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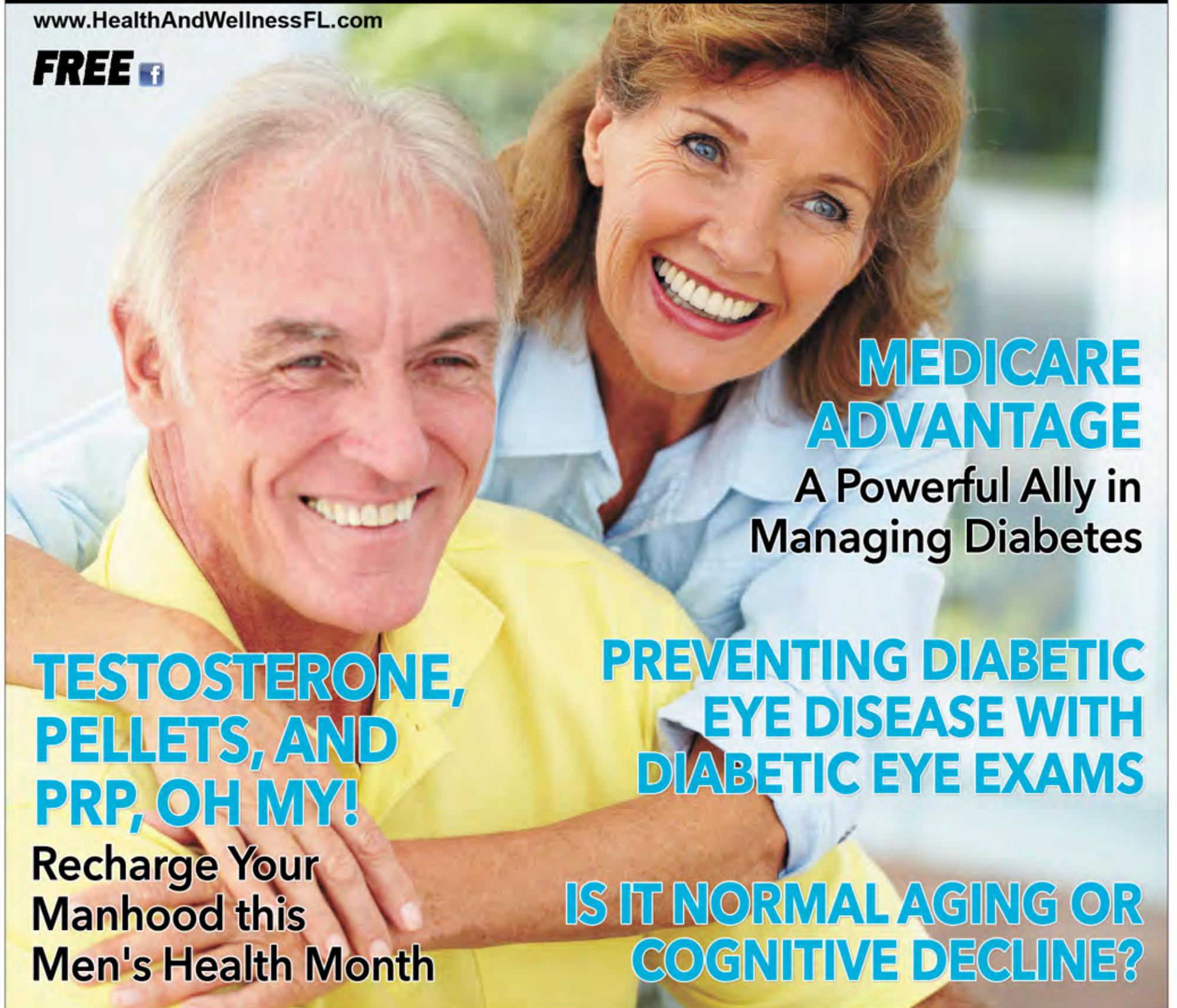
# Health & Wellness<sup>®</sup> MAGAZINE

November 2024

Lake/Sumter Edition - Monthly

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# PREVENTING DIABETIC EYE DISEASE WITH DIABETIC EYE EXAMS

**N**ovember is Diabetic Eye Disease Awareness Month, drawing into focus how diabetes impacts the risk of developing certain eye diseases. Understanding these risks and being proactive in your own care can make a big difference in preventing, delaying and managing diabetic eye disease. First, let's look at the various eye conditions that can affect those with diabetes.

## WHAT IS DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

Diabetic eye disease isn't a single disease, but rather refers to a group of eye conditions that include:

**1. Diabetic Retinopathy** – The most common form of diabetic eye disease, diabetic retinopathy occurs when high blood sugar levels damage the blood vessels in the retina, which is the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. In its early stage, called non-proliferative retinopathy (NDPR), weak blood vessels in the retina may leak, causing swelling of the macula, the part of the retina that processes central vision. In its advanced stage, proliferative retinopathy (PDR), new and abnormal blood vessels emerge. These vessels are fragile and prone to bleeding, which can damage vision.

Roughly 1/3 of people with diabetes can develop diabetic retinopathy, making it the #1 cause of blindness among working-age adults. Early diagnosis and intervention are crucial to preventing vision loss.

**2. Diabetic Macular Edema (DME)** – DME is a result of diabetic retinopathy, where fluid builds up in the eye, including under the macula, causing it to swell and thicken, distorting central vision. Central vision is needed to read, drive, watch TV, even recognize faces.

## 3. Associated Eye Conditions

- **Cataracts** – Although anyone can get a cataract, people with diabetes are 2-5 times more likely to develop them, often at an earlier age than non-diabetics.
- **Glaucoma** – Diabetes can double your risk of developing open-angle glaucoma. Having high blood sugar also increases the chance of developing neovascular glaucoma, wherein new, weak blood vessels in the eye block the drainage system, placing pressure on the optic nerve. In addition, having proliferative diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of this vision-robbing disease.



## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

What's particularly frightening about diabetic eye diseases is that in their early stages, they often produce no symptoms at all. Once they progress, however, they can cause symptoms like:

- Blurred vision
- Spots or dark strings floating in vision (floaters)
- Dark or blank areas in vision
- Difficulty distinguishing colors
- Vision loss

## WHAT CAUSES DIABETIC EYE DISEASE?

The main cause of diabetic eye disease is prolonged high blood sugar levels, which damage retinal blood vessels. Things that increase your risk of developing one or more of these diseases include: having prolonged diabetes, poor blood sugar control, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and smoking. Being Black, Hispanic or Native American also increases this risk.

## PREVENTING AND MANAGING DIABETIC EYE DISEASE

You can reduce your risk of developing diabetic eye disease, and slow its progression by following these guidelines:

**1. Get Regular Diabetic Eye Exams** – One of the most important ways to help prevent diabetic eye diseases from damaging your vision is through annual comprehensive eye exams. Early detection and treatment are crucial in preventing vision loss. In fact, early discovery of diabetic eye disease can reduce the risk of related severe vision loss by as much as 95%!

Because conditions like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma often develop stealthily, regular diabetic eye exams are used to detect early signs of disease before symptoms arise. Most people with diabetes should see their eye doctor at least once a year. People with existing diabetic retinopathy or other problems may need more frequent visits. Follow your eye doctor's recommendations.

Your eye exam will include some or all of the following:

- **Visual Acuity Testing:** This assesses how well you can see at various distances to help detect changes in vision over time.
- **Dilation:** A dilated exam allows your doctor to closely examine your optic nerve and retina for changes or early signs of damage, such as bulging, leaking or bleeding blood vessels, swelling, or neovascularization (abnormal development of new blood vessels).
- **Tonometry:** This test measures intraocular pressure to screen for glaucoma.
- **Advanced Testing:** In some cases, the exam may also include advanced procedures such as digital retinal imaging or optical coherence tomography (OCT) for exceptionally detailed images of the retinas.

**2. Manage Blood Glucose** – Keeping blood sugar levels under control is essential in preventing damage to the blood vessels in the retina. Regular blood sugar monitoring and keeping HbA1c levels within target range can stop or slow the progression of eye disease.



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Vow to:

- Take medications as prescribed
- Monitor blood sugar levels frequently

**3. Regulate Blood Pressure and Cholesterol Levels** – High blood pressure and cholesterol can exacerbate damage to the eyes' blood vessels. Managing elevated conditions through lifestyle changes and medication, if needed, can help protect your vision, as well as your heart.

**4. Make Healthier Choices** – Supporting healthy vision means being mindful of your lifestyle choices. Luckily, these choices can improve your overall health, too.

- **Get in More Steps** – Get moving at least 30 minutes, 5 times a week. Whether it's walking, dancing, swimming, golfing, gardening, yoga or playing pickleball, regular movement improves circulation, supports the immune system, and helps manage blood sugar.
- **Maintain a Healthy Weight** – Unless otherwise instructed by your doctor, try choosing more plant-based choices like whole fruit (not juice), especially low-GI fruits like avocados, bell peppers, berries, apples, pears, and kiwi. Enjoy the full spectrum of vegetables. Look for minimally-processed whole grain products without added sugar. If you're on a low-carb diet, talk to your doctor about what healthy choices will complement your eating plan.
- **Quit smoking** – If you have tried quitting before and failed, even a dozen times, don't be discouraged. Talk to your doctor about new smoking cessation methods, which are helping more and more people quit, even if they have smoked for decades.
- **Limit Alcohol Consumption** – While many people with diabetes can drink alcohol in moderation, alcohol can affect how your body uses blood sugar, resulting in either low or high blood sugar. It may also interfere with diabetes medication, particularly oral medication. Talk to your doctor about whether it's safe for you to consume alcohol.

**5. Seek Timely Treatment** – If your eye doctor detects signs of diabetic retinopathy, prompt treatment can help prevent serious and permanent vision loss. Treatments may include laser therapy to seal leaking vessels, injections of anti-VEGF drugs or corticosteroids to reduce swelling and slow disease progression, or, in very advanced cases, surgical procedures like vitrectomy.

Remember, most eye diseases have no symptoms at first, so never ignore any visual disturbances, even if they seem minor. Once symptoms appear, they may be a sign that a disease is progressing. Stopping eye disease before it has a chance to get worse can save your vision from permanent loss. Always seek prompt attention if any vision changes occur.

#### DIABETIC EYE EXAMS FROM LAKE EYE

Diabetic eye disease prevention begins with awareness and regularly scheduled professional care. The friendly, experienced doctors of Lake Eye (a US Eye company) provide comprehensive eye exams, guidance on eye-smart lifestyle choices, and the latest medical interventions designed to help prevent and slow diabetic eye disease and preserve vision.

If you're living with diabetes and haven't had an eye exam in a year or more, contact us today at **1-888-873-9348**. One simple call can help ensure your vision remains healthy, clear, and ready for all of life's adventures.

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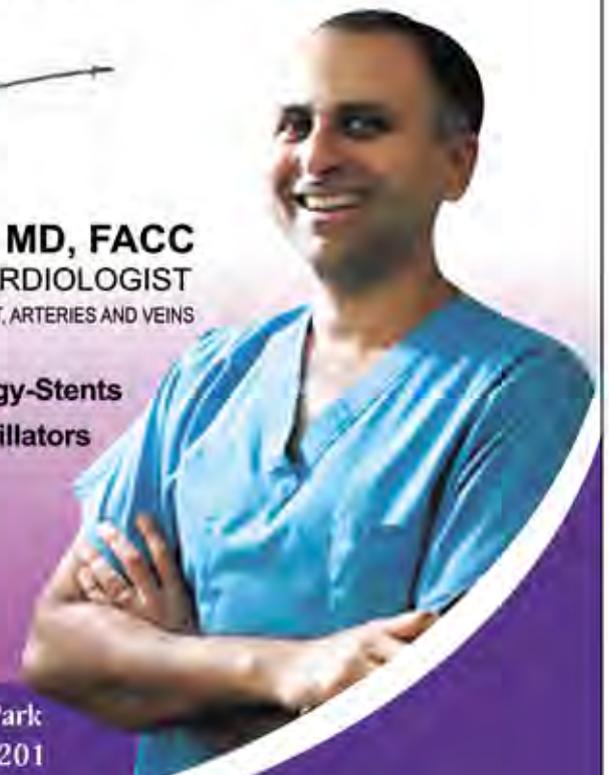
When you come to see me... that's exactly who you will see. I will take your health personally. That is why I am the only doctor you will see when you come to my office. I will take time with you and get to know you personally. No patient of mine will ever have to see an associate or undergo needless testing. I will know which tests are needed and which aren't. I will watch over you and treat you as I want to be treated when, one day, I am the patient and not the doctor. And that is my promise to you.



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# Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) & Your Heart Health

**N**early 24 Million Americans have COPD, and large number of them are over the age of 40 and have a history of smoking or being subjected to respiratory irritants such as chemicals and pollutants. COPD is a disease that is encompassed by chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma, causing shortness of breath, productive coughing and inflammation of the airways. It is a progressive lung disease with no cure. Most patients are put on steroids (oral and inhaled), bronchodilators and antibiotics.

Individuals with COPD often have incidents of fluid build-up, which can make it difficult for them to breath. They frequently feel as if they are drowning and call 911 often due to this terrifying sensation. This is why it's important to speak to your physician about your COPD treatment and the best at home care techniques to keep you safe and comfortable.

Having a disorder like COPD is challenging with continual progressive changes and side effects. Talking to your physician about any fluctuations in your health or symptoms is critical.

#### COPD Symptoms

- Coughing
- Producing phlegm
- Wheezing
- Shortness of breath with normal activity
- Blue tinge to fingernails
- Fatigue

#### The COPD and Cardiac Connection

Both disease states are linked systemically to chronic inflammation in the body. Most individuals are unaware of the fat that they have chronic inflammation, because it's not typically something they can see and what they feel, they often ignore as general aging complaints like stiffness, brain fog, high blood pressure or high lipid levels, diabetes, etc. These issues are what lead to the vast amount of people that have comorbidities.

Patients with COPD have fluid retention, which is also attributed to cardiac issues, and can exacerbate cardiovascular conditions. For both sets of conditions diet is a critical component. Making sure that low sodium, low sugar and carbohydrates are minimal in the diet is helpful to lessen the effects of the inflammatory response. Exercise is also important but should be monitored and discussed with your physician.



The health of the heart and vascular system are affected by many things like, stress, substance abuse and genetics, but the main offenders of heart disorders are being overweight, poor dietary habits, having high blood sugar levels and living a sedentary lifestyle.

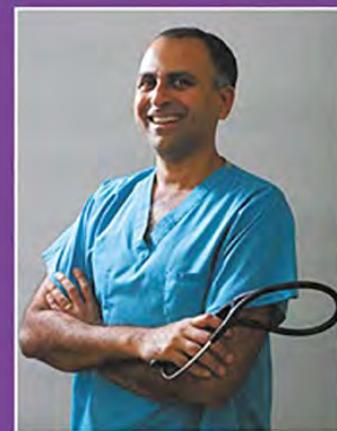
Depending on the stage of the COPD, some patients might need to consider home health care or private duty nursing. When under home health care, their team of nurses and medical director can prevent these readmissions to the hospital by several means. The medical team can prescribe medications to block fluid build-up, have a daily vital reading monitored by a home health program, and have specialists help with understanding nutrition, and how to keep calm and learn to breathe more functionally through the episodes. Your physician is still in charge of your medical care, and all reports from the home health team are reported to your primary care doctor.

Talking to you primary care physician or cardiologist about diagnostic testing, lab work, medication management, and lifestyle changes is critical for your quality of life when dealing with COPD, heart issues or any other health changes or conditions that you might be experiencing.

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# FLIGHT GUIDELINES POST-VEIN TREATMENT: WHEN IS IT SAFE TO FLY?

## How Soon Can You Fly After Vein Treatment?

Traveling after vein treatment can raise concerns about deep vein thrombosis (DVT), a potentially serious complication. The prolonged sitting involved in flying or long car rides can impair venous flow in the legs, which is already a risk factor for DVT. When combined with recent vein treatment, this risk can increase. To minimize the chance of developing a DVT, it's important to follow medical advice and take preventive measures after your procedure. At the Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center, our experts prioritize your safety and will guide you through your recovery process.

## What Is Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT)?

Deep vein thrombosis is a condition where a blood clot forms in one of the deep veins, most commonly in the legs. DVT can lead to swelling, pain, and other complications. The primary concern is that a clot may break off and travel to the lungs, causing a pulmonary embolism, a life-threatening situation. While the risk of developing DVT post-vein treatment is low, air travel can increase this risk due to restricted movement and decreased blood flow.

## How Long Should You Wait to Fly After Varicose Vein Procedures

We recommend waiting at least 7 days before flying or taking long car trips after minimally invasive vein treatments. This precaution allows your body time to heal and return to its pre-treatment baseline risk of DVT. While modern vein therapies are highly effective and safe, giving your body this recovery window is essential for reducing potential complications.

## Why Air Travel Increases DVT Risk

Long periods of sitting—whether on an airplane or during a car ride—can cause sluggish venous flow, increasing the chance of blood clots. A study published by the CDC found that air travelers on flights lasting 4 hours or longer have a 2-3 times higher risk of DVT. Though the risk remains small, combining this with recent vein treatment necessitates extra caution.

## Tips for Safe Travel After Vein Treatment

If you need to fly soon after your vein procedure, follow these tips to lower your risk of DVT and keep your legs healthy during travel:

### 1. Wear Compression Socks

Compression socks help improve blood flow by applying gentle pressure to your legs. These socks



are designed to have graduated pressure, meaning the tightest point is at the ankle, and the pressure decreases up the leg. Wearing compression socks during long trips helps reduce venous stasis (sluggish blood flow) and prevent blood clots. According to a 2018 study published in *The Lancet*, wearing compression socks can decrease the risk of DVT in travelers by up to 65%.

### 2. Hydrate Properly

Staying hydrated is crucial for healthy blood flow. Dehydration can thicken the blood, making clots more likely to form. While it may be tempting to limit water intake to avoid frequent bathroom trips during travel, proper hydration helps maintain optimal circulation and reduces the risk of DVT.

### 3. Stay Active

Movement is key to preventing blood clots. If you're on a flight, try to get up and walk the aisle every hour, or at least whenever the seatbelt sign is off. Walking activates your calf muscles, helping the blood in your legs flow more efficiently back to your heart. If walking isn't possible, perform simple in-seat exercises like heel raises to keep the calf muscles engaged and promote circulation.

### 4. Avoid Tight Clothing

Tight clothing can constrict blood flow, especially around the waist and legs. Opt for loose, comfortable clothing to prevent restricting your circulation during travel.

## Safe Travels

Taking a trip after vein treatment requires careful planning to ensure you avoid complications like DVT. By waiting at least 7 days post-procedure and following key preventive strategies—such as wearing compression socks, staying hydrated, and moving regularly—you can significantly reduce your risk. Consult with your vein specialist for personalized advice based on your health status and travel plans.

## Get support for your veins and circulation problems today.

You may need medical treatment for your veins, and the Central Florida Vein and Vascular Center wants to help. Contact us today to learn more about our services and how we can help you live better. Our board-certified Vascular Surgeons and Phlebologists specialize in minimally invasive vein therapy.

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# TIS' THE SEASON FOR GIFTING

Often times it may not feel like the holiday season with Florida's toasty temperatures, but don't be fooled. The holidays are here! There's an undeniable sense of anticipation in the air, as many of us are looking forward to reconnecting with friends and family.

With Christmas 2024 just around the corner, the age-old tradition of exchanging gifts and spreading joy takes center stage. This year, however, there's a growing trend that savvy shoppers are embracing – the art of shopping early. Beyond the twinkling lights and bustling holiday markets, the wisdom of starting your Christmas shopping ahead of time becomes evident. As we navigate through a world of ever-changing dynamics, early holiday shopping not only ensures access to the finest gifts but also offers a respite from the last-minute chaos, allowing for a more thoughtful and enjoyable celebration.



## 2024 Gifting Trends

It seems many friends and family have been under a lot of stress from the recent hurricanes, the election season and the economy. So this year, give something they can really use that is around improving wellness and mindfulness. Think self care, aromatherapy, meditation, journaling and even fitness. The great thing about wellness gifts is that they are perfect for people of all ages and enjoyed by both men and women alike.

Young children will enjoy a set of fizzy bath bombs. Your best friend will appreciate a carefully curated bath set. You can't go wrong with an aromatic collection of soaps or essential oils for a coworker. And, your significant other will love a set of comfy pajamas or muscle massagers for after a workout at the gym.



## Avoid the Sweets & Drinks

Traditionally, alcohol and sweets such as chocolate and cookies, have been the "go to" gifts for clients and family members. They're easy to give, but often times they're eaten and forgotten. Or, they're simply trashed when New Year's Day rolls around, and people are purging their kitchens of all the calorie-laden gift sets. Let's face it, many of us have put on some "lb's", so do everyone a favor and skip the sweets and choose health & wellness options.

## Give Experiences

Another gift idea that is on trend for 2024 is experiential gifts. This could be a trip to the spa for a relaxing massage, a facial with your local esthetician, a sunset boat cruise or an art class. Experiential gifts are memorable, and they're perfect for the person in your life who already has one of everything.

## Shop Local

Although it's tempting to knock-out your list by simply shopping online, consider visiting the locally-owned stores in your community. Many small businesses and



restaurants have struggled the past few years. By shopping local, you'll find truly unique gifts with a delightful shopping experience that you can't get online. Plus, you'll be supporting the fabric and diversity of your community by helping to keep local shops in business.



*Skip the holiday hustle this year. Make your list. Check it twice. And get your holiday shopping done!*



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# Medicare Advantage: A POWERFUL ALLY IN MANAGING DIABETES

Samuel Alfano, D.O.

## Take Control of Your Diabetes with Medicare Advantage

**L**iving with diabetes can be challenging, but you don't have to face it alone. Medicare Advantage plans offer comprehensive support designed to help you manage your diabetes and live a healthier, more fulfilling life.

### Why Choose Medicare Advantage for Diabetes Care?

Medicare Advantage plans are packed with benefits that go beyond Original Medicare. These plans offer personalized care and resources tailored to meet your specific health needs, especially when it comes to managing chronic conditions like diabetes.

### Key Benefits of Medicare Advantage for Diabetes:

#### 1. Coordinated Care for Better Health Outcomes

Medicare Advantage plans focus on coordinated care, ensuring that your healthcare providers are all on the same page. Your primary care physician, specialists, and other healthcare professionals work together to create a personalized care plan that helps you manage your diabetes effectively.

#### 2. Prescription Drug Coverage

Managing diabetes often requires medication, and Medicare Advantage plans typically include Part D prescription drug coverage. This means you'll have access to a wide range of diabetes medications at affordable prices, helping you maintain your health without breaking the bank.

#### 3. Preventative Services at No Extra Cost

Preventing complications from diabetes is key to living a long and healthy life. Medicare Advantage plans cover essential preventative services like blood sugar testing, eye exams, foot exams, and more—often at no extra cost to you. Staying on top of these services can help you avoid serious health issues down the line.

#### 4. Access to Diabetes Education and Support Programs

Knowledge is power when it comes to managing diabetes. Many Medicare Advantage plans offer access to diabetes education programs, where you



can learn about healthy eating, physical activity, and how to monitor your blood sugar. Some plans even include health coaching to provide you with personalized support and guidance.

#### 5. Additional Benefits to Keep You Healthy

Beyond diabetes care, Medicare Advantage plans often include extra benefits that can help you stay healthy overall. These may include vision, dental, and hearing care, gym memberships, and wellness programs—all designed to support your health and well-being.

#### 6. Convenience and Affordability

Medicare Advantage plans combine your Medicare Part A (Hospital Insurance), Part B (Medical Insurance), and Part D (Prescription Drug Coverage) into one convenient plan. Many plans offer lower out-of-pocket costs than Original Medicare, making it easier to manage your healthcare expenses.

### Take the Next Step Toward Better Diabetes Management

If you're living with diabetes, a Medicare Advantage plan could be the right choice for you. With

comprehensive coverage and a focus on coordinated care, these plans provide the tools and support you need to manage your condition effectively. Contact your agent to discuss your options and find a plan that fits your needs.

### Put Your Health First with VIPcare!

If you're managing diabetes or another chronic condition, VIPcare is here to help you every step of the way. Our compassionate care team, combined with the comprehensive support of Medicare Advantage plans, offers personalized solutions to keep you healthy and thriving. Don't wait—call VIPcare at 352-268-9841 and discover how we can help you better manage your diabetes and enjoy a more fulfilling, healthier life!



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# REVOLUTIONIZING KNEE PAIN TREATMENT: THE SUMMUS LASER ADVANTAGE AT LASERLAB

In the ever-evolving landscape of pain management, LaserLab stands at the forefront of innovation with its integration of the cutting-edge Summus Laser technology. This revolutionary approach to treating knee pain represents a significant advancement in non-invasive therapeutic options, offering hope to millions who struggle with chronic and acute knee conditions.

The Summus Laser system, featuring state-of-the-art Class IV laser technology, delivers precisely controlled high-power laser energy that penetrates deep into the knee joint and surrounding tissues. This advanced therapeutic approach works at the cellular level, stimulating natural healing processes while providing significant pain relief without the need for medication or surgery.

## Understanding the Technology

The Summus Laser's sophisticated delivery system utilizes specific wavelengths of light that optimize tissue penetration and cellular response. Operating at power levels up to 15 watts, this advanced system delivers therapeutic energy to depths previously unattainable with traditional laser systems. The precision-engineered beam ensures uniform distribution of energy, maximizing therapeutic benefits while maintaining patient comfort and safety.

## The Science Behind the Success

At its core, the Summus Laser therapy works through a process called photobiomodulation. This scientific breakthrough triggers a cascade of beneficial biological effects:

- Enhanced cellular energy production
- Improved blood circulation to injured areas
- Accelerated tissue repair and cell growth
- Reduced inflammation and swelling
- Natural pain relief through endorphin release
- Increased production of collagen for tissue repair

## Comprehensive Treatment Protocols

At LaserLab, the implementation of Summus Laser technology follows meticulously developed protocols tailored to each patient's specific condition. Whether treating osteoarthritis, sports injuries, or post-surgical rehabilitation, our specialists customize treatment parameters to achieve optimal outcomes. The typical treatment plan involves:



- Detailed initial assessment and diagnosis
- Customized power settings based on condition severity
- Strategic targeting of affected areas
- Progressive treatment protocols
- Regular evaluation of treatment response

## Patient Benefits and Advantages

The integration of Summus Laser therapy at LaserLab offers numerous advantages over traditional treatment methods:

1. Non-invasive treatment with no downtime
2. Immediate pain relief that builds with each session
3. Reduced need for pain medications
4. No known side effects
5. Cumulative healing benefits
6. Quick treatment sessions (typically 8-15 minutes)

## Clinical Success Stories

Our implementation of the Summus Laser has demonstrated remarkable success in treating various knee conditions. Patients report significant improvements in mobility and reduction in pain levels, often experiencing relief after just a few sessions. The technology has proven particularly effective for:

- Osteoarthritis pain management
- Sports-related injuries
- Post-surgical rehabilitation
- Chronic knee pain
- Acute injury recovery

## Looking to the Future

As LaserLab continues to pioneer advanced pain management solutions, the Summus Laser represents more than just a treatment option – it symbolizes our commitment to embracing technological innovation in the service of patient care. The system's versatility and proven effectiveness make it an invaluable tool in our comprehensive approach to knee pain management.

Our dedication to staying at the cutting edge of medical technology ensures that patients receive the most advanced and effective treatments available. The integration of the Summus Laser system reflects our understanding that the future of pain management lies in sophisticated, non-invasive solutions that promote the body's natural healing processes.

For those suffering from knee pain, LaserLab's adoption of the Summus Laser technology offers a beacon of hope. This advanced therapeutic option provides a path to pain relief and improved function without the risks associated with surgery or long-term medication use. As we continue to refine our protocols and witness the transformative results in our patients, we remain committed to leading the way in innovative pain management solutions.

LaserLab provides safe, effective, non-surgical pain relief and regenerative healthcare services. Our Pain Therapy Specialists use state-of-the-art Class IV Therapeutic Lasers to treat patients suffering from long-term pain. Our advanced laser technology reduces pain and inflammation, enhances healing, and increases circulation with no surgery, drugs, or side effects.

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# Is It Normal Aging or Cognitive Decline?

**H**ave you ever had trouble remembering where you placed your keys? Or did you forget the name of an old friend you ran into at the grocery store?

As people age, they have occasional problems retrieving information from their memory. While the person experiencing these problems might notice a slight decline, typically, the changes are so subtle that family members might not notice. Even memory tests aren't sensitive enough to catch these differences.

However, **10 to 15 percent** of Americans over 65 might develop mild cognitive impairment (MCI), which involves more frequent lapses in memory and judgment. Though MCI is sometimes caused by Alzheimer's, many other causes are reversible.

Here are some tips to tell the difference between normal aging and MCI.

## Normal aging versus cognitive decline

Memory loss caused by aging doesn't disrupt your daily life in the same way as MCI. It won't occur all the time, and the lapses won't be severe enough to affect your ability to complete everyday tasks, like remembering to take food out of the oven or driving home from work. Unlike MCI, age-related memory loss doesn't affect your ability to learn and remember new information.

## People with MCI also experience symptoms like:

- getting lost or disoriented in familiar places
- having a hard time following along with a story or conversation
- frequently missing appointments or social engagements
- difficulty with decision-making or judgment
- difficulty finishing tasks or following directions

Unlike normal aging, MCI can also lead to bouts of depression, anxiety, aggression, or apathy.

## How a doctor can help

After learning about your symptoms and taking a medical history, your doctor might be able to tell if the memory loss is age-related or something more serious. If the memory problems are frequent and disruptive, you might be diagnosed with MCI. Your doctor will run tests to determine the underlying cause and see if the issues are treatable.



Some common causes of MCI include thyroid hormone or vitamin deficiencies, metabolic problems, sleep problems, depression, and medications you may have recently started taking. Once these issues are addressed, one in four people will return to their baseline cognitive function. However, one in six cases will progress to dementia.

A PET scan, lumbar puncture, or blood test can help the doctor determine if the MCI is caused by Alzheimer's and whether you might be eligible for clinical trials or a good candidate for recently approved anti-amyloid medications. Doctors can also help you implement lifestyle changes like exercise or a healthy diet, such as the Mediterranean diet, that might help protect your brain.

For many people, memory lapses are disconcerting. If these lapses are frequent, it might be a sign of MCI. Figuring out the underlying reason for these memory problems and intervening could help your brain return to normal.

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By Thomas G. Ward, D.O.

# American Diabetes Month: FOCUSING ON EYE HEALTH

**N**ovember marks American Diabetes Month, a time to raise awareness about diabetes and its impact on millions of lives. While many associate diabetes with blood sugar levels and insulin, its effects extend far beyond, particularly to eye health. This often-overlooked aspect of diabetes management deserves our attention, as diabetic eye diseases are leading causes of vision impairment and blindness among working-age adults.

Diabetes can significantly affect eye health through various conditions collectively known as diabetic eye disease. The most common of these is diabetic retinopathy, which occurs when high blood sugar levels damage the blood vessels in the retina. This can lead to vision problems and, if left untreated, blindness. Other diabetes-related eye conditions include diabetic macular edema, cataracts, and glaucoma.

The risk of developing these eye problems increases the longer a person has diabetes. However, the good news is that with proper management and regular check-ups, many of these issues can be prevented or their progression slowed. This is why American Diabetes Month serves as a crucial reminder for those with diabetes to prioritize their eye health.

For individuals living with diabetes, maintaining good eye health starts with managing blood sugar levels. Keeping glucose levels within the target range can significantly reduce the risk of developing diabetic eye diseases or slow their progression. This involves following a balanced diet, regular exercise, and taking medications as prescribed by healthcare providers.

Regular comprehensive dilated eye exams are another critical component of preserving vision for people with diabetes. The American Diabetes Association recommends that adults with type 1 diabetes should have a comprehensive eye exam within five years of diagnosis. Those with type 2 diabetes should have an exam at the time of diagnosis. After that, everyone with diabetes should have annual eye exams, or more frequently if recommended by an eye care professional.



During these exams, an eye care specialist can detect early signs of diabetic eye disease before noticeable symptoms occur. Early detection is crucial because many treatments are most effective when started in the early stages of the disease. These treatments may include laser therapy, injections of anti-VEGF drugs, or in some cases, surgery.

It's important to note that diabetic eye diseases often develop without early warning signs. When symptoms do appear, they may include blurry vision, dark or empty areas in your vision, difficulty perceiving colors, or vision loss. If you experience any of these symptoms, it's crucial to seek immediate medical attention.

Beyond medical interventions, lifestyle choices play a significant role in maintaining eye health for people with diabetes. Quitting smoking, controlling blood pressure, and maintaining a healthy weight can all contribute to better eye health and overall diabetes management. Additionally, protecting your eyes from UV rays by wearing sunglasses and maintaining good overall hygiene can help prevent eye infections.

Nutrition also plays a vital role in eye health for people with diabetes. Foods rich in vitamins C and E, zinc, lutein, zeaxanthin, and omega-3 fatty acids can support eye health. These nutrients are found in green leafy vegetables, fish, nuts, and citrus fruits. Incorporating these foods into a diabetes-friendly diet can provide dual benefits for blood sugar control and eye health.

This American Diabetes Month, let's shine a spotlight on the importance of eye health in diabetes care. By raising awareness about the link between diabetes and eye health, we can encourage more people to take proactive steps in preserving their vision. Whether you have diabetes or know someone who does, spread the word about the importance of regular eye exams and comprehensive diabetes management.

Remember, vision loss from diabetes is often preventable with early detection and proper care. By focusing on eye health this November, we can help ensure that those living with diabetes maintain clear vision for years to come. Empowering individuals with knowledge about the connection between diabetes and eye health is a crucial step towards reducing the incidence of diabetes-related vision problems and improving overall quality of life for those affected by this condition.

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If you are experiencing any changes in your eye health, whether it is blurry vision, pain, impaired vision, or any other visual irregularities, you should see an ophthalmologist right away. The earlier a disease is detected, the better the outcome and treatment options are for you. You will find a friendly and warm environment at Retina Group of Florida.

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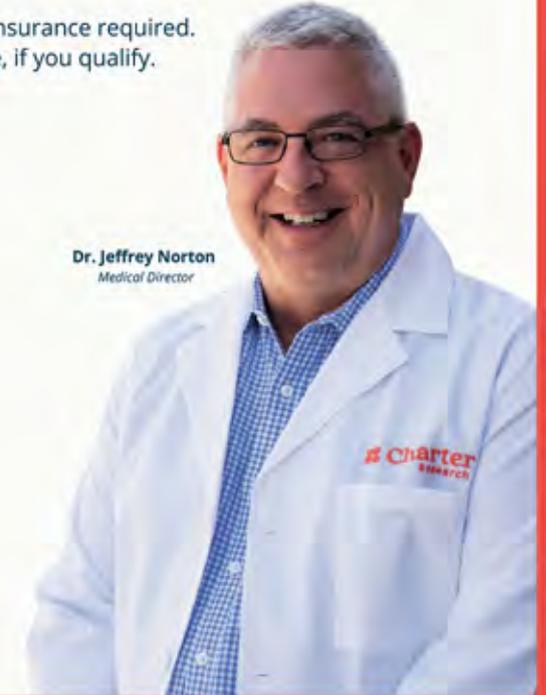
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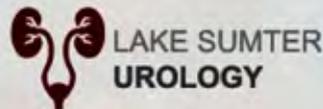
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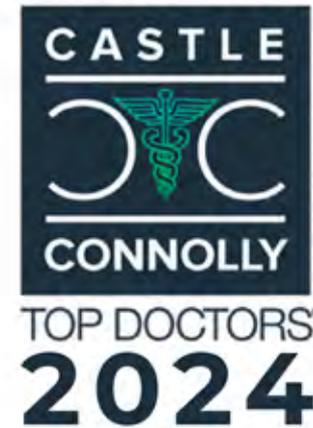
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# THE DEADLY CONNECTION:

## Smoking, COPD, Lung Cancer, and Impaired Wound Healing

By Dr. Nam Dinh, MD, FAAOS

**S**moking has long been recognized as a major public health hazard, with a laundry list of adverse health effects. Among the most devastating consequences are Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and lung cancer, both closely linked to smoking. Additionally, the negative effects of nicotine on wound healing underscore the crucial need to quit smoking prior to surgery.

### COPD: A Slow and Silent Killer

COPD is a progressive lung disease that encompasses conditions like chronic bronchitis and emphysema. The primary culprit behind COPD is tobacco smoke, responsible for nearly 90% of all COPD cases. Smoking introduces harmful chemicals and irritants into the respiratory system, leading to inflammation and damage in the airways. This can result in a reduced ability to breathe, chronic coughing, and impaired quality of life.

### Lung Cancer: A Lethal Consequence of Smoking

Lung cancer remains one of the deadliest cancers globally, and smoking is its leading cause. The carcinogens in tobacco smoke, such as benzene and formaldehyde, can initiate genetic mutations in lung cells, leading to the uncontrolled growth of cancerous tumors. Sadly, lung cancer often remains undetected until advanced stages, contributing to its low survival rate.

### Nicotine's Role in Wound Healing

While the lung-related dangers of smoking are widely known, the negative effects of nicotine on wound healing are less publicized but equally significant. Nicotine, a highly addictive compound found in tobacco, narrows blood vessels and reduces blood flow. This constriction limits the delivery of essential nutrients and oxygen to healing tissues, slowing down the body's natural recovery process.

Furthermore, nicotine disrupts the delicate balance of inflammation and anti-inflammatory responses in the body. This imbalance can result in prolonged inflammation at the wound site, delaying healing and increasing the risk of complications, such as infections and poor scarring.

### The Critical Importance of Quitting Before Surgery

For individuals facing surgery, whether it's elective or necessary, quitting smoking is paramount. Smoking before surgery increases the risk of complications



during and after the procedure. Reduced blood flow and impaired wound healing can lead to slower recovery times, increased postoperative pain, and a higher likelihood of infections.

Surgeons often recommend quitting smoking for a certain period before surgery to optimize outcomes. The duration can vary based on the type of surgery and individual health factors. In some cases, even a few weeks of abstinence can significantly improve the body's readiness for the operation.

### How to Quit Successfully

Quitting smoking is a challenging endeavor, but it is far from impossible. Numerous resources and strategies are available to help individuals kick the habit and improve their health:

- 1. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT):** NRT products like nicotine gum, patches, and lozenges can help gradually reduce nicotine dependence.
- 2. Prescription Medications:** There are prescription medications, such as varenicline and bupropion, that can aid in smoking cessation.
- 3. Behavioral Support:** Counseling and support groups can provide essential guidance and motivation to quit smoking successfully.
- 4. Mindfulness and Stress Reduction:** Practicing mindfulness techniques and finding healthy ways to manage stress can be critical in maintaining a smoke-free lifestyle.
- 5. Support from Loved Ones:** Inform friends and family about your decision to quit smoking and ask for their support.

**6. Set a Quit Date:** Choose a specific date to quit smoking and prepare for it mentally and emotionally.

### A Path to Better Health

The connection between smoking, COPD, lung cancer, and impaired wound healing is undeniable. The negative impact of nicotine on the body's ability to heal wounds underscores the necessity of quitting smoking before surgery. By taking this important step, individuals not only improve their surgical outcomes but also reduce their risk of developing life-threatening lung diseases and ultimately pave the way for a healthier, smoke-free future. The journey to quitting is undoubtedly challenging, but the rewards for your health and well-being are immeasurable.

### 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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# Diabetic Wound Care:

## Harnessing the Power of Amniotic Membrane Technology

The management of diabetic wounds remains one of the most challenging aspects of modern healthcare, with complications potentially leading to severe outcomes including amputation. However, innovative treatments like amniotic membrane therapy from RxWound are revolutionizing the approach to diabetic wound care, offering new hope for patients struggling with chronic wounds.

### Understanding the Power of Amniotic Membrane Technology

Amniotic membrane grafts represent a groundbreaking advancement in wound care treatment. Derived from the innermost layer of human placenta, these grafts are ethically sourced from planned cesarean section donations, ensuring both moral integrity and clinical excellence. The procurement process involves rigorous screening and testing for communicable diseases, maintaining the highest standards of safety and quality.

The impressive 95% success rate of patients attaining full wound closure within a six-week period, along with a minimal risk of negative side effects, establishes amniotic membrane therapy as a transformative advancement in wound care. This natural approach not only accelerates healing but also aligns with sustainable medical practices, making it an ideal choice for advanced wound management.

### The Five Pillars of Healing Process

Amniotic membrane technology works through five fundamental mechanisms that synergistically promote optimal wound healing:

**1. Reduced Inflammation:** The membrane's natural anti-inflammatory properties help control excessive inflammation, which is particularly crucial for diabetic patients who often experience prolonged inflammatory responses. This regulation creates an optimal environment for healing to begin.

**2. Powerful Antibacterial Properties:** The inherent antibacterial characteristics of amniotic membrane provide a natural defense against pathogens, reducing the risk of infection without relying solely on conventional antibiotics. This is especially valuable given the rising concerns about antibiotic resistance.



**3. Enhanced Tissue Growth Support:** Rich in growth factors and essential proteins, the membrane actively promotes tissue regeneration and cellular proliferation. This support is vital for diabetic wounds, which typically struggle with delayed healing due to compromised cellular function.

**4. Creation of Optimal Wound Healing Environment:** The membrane maintains ideal moisture levels and provides necessary nutrients, creating a perfectly balanced environment for wound healing. This micro-environment supports cellular migration and proliferation, essential components of the healing process.

**5. Effective Biological Barrier:** Acting as a natural protective shield, the membrane creates a physical barrier against external contaminants while maintaining the wound's optimal healing environment. This dual-action protection is crucial for preventing complications in diabetic wounds.

### Clinical Impact and Future Implications

The implementation of RxWound's extensive array of amniotic membrane solutions marks a significant advancement in diabetic wound care. Traditional treatments often struggle with the complexity of diabetic wounds, but this innovative approach addresses multiple aspects of wound healing simultaneously. The therapy's success rate demonstrates its potential to reduce healing time, decrease the risk of complications, and improve patient outcomes.

Healthcare providers report that patients receiving amniotic treatment experience faster healing rates and reduced complications compared to conventional treatments. The therapy's natural composition and lack of adverse effects make it an attractive option for patients who may be sensitive to synthetic treatments or those with compromised immune systems.

The sustainable and ethical sourcing of amniotic membranes, combined with their remarkable healing properties, positions RxWound as a leader in modern wound care solutions. As the medical community continues to seek effective treatments for diabetic wounds, the role of amniotic membrane therapy grows increasingly significant, offering hope for improved outcomes in this challenging aspect of healthcare.

### About RxWound

Founded in 2015, RxWound is a team of dedicated wound care professionals serving seniors with advanced care solutions across all 50 states.

The company mission is to improve the outcomes of wound healing and elevate the quality of life for each patient, while respecting the precious gift of donated human tissue. It is dedicated to upholding standards of excellence, integrity, and compassion, with the goal of setting new standards in care and promoting a healthier, more vibrant future.

RxWound looks forward to serving you and making a positive difference in your healthcare journey.

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# REGAINING CONTROL: THE BENEFITS OF EMSELLA FOR URINARY INCONTINENCE

**F**or millions of people, urinary incontinence is an uncomfortable and embarrassing condition that can significantly impact their quality of life. Whether it's a occasional leak during physical activity or a constant struggle to make it to the restroom in time, urinary incontinence can be a source of frustration, social isolation, and even depression. However, thanks to a revolutionary new treatment called EMSELLA, those suffering from urinary incontinence now have a non-invasive and effective solution to regain control over their bladder.

## Understanding Urinary Incontinence

Urinary incontinence is the involuntary leakage of urine, and it can occur for a variety of reasons. In women, it is often caused by weakened pelvic floor muscles, which can result from pregnancy, childbirth, or the natural aging process. Men, on the other hand, may experience incontinence due to prostate problems or as a side effect of certain medical treatments. Regardless of the cause, urinary incontinence can be a source of significant physical and emotional distress.

## The EMSELLA Solution

EMSELLA is a revolutionary treatment that uses high-intensity focused electromagnetic (HIFEM) technology to stimulate and strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. During a typical EMSELLA session, the patient sits fully clothed on a specialized chair that delivers thousands of supramaximal muscle contractions to the pelvic floor area. These contractions are similar to the muscle contractions that occur during Kegel exercises, but are significantly more intense and efficient.

## The Benefits of EMSELLA

One of the primary benefits of EMSELLA is its non-invasive nature. Unlike surgical procedures or medications, EMSELLA does not require any incisions, injections, or oral medications. This means that patients can undergo treatment without the risk of complications or side effects associated with more invasive interventions.

Another significant advantage of EMSELLA is its effectiveness. Clinical studies have shown that EMSELLA can significantly improve urinary incontinence symptoms in both men and women. In one study, 95% of patients reported a significant



improvement in their quality of life after undergoing EMSELLA treatment. Additionally, EMSELLA has been shown to be effective in treating other pelvic floor disorders, such as fecal incontinence and sexual dysfunction.

EMSELLA is also convenient and time-efficient. Each treatment session lasts only 28 minutes, and most patients require a series of six sessions spaced a week apart. This means that patients can receive the full course of treatment in just six weeks, with minimal disruption to their daily routine.

Furthermore, EMSELLA is a comfortable and painless treatment. Patients may feel a slight tingling sensation during the treatment, but the procedure is generally well-tolerated and does not require any anesthesia or recovery time.

## Regaining Confidence and Quality of Life

For those struggling with urinary incontinence, the impact on daily life can be significant. Simple activities like exercise, social gatherings, or travel can become sources of anxiety and embarrassment. However, with the help of EMSELLA, many patients are able to regain control over their bladder and reclaim their confidence and quality of life.

*One patient, Sarah, a 47-year-old mother of two, had been struggling with urinary incontinence for years after giving birth to her children. "I was always worried about leaking, especially during exercise or when I laughed too hard," she recalls. "It was embarrassing and made me feel self-conscious." After undergoing EMSELLA treatment, Sarah noticed a significant improvement in her symptoms. "It's been life-changing," she says. "I can exercise without worry, and I feel so much more confident in social situations."*

*Another patient, John, a 62-year-old retiree, had been dealing with urinary incontinence as a result of prostate problems. "It was really limiting my lifestyle," he explains. "I couldn't travel or participate in activities without worrying about finding a restroom." After completing his EMSELLA treatment, John reports a dramatic improvement in his symptoms. "I feel like I have my freedom back," he says. "It's been a game-changer for me."*

## Conclusion

Urinary incontinence is a common and often debilitating condition, but with the help of EMSELLA, those suffering from this condition now have a safe, effective, and convenient treatment option. By strengthening the pelvic floor muscles, EMSELLA can help patients regain control over their bladder and improve their overall quality of life. Whether you're a new mother, an active adult, or someone dealing with the effects of aging, EMSELLA offers a promising solution for regaining confidence and freedom from the constraints of urinary incontinence.



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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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# ENJOYING THE HOLIDAYS IN ASSISTED LIVING

By Janice Martin, owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc.

**M**aking the decision to move to assisted living is difficult. There is no denying it's life changing. One of the questions I frequently hear is, "when will I know it's time?" Although you may know in your heart that the time has come, there is still reluctance to take that next step.

Conversations will have a similar pattern. In April, they may have made the decision to move forward but resist scheduling a date. "Dad's birthday is in May. Let's wait until after his birthday." In June, "His grandson is graduating and he really wants to go. Let's wait until he gets back" In July, "His granddaughter is getting married, let's wait until after that." In August, "Their anniversary is in September and they need to be together one last time." In October, "We're not ready because there's too much to do." And in November, regardless of the circumstance, there's the big one.... "The holidays are coming and we really want them to have one last Christmas together in their home."

There will always be something. There will never be a time when all the planets are in alignment and the transition will be perfect. You will never "be ready." The reality is that your loved one can still participate in all these celebrations and events when they're in assisted living! That does NOT have to change because they always have the freedom to come and go wherever and whenever they wish. For a few hours, a day, a weekend, or an extended visit out of town.

But the holidays? The #1 misconception is that it will be sad and lonely. However, the holidays are the BEST time to be in assisted living! For weeks ahead of time there is something exciting happening. There is traditional music, special foods to enjoy, people visiting, and there is a happy energy in the air. Families are invited to a community Thanksgiving feast and everyone feels like family as they celebrate together. The residents often meet ahead of time, and THEY determine the menu to include family favorites.

And the decorations?? I doubt you will ever see so many gorgeous Christmas trees! They are everywhere all over the building but the one in the lobby will be the crème de la crème! There are also beautiful menorahs to light, dreidels to enjoy, celebrations, and opportunities to learn about traditions of other religions and regions.



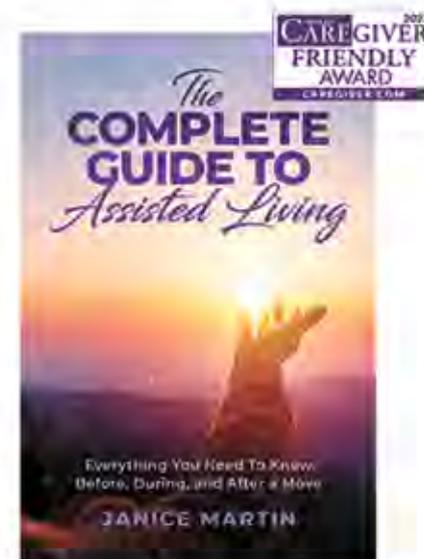
Many years ago, I began my career as an activities director. The first Christmas I worked in a community was quite an eye-opener. I put up and decorated over 10 different trees on every floor, in the lobby, in the dining room, in the activity room - everywhere! I didn't realize this requirement when I was hired, but it was actually fun (and exhausting!) and each tree was a little different. (Hint: after the holidays, cover the decorated tree with a large trash bag, and put it in the garage or empty room. Next year will be much easier!)

Communities will often have an indoor "Festival of Trees" or a "Festival of Wreaths" as a charity fundraiser. Local businesses will purchase a tree or wreath of various sizes and bring it to the community, decorate with a different theme, to be on display and enjoyed for several weeks. The trees will be auctioned, and the highest bidder gets to decide the charity and take the tree home. A community in Ocala does a spectacular event each year to benefit the Alzheimer's Association. There are easily 50+ trees of all shapes, sizes, and themes, followed by a live auction. All the residents participate by enjoying the fun, food, drinks, and excitement!

There are also gingerbread house competitions. I organized one and provided the basic kit to local businesses and departments at the assisted living. They used their imagination to think outside the box for an original creation. The residents were the judges, and the winner got bragging rights. My community had other facilities across the country. There was a company-wide competition to produce the most magnificent one. The final creations were enormous and elaborate and the residents enjoyed watching them come to life. During this competition, there was no limit to the size, but the "house" had to be made from scratch in the community's kitchen. One project actually had a model train running around and through it!

There are also outings on the community bus to look at the Christmas lights, followed by hot cocoa and cookies upon return. Even though a person is in assisted living doesn't mean it will be their last holiday to enjoy and you may be pleasantly surprised that it could be one of the most memorable. I challenge you to convince me that sitting home alone through the holidays with nothing but a turkey TV dinner and a rerun of "It's A Wonderful Life" can begin to compare. If a resident would like to spend time at their family's home, they are welcome to do so. However, it's often overstimulating for many seniors who have difficulty with the (loud) competing conversations and children running everywhere.

In my experience, the holidays are the best time to be in assisted living. Your loved one will be active and busy enjoying the variety of celebrations and the company of others - with the option to simply return to their private apartment to quietly reflect on the things for which they are most thankful.



*Janice Martin is an author, educator, and specialist on senior living options and the owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc. She assists families in locating senior options and communities 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). She never uses AI to produce her writing for any publication.*



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# NATIONAL HEALTHY SKIN MONTH

By Dr. Ashley Cauthen

November is National Healthy Skin Month, a time to celebrate and prioritize the health of our skin. Your skin is not only the largest organ of your body, but it also plays a vital role in protecting you from external threats and reflects your overall well-being. In honor of this month, we have gathered expert tips and advice to help you maintain healthy, glowing skin all year round.

Your skin is a remarkable organ that performs numerous essential functions for your overall health. It acts as a protective barrier against harmful viruses, infections, and environmental factors. Additionally, it helps regulate body temperature and fluid balance. Taking care of your skin is not just about looking good; it is an integral part of maintaining your overall well-being.

## Understanding Skin Cancer Prevention

Skin cancer is a significant concern worldwide, with one in five Americans developing it by the age of 70. It is crucial to raise awareness about skin cancer prevention and early detection. By following these tips, you can significantly reduce your risk:

- **Wear Sunscreen Daily:** Protect your skin from harmful UV rays by applying a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 every day. Don't forget to reapply every two hours, especially when spending extended periods outdoors. Some of MidState's favorites are ISDIN Eryfotona Ageless & Actinica, EltaMD Elements and UV Clear.

- **Cover Up:** When spending time outdoors, wear protective clothing, such as wide-brimmed hats and sun-protective clothing, to shield your skin from direct sun exposure.

- **Stay in the Shade:** Seek shade whenever possible, especially during peak sun hours between 10 am and 4 pm, when the sun's rays are the strongest.

- **Perform Self-Skin Exams:** Regularly examine your skin for any changes, including new moles, growths, or spots. If you notice anything unusual, remember your ABC's. A- asymmetry, B- border, C- color, D- diameter (less than 10mm), E- evolving.

## Dermatologist-Recommended Skincare Habits

Maintaining healthy skin requires adopting good skincare habits. Follow these expert-recommended tips to keep your skin looking and feeling its best:

### 1. Cleanse and Moisturize Daily

Start your skincare routine by cleansing your face with a gentle cleanser suited for your skin type. Follow up with a moisturizer that provides hydration and nourishment.

### 2. Determine Your Skin Type

Understanding your skin type is essential for choosing the right skincare products. Whether you have dry, oily, combination, or sensitive skin, select products that address your specific needs.

### 3. Protect Your Skin from Environmental Factors

Environmental factors, such as pollution and harsh weather conditions, can damage your skin. Using antioxidants, like vitamin C, can help neutralize free radicals and protect your skin from premature aging. Snag ISDIN's Vitamin C from one of our three locations.

### 4. Embrace the Power of Retinol

Incorporating retinol or retinoid products into your skincare routine can help improve skin texture, reduce wrinkles, and even out pigmentation. Start with a low concentration and gradually increase usage to avoid irritation. Skinbetter Sciences' AlphaRet is a great starter retinoid that's safe for all skintypes.

### 5. Get Your Beauty Sleep

A good night's sleep is not just crucial for your overall well-being but also for the health of your skin. Aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep to allow your skin to repair and rejuvenate itself.

### 6. Stay Hydrated

Hydration is key to maintaining healthy skin. Drink at least eight glasses of water daily to keep your skin hydrated and flush out toxins. Limit alcohol consumption, as it dehydrates the skin and can exacerbate skin issues.

### 8. Visit a Dermatologist

Regular visits to a dermatologist are essential for maintaining healthy skin. A dermatologist can assess your skin's condition, provide personalized recommendations, and address any concerns or issues you may have.

As the winter season approaches, it's essential to give your skin some extra attention. The cold weather and dry indoor heat can lead to dryness, itching, and other skin problems. Here are some tips to keep your skin healthy and radiant during winter:

- **Moisturize Intensively:** Use a heavier lotion or skin cream after showers to lock in moisture and prevent dryness. Don't forget to apply a lip balm with SPF protection to keep your lips hydrated and protected from the elements.

- **Protect Your Skin During Winter Sports:** If you enjoy winter sports, such as skiing or snowboarding, remember to apply sunscreen with at least SPF 30 and wear protective clothing to shield your skin from harmful UV rays and cold wind.

- **Be Mindful of Indoor Heating:** Indoor heating can strip your skin of its natural moisture. Use a humidifier to add moisture to the air and prevent dryness.

During National Healthy Skin Month and beyond, prioritize the health of your skin by adopting good skincare habits, protecting yourself from the sun, and seeking help from MidState when needed. Remember, healthy skin is not just about looking good; it is an investment in your overall well-being. Take care of your skin, and it will reward you with a radiant and vibrant appearance that reflects your inner health and happiness.

## MidState Skin Institute Services:



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### Medical Dermatology

The science of treating the skin, hair, and nails to relieve or cure skin disorders.

### Surgical Dermatology

The practice of dermatology that specializes in surgical procedures & minimally invasive techniques to treat skin cancer.

### Cosmetic Dermatology

The practice of improving the look and health of one's skin through medical or surgical procedures, to help patients look and feel their best.

### Aesthetics

Treatment for the skin, hair or body that is meant to enhance the appearance of patients through minimally invasive techniques & personalized topical skin care recommendations.

# TESTOSTERONE, PELLETS, AND PRP, OH MY! RECHARGE YOUR MANHOOD THIS MEN'S HEALTH MONTH



**G**entlemen, it's time to face the facts: life can take a toll on your testosterone levels. As we age, those youthful energy levels, rock-solid muscle mass, and even your once-fiery libido can start to fizzle out. But guess what? It doesn't have to be that way. At Recharge Clinic, we've got a suite of next-level treatments designed to get you back in the game—stronger, leaner, and ready to roll.

Let's dive into some of the key players in your hormonal comeback, all geared towards improving not just your health, but your sexual health too.

### **Testosterone Replacement Therapy (TRT): Your First Line of Defense**

Testosterone isn't just about chest hair and deep voices. Low T can lead to fatigue, brain fog, and low sex drive—basically, feeling like a shadow of your former self. Testosterone Replacement Therapy (TRT) comes to the rescue by giving you a well-needed boost.

Whether you choose testosterone shots or pellets, TRT delivers a controlled dose of testosterone directly into your bloodstream. Expect to see improvements in muscle mass, mood, and sexual health as your energy levels and libido come roaring back.

### **Testosterone Pellets: Steady and Low Maintenance**

If regular shots aren't your thing, testosterone pellets are an amazing alternative. These tiny pellets, implanted just under the skin, release testosterone slowly and consistently over several months. Think of it as a slow drip of awesomeness—keeping your hormone levels stable and your body functioning optimally.

Pellets are perfect for guys looking for long-term testosterone management without the hassle of

frequent doctor visits. The result? More energy, stronger muscles, and a boost in your sex drive that'll keep you feeling like you're in your prime.

### **Peptides: Little Molecules, Big Impact**

Peptides might sound like something from a science fiction movie, but they're actually short chains of amino acids that help your body communicate better. When it comes to sexual health, peptides like Ipamorelin or CJC-1295 can help boost growth hormone production, which supports fat loss, muscle growth, and increased libido.

Delivered through subcutaneous injections, these little powerhouses can rejuvenate your body from the inside out, giving you not only more stamina in the gym but also improved sexual performance and recovery.

### **Human Growth Hormone (HGH): The Fountain of Youth?**

Human Growth Hormone (HGH) is another big player in maintaining your vitality. While HGH production naturally decreases with age, supplementing it through injections can give your body the edge it needs to feel younger, stronger, and more sexually capable.

With regular HGH therapy, expect to see improvements in muscle tone, energy levels, and even libido. While it's not exactly the fountain of youth, it's pretty close, helping to keep you looking and feeling your best, from the boardroom to the bedroom.

### **Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy: Powering Up Your Performance**

PRP therapy uses your own blood (how cool is that?) to improve your sexual health. After drawing

a small amount of blood, it's spun in a centrifuge to isolate the platelet-rich plasma. This plasma, packed with growth factors, is then injected into areas where you want to see improvement. For men, this often means targeting the penis for enhanced performance, better erections, and increased sensitivity.

PRP is a non-surgical, natural way to jump-start your sexual health, with many men reporting noticeable improvements in sexual function and confidence within weeks.

### **Revitalize Your Manhood This Men's Health Month**

Whether you're looking to get back into shape, reclaim your sexual vitality, or simply boost your overall wellness, Recharge Clinic has the cutting-edge solutions you need. From testosterone replacement therapy to peptides, HGH, and PRP, we've got the treatments that can recharge your body and your sex life.

So, what are you waiting for? Call Recharge Clinic today and let's get your testosterone—and your life—back on track.

*Free Consultations - 352-512-9996  
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**Lady Lake**  
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**Southwest Ocala (Opening Fall of 2024)**  
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# Navigating End-of-Life Decisions: The Role of Hospice Palliative Care and Strategic Planning

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

**A**s we navigate the complex journey of life, we inevitably confront the reality of mortality. When faced with terminal illness, the importance of hospice palliative care becomes clear. This specialized medical care focuses on providing relief from pain and other distressing symptoms, enhancing the quality of life for patients and their families. However, beyond medical support, thoughtful estate and legacy planning can significantly ease the financial burdens that often accompany end-of-life decisions.

## Understanding Hospice Palliative Care

Hospice palliative care is designed to provide comprehensive support to individuals with life-limiting conditions. Unlike curative treatment, which aims to eliminate the illness, palliative care prioritizes comfort, dignity, and quality of life. This approach can be initiated at any stage of a serious illness and involves a multidisciplinary team, including doctors, nurses, social workers, and spiritual advisors.

The goal of hospice care is not just to manage physical symptoms but also to address emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Families are often involved in care decisions, allowing for open discussions about preferences and wishes. This holistic approach creates an environment where patients can feel safe and supported, ultimately leading to more meaningful end-of-life experiences.

## The Financial Implications of End-of-Life Care

While hospice care provides essential support, the financial aspects of end-of-life decisions can be daunting. Medical bills, potential long-term care expenses, and funeral costs can accumulate rapidly, creating additional stress for families during an already challenging time. This is where strategic planning—specifically estate and legacy planning—becomes vital.

**Estate Planning:** Establishing a comprehensive estate plan ensures that your assets are managed according to your wishes. This includes drafting a will, setting up trusts, and designating powers of attorney. These legal documents help clarify your desires regarding asset distribution, healthcare decisions, and financial management, minimizing confusion and disputes among family members.

**Legacy Planning:** Legacy planning goes beyond just managing assets; it involves determining how you want to be remembered. This could include philanthropic endeavors, family traditions, or specific messages you want to pass down to future generations. By addressing these aspects, you provide a framework for your loved ones, helping them to honor your legacy while navigating their grief.

**Retirement Planning:** A solid retirement plan is equally crucial. By anticipating healthcare needs and potential end-of-life expenses, you can create a financial cushion that alleviates some of the burdens on your family. Long-term care insurance, health savings accounts, and retirement accounts can all play significant roles in ensuring you have the resources necessary to cover your needs without placing financial strain on your loved ones.

## The Interconnection of Care and Planning

The synergy between hospice palliative care and financial planning cannot be overstated. When individuals have a well-thought-out plan in place, they can focus on the emotional and relational aspects of their care rather than being overwhelmed by financial concerns. This holistic approach enhances not only the quality of care received but also the overall experience for families during a difficult time.

## Open Communication is Key

Engaging in open and honest conversations with loved ones about your wishes is essential. Discussing your preferences regarding medical care, financial decisions, and legacy intentions can alleviate the burden on family members during a crisis. Encourage family members to express their thoughts and feelings as well, creating a supportive environment that fosters understanding and compassion.

## Seeking Professional Guidance

While it may seem daunting, the process of estate and legacy planning can be streamlined with the help of professionals. Financial advisors, estate planners, and hospice care coordinators can provide invaluable assistance in crafting a comprehensive plan tailored to your unique situation.

Their expertise can help you navigate the complexities of legal and financial issues, ensuring that your desires are honored.

## Conclusion

As we confront the inevitable, integrating hospice palliative care with thoughtful estate and legacy planning can make a significant difference in the lives of both patients and their families. By addressing medical needs while also preparing for the financial and emotional challenges of end-of-life decisions, individuals can foster a sense of peace and control during a tumultuous time.

Ultimately, this proactive approach not only enriches the patient experience but also creates a lasting legacy of love and consideration for future generations. In the end, it's about more than just planning; it's about ensuring that our final chapters are filled with dignity, comfort, and meaningful connections.

*Do you want to learn more about estate, legacy, and retirement planning? Do you have questions concerning end-of-life expenses?*

The team at Securenet Financial, LLC can help. Visit our website at [www.securenetfinancial.com](http://www.securenetfinancial.com) or call our office at (352) 312-9900 to schedule a no-cost, no-obligation introductory consultation. At Securenet Financial, we're here for you.

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# INTERVENTIONAL PAIN MANAGEMENT IS WELL BEYOND MEDICATION MANAGEMENT ALONE

By Brent Compton, MD

**C**hronic pain is a debilitating condition that affects millions of people worldwide, significantly impacting their quality of life. While traditional pain management strategies, such as medication and physical therapy, can provide relief, interventional pain management offers a more targeted and minimally invasive approach to addressing the root causes of pain. In this article, we'll delve into the world of interventional pain management and explore its role in the comprehensive treatment of chronic pain.

Interventional pain management is a specialized field of medicine that focuses on diagnosing and treating various types of chronic pain through minimally invasive techniques. These procedures are performed by highly trained physicians, often pain management specialists or anesthesiologists, who use advanced imaging techniques and specialized equipment to target specific areas of the body responsible for pain.

One of the primary goals of interventional pain management is to reduce or eliminate pain while minimizing the need for oral medications, particularly opioids, which can have significant side effects and carry the risk of addiction. By targeting the source of pain directly, interventional techniques can provide long-lasting relief and improve overall functionality.

The decision to pursue interventional pain management typically follows a structured pathway, beginning with conservative treatments and progressing to more advanced interventions as necessary. This pathway can be visualized as a decision tree, guiding patients through the various options available to them.

At the most basic level, patients may begin with non-invasive treatments such as chiropractic care, physical therapy, massage, and home exercises. These approaches aim to alleviate pain through manual manipulation, stretching, and strengthening exercises, often addressing musculoskeletal issues or improving overall mobility.

If these initial treatments prove insufficient, the next level may involve medications and imaging tests. Pain medications, including over-the-counter and prescription options, can provide temporary relief, while imaging techniques like X-rays, MRI, or CT scans can help identify the underlying cause of pain and guide further treatment decisions.



When conservative methods and medications fail to provide adequate relief, interventional pain management techniques become a viable option. These minimally invasive procedures include:

- 1. Epidural steroid injections:** These injections deliver corticosteroids directly into the epidural space of the spine, reducing inflammation and providing pain relief for conditions such as herniated discs, spinal stenosis, or radiculopathy.
- 2. Facet joint injections:** Targeted injections into the facet joints of the spine can alleviate pain caused by arthritis or injury in these joints.
- 3. Radiofrequency ablation:** This procedure uses heat generated by radio waves to disrupt the transmission of pain signals from specific nerves, providing long-term relief for conditions like chronic back or neck pain.
- 4. Spinal cord stimulation:** Implanted devices deliver electrical impulses to the spinal cord, modulating pain signals and providing relief for various chronic pain conditions.
- 5. Nerve blocks:** These injections involve the administration of medication, such as anesthetics or steroids, near specific nerves to block the transmission of pain signals.

If all other interventions fail to provide adequate relief, surgery may be considered as a last resort. However, interventional pain management techniques often allow patients to avoid or delay the need for surgical intervention, reducing the risks and recovery time associated with major procedures.

It's important to note that interventional pain management is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Each patient's condition is unique, and treatment plans are tailored to address their specific needs. Pain management specialists work closely with patients to develop comprehensive treatment strategies, combining interventional techniques with other modalities, such as physical therapy, medication management, and lifestyle modifications.

In conclusion, interventional pain management offers a promising solution for individuals suffering from chronic pain. By targeting the source of pain directly through minimally invasive techniques, these procedures can provide significant relief and improve overall quality of life. As awareness of these techniques continues to grow, more patients can benefit from this comprehensive approach to pain management.

At The **Interventional Pain Institute**, each patient's pain is thoroughly evaluated and a customized treatment plan is developed. Dr. Compton and his team are dedicated to treating every patient with the utmost respect and care, with a mission to help patients regain functionality and improve their quality of life.

The Interventional Pain Institute also places a strong emphasis on patient education. An informed patient is an empowered patient, and the team strives to provide as much information as possible about each patient's condition and treatment options.

With offices conveniently located in The Villages and Ocala, Florida, The Interventional Pain Institute is an excellent choice for those suffering from chronic or acute pain. Under the care of Dr. Brent Compton, patients can find not just relief, but also a renewed sense of hope for a pain-free future. Experience the difference at The Interventional Pain Institute today.

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# Diabetic Neuropathy: How Physical Therapy Can Help

**R**oughly, 29 million Americans have diabetes. Many of these cases are undiagnosed, but for those individuals that struggle with the disease, symptoms of diabetic neuropathy can be debilitating.



Diabetic neuropathy is a progressive disease that affects nearly 200,000 new patients per year. Understanding the disease state is complex, but in short, having high blood sugar levels, along with low blood and oxygen supply, damages the nerves throughout the body. This damage generally affects the long peripheral nerves that feed sensations to the legs, feet, and toes from the spinal cord, through communication with the brain. If your condition has progressed, you may feel nerve damage sensations in your upper extremities as well.

Once the peripheral nerves are damaged, there is no cure. Along with medications and drug therapies, there are proven methods to lessen the symptoms of peripheral diabetic neuropathy. Physical medicine provides alternative therapeutic and rehabilitating procedures that can offer significant pain relief and limit drug dependency. Physical therapy helps with balance and can reduce the risk of falls.

**When you have diabetic neuropathy, your feet and legs can feel so numb that you may trip, fall and injure yourself just by trying to get through normal daily activities. This can be dangerous for obvious reasons. Along with dietary changes, orthopedic shoes and compression stockings, physical therapy can help.**



## Physical & Occupational Therapy Benefits

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- Electrical nerve stimulation
- Help with daily tasks & Living
- Cold laser treatment

Patient & Occupational Education is critical to alleviate further injury and to promote the most efficacious healing. Coupled with family participation, self-help management to promote and maintain independent function, and mobility is critical.

Physical therapy is used to help with numerous indications and conditions like retraining the body to improve gait and balance and also after hip, knee or shoulder replacement 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 & Occupational therapy.

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

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## Peripheral Neuropathy Symptoms

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- Joint inflammation
- Joint damage
- Balance issues
- Skin discoloration & texture changes
- Muscle cramps
- Feelings of stiffness
- Non-healing foot & ankle ulcers

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# Understanding Alzheimer's Disease: A CALL FOR INCREASED AWARENESS

By David Culbreth, Senior Transitions Specialist, Realtor, SRES

**A**lzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disorder that slowly erodes memory, thinking skills, and the ability to perform even the simplest of daily tasks. As the most common form of dementia, Alzheimer's impacts millions of individuals worldwide, robbing them of their independence and altering the very core of who they are. Despite its prevalence, there remains a concerning lack of awareness and understanding surrounding this debilitating condition. It is time to shed light on Alzheimer's and rally support for those impacted by this cruel disease.

## The Devastating Impact

The journey of an Alzheimer's patient is a heart-breaking one. Initially, the disease manifests as mild memory loss and confusion, often dismissed as a natural part of aging. However, as it progresses, the symptoms become increasingly severe, with individuals experiencing disorientation, difficulty communicating, and an inability to recognize loved ones. Simple tasks like dressing, bathing, and eating become insurmountable challenges. Ultimately, Alzheimer's renders those affected completely dependent on caregivers, stripping them of their autonomy and dignity.

Beyond the toll on individuals, Alzheimer's disease places an immense burden on families and caregivers. The emotional and financial strain of caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's is immense, often leading to burnout, stress, and even depression among caregivers. The ripple effect extends far beyond the patient, impacting entire families and communities.

## A Growing Crisis

As the global population ages, the prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is on the rise. According to the Alzheimer's Association, an estimated 6.5 million Americans aged 65 and older are living with Alzheimer's. Worldwide, this number soars to over 55 million individuals affected. Alarmingly, these figures are projected to nearly triple by 2050 without significant medical breakthroughs.

The economic impact of Alzheimer's is staggering, with the annual cost of caring for those affected exceeding hundreds of billions of dollars globally. This financial burden extends to healthcare systems, governments, and society as a whole, underscoring the urgency for increased investment in research, treatment, and support services.



## Shattering the Stigma

Despite its widespread impact, Alzheimer's disease remains shrouded in misconceptions and stigma. Many individuals fear the disease, associating it with a loss of personhood and dignity. This societal perception often leads to isolation and marginalization of those affected, exacerbating the challenges they face.

Raising awareness is crucial to combating these harmful stigmas and fostering a more compassionate and inclusive society. By educating the public about the realities of Alzheimer's, we can promote greater understanding, empathy, and support for those impacted by the disease.

## A Call to Action

Addressing the Alzheimer's crisis demands a multifaceted approach. Increased funding for research is paramount, as scientists continue their quest for effective treatments and, ultimately, a cure. Additionally, bolstering support services, such as respite care and counseling for caregivers, can alleviate the immense burden shouldered by families.

Furthermore, advocacy efforts play a vital role in raising awareness and driving policy changes that prioritize the needs of those affected by Alzheimer's. From grassroots initiatives to national campaigns, every voice counts in amplifying the call for action and fostering a more supportive and inclusive environment.

As individuals, we all have a role to play in this fight against Alzheimer's. By educating ourselves and others, offering support to caregivers, and advocating for increased resources, we can make a tangible difference in the lives of those affected by this devastating disease.

Alzheimer's disease is a formidable challenge, but one that can be overcome through collective action, compassion, and a unwavering commitment to supporting those impacted. By raising awareness and rallying support, we can create a society that empowers individuals living with Alzheimer's and provides them with the dignity and care they deserve.



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# HEALTHY AGING

## and Quality of Life Within Reach with a Proactive Approach

**A**s we age, finding ways to improve our health and wellness - physically, mentally, and emotionally - can become an increasingly more important and sometimes more difficult task.

Recognizing the challenges that aging brings to the human body is an important first step towards a better you. By addressing those recognized challenges and health concerns, we give ourselves the power to transform our lives and reap the rewards of improved energy, strength, and an enhanced sense of well-being.

Improving quality of life as we age is important as it allows us to engage in life more meaningfully, maintain our independence, and to experience increased happiness and well-being. What's more, connecting with others, including health and wellness professionals, can positively impact our mental and physical health by helping us overcome feelings of depression and isolation and creating a sense of purpose and satisfaction.

### Can you maintain quality of life as you age?

Absolutely! Maintaining a good level of health and well-being and quality of life into our senior years is achievable and can be fun! Some proactive measures, including seeking health care services from qualified health and wellness authorities and medical professionals not only can help, but is an important part of maintaining quality of life.

Aches and pains, memory lapses, loss of hearing, skin changes, and more may be "symptoms" sometimes associated with getting older, but the fact is that we are living longer and are healthier and happier than ever before.

Many older adults enjoy vigorous health – even enjoying new and exciting activities – from pickleball to line dancing to softball and more – that they may not have had the time to enjoy in their earlier years – all due in part to taking care of their physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Establishing a healthy lifestyle which includes maintaining a nutritious diet, managing stress, getting exercise, and sleeping enough hours can help you live a happy, quality life despite the expected changes associated with aging.

### Do I have to do it alone?

Not at all! Resources to help you every step of the way are plentiful. From primary and specialty health care providers, to hearing and dental care specialists, to nutritionists and dermatologists, and more, those committed to prioritizing your well-being should be an integral part of your health and wellness journey for years to come.

### Where can you find resources to help?

In addition to seeking qualified medical professionals to help you detect health issues early, reading articles about senior health, asking your physician about health and wellness classes available in your area, engaging in activities and social groups, and attending events such as health and wellness expos, can offer a host of useful information.

Locally, The Villages Homeowners Advocates (VHA) sponsors the area's largest health and wellness expo each November to celebrate and support health and wellness in our community and to encourage quality of life for seniors.

"Our 2024 Health and Wellness Expo will bring together local health and wellness experts in an effort to educate residents on how to stay healthy while aging and to maintain an overall good quality of life for years to come," commented VHA President Peter Russell.

Russell said the Health and Wellness Expo, slated for 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. November 15th at Rohan Recreation Center, 850 Kristine Way, The Villages, is a pivotal platform for helping area residents lead healthier, happier lifestyles by bringing them in front of representatives and experts in a wide variety of fields.

The free event will afford attendees the opportunity to participate in live interactive seminars, hear from guest speakers, and connect with a variety of representatives from wellness services ranging from primary and specialty health care services, Medicare and Medicare Advantage options, estate planning, dermatology, vein care, healthy eating, and much more – all aimed at helping seniors enjoy an enhanced quality of life.



Russell added, "The Health and Wellness Expo is part of the VHA's overall mission to foster good health for our residents by inspiring them to prioritize and participate in their own physical, mental and emotional health care journey. We believe the expo will help them achieve this by providing them the chance to connect with a diverse array of exhibitors and engaging activities all designed to promote overall good quality of life as we age."

Net proceeds from the 501 (c) (3) organization's event will benefit other organizations which address needs in the areas of nutrition, physical and mental health, US Veterans and armed forces, housing, and youth.

For more information on the VHA, visit [thevha.net](http://thevha.net)



The Villages Homeowners Advocates

# HEALTH & WELLNESS EXPO 2024

STAY HEALTHY WHILE AGING

**Friday, November 15th, 2024**

**1:00pm - 4:00pm**

Rohan Recreation Center  
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## Free Event!

# What's Your Diet?

By Pastor Roger P. Felipe

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

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

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

longer and healthier. It's about honoring Jesus Christ with all of life, including the way they take care of their bodies.

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

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



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

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

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