

CENTRAL FLORIDA'S

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

August 2025

Marion Edition - Monthly

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**BACK TO
SCHOOL &
BACK TO YOU**

**UNDERSTANDING
PSORIASIS**

**AT-HOME CANCER
SCREENING.
A RELIABLE OPTION?**

**HOW YOUR FEET
REFLECT YOUR
OVERALL HEALTH**

**PREVENTING FALLS
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CONTENTS AUGUST 2025

6 Cancer and Heart Disease Prevention: Early Detection Can Save Your Life

7 At-Home Cancer Screening. A Reliable Option?

8 Understanding Alopecia: Types, Causes, And New Treatment Research

9 Understanding Psoriasis: How Lumen Dermatology Supports Your Journey to Clearer Skin

10 Understanding Psoriasis: Strengthening Your Immune System for Better Skin Health

11 How Your Feet Reflect Your Overall Health

14 Preventing Falls in Older Adults Saves Lives

15 The Power of Emsella: The Non-invasive Treatment for Urinary Incontinence

16 Obstructive Sleep Apnea & Oral Appliances: A Solution for a Good Night's Sleep

17 Breakthrough In Neuropathy Treatment: How Summus Laser Therapy Offers Hope for Nerve Pain Sufferers

18 The Weighty Legacy: How Childhood Obesity Shapes Adult Health and Well-Being

19 Stress Management Tips from Quick Care Urgent Care

20 Back to School and Back to You

21 Attorney Patrick Smith Radio Show Now on 14 Stations

22 Developing Social Communication in Children

23 Spiritual Wellness: Dealing With Life's Painful Situations

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Introducing Lumen Dermatology

We're excited to share that David Kosiorek, PA-C and Michael J. Freeman, MD have started a NEW Dermatology practice! David has 27 years of Dermatology experience and is proudly serving The Villages and Ocala. He is passionate in providing meticulous, personalized care with a focus on early detection and treatment of skin cancer. His new practice, Lumen Dermatology, continues his commitment to excellence, offering comprehensive skin care solutions in a welcoming environment.

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The Villages, FL
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2750 SE 17th Street
Ocala, FL 34471

CONTACT US

Owner
Cristan Gensing
cristan@gwhizmarketing.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Sonny Gensing
sonnygensing@yahoo.com



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CANCER AND HEART DISEASE PREVENTION: Early Detection Can Save Your Life

By Martin Gramatica

Taking control of your health means staying ahead of potential problems before they become life-threatening crises. Cancer and heart disease remain the leading causes of death worldwide, but the good news is that early detection through advanced screening technology can dramatically improve outcomes and save lives. CT early detection body scans represent a revolutionary approach to preventive healthcare, offering a comprehensive view of your body's current state and potential health risks.

The Power of Early Detection

Traditional healthcare often operates on a reactive model—addressing symptoms after they appear. However, many serious conditions, including various cancers and cardiovascular diseases, can develop silently for years without obvious symptoms. By the time warning signs emerge, the disease may have progressed to advanced stages where treatment options become more limited and less effective.

CT early detection body scans flip this approach on its head, providing a proactive window into your health. These sophisticated imaging techniques can identify abnormalities, growths, blockages, and other concerning changes long before they would typically manifest as noticeable symptoms. This early intervention window is often the difference between a manageable health condition and a medical emergency.

Why Consider ClearView CT Scanning?

Unexplained Symptoms: Have you been experiencing persistent discomfort, unusual fatigue, or concerning changes in your body that your regular doctor hasn't been able to explain? For unexplained pains or symptoms that evade diagnosis, ClearView can offer crucial clues or provide additional peace of mind. Sometimes the answers we seek aren't visible through standard examinations, but advanced imaging can reveal what's happening beneath the surface.

Genetic and Family History: Your family's medical history significantly affects your personal health risks. If cancer, heart disease, or other serious conditions run in your family, you're statistically more likely to develop these same issues. A ClearView scan can help you keep a vigilant eye on conditions you may be particularly worried about, allowing you to monitor your body for early signs of inherited health risks.

Proactive Health Mindset: Perhaps most importantly, regular CT scans support a proactive approach to healthcare. With consistent scanning over time, medical professionals can track subtle changes in your body's condition. This longitudinal view means they can detect unusual developments early, significantly increasing the chances of effective treatment and positive outcomes.

Beyond Detection: Peace of Mind

The psychological benefits of early detection screening shouldn't be underestimated. Uncertainty about your health can create ongoing stress and anxiety that affects your quality of life. Whether scans reveal everything is normal or identify areas requiring attention, you'll have concrete information to guide your healthcare decisions and reduce worry about unknown health risks.

Early detection through CT scanning represents an investment in your future health and well-being. By identifying potential problems before they become crises, you're giving yourself the best possible chance for successful treatment and long-term health.

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MARTIN GRAMATICA
Super Bowl Champion

From Super Bowl Champion to Health Advocate, Martin Gramatica traded his NFL cleats for a mission to help others stay healthy and active. The former Tampa Bay Buccaneers kicker, who helped bring home a Super Bowl championship in 2003, spent 10 years in the National Football League with five of those seasons in Tampa Bay.

Now co-founder of ClearView Imaging Center in The Villages, Gramatica applies the same precision and dedication that made him successful on the field to promoting early health detection. His athletic background gives him unique insight into body awareness and proactive health management.

"As an athlete, I would know every little pain in my body when I played because it mattered," Gramatica explains. "This is being proactive to stay healthy for yourself and your family."

His transition from professional sports to healthcare advocacy stems from a desire to make a meaningful impact beyond football. "I never thought I would end up doing anything that could help save somebody's life," he reflects. "I think my kicking career probably hurt some people's hearts - if I made or missed a kick - but now we are helping them all."

Gramatica's passion for The Villages community drives his commitment to bringing advanced imaging technology to residents who want to stay active and enjoy their retirement years to the fullest.

At-Home Cancer Screening. A Reliable Option?

Catching cancer early can greatly improve the chances of successful treatment and survival. Some tests can spot abnormalities even before signs or symptoms appear.

Unfortunately, many people avoid colonoscopies (to detect colon cancer) or Pap smears (to test for cervical cancer) because they find them invasive, uncomfortable, or embarrassing.

At-home cancer screening tests offer new ways for people to screen from the comfort and privacy of home at their convenience. But are these tests as accurate as going to the doctor's office?

New At-Home Cervical Cancer Screening Option Now Available

The first at-home screening device for cervical cancer was approved by the FDA in 2024. It enables women to self-collect vaginal cells to test for human papilloma virus (HPV), the virus that causes nearly all cervical cancers. Now available by mail through an on-line registration process, the collected sample is sent to a certified lab for testing.

"This test is one of the first of its kind and has the potential to broaden HPV testing, especially for patients who may be hesitant to see a doctor," says Heather Miller, MD, gynecologic oncologist with Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute. "The studies show similar accuracy to detect HPV compared to Pap tests conducted during clinic visits."

Dr. Miller stresses, however, that the test should be reserved for patients who are low risk and have no personal or family history of HPV or abnormal pap smears. "Any positive HPV test should prompt a visit to a gynecologist and further examination," she said.

At-Home Options for Colon Cancer Screenings

The two most common ways to screen for colon cancer are colonoscopy (the procedure examines the inside of the colon to look for polyps or abnormal growths) and stool-based tests like the FIT (fecal immunochemical tests) or gFOBT (guaiac-based fecal occult blood tests) that check for traces of blood or abnormal DNA in the stool.

Both types of screening tests are available for at-home use—some require a doctor's order, while others can be bought over the counter.

The first at-home non-invasive test for colon cancer that detects both altered DNA and blood in stool was approved by the FDA in 2014. Once prescribed by a doctor or through telehealth, the kit is mailed with detailed instructions, and results are sent to your provider within one to two weeks.



According to Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute medical oncologist Anjan Patel, MD, the key benefits of at-home screening are their "ease of availability and affordability." That may be a positive advantage given the alarming rise in colon cancer among people in their 20s, 30s and 40s.

There are limitations, however.

"Results can vary depending on where the cancer may be in the colon," said Dr. Patel. "These tests have limited efficacy. A positive test is helpful to identify the need for a colonoscopy, but a negative result does not confidently allow a person to avoid a scope test." Like at-home cervical cancer tests, these tools are intended only for people at average risk.

Dr. Patel stresses that DNA-based testing is indicated for those who have had a negative colonoscopy in the past and not as an initial test. Additionally, he notes, "Colonoscopy also allows for the removal of potentially pre-cancerous polyps and the diagnosis of other conditions like inflammatory bowel disease during the procedure."

It's important to stay on schedule with all recommended cancer screenings. Guidelines may differ based on your age, family history and lifestyle.

A Pap test to screen for cervical cancer is advised for all women beginning at age 21 and continuing until age 65. Women from 21 to 29 should have a Pap test every three years. Beginning at age 30, a Pap test combined with human papillomavirus (HPV) testing is recommended every five years.

Colonoscopy screening should start at age 45 and be done every 10 years, unless recommended more often by your doctor, up until age 75. This screening can detect cancer early and help prevent it by finding and removing polyps—abnormal growths in the colon that can turn into cancer—during the procedure.

Talk to your healthcare provider to find out which screenings are right for you. Most are painless and covered by insurance plans or available through community prevention programs. Reducing cancer risk is definitely worth the effort.

WORLD-CLASS CANCER TREATMENT, CLOSE TO HOME

About Florida Cancer Specialists & Research Institute, LLC (FLCancer.com)

For more than 40 years, FCS has built a national reputation for excellence that is reflected in exceptional and compassionate patient care, driven by innovative clinical research, cutting-edge technologies and advanced treatments, including targeted therapies genomic-based treatment and immunotherapy. Our highest values are embodied by our outstanding team of highly trained and dedicated physicians, clinicians and staff.

In Marion County, board-certified physicians specializing in hematology, medical oncology, gynecologic oncology and radiation oncology provide personalized care for all forms of cancers and blood disorders. With extraordinary skill and experience, they deliver treatments with maximum effectiveness and safety, combined with compassion and concern for patients and their families. From genetic screening to immunotherapies and access to the latest clinical trials, our top-ranked cancer experts provide the newest and most advanced treatments available – increasing cure rates and extending lives.



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For more information,
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UNDERSTANDING ALOPECIA: TYPES, CAUSES, AND NEW TREATMENT RESEARCH

Hair loss affects millions of people worldwide, impacting not only physical appearance but also emotional well-being and self-confidence. Alopecia, the general medical term for hair loss, encompasses a broad spectrum of conditions that cause hair to fall out from various parts of the body. Understanding the different types of alopecia and their underlying causes is crucial for those experiencing hair loss and seeking appropriate treatment options.

The Spectrum of Alopecia Conditions

Alopecia manifests in several distinct forms, each with unique characteristics and causes. The most common types include alopecia areata, androgenetic alopecia, and traction alopecia, though numerous other variations exist within the medical classification system.

Alopecia areata represents an autoimmune condition where the body's immune system mistakenly attacks healthy hair follicles. This results in distinctive patchy hair loss that can occur anywhere on the body, though it most commonly affects the scalp. The patches are typically round or oval-shaped and may appear suddenly. In some cases, the condition progresses to alopecia totalis, involving complete scalp hair loss, or alopecia universalis, which affects hair across the entire body. The unpredictable nature of alopecia areata makes it particularly challenging for those affected, as hair may regrow spontaneously or the condition may persist or worsen over time.

Androgenetic alopecia, commonly known as male or female pattern baldness, represents the most prevalent form of hair loss. This genetic condition affects both men and women, though it manifests differently in each gender. Men typically experience receding hairlines and crown thinning, while women often notice diffuse thinning across the top of the scalp. The condition results from a combination of genetic predisposition and sensitivity to dihydrotestosterone (DHT), a hormone that causes hair follicles to shrink and eventually stop producing hair.

Traction alopecia develops from prolonged tension or pulling on hair strands, often due to certain hair-styling practices. Tight ponytails, braids, weaves, or chemical treatments can gradually damage hair follicles, leading to permanent hair loss if the damaging practices continue unchecked. Unlike other forms of alopecia, traction alopecia is entirely preventable through proper hair care practices.

Different Types of Alopecia



The Emotional Impact of Hair Loss

Beyond the physical manifestations, alopecia significantly impacts psychological well-being. Many individuals experience decreased self-esteem, social anxiety, and depression following hair loss. The visible nature of the condition can affect professional and personal relationships, making effective treatment options highly sought after by those affected.

Advancing Treatment Through Clinical Research

Recognizing the substantial need for effective alopecia treatments, research institutions continue developing innovative therapeutic approaches. Renstar Medical Research is currently conducting comprehensive clinical trials that offer hope for individuals experiencing mild to moderate hair loss.

These clinical studies are evaluating an investigational treatment specifically designed for males and females aged 18 to 65 who are dealing with mild to moderate androgenetic alopecia. The research represents a significant step forward in alopecia treatment development, potentially offering new solutions for those who have found limited success with existing therapies.

Clinical trials like these are essential for advancing medical understanding and treatment options for alopecia. Participants in such studies not only gain access to cutting-edge treatments before they become widely available but also contribute valuable data that helps researchers better understand hair loss mechanisms and treatment effectiveness.

For individuals considering participation in clinical research, it's important to understand that investigational treatments undergo rigorous testing to evaluate both safety and efficacy. These studies are conducted under strict medical supervision with comprehensive monitoring to ensure participant safety throughout the research process.

Looking Forward

As research continues to evolve, the future holds promise for more effective alopecia treatments. The combination of improved understanding of hair loss

mechanisms, advancing medical technologies, and ongoing clinical research efforts like those conducted by Renstar Medical Research brings hope to millions affected by various forms of alopecia.

Anyone experiencing hair loss should consult with healthcare professionals to determine the specific type of alopecia and explore available treatment options, including potential participation in clinical research studies that may provide access to innovative therapeutic approaches.

About Renstar Medical Research

Founded in 1998, Renstar Medical Research has been at the forefront of clinical research, dedicated to advancing medical breakthroughs through high-quality, multispecialty clinical trials. With over two decades of experience, we have conducted studies across a wide range of therapeutic areas, including obesity, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, psoriasis, and other conditions.

Through innovation, expertise, and a patient-centered approach, we strive to make a meaningful impact on global healthcare. At Renstar Medical Research, we are seeking tomorrow's answers to the health questions of today.

For more information about an eczema clinical trial and to determine if you qualify, contact Renstar Medical Research today.

FRUSTRATED BY HAIR LOSS?

YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE IF:

- Aged 18-65 years or older
- Thinning on the crown
- Thinning on the temples
- Receding hairline



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Understanding Psoriasis:

How Lumen Dermatology Supports Your Journey to Clearer Skin

By David Kosiorek, PA-C

August marks Psoriasis Awareness Month, a crucial time to shed light on a chronic skin condition that affects over 8 million Americans. At Lumen Dermatology, we recognize the profound impact psoriasis can have on patients' physical comfort, emotional wellbeing, and quality of life. This awareness month serves as an important reminder that effective treatment options exist, and no one has to face this condition alone.

What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is an autoimmune condition that causes skin cells to multiply rapidly, leading to the formation of thick, scaly patches on the skin's surface. These patches, called plaques, typically appear red with silvery-white scales and can develop anywhere on the body, though they commonly affect the elbows, knees, scalp, and lower back. The condition results from an overactive immune system that mistakenly attacks healthy skin cells, accelerating the normal skin cell turnover process from weeks to just days.

While psoriasis primarily affects the skin, it's important to understand that this condition extends beyond surface-level symptoms. Many patients experience itching, burning, and pain in affected areas. The visible nature of psoriasis can also lead to feelings of self-consciousness, anxiety, and depression, making comprehensive care essential for overall wellbeing.

Breaking Down Common Misconceptions

One of the most persistent myths surrounding psoriasis is that it's contagious. This misconception can lead to unnecessary social stigma and isolation for those living with the condition. Psoriasis is entirely non-contagious – it cannot be spread through touch, sharing personal items, or close contact with others.

Another common misunderstanding is that psoriasis is simply a cosmetic concern. In reality, it's a serious medical condition that requires proper diagnosis and treatment. Without appropriate care, psoriasis can worsen over time and may increase the risk of developing other health conditions, including psoriatic arthritis, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

The Lumen Dermatology Approach

At Lumen Dermatology, we understand that every patient's psoriasis experience is unique. Our comprehensive approach begins with a thorough evaluation to determine the type and severity of your



condition. We offer various forms of psoriasis treatment, including plaque psoriasis, guttate psoriasis, inverse psoriasis, and pustular psoriasis, each requiring tailored treatment strategies.

Our treatment philosophy centers on creating personalized care plans that address both the physical symptoms and the emotional impact of psoriasis. We believe in educating our patients about their condition, empowering them to make informed decisions about their treatment options, and supporting them throughout their journey to clearer, healthier skin.

Advanced Treatment Options

Modern psoriasis treatment has evolved significantly, offering patients more effective options than ever before. At Lumen Dermatology, we provide access to the latest therapeutic approaches, including topical treatments, phototherapy, systemic medications, and innovative biologic therapies. Our dermatologists stay current with emerging treatments and clinical research to ensure our patients receive the most advanced care available.

We also recognize the importance of lifestyle modifications in managing psoriasis. Our team provides guidance on stress management techniques, dietary considerations, and skincare routines that can complement medical treatments and help minimize flare-ups.

Your Partner in Psoriasis Management

Living with psoriasis doesn't mean accepting discomfort or limiting your lifestyle. During Psoriasis Awareness Month and throughout the year, Lumen Dermatology remains committed to helping patients achieve significant improvement in their symptoms and overall quality of life.

If you're experiencing symptoms of psoriasis or have been struggling to find effective treatment, we encourage you to schedule a consultation with our experienced dermatology team. Together, we can develop a comprehensive treatment plan that addresses your specific needs and helps you regain confidence in your skin.

Remember, psoriasis is manageable with the right care and support. At Lumen Dermatology, we're here to guide you every step of the way toward clearer, more comfortable skin.

Expert Dermatology Care for Your Skin

At Lumen Dermatology, we bring over 70 years combined experience in skin health. Our team specializes in diagnosing, treating, and preventing skin conditions, including acne, eczema, psoriasis, and skin cancer. With a patient-centered approach, we provide personalized care to help you achieve and maintain healthy skin for life.

Book Your Appointment

Booking a Dermatology appointment is an essential step for anyone looking to address skin concerns or maintain overall skin health. By scheduling an appointment, patients gain access to professional insights and tailored solutions that can significantly improve their skin health.

Call 352-830-1500 to schedule your appointment today!



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UNDERSTANDING PSORIASIS: Strengthening Your Immune System for Better Skin Health

By Jessica Howington, APRN

August marks Psoriasis Awareness Month, a crucial time to shine light on this chronic autoimmune condition that affects over 8 million Americans. At Ocala Health & Wellness, we believe that education and proactive immune system support are key components in managing psoriasis and promoting overall skin health.

What is Psoriasis?

Psoriasis is an autoimmune disorder where the immune system mistakenly attacks healthy skin cells, causing them to multiply rapidly. This accelerated cell turnover creates the characteristic red, scaly patches that can appear anywhere on the body. While genetics play a significant role, environmental factors and immune system dysfunction often trigger flare-ups.

The condition extends beyond skin deep, as many patients also experience joint pain, fatigue, and emotional challenges. Understanding that psoriasis is not contagious but rather an immune system imbalance helps reduce stigma and encourages proper treatment approaches.

THE IMMUNE SYSTEM CONNECTION

Since psoriasis stems from immune system dysfunction, supporting your body's natural defenses becomes paramount. A well-functioning immune system helps regulate inflammation and maintains the delicate balance needed for healthy skin cell production.

Research shows that chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, and immune system irregularities contribute to psoriasis severity. By focusing on immune system optimization, patients often experience reduced flare-ups and improved quality of life.

NATURAL WAYS TO BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Nutrition as Medicine: A anti-inflammatory diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and fiber supports immune function. Include fatty fish, leafy greens, berries, and colorful vegetables while limiting processed foods, sugar, and inflammatory oils. Specific nutrients like vitamin D, zinc, and selenium play crucial roles in immune regulation and skin health.

Stress Management: Chronic stress suppresses immune function and triggers psoriasis flares. Incorporate stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing exercises, or regular counseling. Even fifteen minutes of daily relaxation can significantly impact immune system balance.



Quality Sleep: During sleep, your body repairs tissues and regulates immune function. Aim for seven to nine hours of quality sleep nightly. Create a consistent bedtime routine and optimize your sleep environment for better rest.

Regular Exercise: Moderate physical activity enhances immune system function, reduces inflammation, and improves mood. Activities like walking, swimming, or gentle yoga provide benefits without overstressing the body.

Hydration and Supplements: Proper hydration supports cellular function and toxin elimination. Consider immune-supporting supplements like probiotics, vitamin D, turmeric, and fish oil under professional guidance.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT AT OCALA HEALTH & WELLNESS

Our comprehensive approach to psoriasis management combines conventional medical treatments with integrative wellness strategies. We work closely with patients to identify triggers, optimize nutrition, and develop personalized immune support protocols.

Through functional medicine principles, we address root causes rather than just symptoms. This might include gut health optimization, hormone balancing, and targeted nutritional interventions that support overall immune function.

MOVING FORWARD WITH HOPE

Psoriasis Awareness Month reminds us that effective management requires a holistic approach. While there's no cure, combining medical treatment with immune system support offers hope for better outcomes and improved quality of life.

If you're struggling with psoriasis, remember that you're not alone. At Ocala Health & Wellness, we're committed to helping you develop a comprehensive plan that addresses both your immediate symptoms and long-term wellness goals. Together, we can work toward healthier skin and a stronger immune system.

Ocala Health & Wellness

At Ocala Health & Wellness, we envision a vibrant community where holistic health and well-being thrive. We strive to empower individuals on their journey to optimal wellness through personalized care, education, and support. Our commitment is to create a nurturing environment that fosters physical, mental, and emotional balance, inspiring each person to embrace a healthier, happier life. Together, we cultivate a culture of wellness that transforms lives and uplifts our community.

About the Author

Driven by a passion for wellness, Jessica is a versatile nurse practitioner who has honed her skills across a range of dynamic healthcare settings. After earning her Master's in Nursing from Emory University, she has gone on to make her mark in the emergency room, psychiatry, hospice, palliative care, and functional medicine, dedicated to empowering each of her patients to achieve their optimal health.

When she's not in the clinic, Jessica channels her competitive spirit into the equestrian sport of dressage, recently being short-listed for the Tokyo Olympics with her horse, Cavalia. As an accomplished competitor, she also manages her family's top-tier training, boarding, sales, and lesson facility in Ocala, where she shares her love for all animals, including her own sweet dogs.

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HOW YOUR FEET REFLECT YOUR OVERALL HEALTH

By Dr. Andrew Franklin, DPM, PH.D

Your feet do far more than simply carry you through your daily activities. They serve as windows into your overall health, often revealing the first signs of systemic health problems before symptoms appear elsewhere in your body. As podiatrists, we're trained to recognize these subtle warning signs that many people might dismiss as minor inconveniences. Understanding what your feet are telling you could be the key to early detection and treatment of serious health conditions.

The connection between foot health and systemic wellness isn't coincidental. Your feet contain thousands of nerve endings, an extensive network of blood vessels, and are positioned at the furthest point from your heart. This unique anatomy makes them particularly sensitive to changes in circulation, nerve function, and overall body chemistry. When something goes wrong elsewhere in your body, your feet often sound the alarm first.

WARNING SIGNS YOUR FEET ARE SENDING YOU

Numbness or Tingling: If you're experiencing persistent numbness, tingling, or a "pins and needles" sensation in your feet, your body may be signaling several potential health issues. These symptoms commonly indicate diabetes-related nerve damage, also known as peripheral neuropathy. However, they can also suggest vitamin B12 deficiency or other metabolic disorders, or compression of nerves in the lower back. You should seek medical attention if these sensations persist, worsen over time, or begin to interfere with your daily activities or balance.

Consistently Cold Feet: While occasional cold feet are normal, chronically cold feet that feel cold to the touch may indicate poor circulation, hypothyroidism, or Raynaud's disease. Poor circulation can be a sign of cardiovascular problems or peripheral artery disease, conditions that require medical evaluation. If your feet remain cold despite warm environments and appropriate footwear, it's time to discuss this with your healthcare provider.

End-of-Day Swelling: Swelling in your feet and ankles, particularly noticeable at the end of the day, can signal various health concerns ranging from heart failure and kidney problems to vein issues. While pregnancy commonly causes foot swelling, persistent swelling in non-pregnant individuals



warrants attention. You should be especially concerned if swelling is accompanied by shortness of breath, chest pain, or sudden weight gain, as these symptoms could indicate serious cardiovascular or renal issues.

Discolored Toenails: Changes in toenail color, texture, or thickness often reflect more than cosmetic concerns. While fungal infections are common culprits, discolored nails can also indicate psoriasis, trauma, or even melanoma. Black or brown streaks under the nail represent a particular red flag that requires immediate medical evaluation, as they could signal a dangerous form of skin cancer.

Foot Cramping and Muscle Spasms: Frequent cramping or muscle spasms in your feet may indicate dehydration, electrolyte imbalances, or circulation problems. These issues can stem from various conditions, including diabetes, kidney disease, or cardiovascular problems. Prevention often involves maintaining proper hydration and incorporating regular stretching into your routine, but persistent cramping deserves medical attention.

Non-Healing Sores: Perhaps the most serious warning sign is sores or wounds on your feet that don't heal within a reasonable timeframe. This symptom commonly indicates diabetes, a compromised immune system, or vascular disease, and sometimes even malignancies. Non-healing wounds demand immediate attention because they can lead to severe complications, including serious infections and, in worst-case scenarios, amputation.

THE PODIATRIST'S ROLE IN EARLY DETECTION

Podiatrists play a crucial role in identifying systemic illnesses through comprehensive foot examinations.

During routine visits, we employ various diagnostic tools including circulation assessments, nerve function tests, and detailed wound evaluations. We can detect subtle changes in skin temperature, pulse strength, and sensation that might indicate developing health problems.

For individuals with chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, or autoimmune disorders, regular podiatric examinations become even more critical. These routine screenings can catch problems in their earliest stages when treatment is most effective.

TAKING ACTION FOR YOUR HEALTH

Your feet are speaking to you every day. The key is learning to listen and respond appropriately. Don't dismiss changes in your feet as inevitable signs of aging or minor annoyances. When you notice persistent symptoms like those described above, schedule a comprehensive foot examination with a qualified podiatrist.

Being proactive about foot health isn't just about preventing foot problems—it's about safeguarding your overall health and potentially catching serious conditions before they become life-threatening. Your feet have important stories to tell about your health. Make sure you're paying attention to what they're saying.

About Dr. Andrew Franklin, DPM, Ph.D

Dr. Andrew Franklin, DPM, Ph.D., moved from Essex, UK to the US in 2007, completing his post-doctorate in Organic Chemistry at FSU. He studied Podiatric Medicine at Ohio College of Podiatric Medicine and completed surgical residency at Cleveland Clinic. Relocating to Ocala in 2018, he opened Ocala Podiatry in December 2023. This board-certified podiatrist emphasizes patient education and teamwork. Married with two boys, he enjoys pickleball, sports, traveling, and outdoor activities.



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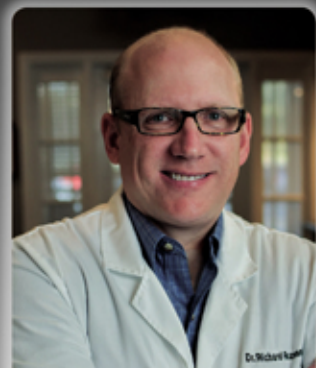
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PREVENTING FALLS IN OLDER ADULTS SAVES LIVES

Submitted by Hospice of Marion County

According to the CDC, falls are the leading cause of injury for adults ages 65 and older. In Florida, 24.4% of older adults fell per its latest 2021 data, with the number of older adults in Florida who fell at 1,028,468. Across the U.S. over 14 million or 1 in 4 adults report falling every year and the adjusted death rate across the U.S. is rising. Each year millions of people aged 65 or older fall, but most do not tell their doctor. Here are more statistics:

- 3 million older adults are treated in emergency rooms for falls each year.
- Over 800 million are hospitalized due to a fall that caused head injuries and/or hip fractures.
- Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injuries.
- Each year approximately \$50 billion is spent on medical costs for falls that are non-fatal and \$754 million is spent on fatal falls.

According to the National Council on Aging, one-fourth of Americans aged 65+ falls each year and falls are the leading cause of non-fatal emergency room visits and hospital admissions among older adults. Plus, statistics reveal that one fall usually leads to another in the future among this age group.

Preventing falls in the home helps curb hospital stays and emergency room visits. Falls at any age take away what matters most, our quality of life and independence. This is especially true for older age groups. Taking extra care when walking and taking precautions goes a long way in maintaining better health as you age.

Tips to help prevent falls:

- Increase strength and balance through walking, swimming or other types of exercise such as yoga or tai chi.
- Get rid of trip hazards in your home such as clutter and extension cords in walkways.
- Removing rugs that slip or that are worn and curled up around the edges.
- Add grab bars in bathrooms and at outside doors of the house.
- Install handrails and better lighting where needed inside your home.



There are currently over 40 million people in the U.S. aged 65+ and this number is anticipated to double by 2050. As a result, demand for durable medical equipment (DME) is in higher demand for this segment of the population due to normal aging ailments, falls and other illnesses.

Whether in short-term or long-term care, and especially with post-surgery care at home, DME home medical equipment and supplies play an assistive role in faster patient recovery. Luckily, there are many options for consumers of home medical supplies and equipment ranging from personal aids for daily living, mobility aids such as canes, walkers, and wheelchairs, to monitoring equipment such as oxygen and diabetic supplies to hospital beds.

Accent Medical, a durable medical equipment company and affiliate of Hospice of Marion County, is a not-for-profit organization that offers quality care and products to anyone in Marion County.

Clients can pick up or if home delivery is required, that too can be arranged. Accent Medical technicians will hand-assemble in the home, provide education on safe and easy ways to operate the equipment, making sure clients understand "how to" instructions before leaving their home.

Additionally, if purchasing equipment is not in your budget or required for long-term use, an option to rent is available as well. Accent Medical will provide a free price estimate and recommend only the items that are right for the customer. To learn more about Accent Medical, call (352) 622-7260 or visit: www.accentmedical.org

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The Power of Emsella:

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Emsella is a non-invasive treatment option for urinary incontinence, offering a groundbreaking solution for individuals seeking relief without surgery or medication. Using high-intensity focused



electromagnetic (HIFEM) technology, Emsella stimulates deep pelvic floor muscles, helping to strengthen and restore muscle tone. This treatment is ideal for patients suffering from stress incontinence, urge



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

Clinical studies have demonstrated that Emsella can significantly reduce symptoms of urinary incontinence, improving quality of life for patients who

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.

Emsella is quick, non-invasive, and painless. It is a revolutionary treatment for both men and women experiencing incontinence and/or wanting to improve sexual wellness.



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Obstructive Sleep Apnea & Oral Appliances: A Solution for a Good Night's Sleep

By Richard W. Rozensky, DDS, D.ABDISM

Sleep apnea affects more than 25 million people in the United States. It is a progressive condition that interrupts breathing patterns throughout a person's sleep. People who suffer from Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) may have episodes of stopping breathing up to hundreds of times per night for 10 seconds or longer, and along with this disruption comes many adverse side effects and morbidities.

What Is Sleep Apnea?

The short answer is the airway collapses during sleep. It is a relatively common condition and is related to lifestyle and age. Once the sleep pattern is disrupted, the lack of oxygen to the brain and heart can cause serious health concerns and implications. Left untreated, OSA can lead to heart attacks, stroke, diabetes, and other serious complications.

What are the Side Effects and Complications Associated with Sleep Apnea?

- High blood pressure
- Cardiovascular disorders such as A-Fib
- Chronic disease
- Diabetes
- Brain health impairment

What are the symptoms of Sleep Apnea?

- Snoring
- Gasping for air while sleeping
- Dry mouth
- Cognitive decline or brain fog
- Restless sleeping
- Daytime sleepiness/dozing

Obstructive Sleep Apnea & Oral Appliances:

Have you tried CPAP therapy?

The customary first line of treatment for severe sleep apnea is a PAP device. For Mild and Moderate Sleep Apnea an oral appliance is an effective alternative. Approximately 50 percent of patients are unable to tolerate the use of a PAP, and therefore are not achieving optimum treatment results. In many cases those individuals are going untreated. Those



patients are candidates for Oral Appliance Therapy, or OAT. A custom-fit oral appliance is an effective therapeutic treatment option for Obstructive Sleep Apnea and can also help to eliminate snoring. By opening the airway, you increase your oxygen intake, as well as improve your sleep, and your overall health. The American Medical Association, The American Academy of Sleep Medicine and the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine all recommend OAT to be prescribed by a Sleep Physician and fabricated by an ABDISM qualified dentist.

The negative effects of poor sleep are numerous. We all know the short-term results of not sleeping well and feeling terrible but what about the more serious health concerns? If left untreated, people may experience poor memory, decreased cognitive function leading to dementia and Alzheimer's disease, cardiovascular disease including high blood pressure, insulin resistance, obesity and worsening symptoms of asthma and COPD due to lack of oxygen to the brain during sleeping hours. The good news is that if properly diagnosed and treated early, the effects of Sleep Apnea can be reversed over time.

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Benefits of Oral Appliance Therapy for the treatment on Sleep Apnea:

- Oral appliances can be easily cleaned and disinfected by patients.
- Oral Appliances are silent.
- Oral Appliances are truly portable. They can fit in a pocket or purse. They require no electricity and are easily transported when traveling.
- Best of all, Laurel Manor Dental/SleepCare provides CDC recommended, single use WatchPAT™ ONE contact less, first and only disposable Home Sleep Apnea Test.

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!

BREAKTHROUGH IN NEUROPATHY TREATMENT:

HOW SUMMUS LASER THERAPY OFFERS HOPE FOR NERVE PAIN SUFFERERS

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

Understanding Neuropathy: A Complex Challenge

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

The Summus Laser: A Technological Marvel in Pain Management

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

Key Mechanisms of Summus Laser Therapy

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

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

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

Clinical Evidence and Patient Outcomes

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



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

Treatment Process and Expectations

A typical Summus Laser treatment protocol involves:

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

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

Advantages Over Traditional Neuropathy Treatments

The Summus Laser offers several distinct advantages:

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

Who Can Benefit?

Summus Laser therapy is particularly beneficial for patients with:

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

Future of Neuropathy Treatment

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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



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THE WEIGHTY LEGACY:

HOW CHILDHOOD OBESITY SHAPES ADULT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Childhood obesity has become a global epidemic, with rates tripling since the 1970s. This alarming trend not only affects children's immediate health and quality of life but also casts a long shadow into adulthood. The consequences of carrying excess weight during formative years extend far beyond physical appearance, impacting various aspects of adult life, from physical health to emotional well-being and socioeconomic status.

One of the most significant long-term effects of childhood obesity is the increased risk of chronic health conditions in adulthood. Children who are obese are more likely to become obese adults, and this prolonged state of excess weight can lead to a host of health problems. Type 2 diabetes, once considered an adult-onset disease, is now increasingly diagnosed in children and adolescents due to obesity. This early onset of diabetes can result in more severe complications in adulthood, including kidney disease, blindness, and cardiovascular problems.

Cardiovascular health is another major concern for adults who were obese as children. Studies have shown that childhood obesity is associated with a higher risk of hypertension, high cholesterol, and atherosclerosis in adulthood. These conditions significantly increase the likelihood of heart disease and stroke, which remain leading causes of death worldwide. The cumulative effect of carrying excess weight from childhood through adulthood places an enormous strain on the cardiovascular system, potentially leading to premature mortality.

Musculoskeletal issues are also more prevalent among adults who were obese as children. The excess weight puts undue stress on growing bones and joints, leading to problems such as osteoarthritis, chronic pain, and reduced mobility in adulthood. These issues can severely impact quality of life, limiting physical activity and potentially contributing to further weight gain, creating a vicious cycle.

Beyond physical health, the psychological impact of childhood obesity can persist well into adulthood. Children who are obese often face bullying, social isolation, and discrimination, which can lead to low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. These emotional scars can carry over into adulthood, affecting mental health, relationships, and overall life satisfaction. Adults who were obese as children may struggle with body image issues, disordered eating patterns, and difficulty forming intimate relationships.

The socioeconomic consequences of childhood obesity in adulthood are often overlooked but are nonetheless significant. Studies have shown that individuals who were obese as children tend to achieve

lower levels of education and earn less income as adults compared to their normal-weight peers. This disparity may be attributed to various factors, including health-related absenteeism, reduced productivity due to physical limitations, and societal biases against individuals with obesity.

Furthermore, the healthcare costs associated with treating obesity-related conditions can be substantial, placing a significant financial burden on individuals and healthcare systems. Adults who have been obese since childhood may face higher insurance premiums, more frequent medical visits, and greater out-of-pocket expenses for managing chronic conditions.

The reproductive health of adults who were obese as children can also be affected. Women who were obese in childhood are more likely to experience fertility issues, complications during pregnancy, and have a higher risk of gestational diabetes. Men may face reduced fertility and an increased risk of erectile dysfunction.

It's important to note that the long-term effects of childhood obesity are not inevitable. Early intervention and lifestyle changes can significantly reduce the risk of these adverse outcomes. Encouraging healthy eating habits, regular physical activity, and positive body image from a young age can help prevent obesity and its associated complications.

Parents, educators, healthcare providers, and policymakers all have crucial roles to play in addressing childhood obesity. Implementing school-based programs that promote healthy eating and physical activity, improving access to nutritious foods in underserved communities, and educating families about the importance of a balanced diet and active lifestyle are all essential steps in combating this issue.

Additionally, creating supportive environments that reduce stigma and promote inclusivity for children of all body sizes is crucial. This approach can help mitigate the psychological impact of obesity and encourage healthier behaviors without damaging self-esteem.

In conclusion, the long-term effects of childhood obesity on adult health and well-being are far-reaching and complex. From increased risks of chronic diseases to psychological and socioeconomic challenges, the impact can be felt throughout one's lifetime. However, with awareness, early intervention, and comprehensive approaches to prevention and treatment, it is possible to break the cycle of obesity and improve outcomes for future generations. By addressing childhood obesity, we invest not only in the health of our children but also in the well-being of the adults they will become.

MEET THE TEAM

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



Christopher Bagley, APRN

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

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



Eldon Waters, MSN, APRN

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

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

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



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Stress Management Tips from Quick Care Urgent Care

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

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

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

Take Time for Yourself

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

Get Moving

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

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

Meditation

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

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

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

Quick Care Med Urgent Care

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

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

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

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Back to School and Back to You

When kids head back to school, the ripple effects extend far beyond backpacks and lunch boxes. The shift transforms entire household routines, alters traffic patterns throughout communities, and signals the start of fall activities across cities and towns. This transitional period presents a unique opportunity for parents to refocus on their own well-being and establish new priorities.

THE REALITY OF MODERN PARENTING

Modern parenting demands intense juggling of responsibilities, from household duties and child-care to managing schedules and appointments for the entire family. Many parents find themselves caught in the cycle of prioritizing everyone else's needs while relegating their own well-being to the back burner. Whether it's packing lunches, coordinating school drop-offs, or managing after-school activities, parents often become so focused on their family's needs that self-care takes a backseat.

The familiar refrain "you have to take better care of yourself" echoes constantly in parenting circles, yet this well-meaning advice often falls flat due to its vagueness. Parents need concrete strategies and actionable steps to invest in their health consistently. The key lies in three fundamental principles: planning, simplicity, and convenience.

STRATEGIC FITNESS PLANNING

Success in any fitness journey begins with thoughtful preparation and goal-setting. When selecting a fitness program, consider both external and internal factors that will influence your long-term commitment.

External factors include choosing a fitness location with convenient scheduling, selecting a program that offers efficiency and variety, and finding a supportive community with helpful resources.

Internal factors encompass identifying both short-term and long-term motivation sources, preparing with appropriate clothing and equipment, and recognizing small improvements in daily activities like enhanced posture.

FINDING YOUR FITNESS FORMULA

Choose What You Enjoy: Enjoyment serves as the cornerstone of sustainable fitness. When exercise feels fun rather than punitive, motivation increases naturally, mental health improves, and physical performance enhances. Activities you genuinely enjoy become sustainable over time and often foster meaningful social connections.

Create Built-in Accountability: Accountability transforms fitness from a solo struggle into a supported journey. Joining fitness groups provides like-minded community support while creating natural accountability through scheduled classes. Personal trainers offer individualized motivation and customized workout plans tailored to specific needs and goals. Progress tracking provides tangible evidence of accomplishment, fueling continued motivation.

Prioritize Convenience: Location convenience cannot be overstated in maintaining consistent workout routines. Choose studios or gyms that integrate seamlessly into your existing schedule—whether near home, work, grocery stores, or children's schools. The less effort required to reach your workout destination, the higher your likelihood of maintaining the routine long-term.



THE CLUB PILATES ADVANTAGE

Club Pilates embodies these essential components by delivering comprehensive, well-rounded workouts designed for every participant. The efficiency factor shines through diverse class offerings available seven days a week, maximizing flexibility for busy schedules.

Pilates uniquely combines multiple fitness elements into one effective modality. The interesting equipment facilitates strength and core training while simultaneously addressing flexibility, mobility, and cardiovascular conditioning. This comprehensive approach creates a one-stop solution for meeting diverse fitness goals without requiring multiple gym memberships or complicated routines.

The convenience factor extends through strategically located studios throughout Lee County, making it easier to incorporate regular exercise into demanding schedules.



EMBRACING THE OPPORTUNITY

Schedule changes present perfect opportunities to embrace improved quality of life. Joseph Pilates wisely observed that "Physical fitness is the first requisite of happiness"—words that resonate powerfully at Club Pilates.

Dedicating one hour daily to personal fitness represents self-care, not selfishness. This investment in wellbeing demonstrates healthy lifestyle priorities to the next generation while improving your own physical and mental health. When parents model active, healthy living, they create lasting positive impacts that extend far beyond individual benefits.

The back-to-school transition offers a natural reset button for establishing new routines. Rather than viewing this period as simply accommodating everyone else's schedules, embrace it as an opportunity to prioritize your own health and happiness. Your family, community, and future self will thank you for making this essential investment in well-being.

Ready to make this the year you prioritize yourself? Club Pilates Ocala is here to support your fitness journey with convenient class schedules, expert instruction, and a welcoming community. Take the first step toward a healthier, happier you—call Club Pilates Ocala today to learn about our class offerings and discover how Pilates can transform your routine and your life.



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Developing Social Communication in Children

Innovative Therapies Group

A child's expressive vocabulary grows rapidly from the time of his first word at approximately 12 months, through first grade. Did you know that the average 2 year old uses over 200 words growing to 1000 words by age 3 years to over 1600 words by age 4? Your child's words may only be understood 50% of the time by age 2 but should be 90% understandable between 4-5 years.

There are many strategies that parents and care-givers can use to improve a child's communication:

Follow the child's lead

- Let the child choose the activity
- Join in the child's activity
- Comment on the child's play/talk about what he/she is doing
- Be face to face

Make it interactive – Create an opportunity for your child to communicate

- Keep toys/needed items in sight and out of reach to elicit requesting
- Provide inadequate portions so child requests more
- Create silly situations/be animated
- Playfully obstruct activity so child must request you "move", "go", etc.

Model and Expand the child's language

- Model gestures and words
- Simplify your language
- Speak slowly
- Be repetitive
- Provide choices (even when you already know what the child wants)
- Add one more element to your child's language (i.e.: if child uses one word utterances, model two word phrases, "go" becomes "car go")

Try some of these fun outdoor activities to help develop language skills.

Nature Walk: Whether at your local park or in your own backyard, now's the perfect time to get outside. While you are there, take the time to talk about what you are seeing:

- Label items (grass, leaf, flower, tree, dirt, stick). Collect items in a bag and encourage your child to show others what they found. Model language ("Look, I see, I found")



- Talk about the colors and sizes (big/little, short/tall) of the flowers, bugs, rocks and plants
- Discuss what you hear (model silly sounds and animal sounds)
- Talk about what people/animals are doing (who is running, sliding, throwing, swinging or what is crawling, flying, hiding). This is a great activity to practice verbs!

Water/sand play: Enjoy a hot day with water and/or sand play! Fill up a small pool or even a bucket with water/sand. You can use cups, big spoons and strainers while discussing the different steps throughout the activity:

- Talk about actions (splash, pour, fill, dump, scoop, dig)
- Label items (boats, spoons, cups). Children love to find items buried in the sand (hide, find and label them)!
- Talk about body parts (splash/scoop with your hands, splash with/bury your feet, do little splashes/dig with your fingers)

Follow the Leader/Simon Says: Both activities are great for toddlers and school-age children. Use Follow the Leader to work on identifying body parts and actions, as well as following directions. Younger children can participate by following visual instructions.

- Make sure you talk about what you're doing (model words), model actions and assist them with hand over hand assistance if necessary! ("Clap hands, stomp feet, arms up", "touch your eyes/nose/toes" and "Walk, run, jump, hop")
- Work on opposites (up/down, stop/go, loud/soft, high/low)

- Make instructions harder if the children are older (have them follow two "clap your hands then stomp your feet" or "touch your nose then touch your toes")
- Take turns being the leader and being "Simon". Encourage your child to tell you what to do!

Caregiver involvement can have a positive impact on improving a child's language skills. However, there are red flags which may indicate that a child may need professional intervention.

Red Flags

18 months:

- Does not point to objects
- Does not use gestures such as waving or shaking head
- Does not respond to "no" and "bye-bye"
- Does not use at least six to ten words consistently
- Does not hear well or discriminate between sounds

24 months:

- Does not use at least six consonant sounds
- Does not follow simple directions
- Has a vocabulary of less than 50 words
- Has decreased interest in social interactions

36 months:

- Strangers have difficulty understanding what the child is saying
- Does not use simple sentences

Innovative Therapies Group understands that family education is critical to improve a child's development of language skills. Coupled with family participation, direct therapy for a variety of communication disorders and delays can promote independent function and improved communication.

Speech therapy can help with improving a child's ability to understand and use language; and their ability to produce intelligible speech. We have experience treating children with a variety of disorders including Autism Spectrum Disorder.

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

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

Dealing With Life's Painful Situations

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

On Father's Day in 2005 my dad came to my office to visit and talk about how things were going. In the course of our discussion he mentioned that he experienced a terrible night's sleep because his back was causing him so much pain. I told him that it was time to go to the ER and get checked out to find out what was causing all of his pain. He did, and that started a two-year battle with pancreatic cancer. My dad fought an incredible fight with this terrible cancer but passed away in August of 2007.

Many people have faced the pain of having to bury a loved one. The question is, "How do I deal with the pain?" We may have confidence that our loved one is in a better place, but do we do with the pain that we still feel?

As you read this, maybe your pain is not in the loss associated with death, but rather you have faced the end of a relationship, or perhaps have received bad news regarding your own health. The question still remains, "what are we to do with these painful situations?"

As we turn through the pages of Scripture, we find that the thoughts and writings of the Psalmist David bring comfort and hope to those in pain.

David understood painful situations for he faced many of them in his own life. He too, buried many loved ones and faced enormous family problems. How did he get through these challenges? He turned to God for help.



David tells us in the book of Psalms, ¹⁸ *The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalms 34:18*

You are never closer to God than when you are hurting. David knew that from personal experience. David took his pain and his problems to the Lord and asked for His help. In Psalm 142:1-2 David wrote, *"I cry aloud to the LORD; I lift up my voice to the LORD for mercy. I pour out my complaint before him; before him I tell my trouble."*

Our natural tendency is to suffer in silence. We put on a smile and pretend that everything is fine in our lives. Yet in reality, we know that ignoring our pain does not bring relief. We hope that time will heal all wounds but we know it does not. In fact, time often makes matters even worse.

Pain is our body's way of letting us know that we need to deal with something. Whether it is physical, emotional, or relational, pain should not be ignored. And yet still, we try to run from it.

It is human nature to run from painful situations. By law, all doors in public buildings swing out. When people panic, they run. They try to escape. When we face pain, loss and hurt, we look for ways to escape. We dream of running away from reality in hopes of finding peace and comfort over the next rainbow. Sometimes people try to escape by turning to alcohol, drugs, food, or even inappropriate relationships. Running from your problems never brings resolution.

David went on to say in Psalm 142:3 that ³ *"When my spirit grows faint within me, it is you who knows my way..."* God knows the pain we feel and He wants us to run to Him with our troubles.

As you read his Psalms, you will quickly notice that David was very open about what he was going through. And yet, through it all, he learned to trust and depend on God.

When dealing with the pressures and strains of life and the emotional challenges we face, we can learn much from David's example. Stop pretending that you can handle everything in your own strength and turn to God who loves you and cares about you. He specializes in mending broken hearts.

Tim Neptune is the lead pastor of Venture Church Naples, a new church located on the campus of Florida SouthWestern State College in Naples, FL. For more information, visit www.venturenaples.com.



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