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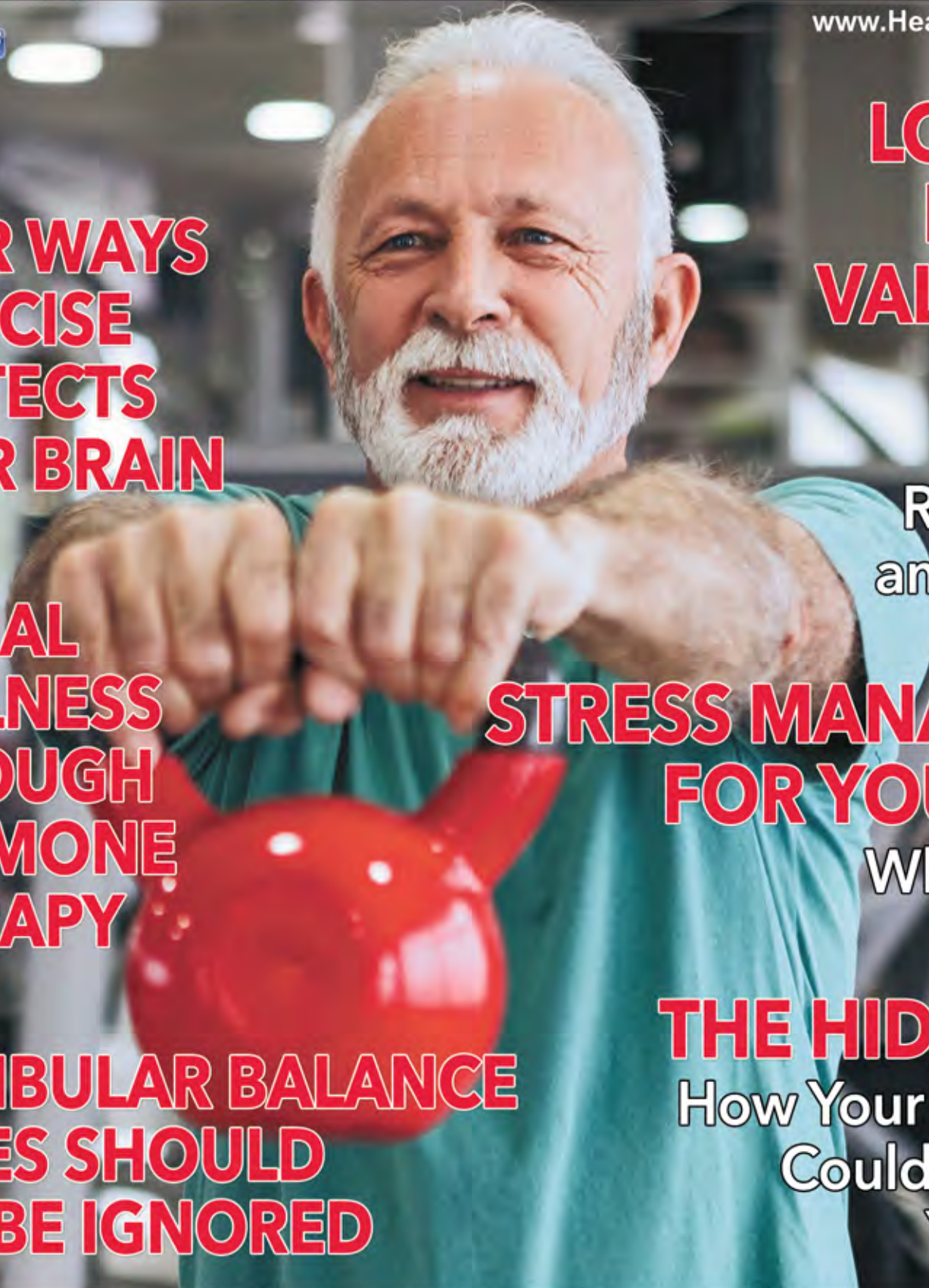
A Focus on
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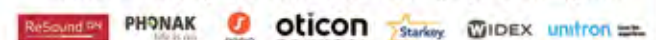
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THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR CONTACT LENS CHECK-UPS: ENSURING LONG-TERM EYE HEALTH

Contact lenses allow people to see with incredible clarity without the limitations of glasses. However, ongoing contact lens use can lead to minor complications like dry eye and eyelid inflammation to more serious ones, such as keratitis (infection) and corneal abrasion. That's why regular contact lens check-ups are essential for maintaining optimal eye health and vision. These routine examinations play a vital role in ensuring your lenses are functioning effectively, fitting comfortably, and not posing any risks to your eye health and vision.

BENEFITS OF REGULAR CONTACT LENS EXAMS

Routine contact lens exams provide and are designed to:

1. Preserve Eye Health

Regular check-ups greatly reduce the risk of various eye complications through:

- **Early Detection of Problems** – Your eye doctor can identify early signs of potential disease processes, well before symptoms become noticeable. Early detection allows for timely intervention and prevention of more severe conditions, such as corneal neovascularization, corneal abrasion, hypoxia, and other problems that, left undiagnosed and untreated, can seriously damage vision.
- **Prevention of Infection** – Even with diligent cleaning and care, contact lenses can harbor harmful bacteria and microorganisms. Regular check-ups help minimize the risk of eye infections like infectious keratitis, bacterial keratitis and fungal keratitis and other hazards.
- **Detection of Systemic Issues** – Believe it or not, your eyes can reveal other problems throughout the body. Regular contact lens exams can uncover signs of systemic diseases that also affect eye health, such as diabetes, hypertension, and autoimmune disorders.

2. Promote Clear, Comfortable Vision

Routine contact lens exams ensure that your contact lenses continue to provide you with total comfort. Your exam will include:

- **Fit Assessment** – Your eye doctor will evaluate the fit of your lenses to confirm they're not causing any discomfort or damage to your eyes.
- **Prescription Updates** – Eyes and vision change over time, making regular exams the key to ensuring your prescription remains up-to-date. Updated vision correction helps prevent problems like eye strain, headaches, blurred vision, even accidents.
- **Lens Material Evaluation** – New technologies mean there are more contact lens types than ever before. From rigid gas permeable and soft lenses to hybrid, scleral and silicone hydrogel, there's a contact lens for almost everyone. Your eye doctor can assess whether your current lens material is still suitable for your eyes or if a switch to a different type might provide enhancements to your comfort and lifestyle.

HOW OFTEN DO I NEED A REGULAR CONTACT LENS EXAM?

Your eye doctor will take into account your age, health profile and other factors to customize your exam schedule. In general, the recommended frequency of contact lens exams depends on the following:

- **Age** – Teenagers and young adults, who often experience more rapid changes in their eyes, should have annual exams. As we move deeper into our 20s and 30s, exams every two years may be sufficient, assuming no complications arise. For people ages 40 and up, annual or twice-yearly exams are typically recommended due to the increased risk of age-related eye conditions.

- **Eye Health** – Individuals with a history of eye infections, corneal ulcers, or chronic dry eye, or conditions like diabetes, may require exams every six months or more. By keeping a close watch on eye health and any changes that may be developing, your eye doctor can take steps to halt problems before they become serious.

- **Lens Type** – The type of contact lenses you wear can influence exam frequency. Daily disposable lenses may require less frequent check-ups compared to extended wear or specialty lenses. It is particularly important to receive regular check-ups if you wear extended-wear lenses, which can leave you more prone to infection and other problems.

SIGNS YOU NEED A CONTACT LENS CHECK-UP IMMEDIATELY

See your eye doctor immediately if you experience any of the following:

- **Eye Pain or Discomfort** – Serious, persistent or worsening eye pain or irritation could indicate ill-fitting lenses, which should not be ignored. These symptoms could also indicate corneal abrasion, or another problem requiring prompt attention.
- **Signs of Infection** – Symptoms may include swollen, itchy, or red eyelids; discoloration of the whites of the eyes (particularly if they appear pink); or milky or yellowish discharge from the eyes.
- **Vision Changes** – Sudden blurry vision, double vision, halos, flashes of light, difficulty focusing or a curtain-like effect over part of your vision necessitate immediate attention. If your eye doctor isn't able to see you immediately, have someone take you to the ER.
- **Persistent Dryness or Excessive Tearing** – Persistent dryness or excessive tearing that doesn't improve with artificial tears or your usual care routine means it's time for an immediate check-up.
- **Extreme Light Sensitivity** – Sudden, severe sensitivity to light may indicate a serious eye condition demanding prompt evaluation.
- **Foreign Objects in Eyes** – If you get anything in your eyes such as debris, chemicals, or a larger object, seek immediate medical attention.

WHAT TO EXPECT DURING A CHECK-UP

Your eye doctor may recommend that you wear your lenses as normal throughout the day and keep them in for your appointment. This allows your doctor to assess how your lenses are performing and how your eyes are reacting to them.

During a contact lens check-up, your eye doctor will:

1. **Evaluate your eye health** – This includes an eye health assessment, tear film evaluation, and standard eye and vision tests.
2. **Assess the comfort and fit of your lenses** – A slit lamp microscope evaluation allows your doctor to check lens alignment and movement.
3. **Check for signs of lens wear and tear** – Cracked or torn contact lenses should be disposed of and replaced.
4. **Make any necessary adjustments** to how your lenses fit, how you care for them, and how long you wear them.
5. **Discuss any issues or discomfort** you may be experiencing, and, if needed, make recommendations for different lens types you may want to try.
6. **Provide education you may need** about using, cleaning and storing your contacts.

CONTACT LAKE EYE FOR ALL YOUR CONTACT LENS NEEDS

Regular contact lens check-ups are more than just a suggestion; they are an essential part of maintaining your eye health and safeguarding comfortable, clear vision. The caring professionals of Lake Eye (a US Eye company) are here to help you enjoy all the benefits of contact lenses while minimizing any related risks to your eye health and vision.

Our experienced ophthalmologists and optometrists conduct comprehensive, state-of-the-art eye exams specifically designed for contact lens wearers. We also provide customized fitting services to ensure your lenses are the right fit and type to deliver maximum comfort and wearability.

Every Lake Eye location also includes a full-service optical department featuring the latest in contact lenses, including specialty lenses for people living with chronic dry eye and corneal conditions like keratoconus, so nearly everyone can enjoy the clarity and convenience of contact lenses!

If you're ready to begin your next chapter with contact lenses, or you haven't had a contact lens check-up in a while, contact your local Lake Eye. We're here to help keep you looking great and seeing brilliantly.



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STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR YOUR HEART: WHY IT'S CRITICAL

T.E. Vallabhan, MD, FACC

We all know it's imperative to keep ourselves healthy through exercise, eating right, and warding off viruses and infections. However, one of the most overlooked stressors on our hearts is—*anxiety*.

According to the American Heart Association, "More research is needed to determine how stress contributes to heart disease — the leading killer of Americans. But stress may affect behaviors and factors that increase heart disease risk: high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, smoking, physical inactivity, and overeating. Some people may choose to drink too much alcohol or smoke cigarettes to "manage" their chronic stress; however, these habits can increase blood pressure and may damage artery walls.

And your body's response to stress may be a headache, back strain, or stomach pains. Stress can also zap your energy, wreak havoc on your sleep and make you feel cranky, forgetful and out of control. A stressful situation sets off a chain of events. Your body releases adrenaline, a hormone that temporarily causes your breathing and heart rate to speed up and your blood pressure to rise. These reactions prepare you to deal with the situation — the "fight or flight" response.

When stress is constant, your body remains in high gear off and on for days or weeks at a time. Although the link between stress and heart disease isn't clear, chronic stress may cause some people to drink too much alcohol which can increase your blood pressure and may damage the artery walls."

If you find that you are feeling more stressed than normal it's important to take time for yourself, relax and do something that brings you joy, even if that's simply taking a nap!

Dr. Vallabhan's Tips to Relieve Stress

Tip #1

Take Time for Yourself—Read a book, take a warm Epsom salt bath, get a massage, take a relaxing drive, take a nap, meditate, pray, or simply watch your favorite program on TV (not an action packed thriller) can be very relaxing and relieve some stress.



Tip #2

Exercise—Increasing cardiovascular exercise is critical for oxygen intake, circulation, and increasing both brain and heart health. It can also be a wonderful outlet to release frustration and lower blood pressure. People that exercise regularly, have significantly lower stress and cortisol levels. It's important to speak to your cardiologist or primary care doctor before embarking on any new exercise program. For those with cardiovascular disease, it's well known that swimming or water aerobics are exceptional options to safely increase cardio without as much vigor as with land exercising. Also, low impact exercise like walking, Yoga or Pilates are also beneficial ways to get your cardio in without overdoing it.

Tip #3

Don't Ignore Your Symptoms—If you have any issues with anxiety, stress, PTSD or changes in your heart rate, blood pressure or are experiencing tightness or palpitations, don't ignore your symptoms. If stress or cardiac issues are left untreated, they can create exacerbated conditions or even death. Talk to your physician right away if you notice any changes in your health.

Dr. V

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Do You Need Knee Replacement Surgery?

What You Should Know

By Sergio Martinez, D.O.

When it comes to joint replacement, one of the main conditions that orthopedic surgeons see and treat daily is knee pain.

Arthritis is one of the primary causes of knee pain in the aging population.

Your Knees Withstand Remarkable Pressure on a Daily Basis

Walking, standing, and exercising put a lot of strain on our knees. For example, a person that weighs 150 lbs. walking up a flight of stairs will put approximately 500 lbs. of pressure on the knees — with each step. Not only is the knee one of the most intricate of all the joints in the body, but it is also the most susceptible to arthritis. Multiple types of arthritis affect the knees, but osteoarthritis is by far the number one type that surpasses all others.

Positioned between the three bones of the knee (the femur, tibia, and patella), the articular cartilage provides a smooth gliding surface and acts as a shock absorber. This cartilage is smooth and resilient but is susceptible to wear and tear. Once the cartilage begins to break down it is difficult to stop, and often, the cartilage breaks down completely and wears away. This can cause soreness, swelling, and stiffness, and is the beginning stages of osteoarthritis, or bone rubbing against bone. In turn, this can cause bone spurs and a great deal of discomfort.

Osteoarthritis develops slowly, and often, the pain becomes worse with time. This type of arthritis is also known as degenerative joint disease because it is often associated with the aging process. This process can also affect younger people. Osteoarthritis pain can be debilitating and interfere with daily activities, affect your ability to work, and create limited range of motion in your life.

Many people may find little to no relief with over-the-counter nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), like ibuprofen. Other treatment methods are often necessary.

Treatment

Conservative methods are the first line of defense. These included things such as weight reduction, controlled non-resistive exercises, bracing, injections, biologic regenerative methods, and pain medication.



However, because the knee joint has no blood supply, it's difficult to heal this area with many alternative treatments, and surgery is often necessary.

Knee Joint Replacement

Depending on your individual circumstances and especially your age, you may be a candidate for a partial knee replacement. In cases of extensive degeneration, a total knee replacement may be more appropriate.

Arthritic damage to one side of the knee is common, so utilizing an implant customized for the medial or lateral deteriorated area is often a better option than a knee replacement depending on your individual circumstances.

If you are a candidate for a partial knee implant, a technique to preserve your tendons and ligaments, as well as part of your natural knee bone when possible is available. Additionally, preserving the bone will provide a more natural knee for any future treatments.

SERGIO MARTINEZ, DO, AOA, AOAO

Sergio Martinez, D.O. is a board certified orthopedic surgeon. Dr. Martinez earned his bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Chemistry from the University of Miami, Coral Gables. He received a certificate in Biomedical Sciences from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine and then received his Doctorate of Osteopathy from the same.



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WHAT IS VENOUS HYPERTENSION?

Venous hypertension is a medical condition involving increased pressure in the veins, particularly the legs. It is crucial to understand the implications of this diagnosis, including its description, associated risk factors, symptoms, and available treatment options.

Description of Venous Hypertension:

Venous hypertension, also known as chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), occurs when the veins in the legs struggle to return blood to the heart efficiently. This condition often results from weakened or damaged valves within the veins, leading to poor blood circulation. Consequently, blood can pool in the lower extremities, causing increased pressure in the veins.

Risk Factors Associated with Venous Hypertension:

Several factors contribute to the development of venous hypertension. These may include:

- 1. Age:** The risk of venous hypertension increases as veins lose elasticity.
- 2. Family History:** A genetic predisposition may make some individuals more susceptible to venous issues.
- 3. Gender:** Women are generally more prone to venous hypertension, particularly during pregnancy.
- 4. Prolonged Sitting or Standing:** Jobs or lifestyles involving long sitting or standing periods can contribute to poor circulation.
- 5. Obesity:** Excess body weight can pressure veins, affecting their proper functioning.

Symptoms of Venous Hypertension:

Patients with venous hypertension may experience various symptoms, including:

- 1. Swelling:** Persistent swelling, especially in the ankles and lower legs.
- 2. Varicose Veins:** Discoloration, redness or the development of varicose veins.
- 3. Pain or Discomfort:** Aching or throbbing sensations in the affected legs.
- 4. Skin Changes:** Brownish discoloration in the lower calf, hardening of the tissues of the lower calf.
- 5. Fatigue:** Feeling tired or heavy legs, particularly after prolonged periods of sitting or standing.
- 6. Ulcers:** Skin ulcers may develop in severe cases, often near the ankles.



Treatment Options for Venous Hypertension:

It's essential to emphasize that treatment for venous hypertension aims to manage symptoms and improve overall venous health. Potential treatment options that patients may discuss with their healthcare provider include:

1. CONSERVATIVE MEASURES:

- **Compression Therapy:** Wearing compression stockings can reduce the pressure buildup that causes the complications of venous hypertension and alleviate symptoms.
- **Lifestyle Changes:** Encouraging patients to exercise regularly and elevate their legs when possible. Weight loss and walking to build up calf muscle pump is key.

2. MEDICAL PROCEDURES:

- **Endovenous Laser Treatment (EVLT):** This minimally invasive procedure uses laser energy to seal problematic veins, redirecting blood flow to healthier vessels.
- **Microphlebectomy:** A surgical technique involving the removal of small varicose veins through tiny incisions.
- **Radiofrequency Vein Ablation:** Use of radiofrequency energy to heat and close off problematic veins, thereby reducing the appearance and symptoms of varicose veins. This procedure is performed under local anesthesia and involves the insertion of a catheter into the affected vein, which delivers radiofrequency energy to collapse and seal the vein.
- **Venaseal Cyanoacrylate:** Adhesive to close the veins, creating venous hypertension.
- **Varithena:** a non-compounded sclerosant that chemically shuts down veins, leading to venous hypertension.
- **Ultrasound-guided Foam Sclerotherapy:** Injection of a special solution into the affected veins, causing them to collapse and fade.

Patients diagnosed with venous hypertension must prioritize consultation with a healthcare professional for personalized care. A qualified medical professional, such as a vascular specialist or phlebologist, will conduct a comprehensive assessment, considering individual health conditions, lifestyle factors, and the specific severity of venous hypertension. This evaluation is crucial in determining the most appropriate treatment plan tailored to the patient's circumstances.

Venous hypertension demands meticulous management to address symptoms effectively and mitigate potential complications. Medical guidance is indispensable in navigating the range of available interventions. Patients should be informed that seeking timely medical advice is beneficial and imperative for their well-being. Exploring suitable treatment options under the guidance of a healthcare provider ensures a targeted approach to managing venous hypertension, promoting better vascular health, and enhancing the patient's quality of life.

Get support for your veins and circulation problems today.

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

For more information regarding the prevention of varicose veins, please read this blog written by Dr. Horowitz: <https://cfvein.com/what-is-venous-hypertension/>

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COSMETIC DENTISTRY IS MORE THAN A PRETTY SMILE

By Richard W. Rozensky, DDS, D.ABDSM

Cosmetic 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.
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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!

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THE HIDDEN LINK: HOW YOUR HEART HEALTH COULD BE AFFECTING YOUR HEARING

By Dr. Evans Pemba

Recent research has uncovered a compelling connection between cardiovascular health and hearing loss, shedding new light on how our body's systems are intricately interconnected. The relationship between heart health and hearing ability has emerged as a crucial area of study, with implications for millions of people worldwide who experience either or both conditions. As medical understanding deepens, the evidence supporting this connection grows stronger, prompting healthcare providers to reconsider their approach to treating these seemingly distinct conditions.

The inner ear, despite its small size, is extraordinarily demanding in terms of blood supply. Its delicate hair cells and other structures require a constant, robust flow of oxygen-rich blood to function properly. When cardiovascular problems arise, these sensitive auditory components are often among the first to suffer. Poor circulation can starve these cells of essential nutrients and oxygen, potentially leading to permanent damage and hearing loss. The intricate network of blood vessels serving the inner ear is particularly vulnerable to cardiovascular dysfunction, making hearing health an unexpected casualty of heart problems.

High blood pressure, in particular, can be devastating to hearing health. The force of blood pushing against arterial walls can damage the delicate blood vessels in the inner ear, leading to accumulating harm over time. Studies have shown that individuals with uncontrolled hypertension are significantly more likely to experience hearing loss compared to those with normal blood pressure readings. This relationship becomes even more pronounced as people age, highlighting the importance of early intervention and prevention strategies.

Another cardiovascular factor affecting hearing is atherosclerosis – the buildup of plaque in the arteries. As arteries become narrowed and hardened, blood flow to the inner ear can be compromised. This reduction in blood flow may not only contribute to hearing loss but can also cause tinnitus, the perception of ringing or buzzing in the ears that affects millions of people globally. The impact of atherosclerosis on hearing health underscores the importance of maintaining healthy cholesterol levels and overall cardiovascular wellness.



The connection works both ways – research suggests that hearing loss might serve as an early warning sign of cardiovascular problems. Medical professionals are increasingly recognizing that hearing assessments could potentially help identify individuals at risk for heart disease before more severe symptoms manifest. This understanding has led to calls for more comprehensive screening protocols that consider both cardiovascular and auditory health. Early detection through hearing evaluations could provide valuable time for preventive interventions and lifestyle modifications.

Prevention and management strategies for both conditions often overlap. Regular exercise, maintaining a healthy diet, and avoiding smoking can help protect both heart and hearing health. These lifestyle modifications improve blood circulation throughout the body, including to the delicate structures of the inner ear. Additionally, managing stress levels and maintaining healthy blood pressure can help preserve both cardiovascular and auditory function. Following a Mediterranean-style diet, rich in omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants, has shown promise in protecting both heart and hearing health.

For those already experiencing hearing loss, understanding its potential connection to heart health is crucial. Regular cardiovascular check-ups become even more important, as addressing underlying heart issues might help prevent further deterioration of hearing ability. Similarly, individuals with known heart conditions should be particularly vigilant about their hearing health and undergo regular audiological evaluations. This dual approach to healthcare can lead to better outcomes for both conditions.

The medical community is increasingly adopting a more holistic approach to patient care, recognizing that treating these conditions in isolation may not be as effective as addressing them together. This integrated approach has led to better outcomes for patients dealing with both cardiovascular and

hearing issues. Healthcare providers are now more likely to consider both systems when developing treatment plans and preventive strategies.

Looking ahead, researchers continue to explore the intricate relationship between heart health and hearing function. This ongoing research may lead to new therapeutic approaches that could benefit both conditions simultaneously. For now, the message is clear: taking care of your heart health might be one of the best things you can do for your hearing, and vice versa.

Understanding this connection empowers individuals to take proactive steps in protecting both their cardiovascular and auditory health. Regular check-ups with healthcare providers, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and staying informed about the latest research can help preserve these vital functions for years to come. As our understanding of this relationship deepens, the importance of considering both heart and hearing health together becomes increasingly evident in maintaining overall well-being.



DR. EVANS PEMBA

Dr. Evans Pemba is the Audiologist and owner of Ocala Hears Audiology. A graduate of the University of Florida (UF), Dr. Pemba is a rabid fan of all things Gators and bleeds orange and blue through and through.

After graduating from UF, Evans served in the Army and has a special place for the Veterans that gave us all the freedoms we enjoy. When he is not seeing patients, Evans likes to enjoy the Florida outdoors with his wife and two daughters.

Born in Zimbabwe, he comes from a culture where oral tradition is the primary method via which knowledge is handed down from generation to generation. Therefore, he knows how important it is to be a good listener. As such, he promises to always listen more than he talks. That way you and he will chart the best path towards helping you hear better.



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If your love life needs a little-pick-me up or a complete overhaul we also have many options available that enhance libido and sexual responsiveness such as PRP and Stem Cell Sexual Regeneration Therapy for men and women, peptides PT-141 and Oxytocin that enhance intimacy and desire.

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Four Ways Exercise Protects Your Brain

If you want to keep your brain healthy as you age, scientists will be the first to tell you: It might be time to start getting serious about exercise. Studies have shown that physical exercise is one of eight established ways to reduce dementia risk.

Scott Forbes, an associate professor at Brandon University who studies exercise and sports science, says that a growing number of studies show the positive effects of exercise on brain health. Luckily, you don't need to hit the gym for an hour daily to see an impact.

"We found benefits when individuals exercised at least 3 times a week," Forbes said.

Adding small bursts of high-intensity cardio—researchers call them "exercise snacks"—three to four times throughout the day can have this positive impact.

So, how exactly does exercise protect the brain? Here are four ways.

1. Exercise increases blood flow to the brain

In mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's, the brain isn't receiving enough blood flow, starving the brain cells of oxygen and other nutrients.

Exercise increases blood flow to regions of the brain, like the hippocampus, which is among the first parts of the brain affected by Alzheimer's. This keeps the cells healthy longer and prevents them from becoming damaged or dying. Since the cells stay healthy, it also prevents the brain's immune system from overreacting and causing even more damage.

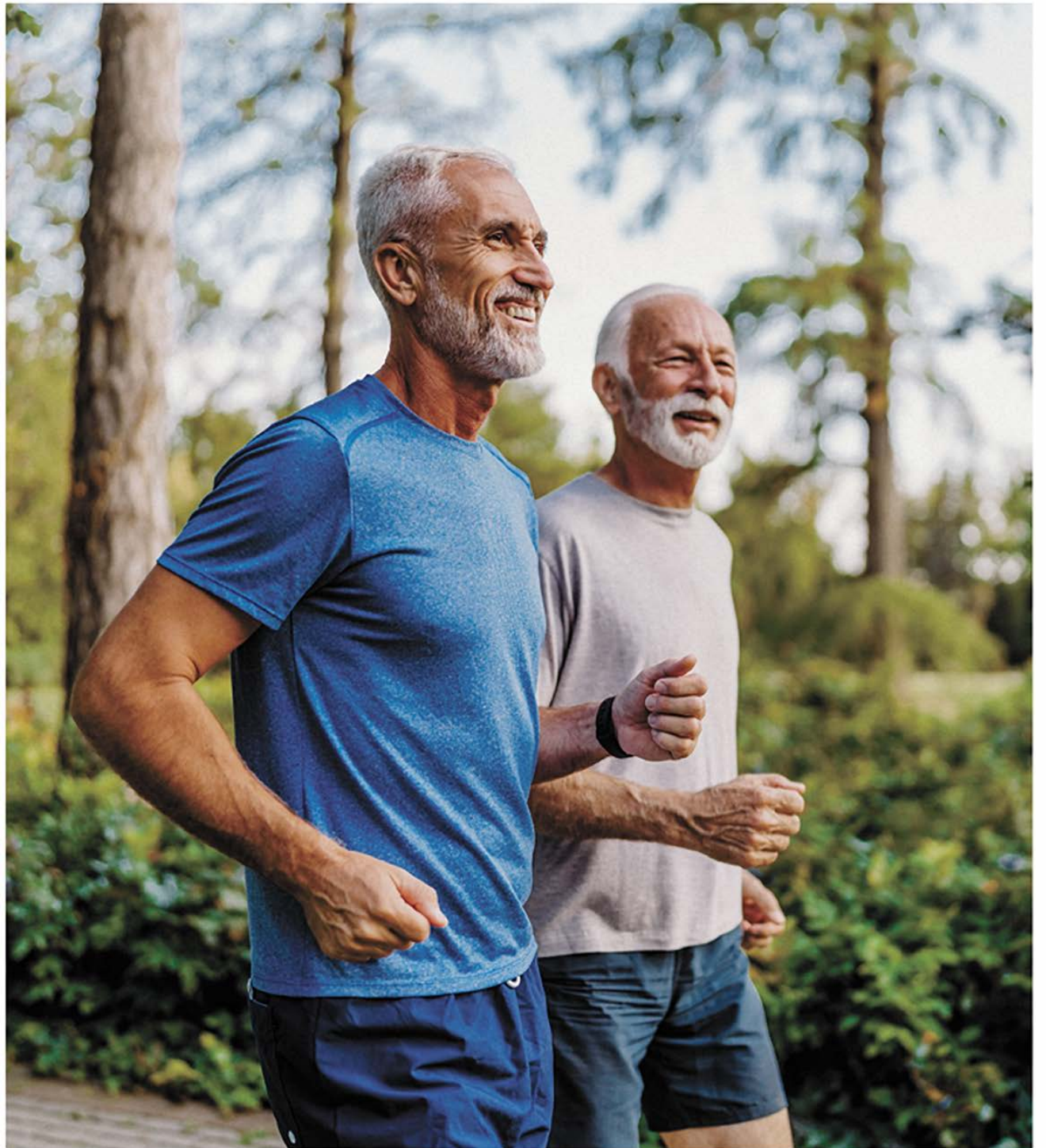
2. Exercise promotes the growth of new brain cells and connections

Exercise causes the brain to produce a variety of proteins called growth factors (IGF-1, BDNF, and VEGF) that may help the brain make new cells to replace old or damaged ones.

These growth factors can also help the existing brain cells grow in the hippocampus and strengthen existing connections, helping protect the brain against memory problems. Researchers are currently studying some of these growth factors to try and replicate the benefits of exercise in pill form.

3. Exercise helps the brain's immune system stay healthy

Some researchers even hypothesize that problems with the immune system, and not amyloid or tau, are the key drivers of Alzheimer's disease. Exercise can



help tone down pro-inflammatory processes in the brain that might contribute to Alzheimer's disease.

4. Exercise can help you stay social

Loneliness is one of the major risk factors for developing dementia.

Older individuals who exercise report reduced feelings of social isolation, and it helps people feel more resilient and positive about aging. Many people exercise in groups or play team sports, which might explain these findings.

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Love Your Eyes This Valentine's Day: A Focus on Retinal Health and Prevention

By Thomas G. Ward, D.O.

February brings hearts and flowers, but it's also an ideal time to show love to one of our most precious gifts – our eyes. While we exchange cards and chocolates this Valentine's Day, let's take a moment to focus on eye health, particularly retinal diseases that can impact our vision and quality of life.

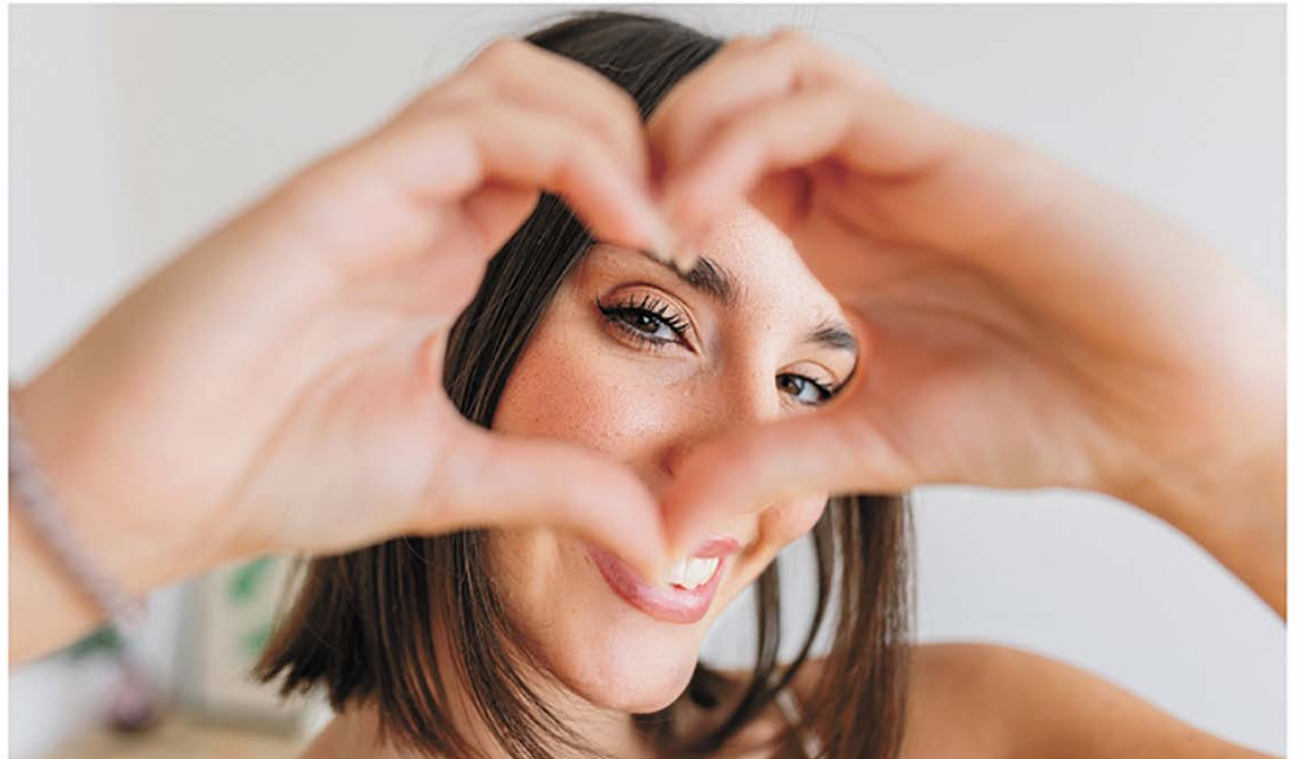
The retina, a light-sensitive layer of tissue at the back of the eye, plays a crucial role in transforming light into signals that create the images we see. Like a delicate film in a camera, our retina requires proper care and attention to maintain its function. Several conditions can affect this vital tissue, including age-related macular degeneration (AMD), diabetic retinopathy, and retinal detachment.

Age-related macular degeneration particularly affects the central portion of the retina called the macula, which is responsible for sharp, detailed vision. As we age, the risk of AMD increases, making it essential to monitor any changes in vision. Early symptoms might include difficulty reading or recognizing faces, or noticing straight lines appearing wavy.

Diabetic retinopathy, another common retinal condition, affects people with diabetes when high blood sugar levels damage the delicate blood vessels in the retina. Regular blood sugar control and comprehensive eye examinations are crucial for prevention and early detection. Like nurturing any relationship, maintaining eye health requires consistent attention and care.

This Valentine's Day, consider giving yourself the gift of eye health. Start by scheduling a comprehensive eye examination, especially if you haven't had one in the past year. Regular check-ups can detect early signs of retinal diseases before they cause significant vision loss. Remember, prevention is always better than treatment.

Lifestyle choices play a significant role in maintaining retinal health. A diet rich in antioxidants, particularly leafy greens, fish high in omega-3 fatty acids, and colorful fruits and vegetables, can support eye health. Think of it as treating your eyes to a healthy Valentine's feast every day. Additionally, protecting your eyes from harmful UV rays by wearing sunglasses and maintaining a healthy blood pressure can help preserve retinal function.



For those already diagnosed with retinal conditions, modern medicine offers various treatment options. From medications and laser therapy to advanced surgical procedures, ophthalmologists can help manage these conditions effectively when caught early. Support groups and educational resources are also available to help patients understand and cope with their diagnosis.

Digital eye strain has become increasingly common in our screen-dominated world. This Valentine's Day, show your eyes some love by practicing the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break and look at something 20 feet away. Consider it a moment of meditation for your eyes.

Don't forget that smoking significantly increases the risk of developing retinal diseases and can accelerate their progression. If you smoke, quitting is one of the most loving gifts you can give your eyes – and your overall health.

As we celebrate love this February, remember that self-care includes caring for our vision. Schedule that eye appointment you've been postponing, adopt healthy habits that support eye health, and pay attention to any changes in your vision. Early detection and treatment of retinal diseases can help preserve your sight for all the Valentine's Days to come.

After all, our eyes help us see not just the world around us, but also the faces of those we love. This Valentine's Day, make a commitment to protect and cherish your vision, ensuring many more years of seeing life's beautiful moments clearly.

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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.

Please call (352) 419-8928 today to schedule your eye exam. When necessary same day appointments can often be accommodated.



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YOU MAKE ME WEAK IN THE KNEES

By Dr. Chad Rose, DC

This Valentine's Day, let's talk about a different kind of weakness in the knees – the kind that's less about romance and more about your joint health. While poets and songwriters have long used "weak knees" as a metaphor for love, at Rose Wellness Clinic, we believe your knees should only go weak for your valentine, not from chronic pain!

Love Your Knees, Love Your Life

Remember when you could dance all night without a second thought? When kneeling to propose (or garden, let's be practical!) didn't require a strategic plan? Your knees have been there for all of life's big moments, and they deserve some tender loving care in return. Just like any good relationship, the one with your joints requires attention, care, and sometimes a little professional intervention.

Don't Let Knee Pain Break Your Heart

Are stairs becoming your nemesis? Has that morning jog turned into more of a morning "maybe not"? Many people brush off knee pain as a natural part of aging or something they'll "deal with later." But here's the truth: addressing knee pain early isn't just about relief – it's about preventing a cascade of complications that could affect your mobility, independence, and overall quality of life.

Warning Signs Your Knees Are Sending Love Letters

Just as love gives us signals, your knees have ways of telling you they need attention. Watch out for these signs:

- Persistent aching or stiffness, especially in the morning
- Swelling or tenderness around the joint
- Clicking or popping sounds during movement
- Difficulty with stairs or standing from a seated position
- Pain that increases with activity

Fall in Love with Our Comprehensive Care Approach

At Rose Wellness Clinic, we believe in matchmaking you with the perfect treatment plan. Our holistic approach to knee health includes a suite of innovative and proven therapies that work together to get you back to your active lifestyle:

Chiropractic Care: Like a skilled matchmaker, our chiropractors work to restore proper alignment and balance throughout your body, addressing the root

causes of knee pain rather than just the symptoms. Through gentle adjustments and personalized care plans, we help restore optimal joint function and mobility.

Red Light Therapy: This cutting-edge treatment helps stimulate healing and reduce inflammation – think of it as a romantic candlelit dinner for your cells, encouraging them to rejuvenate and repair. This non-invasive therapy can significantly reduce pain and accelerate healing.

Physical Therapy: Our expert physical therapists are like relationship counselors for your joints, teaching you the right moves to strengthen, stabilize, and support your knees for the long haul. They'll work with you to develop a customized exercise program that builds strength and flexibility while preventing future injuries.

PRP (Platelet-Rich Plasma): Sometimes, love comes from within. PRP therapy uses your body's own healing factors to regenerate and repair damaged tissue, offering a natural solution for chronic knee issues. This innovative treatment harnesses your body's natural healing abilities to promote long-lasting relief.

A Valentine to Your Future Self

Investing in your knee health today is like writing a love letter to your future self. Whether you're dealing with the early twinges of discomfort or managing chronic pain, Rose Wellness Clinic offers the expertise and compassionate care you need to keep moving, dancing, and yes, even going weak in the knees for all the right reasons.

This Valentine's Day, give yourself the gift of movement. Schedule a consultation with Rose Wellness Clinic and let us help you fall in love with an active, pain-free lifestyle again. Because the only time your knees should go weak is when Cupid's arrow strikes – not when you're climbing stairs!

Don't let knee pain be the heartbreaker in your life. Contact Rose Wellness Clinic today, and let's write a love story about your journey back to optimal joint health. After all, the best romance is the one you have with a healthy, active lifestyle!

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Dr. Chad Rose, DC is the lead chiropractor at Rose Wellness Clinic who serves The Villages and the surrounding communities in FL.

Dr. Chad Rose, DC uses chiropractic care to improve the health and wellness in all areas of patient's lives, whether they are having problems with back pain or neck pain, or just want to start feeling better when they wake up in the morning. Dr. Rose takes a "whole person" approach in chiropractic care, which means looking for the underlying causes of disease, discomfort, and pain, as opposed to just treating the symptoms. Many seemingly unrelated symptoms often arise from imbalances in the spinal column, and Dr. Rose will be able to determine the root of the pain and create a personalized chiropractic and wellness plan to suit each patient's individual needs. Under the supervision and care of our caring and skilled chiropractor, patients report higher functioning in all areas of their lives.

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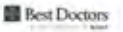
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BREAKTHROUGH IN NEUROPATHY TREATMENT: HOW SUMMUS LASER THERAPY OFFERS HOPE FOR NERVE PAIN SUFFERERS

Neuropathy is a debilitating condition that affects millions of people worldwide, causing chronic pain, numbness, and significant disruption to daily life. Traditional treatments have often fallen short of providing comprehensive relief, leaving patients searching for innovative solutions. Enter the Summus Laser, a cutting-edge therapeutic approach that is revolutionizing neuropathy treatment and offering new hope to those struggling with nerve-related pain.

Understanding Neuropathy: A Complex Challenge

Neuropathy is a condition characterized by damage or dysfunction of peripheral nerves, typically causing symptoms like burning pain, tingling sensations, muscle weakness, and sensitivity to touch. Common causes include diabetes, chemotherapy, autoimmune disorders, and physical injuries. The complex nature of nerve damage has historically made treatment challenging, with many patients experiencing limited success from conventional medical interventions.

The Summus Laser: A Technological Marvel in Pain Management

The Summus Laser represents a significant advancement in medical technology, utilizing high-powered laser therapy to address nerve pain at its source. Unlike traditional treatments that merely mask symptoms, this innovative approach focuses on cellular regeneration and healing. The laser delivers concentrated light energy deep into affected tissues, stimulating natural healing processes and promoting nerve repair.

Key Mechanisms of Summus Laser Therapy

1. Cellular Stimulation: The laser's precise wavelengths penetrate damaged nerve tissues, encouraging mitochondrial activity and accelerating cellular metabolism. This process helps restore normal cellular function and reduces inflammation.

2. Improved Circulation: By enhancing blood flow to damaged nerve areas, the Summus Laser helps deliver essential nutrients and oxygen, supporting the body's natural healing mechanisms.

3. Pain Reduction: The therapy triggers the release of endorphins and reduces pain-causing inflammatory markers, providing immediate and long-term relief for patients.

Clinical Evidence and Patient Outcomes

Numerous clinical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Summus Laser therapy in treating neuropathy. Patients report significant improvements



in pain levels, sensation restoration, and overall quality of life. Many individuals who previously struggled with chronic nerve pain have experienced remarkable recoveries, regaining mobility and reducing their dependence on pain medications.

Treatment Process and Expectations

A typical Summus Laser treatment protocol involves:

- Comprehensive initial assessment
- Customized treatment plan
- Multiple targeted laser sessions
- Gradual progression of healing and pain reduction

Most patients experience noticeable improvements within 4-6 treatment sessions, with continued benefits developing over subsequent weeks and months.

Advantages Over Traditional Neuropathy Treatments

The Summus Laser offers several distinct advantages:

- Non-invasive approach
- No significant side effects
- No pharmaceutical dependencies
- Targets root causes of nerve damage
- Supports long-term healing
- Relatively quick treatment sessions

Who Can Benefit?

Summus Laser therapy is particularly beneficial for patients with:

- Diabetic neuropathy
- Chemotherapy-induced nerve damage
- Peripheral nerve injuries
- Chronic pain conditions
- Reduced sensation in extremities

Future of Neuropathy Treatment

As medical technology continues to advance, the Summus Laser represents a promising frontier in nerve pain management. Its ability to stimulate natural healing processes offers hope to countless individuals who have struggled with traditional treatment methods.

Conclusion

For those battling neuropathy, the Summus Laser provides a beacon of hope. By combining advanced technological innovation with a deep understanding of cellular healing, this treatment approach is transforming how we conceptualize and address nerve pain.

Patients interested in exploring this revolutionary treatment should consult with qualified healthcare professionals specializing in laser therapy and neuropathic conditions to determine their individual suitability and potential treatment outcomes.

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.

LaserLab believes there's a better way to manage pain. We've pioneered a paradigm-changing health and wellness program that helps to revitalize the lives of people suffering from pain.



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REVITALIZE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH WITH THE THETA CHAMBER AT KEEP YOUNG WELLNESS CENTER

By Allen T. Stanley, Practitioner

At the forefront of innovative wellness technology, Keep Young Wellness Center proudly introduces the Theta Chamber, a groundbreaking therapeutic system that combines multiple healing modalities to promote deep relaxation, mental clarity, and overall well-being. This state-of-the-art chamber represents a significant advancement in non-invasive neural enhancement therapy, offering clients a unique path to optimal health.

What is the Theta Chamber?

The Theta Chamber is a revolutionary multi-sensory simulator that harnesses the principles of brainwave entrainment—a therapeutic approach that stimulates the brain using rhythmic frequencies to facilitate changes in neural activity. This process promotes the formation of new neural connections, balancing brain function and neurochemistry.

For those dealing with cognitive function challenges, stress, pain, headaches, migraines, PMS, and behavioral issues, the Theta Chamber offers a new avenue for mental health support. While many therapies are designed to target individual symptoms, the Theta Chamber goes a step further by focusing on holistic, brain-based health improvement. Through the use of precisely calibrated electrical frequencies, the Theta Chamber reinforces neural connections, supports regular brain function, and promotes a positive emotional state.

A Scientific Approach to Brain Health

Inspired by research on electrophysiological oscillations, the Theta Chamber has been carefully engineered to optimize brainwave entrainment. Brainwave entrainment uses rhythmic stimuli—such as sound, light, and electrical pulses—to guide the brain into a desired frequency. This frequency is commonly associated with calmness, relaxation, and focus, aligning with the brain's natural oscillations to create harmony and mental clarity.

How the Theta Chamber Works

Each 30-minute session in the Theta Chamber includes a blend of therapies scientifically designed to help “reset” the brain. These include:

- **Vestibular Motion:** Gentle rocking or rotation that synchronizes with the brain's natural motion-processing systems, promoting equilibrium and calming sensations.



- **Cranial Electrotherapy Stimulation (CES):** CES is a US FDA-approved noninvasive, electro-medical treatment that has been shown to decrease anxiety, insomnia, and depression significantly. CES is the main modality utilized in the recovery of drug addiction. Studies have shown that deep relaxation and calm alertness produced by CES increases suggestibility and hypotism along with an induced state of openness and adds heightened awareness; allowing new ideas, memories, and subconscious material to come to the surface.
- **Left/Right Hemispheric Synchronization using Light Therapy:** Alternating light stimulation aimed at aligning both brain hemispheres, fostering balanced thought patterns and emotional stability.
- **Traveling Pulsed Electromagnetic Frequencies (PEMF):** Low-frequency electromagnetic pulses work to improve cellular function and communication within the brain, supporting neural growth and recovery.
- **Inner Voice and Frequency Modulation:** This unique approach uses a combination of Theta, Alpha, and Delta brainwave frequencies, along with over 2,000 body-specific frequencies, customized to each client's current mental state.

Together, these modalities create an experience that is scientifically informed, safe, and tailored to individual needs. They help facilitate neurogenesis—the formation of new neurons and neural connections—enabling more rapid mental health recovery and emotional well-being.

The Theta Chamber's Impact on Mental Health and PTSD

The Theta Chamber provides unique support for people managing mental health conditions such as PTSD, a condition that can be especially challenging during the holiday season when stress levels peak. PTSD affects millions, often impairing a person's ability to manage stress, control emotions, and process memories. Many people with PTSD experience recurring flashbacks, heightened anxiety, and mood disturbances. By helping to “reset” brainwave patterns and restore balanced brain activity, the Theta Chamber offers a new resource for PTSD relief.

Research has shown that brainwave entrainment therapies can produce measurable improvements in mood and behavior for those struggling with PTSD, anxiety, and depression. Through regular Theta Chamber sessions, clients report a reduction in intrusive thoughts, a decrease in anxiety symptoms, and a more positive overall outlook. The controlled sensory environment within the chamber is especially helpful in providing a calm, supportive space for people looking to improve their mental health. And because the treatment is non-invasive and drug-free, it's accessible to a wider range of clients who may be looking to avoid medication or who need complementary support.

Prioritize your mental health and consider how the Theta Chamber's powerful, multi-sensory experience could help you with renewed calm and resilience. Every session is designed with care, ensuring that each person receives a customized experience tailored to their specific neurological needs. Take the first step toward lasting mental wellness—contact Keep Young Wellness Center to schedule your Theta Chamber session today. Experience firsthand the benefits of this revolutionary therapy and a healthier, more balanced mind.



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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.

As 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 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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Resources for paying for a Senior Living Community

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

LONG TERM CARE INSURANCE is the best resource to reduce the cost of senior living. Most require that you need assistance with at least two Activities of Daily Living which include bathing/showering, dressing, hygiene/grooming, transferring (i.e. from a bed to a chair), toileting/incontinency, assistance with feeding. Medication management and cooking are NOT considered ADLs.



There may be an elimination period until benefits begin and every policy is different; however, most are 90 days. During this time, you must pay privately before benefits begin. Some will pay for in-home care which may be used toward the elimination period. This is an effective way to utilize your policy so you can move to a community and immediately use your benefits. It is important to review your policy to understand your specific benefits and limitations.

In most cases, if you do not use your policy, you have lost your investment! Too often, many people who desperately need care put off receiving the benefits because they insisted on staying in their own home. Once approved for benefits, the premiums stop and may pay for most, if not all, of your stay thereby costing less than staying in your home.

LIFE INSURANCE POLICIES. Some policies are designed with a dual purpose as a death benefit or to pay for long term care. The entire amount can be used for long term care. If some or none of it is used for long term care, the remaining money is used as a death benefit. There is no elimination period, and you can use it along with your own income to help extend the payments.

VETERAN'S AID AND ATTENDANCE is an often overlooked need's-based benefit that is available for eligible Veteran's and/or their surviving spouse and must meet ONE of the following conditions:

- Served at least 90 consecutive days of active service including at least one day of active service during a period defined below and need assistance with Activities of Daily Living.
- Be bedridden
- Be at least 65 years old and
- Be a resident of a long-term care community

The Veteran must have served during the following dates with an honorable discharge:

- **World War II** - December 7, 1941 - December 31, 1946
- **Korean War** - June 27, 1950 - January 31, 1955
- **Vietnam War** - November 1, 1955 - May 7, 1975 – This is the only time when a Veteran must have served in-country in Vietnam
- **Vietnam War** - August 5, 1964 - May 7, 1975 – Veteran did not need to serve in country
- **Persian Gulf War** - August 2, 1990 through a date to be determined

Aid and Attendance is a monetary "add on" to the Basic Veterans / Survivors Pension. The amounts for 2025 listed below are the maximum monthly benefit amount a Veteran or surviving spouse may be entitled to.

- Veteran with no spouse or dependent child – \$2,358
- Veteran with a spouse or dependent child – \$2,795
- Two Veterans married to each other (one qualifies for A&A) - \$2,795
- Two Veterans married to each other (both qualify for A&A) – \$3,740
- Surviving spouse with no dependent child – \$1,515
- Surviving spouse with a dependent child – \$1,808

It may be possible for an individual who served in the Reserves or National Guard to qualify. The basic training that a reservist or somebody in the National Guard would go through doesn't constitute active duty. However, if they are called up after that either immediately or down the road, that can enable them to qualify.

In 2025, the net worth limits to receive this benefit is **\$159,240. This includes savings and checking accounts, mutual funds, stocks, and vacation homes. The primary home and car do not count towards the limit. There are programs to protect your income and assets, allowing you to qualify. Always speak with an attorney to learn more before assuming you don't qualify!**

There is a 3-year look-back period for assets that have been gifted or sold for less than fair market value to avoid the maximum net worth limit. There is a penalty that may be up to 5 years before they are eligible to receive benefits. However, if they are able to get the gifted item back, there will be no penalty period.

You must have a copy of the Veteran's DD214 to apply. If it's lost, the VA can assist in getting a new one, but it will delay the process.

THE MEDICAID WAIVER is another needs-based benefit for an individual with an income in 2025 less than \$2,901. For married spouses both applying, it is \$5,802. If one spouse remains home and needs some of their spouses income to survive, there may be something called "Spousal Diversion" that can help.

The same qualifiers apply as Aid and Attendance (highlighted above). However, there is a 5 year look back for Medicaid.

There are only a few communities that accept the Waiver. Most communities have two fees – the room rate, which may be shared or private, and the care fees. However, the waiver only applies to the care. The individual will still be responsible for their room rate, which sadly often exceeds their income. There are different providers for the waiver and each facility has a different contract with some or all of them and the amount of the benefit.

The Waiver is a State program and is not reciprocated from one state to another. Residency must first be established before starting the process from the beginning.

Aid and Attendance is a Federal program and applies to all US States and can be used for payment in all assisted livings.

In a few circumstances, both programs can be used together. It is important that you get help from a professional, or attorney for the application process for either program. It can take several months to be approved, depending upon the circumstances. However, the benefits may be retroactive to the date of the application.

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 in paperback and eBook. For more information or a schedule of upcoming events on how to have a successful transition to senior living, call 352-477-1866 or visit www.seniorliaisoncfl.com.



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The Transformative Benefits of Assisted Stretching: A Modern Approach to Mobility and Wellness

In recent years, assisted stretching has emerged as a powerful technique in the wellness industry, offering unique advantages that extend far beyond what individuals can achieve through traditional self-stretching methods. This professional approach to flexibility training, where a trained practitioner guides and supports the stretching process, is revolutionizing how we think about mobility, recovery, and overall physical well-being.

At its core, assisted stretching combines the principles of various bodywork modalities with modern understanding of human anatomy and physiology. During a session, a trained professional applies precise pressure and resistance while guiding the client through a series of stretches, effectively helping them achieve deeper ranges of motion than possible when stretching alone. This partner-based approach ensures proper alignment and technique, significantly reducing the risk of injury that can occur during self-stretching.

One of the primary advantages of assisted stretching lies in its ability to overcome the body's natural protective mechanisms. When stretching independently, the body's proprioceptive nervous system often limits range of motion as a protective measure. However, with the guidance of a professional, these limitations can be safely exceeded through controlled movements and expert manipulation, leading to improved flexibility and reduced muscle tension.

The benefits of assisted stretching extend well beyond enhanced flexibility. Regular sessions have been associated with improved posture, reduced chronic pain, and increased body awareness. For office workers who spend long hours at desks, assisted stretching can help counteract the negative effects of prolonged sitting by addressing tight hip flexors, rounded shoulders, and compressed spine muscles. Athletes particularly benefit from this practice, as it aids in recovery, prevents injuries, and optimizes performance through improved range of motion and muscle balance.

Mental health benefits also play a significant role in the assisted stretching experience. The combination of physical manipulation and focused breathing creates a deeply relaxing state, similar to meditation. Many clients report reduced stress levels, improved sleep quality, and enhanced mental clarity following their sessions. This mind-body connection is further strengthened by the presence of a trained professional who can provide guidance on proper breathing techniques and body awareness.



For individuals dealing with chronic conditions or recovering from injuries, assisted stretching offers a gentle yet effective approach to rehabilitation. The controlled environment allows for careful manipulation of affected areas while maintaining safety and comfort. This makes it particularly valuable for those with conditions like fibromyalgia, arthritis, or post-surgical recovery, where self-stretching might be challenging or risky.

Another significant advantage is the customization aspect of assisted stretching. Unlike group fitness classes or generic stretching routines, each session can be tailored to address individual needs, limitations, and goals. Practitioners can focus on specific problem areas, adapt techniques based on client feedback, and progressively advance the intensity as flexibility improves. This personalized approach ensures optimal results while maintaining safety and comfort throughout the process.

The educational component of assisted stretching sessions provides lasting value beyond the immediate physical benefits. Clients learn proper stretching techniques, body awareness, and movement patterns that they can incorporate into their daily routines. This knowledge empowers individuals to maintain their flexibility gains and better understand their body's needs and limitations.

As our understanding of physical wellness continues to evolve, assisted stretching stands out as a comprehensive approach to body maintenance and improvement. Whether seeking relief from chronic tension, preparing for athletic performance, or simply investing in long-term physical well-being, assisted stretching offers a professional, effective solution. By combining expert guidance with personalized attention, this modern approach to flexibility training provides benefits that extend far beyond what traditional self-stretching methods can achieve, making it an invaluable tool in the pursuit of optimal physical health and wellness.

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ABOUT StretchLab

StretchLab Normatec

- Normatec is a pneumatic compression therapy designed to improve circulation, flexibility, and muscle recovery.
- The Normatec leg attachments use compressed air to massage the leg muscles and mobilize fluid.
- Members get one complimentary session, with the option to add more sessions to their existing membership.

Xponential Plus

- Xponential Plus offers on-demand access to boutique fitness classes from various brands like Pure Barre, Club Pilates, YogaSix, and more.
- It provides live and on-demand classes, allowing users to work out from anywhere.
- The platform features additional video, audio, and lifestyle content for holistic health and wellness.

MAPS (Movement Activation Posture Symmetry)

- MAPS is StretchLab's proprietary digital scanning 3D technology.
- It performs a total body movement assessment scan in under 30 seconds by analyzing more than 2,000 data points.
- The technology identifies movement inefficiencies across four critical categories: mobility, activation, posture, and symmetry.
- Results are delivered on-screen and via email, allowing Flexologists to create customized movement plans and track progress over time.

FTP (Flexologist Training Program)

- Flexologist Training Program (FTP) is StretchLab's proprietary 50-70 hour comprehensive assisted stretching curriculum.
- The program includes a blend of online learning and in-person instruction, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for a career in stretching.
- Training covers movement analysis principles, focusing on the overhead squat (OHS), and provides a best-in-class stretch experience.
- FTP is the only accredited certificate program recognized by the Institute for Credentialing Excellence for assisted stretching.

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RECHARGE YOUR HEALTH:

Exploring Regenerative Medicine at The Recharge Clinic

When it comes to healing and recovery, The Recharge Clinic is redefining possibilities. By embracing cutting-edge regenerative medicine techniques, they offer powerful solutions to help your body repair, rejuvenate, and thrive. If you've been dealing with chronic pain, injuries that won't heal, or just want to feel younger and more energized, it's time to explore what regenerative medicine can do for you.

Human Cellular Tissue: The Future of Healing
Imagine using your body's natural mechanisms to repair itself. That's exactly what FDA-approved human cellular tissue therapies can offer. These treatments harness the potential of cellular tissue to regenerate damaged or aging tissue, reduce inflammation, and improve joint and tissue health. Whether you're struggling with joint pain, arthritis, or sports injuries, this innovative option provides a safe and effective pathway to relief and recovery.

Trigger Point Injections: Unlock Tension and Relieve Pain
Chronic pain can stem from knotted muscles, also known as trigger points. The Recharge Clinic's trigger point injections target these pain points with precision, delivering medication to relax tight muscles and reduce inflammation. This quick and minimally invasive treatment offers near-immediate relief, helping you move and feel better without the downtime of surgery.

Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy: Supercharging Your Body's Healing Powers
Your blood contains incredible healing properties, and PRP therapy puts that power to work. By isolating and concentrating platelets from your blood, PRP



treatments accelerate the repair of soft tissues, stimulate collagen production, and improve overall healing. Commonly used for joint pain, tendon injuries, and even aesthetic applications like hair restoration, PRP therapy is as versatile as it is effective.

More Ways to Regenerate and Revitalize
If you're ready to take your health to the next level, The Recharge Clinic offers an array of complementary therapies that amplify their regenerative treatments:

- **Peptides:** Targeted therapies that optimize hormone levels, improve recovery, and promote anti-aging benefits.
- **Acoustic Wave Therapy:** A non-invasive option that enhances blood flow, breaks up scar tissue, and promotes cellular repair.
- **Human Growth Hormone (HGH):** Reinvigorate your body's vitality and energy with treatments that support tissue repair, metabolism, and muscle recovery.
- **Ketamine Infusions:** Transform mental wellness with this groundbreaking therapy for depression, anxiety, and chronic pain.
- **NAD IV Therapy:** Recharge your cells at the molecular level to boost energy, improve mental clarity, and combat aging.

Your Next Step Toward Recovery
Regenerative medicine isn't just about fixing what's broken; it's about empowering your body to function at its best. Whether you're seeking pain relief, faster recovery, or improved vitality, The Recharge Clinic's team of skilled professionals is ready to guide you every step of the way.

Don't wait to feel better—schedule your consultation today and experience the Recharge Clinic difference. It's time to recharge, regenerate, and live your best life.

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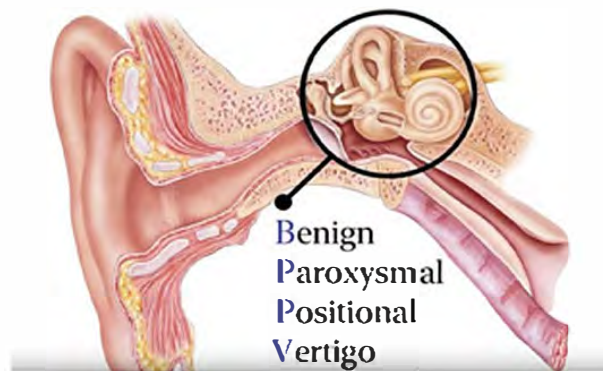
Expertise Matters

Vestibular Balance Issues Should Not be Ignored:

A Physical Therapy Method has Helped Countless Individuals Find Restoration

At least 50 percent of the U.S. population will develop a balance issue, at some point in their lives. Balance disorders typically happen to the aging population, between the ages of 50 to 75, and most of these are related to vestibular disruptions.

Patients suffering from vestibular related disorders frequently experience vertigo, dizziness, nausea, migraines, gait issues (walking), and imbalance. In addition, many patients complain of mood changes and cognitive impairment. Usually, these symptoms stem from issues in the inner ear. More than 69 million Americans have experienced some form of vestibular problems in their lifetime, and that number is on the rise.



BPPV: The most common form of vestibular complications is Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo or BPPV.

- Benign - Not life-threatening
- Paroxysmal - Brief spells that come and go
- Positional - Triggered by certain head positions or movements
- Vertigo - A false sense of rotational movement

Tiny calcium crystals (otoconia) in the inner ear that slough off and get lodged in the fluid of the ear canals (labyrinth) usually are the cause of BPPV. Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo can be effectively treated with one of two simple manual therapies that move the crystals through the ear, improving and in many cases alleviating vertigo and the sensations of dizziness. These therapies can be performed in the convenience of Innovative Therapies Group's office.



It's dangerous to leave vestibular disorders untreated. If you have balance issues, your likelihood of suffering a fall with possible complications like broken bones, or impingements, which cause limited range-of-motion is much higher. Not to mention that the unpleasant side effects of nausea and painful headaches can be alleviated through the proper treatment, which will help you to get back to living a good quality of life.

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.



Innovative Therapies Group, Inc.
352-433-0091 | innovativetherapiesgroup.com

HOW THE ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM AND CBD WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT IMMUNE HEALTH

How does the endocannabinoid system (ECS) work in harmony with hemp and CBD to support your immune health? If you've been curious about how these compounds function in the body, this could be an interesting read.

The **endocannabinoid system** is a complex network of receptors and chemicals in your body that plays a key role in regulating several important physiological processes, including immune response, pain sensation, mood, and inflammation. When it comes to boosting your immune system, the ECS is a key player. Hemp-derived **CBD (cannabidiol)** and other cannabinoids can interact with this system to support its normal function, helping maintain balance (homeostasis) in the body.

Hemp, with its rich content of CBD and other cannabinoids, works with your ECS to enhance **immune modulation**—a critical function in defending your body from illness. By influencing receptors like CB1 and CB2, CBD may help reduce inflammation, regulate the immune response, and even support cellular repair, making it an excellent natural aid for immunity.

That said, it's important to understand that **CBD is not snake oil**—it's a legitimate supplement with scientifically backed potential benefits. However, as with any supplement or wellness product, **quality matters**. Not all CBD products are created equal, and in order to experience the full benefits, it's essential to seek out products that are sourced from reputable companies. When shopping for hemp or CBD, look for third-party lab testing to ensure purity, potency, and the absence of harmful contaminants.



Because there's a wide variety of CBD products out there, it's always wise to consult with a healthcare professional to help guide you in selecting the best options for your specific needs. This way, you can be confident that you're making an informed decision and supporting your health in the best possible way.

If you're interested in learning more or need help navigating the world of hemp and CBD products, we at The Pharm Stand, would be happy to share additional resources and help.

The Pharm Stand:

Nature's Healing Powers at Your Fingertips

Hemp is quickly gaining recognition as a safe, effective alternative to traditional medications. With its wide range of health benefits and minimal side effects, it offers a promising path for those looking to reduce their dependence on over-the-counter drugs or prescription medications. At *The Pharm Stand* in The Villages, you can explore the natural remedies that are tailored to your specific needs, all while receiving personalized care from a knowledgeable, nurse-led team.

If you're ready to step away from synthetic medications and dive into nature's remedies for healing, *The Pharm Stand* is here to help you navigate the power of hemp to enhance your overall health and wellness.

Visit The Pharm Stand Today and discover how nature's healing power can support your journey to better health.

Disclaimer: The statements made regarding these products have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. The efficacy of these products has not been confirmed by FDA-approved research. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. All information presented here is not meant as a substitute for or alternative to information from health care practitioners. Please consult your health care professional about potential interactions or other possible complications before using any product. The Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act requires this notice.

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CAUDAL STEROID INJECTIONS:

An Effective Treatment Option for Lower Back and Tailbone Pain

By Brent Compton, MD

Caudal steroid injections have emerged as a valuable treatment option for patients suffering from chronic lower back pain, sciatica, and tailbone discomfort. This minimally invasive procedure delivers powerful anti-inflammatory medication directly to the affected area, providing meaningful relief for many individuals who have not found success with conservative treatments.

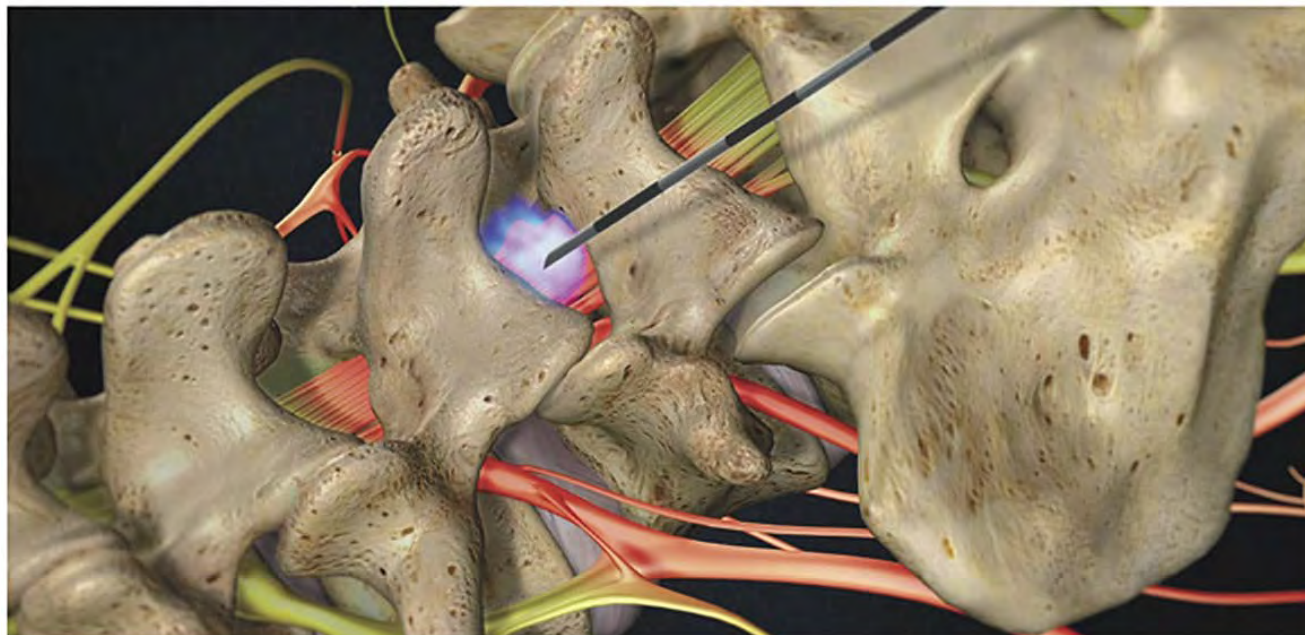
The caudal approach involves injecting a combination of local anesthetic and corticosteroids into the epidural space through the sacral hiatus, a natural opening at the base of the spine. This technique is particularly effective because it allows medication to spread throughout the lower epidural space, addressing inflammation and pain signals in multiple nerve roots simultaneously.

Patients considering this treatment often have conditions such as herniated discs, spinal stenosis, or failed back surgery syndrome. The procedure is especially beneficial for those experiencing radicular pain – pain that radiates from the spine into the legs – as the medication can effectively target inflamed nerve roots that cause these symptoms.

The procedure itself is typically performed in an outpatient setting and usually takes less than 30 minutes. Before the injection, patients receive local anesthesia to minimize discomfort. Using fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance, the physician carefully positions the needle to ensure accurate placement. This imaging guidance is crucial for both safety and effectiveness, allowing the doctor to verify the correct distribution of medication.

Most patients report feeling pressure during the injection but minimal pain. The local anesthetic provides immediate pain relief, while the steroid medication typically begins working within 2-3 days, gradually reducing inflammation and pain over the following week. The duration of pain relief varies among individuals, with some experiencing benefits for several months or longer.

While caudal steroid injections are generally safe, patients should be aware of potential risks and side effects. These may include temporary numbness or



weakness in the legs, mild soreness at the injection site, and rarely, infection or bleeding. Some patients might experience a temporary increase in pain before the anti-inflammatory effects take hold.

The success rate of caudal injections varies depending on the underlying condition and individual factors. Research suggests that approximately 60-75% of patients experience significant pain reduction following the procedure. This treatment can be particularly effective when combined with physical therapy and appropriate exercise programs, as the pain relief window provides an opportunity to strengthen supporting muscles and improve flexibility.

For optimal results, healthcare providers typically recommend limiting strenuous activities for a few days following the injection. Patients can usually return to normal activities the day after the procedure, though they should follow their physician's specific instructions for recovery.

While not a permanent cure for chronic pain conditions, caudal steroid injections can provide substantial relief and improve quality of life for many patients. They may be repeated if necessary, though most physicians limit the number of injections to three or four per year to minimize potential side effects from repeated steroid exposure.

Before considering this treatment, patients should undergo a thorough evaluation to determine if they are suitable candidates. Certain conditions, such as active infections, bleeding disorders, or allergies to

the medications used, may preclude someone from receiving these injections. A detailed discussion with a healthcare provider can help determine if caudal steroid injections are an appropriate treatment option for an individual's specific condition.

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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UNDERSTANDING DRY SKIN: CAUSES, CONCERNS, AND TREATMENTS

By Dr. Ashley Cauthen

Dry skin, also known as xerosis, is a common skin condition that affects people of all ages and skin types. It occurs when the skin loses moisture and becomes dehydrated, leaving it feeling tight, rough, and sometimes even flaky or cracked. Although dry skin is often a temporary issue caused by environmental factors, it can sometimes indicate a more serious underlying condition. Understanding the causes, concerns, potential illnesses associated with dry skin, and available treatments can help you manage the condition effectively.

Causes of Dry Skin

Dry skin can be triggered by various factors. Some of the most common causes include:

1. Environmental Factors

- **Cold Weather:** During the colder months, lower humidity levels can strip the skin of its natural moisture. This is especially common in areas with harsh winters or air-conditioned spaces.
- **Hot Showers or Baths:** While hot water feels soothing, it can actually remove essential oils from the skin. Prolonged exposure to hot water can lead to dryness.
- **Sun Exposure:** Excessive sun exposure can damage the skin and cause it to lose moisture. Sunburn can also exacerbate dry skin, especially in people with sensitive skin.

2. Skin Care Products

- **Harsh Soaps:** Some soaps and cleansers contain ingredients that can strip the skin of its natural oils, contributing to dryness.
- **Fragrances and Dyes:** Products with artificial fragrances or dyes can irritate the skin and contribute to dryness, especially for people with sensitive skin.

3. Medical Conditions

Certain medical conditions can also contribute to dry skin:

- **Eczema (Atopic Dermatitis):** This chronic condition causes the skin to become inflamed, itchy, and dry. People with eczema often have a weakened skin barrier, making it more prone to dryness.
- **Psoriasis:** Psoriasis is an autoimmune condition that leads to the rapid buildup of skin cells, causing scales and patches of dry, thick skin.
- **Hypothyroidism:** An underactive thyroid can lead to a reduction in the skin's ability to produce oils, resulting in dry skin.

- **Diabetes:** High blood sugar can lead to dehydration, which in turn causes the skin to become dry.
- **Dehydration:** Insufficient water intake can lead to dehydration, which affects the skin's hydration levels, leaving it dry and flaky.

4. Age

As we age, the skin's natural ability to retain moisture decreases. The production of natural oils slows down, and the skin becomes thinner and less able to retain water. This makes older adults more prone to dry skin.

5. Medications

Some medications, such as those used to treat acne, high blood pressure, and cholesterol, can have side effects that cause dryness. Diuretics, for example, promote fluid loss, which can lead to dehydration and dry skin.

Concerns and Illnesses Associated with Dry Skin

While dry skin is often a mild, temporary issue, it can sometimes lead to more serious health concerns. If left untreated or poorly managed, dry skin can lead to the following conditions:

1. Infections

Dry, cracked skin is more susceptible to infections. Small tears or cracks in the skin provide an entry point for bacteria, fungi, or viruses, which can lead to infections like cellulitis, athlete's foot, or fungal rashes.

2. Eczema Flare-Ups

For individuals with eczema, dry skin can trigger flare-ups of the condition, leading to red, itchy, and inflamed patches. Without proper care, these flare-ups can become more severe and difficult to manage.

3. Psoriasis Aggravation

In individuals with psoriasis, dry skin can cause the skin to crack and peel, making the condition worse. Dryness can increase the discomfort caused by psoriasis and hinder the effectiveness of treatments.

4. Skin Sensitivity

Dry skin is more sensitive to environmental factors like heat, cold, and sun exposure. This heightened sensitivity can lead to further irritation and discomfort.

Home Remedies for Dry Skin

Treating dry skin at home often involves using simple, affordable methods to restore moisture and protect the skin. Here are some helpful tips:

1. Moisturize Regularly

Using a good-quality moisturizer is one of the most effective ways to treat dry skin. Look for creams or ointments with ingredients like hyaluronic acid, glycerin, ceramides, and petrolatum, which help lock in moisture. Apply moisturizer immediately after bathing to trap water in the skin.

2. Use Gentle Skin Care Products

Switch to mild, fragrance-free cleansers and avoid harsh soaps. Look for products labeled as "moisturizing" or "hydrating" to help replenish the skin's moisture.

3. Limit Hot Showers and Baths

Avoid prolonged exposure to hot water, as it can strip the skin of its natural oils. Opt for lukewarm water instead and try to keep your showers short.

4. Stay Hydrated

Drinking plenty of water throughout the day helps to maintain the skin's hydration levels from the inside. Aim for at least 8 glasses of water per day.

5. Humidify Your Home

Using a humidifier in your home can help prevent moisture loss from the skin, particularly in winter when indoor air tends to be dry.

In-Office Treatments for Dry Skin

For more persistent cases of dry skin or conditions that don't improve with home remedies, a visit to our dermatology office may be necessary. Here are some treatments we may recommend:

1. Prescription Topicals

For conditions like eczema or psoriasis, we may prescribe topical corticosteroids or other prescription-strength creams to reduce inflammation and hydrate the skin. These treatments can help control flare-ups and keep the skin's moisture levels balanced.

2. Hydration Therapy

For extremely dry skin, especially in cases of eczema or psoriasis, we may recommend treatments that hydrate the skin deeply. This may include the use of professional-grade moisturizers or topical treatments that are more effective than over-the-counter options.

3. Light Therapy

Light therapy (phototherapy) may be used for patients with psoriasis or other chronic skin conditions. This treatment uses ultraviolet light to help improve the skin's condition and reduce symptoms of dryness, redness, and irritation.

Dry skin is a common condition that can be managed effectively with the right approach. Whether caused by environmental factors, medical conditions, or lifestyle choices, understanding the causes and available treatments is essential for achieving healthy, hydrated skin. At MidState Skin, we are here to help guide you through personalized treatment options to keep your skin feeling and looking its best. If you're experiencing persistent or severe dry skin, don't hesitate to reach out for a consultation to explore the best treatment plan for your needs.



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WHOLEHEARTED

By Jodi Thomas

I love Valentine's Day. Not just the flowers and the chocolate and all that good stuff, but I have always loved the idea of celebrating *love* . . . and on a trivial note, seeing all the pink and red hearts just makes me happy for some reason.

Lately I've been thinking a lot about my own heart. When reflecting on 2025 and what I hope for this year, I really desire to live *wholeheartedly*. And the first step in doing this is learning to pay attention to my **heart**. I'm reading a great book right now called *Soulful Simplicity* by Courney Carver. I highly recommend it. In the book, she discusses living wholeheartedly and that we have to learn to *listen* to our hearts. She has an exercise where in a quiet moment, you place both hands on your heart, one hand on top of the other, and just sit in the quiet for a moment or two, and ask yourself, "What is my heart saying? What is my heart feeling?"

Yet, most of us are terrified to do this. Why? Because, without a doubt, most of us are never taught to listen to our hearts. We are taught to "suck it up," to keep pushing forward, to fulfill our myriad responsibilities, regardless what our hearts might be saying, or trying to say. And there are many times where we have to do just that—it's part of being an adult. But there's an equal, if not more, need for us to listen to those precious hearts of ours, that have often long been covered up by obligation, fear of what other people think, busy-ness, and self-medication with our vices of choice.



The primary reason we need to learn to listen to our hearts are that our hearts are **very important to God**. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Think about what that says and the implication of it. Both good and bad flow from our heart, based upon the state of our heart. Ignore your heart for too long, and this is disastrous for living the kind of life that you once imagined for yourself.

In fact, our hearts are so valuable to God that they are the very place that Christ has decided to take up residence. Ephesians 3:17 says, "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ *may dwell in your hearts through faith*." Additionally, Romans 5:5 says that God pours out His love into our hearts. Now, I spend a lot of time nurturing my relationship with God. But to be completely honestly, many times I don't feel God's presence or love. These are things that I have to

take *by faith*. But even this comes from the heart, for Romans 10:10 says "For it is *with your heart that you believe* and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."

When I truly believe these truths, which comes from my very heart, that Christ actually lives in my heart and God's love is poured into my heart, I am empowered to live in God's love and to express that love to others in my day to day life. And folks, there is just nothing in life more important than that.

Not only does God reside in our heart, he desires to protect it. Philippians 4:7 says "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, *will guard your hearts* and your minds in Christ Jesus." How does the peace of God guard our heart? It guards it against worry, against anxiety, against unforgiveness. . . all of the things that wreck havoc on our hearts and create stress in our lives.

Our hearts are so valuable to God, that He desires *all* of our hearts. In Luke 10:27, Jesus said the greatest commandment was to "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart* and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind."

When you see those pretty pink and red hearts this Valentines Day, I hope you are reminded that your heart is a unique treasure to God. There is no other heart like yours. It is so valuable to Him that Jesus died on the cross so that He could live there and God's love be poured out into your heart. Because your heart is of the utmost value to God, you need to value it, too. Learn to listen to it. Learn to respect it. Don't ignore it. I hope you will join me in the quest of living *wholeheartedly* in 2025.

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