

CENTRAL FLORIDA'S

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

March 2025

Lake/Sumter Edition - Monthly

FREE 

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SPRING INTO ACTION

5 Ways Physical Therapy
Can Transform Your Health

7 EYE CARE MYTHS DEBUNKED

PAIN AWARENESS MONTH

ARE YOUR SYMPTOMS RELATED TO ATRIAL FIBRILLATION (AFIB)?

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REVOLUTIONIZING JOINT CARE

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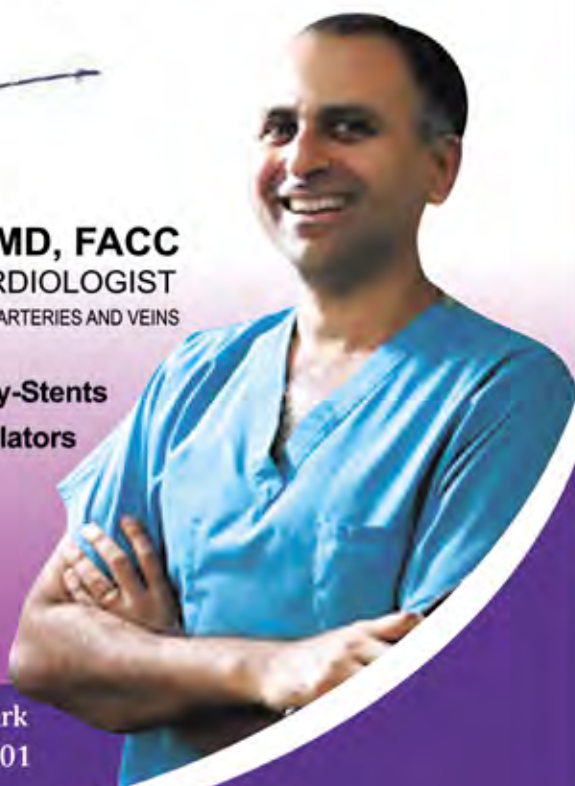
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7 EYE CARE MYTHS DEBUNKED

Practicing proper eye care is critical to maintaining your eye health. However, there are many misleading myths about vision loss that can lead to uninformed and unhealthy practices. Here are seven debunked eye care myths to help you determine fact from fiction while maintaining your eyesight.

MOST POPULAR EYE CARE MYTHS

1. Vision loss is unpreventable: While it's true that many serious eye conditions don't always show symptoms, nearly 80% of vision loss can be prevented with early detection and treatment. A routine eye exam as part of your yearly visit to an optometrist can identify growing problems, such as glaucoma, before they become serious enough to start causing vision loss. If you experience a sudden change in vision, including blurriness, floaters, pain, or difficulty focusing, your optometrist will be able to diagnose those symptoms as well.

2. Having 20/20 vision means your eyes are healthy: Twenty-twenty vision indicates your central vision is clear, but that doesn't mean your eyes have a clean bill of health. Conditions such as retinal disease and problems with your cornea can still persist, even with 20/20 eyesight. People with such "perfect" vision can still experience issues with visual tracking and other skills, making it difficult to work or learn. That's why a comprehensive eye exam looks at more than just your eye strength, so any issues can be detected and corrected.

3. Wearing eyeglasses and contacts weakens your vision: It's a common misconception that using contacts or glasses, or using a prescription that's too strong, will permanently worsen your eyesight. The truth is your brain wants to see as clearly as possible, and wearing glasses and contacts can greatly improve your eyesight, reducing eye strain and headaches. Because your brain has become accustomed to seeing things less clearly, it's likely new prescription lenses may seem overwhelmingly vibrant and may take a period of adjustment. While an incorrect eyeglass or contacts prescription can cause short-term effects like eyestrain or headaches, it won't permanently damage your vision. Instead, work with your optometrist to find the correct prescription for your eyes.

4. Eye exercises can eliminate the need for glasses or contacts: Eye muscle exercises, also known as visual therapy, can help certain eye muscle disorders that affect visual skills like convergence and



divergence. However, the need for eyeglasses or contacts depends on much more than the strength of your eye's muscles. Natural factors like your cornea's shape or eye length, as well as the development of cataracts or other eye diseases, will affect whether you need a visual prescription — all of which are factors that can't be fixed with visual therapy.

5. Sitting too close to a TV or computer damages your eyes: Some people think that excessive screen time or sitting too close to electronic devices is a cause of nearsightedness. In fact, it's often a symptom of it. While it's not a good idea to stare closely at bright screens, you may find it necessary if your devices are appearing blurry. Instead, take it as a sign to go and get your eyes checked.

6. Cataracts grow back: Cataracts happen when the naturally clear lens inside your eye begins to cloud, which can occur as you age. If the clouding is serious enough, the lens may need to be surgically removed and replaced with an artificial lens. Once the natural lens is completely removed and replaced, cataracts cannot grow back. What you may experience instead is a "secondary cataract," where cells collect on the posterior capsule, a tissue film that holds the lens implant in place. This can usually be corrected through an in-office laser procedure.

7. You don't need a regular eye exam if you see well: People often assume that if their vision is fine, they can skip their yearly trip to the optometrist. In actuality, much more happens during an annual vision checkup than just updating your prescription. Part of your eye exam checks for any changes in your eye health that can be possible symptoms of

other serious health conditions, including allergies, high blood pressure, diabetes, or even brain tumors and cancers. Your eye exam can help detect potentially life-threatening diseases that not only affect your health but take a toll on your whole body. Regular eye exams will help you catch and treat these conditions early on, preventing vision loss and protecting your health.

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Revolutionizing Joint Care:

How Robotic Technology is Transforming Recovery in Central Florida

In an era where medical innovation continuously pushes boundaries, robotic technology has emerged as a game-changer for individuals suffering from joint pain. Across Lake, Sumter, and Marion counties, advanced robotic systems like the Mako robot are revolutionizing orthopedic care, offering patients faster recoveries and improved outcomes for conditions that once meant lengthy hospital stays and difficult rehabilitation periods.

When Joint Pain Becomes a Barrier

Joint pain affects millions of Americans, often limiting mobility and diminishing quality of life. Whether resulting from osteoarthritis, injury, or age-related wear, deteriorating joints can transform once-simple activities into painful challenges. For residents of Central Florida, where active lifestyles are treasured year-round, joint limitations can be particularly frustrating.

"I couldn't even walk my dog around the block anymore," recalls Maria Santos, a 67-year-old Villages resident who recently underwent robotic-assisted knee replacement. "I tried medications and injections, but eventually, my orthopedist told me surgery was my best option."

Enter the Mako Robot: Precision Medicine in Action

The Mako Robotic-Arm Assisted Surgery System represents the pinnacle of orthopedic technology currently available to patients in Lake, Sumter, and Marion counties. This innovative system combines advanced imaging, intelligent algorithms, and precision robotics to transform joint replacement surgery.

Unlike conventional approaches, Mako-assisted procedures begin well before the patient enters the operating room. The system creates a personalized 3D model of the patient's joint anatomy, allowing surgeons to plan with unprecedented accuracy. During surgery, the robotic arm guides the surgeon within the pre-defined surgical plan, ensuring optimal implant placement down to the millimeter.

The Benefits: Why Robotic Technology Matters

The advantages of robotic-assisted joint surgery extend far beyond technical precision:

Faster recovery times mean patients typically return home sooner—often the same day for partial knee replacements and just 1-2 days for total joint replacements. This quick transition from hospital to home significantly reduces infection risks and allows for recovery in familiar surroundings.



Improved accuracy results in better-fitting implants. The Mako system helps surgeons achieve optimal alignment and balance, which contributes to improved function and potentially longer-lasting results.

Reduced trauma during surgery is another key benefit. The robotic system helps surgeons preserve more healthy bone and tissue, leading to less post-operative pain and quicker rehabilitation.

The Patient Experience

For Central Florida residents considering joint replacement, the robotic difference begins with the first consultation. Detailed imaging creates a digital twin of the affected joint, allowing surgeons to demonstrate the procedure and expected outcomes visually.

During surgery, the robotic system acts as an extension of the surgeon's expertise rather than a replacement. The technology provides real-time feedback, allowing for adjustments based on the patient's unique anatomy beyond what was visible in pre-operative planning.

Post-surgery, patients typically experience less pain and swelling compared to traditional methods. Physical therapy begins sooner, and many patients find themselves taking their first steps with their new joint the same day as surgery.

Looking Forward: Accessibility in Central Florida

As robotic joint surgery technology becomes more established, its availability continues to expand across Lake, Sumter, and Marion counties. What was once considered futuristic is now becoming the standard of care at leading orthopedic centers throughout the region.

For residents suffering from debilitating joint pain, the message is clear: advanced solutions are available close to home. With shorter hospital stays, faster recoveries, and improved outcomes, robotic-assisted joint surgery offers new hope for returning to active, pain-free living.

If painful joints are holding you back from enjoying Central Florida's beautiful outdoor spaces and active lifestyle communities, it may be time to explore how robotic technology could help you get back to the activities you love. UF Health Medical Group Orthopaedics is at the forefront of this revolutionary care, offering Mako robotic-assisted surgery to patients across Lake, Sumter, and Marion counties—helping you recover sooner and return to your active lifestyle with greater confidence and comfort than traditional approaches.



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Paul A. Mahle, MD, is an orthopaedic surgeon at UF Health specializing in joint replacement and adult reconstructive surgery. He provides personalized care for bone, muscle, and joint conditions, offering both non-surgical and surgical treatments for hip and knee injuries and degenerative conditions.

As part of a skilled healthcare team, he draws on shared expertise and best practices to diagnose and treat a wide range of musculoskeletal conditions. Outside of his practice, he enjoys traveling, being outdoors, and is passionate about physical wellness, encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle.

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ARE YOUR SYMPTOMS RELATED TO ATRIAL FIBRILLATION (AFIB)?

T.E. Vallabhan, MD, FACC



A Fib is an irregular heart rate that is often rapid with palpitations and causes insufficient blood flow. More than 6 million individuals in the United States have AFib. Hereditary heart disease usually causes the disorder, but other factors contributing to heart arrhythmias are high cholesterol, high blood pressure, obesity, heavy alcohol use, and more. A disruption to the top chamber of the heart, prompting the heart's rhythm and rate to fluctuate, causes an arrhythmia.

The two sides of the heart work in opposition to each other. The right side of the heart takes in deoxygenated blood from the body and feeds them to the veins and lungs; the left side carries the oxygen and nutrient-rich blood from the lungs and feeds it back to the body. Four chambers make up the heart. The top chambers are called the atria, and the lower are the ventricles. Without proper functioning, the heart will begin to cause damage to major organs, and without maintenance, your heart can cause adverse effects very quickly.

Most of us are very familiar with symptoms of coronary heart disease, but AFib symptoms often go overlooked and are not taken as seriously as they should be. Atrial Fibrillation takes over 130,000 lives each year.

The symptoms of an atrial heart arrhythmia are:

- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Racing heart
- Fluttering heart
- Palpitation
- Uneven heartbeat
- Chest pain

If left untreated, AFib can cause blood clots to form in the heart. These clots are produced due to the restricted pumping of the chambers, which causes the blood to pool in the atria and form clots. If the blood clots break off, they can reach the brain and cause a stroke. Patients with AFIB are seven times more likely to have a stroke than those with normal heart rhythm.

Treatment for AFib

- Medications to regulate the heart's rhythm (antiarrhythmic drugs)
- Blood-thinners to reduce the risk of stroke
- Surgery (i.e. Catheter ablation, MAZE procedure)

It's critical to seek medical attention from a respected cardiologist if you are experiencing any of the symptoms related to atrial fibrillation. Do not wait, the heart muscle, rhythm, rate, and ability to pump correctly, is what is keeping you alive.

Dr. V

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VEIN HEALTH AS THE TEMPERATURE RISES AND FALL

Understanding how external factors like heat affect your vein health is crucial for managing symptoms and preventing further complications. When thinking about veins, we're exploring a complex network responsible for circulating blood throughout our bodies. Picture this: within our veins are tiny valves that regulate blood flow. However, when these valves become compromised, as is the case with varicose veins, blood can accumulate, leading to discomfort and visible changes in our lower extremities.

Now, let's focus on the sun's role in this scenario. When exposed to high temperatures, our bodies naturally kick into gear to cool us down. One of the mechanisms involved is vasodilation, where our blood vessels widen to promote heat dissipation. While this process is essential for temperature regulation, it can exacerbate issues for those with varicose veins. Imagine this: already-stressed veins are now tasked with handling increased blood flow, which only amplifies swelling and puts more strain on those delicate valves.

So, what can you do to ease the burden on your veins during the scorching summer months?

- 1. Mind the Water Temperature:** As tempting as it may be to soak in a hot tub, opt for lukewarm baths to avoid further aggravating your veins.
- 2. Seek Shade:** Embrace the shady spots outdoors to give your veins a break from the heat. Your body will thank you for the reprieve.
- 3. Time Your Activities:** Plan outdoor excursions wisely, steering clear of the sun's peak intensity between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. whenever possible.
- 4. Hydrate:** Keep your body well-hydrated to maintain optimal blood viscosity, making it easier for your veins to do their job effectively.
- 5. Stay Active:** Don't let the heat sideline your exercise routine. Even short walks or aquatic workouts can do wonders for your circulation and overall vein health.
- 6. Dress Smart:** Choose breathable, loose-fitting clothing to stay cool and comfortable.



Now, let's shift gears to the cooler months. Interestingly, cold temperatures offer some respite for your veins. Just as ice reduces swelling, chilly weather causes veins to constrict, providing relief from discomfort and minimizing swelling. However, winter brings its own challenges, such as decreased physical activity and indulgent holiday feasts, which can negatively impact vein health.

HERE'S HOW TO NAVIGATE THE WINTER SEASON WITH YOUR VEIN HEALTH IN MIND:

- 1. Keep Moving:** Combat the urge to hibernate by incorporating regular movement into your daily routine.
- 2. Mindful Eating:** While holiday indulgence is part of the fun, strive for balance by making healthier food choices whenever possible.
- 3. Stretch Regularly:** Whether you are desk-bound or on your feet all day, stretching breaks can boost circulation and alleviate symptoms of vein issues.

For more information regarding the prevention of varicose veins, please see our blog at:
<https://cfvein.com/vein-health-and-seasons/>

While these lifestyle adjustments can help manage symptoms, seeking professional treatment is essential for long-term vein health. At Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center, our experts specialize in minimally invasive procedures tailored to your unique needs. Say goodbye to discomfort and hello to healthy, beautiful legs. Contact us today to schedule your consultation and take the first step toward vein wellness.

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SPRING INTO ACTION: 5 WAYS PHYSICAL THERAPY CAN TRANSFORM YOUR HEALTH

By Dr. Chad Rose, DC

As Florida's perfect weather welcomes another beautiful spring season, it's the ideal time for personal renewal. It's time to shake off the hibernation habits and spring into action for your health. Physical therapy, often underutilized and misunderstood, provides powerful tools to enhance your well-being beyond just injury recovery. Here's how making physical therapy part of your health routine can help you blossom this season.

Personalized Movement Plans for Lasting Results

One-size-fits-all exercise routines often lead to disappointment or injury. Physical therapists are movement specialists who evaluate your unique body mechanics, strengths, and limitations to create customized plans that work specifically for you.

Unlike generalized workout programs, PT-designed routines address your individual needs, whether you're recovering from surgery, managing chronic pain, or simply looking to improve your fitness safely. This personalized approach ensures you're working efficiently toward your goals while minimizing injury risk and maximizing results.

Prevention: Your Best Health Investment

Many people think of physical therapy only after injury strikes, but its preventive powers are remarkable. Regular sessions can identify and correct movement patterns that might lead to future problems. Your physical therapist can spot early warning signs in your posture, gait, or muscle imbalances that could develop into painful conditions later.

Prevention through physical therapy is particularly valuable for those with physically demanding jobs, athletes, and seniors. Like regular dental check-ups prevent major tooth problems, proactive physical therapy prevents musculoskeletal issues before they begin.

Beyond Pain Relief: Addressing Root Causes

While medications can mask pain temporarily, physical therapy works to resolve underlying issues causing discomfort. Through a combination of manual therapy, therapeutic exercises, and education, physical therapists address the root causes of pain rather than just treating symptoms.



This comprehensive approach leads to more sustainable outcomes. Many patients find that consistent PT helps them reduce dependence on pain medications while improving their quality of life. The skills learned in therapy sessions also provide tools for self-management between appointments.

Enhancing Performance in Daily Life

Physical therapy isn't just for athletes or those recovering from injuries. Everyone can benefit from improved movement quality in daily activities. From picking up your children to gardening or carrying groceries, better movement patterns make everyday tasks easier and safer.

As your body mechanics improve through therapy, you'll likely notice increased energy levels, better posture, and greater confidence in your physical abilities. These improvements ripple throughout your life, affecting everything from work productivity to leisure activities.

Holistic Approach to Wellness

Modern physical therapy takes a whole-person approach to health. Beyond exercises, therapists often address nutrition, sleep quality, stress management, and other lifestyle factors affecting physical wellness. This integrated perspective helps create sustainable health improvements rather than quick fixes.

Many therapists now incorporate mindfulness techniques, breathing exercises, and other complementary approaches that benefit both physical and mental health. This holistic strategy recognizes that true wellness encompasses both body and mind.

As spring unfolds with its promise of renewal, consider how physical therapy might help you achieve your health goals. Whether you're managing a chronic condition, recovering from injury, or simply wanting to move better and feel stronger, making physical therapy a priority can help you spring into action toward your best health yet.

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Pain Awareness Month: Understanding Joint Pain in Sports Like Pickleball, Tennis, and Golf

By Dr. Nam Dinh, MD, FAAOS

March is Pain Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and educate the public about the various forms of pain and their impact on daily life. One common type of pain is joint pain, which can be particularly prevalent among individuals who participate in sports such as pickleball, tennis, and golf.

Joint pain is a common issue that affects many individuals who participate in sports, such as pickleball, tennis, and golf. These sports can put stress on the joints, particularly the hips, knees, and shoulders, leading to pain, swelling, and reduced range of motion. If joint pain is severe or persistent, it can impact an individual's ability to participate in physical activities and enjoy their favorite sports.

Orthopaedic surgeons are medical doctors who specialize in the treatment of bones, joints, and muscles. They provide a range of treatments for individuals with joint pain, including both surgical and non-surgical options.

Non-surgical treatments for joint pain include physical therapy, chiropractic care, and pain management techniques, such as corticosteroid injections, to relieve pain and improve joint function. In some cases, orthopaedic surgeons may also recommend medications, such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), to reduce pain and swelling.

If non-surgical treatments are not effective, orthopaedic surgeons may recommend surgical intervention. Joint surgery can range from minimally invasive procedures, such as arthroscopy, to more complex procedures, such as joint replacement surgery.

Arthroscopy is a minimally invasive surgical procedure that involves the use of a small camera and instruments to diagnose and treat joint problems. This procedure is often used to treat joint conditions such as meniscal tears, rotator cuff tears, and osteoarthritis.

Joint replacement surgery is a procedure in which a damaged joint is replaced with an artificial joint, called a prosthesis. Joint replacement surgery is typically recommended for individuals with severe joint pain and limited joint function. The most common joint replacement surgeries include hip replacement, knee replacement, and shoulder replacement.

Orthopaedic surgeons will evaluate the individual's specific needs and recommend the most appropriate treatment option. The goal of treatment is to relieve pain, improve joint function, and help individuals to return to their favorite sports activities as quickly and safely as possible.

Thankfully, most injuries are overuse injuries and can be treated with non-surgical measures such as ice, anti-inflammatory medicines, and rest. If an injury is more serious, it should be treated quickly. Prompt treatment can minimize long-term damage. Visiting an orthopedic specialist who has experience in treating sports injuries will result in accurate diagnosis and proper treatment of your condition.



CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING SAFETY TIPS WHEN PLAYING PICKLEBALL:

- Be aware of your playing area and any obstacles that might cause a hazard.
- Avoid backpedaling on the pickleball court to avoid backward falls.
- Stretch and warm up before you play.
- Wear proper court shoes and eye protection. Use appropriate equipment.
- Listen to your body and give it time to rest.
- Communicate with your partner to avoid confusion.
- Improve your balance and learn to fall without injury.
- Do not play on a wet court.
- Work with a professional to improve your fundamentals.
- Have an emergency plan in case of injury on the court.



Joint pain is a common issue for individuals who participate in sports, such as pickleball, tennis, and golf. If joint pain is severe or persistent, individuals should seek the advice of an orthopaedic surgeon for further evaluation and treatment. Orthopaedic surgeons provide a range of treatments, including both surgical and non-surgical options, to relieve pain and improve joint function, allowing individuals to return to their favorite sports activities and maintain an active and healthy lifestyle.

About Dr. Nam Dinh

Dr. Nam Dinh is a fellowship trained orthopedic surgeon at Optimotion Orthopaedics with special training in minimally invasive LATERAL total knee replacement ANTERIOR hip replacement surgery. To learn more information about Dr. Dinh visit optimotion.com.



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Cognition, focus and reflexes

Peptides are amino acids specifically designated to direct very specific cellular responses. Research has shown that certain peptides such as SS31, MOTS-C and NAD+ have been helpful in patients needing assistance with neurologic disorders such as MS, Lyme's Disease, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and various other conditions. Stimulating mitochondrial responses these peptides are at the core of true cellular regeneration.

Muscular and neurological problems — such as muscle weakness, exercise intolerance, hearing loss, trouble with balance and coordination, seizures, and learning deficits — are common features of mitochondrial disease because muscle cells and nerve cells have especially high energy needs.



Addressing Parkinson's

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a progressive age-related degenerative disease with the loss of dopaminergic neurons (DA neurons), leading to progressive motor impairment including akinesia, bradykinesia, hypokinesia, postural instability, rigidity, stooped posture, and tremor at rest, which commonly present along with gait impairment. Furthermore, various non-motor symptoms are also involved including hyposmia, constipation, depression, appetite and rapid eye movement sleep behavior disorder. DA replacement therapy is widely used to improve the motor impairment, while long-term application can lead to various complications and cannot cure the disease.

It is widely accepted that PD is often associated with a variety of gastrointestinal symptoms, suggesting that dysfunction of the brain-gut axis might be involved in its occurrence. For this reason, a link between brain-gut peptides and the central nervous system (CNS) has been considered. Numerous studies have demonstrated that many brain-gut peptides have neuroprotective effects, improving the motor impairment in PD. The mechanisms of their neuroprotective effects may be related to anti-inflammation, anti-oxidative stress, anti-apoptosis, neurotrophic action, and autophagy.

GLP-1, a 30-amino-acid peptide hormone, is the transcription product of a pro-glucagon gene. Distributed in central and peripheral regions, it can freely cross the blood-brain barrier (BBB) by diffusion. The GLP-1 receptor is widely expressed not only in the pancreas,

but in most regions of the brain as well as other organs, such as in the kidney, heart, lung, intestine, and stomach. GLP-1 has a variety of biological functions, including inhibition of gastric emptying and intestinal peristalsis, stimulation of insulin secretion, inhibition of glucagon secretion, reduction of appetite and food intake, weight reduction, and protection against β cell apoptosis. In addition to the effects on the digestive system, it has been suggested that GLP-1 has protective effects on the cardiovascular system and takes part in the regulation of bone turnover. Moreover, neuroprotective effects of GLP-1 have also been demonstrated.

Mitochondrial pathways of disease

Disruption of normal mitochondrial function is detrimental to cell viability. Neurons are particularly dependent on mitochondria for calcium buffering and ATP production and, therefore, are highly susceptible to mitochondrial defects. Utilizing peptide therapies to restore them to therapeutic levels.

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Aging Doesn't Always Mean Cognitive Decline

Many people believe that cognitive decline is an inevitability as we get older — or that dementia is just a normal part of aging. But in fact, while age is perhaps the most significant risk factor for cognitive decline, this isn't the case for everyone. Many people stay sharp even into their 70s, 80s, 90s and beyond. Here are a few brain functions that may actually improve as the years roll past.

1. Older adults may make wiser split-second decisions.

Imagine driving to work in the morning, singing along to the music on the radio. The traffic light at the nearest intersection is about to turn red, and you spot a car close behind you in the rearview mirror. How fast can you read the situation and decide whether to brake and risk being rear-ended or to try to get through the intersection?

This kind of split-second decision-making relies on speedy mental processing. While rapid decision making may slow a bit beginning at age 60, we become more cautious. So, while it may take a few more milliseconds to make the split-second decision, chances are it will be a wiser choice.

2. The aging brain is better at blocking out distractions.

Imagine you're back in the car, driving with family members, loved ones, or small children. It is raining heavily, impairing visibility on the road. The other passengers in the car are trying to pass the time by playing loud games or music on their phones. How well could you spot a pedestrian running out on the road?

Older adults might be better equipped to handle this situation. A 2021 study found that older individuals were better at tuning out potential distractions and orienting their attention to essential things in their environment.

3. General knowledge, learned skills, and vocabulary accumulate with age.

Being older means having more life experience, more time to accumulate knowledge and facts, and more time to perfect hobbies and mental skills. As a result, people in their sixties and seventies gradually improve upon these abilities with age.

As a result, older adults come out on top when it comes to tests of knowledge, history, or even solving familiar math problems.



Research also shows younger generations who have grown up with the internet — like millennials and Gen Z — are more susceptible to misinformation than older adults.

Many recent studies have overturned the idea that aging causes cognitive decline across the board. While some people may experience problems with memory and other aspects of thinking or problem-solving, many other abilities stay intact. They may continue improving as we age.

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By Thomas G. Ward, D.O.

March is Save Your Vision Month: Protecting Your Eyes in a Digital World

In an era where screens dominate our daily lives, protecting our vision has never been more crucial. March, designated as Save Your Vision Month, serves as a vital reminder to prioritize eye health and implement preventive measures to safeguard our precious sense of sight.

Digital eye strain has become increasingly prevalent as adults and children spend countless hours in front of computers, smartphones, and tablets. Studies indicate that the average American adult spends over seven hours per day looking at screens, while children's screen time has doubled since the pandemic began. This prolonged exposure to digital devices can lead to a constellation of symptoms known as Computer Vision Syndrome, including dry eyes, blurred vision, headaches, and neck pain.

Fortunately, eye care professionals recommend several effective strategies to maintain optimal vision health. The 20-20-20 rule stands as a cornerstone of digital eye wellness: every 20 minutes, take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away. This simple practice helps reduce eye muscle fatigue and maintains visual flexibility.

Proper workplace ergonomics also play a crucial role in vision health. Positioning your screen at arm's length and slightly below eye level can significantly reduce strain. Additionally, ensuring adequate lighting that doesn't create glare on your screen helps prevent unnecessary eye stress. Many eye care professionals recommend using blue light filtering glasses or screen protectors to minimize exposure to potentially harmful blue light emissions from digital devices.

Regular comprehensive eye examinations remain the foundation of preventive eye care. While vision screenings at school or work are helpful, they don't replace the thorough evaluation provided by an eye care professional. These examinations can detect early signs of serious conditions like glaucoma, macular degeneration, and diabetic retinopathy before they cause significant vision loss.

Nutrition also plays a vital role in maintaining healthy vision. Foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids, lutein, zinc, and vitamins C and E can help prevent



age-related vision problems. Dark leafy greens, fish, eggs, nuts, and colorful fruits and vegetables should be regular components of an eye-healthy diet.

Outdoor activities offer another layer of vision protection, particularly for children. Research suggests that spending time outdoors may help prevent or slow the progression of myopia (nearsightedness) in young people. However, proper UV protection is essential during outdoor activities, as excessive sun exposure can increase the risk of cataracts and other eye conditions.

As we observe Save Your Vision Month, it's important to remember that vision care extends beyond March. Implementing these protective measures year-round can help preserve our eyesight for years to come. The American Optometric Association emphasizes that approximately 80% of visual impairment worldwide is preventable with proper care and regular examinations.

This March, take the opportunity to schedule a comprehensive eye exam, assess your digital device habits, and make necessary adjustments to protect your vision. Remember, our eyes are irreplaceable, and investing in their health today will pay dividends throughout our lives. By raising awareness and taking proactive steps to protect

our vision, we can work together to reduce the incidence of preventable vision problems and ensure clearer, healthier sight for generations to come.

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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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THE THETACHAMBER: A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO MENTAL WELLNESS

By Allen T. Stanley, Practitioner

In today's fast-paced world, mental health challenges have become increasingly prevalent. Anxiety, stress, depression, insomnia, and various addictions affect millions of people, significantly impacting their quality of life. Keep Young Wellness Center has introduced an innovative solution to address these concerns: The ThetaChamber™, a cutting-edge technology designed to offer relief without medication.

Understanding The ThetaChamber™ System

The ThetaChamber represents a breakthrough in non-invasive mental health treatment. This advanced system combines multiple therapeutic modalities to create a synergistic effect on the brain, helping to restore balance to neural circuits that regulate mood, stress response, and sleep patterns.

The treatment utilizes a combination of gentle magnetic stimulation, light therapy, sound frequencies, and vibration to encourage the brain to produce theta waves—a state associated with deep relaxation, creativity, and healing. This multi-sensory approach targets the underlying neurological imbalances that contribute to various mental health conditions.

Addressing Multiple Conditions Effectively

What makes The ThetaChamber particularly remarkable is its versatility in treating a spectrum of conditions:

Anxiety and Stress: The system helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system—our "rest and digest" mode—counteracting the fight-or-flight response that characterizes anxiety and stress. Many clients report feeling a profound sense of calm after just a few sessions.

Depression: By stimulating key neural pathways and encouraging the production of mood-regulating neurotransmitters, The ThetaChamber offers a promising alternative for those struggling with depression who haven't found relief through traditional methods.

Insomnia: The theta wave state induced during treatment helps retrain the brain to achieve more natural sleep patterns. Clients often experience improved sleep quality, longer duration, and an easier time both falling and staying asleep.



Addictions: Whether dealing with substance dependencies or behavioral addictions, The ThetaChamber helps reduce cravings by addressing the neurological reward pathways involved in addictive behaviors. This makes it a valuable component of comprehensive addiction recovery programs.

The Treatment Experience at Keep Young Wellness Center

At Keep Young Wellness Center, each ThetaChamber treatment is personalized to address the specific needs of the individual. The experience begins with a comprehensive assessment to identify the particular challenges and goals of each client.

During the session, clients recline in the specialized chamber while wearing headphones and light-filtering glasses. The treatment is entirely non-invasive and painless. Many describe the experience as deeply relaxing—similar to meditation but without requiring the mental discipline to achieve that state.

A typical treatment protocol involves a series of sessions over several weeks, with each session lasting approximately 30-45 minutes. Many clients begin noticing improvements within the first few treatments, with effects becoming more pronounced as the series progresses.

Benefits Beyond Symptom Relief

While The ThetaChamber effectively addresses specific conditions, many clients experience additional benefits that enhance overall well-being:

- Improved cognitive function and mental clarity
- Enhanced creativity and problem-solving abilities
- Increased energy levels during waking hours
- Better emotional regulation and stress resilience
- Reduced physical tension and pain

These complementary benefits contribute to a more holistic improvement in quality of life, extending beyond the primary symptoms that initially prompted treatment.

A Medication-Free Alternative

One of the most significant advantages of The ThetaChamber is that it provides a non-pharmaceutical option for those seeking relief from mental health challenges. This is particularly valuable for individuals who:

- Experience unwanted side effects from medications
- Prefer natural approaches to wellness
- Have not responded adequately to traditional treatments
- Seek complementary therapies to enhance their existing treatment plan

Keep Young Wellness Center emphasizes that The ThetaChamber can work alongside conventional treatments when appropriate, allowing for an integrated approach to mental health care.

The Future of Mental Health Treatment

As more people seek effective, non-invasive solutions for mental health concerns, technologies like The ThetaChamber represent the evolving landscape of treatment options. Keep Young Wellness Center stands at the forefront of this movement, offering clients access to innovative approaches that address not just symptoms but the underlying neurological patterns that contribute to mental health challenges.

For those struggling with anxiety, stress, depression, insomnia, or addictions, The ThetaChamber at Keep Young Wellness Center offers a promising path toward restored balance and improved quality of life—one session at a time.



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NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH: THE SURPRISING CONNECTION BETWEEN DIET AND HEARING HEALTH

By Dr. Evans Pemba

Your dinner plate might be doing more than just satisfying your hunger—it could be protecting your hearing. As we celebrate National Nutrition Month this March, it's worth exploring the fascinating and often overlooked relationship between what we eat and how well we hear.

Most of us understand that nutrition impacts our heart health, weight, and energy levels, but few realize that our dietary choices can significantly influence our auditory system. Research increasingly shows that certain nutrients play vital roles in maintaining healthy hearing and potentially preventing age-related hearing loss.

The inner ear contains some of the body's most metabolically active tissues, requiring consistent nutrient delivery to function optimally. Poor nutrition can compromise blood flow to these delicate structures, potentially accelerating hearing deterioration.

Several key nutrients stand out for their hearing-protective properties. Potassium regulates the fluid balance in inner ear tissues, with studies linking decreased levels to age-related hearing loss. Foods rich in potassium include bananas, potatoes, spinach, and yogurt.

Antioxidants, particularly vitamins C and E, help combat oxidative stress—a major contributor to cellular damage in the auditory system. Colorful fruits and vegetables like berries, citrus fruits, and bell peppers provide these protective compounds in abundance.

Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish like salmon and in walnuts, may help strengthen the blood vessels in the ear's sensory system. Research published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that adults who consumed two or more servings of fish weekly had a 42% lower risk of developing age-related hearing loss compared to non-fish eaters.

Magnesium deserves special attention as it helps protect hair cells in the inner ear from damage caused by loud noises. Whole grains, nuts, and leafy greens provide this mineral that may serve as nature's hearing protector.



Folate deficiency has been linked to hearing loss in older adults. A Dutch study found that folate supplementation slowed hearing decline in participants with age-related hearing loss. Lentils, beans, and dark leafy greens are excellent dietary sources.

The Mediterranean diet, with its emphasis on plant foods, whole grains, and healthy fats, shows particular promise for hearing protection. A study from the Journal of Nutrition found that adherence to this eating pattern was associated with a 30% lower risk of developing hearing impairment.

Conversely, diets high in processed foods, refined sugars, and unhealthy fats may accelerate hearing damage through increased inflammation and compromised circulation. Research has linked higher blood sugar levels with an increased risk of hearing impairment, suggesting that metabolic health plays a crucial role in auditory function.

Maintaining proper hydration is also essential, as dehydration can adversely affect the fluid balance in the inner ear. Water remains the best choice for staying hydrated.

For those already experiencing hearing difficulties, nutrition shouldn't be viewed as a replacement for proper audiological care. However, optimizing your diet may complement other treatments and potentially slow further deterioration.

During this National Nutrition Month, consider that healthy eating benefits extend beyond the commonly recognized advantages for heart health and weight management. Your hearing health stands to gain from mindful food choices as well.

Experts recommend a balanced approach: consume a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables, incorporate lean proteins and healthy fats, limit processed foods and excess sodium, and stay properly hydrated. These habits support not just general health but may specifically protect the delicate structures responsible for our sense of hearing.

As we age, maintaining good nutrition becomes increasingly important for preserving all our sensory functions. By making informed dietary choices today, you're not just investing in your overall health—you're helping ensure that you'll continue to clearly hear the sounds that enrich your life for years to come.



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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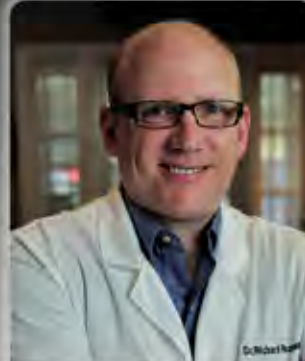
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incontinence, or mixed incontinence, and can be particularly beneficial for women post-childbirth or during menopause.

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have struggled with this common condition. Many patients experience noticeable results after just a few sessions, with a significant reduction in accidents, urgency, and the need to frequently visit the bathroom. For those looking for a non-surgical solution to regain control over their bladder, Emsella offers a promising alternative to traditional treatments.

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CONGRATULATIONS to Shanqueria Wiggins, PT, DPT!

We are thrilled to celebrate Dr. Shanqueria Wiggins remarkable achievement in passing her national Physical Therapy exam. Her unwavering persistence and perseverance, all while providing exceptional care to our members at StretchLab, has been truly inspiring.

Shan, your positivity and passion have left an indelible mark on our team. As you embark on this new chapter as a Physical Therapist, we know you will continue to touch lives and make a difference. Your coworkers and our members will miss you dearly, but we are confident that your warmth and dedication will shine in your new role.

Congratulations! Your success is well-deserved, and we can't wait to see what amazing things you will achieve next. StretchLab will always be proud to call you one of our own."

In case you are interested since it is MS Awareness month... One of our Flexologist, Melissa Hersh is supporting her friend, Kelly Barete-Beccaccio that lives in Jacksonville. Kelly has MS and is participating in the MS run the US 3,260 mile relay. Melissa will be joining Kelly in California to run portions of the relay with her. Kelly was recently featured in a River City Live news segment: https://www.instagram.com/reel/DGPBIS_uLmv/?igsh=Zm5heGM2aHNyOXNo



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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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.

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RECHARGE YOUR MIND:

Edgy Innovations in Mental Health Therapies at Recharge Clinic

In today's fast-paced world, conventional mental health treatments may not always deliver the rapid relief patients need. Recharge Clinic is challenging the status quo by offering a suite of advanced therapies—including ketamine infusions, NAD IV therapy, CBD IV infusions, and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) with testosterone pellets—that target the root causes of depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline. By addressing neurochemical imbalances, inflammation, and hormonal deficiencies, these treatments offer a comprehensive strategy to help you reclaim your mental vitality.

Ketamine Therapy:

Rapid Relief for Treatment-Resistant Depression

Once known solely as an anesthetic, ketamine has emerged as a breakthrough treatment for individuals with treatment-resistant depression. Research published in *JAMA Psychiatry* has shown that up to 70% of patients suffering from severe depression experience significant improvement after ketamine infusions. Unlike traditional antidepressants, which may take weeks to exert their effects, ketamine works within hours by modulating glutamate neurotransmission—helping to recalibrate neural circuits disrupted by chronic depression. Administered under strict medical supervision, this therapy offers an immediate lifeline for those in crisis, providing rapid symptom relief while paving the way for longer-term recovery.

NAD IV Therapy: Fueling Brain Health at the Cellular Level

Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD) is a coenzyme essential for cellular energy production and repair. As NAD levels naturally decline with age, deficiencies can contribute to cognitive decline and reduced mental energy. NAD IV therapy, available at Recharge Clinic, aims to replenish these critical levels, thereby enhancing mitochondrial function and overall brain health. A study in *Aging Cell* (2016) demonstrated that boosting NAD levels in animal models improved energy metabolism and cognitive performance. While further research in humans is warranted, NAD therapy offers promising potential as an adjunctive treatment for combating mental fatigue, enhancing clarity, and supporting sustained cognitive function.

CBD IV Infusion:

Natural Relief from Anxiety and Inflammation

Cannabidiol (CBD) has rapidly gained attention for its therapeutic properties, particularly in alleviating anxiety and reducing inflammation. Unlike THC, CBD is non-psychoactive, making it an attractive option for

those seeking relief without intoxication. When delivered intravenously, CBD bypasses the digestive system for faster, more reliable absorption. Research published in *The Permanente Journal* (2019) reported that approximately 79% of patients experienced reduced anxiety and improved sleep quality with CBD use. At Recharge Clinic, CBD IV infusions harness these benefits, offering a natural complement to traditional mental health treatments by modulating serotonin receptors and mitigating inflammation that may contribute to mood disorders.

HRT with Testosterone Pellets: Balancing Hormones for Enhanced Mood and Cognition

Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) with testosterone pellets provides another innovative approach for addressing mental health, especially in men experiencing low testosterone levels. Low testosterone has been linked to symptoms of depression, fatigue, and impaired cognitive function. Research featured in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* (2015) has shown that testosterone replacement can significantly improve mood, energy, and overall mental well-being. The steady release provided by pellet therapy helps maintain balanced hormone levels, minimizing mood fluctuations and supporting cognitive clarity. At Recharge Clinic, HRT is personalized and closely monitored by experienced clinicians to ensure optimal, safe outcomes.

A Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health

Rather than relying solely on conventional medications, Recharge Clinic integrates these cutting-edge therapies to address the underlying biological factors that contribute to mental health challenges. Ketamine infusions rapidly reset dysfunctional neural pathways, while NAD IV therapy recharges your cellular energy. CBD IV infusions naturally alleviate anxiety and reduce inflammation, and testosterone pellet HRT balances hormones to stabilize mood. This multi-pronged strategy not only provides immediate relief but also fosters long-term improvements in mental and cognitive health.

Emerging data reinforces the potential of this integrative approach. Ketamine's quick action offers essential relief during critical moments, and NAD therapy supports sustained brain energy production. Meanwhile, CBD's anti-inflammatory and anxiolytic effects, coupled with testosterone's mood-stabilizing properties, create a synergistic effect that addresses both symptoms and root causes. Each treatment is administered under the vigilant supervision of skilled medical professionals, ensuring that therapy is tailored to your specific needs and health profile.

Next Steps: Empower Your Mental Health Journey

If you're ready to move beyond outdated treatment paradigms and explore a more dynamic, personalized approach to mental health care, consider scheduling a consultation at Recharge Clinic. Their experienced providers are committed to crafting individualized treatment plans based on the latest clinical data and emerging research. With a focus on patient safety and measurable outcomes, Recharge Clinic's innovative therapies offer a fresh perspective on managing depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline.

Advances in mental health care are redefining the possibilities for those struggling with these conditions. Recharge Clinic's bold approach is not just about alleviating symptoms—it's about empowering you to reclaim your cognitive vitality and emotional balance. If you've been battling mental health challenges and are seeking alternatives to traditional treatments, these cutting-edge therapies might be the breakthrough you need.

Your mental wellbeing is an investment worth making. With Recharge Clinic's blend of rapid-acting and long-term strategies, you can transform your mental health journey. Consult with a qualified provider today to determine whether these innovative treatments are right for you, and take the first step toward a brighter, more resilient future.

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Financial Wellness; Retirement Planning

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

Planning for retirement is not merely a task for the elderly; it's a crucial aspect of financial wellness that individuals should engage in at any age. In today's dynamic economic landscape, where uncertainties abound, having a concrete retirement plan is indispensable. This article delves into the significance of retirement planning in fostering financial stability and security, emphasizing its relevance irrespective of one's age.

The Need for Retirement Planning:

Retirement marks a significant transition in life, where the regular inflow of income ceases, and individuals rely on their savings and investments to sustain their lifestyle. Without adequate planning, this transition can be daunting, leading to financial stress and uncertainty. Retirement planning provides a roadmap for accumulating savings over the years, ensuring a comfortable and secure retirement.

Starting Early: A Strategic Advantage:

One of the key tenets of retirement planning is starting early. Fortunately, modern planning tools and investment opportunities make the planning process easier and more enjoyable. The power of compounding works wonders over time, allowing even modest contributions to grow substantially. By initiating retirement planning at a young age, individuals can harness this power, enabling their savings to grow exponentially. Moreover, starting early provides a longer time horizon to weather market fluctuations and adjust investment strategies accordingly.

Adapting to Life's Changes:

A well-crafted retirement plan isn't static; it evolves with changing life circumstances. Whether it's starting a family, advancing in one's career, or facing

unexpected challenges, a robust retirement plan accommodates these changes. Regular reassessment of financial goals, risk tolerance, and investment strategies ensures that the plan remains aligned with one's evolving needs and aspirations.

Mitigating Risks and Uncertainties:

Life is replete with uncertainties, ranging from health issues to economic downturns. Retirement planning acts as a shield against these risks, providing a buffer to withstand unforeseen challenges. Through diversification of investments, allocation to different asset classes, and insurance coverage, individuals can mitigate potential risks and safeguard their retirement nest egg.

Securing Financial Independence:

Retirement planning isn't just about accumulating savings; it's about achieving financial independence. By envisioning the desired lifestyle in retirement and setting concrete financial goals, individuals can work towards realizing their aspirations. Whether it's traveling the world, pursuing hobbies, or supporting loved ones, a well-executed retirement plan empowers individuals to live life on their own terms.

Seeking Professional Guidance:

While self-directed retirement planning is commendable, seeking professional guidance can provide invaluable insights and expertise. Financial advisors possess the knowledge and experience to tailor retirement plans to individual circumstances, optimize investment strategies, and navigate complex financial landscapes. By leveraging their expertise, individuals can enhance the effectiveness of their retirement planning efforts and make informed decisions.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, retirement planning is an essential component of financial wellness, irrespective of one's age. By initiating planning early, adapting to life's changes, mitigating risks, and seeking professional guidance, individuals can secure a comfortable and fulfilling retirement. Embracing retirement planning as a lifelong endeavor empowers individuals to take control of their financial future, ensuring peace of mind and prosperity in the golden years. Start planning today; your future self will thank you for it.

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WHAT IS A SENIOR ADVOCATE?

By Janice Martin, Senior Advocate and
Owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc.

What is a Senior Advocate and how do they serve the community? A Senior Advocate ensures that each senior is treated fairly and honestly as an individual. They assist seniors in being their voice, finding a service or appropriate community, or avoiding exploitation. If your loved one is in a rehab, nursing home, or assisted living and you don't feel they are receiving good care and you speak up for them, you are their advocate. Some may call themselves an advocate, but their actions speak otherwise. When the guidance of others is influenced by personal gain, they are not an advocate.

Before founding Senior Liaison of Central Florida, I worked as a Director of Sales in senior living communities. Families knew that if they had concerns about their loved one's care or if they weren't getting answers from other directors, they could count on me to be their advocate and keep the lines of communication open.

It was frustrating when a placement service referred a potential resident to the community where I worked, knowing their care needs could not be met. It was difficult to fight a corporation that insisted on "heads on beds" rather than seeing the person as an individual needing care and compassion. They expected me to admit as many residents as possible. The corporate and the placement service goal was purely financial gain. I was determined to be a true advocate with a different approach and resigned from community care.

Since I started Senior Liaison in 2021, my mission has always been to focus solely on the needs of those I serve. I am an advocate and educator on senior living options, and I also help with placement. I am heartbroken when I hear stories about how people are being misled by those who appear trustworthy. I have worked diligently to educate the public on all available options, either in their home or a senior community. Placement isn't always the answer.

When a placement company refers someone to a community, we are paid a referral fee by the community when the client moves in. However, we must be the initial referral source, or we will not be compensated. As a result, too many merely submit a name before they have a chance to learn more about the client. They may misrepresent who they work for,

making it appear they are a hospital or rehab employee. Others send personal information to every community – often without their knowledge or permission.

As a result, I am committed to taking action to serve with the greatest integrity. Senior Liaison is now a National Association of Senior Advocates (NASOA) member and abides by their "unwavering commitment to integrity, honesty, and client advocacy." I have pledged to act in only the client's best interest, be unbiased, offer all options available regardless of my financial gain, and be held to the highest standards possible. Before being accepted for membership, there must be a background check, consideration of online reviews, and no indication of a complaint with the Better Business Bureau.

I am also a National Placement and Referral Alliance (NPRA) member and a Certified Placement and Referral Specialist. The Code of Ethics is similar to NASOA but also requires all members to observe local, state, and federal laws governing placement and referrals, including Medicare and Medicaid policies, and may not receive gifts to influence guidance.

Surprisingly, there are no Florida regulations overseeing placement services. Therefore, I have contacted our congressman and proposed legislation to ensure an honest process of giving and receiving referrals and to stop misleading vulnerable families. My proposal requires that all placement services...

... must fully disclose who they represent upon initial contact,

... must disclose how they receive compensation at initial contact,

... must ask if the individual is working with another placement service before obtaining any information,

... must receive permission to use personal information before giving it to a community. If a community does not receive any information other than a name, it shall not be considered a valid referral,

... must not have an exclusive relationship with one single community,

... must not influence a client's decision on where they choose to move through manipulation or scare tactics,

... must only refer a client to the communities that meet the individual's needs,

... that no hospital or physical rehabilitation company may have an exclusive relationship with only one placement service,

... And there may never be any compensation changing hands between the placement service and any member of the community other than the contracted compensation.

I am the only Certified Placement and Referral Specialist in Central Florida and the only local member of the NASOA. If you are approached by someone to assist you with your search, I encourage you to discuss these key factors before proceeding.

For the last three years, it has been my honor to provide articles in this magazine educating readers about assisted living. This will be my final submission as I put more attention to finishing my next book, "The Essential Guide to Assisted Living: Expectation vs Reality." Please visit my website or contact me by email to be notified when it's available. I also welcome the opportunity to speak to local clubs, churches, and civic associations. I am always available to assist you in your search for placement or connect you with trusted companies to provide in-home service. Thank you for your readership and support!

Janice Martin is an advocate, author, educator, and specialist on senior living options and the owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc. She assists families in locating senior options and communities and has written "The Complete Guide to Assisted Living: Everything You Need to Know Before, During, and After a Move" available on Amazon.com. For more information 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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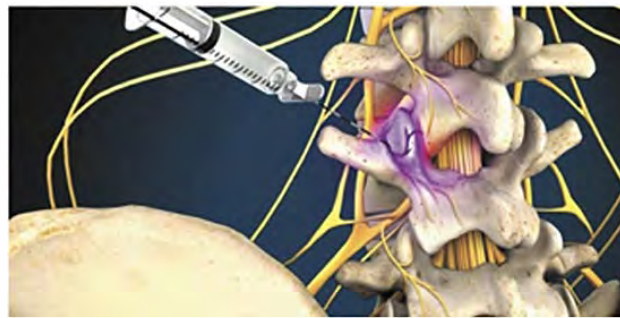
Discover Superior Pain Management

When it comes to pain management, The Interventional Pain Institute (IPI) is the new name creating waves in The Villages and Ocala, Florida. Led by Dr. Brent Compton, the institute offers a comprehensive array of interventional pain services designed to alleviate chronic and acute pain, thereby enhancing patients' quality of life.

Dr. Brent Compton was raised locally in Lady Lake, FL and after finishing his medical training and work in Texas has relocated his family back home to The Villages where he opened the practice in August of 2023. His vast experience, combined with a deep commitment to patient care, is the propelling force behind the success of IPI. Dr. Compton's approach integrates the most advanced medical technology with a compassionate understanding of each patient's journey, resulting in personalized treatment plans that address both the physical symptoms and the emotional impact of pain.

Regardless of if you are experiencing acute (new) or chronic (long term) pain, The Interventional Pain Institute has a treatment option specific to you. Dr. Compton knows every patient is unique and every patient is treated as such. Some patients require medication while others do not. This clinic specializes in a wide range of interventional pain services and our goal is to provide pain relief with the most conservative means possible. Our services include but are not limited to:

1. Epidural Steroid Injections: These are employed to relieve pain in the neck, back, arm, and leg caused by



inflamed spinal nerves due to conditions such as spinal stenosis, disc herniation, radiculopathy, and sciatica.

2. Facet Joint Injections: These injections can help identify the cause and location of pain while providing relief by reducing inflammation and irritation.

3. Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA): This technique uses heat generated by radio waves to target specific nerves and interrupt their ability to send pain signals.

4. Spinal Cord Stimulation: This involves the stimulation of the spinal cord with mild electrical pulses to block the sensation of pain.

5. Sacroiliac Joint Injections: Used to diagnose and treat pain associated with sacroiliac joint dysfunction.

6. Trigger Point Injections: These are used to treat painful areas of muscle that contain trigger points, or knots of muscle that form when muscles do not relax.

7. Peripheral nerve stimulation: This unique and newer technique uses stimulation technology that was once reserved for the spine only and now allows us to treat extremity pain as well.

8. Minimally Invasive Lumbar Decompression (M.I.L.D): Offers relief for patients with spinal stenosis with a minimally invasive procedure.

9. Medicare and insurance approved Back and knee braces.

10. Kyphoplasty/Vertebral Augmentation: Treatment for compression fractures of the spine.

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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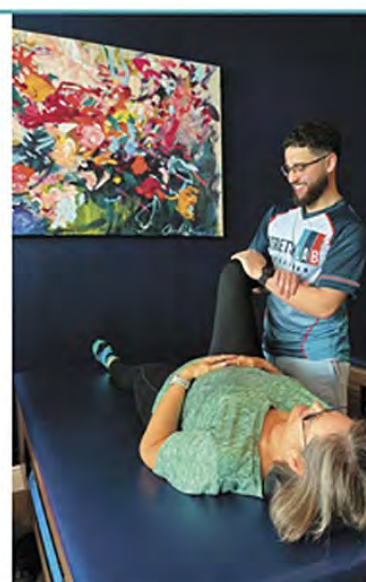
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Dupuytren's Contracture:

Why Xiaflex Injections Should Be Paired with Occupational Hand Therapy

Dupuytren's contracture is a progressive hand condition characterized by the thickening and tightening of the fascia beneath the skin of the palm. As the disease advances, tough fibrous cords form and contract, pulling fingers—most commonly the ring and pinky fingers—toward the palm. This contracture significantly impairs hand function, making everyday tasks from shaking hands to putting on gloves increasingly difficult.

While surgical intervention was once the primary treatment, collagenase injections, specifically Xiaflex (collagenase clostridium histolyticum), have revolutionized Dupuytren's management. These enzyme-based injections break down the collagen deposits forming the problematic cords. However, the journey to restored hand function doesn't end with the injection—occupational therapy (OT) hand rehabilitation plays a crucial role in maximizing outcomes.

Understanding Xiaflex Treatment

Xiaflex works by enzymatically dissolving the collagen cords responsible for finger contractures. The procedure typically involves an injection directly into the cord, followed by a manipulation procedure 24-72 hours later where the physician extends the affected finger to rupture the weakened cord. The immediate result can be dramatic—fingers that haven't straightened in years suddenly gain newfound freedom.

However, this freedom comes with responsibility. The tissue disruption from both the injection and manipulation creates a healing environment where new patterns of movement and tissue organization will establish themselves. Without proper guidance, the healing process may lead to suboptimal results or even recurrence.

The Critical Role of Hand Therapy

Post-Xiaflex occupational therapy serves several essential functions that significantly impact long-term outcomes:

First, OT helps maintain the range of motion achieved during the manipulation procedure. Without consistent stretching and movement, newly released tissues may contract again during healing. Therapists provide customized splinting programs, often including night splints that hold fingers in extension while sleeping and dynamic splints for daytime wear.



Second, therapy addresses the compensatory movement patterns patients developed while living with contractures. Many patients unconsciously alter how they use their hands to accommodate limitations. These ingrained habits don't automatically disappear when range of motion improves and can impede full functional recovery if not addressed through targeted retraining.

Third, professional guidance helps manage common post-injection complications. Swelling, bruising, and temporary pain are expected responses that benefit from therapeutic interventions like compression, manual edema mobilization, and modalities to control inflammation and discomfort.

Fourth, therapists provide progressive strengthening exercises once the initial healing phase passes. Many patients experience weakness after years of altered hand use, and rebuilding strength in newly available ranges of motion is essential for full functional recovery.

Evidence Supporting Combined Approach

Research consistently demonstrates superior outcomes when Xiaflex injections are paired with structured therapy programs. Patients receiving comprehensive hand therapy show greater long-term maintenance of extension gains, improved grip strength, and higher scores on functional assessments compared to those receiving injections alone.

Additionally, recurrence rates—a significant concern with all Dupuytren's treatments—appear lower when patients participate in ongoing hand therapy and adhere to home exercise programs.

Practical Considerations

Typically, hand therapy begins shortly after the manipulation procedure and continues for 8-12 weeks, with frequency tapering as progress is made. Patients should expect an active role in their recovery, including performing home exercises between sessions.

Insurance coverage varies, but most plans recognize the medical necessity of post-Xiaflex therapy. The investment in therapy often pays dividends through improved function and potentially decreased need for retreatment.

For optimal results, patients should seek hand therapists with specific experience treating Dupuytren's contracture. These specialists understand the condition's unique challenges and can provide targeted interventions that general physical therapists might not offer.

By embracing the partnership between Xiaflex injections and specialized hand therapy, patients give themselves the best opportunity to overcome the limitations of Dupuytren's contracture and return to the activities that matter most to them.

Innovative Therapies Group has certified hand therapists that specialize in specific treatments post Xiaflex injections for Dupuytren's contractions and will help you to regain function post procedure.

Types of Treatment Available with Physical Therapy

- Assessment and Evaluation Programs
- Difficulty Walking
- Fall Prevention and Balance Retraining
- Fitness and Wellness Programs
- Functional Training
- Gait Training and Balance Programs
- Manual and Massage Therapy
- Neurological and Neurodegenerative Retraining
- Vestibular Rehabilitation



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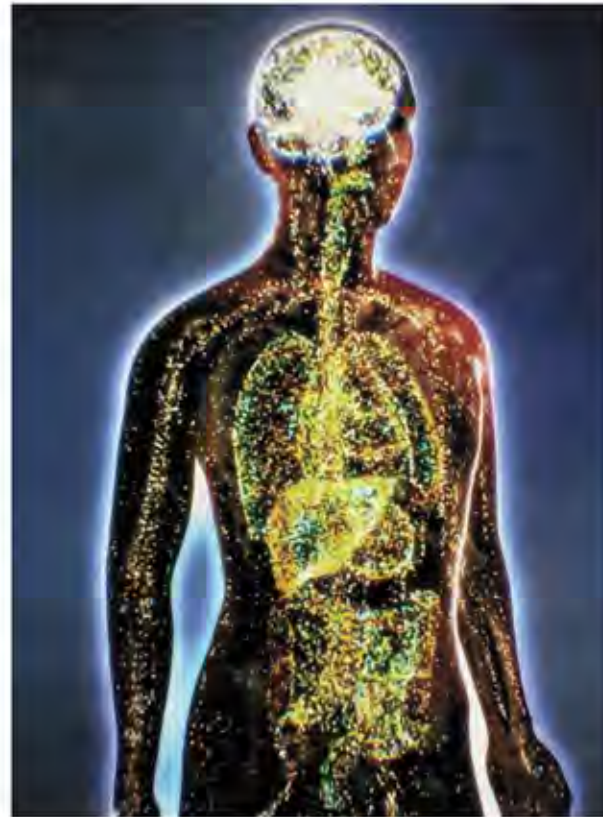
HOW THE ENDOCANNABINOID SYSTEM AND CBD WORK TOGETHER TO SUPPORT IMMUNE HEALTH

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.

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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.

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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.
- **Cone Beam 3D Imaging** — Using cone beam technology, we can map underlying bone structure, nerve pathways, and soft tissue for more detailed treatment planning.
- **Intraoral Camera** — The intraoral camera puts you in the driver's seat. You can see exactly what the doctor sees, allowing the doctor to explain your treatment plan tooth by tooth.

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

Meet Dr. Rozensky

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

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

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

Laurel Manor Dental/Laurel Manor SleepCare

352.430.1710

laurelmanordental.com

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For the last 18 years, Patrick Smith has served Clermont as a local estate planning attorney and occasional radio guest host. It's the last year, though, that has brought his knowledge and outreach to the entire state and across the country — this time returning as host of his own callin legal advice show. Saturday mornings from 8-9 you can listen Live on 102.5 FM and AM760 and call in with you legal questions. Broadcasts can also be streamed Live on Facebook and at theBoneOnline.com. The office and website are always available to you: **352-204-0305 - www.AttorneyPatrickSmith.com**



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