CENTRAL FLORIDA'S

Health & Wellness MAGAZINE

September 2025

Lake/Sumter Edition - Monthly

FREE

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AGING DOESN'T ALWAYS MEAN COGNITIVE DECLINE

PROTECTING YOUR VISION

THE SURPRISING LINK BETWEEN CHOLESTEROL AND EYE HEALTH

SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA

EXPERT CARE AND TREATMENT

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR HEALTH CHECK-UPS AFTER AGE 55

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In 2023, Evelyn and Larry Boman faced a cancer diagnosis and an uncertain future, but the right healthcare made all the difference. Now with cancer in their rearview, they're back to cruising in their yellow Mustang, counting their blessings, and sharing how The Villages Health changed their lives.

"It's a great experience to have a medical team over you, taking care of you, that looks at you like you're more than a number. You're a person. And they're just so loving, so caring... It's incredible." - Larry Boman

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Expert Dermatology Care for Your Skin

David Kosiorek, PA-C
Physician Assistant Certified
Vohra Wound Care Certification

Michael J. Freeman, MD
Dermatologist

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.

Comprehensive Care at Lumen Dermatology

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HOW TO PREVENT COMMON EYE CONDITIONS

Keeping your eyes healthy is one of the most important things you can do to protect your health and wellbeing. There are several common eye conditions that, if left untreated, can lead to vision issues or even vision loss. However, these conditions are easily preventable if the right steps are taken. Here are some of the most common eye conditions afflicted by adults and tips to help you prevent them from developing.

COMMON EYE CONDITIONS EXPLAINED

Oftentimes, many eye conditions will develop over time, and they'll often develop without early-onset symptoms. Some of the most common eye conditions include:

- **Glaucoma:** Glaucoma is the general term for a series of eye diseases that can damage your optic nerve, which is often caused by increased pressure on the eye. Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness worldwide, and it's often not noticed until serious vision loss is experienced.

- **Cataracts:** Cataracts are a clouding of the eye, which is caused by damage to your eye's lens. This often leads to blurred vision and difficulty seeing at night. Surgery is the most common treatment for restoring vision affected by cataracts.

- **Macular Degeneration:** Affecting the central part of the retina, macular degeneration can gradually affect central vision, making it hard to do simple tasks, such as reading, driving, or even recognizing a loved one.

- **Diabetic Retinopathy:** Diabetic retinopathy affects people with diabetes. High blood sugar levels damage the retina's blood vessels, which are located in the back of the eye, leading to swelling, blurred vision or vision loss.

8 WAYS TO PREVENT COMMON EYE CONDITIONS

While the above eye conditions can be severe, they are fortunately treatable and even preventable. To avoid the side effects of these dangerous diseases, take the following proactive steps:

1. Diet: A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids, antioxidants, and vitamins A, C and E provide all the necessary nutrients to strengthen your vision. Some good foods to implement include dark leafy greens,

like spinach, kale or collard greens, as well as fish, including salmon, tuna and trout. Citrus and nuts are also excellent snacks that provide these vitamins.

2. Know Your Health: Many common eye conditions are genetic, so there's a chance you may be predisposed. If possible, try to understand your family's health history, particularly regarding eye health. If you have chronic conditions like diabetes or high blood pressure, try to keep your health in range. Maintaining a healthy weight will also keep stress off your body.

3. Avoid Smoking: Smoking has been found to increase the risk of cataracts and macular degeneration. Quitting or never starting smoking can significantly boost your eye health.

4. Take Care in the Sun: UV rays can be especially damaging to your eyes when outside. Look for sunglasses that have at least 99% UVA and UVB protection.

5. Practice Eye Safety: Protective eyewear, both at work and at home, can decrease your risk of eye injury. Painting, construction, yardwork or sports are common activities where protective eyewear should be worn at all times.

6. Limit Screen Time: While it may be hard to look away from your phone or computer in today's ever-connected world, digital eye strain is a serious complication that can affect your eye's health. The 20-20-20 rule – looking up every 20 minutes at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds – can help prevent the damages caused by excess screen time.

7. Use Contact Lens Safety: If you wear corrective contact lenses, it's important to wash your hands before taking them out or putting them in. You should also properly clean your contact lenses nightly to avoid dangerous eye infections.

8. Schedule Comprehensive Eye Exams: Many common eye conditions, including those mentioned above, are screened for during comprehensive eye exams. Eye exams use imaging to take pictures of critical parts of the eye, including the retina and optic nerve, to look for "undetected" signs of disease. It's the quickest way to get a personalized health plan to manage your eye health.

PRESERVE YOUR EYE HEALTH WITH LAKE EYE

Even by following proactive at-home steps, the best way to prevent eye conditions from developing is to schedule and receive regular eye exams. Your optometrist will work with you and prescribe treatment plans to prevent eye diseases from progressing. For advanced eye health protection from common eye conditions, contact the experts at Lake Eye.

Lake Eye, a US Eye company, is dedicated to preserving and restoring your vision. We offer comprehensive eye exams, a full-service optical department, and advanced surgical treatments for nearly every common eye condition. To learn more about the variety of services we provide to help slow and reverse vision loss, contact Lake Eye today and schedule an appointment with one of our experienced ophthalmologists or optometrists.

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The Critical Importance of Regular Health Check-ups After Age 55

As we celebrate reaching our mid-50s and beyond, maintaining our health becomes increasingly vital for enjoying the active, fulfilling life we've worked so hard to build. At UF Health, we understand that preventive care isn't just about catching problems early — it's about empowering you to take control of your health journey during these pivotal years.

Why Age 55 Marks a Health Care Milestone

The transition into your mid-50s represents a significant shift in your body's needs and risk factors. During this period, the likelihood of developing chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and certain cancers increases substantially. What makes this age particularly crucial is that many of these conditions develop silently, showing few or no symptoms until they've progressed significantly.

Your immune system also begins to change after 55, becoming less efficient at fighting off infections and diseases. Additionally, hormonal changes, particularly in women after menopause, can affect bone density, cardiovascular health and overall well-being. These natural aging processes make regular monitoring and early intervention more important than ever.

Essential Screenings for the 55+ Population

Regular check-ups after 55 should include comprehensive screenings tailored to your age group's specific risks. Cardiovascular assessments become paramount, including blood pressure monitoring, cholesterol panels and electrocardiograms to detect heart rhythm abnormalities. These screenings can identify cardiovascular disease risk factors before symptoms appear, allowing for lifestyle modifications or treatments that can prevent heart attacks and strokes.

Cancer screenings take on heightened importance during this life stage. Colonoscopies, mammograms and skin cancer checks should be scheduled according to your physician's recommendations and your personal risk factors. For men, prostate cancer screenings become increasingly relevant, while women should continue regular cervical cancer screenings and discuss bone density testing to assess osteoporosis risk.

Diabetes screening through regular blood glucose testing is essential, as Type 2 diabetes risk increases significantly with age. Early detection allows for dietary and lifestyle interventions that can prevent or delay the onset of this condition and its associated complications.

The Ripple Effect of Preventive Care

Regular check-ups with your primary care physician create a comprehensive health picture that extends far beyond individual test results. Your health care provider can identify patterns and connections between different aspects of your health, leading to more personalized and effective treatment strategies. This holistic approach is particularly valuable for managing multiple conditions that often coexist in older adults.

Preventive care also includes medication reviews, which become increasingly important as prescription regimens often become more complex with age. Your doctor can identify potential drug interactions, unnecessary medications or dosage adjustments needed as your body's metabolism changes.

Building Your Health Care Relationship

Establishing a strong relationship with your healt care team is crucial for navigating the health challenges that may arise after 55. This should include open communication about your concerns, lifestyle factors and health goals. Don't hesitate to discuss changes in energy levels, sleep patterns, memory or physical capabilities — these conversations can provide valuable insights into your overall health status.

Regular check-ups also provide opportunities to discuss preventive measures such as vaccinations, including annual flu shots, pneumonia vaccines and the shingles vaccine, which are particularly important for adults over 55.

Taking Action for Your Future

The investment you make in preventive health care today pays dividends in maintaining your independence, vitality and quality of life in the years ahead. At UF Health, we're committed to partnering with you in this journey, providing comprehensive care that adapts to your changing needs.

Don't wait for symptoms to appear — schedule your next check-up today. Your future self will thank you for the proactive steps you take now to maintain your health and well-being throughout your golden years.

Same-day and next-day appointments available – call 352.323.5665 for more information or to schedule an appointment.

Refer a friend and receive a FREE wellness gift!

Oscar A. Perez Gutierrez, MD, an internal medicine physician, is dedicated to providing comprehensive, individualized care with a focus on prevention. Known for his patient-centered approach, he believes in building strong, trusting relationships with his patients. He takes a holistic approach to patient care, focusing not only on treating acute illnesses, but also on preventive care and health maintenance.

Dr. Perez understands the importance of listening to his patients' concerns, thoroughly explaining diagnoses and treatment options and empowering his patients to take an active role in their health and wellness.

Passionate about patient care and community service, he has contributed to mission trips to Haiti, Venezuela and Cuba. In his personal time, Dr. Perez enjoys mountain biking and traveling with his wife and two children.

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Understanding Squamous Cell Carcinoma

EXPERT CARE AND TREATMENT

By David Kosiorek, PA-C

Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is the second most common form of skin cancer, affecting millions of people worldwide each year. While this diagnosis can be concerning, early detection and proper treatment lead to excellent outcomes for most patients. At Lumen Dermatology, our experienced team specializes in comprehensive SCC care, from prevention and early detection to advanced treatment options.

What is Squamous Cell Carcinoma?

Squamous cell carcinoma develops in the squamous cells that make up the outer layer of your skin. Unlike basal cell carcinoma, SCC has a higher tendency to spread to other parts of the body if left untreated, making early intervention crucial. This cancer typically appears on sun-exposed areas such as the face, ears, neck, lips, backs of hands, arms, and legs.

The primary cause of SCC is cumulative ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure from the sun or tanning beds. Other risk factors include fair skin, a history of sunburns, weakened immune system, exposure to certain chemicals, and previous skin cancer diagnoses. People over 50, men, and those with outdoor occupations face increased risk.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

SCC can present in various forms, making professional evaluation essential. Common signs include persistent, scaly red patches that may bleed or crust over, elevated growths with a central depression, wart-like growths, and open sores that don't heal within several weeks. Any new growth, changing mole, or suspicious skin lesion warrants immediate dermatological examination.

The cancer often develops gradually, which can lead patients to dismiss early symptoms as minor skin irritations. However, what distinguishes SCC from benign conditions is its persistence and progressive nature. Unlike temporary skin issues that resolve on their own, SCC lesions continue growing and changing over time.

When SCC is suspected, we perform precise biopsies to confirm the diagnosis and determine the specific subtype and characteristics of the cancer.

Our treatment philosophy centers on achieving complete cancer removal while preserving both function and cosmetic appearance.

For patients who aren't surgical candidates or have specific location concerns, we provide alternative treatments such as supeficial radiation therapy. Our team carefully evaluates each case to recommend the most appropriate treatment approach based on the cancer's size, location, depth, and the patient's overall health status.

Prevention and Ongoing Care

Beyond treatment, Lumen Dermatology emphasizes prevention and long-term skin health management. We provide comprehensive skin cancer screenings, educate patients about proper sun protection, and establish personalized follow-up schedules. Our team recommends daily broad-spectrum sunscreen use, protective clothing, and avoiding peak sun hours. For patients with a history of SCC, regular monitoring becomes essential since they face increased risk for developing additional skin cancers.

Your Partner in Skin Health

Receiving an SCC diagnosis doesn't have to be overwhelming. At Lumen Dermatology, our compassionate team guides you through every step of your treatment journey, from initial consultation through recovery and beyond. We're committed to providing personalized, evidence-based care that prioritizes your health, comfort, and peace of mind.

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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Why a Dedicated Vein Clinic Matters for Treating Leg Vein Issues

Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center Specializes in Comprehensive, Compassionate Care

The Importance of a Dedicated Vein Center

The care of patients with venous disorders has become a specialty itself complete with graduate medical training, Board Certification, and national societies focusing exclusively on vein care. Unfortunately very few practitioners that call themselves vein specialists have undergone this specialty training and focus solely on vein care.

Many specialties have added vein care to their practice as an adjunct service line that is not their main field of expertise. Cardiology, Plastic Surgery, Dermatology, Internal Medicine and Interventional Radiology are but a few specialties that "dabble" in vein care. They do not commit to the specialty training and certification that makes a provider an expert in vein care.

In a dedicated vein center, the treatment of patients with venous disease is the sole focus and provides a better patient experience and unparalleled results. All staff and providers are experts in the vein care process, minimizing chaos and creating an efficient and effective patient centered experience. Dedicated vein centers are early adopters of new technology and equipment in order to offer the best possible treatment options for patients. Dedicated vein centers provide care based on best practices to achieve superior results.

The specialists in a dedicated vein center are trained to provide comprehensive care that requires broad expertise. Commonly patients present with complex vein problems that can be handled in a dedicated vein center with ease.

If you've noticed leg pain, swelling, bulging veins, or skin discoloration around the ankles, these may be signs of an underlying vascular condition like chronic venous insufficiency (CVI), varicose veins, or venous ulcers. These issues are more than cosmetic—they're medical. And when it comes to diagnosing and treating them effectively, a specialized approach makes all the difference.

At **Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center,** patients receive expert care from a team that focuses exclusively on vein health. With state-of-the-art diagnostics and minimally invasive treatment options, this dedicated vein clinic offers solutions tailored to everyone's needs—without the need for hospitalization or extended downtime.

Leg Vein Disorders Are Common—But Often Misunderstood

Vein conditions affect millions of Americans. According to the Society for Vascular Surgery, **about 35% of U.S. adults have varicose veins,** and up to **40% of women and 20% of men** will experience chronic venous insufficiency (CVI) in their lifetime. Symptoms can include:

- Aching or cramping in the legs
- Swelling that worsens throughout the day
- Visible, twisted varicose veins
- Skin discoloration or ulceration near the ankles

Despite how common these conditions are, they are often overlooked or misdiagnosed in general practice settings. Patients may be told that symptoms are due to aging, weight, or long hours standing—when in fact, **they may be signs of an underlying vascular disorder requiring targeted treatment.**

Why Choose a Dedicated Vein Clinic?

Unlike general medical practices or cosmetic centers, a dedicated vein clinic offers focused expertise in diagnosing and treating venous diseases. At Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center, Dr. John D. Horowitz and his team have developed a reputation for excellence in vein care. Here's what sets their approach apart:

1. Board-Certified Vascular Surgeon Oversight

Dr. Horowitz is a board-certified vascular surgeon with extensive experience in diagnosing and treating vein disorders. Every patient's care is guided by a specialist who understands the full vascular system, ensuring accurate diagnosis and safe, effective treatment. All of the experts at CFVVC's dedicated vein center have extensive training and experience in treating the most advanced prblems that vein patients present with.

2. In-Office Ultrasound Diagnostics

The practice uses advanced ultrasound imaging to assess blood flow and detect reflux or blockage in the veins. All testing is done on-site, allowing for prompt and precise evaluation without the need for referral to an outside imaging center. Our sonographers are among the few practitioners in the nation that can not only provide state of the art diagnostic studies, but can assist in procedures to guide the provider.

3. Minimally Invasive Treatment Options

Today's vein treatments are nothing like the invasive vein-stripping surgeries of the past. Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center offers many vein treatment options to create a care plan that is specific to each patient's needs. Some of the vein treatments offered at Central Florida Vein and Vascular Center include:

- **Endovenous Laser Treatment (EVLT):** Uses laser energy to seal off faulty veins
- Radiofrequency ablation
- Varithena non-compounded ultrasound guided foam sclerotherapy
- **Sclerotherapy:** Injects a solution that closes smaller varicose or spider veins
- Ultrasound guided foam sclerotherapy
- **Microphlebectomy:** Removes surface varicose veins through tiny punctures
- **Venaseal:** This minimally invasive procedure uses medical glue to seal varicose veins.

All procedures are performed in the comfort of the clinic with **little to no downtime.** Most patients resume normal activity within a day.

4. Comprehensive, Personalized Care

Vein conditions vary widely from person to person. Some patients may have minor cosmetic concerns; others may struggle with ulcers that impact their mobility. At Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center, treatment plans are **customized to address both medical and aesthetic goals.** Regular follow-ups ensure continued healing and prevention of recurrence.

Early Treatment Prevents Complications

Chronic venous insufficiency is a progressive disease. Left untreated, it can lead to serious complications such as:

- Skin thickening and hardening (lipodermatosclerosis)
- Venous ulcers that are slow to heal
- Blood clots (superficial or deep vein thrombosis)
- Increased risk of infection

Seeking care at the **first sign of leg vein symptoms** improves outcomes significantly. In many cases, early intervention can stop disease progression, relieve discomfort, and prevent future medical complications.

Insurance Coverage & Patient Access

Because vein issues are medical, not just cosmetic, most treatments offered at Central Florida Vein & Vascular Center are covered by insurance, including Medicare. The team works closely with each patient to determine coverage eligibility and obtain any necessary pre-authorizations.

With **four locations across Central Florida,** in Orlando, Oviedo, Hunter's Creek, and The Villages, the clinic offers convenient access to expert care. Schedule a consultation with a vein care expert today.

Know the Warning Signs—and Don't Wait

If you experience any of the following, it's time to schedule a vein consultation:

- Leg heaviness or fatigue that worsens with standing
- Swollen ankles, especially in the evening
- Visible varicose or spider veins
- Itching, burning, or skin changes on the lower legs
- A history of blood clots or leg ulcers

These symptoms are not simply part of aging or being active—they're a signal that your veins may need medical attention.

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High Cholesterol = High Risk for Debilitating Diseases

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

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

What numbers are healthy?

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

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

What are the Risk Factors?

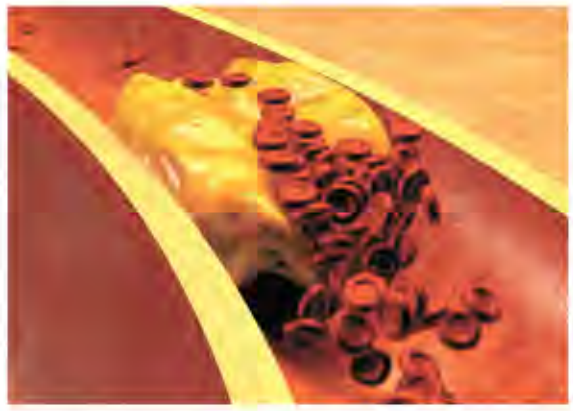
Cholesterol along with another substance in the blood can form atherosclerosis, which is the plaque that builds up in the arteries. If you have excessive plaque, then you are at high risk of having a coronary heart attack, heart disease, stroke and other disease related issues. Triglycerides are the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

What you can do

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

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

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



Foods to incorporate

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

Cholesterol Lowering Foods
Garlic
Oatmeal and Oat bran
Pears
Apples
Prunes
Beans
Red wine
Fatty fish (salmon and sardines)
Nuts
Black tea
Spinach
Olive Oil

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

Dr. Vallabhan

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SPECIALIST IN DISEASES OF THE HEART, ARTERIES AND VEINS

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To find out more information on the Dr. Vallabhan, your local specialists in the diseases of the heart, veins, and arteries, please call (352) 750-2040 or visit them online at, Drvcardio.com

Decompression Therapy
UNLOCKING HEALING POTENTIAL

By Dr. Chad Rose. DC

Decompression therapy has emerged as a groundbreaking treatment option for individuals suffering from chronic pain, offering a non-invasive alternative to traditional medical interventions. At Rose Wellness Clinic, patients are discovering a revolutionary approach to managing pain, improving mobility, and enhancing overall quality of life through this advanced therapeutic technique.

Understanding Decompression Therapy
Decompression therapy is a specialized treatment designed to alleviate pressure on compressed joints, nerves, and soft tissues. The primary goal is to create negative pressure within the affected area, which helps decompress spinal discs, reduce nerve impingement, and promote natural healing processes. Unlike invasive surgical procedures, this therapy offers a gentle, strategic approach to addressing various chronic pain conditions.

KEY BENEFITS OF DECOMPRESSION THERAPY

1. Non-Invasive Pain Management
One of the most significant advantages of decompression therapy is its non-surgical nature. Patients can experience substantial pain relief without the risks associated with invasive procedures. The treatment is particularly effective for:

- Chronic lower back pain
- Herniated or bulging discs
- Sciatica
- Neck pain
- Degenerative disc disease
- Pinched nerves

2. Improved Healing and Circulation
The therapy works by creating negative pressure within the affected area, which:

- Promotes nutrient and oxygen flow to injured tissues
- Reduces inflammation
- Stimulates the body's natural healing mechanisms
- Helps rehydrate compressed discs
- Encourages the retraction of herniated disc material

3. Enhanced Mobility and Flexibility
Patients often report significant improvements in:

- Range of motion
- Muscle flexibility
- Overall joint function
- Reduction in stiffness and discomfort

4. Holistic Approach to Treatment
Rose Wellness Clinic takes a comprehensive approach to decompression therapy, combining it with:

- Personalized treatment plans
- Complementary therapies
- Nutritional guidance
- Rehabilitation exercises

INSURANCE COVERAGE AT ROSE WELLNESS CLINIC

Many patients are pleasantly surprised to learn that decompression therapy may be covered by their insurance provider. At Rose Wellness Clinic, our dedicated team works closely with patients to:

- Verify insurance benefits
- Provide detailed documentation
- Navigate insurance claims process
- Offer flexible payment options for treatment

Insurance Considerations

- Most major health insurance plans provide partial coverage
- Coverage typically depends on:
- Specific diagnosis
- Recommended treatment duration
- Individual policy details
- Pre-authorization may be required
- Patients are encouraged to consult with their insurance provider

Rose Wellness Clinic Offers an Insurance Friendly Multidisciplinary Approach

- Conservative medical care
- Physical therapy
- Chiropractic
- Durable medical equipment (DME)

Who Can Benefit Most?
Decompression therapy is particularly beneficial for individuals experiencing:

- Chronic pain lasting more than six months
- Limited relief from traditional treatments
- Desire to avoid surgical interventions
- Recurring musculoskeletal issues
- Performance-related physical limitations

Safety and Effectiveness
Clinical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of decompression therapy, with many patients reporting:

- Significant pain reduction
- Improved functional capabilities
- Enhanced quality of life
- Reduced reliance on pain medications

At Rose Wellness Clinic, our expert practitioners utilize state-of-the-art equipment and personalized treatment protocols to ensure optimal results for each patient.

Consultation and Next Steps
Individuals interested in exploring decompression therapy should schedule a comprehensive evaluation with our specialized medical team. During the initial consultation, our experts will:

- Conduct a thorough medical history review
- Perform diagnostic assessments
- Create a customized treatment plan
- Discuss potential insurance coverage

Decompression therapy represents a promising solution for those seeking relief from chronic pain without invasive procedures. Rose Wellness Clinic remains committed to providing cutting-edge, patient-centered care that transforms lives and restores hope.

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

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

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UNDERSTANDING PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE (PAD)

By Dr. Andrew Franklin, DPM, PH.D

September marks Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) Awareness Month, making it an ideal opportunity to discuss this often-overlooked vascular condition. As a foot and ankle specialist, I frequently encounter patients whose first symptoms of PAD manifest in their feet, yet many remain unaware of the serious implications this disease can have on their overall health.

UNDERSTANDING PAD: MORE THAN POOR CIRCULATION

Peripheral Arterial Disease develops when plaque accumulates within the arteries supplying blood to your extremities, causing these vessels to narrow or become completely blocked. This arterial narrowing significantly reduces blood flow to your legs and feet, creating a cascade of potential health complications that extend far beyond simple circulation problems.

The condition represents a systemic issue that can signal increased risk for cardiovascular events, including heart attacks and strokes. In severe cases, insufficient blood flow can lead to tissue death and the need for amputation.

RECOGNIZING THE WARNING SIGNS

Your lower extremities often serve as early indicators of PAD, displaying symptoms that shouldn't be ignored:

Pain and Discomfort

- Cramping, aching, or fatigue in leg muscles during activity that subsides with rest (intermittent claudication)
- Persistent pain in feet or toes, particularly at night that is relieved with walking or dangling your feet off the bed.

Physical Changes

- Noticeable temperature differences between each legs
- Wounds or ulcers that heal slowly or not at all
- Changes in skin texture, including a shiny appearance
- Altered nail growth patterns
- Color changes in the skin of your legs or feet

Functional Limitations

- Weakness in the legs
- Reduced sensation in the feet

RISK FACTORS TO CONSIDER

Several factors can predispose individuals to developing PAD:

Age and Lifestyle

- Being over 50 years of age
- Current or former smoking habit
- Sedentary lifestyle

Medical Conditions

- Diabetes mellitus
- Hypertension
- Elevated cholesterol levels
- Obesity

Genetic Predisposition

- Family history of cardiovascular disease
- Personal history of heart disease or stroke

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Taking proactive steps can significantly reduce your PAD risk and improve outcomes if you already have the condition:

MEDICAL MONITORING

Regular vascular screenings, particularly for those over 50 or with risk factors, allow for early detection. Simple, painless tests can evaluate blood flow and identify potential problems before they become severe.

LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS

- **Tobacco Cessation:** Eliminating tobacco use is perhaps the most impactful change you can make for vascular health
- **Exercise Program:** Structured walking programs and regular physical activity improve circulation and can alleviate symptoms
- **Chronic Disease Management:** Maintaining optimal control of diabetes, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels through medication and lifestyle changes

FOOT CARE PROTOCOLS

- Daily inspection of feet for any abnormalities
- Proper hygiene and moisturization
- Immediate attention to any wounds or concerning changes
- Regular professional foot examinations

TAKING ACTION THIS SEPTEMBER

PAD Awareness Month serves as a reminder to prioritize your vascular health. If you're experiencing any concerning symptoms or have multiple risk factors, don't delay in seeking professional evaluation. Early intervention can prevent serious complications and preserve both your mobility and overall health.

Consider scheduling a comprehensive vascular assessment to establish baseline measurements and discuss personalized prevention strategies. Together, we can develop an approach that addresses your individual risk factors and helps maintain the health of your lower extremities for years to come.

The key to managing PAD lies in awareness, early detection, and consistent follow-through with treatment recommendations. Your feet often tell the story of your vascular health—let's make sure it's a positive one.

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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UNDERSTANDING OVARIAN AND PROSTATE HEALTH

September marks an important time for health awareness, bringing attention to two critical areas of reproductive and urological health: ovarian cancer awareness and prostate health education. At Lake Sumter Urology, we believe that knowledge is power when it comes to protecting your health and the health of your loved ones.

Ovarian Cancer Awareness: The Silent Threat
September is National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month, dedicated to educating women and their families about this often-overlooked disease. Ovarian cancer affects approximately 22,000 women in the United States each year, making it the fifth leading cause of cancer death among women. What makes this disease particularly dangerous is its tendency to develop silently, often without obvious symptoms until it reaches advanced stages.

Recognizing the Warning Signs
While ovarian cancer symptoms can be subtle, being aware of potential warning signs is crucial for early detection. Women should pay attention to persistent symptoms lasting more than two weeks, including:

- Bloating or abdominal swelling
- Pelvic or abdominal pain
- Difficulty eating or feeling full quickly
- Urinary urgency or frequency
- Fatigue
- Back pain
- Changes in bowel habits

These symptoms can easily be attributed to other conditions, which is why ovarian cancer is sometimes called the "whispering disease." However, when these symptoms are new, persistent, or severe, it's important to consult with a healthcare provider promptly.

Risk Factors and Prevention
Understanding risk factors can help women make informed decisions about their health. Age is the most significant risk factor, with most cases occurring in women over 50. Family history of ovarian, breast, or colorectal cancers can increase risk, particularly when associated with BRCA gene mutations. Other factors include personal history of breast cancer, fertility treatments, and hormone replacement therapy.

While there's no foolproof way to prevent ovarian cancer, certain factors may reduce risk, including pregnancy, breastfeeding, and the use of oral contraceptives. Regular gynecological examinations and open communication with healthcare providers about family history and symptoms remain the best defense.

Prostate Health: A Men's Health Priority
While September focuses on ovarian awareness, it's equally important to address prostate health, which affects virtually all men as they age. The prostate gland, responsible for producing seminal fluid, can develop various conditions that significantly impact quality of life.

Common Prostate Conditions
Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH), or enlarged prostate, affects more than half of men in their 60s and up to 90% of men in their 70s and 80s. Symptoms include difficulty starting urination, weak urine stream, frequent urination (especially at night), and the feeling of incomplete bladder emptying.

Prostate cancer, the second most common cancer in men, typically develops slowly and may not cause symptoms in early stages. Regular screening through PSA blood tests and digital rectal examinations can help detect problems early when treatment is most effective.

The Urological Connection
At Lake Sumter Urology, we understand that both ovarian and prostate health issues can significantly impact urological function. Ovarian masses can compress the bladder or ureters, causing urinary symptoms. Similarly, prostate conditions directly affect urinary function and overall quality of life.

Taking Action for Your Health
Prevention and early detection remain the most powerful tools against both ovarian and prostate-related health issues. We encourage patients to maintain regular check-ups, communicate openly with healthcare providers about symptoms and family history, and stay informed about their bodies.

For women, this means scheduling annual gynecological examinations and reporting any concerning symptoms promptly. For men, prostate screening discussions should begin around age 50, or earlier for those with family history or other risk factors.

COMPREHENSIVE UROLOGICAL SERVICES
At Lake Sumter Urology, we treat various male urology conditions, including Enlarged Prostate (BPH), Urinary calculi (Kidney Stones), Prostate Cancer screening and management, Erectile Dysfunction, Hypogonadism (Low Testosterone), Kidney tumors, Bladder cancer, Chronic Prostatitis, Elective Sterilization (Vasectomy), Infertility, and Female Urology conditions, Recurrent Urinary tract Infections, Urinary incontinence(Bladder control) Pelvic Organ Prolapse, and Chronic Pelvic Pain, with utmost expertise and experience.

This September, take charge of your health by scheduling appropriate screenings, learning about your family history, and staying alert to your body's signals. Early detection saves lives, and we're here to support you every step of the way. Contact Lake Sumter Urology at 352-775-6899 to schedule a confidential consultation with specialists who understand and can help address your concerns.

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Aging Doesn't Always Mean Cognitive Decline

For thousands of years, humans have obsessed over their canine and feline companions. Any pet owner will tell you how their dog or cat brings them joy, alleviates stress, and keeps them active and on their toes.

But could pets also stave off brain aging? People who own pets are less lonely—a major risk factor for dementia. Playing with your pet or taking them for a walk is a form of exercise which can also keep the brain healthy for longer. Now, scientists are interested in seeing whether people who owned cats or dogs had a lower risk of cognitive decline or dementia.

Several observational studies published last year suggest that your dog or cat could meaningfully reduce your risk of developing dementia, especially if you're over the age of 50.

How pet ownership could reduce the risk of dementia and cognitive decline In 2023, Japanese researchers published a study that looked at 11,194 older adults to see whether owning dogs or cats provided a protective effect against dementia.

Compared to those without pets, dog owners were 40 percent less likely to develop dementia over the course of four years. Dog owners who were social or exercised regularly experienced an extra 20 percent decrease in dementia risk. Unfortunately, the study didn't find evidence that owning cats had a similar effect.

At least in this study, dogs came out ahead.

Chinese researchers published a similar study last year, also looking at the link between pet ownership and cognitive decline among a cohort of 7,495 adults over the age of 50 in the UK.

The participants received psychological tests to assess their memory, verbal fluency, and thinking eight years apart. Owning a cat or dog was associated

with a slower rate of cognitive decline among individuals who were living alone. However, older adults living with others saw no significant benefit.

This study suggests that companionship from dogs or cats could offset some of the negative effects of living alone.

For people who have already developed Alzheimer's or dementia, there isn't a lot of research yet on how interactions with pets or trained therapy animals affect further cognitive decline.

However, many long-term care facilities have also started implementing animal-assisted therapy for their residents facilitated by certified handlers and trained dogs. Dogs can still improve their quality of life. Playtime with a pup could ease agitation, aggression, depression, and even help residents cope with sundowning, emotional and behavioral issues that worsen as daytime fades.

Research is needed to determine whether "prescribing" pets to otherwise lonely or isolated older adults could have a protective effect on their brains.

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Building Health Through Trust:
Why Your Primary Care Provider Matters More Than Ever

In today's fast-paced health care landscape, establishing a trusting relationship with a primary care provider has become one of the most crucial investments you can make in your long-term health and well-being. This foundational partnership serves as the cornerstone of effective health care management, offering benefits that extend far beyond routine checkups and sick visits.

The Foundation of Comprehensive Care
A trusted primary care provider serves as your health care quarterback, coordinating all aspects of your medical care while maintaining a comprehensive understanding of your health history, family background and personal health goals. This continuity of care is invaluable when managing chronic conditions, preventing disease and making informed decisions about your health trajectory.

When you work with the same provider over time, they develop an intimate understanding of your baseline health status, making it easier to identify subtle changes that might indicate emerging health concerns. This familiarity enables earlier detection of potential problems and more personalized treatment approaches tailored to your specific needs and circumstances.

Trust as the Catalyst for Better Health Outcomes
Trust between patients and providers creates an environment where open, honest communication can flourish. When you feel comfortable sharing sensitive information about your symptoms, lifestyle habits or health concerns, your provider can make more accurate diagnoses and develop more effective treatment plans. This transparency is particularly important when discussing mental health issues, substance use or other sensitive topics that significantly impact overall well-being.

Research consistently demonstrates that patients who trust their health care providers are more likely to follow treatment recommendations, take medications as prescribed and engage in preventive care activities. This directly translates to better health outcomes, reduced hospitalizations and improved quality of life.

Preventive Care and Early Intervention
A trusted primary care relationship emphasizes preventive care as a cornerstone of maintaining good health. Regular screenings, immunizations and health assessments can identify risk factors and catch diseases in their earliest, most treatable stages. Your

primary care provider can work with you to develop personalized prevention strategies based on your age, family history, lifestyle factors and individual risk profile.

This proactive approach is particularly valuable for managing chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. With consistent monitoring and adjustment of treatment plans, many serious complications can be prevented or significantly delayed.

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For residents of Central Florida, our experts at UF Health Medical Group Primary Care offer an exceptional model of comprehensive, patient-centered care. These facilities combine the resources and expertise of a leading academic medical system with the personal attention and continuity that makes primary care relationships so valuable.

UF Health Medical Group Primary Care offices are available throughout Central Florida and are staffed by board-certified physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants who are committed to building long-term relationships with their patients. The integration with UF Health's broader network means that when specialist care or advanced diagnostic services are needed, seamless coordination ensures continuity of care and communication between all members of your health care team.

Our practices emphasize evidence-based medicine while recognizing that each patient brings unique circumstances, preferences and goals to their health care journey. This balanced approach ensures you receive care that is both scientifically sound and personally meaningful.

Making the Investment in Your Health
Choosing a primary care provider is ultimately an investment in your future health and peace of mind. The time spent building this relationship pays dividends through better health outcomes, more efficient health care experiences and the confidence that comes from having a trusted medical advocate in your corner.

In an era of increasingly complex health care systems, having a primary care provider you trust serves as your guide, advocate and partner in navigating medical decisions and maintaining optimal health throughout all stages of life.

Be at your best and schedule an appointment today—call 352.323.5665.

Same-day and next-day appointments available.

Alfredo J. Farinas, MD, is an internal medicine physician at UF Health Medical Group Primary Care. He is dedicated to developing lasting relationships with his patients and making their health his priority. Dr. Farinas believes preventive care and the management of chronic conditions are key to a patient's long-term health goals.

He has been caring for patients in the Mount Dora area for more than 30 years and is proud to continue that legacy with UF Health. He is devoted to enhancing lives through tailored and thorough medical care, while nurturing trust and cooperation with his patients. His decision to specialize in internal medicine stems from a genuine commitment to positively impact individuals and communities.

In his personal time, Dr. Farinas enjoys spending time on his boat with his wife and two daughters.

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Protecting Your Vision

The Surprising Link Between Cholesterol and Eye Health

By Thomas G. Ward, D.O.

As September marks National Cholesterol Education Month, it's crucial to understand that high cholesterol doesn't just affect your heart—it can also significantly impact your vision. While most people associate cholesterol with cardiovascular health, few realize its important role in eye health. This connection underscores the importance of maintaining healthy cholesterol levels for overall well-being, including preserving your eyesight.

Cholesterol, a waxy substance found in your blood, is essential for building cell membranes and producing hormones. However, when levels become too high, it can lead to various health issues, including eye problems. The eyes, like other organs, rely on a network of blood vessels to function properly. When these vessels are compromised by high cholesterol, it can result in serious eye conditions that may threaten your vision.

One of the most common eye problems associated with high cholesterol is retinal vein occlusion. This condition occurs when cholesterol deposits block the veins that drain blood from the retina, leading to swelling, bleeding, and potential vision loss. The sudden onset of blurry vision in one eye is often the first sign of this condition, which requires immediate medical attention to prevent permanent damage.

Another concern is arcus senilis, a gray or white arc visible around the cornea's outer edge. While this condition is common in older adults and usually harmless, its presence in younger individuals can indicate high cholesterol levels. It serves as a visible reminder of the importance of regular cholesterol checks and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Perhaps most alarmingly, studies have shown a link between high cholesterol and an increased risk of developing age-related macular degeneration (AMD). AMD is a leading cause of vision loss in older adults, affecting the central part of the retina responsible for sharp, detailed vision. While the exact mechanism is not fully understood, researchers believe that cholesterol buildup in the eye may contribute to the development and progression of this condition.

Fortunately, many of the steps you can take to lower your cholesterol also benefit your eye health. A diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can help reduce bad cholesterol levels while

providing essential nutrients for eye health. Foods high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon, sardines, and flaxseeds, are particularly beneficial for both cholesterol management and eye health.

Regular exercise is another crucial factor in maintaining healthy cholesterol levels and supporting eye health. Physical activity helps increase HDL (good) cholesterol while lowering LDL (bad) cholesterol. Moreover, exercise improves blood circulation throughout the body, including the eyes, which can help prevent vision problems.

Quitting smoking is also vital for both cholesterol management and eye health. Smoking not only lowers good cholesterol levels but also increases the risk of various eye diseases, including cataracts and AMD. If you smoke, consider seeking support to quit as part of your overall health improvement plan.

During National Cholesterol Education Month, it's an excellent time to schedule a comprehensive eye exam along with a cholesterol check. Many eye care professionals can detect signs of high cholesterol during a routine eye examination, potentially catching issues before they become more serious. These exams can include dilated eye exams, which allow your doctor to examine the blood vessels in your retina for signs of cholesterol buildup or other issues.

If you're prescribed cholesterol-lowering medications, such as statins, it's important to take them as directed. Some studies have suggested that statins may have additional benefits for eye health, potentially reducing the risk of certain eye conditions. However, always consult with your healthcare provider about the best treatment plan for your individual needs.

In conclusion, the connection between cholesterol and eye health highlights the importance of a holistic approach to health care. By maintaining healthy cholesterol levels through diet, exercise, regular check-ups, and appropriate medical interventions, you're not just protecting your heart—you're also safeguarding your vision. This National Cholesterol Education Month, take proactive steps to lower your cholesterol and keep your eyes healthy for years to come. Your future self will thank you for the clear vision ahead, allowing you to fully enjoy life's precious moments with sharp, vibrant sight.

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

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REVOLUTIONIZING WELLNESS:

INFINITY MEDICAL INSTITUTE'S COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ANTI-AGING AND LONGEVITY

In the heart of The Villages, Florida, a beacon of medical innovation is transforming how we approach aging and personal health. Infinity Medical Institute has been at the forefront of regenerative medicine since its establishment in 2009, offering a holistic and personalized approach to wellness that goes far beyond traditional medical treatments.

Founded in Tampa and now bringing its cutting-edge services to The Villages, Infinity Medical Institute represents a paradigm shift in healthcare. The institute's philosophy is simple yet profound: it's not just about adding years to life, but adding life to years. This approach recognizes that aging is not something to be feared, but a process that can be optimized and embraced with the right medical support.

A Comprehensive Suite of Innovative Treatments
What sets Infinity Medical Institute apart is its comprehensive range of advanced therapies designed to address the multifaceted challenges of aging. The clinic offers a diverse array of treatments that target various aspects of health and wellness:

- **Bioidentical Hormone Therapy:** provides a natural approach to hormone balance, addressing common age-related symptoms like fatigue, mood fluctuations, and decreased libido.
- **Testosterone Replacement Therapy:** helps men restore vitality by supporting healthy testosterone levels, enhancing energy, muscle mass, and overall well-being.
- **Sexual Wellness Treatments:** offer targeted therapies to improve intimate health and quality of life.
- **Aesthetic Services:** Including Botox, Derma fillers, laser skin resurfacing, PRP, Body contouring, cellulite reduction.
- **Pulse Wave Therapy:** Improves circulation and activates stem cell regeneration correcting conditions like chronic pain, neuropathy and erectile dysfunction.
- **Platelet-Rich Plasma (PRP) Therapy:** harnesses the body's own growth factors to accelerate healing and tissue repair.
- **Stem Cell Therapy:** represents a groundbreaking regenerative approach to treating injuries and revitalizing aging tissues.
- **Peptide Therapy:** uses specialized treatments to stimulate natural bodily processes, including metabolism and immune function.
- **Weight Loss Programs:** offer comprehensive, sustainable solutions supported by medical expertise.

Patient-Centered Care: Beyond Treatment
Infinity Medical Institute stands out not just for its advanced treatments, but for its commitment to patient care. The clinic offers free consultations, allowing individuals to explore their health options without financial pressure. This approach reflects their belief in transparency and patient empowerment.

Located at 322 Heald Way in The Villages, the clinic operates Monday through Thursday from 8 AM to 4 PM, and Fridays from 8 AM to 1 PM. Each patient receives a customized treatment plan that recognizes their unique health needs and personal wellness goals.

The Science of Regenerative Medicine
The institute's approach is grounded in regenerative medicine – a field that focuses on natural, integrative therapies working in harmony with the body's inherent healing processes. Their experienced medical team is dedicated to delivering evidence-based care that optimizes health and longevity.

A Vision for Transformative Healthcare
Infinity Medical Institute represents more than just a medical clinic; it's a vision of healthcare that sees aging as an opportunity for growth, renewal, and continued vitality. By combining advanced medical technologies with a compassionate, individualized approach, they are redefining what it means to age gracefully and healthily.

For those seeking to take control of their health, optimize their wellness, and embrace a more vibrant future, Infinity Medical Institute in The Villages offers a beacon of hope and innovative medical care.

About Infinity Medical Insitute
Pioneers in Integrative Medicine, Infinity Medical Institute is a company dedicated to bench marking health in concert with breakthroughs in education through

science. Understanding where individuals are in their "Life Cycle" as opposed to treating symptoms that are often an expression of a greater challenge they are experiencing with their bodies at the cellular level. A new approach in health and wellness based on recently made available research, allowing us to understand the differences in Biological Age as compared to Chronological Age.

Most of us fail to realize that our personal health is the result of the "aging process" complimented and/or penalized by the manner in which we take care of and/or misuse ourselves. Our consumption patterns combined with normal aging and physical activities directly affect our quality of life.

Our approach to wellness is based on meeting people where they are in their personal life and developing an individualized plan of action in and around nutrition, supplementation, and lifestyle.

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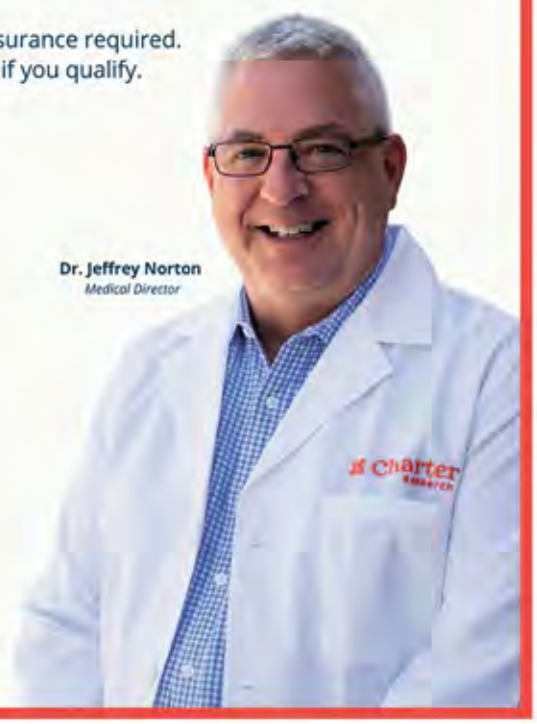

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BREAKTHROUGH IN NEUROPATHY TREATMENT:

HOW SUMMUS LASER THERAPY OFFERS HOPE FOR NERVE PAIN SUFFERERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clinical Evidence and Patient Outcomes
Numerous clinical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of Summus Laser therapy in treating neuropathy. Patients report significant improvements

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

Treatment Process and Expectations
A typical Summus Laser treatment protocol involves:

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

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

Advantages Over Traditional Neuropathy Treatments
The Summus Laser offers several distinct advantages:

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

Who Can Benefit?
Summus Laser therapy is particularly beneficial for patients with:

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

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

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

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

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

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Obstructive Sleep Apnea & Oral Appliances:

A Solution for a Good Night's Sleep

By Richard W. Rozensky, DDS, D.ABDSM

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 ABDSM 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 WatcbPAT"" 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!

RECHARGE YOUR BODY:
REGENERATIVE THERAPY THAT ACTUALLY WORKS

You've tried the pain pills. You've "rested." You've done the whole "just ice it" routine your aunt swears by. Still hurt? Still tired? Still feeling like your body is giving you the middle finger every time you move?

It's time to ditch the quick fixes and give your body something it can actually use to repair, rebuild, and restore — **Regenerative Therapy at Recharge Clinic.**

This isn't magic. This is science. And it's all about jumpstarting your body's own healing abilities so you can feel better without living at the mercy of meds or endless recovery timelines.

Pulsed Electromagnetic Field (PEMF) Therapy
Think of PEMF therapy like plugging your body into a charger — only instead of juicing up your phone, we're juicing up your cells. The magnetic fields help your cells work better, recover faster, and reduce inflammation. Whether you're nursing a sports injury or just feel like your joints came straight from a 1950s parts factory, PEMF can help you get back in motion.

Trigger Point Injections
We all have those muscle knots that feel like they've been there since the Bush administration. Trigger point injections target those stubborn, painful areas with a small injection that relaxes the muscle, improves blood flow, and reduces pain. It's fast, effective, and way less awkward than having your friend "just press on it until it pops."

PRP Therapy (Platelet-Rich Plasma)
Your blood is full of powerful growth factors — PRP therapy just makes them work overtime. We draw a little of your blood, spin it to separate the healing platelets, and then inject that concentrated goodness right where you need it. PRP has been used by pro athletes to speed up recovery, but here's the kicker: you don't have to be famous or on a championship team to get it.

FDA-Approved Human Cellular Tissue Therapy
This is where regenerative medicine really flexes. Using ethically sourced, FDA-approved human cellular tissue, we help your body replace damaged cells and tissue. It's the next level of healing — perfect for people who are ready for big results and tired of temporary fixes.

Other Regenerative All-Stars at Recharge Clinic
We've got more ways to help you heal and recharge:

- **Ketamine Infusions** – For chronic pain and mood disorders.
- **NAD Therapy** – Cellular energy boost for brain and body.
- **Deca (Nandrolone Decanoate)** – Helps preserve lean muscle while aiding recovery.
- **Peptides & HGH** – Support tissue repair, muscle growth, and anti-aging.

Why This Works
Here's the thing: your body wants to heal — it just needs the right tools. Regenerative therapy gives your cells the boost they need to repair damage instead of just masking symptoms. That means less downtime, fewer side effects, and a better shot at actually fixing the problem.

Let's Get You Moving Again
If you're ready to feel better, stronger, and maybe even a little younger, it's time to talk regenerative therapy. We're not here to slap a band-aid on your pain — we're here to help you actually heal.

Recharge Clinic. Where science meets recovery. Where your body gets the respect it deserves. And where you finally get to tell pain to take a hike.

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WHAT DOES A COMPLETE BLOOD COUNT (CBC) REVEAL ABOUT BLOOD CANCERS?

A CBC (complete blood count) is a common blood test that measures and evaluates the different types of cells in the blood. While it is often part of a routine health checkup, it is also one of the first tests commonly used to detect signs of many types of blood cancer.

A CBC is usually done at a lab or hospital. You may need to follow special instructions beforehand, such as stopping certain medications that can affect results. During the test, blood is drawn from a vein in your arm using a needle. The blood is collected in a labeled tube and sent to a lab, where a technologist uses specialized equipment to examine your blood cell counts.

The ABCs of CBCs

Think of a CBC like a quick snapshot of your blood—sometimes it can feel like reading an alphabet soup of medical abbreviations. Key parts of the test include:

- **White blood cells:** Part of the immune system that fights infections and other diseases
- **Red blood cells (RBCs):** Cells that carry oxygen throughout the body
- **Hemoglobin (Hb):** The specific protein in RBCs that carries oxygen
- **Hematocrit (Hct):** The percentage of blood made up of red blood cells
- **Platelets:** Fragments of cells that help with blood clotting

This "alphabet soup" gives doctors important clues about your overall blood health. A CBC can detect signs of anemia, infection, inflammation, potential bleeding problems, or certain blood disorders, and it can help track the effectiveness of treatments.

CBC Reference Chart

This reference chart shows the main components and typical normal ranges for a CBC test:

Component	Typical Normal Range	Function/Notes
White Blood Cells WBCs)	4,200 - 10,000 cells per microliter	Fight infection and support immune function
Red Blood Cells (RBCs)	Females: 3.8 - 5.4 million cells per microliter Males: 4.3 - 6.3 million cells per microliter	Carry oxygen throughout the body
Hemoglobin (Hb)	Females: 12.0 - 16.0 grams per deciliter Males: 14.0 - 18.0 grams per deciliter	Protein in RBCs that carries oxygen
Hematocrit (Hct)	Females: 37% - 47% Males: 41% - 51%	Percentage of blood made up of red blood cells
Platelets	150,000 - 450,000 per microliter	Help with blood clotting to prevent bleeding

If your CBC results are outside the normal range, it doesn't automatically mean something serious. Sometimes the cause can be simple, but it may also point to certain health conditions.

While a CBC is an important first step in detecting possible blood cancers, it is not enough by itself to confirm a diagnosis. Abnormal results typically prompt further tests — such as a peripheral blood smear, bone marrow biopsy, imaging, or genetic testing. These are necessary to confirm the presence, type, and stage of cancer and guide steps for treatment. What are blood cancers?

Every three minutes, someone in the U.S. is diagnosed with blood cancer, which is an umbrella term that covers leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma and other cancers that affect the blood and lymphatic system.

Although the specific causes remain largely unknown, scientists have learned that blood cancers develop when the DNA in immature blood cells becomes damaged or mutated. This triggers uncontrolled cell growth that crowds out healthy cells, leaving less room for normal blood production and weakening the immune system.

- Leukemia develops when the bone marrow makes large numbers of abnormal white blood cells that don't work properly and crowd out healthy blood cells. Unlike most cancers, leukemia doesn't form tumors.
- Lymphoma is a cancer of the lymphatic system, which helps remove excess fluid and produce immune cells. It begins when abnormal lymphocytes (a type of white blood cell) grow uncontrollably and build up in lymph nodes and other tissues.
- Myeloma affects plasma cells and disrupts normal antibody production, weakening the immune system and increasing infection risk.

Many blood cancers can start with vague or nonspecific symptoms such as fatigue, fever, night sweats, weight loss, or frequent infections. Because these symptoms are common to many less serious conditions, it can be difficult to recognize blood cancers early without blood tests or medical evaluation.

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CAUDAL STEROID INJECTIONS:

An Effective Treatment Option for Lower Back and Tailbone Pain

By Brent Compton, MD

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

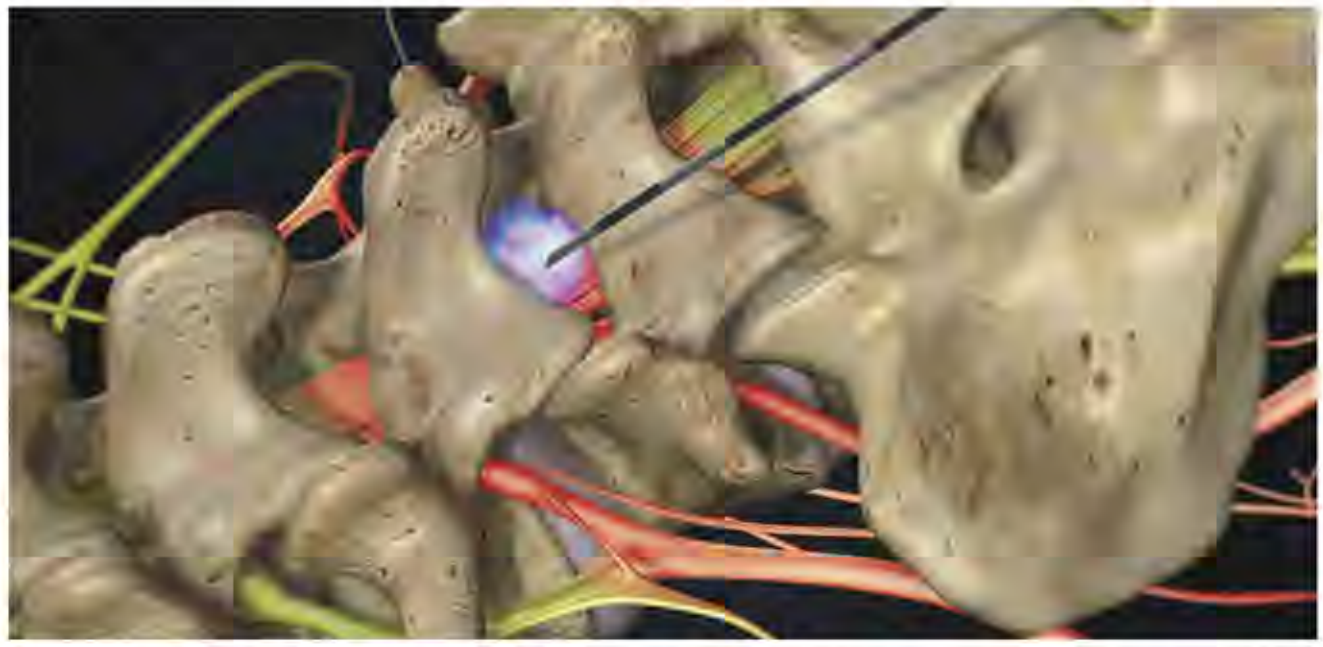
The caudal approach involves injecting a combination of local anesthetic and corticosteroids into the epidural space through the sacral hiatus, a natural opening at the base of the spine. This technique is particularly effective because it allows medication to spread throughout the lower epidural space,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

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

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

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

While caudal steroid injections are generally safe, patients should be aware of potential risks and side effects. These may include temporary numbness or weakness in the legs, mild soreness at the injection site, and rarely, infection or bleeding. Some patients might experience a temporary increase in pain before the anti-inflammatory effects take hold.



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

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

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

Before considering this treatment, patients should undergo a thorough evaluation to determine if they are suitable candidates. Certain conditions, such as active infections, bleeding disorders, or allergies to the medications used, may preclude someone from receiving these injections. A detailed discussion with a healthcare provider can help determine if caudal steroid injections are an appropriate treatment option for an individual's specific condition.

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

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

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

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The Power of Physical Therapy:
Maximizing Recovery Through Proactive Care

Undergoing orthopedic surgery involves more than just the procedure itself. A crucial aspect that often goes unrecognized is the role of physical therapy both before and after surgery. Did you know that engaging in physical therapy sessions prior to your surgery can significantly impact your recovery?

It's a common misconception that physical therapy starts after surgery. However, the reality is quite the opposite. Pre-operative physical therapy plays a pivotal role in enhancing your overall fitness and readiness for the impending procedure. The key lies in proactive preparation, aiming to strengthen your body and address any existing weaknesses or limitations.

One of the primary benefits of pre-operative physical therapy is its ability to address issues that might exacerbate during the lead-up to surgery. Loss of joint motion, weakened muscles, and poor movement patterns tend to worsen before a surgical intervention. Engaging in a pre-operative strengthening regimen helps counter these issues by reinforcing soft tissue mobility, reducing inflammation, and enhancing muscle balance and coordination.

For instance, individuals preparing for a total knee replacement require specific strengthening of the muscles supporting and stabilizing the knee joint. A tailored pre-operative strengthening protocol, curated by a skilled therapist, can make a significant difference in the outcome of the surgery.

Beyond physical preparation, pre-operative therapy also involves education and guidance. Therapists provide invaluable insights into the impending procedure, pain management strategies, and establish a supportive environment that diminishes fears or concerns related to the surgery.

Wondering how to kickstart this proactive approach? Simply ask your primary care physician, orthopedic surgeon, or any healthcare professional involved in your care for a physical therapy script aimed at pre-operative strengthening. This step opens the door to an evaluation of your condition and allows the therapist to determine the most beneficial treatment options tailored to your specific needs, ensuring the swiftest recovery possible.

But it doesn't stop there. Post-operative physical therapy is equally crucial. It's the bridge between the surgery and returning to your optimal functionality. Through targeted exercises, pain management techniques, and personalized care, post-operative therapy aims to expedite recovery, rebuild strength, and restore mobility.

The impact of physical therapy both before and after orthopedic surgery cannot be overstated. It's a proactive investment in your well-being, enabling a smoother recovery trajectory, minimizing complications, and ultimately allowing you to regain your active lifestyle sooner.

In conclusion, don't overlook the power of physical therapy in the pre- and post-operative phases of orthopedic surgery. By taking proactive steps to strengthen your body before surgery and engaging in a dedicated rehabilitation program afterward, you pave the way for a swifter, more successful recovery, ensuring you get back on your feet in no time.

Physical & Occupational Therapy Benefits

- Manual stretching
- Hip & Ankle Alignment Strategies
- Decompression
- Electrical nerve stimulation
- Help with daily tasks & Living
- Cold laser treatment

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

Physical therapy is used to help with numerous indications and conditions like retraining the body to improve gait and balance and also after hip, knee or shoulder replacement and so much more. There is no better way to alleviate pain, increase range-of-motion and live a more mobile higher quality of life than through physical & Occupational therapy.

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

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CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR HEALTH

Submitted by Hospice of Marion County

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

Health of Caregivers Impacted

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

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

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

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

Resources and Tips Available

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

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

Call Hospice of Marion County for support from these programs:

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

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

empath HOSPICE OF MARION COUNTY

Attorney Patrick Smith Radio Show Now on 14 Stations

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**

Unchanged these his last 18 years of practice is Attorney Smith's flat fee model of Estate Planning, including $75 Wills. He continues to be available free of charge to speak to your church or social club on a wide range of topics, including charitable giving, estate planning for Florida residents, and homestead and tax planning. The previous year's radio content can be found and streamed at www.AttorneyPatrickSmith.com.

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Hope and Optimism

By Pastor Timothy L. Neptune

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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