that often comes with caring for someone with memory loss.

In addition to these benefits, AdviniaCare at Paddock Ridge also provides support and resources for family members. Many communities offer support groups, educational resources, and other services that are designed to help family members cope with the challenges of caring for someone with memory loss.

## Memory Care Services Include:

- Assistance setting appointments and coordinating outside health care needs
- Daily verbal prompting for meals, activities of daily living, and life enrichment programming
- Daily bed making and routine night checks
- Coordinate diagnostics testing/scheduling transportation for doctor visits
- Daily personal assistance with grooming and/or dressing
- Personal assistance with bathing
- Personal escort to meals and activities
- Personal assistance with dining and menu selections
- Assistance with behavioral expressions
- Medications management is included



## Choosing a Memory Care Community

When choosing a memory care community, it's important to consider the needs and preferences of the individual with memory loss. Some factors to consider include:

**Location:** Choosing a community that is close to family members and loved ones can make it easier to visit and stay connected.

**Size:** Some individuals may prefer a smaller community with a more intimate environment, while others may prefer a larger facility with more amenities.

**Services:** Consider the services and amenities offered by the facility, such as specialized care, structured activities, and nutritious meals.

**Staffing:** Ask about the staff-to-resident ratio and the qualifications and training of staff members.

**Cost:** Memory care communities can vary widely in cost, so it's important to consider the budget and financial resources of the individual with memory loss and their family.

We at AdviniaCare recognize that caring for loved ones with memory loss can both be a pleasure and a challenge at times. With our memory care programs, we can relieve some of the burden off of your shoulders and create a beneficial experience for both you and your loved one.



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# NATIONAL ARTHRITIS AWARENESS MONTH: Understanding and Managing Arthritis for a Healthier Future

By Dr. Nam Dinh, MD, FAAOS

**N**ational Arthritis Awareness Month is an important time to shed light on the various forms of arthritis that affect millions of people worldwide. From osteoarthritis to psoriatic arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, understanding these conditions is crucial for maintaining an active role in one's treatment journey. Let's delve into the details of these arthritis types and explore the importance of informed decision-making.

## 1. Exploring Arthritis Diversity: Types and Treatments

Arthritis is not a one-size-fits-all condition. There are different types, each with distinct causes, development patterns, and treatment strategies. Osteoarthritis, psoriatic arthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis are among the most well-known types. Learning about their unique characteristics can empower individuals to make informed decisions about their health.

## 2. The Burden of Osteoarthritis

Osteoarthritis stands as a widespread and debilitating condition, often striking individuals over the age of 65. This form of arthritis is characterized by the gradual breakdown of cartilage, leading to pain, stiffness, and reduced joint mobility. While it is often linked to aging, it's important to recognize that it can impact anyone, regardless of age.

## 3. Unraveling Osteoarthritis

The wear and tear on our joints that occurs naturally over time is known as osteoarthritis. This irreversible condition is often a result of a combination of factors, including genetics, joint injuries, and lifestyle. Understanding the underlying mechanisms can help individuals take proactive steps to manage and mitigate its effects.

## 4. Risk Factors: Age, Activity, and Weight

Certain factors increase the risk of developing advanced osteoarthritis. Older individuals are more susceptible due to the cumulative effects of joint wear over time. Highly active individuals might experience accelerated joint deterioration, especially if their activities involve repetitive stress on specific joints. Additionally, excess weight places added strain on joints, contributing to the development of osteoarthritis.



## 5. Surgical Interventions for Osteoarthritis

In severe cases of osteoarthritis where conservative treatments are insufficient, surgical interventions become necessary. Total hip and knee replacements are common procedures that involve removing damaged joint components and replacing them with prosthetics designed to restore function and alleviate pain. These surgeries have the potential to significantly enhance an individual's quality of life.

## 6. Muscle-Sparing Techniques: Enhancing Recovery

Modern medical advancements have led to muscle-sparing surgical techniques that benefit patients undergoing joint replacement. By preserving major muscle groups during surgery, patients experience quicker recovery times and improved independence. These techniques contribute to faster post-surgery mobility, facilitating rehabilitation and a smoother transition to an active lifestyle.

As National Arthritis Awareness Month approaches, take the opportunity to educate yourself and others about the importance of understanding and managing arthritis. By distinguishing between different types of arthritis and recognizing the factors that contribute to their development, individuals can make informed choices to optimize their well-being.

Whether you're dealing with the challenges of osteoarthritis, psoriatic arthritis, or rheumatoid arthritis,

remember that knowledge is your greatest ally. Participate actively in discussions with healthcare providers to create tailored treatment plans that consider your unique health status, diagnosis, and support system. By being proactive and well-informed, you can embark on a journey towards better joint health and an improved quality of life.

## About Dr. Nam Dinh

Dr. Nam Dinh is a board-certified, fellowship trained orthopedic surgeon at Optimotion Orthopaedics with special training in minimally invasive LATERAL total knee replacement ANTERIOR hip replacement surgery. To learn more information about Dr. Dinh visit [optimotion.com](http://optimotion.com).



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# Achieving Healthy Aging:

## Balancing Wellness and Financial Security

By Steve Schneider, MBA - CEO, Securenet Financial, LLC.

In today's world, aging is not just about reaching a certain age; it's about maintaining vitality, independence, and happiness throughout our later years. A key component of aging well involves not only taking care of our physical and mental health but also ensuring our financial stability. This article explores the essential relationship between healthy aging and sound financial planning, illustrating how they intersect to pave the way for a secure and fulfilling retirement.

### The Pillars of Healthy Aging

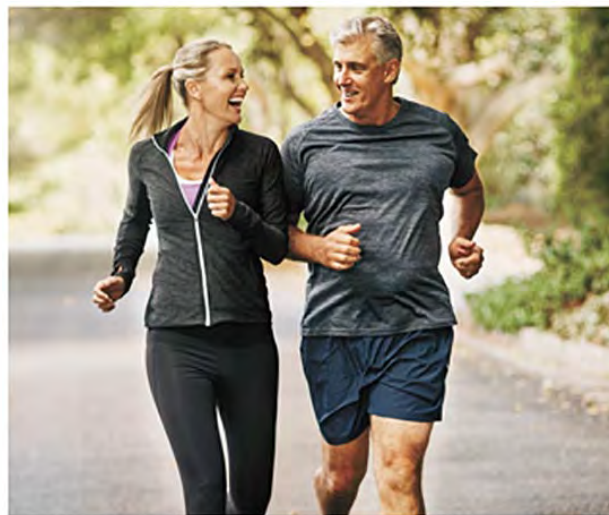
Healthy aging encompasses various aspects of life that contribute to overall well-being and longevity:

- **Physical Health:** Regular exercise, a balanced diet, and routine health screenings are crucial for maintaining physical fitness and preventing age-related illnesses.
- **Mental Well-being:** Engaging in cognitive activities, social interactions, and managing stress effectively promote mental acuity and emotional resilience.
- **Social Connections:** Strong relationships with family, friends, and community foster a sense of belonging and support, which are vital for mental and emotional health.
- **Purpose and Engagement:** Pursuing hobbies, volunteer work, or lifelong learning keeps individuals active, engaged, and fulfilled.

### The Importance of Financial Stability

Financial security is fundamental to enjoying a worry-free retirement and supporting a healthy aging process:

- **Peace of Mind:** Having sufficient savings and investments allows retirees to focus on enjoying life without the stress of financial uncertainty.
- **Access to Healthcare:** Adequate funds ensure access to quality healthcare services, essential for managing health conditions and maintaining well-being.
- **Maintaining Independence:** Financial stability enables retirees to make choices that align with their preferences and needs, supporting independence and autonomy.



### Planning for a Secure Retirement

Planning early and wisely for retirement is essential to achieving financial security in later years. Obtaining expert guidance is crucial to navigate the complexities of retirement planning:

- **Financial Assessment:** Evaluate current financial status, including savings, investments, pensions, and potential retirement income sources.
- **Setting Goals:** Define retirement goals, such as desired lifestyle, travel plans, healthcare needs, and legacy considerations.
- **Creating a Strategy:** Develop a personalized retirement plan that includes savings goals, investment strategies, and risk management to achieve long-term financial security.
- **Monitoring and Adjusting:** Regularly review and adjust the retirement plan as circumstances change, ensuring it remains aligned with evolving goals and market conditions.

### The Interplay Between Health and Wealth

The correlation between financial stability and healthy aging is profound and interconnected:

- **Reduced Stress:** Financial security alleviates stress and anxiety, contributing to better overall mental and physical health.
- **Quality of Life:** Adequate financial resources enable retirees to engage in activities they enjoy, maintain social connections, and pursue personal interests, enhancing their quality of life.

- **Long-Term Care:** Planning for potential healthcare needs and long-term care costs ensures peace of mind and protects retirement assets from unexpected expenses.

### Conclusion

As individuals live longer and healthier lives, the importance of integrating health and financial planning becomes increasingly evident. Securenet Financial LLC is committed to helping clients achieve a secure and prosperous retirement through comprehensive financial advice and tailored solutions. By prioritizing both health and wealth, individuals can navigate their golden years with confidence, enjoying the rewards of a well-lived life.

Remember, aging is a journey that can be enriched through proactive planning and a commitment to holistic well-being. Start planning today to ensure a future filled with vitality, independence, and financial security.

For more information on how Securenet Financial LLC can assist you in planning for a secure retirement, visit [SecurenetFinancial.com](https://www.securenetfinancial.com).

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# Comparing Assisted Living To a Shiny New Car

By Janice Martin, Owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida

I got a call from a daughter who had received a 45 day move out notice from the assisted living community where her father lived because dad needed more care than they could provide. After learning more about the circumstances, I explained that his needs could indeed be met in assisted living. However, he needed a community with a higher level of licensing. There are actually different licenses that dictate how much hands-on nursing care a community can provide.

A Standard License is suitable for those needing minimal assistance with activities of daily living. Most communities have this license. The care is provided by CNAs and caregivers and does not require a nurse in the building. Too often, people realize after moving to a community with a standard license that neither a caregiver nor a nurse may change a bandage regardless of the size of the bandage. The restrictions of the license will not allow them.

A Limited Nursing License (LNS) will have nurses in the community, but not necessarily 24 hours a day. They are permitted to apply and change bandages, assist with oxygen, casts, self-maintained catheters, glucose testing and more. The highest level is an Extended Congregate Care License (ECC). They can do everything a standard license and LNS license allows, plus provide total help with all activities of daily living and any nursing service permitted within the scope of their license that's authorized by a physician. Those who believe their loved one needs a nursing home are surprised to learn that the care can often be met in an LNS or ECC license community. However, although caregivers and CNAs are in the building, none are required to have a nurse 24/7. Often, the nurse is at home on call from 10PM to 7AM.

Let's get back to my earlier example. The community where her father lived has a standard license. I suggested two communities with an LNS license and what made one community different from the other. It was not the quality of care, but the culture of the community. One had more active residents and participation than the other, which I understood was important to her father.

She visited both LNS communities. She also stopped into a standard license community that was close to her home, but she was not familiar with their license nor anything else about them. However, the



community is shiny and newer than the others, with residents who are more active because they don't have as many care needs as residents in an older community. However, the truth is at the end of the day the community is not licensed to provide any more care than where her father currently lived. The daughter was wowed by the way it looked and ignored the limits of the care that could be provided. A few months from now, if her dad declines, she may find herself in the same situation and may need to find a new community because her dad's needs are again not being met.

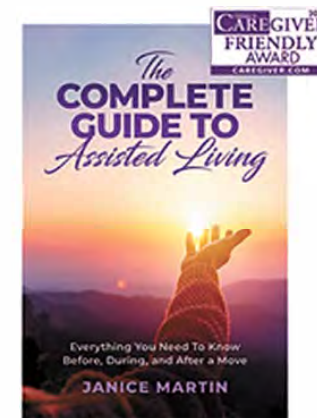
As another example, a husband called because his wife was in rehab and due to be discharged. He is unable to provide the advanced care that she needs at home, and he didn't know where to look. I suggested a short term stay at an LNS community with 24 hour nurses in the building where she could continue to receive therapy with the goal to possibly returning home. Sadly, she was denied after the nurse met with her and observed that she does not meet the assisted living admission criteria, regardless of the license level, of being able to transfer without any devices, or to stand, bear weight, and pivot.

However, another placement company inappropriately referred a community to him that has a standard license. He visited the community and was told that they would accept her despite the fact that they had not met with her to witness her actual care needs. The community made their determination on what they were told, not observed. I tried in vain to help the husband understand that the standard license community could not possibly meet her needs and suggested other options beyond assisted living. Sadly, he listened to their promises and decided to move her there because the community is "so pretty."

It does not matter what the community looks like! Don't look at the shiny features, the fancy lobby, and chandeliers. Consider their license and if they can truly meet your loved one's care needs. Look at the other similarly licensed communities and compare apples to apples.

If you are looking for a new car and one car dealer says their car has all the fancy features you want but lacks in the important safety features, you may not understand that it will not meet your family's needs unless you have someone with qualified knowledge to educate you. If you go to another car dealer and they tell you their car has all the important safety features, but doesn't have all the bells and whistles, which one will be more important to you for the safety of your family? One might be prettier and shinier than the other and the cost may be about the same, but which one will you want for your precious family's protection? Listen to someone with unbiased knowledge of the differences.

Choosing an appropriate assisted living is a very important decision. Please make certain your decision is based on solid facts that truly fit your loved one's care needs and not the pretty features.



Janice Martin is an author, educator, and an unbiased specialist on senior living options and the owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc. She assists families in locating senior options either at home or to a community and has written "The Complete Guide to Assisted Living: Everything You Need to Know Before, During, and After a Move" available on Amazon.com. For more information, call 352-477-1866 or visit [www.seniorliaisoncfl.com](http://www.seniorliaisoncfl.com).



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# THE HORMONE-SEXUAL HEALTH CONNECTION: UNDERSTANDING YOUR BODY'S CHEMICAL MESSENGERS

**S**exual health is a crucial aspect of overall well-being, encompassing physical, emotional, and social dimensions. At the core of sexual health lies a complex interplay of hormones – chemical messengers that regulate various bodily functions, including sexual development, desire, and function. Understanding the role of hormones in sexual health can empower individuals to make informed decisions about their bodies and relationships.

## Key Hormones in Sexual Health

Several hormones play pivotal roles in sexual health:

**1. Testosterone:** Often associated with male sexuality, testosterone is important for both men and women. In men, it drives libido, sperm production, and erectile function. In women, it contributes to sexual desire and arousal.

**2. Estrogen:** Primarily a female hormone, estrogen is essential for maintaining vaginal health, lubrication, and the menstrual cycle. It also influences sexual desire and arousal in women.

**3. Progesterone:** This hormone works alongside estrogen to regulate the menstrual cycle and prepare the uterus for pregnancy. It can affect mood and libido during different phases of the menstrual cycle.

**4. Oxytocin:** Known as the "love hormone," oxytocin is released during physical intimacy and orgasm. It promotes bonding, trust, and emotional connection between partners.

**5. Prolactin:** This hormone is involved in breast milk production but also plays a role in sexual satisfaction and the refractory period after orgasm.

## Hormonal Imbalances and Sexual Health

When hormone levels are out of balance, various sexual health issues can arise:

- **Low libido:** Decreased levels of testosterone or estrogen can lead to reduced sexual desire in both men and women.
- **Erectile dysfunction:** Low testosterone or high prolactin levels may contribute to difficulty achieving or maintaining erections.
- **Vaginal dryness:** Reduced estrogen, common during menopause, can cause vaginal dryness and discomfort during intercourse.

- **Menstrual irregularities:** Imbalances in estrogen and progesterone can lead to irregular periods, heavy bleeding, or painful menstruation.

- **Mood changes:** Hormonal fluctuations can affect mood, potentially impacting sexual desire and relationship dynamics.

## Maintaining Hormonal Balance for Sexual Health

Several lifestyle factors can help maintain hormonal balance and promote sexual health:

**1. Healthy diet:** Consuming a balanced diet rich in nutrients supports hormone production and regulation.

**2. Regular exercise:** Physical activity helps maintain healthy hormone levels and improves overall sexual function.

**3. Stress management:** Chronic stress can disrupt hormone balance. Techniques like meditation, yoga, or counseling can help manage stress.

**4. Adequate sleep:** Quality sleep is crucial for hormone regulation. Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night.

**5. Limiting alcohol and avoiding smoking:** Excessive alcohol consumption and smoking can negatively impact hormone levels and sexual function.

## Seeking Professional Help

If you experience persistent sexual health issues, it's essential to consult a healthcare provider. They can assess your hormone levels through blood tests and recommend appropriate treatments, which may include:

- Hormone replacement therapy
- Lifestyle modifications
- Medications to address specific sexual health concerns
- Counseling or sex therapy to address psychological factors

Remember, sexual health is an integral part of overall health and well-being. By understanding the role of hormones and taking proactive steps to maintain balance, individuals can enjoy satisfying and healthy sexual lives. Open communication with partners and healthcare providers is key to addressing concerns and finding solutions that work for each unique situation.

## MEET THE TEAM

Elite Medical is comprised of a team who is dedicated to helping you on your journey to better health.



### Christopher Bagley, APRN

Chris is lifelong a resident of Marion county. Chris graduated with a Bachelors degree from the University of Florida in Health Science Education with a specialization in Health Promotion. Chris worked as a firefighter, paramedic and registered nurse prior to becoming a nurse practitioner. Chris has worked primarily as an ER nurse practitioner but also has experience in primary care and long term care.

Chris has always had a passion for health and after committing himself to his health, he was inspired along with Eldon, to open Elite Medical, a comprehensive wellness practice that focuses on health and well-being to prevent sickness and chronic diseases.



### Eldon Waters, MSN, APRN

Eldon is a Marine Corps veteran and attended the College of Central Florida, University of Virginia and completed a Bachelors of Science in Nursing from University of Central Florida. Eldon also completed his Masters of Science in Nursing from South University.

Eldon started as an EMT/Medic at the University of Virginia Medical Center, a level 1 trauma center and teaching facility. He went on to work at Advent Health Ocala as a tech then registered nurse. After gaining more experience, Eldon worked at Ocala Health in the ER as a Nurse Practitioner.

To find out more or to schedule your appointment, please contact Elite Medical today.



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# Sports Injuries: Non-Surgical Treatment with Occupational/Hand Therapy

Innovative Therapies Group

**B**ecause we have the most beautiful weather all year long, in our sunshine state, older individuals are golfing, playing tennis, pickleball, kayaking, swimming, and the list goes on and on; but with all of this healthy activity, adults are more susceptible to injury and wear and tear.

## Tennis Elbow: Tendonitis (Tennis, Golf, etc.)

The same sentiment holds true with elbow injuries. Elbow tendonitis results in a ligament laxity component that if unaddressed, causes the issue to become chronic. The tendon will continue to become inflamed during sports and other daily activities because the muscles are overcompensating for ligament laxity. Instead of surgery, there is another treatment option.

## Pickleball Injuries

Many sports-related injuries are putting players in quite the predicament. Oddly enough, most of these injuries are taking place in the wrist and hands. According to the USAPA (USA Pickleball Association), 70% of the participants playing pickleball are over the age of 60. That's a lot of seniors out there enjoying this exciting sport, but that also means that there are more injuries needing medical attention. The same holds true for many other sports and outdoor activities. Ballistic movements or quick side to side, lateral transitioning, are very often what lead to these injuries.



The most common of the two types of injuries are traumatic, so for all the exercise fanatics, weekend warriors or accident-prone individuals, the RICE method, along with NSAID's (aspirin or ibuprofen) should be your first line of defense if you've injured yourself. But along with this standard of care, any time you or a loved one experiences injury; you should consult a physician for a medical examination immediately to evaluate how severe your injury might be. Additionally, Occupational/Hand therapy should also be a first-line treatment.

## Occupational/Hand Therapy for Sports Injuries

With the right method of hand therapy exercises and stretching, you can regain control of your active lifestyle within a short period of time.

Masking your pain with pain medications is not the answer. Getting to the root cause of your condition is the key to healing your body and living the life you deserve.

Occupational/Hand therapy is the leading way to relieve pain and discomfort at its core for many individuals. Therapeutic manual stretching and exercising provide real results in controlling pain for countless patients. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) also launched new guidelines recently, recommending the use of physical therapy for chronic pain.

Patient & Occupational Education is critical to alleviate further injury and to promote the most efficacious healing. Coupled with at-home exercise guidelines and self-help management to promote and maintain independent function and increase mobility, Innovative Therapies Group has got you covered.

Occupational/Hand therapy is used to help with numerous indications and conditions like retraining the body to improve strength and so much more. There is no better way to alleviate pain, increase range-of-motion and live a more mobile higher quality of life than through physical and occupational hand therapy.

To find out more or to schedule your appointment, please contact Innovative Therapies Group today.

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# Arthritis and the Shift to Single-Story Living

By David Culbreth, Senior Transitions Specialist, Realtor, SRES

**A**rthritis is a debilitating condition affecting millions of adults worldwide. This chronic inflammatory disease causes swelling, pain, and stiffness in the joints, making even the most basic daily tasks a challenge. For those living with arthritis, such as myself, finding ways to manage the symptoms and maintain a quality of life is of utmost importance. One significant step arthritis sufferers are taking is the decision to downsize to single-story homes. This shift in living situation can provide meaningful relief and improved functionality for those grappling with the physical impacts of their condition.

## The Strain of Multi-Level Homes:

Navigating a multi-level home can be an arduous task for someone with arthritis. Going up and down stairs multiple times a day puts significant strain on the joints, often exacerbating pain and inflammation. Something as simple as grabbing an item from the upstairs bedroom or making trips to the laundry room downstairs can become an ordeal. The physical toll of climbing stairs is compounded by the risk of falls. Arthritis can compromise balance and mobility, making staircases a dangerous obstacle. Falling on stairs can lead to serious injuries that may require hospitalization and lengthy recoveries—an outcome arthritis patients understandably aim to avoid. Beyond the safety concerns, the energy required to traverse stairs in a multi-level home leaves many arthritis sufferers feeling fatigued and unable to fully enjoy their living space. This can negatively impact their overall wellness and mental health.

## The Benefits of Single-Story Living:

In contrast, single-story homes provide a welcomed respite from the physical challenges of multi-level living. With everything on one floor, arthritic individuals can move about their living space with greater ease and reduced joint strain. Eliminating stairs removes a major barrier to mobility and independence. This accessibility allows arthritis patients to conserve their energy for other daily activities. Rather than devoting significant effort to getting up and down stairs, they can channel that physical capacity into hobbies, errands, and quality time with loved ones. Reduced exertion can translate to less pain, stiffness, and fatigue over the course of the day. Single-story homes also tend to have wider hallways and doorways, providing ample room for mobility aids like walkers and wheelchairs if needed. This enhanced maneuverability makes it simpler for arthritic individuals to navigate their living



environment comfortably and safely. Additionally, downsizing to a single level often means a smaller overall footprint. This can make cleaning and maintaining the home less physically taxing—an important consideration for those dealing with joint inflammation and discomfort.

## Making the Transition:

For arthritis patients contemplating a move to a single-story home, there are several factors to weigh. Cost is certainly a key consideration, as smaller homes in desirable locations can come with a premium price tag. However, the potential improvements to quality of life may outweigh the financial trade-offs for many. It's also important to carefully evaluate the home's layout and accessibility features. Wider doors, spacious bathrooms, and open floor plans are all beneficial attributes. Some single-story homes may require renovations to make them truly arthritis-friendly, so budgeting for those updates is crucial. Ultimately, the decision to downsize should be a personalized one based on the individual's specific arthritis symptoms, lifestyle needs, and financial situation. But for those struggling with the physical demands of a multi-level home, the shift to single-story living could be a game-changer in managing their condition and preserving their independence. As the arthritis epidemic continues to grow, more and more patients are likely to recognize the value of downsizing. By prioritizing accessibility and functionality in their living spaces, they can take a meaningful step towards improved comfort, mobility, and overall well-being.



## David Culbreth

Senior Transitions Specialist, Realtor, SRES

I am a native Floridian with deep roots in the greater Marion County area. I have a strong passion for helping and serving others that was cultivated during my early years working in the hospitality industry. I have carried that same dedication to superior service with me into the real estate profession.

Over time, through both professional and personal experiences, I've developed a strong desire to assist seniors in any way I can. This desire inspired me to obtain my Seniors Real Estate Specialist designation. I believe seniors have paved the way for us, and we owe them a debt of gratitude for their decades of hard work and the ways they have shaped our experiences and country.

In my real estate practice, I'm committed to helping seniors downsize and transition into the next phase of their lives. I also take great pride in assisting families in finding their dream homes, as well as helping individuals expand their real estate portfolios. While I may be self-employed, my clients are my absolute highest priority. I work diligently on their behalf, ensuring their needs and goals are met with the utmost care and professionalism.



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# Stress Management Tips from Quick Care Urgent Care

If you have bouts of anxiety, stress, fear and nervousness, you're not alone. Stress and anxiety are a normal part of life and usually short-lived, but for 40 million Americans, it's a daily battle. Whether it's anxiety due to biological, psychosocial, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), the treatment options usually include behavioral therapy, counseling, and various prescription medications that block or dull different areas of the brain.

The typical treatment options for anxiety, stress and depression are medications and counseling therapy. Some of the most common drug classes prescribed are selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors, tricyclic antidepressants, and monoamine oxidase inhibitors. Widely known drugs, like Prozac, Zoloft, and Cymbalta effect how neurotransmitters affect the mood by lessening anxiety levels and creating a more serene outlook on life.

Medications are not always the best choice for all individuals and many people pair alternative methods with anti-anxiety drugs or alone to help stave off stressful episodes.

### Take Time for Yourself

It might be difficult, but carving out time to relax, take a bath, take a walk or simply shut yourself in the a separate room for 10 minutes to do deep breathing exercises can reduce anxiety significantly and over time, you will most likely notice that these personal care methods will help you to become calmer throughout the day.

### Get Moving

Talk with your physician about the right exercise plan for you. Most people can benefit from taking a brisk 30-minute walk or a 30-minute swim. Exercise increases circulation, reduces stress, it also improves nutrient and oxygen

rich blood flow, and helps you build strength and to lose weight. If you can work out harder, it's extremely beneficial to get your heart rate up daily with cardiovascular exercise.

### Meditation

Yoga helps to improve flexibility, blood flow, muscle strength, posture, immune function, bone health, decreases depressive episodes, and can regulate blood pressure. Meditation also reduces stress, reduces anxiety, promotes emotional wellbeing, can help fight addictions, can generate health and improve immune function. it can stave off memory disorders and increase neuronal plasticity.

In order to overcome stress and pain, we need a well-rounded treatment protocol that incorporates, medication (if necessary), stress management, nutrition, exercise, meditation, hormone balancing and other therapies that can help to stabilize our systems.

Quick Care Urgent Care offers more than just urgent care services, and they are preparing to add much more to their already vast list of therapies and services for the Ocala community!

### Quick Care Med Urgent Care

If your health needs are not emergent and in need of life-saving measures, the benefit of urgent care in comparison are numerous. To name a few, the wait time will be much shorter. For the most part, urgent care can see their patients within an hour. The cost is also much less with urgent care than it is with emergency room treatment. Quick Care Med urgent care provides you with the proper paperwork to follow up with your primary care physician or specialist, as urgent care takes initiatives to keep the line of communication open to make certain that your treatment is a top priority.

There are numerous reasons people go to urgent care, from sore throats, skin infections, school sports physicals, vaccinations, colds and flu, sprains, heat exhaustion, animal bites, dehydration, broken bones and much more. Before you go to the ER, consider if you could instead be treated at urgent care because of the numerous benefits to you and your loved ones.

**Quick Care Med Walk-In Clinic & Urgent Care** is a comprehensive urgent care clinic with multiple specialties to serve you. Quick Care Med has locations in Marion (Dunnellon and Ocala), Citrus (Crystal River, Inverness, Beverly Hills, and Homosassa), Levy (Williston), & Alachua (Newberry) counties, plus our newest location in Chiefland that provides immediate walk-in treatment to pediatric and adult patients for illnesses and injuries, wellness exams, and employer health services.

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- 6341 N US 441, Ocala, FL 34475  
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# PROMOTING MEN'S HEALTH: SEPTEMBER IS PROSTATE CANCER AWARENESS AND SEXUAL WELLNESS MONTH

September marks two important health observances: Prostate Cancer Awareness Month and Sexual Health Month. This dual focus provides an excellent opportunity to highlight the interconnected nature of prostate health and sexual well-being, while encouraging men to take proactive steps in managing their overall health.

## Prostate Cancer Awareness Month

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers affecting men worldwide. In the United States alone, it's estimated that about one in eight men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during their lifetime. This month-long campaign aims to increase public awareness about the disease, promote early detection, and support those affected by prostate cancer.

The prostate is a small gland located below the bladder that plays a crucial role in male reproductive health. As men age, the risk of developing prostate cancer increases, making regular screenings essential for early detection and successful treatment.

Key aspects of prostate cancer awareness include:

- 1. Risk factors:** Age, family history, and ethnicity can influence a man's likelihood of developing prostate cancer. African American men and those with a family history of the disease are at higher risk.
- 2. Symptoms:** Early-stage prostate cancer often has no symptoms. As the disease progresses, men may experience difficulty urinating, blood in urine or semen, erectile dysfunction, or bone pain.
- 3. Screening:** Regular prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood tests and digital rectal exams (DRE) can help detect prostate cancer in its early stages when it's most treatable.
- 4. Treatment options:** Depending on the cancer's stage and aggressiveness, treatments may include active surveillance, surgery, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, or chemotherapy.
- 5. Lifestyle factors:** Maintaining a healthy diet, regular exercise, and avoiding smoking may help reduce the risk of developing prostate cancer.

## Sexual Health Month

Sexual Health Month focuses on promoting overall sexual well-being, addressing both physical and emotional aspects of sexuality. This observance encourages open conversations about sexual health, emphasizing the importance of education, prevention, and seeking medical care when needed.

Key areas of focus for Sexual Health Month include:

- 1. Safe sex practices:** Promoting the use of barrier methods like condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies.
- 2. Regular STI testing:** Encouraging routine screening for STIs, especially for sexually active individuals or those with multiple partners.
- 3. Consent and healthy relationships:** Fostering discussions about the importance of mutual consent and respect in sexual relationships.
- 4. Reproductive health:** Addressing issues related to fertility, contraception, and family planning.
- 5. Sexual dysfunction:** Raising awareness about common sexual health issues like erectile dysfunction, low libido, and premature ejaculation, and encouraging men to seek medical advice when needed.

## The Intersection of Prostate Health and Sexual Well-being

Prostate health and sexual function are closely linked, making it crucial to address both aspects simultaneously. Prostate cancer and its treatments can significantly impact a man's sexual health, potentially leading to issues such as erectile dysfunction or reduced libido.

Conversely, maintaining good sexual health can contribute to overall prostate health. Regular ejaculation has been associated with a reduced risk of prostate cancer in some studies, although more research is needed to fully understand this relationship.

## Taking Action for Better Health

As we observe both Prostate Cancer Awareness Month and Sexual Health Month, men are encouraged to take the following steps:

- 1. Schedule a check-up:** Book an appointment with a healthcare provider to discuss prostate cancer screening and overall sexual health.
- 2. Stay informed:** Educate yourself about prostate cancer risk factors, symptoms, and prevention strategies.
- 3. Practice safe sex:** Use barrier methods and get regular STI testing to protect your sexual health.
- 4. Communicate openly:** Discuss any concerns about sexual health or prostate issues with your partner and healthcare provider.
- 5. Adopt a healthy lifestyle:** Maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and avoid harmful habits like smoking.
- 6. Support others:** Reach out to friends and family members who may be affected by prostate cancer or experiencing sexual health issues.

## Conclusion

September's dual focus on prostate cancer awareness and sexual health serves as a vital reminder of the importance of men's overall well-being. By addressing these interconnected aspects of health, we can work towards reducing the impact of prostate cancer and improving sexual wellness for men of all ages.

As individuals, healthcare providers, and communities, we must continue to promote open dialogue, encourage regular check-ups, and support those affected by prostate cancer or sexual health issues. By doing so, we can create a healthier, more informed society that prioritizes men's health and well-being throughout the year.



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# COSMETIC DENTISTRY IS MORE THAN A PRETTY SMILE

By Richard W. Rozensky, DDS, D.ABDSM

**C**osmetic dentistry, also known as esthetic dentistry, is the method of dentistry that improves a patient's smile and self-image. Having a beautiful smile and strong teeth are essential for aesthetics and overall health. An attractive smile, or lack thereof, affects your oral health. Self-confidence and how the world perceives you on the outside are important to our mental health. This is because a person's smile is usually the first feature anyone notices.

Esthetic procedures include dental veneers and teeth whitening. Dental crowns, dental bonding, dental implants, inlays and onlays, and dentures are all restorative dental treatments. Dental veneers are the most requested treatment because they can correct tooth discoloration, teeth crowding, and teeth gaps.

## DENTAL VENEERS

Dental veneers are a popular method of correcting tooth imperfections such as misalignment, gaps, stains, and minor chipping. Made of a strong porcelain material designed for long-term wear, they can also reshape teeth and create beautifully symmetrical smiles that look and feel natural. Properly cared for, porcelain veneers can last for decades.

## TEETH WHITENING

Professional teeth whitening is a safe, effective, non-invasive, and long-lasting cosmetic option. With laser teeth whitening, you can see results in one treatment here in our Laurel Manor Dental and SleepCare office. Another option is to whiten your teeth at home. Your custom home whitening kit includes specialized trays that will be customized to fit over your teeth. We provide professional-grade whitening gel to insert into your tray before wearing it. Your dentist will tell you how long to wear the tray each day, and you will have a bright white smile within two to four weeks.

## DENTAL CROWNS

Dental crowns are caps placed on top of damaged teeth. Crowns are used to protect, cover, and restore the shape of your teeth when fillings don't solve the problem. Dental crowns can be made from metals, porcelain, resin, and ceramics. They typically don't require special care over time other than regular good oral hygiene. As we age, our teeth can get damaged. This can happen for a variety of reasons, like tooth decay, injuries, or just regular use. Your teeth can lose their shape or size. Think of the cap as a snug hat for your tooth. The crown restores the tooth's shape, size, strength, and appearance. The dental crown is cemented into place on your tooth, and it covers the visible portion of the tooth.

## DENTAL BONDING

Dental bonding, sometimes called composite bonding or teeth bonding, is a procedure where your dentist applies tooth-colored resin material to the affected teeth to change their shape, size, or color. Dental bonding is less

painful than other treatments because your dentist won't be working anywhere close to the pain-sensing nerve inside your tooth. In most cases, anesthesia isn't even necessary during dental bonding. Dental bonding is the most cost-effective and fastest fix of cosmetic imperfections. However, dental bonding isn't as stain resistant as porcelain crowns or veneers and can chip and crack over time with normal wear and tear.

## DENTAL IMPLANTS

Dental implants are artificial tooth roots that provide a permanent base for fixed, replacement teeth. Implants are a long-term solution for people who suffer from missing teeth, failing teeth, or chronic dental problems. Implants can be one tooth or a group of teeth depending on need. Because they fit, function, and feel like natural teeth, dental implants are the gold standard in tooth replacement. Doctors use a titanium anchor screw that over time, fuses to the living bone cells of the jaw. This union forms a strong and durable anchor for your new teeth, meaning there's no slippage movement. This makes implants more secure than dentures. Eating with dental implants is also more secure and sanitary than dentures because they are not removable.

## INLAYS AND ONLAYS

Inlays and onlays are indirect dental restorations. They are made outside of your mouth in a laboratory. An inlay or onlay is typically used when a cavity is too large for a simple filling. Inlays and onlays can be made of gold, composite, or ceramic materials. Inlays and onlays are more resistant to fractures and damage than traditional cavity fillings, stain-resistant and durable.

## DENTURES

Dentures are an affordable tooth replacement option for those who are not a good candidate for implants. Dentures provide facial support, improved nutrition, and improved confidence. Dentures can be a full set or a partial that replaces a group of teeth generally from an injury. Some dentures are designed to improve a person's bite, eliminating headaches, jaw pain, and other TMJ symptoms. The bases of most removable dentures today are made of polymethylmethacrylate (PMMA) and the teeth themselves can be made of PMMA or ceramic material like that used for porcelain veneers.

## WHY CHOOSE LAUREL MANOR DENTAL AND SLEEP CARE?

In addition to our experienced and caring team, we feel that our advanced technology makes Laurel Manor Dental and SleepCare the top choice for your dental needs. We carefully choose the latest dental tech and tools to increase patient comfort and expand our ability to provide advanced dentistry to our patients.

*In our practice, we utilize the following technology:*

- **iTero Scanner** — The iTero Scanner is a small handheld device that allows us to capture a full 3D image of your teeth and gums. The sharp images mean we can get a better picture of any issues and track any changes in your oral health with a detailed view.
- **Digital Impressions** — No more gooey impressions! Digital impressions also provide more detailed information and a speedier turnaround time in the creation of restorations.
- **Digital X-rays** — Digital radiographs reduce the patient's exposure to radiation while giving the dental team sharper, clearer images that are produced almost instantaneously.
- **Cone Beam 3D Imaging** — Using cone beam technology, we can map underlying bone structure, nerve pathways, and soft tissue for more detailed treatment planning.
- **Intraoral Camera** — The intraoral camera puts you in the driver's seat. You can see exactly what the doctor sees, allowing the doctor to explain your treatment plan tooth by tooth.

Laurel Manor Dental and SleepCare is not only qualified but is a Medicare approved provider as well. If you have Sleep Apnea, consider improving your health and your quality of life. Your body and mind will thank you!

### Meet Dr. Rozensky

As a Diplomate of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine and recognized as a qualified dentist by the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine, Dr. Rozensky earned his Doctorate of Dental Surgery degree from University of New York at Buffalo and then went on to serve our country in the United States Air Force, after which he has enjoyed private practice in General Dentistry for over 20 years. Dr. Rozensky now includes his passion for Sleep Dentistry in his practice and finds true joy in the life changing care he is providing.

At Laurel Manor Dental and SleepCare, Dr. Richard Rozensky and the entire team work closely with you so that you may make informed decisions about your health. In addition to sleep dentistry, all aspects of general dental care and treatment including restorative, cosmetic, implant restoration, hygiene and Invisalign™ are provided.

From the moment you step in the door you will feel at ease. You will be welcomed by a warm and inviting atmosphere, combined with a professional and caring team. You will immediately recognize the emphasis on professionalism and quality, from the people who care for you to the technology used—this is the way dental care should be!

*Laurel Manor Dental/Laurel Manor SleepCare*

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# Hope and Optimism

By Pastor Timothy L. Neptune

**H**ope is confidence in God...not wishful thinking. To have hope is to trust in God to meet our needs...even in the midst of difficult times. When we do go through tough times our confidence in God can get a little rattled, as the Old Testament figure Job experienced. In the midst of his pain and heartache he cried out, "Where then is my hope? Who can see any hope for me?" (Job. 17:15)

Ultimately, hope comes from God. The Scriptures say, "May the God of hope fill you all with joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13) Hope is an essential element of the Christian's life. In 1 Corinthians 13 the Apostle Paul included hope as one of the top three qualities of a person's life: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13)

As followers of Christ, we are called to be dispensers of hope. We should exude a confidence and trust in God that demonstrates that we have hope. Yet I pose the question, "Can a person be filled with hope without being filled with optimism?" According to the encyclopedia, optimism is "to anticipate the best possible outcome." Can we demonstrate hope in God without anticipating the best possible outcomes of the situations we face?

I believe we can. In fact, I think hope is best exemplified when it is demonstrated in the face of negative circumstances. There are many times when hope and optimism go hand in hand. David had both when he faced Goliath. He had confidence in God and he expected the best possible outcomes...Goliath's defeat and an Israelite victory over the Philistines. And yet, there are many examples of people who had hope in God but did not anticipate the best possible outcomes.

Simon Peter is a good example. He and the disciples had been fishing all night and had caught nothing. They had worked so hard and yet still had nothing to show for their labors. And then Jesus tells them to cast out the net one more time. Simon did not expect to catch any fish. He was pessimistic. But, he had confidence in Jesus, so he cast the net. Though the circumstances did not look promising, his hope in God made up for his lack of optimism.

Esther is another good example. She had confidence that God would ultimately provide deliverance for the Jews but as she prepared to go before the King she said, "...I will go to the king, which is against the law; and if I perish, I perish!" (Esther 4:16) She demonstrated hope but not necessarily optimism.

The point is this: hope and optimism are not the same thing. You can still be hopeful even if you are not optimistic. You can still be a dispenser of hope even if you think you are going to face hard times ahead because you know that God will meet your needs.



Jesus didn't sound very optimistic when he said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation (a rather pessimistic view); but be of good cheer (maintain your hope), I have overcome the world (which is the basis of our hope)." (John 16:33)

Hope doesn't mean that the best possible situations will always occur, but it does mean that in some way God will bring something good or useful out of the situation. As we look into the future, we may not always be filled with optimism, but we must always be filled with hope...God is still in control!

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