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

December 2025

Marion Edition - Monthly

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# CORE TO FLOOR - STRENGTHEN YOUR CORE AND PELVIC FLOOR WITHOUT HITTING THE GYM

By Dr. Tina Chandra

The innovative combination of BTL Industries' most sophisticated technologies has given rise to the latest and only non-invasive core conditioning treatment. The "Core to Floor" combination utilizes HIFEM and radiofrequency energy (Emsculpt NEO only) from the Emsella and Emsculpt NEO devices to strengthen primary core musculature.

Emsella targets the pelvic floor muscles, while Emsculpt NEO works to tone and strengthen the abdominal area. When done in conjunction, these two treatments allow people to improve neuromuscular control, muscular strength, sexual pleasure, and vitality.

## Emsculpt NEO

Emsculpt NEO is a nonsurgical body contouring device that combines high-intensity focused electromagnetic (HIFEM) technology with radiofrequency (RF) energy. It strengthens and builds muscles while burning fat at the same time. It can be used to treat the abdomen, buttocks, biceps, triceps, and calves.

Radio frequency is used to heat the muscles and the electromagnetic energy then builds muscles. The heating of the muscles is what causes the reduction of fat in the area being treated. While the HIFEM simultaneously causes thousands of muscle contractions in order to improve strength and muscle tone. Combining these two treatments offers optimal results.

## Emsella

Emsella is great news for those who suffer from urinary incontinence (both women AND MEN) and don't want to go to physical therapy for whatever reason. Emsella is an FDA-approved device that also uses HIFEM, this time to stimulate the muscles of the pelvic floor. It is non-surgical and is performed while the patient is fully clothed and seated in a specialized chair.

Emsella has been jokingly referred to as the "Kegel throne" because each 30-minute treatment is equivalent to doing more than 10,000 Kegels. It contracts the muscles by emitting HIFEM to stimulate the muscles of the pelvic floor that have become too weak to control urination. Even with physical therapy and being very disciplined in doing Kegel exercises, it would be humanly impossible to mimic this type of treatment and its results.

## How does "Core to Floor" work?

Combining Emsculpt NEO and Emsella technologies into a singular form of core therapy has delivered a 95% satisfaction rate among patients.

## Emsculpt Neo for the Abdomen

Core to Floor uses Emsculpt NEO to strengthen the abdominal muscles, stimulating an average of 25% muscle development. An additional bonus is Emsculpt NEO's fat reduction capability, allowing patients to reap the benefits of a 30% fat reduction in the abdominal area.

## Emsella for the Pelvic Floor

Emsella is utilized in core to the floor for its innate capability to strengthen the foundation of the core faster and more effectively than any alternative treatments or exercises. These two state-of-the-art technologies together provide a painless and non-invasive solution to anyone struggling with or looking to prevent issues related to a weak core.

## Why Choose Core to Floor Therapy?

The core is a grouping of the back, pelvic, glute, hip, abdominal, and diaphragm muscles—all of which stabilize the trunk and support the spine. Sufficient core strength is crucial for any physical activity, from running or swinging a golf club to simple everyday tasks such as grabbing something from the top shelf.

A weak core can cause a multitude of physical impairments, from chronic back pain to lack of mobility and balance. Core to Floor therapy helps train the muscles of the pelvis and abdomen to work in harmony, restoring one's quality of life and helping achieve fitness goals.

The combination of two advanced technologies helps to strengthen, tone, and firm the abdominal and pelvic muscles. The primary benefits of this therapy include:

- Increased Muscle Mass
- Enhanced Core Strength
- Restoration of Neuromuscular Control
- Improved Balance, Mobility, and Posture
- Improved Blood Flow
- Correction of Abdominal Separation
- Correction of Incontinence<sup>1</sup>

If you are interested in learning more about "CORE TO FLOOR" using Emsella and Emsculpt NEO from trusted professionals with years of experience, contact Chandra Wellness Center today.

## DR. TINA CHANDRA

Dr. Tina Chandra is committed to providing her patients with excellence and quality care using the latest technological advances. With her exceptional skill and unique training in cosmetic, neuromuscular (TMJ/TMD), physiologic, and sleep deprivation dentistry, Dr. Chandra is highly qualified. She attended the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry and earned her Graduate Fellowship from the prestigious Las Vegas Dental Institute for Advanced Dental Studies (LVI Global) and is considered an expert in her field, a distinction achieved by only 2% of dentists in America. She takes pride in staying up to date with cutting-edge procedures in the dental field. Dr. Chandra has always had a passion for Wellness and Aesthetics. In Addition to her successful Dental practice she manages her Medical Wellness Spa. She is a currently a national guest speaker for the medical device company, Body by BTL for health, wellness and aesthetics.



## DR. RAVI CHANDRA

Ravi Chandra, MD, Ocala's leading vascular surgeon is the only surgeon in Ocala, Florida with outstanding credentials and is quadruple Board certified by the American Board of Endovascular Medicine, American Board of Vascular Medicine, the American Board of Surgery, and the American Board of Phlebology.

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1. Soleiman, D. (2022) Core to floor: EMSculpt Neo & Emsella are an excellent combo, Cosmetic Injectables Center Sherman Oaks, Los Angeles, California. Available at: <https://cosmeticinjectables.com/blog/core-to-floor-emsculpt-neo-and-emsella>.

# HANDLING HOLIDAY EMOTIONS: GRIEF, JOY, AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN

**T**he holiday season is often described as “the most wonderful time of the year.” Yet for many, it’s also one of the most emotionally complicated. For people living with cancer, survivors, or caregivers, the holidays can stir up a deep mix of feelings — joy and gratitude intertwined with fatigue, uncertainty, or grief. Even those in good health can find the season emotionally charged, as expectations of happiness and togetherness clash with the realities of stress, loss, or change.

All the emotions you feel this season are valid; they’re part of being human.

## The Two Sides of Emotion

The holidays have a way of magnifying whatever we’re feeling. For some, they bring comfort, connection, and warmth. For others, they can highlight absence, illness, or the way life has changed. People undergoing treatment or recovery may find it difficult to join every gathering or keep up with traditions. Caregivers might feel stretched thin, torn between responsibilities and the desire to make things “normal.”

Recognize that it’s OK to feel both grateful and sad at the same time. Emotions can coexist — we can laugh through tears, celebrate while remembering those we miss, and feel joy even amid uncertainty.

## What Happens When Emotions Run High

Emotions aren’t just in our heads — they affect the body, too. Stress, sadness, and anxiety can influence hormone levels, immune function, and sleep. For those navigating cancer or recovery, chronic stress can increase fatigue, tension, and even physical discomfort.

Understanding this connection can help us approach emotional wellness as a key part of physical health. Simple coping tools — mindfulness, deep breathing, brief walks, journaling, or moments of stillness — can help reduce stress hormones and restore balance.

## Coping with Grief and Loss

The holidays can be especially hard when illness has changed what used to be familiar or when someone you love is no longer here.

Grief is often more intense during a season that celebrates togetherness. Rather than trying to avoid or suppress that pain, consider gently acknowledging it. Light a candle in a loved one’s honor. Share stories about them during dinner. Create a small ritual that brings them into the moment — like playing their favorite song or cooking their favorite dish.

Grief is not something to “get over”; it’s something we carry differently over time. If sadness feels overwhelming or persistent, reaching out to a counselor, faith leader, or oncology social worker can provide support and perspective.



## Giving Yourself Permission to Feel Joy

When you’re going through something hard, moments of joy can sometimes bring guilt — as if happiness means you’re forgetting what’s painful.

Allow yourself to embrace small pleasures: watching holiday lights, sharing a meal, laughing at a movie, or enjoying the scents of pine and cinnamon. These simple experiences can lift the spirit and support healing.

## Managing Emotional Overload

Between travel, gatherings, and expectations, the holidays can easily lead to emotional or sensory overload. To protect your energy:

- Set limits: It’s OK to decline invitations or leave early if you’re tired.
- Simplify traditions: Focus on what feels meaningful, not what’s “expected.”
- Take small breaks: Even a few minutes of quiet breathing or stretching can reset your body and mind.
- Ask for help: Loved ones often want to help but don’t know how; let them know what would be most supportive.

## The Healing Power of Connection

If you’re struggling, reach out — to friends, family, support groups, or communities of faith. You’re likely to find that others are also navigating mixed emotions this season. Sharing honestly, without pressure to “be OK,” can help lighten the weight.

For those supporting someone facing cancer or grief, the most meaningful gift isn’t advice or cheer — it’s presence. A listening ear, a handwritten note, or simply showing up can make a profound difference.

## Finding Meaning and Peace

Whether you’re celebrating, remembering, or simply getting through each day, allow yourself to feel it all — the joy, the sadness, the gratitude, the ache. This season, try letting go of “shoulds” and focusing on “what is.” Rather than trying to change how you feel, allow yourself to feel it.

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# Why Adults Struggle Most in Restaurants and Crowded Places

by AudioNova

**M**any adults are surprised when they first notice that conversations in restaurants, family gatherings, or busy social settings feel harder than they used to. You might be able to hear every sound around you, yet the person across the table feels distant or unclear. You may find yourself nodding along or leaning in more often. You may even leave a noisy place feeling unusually tired, as if your mind was working overtime simply to follow along. This experience is far more common than people realize, and it often appears long before someone would consider themselves to have hearing loss.

There is a good reason adults struggle most in these environments, and it has to do with how the ear and brain work together. Understanding the science behind it helps remove the confusion and the frustration that many people feel.

The human ear is remarkable. It can pick up thousands of tiny details in speech and sound. The brain then takes those signals and sorts them so you can focus on what matters. The challenge is that most speech clarity comes from high frequency sounds. These sounds are soft, quick, and easy to lose in a room filled with background noise. For example, consonants like S, F, TH, SH, and CH carry the meaning in speech. They help our brain distinguish one word from another. When those sounds become harder to hear, people will often say that others are mumbling or that speech feels less crisp.

As adults get older, even as early as their thirties and forties, the tiny hair cells in the inner ear that detect high frequencies can begin to weaken. This is a slow and natural process, made faster for some people by noise exposure, work environments, genetics, and overall health. The important part is that this change affects clarity long before it affects volume. You may hear the sound of someone speaking, but the details of the words get lost.

Social environments make this even more challenging. Restaurants, parties, and cafes are filled with competing sound sources. Music, dishes, chairs moving, air systems, conversations from other tables, and the natural echo of the room all blend together.



Your ears are picking up every one of those sounds at once. When your brain tries to filter the voice you want to hear from everything else, the job becomes incredibly difficult. This filtering process is called auditory processing, and it becomes more demanding with age.

One of the most overlooked factors is the signal-to-noise ratio. This is the relationship between the voice you want to hear (the signal) and the sound around you (the noise). Even slight hearing changes can make the signal weaker, and even a moderate amount of noise can overpower the ability to follow speech. Adults often blame themselves when they cannot keep up, but the reality is that the environment is simply overpowering the clarity their ears can detect.

There is also an emotional side to this that many people do not talk about. Adults often leave noisy gatherings feeling drained or disconnected. They may stop speaking up as much or avoid busy places altogether. They may feel embarrassed asking people to repeat themselves. What they do not realize is that their brain has been doing the work of separating speech from noise on their behalf, and that work is exhausting. When hearing clarity changes, even slightly, the brain has to fill in the gaps. This can create listening fatigue, which is why some people feel mentally tired after conversations that used to feel effortless.

The good news is that struggling in noisy places is not a sign that something is wrong with you. It is a sign that your ears and brain are working hard in an environment that is genuinely difficult. It is also a sign that early hearing screenings can make a meaningful difference. These screenings show how well you hear

soft, high frequency sounds and how well you understand speech. They give you a clear picture of what is happening and help you know whether your challenges are simply environmental or if subtle hearing changes are beginning.

Adults who take a proactive approach often feel more confident afterward. They understand why certain situations feel hard. They know what is in their control. And if there are early changes, addressing them can make conversations feel more natural again. The goal is not to fear hearing loss. The goal is to protect communication, connection, and confidence.

Struggling in restaurants and crowded places is one of the earliest and most common signs of hearing changes in adults. It is also one of the easiest problems to misunderstand. When you know the science behind it, the frustration starts to fade. You realize that hearing is not just about detecting sound. It is about understanding speech in the middle of real life. When you take steps to understand your hearing earlier, you make it easier to stay connected to the people and the moments that matter most.

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# ADVANCED VARICOSE VEIN TREATMENT:

## Finding Relief at Ocala's Premier Vein Center

By Christian Oraedu, MD

**V**aricose veins affect millions of Americans, causing not only cosmetic concerns but also significant discomfort and potential health complications. These enlarged, twisted veins commonly appear on the legs and can lead to symptoms ranging from aching and swelling to more serious issues like blood clots and skin ulcers. Fortunately, modern medical advances have revolutionized varicose vein treatment, offering patients minimally invasive solutions with excellent outcomes and minimal downtime.

### Understanding Varicose Veins

Varicose veins develop when the valves within veins become weakened or damaged, causing blood to pool rather than flow efficiently back to the heart. This pooling creates the characteristic bulging, ropelike appearance that many patients find unsightly. Beyond aesthetics, varicose veins can cause significant symptoms including leg pain, heaviness, cramping, restless legs, and swelling that worsens throughout the day.

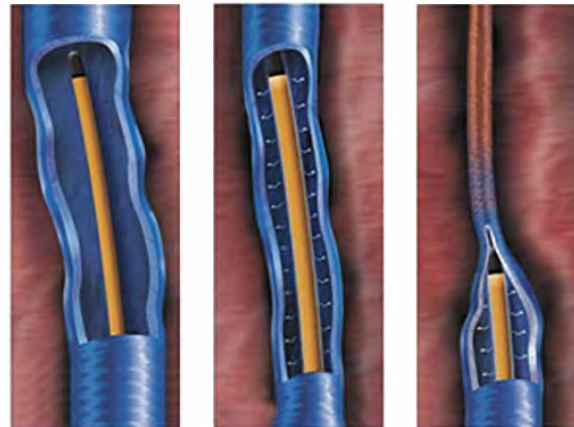
Risk factors for developing varicose veins include genetics, age, pregnancy, prolonged standing or sitting, obesity, and hormonal changes. Women are more likely to develop varicose veins due to hormonal fluctuations during pregnancy and menopause. While some risk factors cannot be controlled, early intervention can prevent progression and alleviate symptoms.

### Modern Treatment Approaches

Today's varicose vein treatments are far removed from the painful vein stripping procedures of the past. Contemporary approaches focus on minimally invasive techniques that can be performed in an office setting with local anesthesia, allowing patients to return to normal activities quickly.

### Endovenous Radiofrequency Ablation: The Gold Standard

Endovenous radiofrequency ablation has emerged as one of the most effective treatments for varicose veins. This innovative procedure uses controlled radiofrequency energy to heat and seal problematic veins from the inside. The treatment works by inserting a thin catheter into the affected vein under ultrasound guidance, then delivering precise radiofrequency energy to close the vein permanently.



DISPOSABLE  
CATHETER  
INSERTED INTO  
VEIN

CONTROLLED HEAT  
COLLAPSES VEIN

CATHETER  
WITHDRAWN,  
CLOSING VEIN

The advantages of radiofrequency ablation are numerous. The procedure typically takes less than an hour, requires only local anesthesia, and patients can walk immediately afterward. Most people return to work within one to two days and resume full activities within a week. The success rate exceeds 95%, with minimal risk of complications and excellent long-term results.

Unlike traditional surgery, radiofrequency ablation leaves no scars and causes minimal bruising or discomfort. The closed veins are gradually absorbed by the body while healthy veins take over circulation, improving both symptoms and appearance.

### Top Vein Treatment Center in Ocala, FL

When seeking varicose vein treatment, choosing an experienced specialist is crucial for optimal outcomes. The Vein Specialists of Central Florida stands as Ocala's premier destination for comprehensive vein care. This leading center combines cutting-edge technology with extensive expertise to deliver superior results for patients throughout Central Florida.

The center's commitment to excellence is evident in their state-of-the-art facility, advanced diagnostic capabilities, and comprehensive treatment options. Patients benefit from personalized care plans tailored to their specific needs, ensuring the most appropriate treatment approach for optimal results.

### The Path to Healthier Legs

If you're experiencing symptoms of varicose veins or are concerned about their appearance, consultation with a vein specialist is the first step toward relief. Modern treatments offer excellent outcomes with minimal disruption to daily life, making it easier than ever to achieve healthier, more comfortable legs.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Christian Oraedu, MD, FACS**

The Vein Specialists of Central Florida is dedicated to providing high quality comprehensive treatment of varicose veins, spider veins and all venous disorders. Our experienced board-certified surgeon uses the most current state-of-the-art technology to achieve the best results for our patients. We provide highly compassionate care with great attention to details.

The Vein Specialists of Central Florida was established by Dr. Christian Oraedu, an experienced board-certified surgeon and a fellow of the American College of Surgeons.

Dr. Oraedu has been performing minimally invasive treatment of vein disorders for more than 15 years. He is one of the pioneers of endovenous Laser treatment of varicose veins in Marion County, Florida. He often sees patients for second opinion who had less than satisfactory outcome from their treatment at other vein centers.

At our center, we understand that experience and training make a great difference in treatment outcomes. When you come to our vein center, you can be assured that you will be seen and treated by our experienced, board-certified surgeon. From the moment you work through our doors to the moment you leave, you will be treated with great courtesy and compassion by our team of well-trained staff.

We offer a variety of options for the treatment of varicose veins and spider veins. We select what is most suited for each particular patient. Options for varicose veins include endovenous laser treatment (EVLT), radiofrequency ablation, microphlebectomy and sclerotherapy. Prior to selecting the appropriate treatment, we perform detailed lower extremity venous ultrasound in the comfort of our center. Spider veins are treated with laser and/or sclerotherapy.



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# UNDERSTANDING PARKINSON'S DISEASE: SYMPTOMS, IMPACT, AND HOPE THROUGH RESEARCH

**D**o you suffer from Parkinson's Disease? If so, you're not alone. Parkinson's Disease affects millions of people worldwide, making it one of the most common neurodegenerative disorders. This progressive condition challenges patients and their families daily, but ongoing research offers hope for better management and potential breakthroughs in treatment.

## What Is Parkinson's Disease?

Parkinson's Disease is a chronic, progressive neurodegenerative disorder that primarily affects the nervous system. The condition develops when nerve cells in the brain that produce dopamine, a crucial chemical messenger, begin to deteriorate or die. Dopamine plays a vital role in coordinating smooth and controlled muscle movements, so its loss leads to the characteristic motor symptoms associated with the disease.

While Parkinson's Disease can affect anyone, it most commonly appears in people over the age of 60. The progression of symptoms varies from person to person, with some experiencing mild effects that develop slowly over many years, while others face more rapid advancement of the condition.

## Recognizing the Symptoms

The symptoms of Parkinson's Disease typically begin gradually and worsen over time. The most recognizable signs include tremors, particularly in the hands, fingers, or limbs, often occurring when the affected area is at rest. These involuntary shaking movements can interfere with daily activities and are frequently one of the first noticeable symptoms.

Slowed movement, medically known as bradykinesia, is another hallmark symptom. Simple tasks that once took moments may begin to require considerably more time and effort. Walking may become difficult, with steps becoming shorter and shuffling. Some people develop a stooped posture or experience balance problems that increase the risk of falls.

Muscle rigidity is also common in Parkinson's Disease. Stiffness can occur in any part of the body, limiting range of motion and causing discomfort or pain. This rigidity may be accompanied by muscle aches and contribute to the characteristic reduced arm swing while walking.



Beyond these primary motor symptoms, Parkinson's Disease can cause a wide range of additional effects. Speech changes, such as speaking softly or slurring words, may develop. Writing may become small and cramped. Non-motor symptoms can include sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety, fatigue, and cognitive changes.

## The Challenge of Living with Parkinson's

Parkinson's Disease is debilitating not only because of its physical symptoms but also due to its impact on independence and quality of life. The progressive nature of the condition means that symptoms typically worsen over time, requiring ongoing adjustments to treatment and daily routines. Simple activities like buttoning a shirt, eating with utensils, or maintaining balance while standing can become significant challenges.

The emotional and psychological toll should not be underestimated. Many people with Parkinson's experience frustration, embarrassment, or isolation as their symptoms become more pronounced. The unpredictable nature of symptom fluctuations can make planning difficult and add to the stress of managing the condition.

## Current Treatment Landscape

Currently, there is no known cure for Parkinson's Disease. Available treatments focus on managing symptoms and improving quality of life. Medications can help increase or substitute for dopamine, while therapies such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy can help maintain function and independence.

## Hope Through Clinical Research

Despite the absence of a cure, there is genuine reason for hope. Research into Parkinson's Disease continues to advance our understanding of the condition and

explore potential new treatment options. Clinical trials play a crucial role in this progress, evaluating innovative approaches that may offer better symptom control or even slow disease progression.

**Renstar Medical Research** is actively seeking volunteers for various clinical trials evaluating potential new options for those with Parkinson's Disease. Participation in clinical research not only provides access to cutting-edge treatments before they become widely available but also contributes to the collective effort to find better solutions for everyone affected by this condition.

If you or a loved one lives with Parkinson's Disease, consider learning more about available clinical trial opportunities. Your participation could help pave the way for the next generation of treatments and bring us closer to a future where Parkinson's Disease can be more effectively managed or even cured.

## TO BE ELIGIBLE YOU MUST:

- Be at least 30 years old
- Be diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease
- Be willing to travel to Ocala, FL for in-person visits

## THOSE THAT QUALIFY MAY:

- Have access to potential new treatment options before the general public
- Receive study-related diagnostic tests, lab work and medical exams at no cost
- Receive compensation for time and travel

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# Breaking Through the Pain:

## INNOVATIVE SHOCKWAVE THERAPY TRANSFORMS ARTHRITIS TREATMENT

By Gene Turner, MD, FAARFM

**M**id-Florida Age Management are highlighting breakthrough treatments that are changing lives for the millions of Americans living with this challenging condition. Among these innovations, Omniwave shockwave therapy is emerging as a game-changer for patients seeking relief from arthritis pain and improved mobility without invasive procedures.

### Understanding the Arthritis Epidemic

Arthritis remains America's leading cause of disability, affecting approximately 58.5 million adults nationwide. This family of more than 100 related conditions causes joint inflammation, pain, stiffness, and decreased range of motion that can significantly impact quality of life. While medications and surgery have long been standard treatments, many patients are now turning to advanced non-invasive alternatives like shockwave therapy.

### Shockwave Therapy: A Non-Invasive Revolution

The Omniwave shockwave therapy device represents the cutting edge of musculoskeletal treatment technology. This sophisticated system delivers precisely calibrated acoustic waves that penetrate deep into affected tissues, stimulating the body's natural healing processes without the risks associated with surgery or the side effects of long-term medication use.

"What makes Omniwave particularly effective is its versatility across different joint applications," I explain to my patients. "At Mid-Florida Age Management, we're seeing remarkable improvements, particularly in hand, shoulder, and knee treatments, where precision targeting is crucial. Our patients have responded exceptionally well to this innovative approach."

### Targeted Treatment for Multiple Joint Conditions

The Omniwave system has demonstrated particular success in treating arthritis in small joints of the hands, where traditional therapies often fall short. The device's precision allows practitioners to direct healing energy to the exact location of inflammation, even in these smaller anatomical structures.

For shoulder arthritis—often one of the most mobility-limiting forms of the condition—patients report significant pain reduction and improved range of motion after a series of Omniwave treatments. The therapy's ability to reduce inflammation while simultaneously promoting tissue regeneration makes it uniquely suited for complex shoulder joint issues.

Knee arthritis patients, who often face limited options between pain management and eventual joint replacement, have found Omniwave treatments provide a middle path—reducing pain and improving function without surgical intervention.

Beyond these primary applications, clinical results show promising outcomes for hip arthritis and other joints affected by degenerative conditions or inflammation.

### Patient-Centered Benefits

What sets Omniwave apart is not just its clinical effectiveness but its patient-friendly profile:

- Treatments typically take just 15-20 minutes
- No anesthesia required
- No incisions or scarring
- Minimal to no recovery time
- Cumulative benefits with successive treatments
- Compatible with other therapy modalities

Most patients report feeling only mild discomfort during treatment sessions, describing the sensation as a series of light tapping pulses as the acoustic waves work their healing magic.

### A Timely Focus During Arthritis Awareness Month

As healthcare providers prepare educational initiatives for Arthritis Awareness Month, many are featuring shockwave therapy as an example of how technology is expanding options for arthritis sufferers. The Omniwave system exemplifies the trend toward treatments that work with the body's natural healing capabilities rather than simply masking symptoms.

For millions living with arthritis pain, awareness of these advanced treatment options offers new hope. As one of my Omniwave patients at our Ocala clinic expressed, "After years of limiting my activities because of knee pain, I've returned to gardening, walking with friends, and playing with my grandchildren. The relief I've experienced feels nothing short of miraculous."

The success stories from Omniwave therapy recipients at Mid-Florida Age Management remind us that while arthritis remains a serious health challenge, innovative approaches continue to improve outcomes and quality of life for those affected by this pervasive condition. If you're in the Ocala area and struggling with arthritis pain, I invite you to learn more about how our Omniwave shockwave therapy might help restore your comfort and mobility.

### About the Author

**"Gene" Turner, MD** is a board-certified physician, advanced fellowship-trained in Regenerative and Functional Medicine and a diplomate of the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine, with over 25 years of clinical experience. Dr. Turner graduated from the University of Arizona College of Medicine and received residency training at Vanderbilt University. He is the medical director of Mid-Florida Age Management.

Your wellness doctor in Ocala is Board Certified by the American Board of Anti-Aging and Regenerative Medicine and is fellowship trained in Metabolic and Nutritional Medicine. He has also received certification as Therapeutic Lifestyle Practitioner through Metagenics FirstLine Lifestyle Medicine Program. The CDC and NIH recommend Lifestyle Treatment Programs for such lifestyle conditions such as hypertension, hyperlipidemia, poor glucose control and overweight. Such programs require time and expertise to develop and implement: our programs include addressing diet, exercise, stress management, sleep issues, nutritional supplementation where indicated and correction of metabolic deficits when detected. Evidence-based programs are used to assess, interpret, and recommend proven integrative protocols which dramatically increase patient adherence and engagement level. The effect is a symbiotic relationship between practitioner and patient, resulting in patient centered care and higher levels of wellness.

Dr. Turner uses conventional, nutritional, complementary and alternative modalities. He specializes in hypertension, lipid disorders, prevention of cardiovascular disease, nutritional and weight management, and clinical age management. He has a special interest in anti-aging medicine for which he uses a combination of natural and prescriptive therapies.

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# COPING WITH GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Submitted by Hospice of Marion County

**D**eath can happen to anyone at any age. It can be a sudden accident or anticipated over a long period of time due to a critical illness. Coping with grief during the holiday season is especially difficult.

There's a song about the holidays being "the most wonderful time of the year." However, for those facing the imminent death or already grieving the loss of a loved one, this time of year can be hard as not only are they navigating the season without their loved one but lost traditions and celebrations.

Grief experts in hospice and palliative care organizations understand how difficult this time of year can be and are available to assist grieving families now or any time throughout the year. Especially during the holiday season they recommend making decisions the grieving person feels is right for them. Here are some tips:

- Be willing to change traditions by creating new rituals to help lessen the pain and loss; find new ways of celebrating the holiday while remembering them.
- Help reduce stress by prioritizing and focusing on projects that bring you joy; pare down the gift list and cards that get sent, or let someone else cook and host the dinner.
- Share stories about your loved one around the table.
- Consider that children grieve differently than adults; you may want to do something special with your child to help remember the loved one lost.
- Remember those who have died in a meaningful way that honors them; volunteer with an organization special to them or donate to their favorite charity.
- Make a plan, but stay flexible and remember you shouldn't feel pressure to do anything you're not comfortable doing.
- Take time for yourself; be sure to include self-care in how you spend your holidays.



Focusing on the positive memories and remembering the life shared with friends and family can help you cope. Hospice of Marion County is hosting **Lights of Love Tree Lighting on Thursday, December 4th** from 6-7:30 pm at Hospice of Marion County, 3231 SW 34th Ave., Ocala, FL 34474. This free event is offered to remember those who filled our lives with love and light. It's an interactive grief workshop that includes creating a permanent memento in honor of your loved one using the photos you bring. RSVP to reserve your space by calling **(352) 873-7456**.

Grief is a process that takes time. Having a wide range of emotions is normal and different for everyone. Sharing your feelings with others can help you process your emotions and cope.

The Monarch Center for Hope and Healing, a program of Hospice of Marion County, provides grief counseling at no charge for Marion County residents. This service is provided by trained professionals and offers counseling sessions to children, teens and adults, individuals or groups. Everyone will eventually experience the loss of a friend or loved one and the Monarch Center grief counselors are there to help guide you through your grief journey. Visit [MonarchCenter-Marion.com](http://MonarchCenter-Marion.com) to learn more or call **(352) 873-7456** to schedule an appointment.

**HOSPICE**  **HOSPICE OF MARION COUNTY**

[HospiceofMarion.com](http://HospiceofMarion.com)



# FINDING RELIEF FROM BUNIONS: EXPERT CARE AT OCALA PODIATRY

By Dr. Andrew Franklin, DPM, PH.D

**B**iving with diabetes requires constant vigilance, and one of the most serious complications that can arise is the development of finding comfortable footwear. If you're dealing with a painful bump at the base of your big toe, you're not alone—and more importantly, you don't have to suffer in silence. Ocala Podiatry specializes in providing comprehensive bunion treatment to help patients regain mobility and live pain-free lives.

## Understanding Bunions

A bunion, medically known as hallux valgus, is a bony prominence that develops at the joint where your big toe meets your foot. This occurs when the bones in the front part of your foot shift out of alignment, causing the tip of your big toe to pull toward the smaller toes while the joint at the base pushes outward. Over time, this misalignment creates the characteristic bump that can become red, swollen, and extremely tender.

Several factors contribute to bunion development, including genetics, foot structure, arthritis, and wearing tight or narrow shoes that squeeze the toes together. Women are particularly susceptible due to wearing high heels and pointed-toe shoes, though anyone can develop bunions regardless of footwear choices if they have an inherited foot structure that predisposes them to this condition.

## Recognizing the Symptoms

Bunions typically start small but progressively worsen without proper intervention. Common symptoms include a visible bump on the outside of the base of your big toe, swelling and redness around the big toe joint, persistent or intermittent pain, corns or calluses where toes overlap, restricted movement of the big toe, and difficulty walking. Many people also experience trouble finding shoes that fit comfortably, as the bunion protrusion makes standard footwear painful to wear.

## How Ocala Podiatry Can Help

At Ocala Podiatry, experienced podiatrists understand that every bunion case is unique and requires personalized treatment. The practice begins with a comprehensive evaluation, including a physical examination of your foot and possibly X-rays to assess the severity of the deformity and determine the best course of action.



For mild to moderate bunions, conservative treatment options are often highly effective. The podiatrists at Ocala Podiatry may recommend custom orthotics designed to redistribute pressure away from the bunion, padding and taping techniques to minimize pain, proper footwear guidance to accommodate the bunion and prevent further progression, anti-inflammatory medications to reduce swelling and discomfort, and ice therapy and physical exercises to maintain joint mobility.

The team also provides expert advice on selecting appropriate shoes with wide toe boxes and good arch support, which can significantly reduce symptoms and slow bunion progression. They may suggest splints or toe spacers to help realign the joint, particularly when worn at night.

## Surgical Solutions When Needed

For severe bunions that don't respond to conservative measures or significantly impact quality of life, Ocala Podiatry offers advanced surgical options. Modern bunion surgery, or bunionectomy, has evolved considerably and can effectively realign the bones, ligaments, and tendons to restore normal foot function and appearance. The surgical approach varies depending on the severity of the deformity, and the podiatrists will thoroughly explain the procedure, recovery expectations, and long-term outcomes.

## Taking the First Step

Living with bunion pain doesn't have to be your reality. The earlier you seek treatment, the more options you'll have and the better your outcomes are

likely to be. Ocala Podiatry is committed to helping patients find relief through evidence-based treatments tailored to individual needs and lifestyles.

Don't let bunions limit your activities or diminish your quality of life. Contact Ocala Podiatry today to schedule a comprehensive evaluation and take the first step toward healthier, pain-free feet. With their expertise, advanced treatment options, and patient-centered approach, you can look forward to walking comfortably again.

## Your Partner in Foot Health

At Ocala Podiatry, our comprehensive approach addresses not just the immediate wound but also the underlying factors contributing to ulcer formation. With proper treatment and ongoing care, most diabetic foot ulcers can heal successfully, allowing patients to return to their normal activities and maintain their quality of life.

If you're concerned about diabetic foot ulcers or any aspect of diabetic foot care, contact Ocala Podiatry today to schedule a consultation.

## 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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### Introducing Lumen Dermatology

We're excited to share that David Kosiorek, PA-C and Michael J. Freeman, MD have started a NEW Dermatology practice!

David has 27 years of Dermatology experience and is proudly serving The Villages and Ocala. He is passionate in providing meticulous, personalized care with a focus on early detection and treatment of skin cancer. His new practice, Lumen Dermatology, continues his commitment to excellence, offering comprehensive skin care solutions in a welcoming environment.

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# Understanding Basal Cell Carcinoma: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

By David Kosiorek, PA-C

**B**asal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) is one of the most common types of skin cancer, affecting millions of people worldwide each year. At Lumen Dermatology, our experienced team encounters this condition frequently and wants to ensure patients understand the importance of early detection and proper treatment.

## What is Basal Cell Carcinoma?

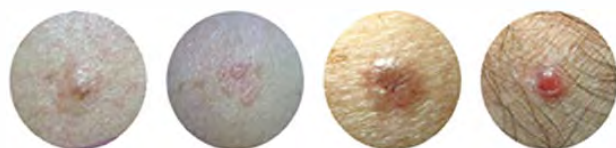
Basal cell carcinoma develops in the basal cells, which are found in the deepest layer of the epidermis. These cancers typically grow slowly and rarely spread to other parts of the body, making them highly treatable when caught early. However, if left untreated, BCCs can become locally invasive, causing significant tissue damage and disfigurement.

## Recognizing the Signs

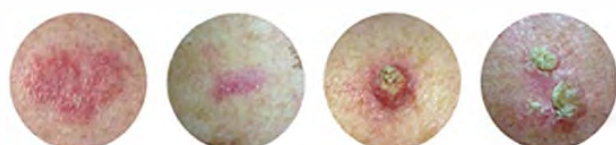
The Lumen Dermatology team emphasizes the importance of knowing what to look for when examining your skin. Basal cell carcinomas can appear in various forms:

- **Nodular BCC** presents as a pearly, domeshaped bump with visible blood vessels. These lesions may develop a central depression or ulceration as they grow.
- **Superficial BCC** appears as a red, scaly patch that may resemble eczema or psoriasis. These are commonly found on the trunk and can be easily overlooked.
- **Morpheaform BCC** looks like a scar-like, firm, pale area with poorly defined borders. This type can be particularly challenging to detect and treat due to its appearance.
- **Pigmented BCC** contains brown, black, or blue pigmentation and may be mistaken for a mole or melanoma.

## BASAL CELL CARCINOMA (BCC)



## SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA (SCC)



## Risk Factors and Prevention

Several factors increase the likelihood of developing basal cell carcinoma. Prolonged sun exposure and a history of sunburns, particularly during childhood, significantly elevate risk. Fair-skinned individuals, those with light-colored eyes and hair, and people over 50 are at higher risk. Additionally, exposure to radiation, certain chemicals, or having a compromised immune system can increase susceptibility.

Lumen Dermatology strongly advocates for prevention through sun protection. This includes wearing broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30, seeking shade during peak sun hours (10 AM to 4 PM), wearing protective clothing, and avoiding tanning beds entirely.

## Treatment Options

When we diagnose basal cell carcinoma, several effective treatment options are available, including Mohs surgery, surgical excision, and superficial radiation therapy. The choice depends on the size, location, and type of BCC, as well as the patient's overall health.

## The Importance of Professional Care

Regular skin examinations by our qualified team at Lumen Dermatology are crucial for early detection. Our professionals can identify suspicious lesions that patients might miss and provide appropriate treatment recommendations.

If you notice any new, changing, or concerning spots on your skin, don't hesitate to schedule an appointment. Early intervention leads to better outcomes and often simpler treatment procedures. Remember, basal cell carcinoma is highly curable when detected and treated promptly by experienced medical professionals.

## 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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# START YOUR BETTER HEALTH JOURNEY NOW: WHY PREVENTIVE CARE MATTERS FOR YOUR FUTURE

By Oscar A. Perez, MD



**A**s we approach the new year, many of us create resolutions focused on better health. While enthusiasm peaks in January, the secret to lasting wellness isn't found in quick fixes or temporary lifestyle changes. Instead, it lies in embracing preventive care as a cornerstone of your health strategy.

Preventive care represents one of the most powerful tools we have in modern medicine, yet it remains underutilized. These proactive health measures — from routine screenings to vaccinations and wellness checkups — can identify potential problems before they become serious conditions, saving lives and improving quality of life for years to come.

## The Power of Early Detection

Many chronic diseases develop silently over years. High blood pressure, diabetes and certain cancers often present no symptoms in their early stages. Regular preventive screenings allow health care providers to catch these conditions when they're most treatable. For example, detecting high cholesterol early can prevent heart attacks and strokes through lifestyle modifications and medication. Similarly, routine cancer screenings have dramatically improved survival rates by identifying diseases in their earliest, most curable stages.

## Long-Term Health Benefits

The impact of preventive care extends far beyond avoiding immediate health crises. When we address risk factors early, we reduce the likelihood of developing complications that can affect multiple body systems. Managing prediabetes, for instance, doesn't just prevent diabetes — it also protects your heart, kidneys, eyes and nerves from future damage.

Preventive care also means staying current with vaccinations, which protect not only you but also your community. Annual flu shots, pneumonia vaccines and updated boosters maintain your immune defenses against preventable diseases.

## Cost-Effective Health Care

Beyond the personal health benefits, preventive care makes financial sense. Treating advanced disease is significantly more expensive than managing conditions early or preventing them altogether. A routine screening costs far less than hospitalization for a heart attack or cancer treatment. Most insurance plans, including Medicare, cover preventive services at no cost to patients, making this investment in your health more accessible than ever.

## Building a Relationship with Your Health Care Provider

Regular preventive visits establish continuity of care with your physician. This ongoing relationship means your doctor understands your complete health history, family background and individual risk factors. They can provide personalized recommendations and catch subtle changes that might signal emerging health issues.

## Taking Action Today

Don't wait for Jan. 1 to put your health first. Schedule your annual physical or any overdue screenings now. Talk with your doctor about your family health history so you can better understand your risk factors and ask which preventive steps are right for your age and lifestyle.

Preventive care isn't just about adding years to your life — it's about adding life to your years. By staying on top of routine checkups and screenings, you're building a strong foundation for long-term, vibrant health.



**Oscar A. Perez, MD**

Internal medicine physician, Oscar A. Perez, MD, 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 them 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. Outside of medicine, Dr. Perez enjoys mountain biking and traveling with his wife and two children.

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# DECOMPRESSION THERAPY UNLOCKING HEALING POTENTIAL

By Dr. Chad Rose, DC

**D**ecompression 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

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### 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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# BREAKTHROUGH IN NEUROPATHY TREATMENT:

## HOW SUMMUS LASER THERAPY OFFERS HOPE FOR NERVE PAIN SUFFERERS

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

### Understanding Neuropathy: A Complex Challenge

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

### The Summus Laser: A Technological Marvel in Pain Management

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

### Key Mechanisms of Summus Laser Therapy

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

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

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

### Clinical Evidence and Patient Outcomes

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



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

### Treatment Process and Expectations

A typical Summus Laser treatment protocol involves:

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

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

### Advantages Over Traditional Neuropathy Treatments

The Summus Laser offers several distinct advantages:

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

### Who Can Benefit?

Summus Laser therapy is particularly beneficial for patients with:

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

### Future of Neuropathy Treatment

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

### Conclusion

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

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

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

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# A New Era for Women's Health

## The Long-Awaited Return of Bioidentical Hormone Replacement Therapy

We have officially entered a new era of bioidentical hormone replacement therapy (HRT). In a landmark decision that many experts describe as transformative for women's health, the FDA has removed the black box warning from menopausal HRT, including estrogen. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) called this action "historic," applauding it as a long-overdue correction that "restores gold-standard science to women's health." For millions of women, this shift represents not just a regulatory update, but validation—an acknowledgment that their symptoms, their struggles, and their pleas for help were real and deserving of treatment.

For decades, women suffered silently. Symptoms such as depression, anxiety, stubborn weight gain, slowed metabolism, brain fog, hot flashes, night sweats, dry skin, and thinning hair were dismissed as "normal." Generations of women were encouraged to accept these changes as an inevitable part of aging. They were told to endure them with grace, just as their mothers supposedly had. But beneath that quiet endurance was something far more serious: a full-body decline triggered by hormone depletion. The body was signaling a system in distress, yet the alarms were muted—silenced by cultural expectations, misinformation, and even the healthcare system itself.

The consequences were profound. Women were not only suffering unnecessarily but were dying earlier from conditions directly related to hormone deficiency. Cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline, osteoporosis, and metabolic dysfunction all escalated in the absence of proper hormone support. And the question remains: in a society constantly seeking medical breakthroughs, how did we allow women's health to be sidelined for so long?

The roots of this silence can be traced back to 2002, when the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) released findings that would shape clinical practice for more than two decades. The study, which was fundamentally flawed in design and interpretation, triggered widespread fear and misunderstanding about hormone therapy. The FDA responded by placing black box warnings on menopausal HRT products—warnings that suggested a significantly elevated risk of breast cancer and cardiovascular events.



Yet the WHI's data was misinterpreted. The study showed no statistically significant increase in breast cancer, involved synthetic hormones only, and included participants who were more than ten years beyond menopause, a group known to respond differently to therapy. Despite these limitations, the findings were broadcast as definitive. Providers became fearful of prescribing HRT, and women in desperate need of relief were denied treatment that could have transformed their health and quality of life.

In the years that followed, numerous high-quality studies were conducted on bioidentical hormones, substances molecularly identical to the hormones naturally produced by the body. These studies consistently failed to show the risks suggested by the WHI. Instead, they revealed benefits that could not be ignored. According to data cited by the FDA, menopausal hormone therapy is associated with a reduction in all-cause mortality, a 50% reduction in cardiovascular disease risk, a 35% reduction in Alzheimer's disease risk, and a 50–60% reduction in osteoporotic fractures. Research also demonstrates improvements in cholesterol, body composition, and metabolic health.

Despite this evidence, the black box warnings remained in place for more than twenty years—an obstacle that prevented countless women from receiving treatment that might have extended their lives. Only in 2025, after years of advocacy and scientific reassessment, did the FDA finally remove the warnings, acknowledging that they were inaccurate.

But regulatory change alone cannot erase decades of fear within the medical community. Many providers remain hesitant to prescribe menopausal or even perimenopausal HRT, often due to outdated training or misunderstandings about hormone physiology. Hormone decline begins long before the official onset of menopause, yet this decline is not always visible in standard laboratory evaluations. That is why it is essential for women experiencing symptoms to seek comprehensive testing and individualized care from specialists trained in bioidentical HRT.

Unfortunately, many patients are placed on standard, synthetic, one-size-fits-all dosing regimens that fail to account for unique hormone needs. Follow-up labs may not be performed, and treatment is often deemed "successful" even when symptoms persist or lab values are suboptimal. Optimal therapy requires far more nuance: hormone levels must be balanced precisely, symptoms must be addressed holistically, and medications must be tailored for each patient. Complicating the issue further is the widespread use of synthetic hormones, such as conjugated equine estrogens and progestins, which can cause inflammation and do not mimic the body's natural hormone structure. In contrast, bioidentical hormones—derived from plant sources—are designed to match the body's own hormones, making them more physiologic and often better tolerated.

At Optimize U Ocala, we are committed to changing this narrative. Our clinic embraces a patient-centered, evidence-based approach to bioidentical hormone replacement therapy. We prioritize optimal hormone levels, symptom resolution, and accessible care. Our model includes frequent follow-up, ongoing laboratory monitoring, and careful dose titration to ensure that each patient receives precisely what their body needs. We also recognize that wellness is multifaceted. To enhance the therapeutic experience and support whole-body health, our clinic offers recovery services including red-light therapy, PEMF, mild hyperbaric oxygen therapy, compression therapy, infrared sauna, cold plunge, and IV nutrient therapy. For convenience, we offer in-clinic lab draws and telemedicine appointments, allowing patients to receive comprehensive care wherever they are.

As we step into a new era of evidence-based women's health, bioidentical HRT stands at the forefront—a therapy once restricted by fear, now liberated by science. And for women who have suffered in silence for far too long, take this moment to let us help you be your most optimized you.



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## Tips to Stay Active & Take the Appropriate Precautions This Holiday Season

**W**hen we think of the holiday season, we typically visualize family dinners, lasting memories, and some relaxation, and we look forward to a peaceful experience. After all, holidays are a time to get away from our stress-filled lives and visit family and friends. In reality, these things hold true, but there is one blinding caveat that we all seem to gloss over—our sedentary lifestyle during the holidays because we don't take the time to exercise or keep our physical therapy appointments. Exercising through the holidays is critical!

Instead of taking the traditional family car drive to enjoy the festive lights in your neighborhood, take a walk. Walking after your evening dinner can be a peaceful experience for the entire family, but also it will facilitate the extra steps and activity that your body craves. In light of walking, when you're out shopping, park further away from the mall or stores to ramp up your cardio.

Hauling luggage, parking the car at the airport, waiting in the security line, worrying about catching our connecting flights, or traveling in the car or bus for long-distance in heavy traffic are all unpleasant experiences that we encounter while trying to get to our favorite destination.

Slips and falls are more common this time of year. If you're up north visiting loved ones, be careful and use extra caution if it's snowing or if there is ice on the ground, steps, and pavement. When you enter a building or home, make sure you get the majority of wet snow off of your shoes to avoid slipping as well.

One of the most common travel concerns in people with known heart disease, as well as healthy individuals, are DVT's, or deep vein thrombosis. DVT's can occur in travelers in the air, railways, or by road. Both chronic and acute symptoms could be a sign or lead to a DVT (deep vein thrombosis). DVTs are life-threatening and should be treated immediately. Deep vein thrombosis is a blood clot in the veins that are formed deep within the legs. Vascular malformations, pelvic tumors, or sitting for extended periods of time are some of the risk factors that go along with DVTs. Every year, over 2 million people are affected by deep vein thrombosis, and sadly over 200,000 of these cases end in death.

To alleviate your chances of DVT, it's imperative to try and move your toes, ankles, and do calf raises in your seat. If you can get up and walk around, that's a valuable method to keep your blood flowing correctly back to your heart. If your trip is over 3 hours, or if you have venous insufficiency, wearing compression stockings is critical to keeping your vascular structures healthy.

You can also do the same little exercises or movements while you're watching Rudolph or Elf with the kids. During the movie, wiggle your toes, stand up and sit down repeatedly for a few minutes, or do leg lifts. All of these flexion and extension movements will keep your circulation pumping and create oxygen-rich blood, and warm muscles.

Take the time to move this holiday season. Be thankful for your range-of-motion, and take advantage of dancing with your grandchildren, or taking a walk with your friends.

**If you often experience pain, stiffness, immobility or balance issues, being proactive about physical therapy treatments and techniques can help to alleviate or lessen these circumstances.**

For patients suffering from pain, the first step to recovery is to receive a proper diagnosis so the cause of the symptoms can be determined. Physical therapists are trained to administer flexibility and strengthening tactics along with body mechanics and awareness techniques to get your body moving and creating a much less painful range-of-motion. With ongoing therapy, most people see remarkable outcomes and lasting results.

**Innovative Therapies Group** offers massage, physical, occupational and speech therapy. They embrace alternative and eastern medicine philosophies and will help you explore new inventive ways to combat your pain or disorders.

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- Manual and Massage Therapy
- Neurological and Neurodegenerative Retraining
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# NEW YEAR, NEW YOU:

## Crafting Realistic Weight Loss Resolutions That Actually Work

**A**s the calendar turns and a new year begins, millions of people around the world set weight loss goals with renewed determination. Yet, by February, many of these resolutions have already fallen by the wayside. The key to successful weight loss isn't about dramatic, unsustainable changes, but rather implementing practical, achievable strategies that transform your lifestyle.

### Understanding the Resolution Mindset

The psychology of New Year's resolutions is complex. We're often motivated by a sense of fresh beginnings and the promise of self-improvement. However, many people sabotage their weight loss efforts by setting unrealistic expectations. Instead of aiming for drastic transformations, successful weight loss requires a holistic approach that combines nutrition, exercise, mental health, and sustainable lifestyle modifications.

### FIVE STRATEGIES FOR MEANINGFUL WEIGHT LOSS

#### 1. Set Specific and Measurable Goals

Vague resolutions like "lose weight" are destined to fail. Instead, create concrete, measurable objectives. For example, "lose 15 pounds by June" or "exercise 150 minutes per week" provide clear targets. Break these larger goals into smaller, weekly milestones that feel attainable and track your progress systematically.

#### 2. Prioritize Nutrition Over Dieting

Radical diets rarely produce long-term results. Focus on developing a balanced, nutritious eating plan that you can maintain. This means incorporating more whole foods, reducing processed items, and learning portion control. Consider consulting a registered dietitian who can create a personalized nutrition strategy tailored to your body's specific needs.

#### Build a Sustainable Exercise Routine

Exercise should be enjoyable, not a punishment. Experiment with different physical activities until you find something you genuinely like. Whether it's dancing, hiking, swimming, or group fitness classes, the best exercise is the one you'll consistently do. Start slowly, gradually increasing intensity and duration to prevent burnout and reduce injury risk.



#### 4. Develop Mental Resilience

Weight loss is as much a mental journey as a physical one. Practice self-compassion and understand that occasional setbacks are normal. Keep a journal to track not just your physical progress, but your emotional journey. Celebrate non-scale victories like increased energy, improved sleep, and enhanced confidence.

#### 5. Create a Supportive Environment

Surround yourself with people who support your goals. This might mean joining a fitness community, finding an accountability partner, or communicating your objectives with family and friends. A strong support system can make the difference between giving up and pushing through challenges.

#### The Bottom Line

Successful weight loss isn't about perfection—it's about consistent, incremental progress. By approaching your resolution with patience, strategy, and self-compassion, you can create lasting change that extends far beyond the numbers on a scale.

Remember, the most important resolution is committing to your overall health and well-being. This year, focus on becoming a healthier version of yourself, one mindful choice at a time.

### MEET THE TEAM

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



#### Christopher Bagley, APRN

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

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



#### Eldon Waters, MSN, APRN

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

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

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



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# Stress Management Tips from Quick Care Urgent Care

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

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

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

## Take Time for Yourself

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

## Get Moving

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

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

## Meditation

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

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

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

## Quick Care Med Urgent Care

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

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

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

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# PILATES AND THE MIND:

## UNLOCKING MENTAL WELLNESS THROUGH MOVEMENT

While Pilates is widely celebrated for its physical benefits—stronger muscles, better posture, improved flexibility, and injury prevention—it also offers profound mental health advantages that deserve greater recognition. Research and personal testimonials demonstrate that Pilates significantly improves mental well-being by reducing stress, sharpening focus, and fostering emotional resilience in ways that extend far beyond the studio.

### Mind-Body Integration: The Foundation of Mental Wellness

At the heart of Pilates lies the principle of mind-body integration, emphasizing the powerful connection between intentional movement and emotional well-being. Todd Hargrove's research on neuroplasticity highlights how deliberate physical activity, particularly practices like Pilates, can reshape neural pathways, making the brain more adaptable and resilient. Through its emphasis on controlled, mindful movements, Pilates enhances brain plasticity—a critical factor in cognitive function, learning capacity, and emotional regulation.

Unlike high-intensity workouts that often encourage a "push through the pain" mentality, Pilates centers around conscious, purposeful movement. Each session becomes an opportunity to strengthen not just muscles, but also the neural connections that support mental health and cognitive vitality.

### Moving Meditation: Building Neural Connections

Pilates transforms exercise into a form of moving meditation. Practitioners must simultaneously engage their minds and bodies, strengthening the vital connection between motor functions and neural processes. This heightened awareness of breath, alignment, and movement stimulates the brain, fostering the creation of new neural pathways.

Every Pilates exercise requires focused attention on proper alignment, precise muscle engagement, and coordinated breath control. This concentration naturally quiets mental chatter and anchors practitioners in the present moment. Many devotees report feeling remarkably centered and calm after sessions, describing a mental clarity that carries into their daily lives.

### An Antidote to Chronic Stress

Chronic stress exacts a heavy toll on both mind and body, contributing to anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders. Pilates provides a powerful antidote through its emphasis on breath control—a core pillar



that directly influences the nervous system. The breath-focused approach activates the parasympathetic nervous system, responsible for the body's rest and relaxation response.

As practitioners flow through exercises with rhythmic breathing patterns, they naturally regulate cortisol levels—the notorious stress hormone—guiding their bodies into progressively relaxed states. This physiological shift equips practitioners with practical tools they can deploy anywhere, anytime. The breath awareness cultivated on the mat becomes a portable stress-management technique, promoting calmness during difficult meetings, traffic jams, or any of life's inevitable challenges.

### Cognitive Flexibility and Mental Clarity

In our constantly connected world, finding genuine focus can feel nearly impossible. Pilates addresses this challenge by requiring practitioners to fully engage their minds in coordinating complex body movements. Each exercise demands precision and control, effectively training the brain to concentrate on one task at a time—a skill increasingly rare in our multitasking culture.

Research consistently supports the idea that mind-body exercises like Pilates positively impact cognitive performance, including memory retention and concentration span. Movement challenges involving balance, coordination, and mindfulness particularly stimulate the brain, promoting cognitive flexibility. Pilates offers simultaneous physical and mental benefits that enhance both focus and mental clarity.

### Emotional Resilience and Mood Enhancement

While all physical activity boosts mood by releasing endorphins, Pilates offers something deeper. The intentional, slow-paced movements foster a profound sense of accomplishment, enhancing self-esteem and building emotional resilience over time.

Pilates also helps release physical tension stored throughout the body, which often manifests as emotional stress. Tension in the neck, shoulders, and back frequently correlates with emotional strain. Through targeted stretching, strengthening, and mobility work, Pilates alleviates both physical discomfort and its emotional counterparts. By promoting better posture and alignment, the practice fosters a sense of groundedness that naturally boosts self-confidence and emotional stability.

### Community Connection and Better Sleep

Though Pilates can be practiced individually, group classes foster meaningful community connections and mutual support. These relationships create a sense of belonging that actively reduces feelings of isolation—a critical factor in mental health. Whether practicing virtually or in person, this shared experience bolsters emotional well-being.

Additionally, Pilates has a remarkable impact on sleep quality. Sleep disturbances commonly accompany stress and anxiety, creating a vicious cycle. Pilates helps break this pattern by promoting deep relaxation and improving physical comfort. When practiced in the evening, its calming effects prepare both body and mind for restorative sleep.

### A Holistic Approach to Mental Wellness

Pilates offers far more than physical benefits—it's a comprehensive tool for enhancing mental health and building lasting resilience. From reducing stress and promoting mindfulness to improving focus, emotional stability, and sleep quality, Pilates addresses the whole person holistically. By integrating mindful movement, intentional breath control, and supportive community connections, Pilates provides a pathway to mental clarity and emotional balance. Whether you're new to the practice or a seasoned devotee, embracing these mental health benefits can lead to a more balanced and resilient life.

Club Pilates Ocala is a boutique Pilates studio specializing in reformer fusion classes for anyone, at any age or fitness level. Pure to Joseph Pilates' original Reformer-based Contrology Method, but modernized with group practice and expanded state-of-the-art equipment, Club Pilates offers high-quality, life-changing training at a surprisingly affordable price.



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# The Direct Anterior Approach: A Faster Path to Recovery After Hip Replacement

By Paul Mahle, MD | UF Health Medical Group Orthopaedics

**A**s a total joint replacement surgeon, I'm constantly seeking ways to improve outcomes and accelerate recovery for my patients. One of the most significant advancements in hip replacement surgery over recent years has been the direct anterior approach. This technique has transformed how we perform total hip arthroplasty, offering patients a faster return to their daily activities with less post-operative discomfort.

## Understanding the Direct Anterior Approach

Traditional hip replacement surgery typically involves accessing the hip joint from the side or back of the hip, which requires cutting through major muscle groups. The direct anterior approach is different. By accessing the hip joint from the front of the body, I can work between the muscles rather than cutting through them. This muscle-sparing technique preserves the natural anatomy and significantly reduces surgical trauma to the surrounding soft tissues.

## Shorter Recovery Time

The most compelling benefit of the direct anterior approach is the dramatically shorter recovery period. Because muscles are not detached from the bone during surgery, patients experience less pain, less inflammation, and faster healing. Patients are walking within hours of surgery and can bear full weight on their new hip immediately. Compared to traditional approaches that may require six to eight weeks of restricted movement and hip precautions, patients undergoing the direct anterior approach often return to normal activities within two to four weeks.

Hospital stays are also typically shorter — often just one night or even same-day discharge for appropriate candidates. This means less time away from home, family, and the comfort of your own environment during the critical early recovery phase.

## Fewer Restrictions, Greater Confidence

Traditional hip replacement techniques often come with a long list of precautions: don't bend past 90 degrees, don't cross your legs, use elevated toilet seats, sleep with a pillow between your knees. These restrictions exist because cutting through muscles increases the risk of hip dislocation during the healing process.



With the direct anterior approach, most of these precautions are unnecessary. The intact muscles provide natural stability to the new joint from day one. Patients can bend, sit in normal chairs and move more freely without restrictions. This freedom translates to greater confidence during recovery and a faster psychological adjustment to the new hip.

## Ideal Candidates

While the direct anterior approach offers tremendous benefits, it's important to understand that not every patient is an ideal candidate. During your consultation, we'll discuss your specific anatomy, overall health and activity goals to determine whether this technique is right for you. Factors such as body composition, previous surgeries, and bone quality all play a role in surgical planning.

## Taking the Next Step

If hip pain is limiting your quality of life and you've been considering joint replacement, I encourage you to explore whether the direct anterior approach might be right for you. At UF Health Medical Group Orthopaedics, we're committed to providing personalized care using the most advanced techniques available. Our goal is not just to replace your hip — it's to restore your mobility, independence, and active lifestyle as quickly and safely as possible.



**PAUL MAHLE, MD**  
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON

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

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



For more information about orthopaedic services at UF Health or to schedule your next appointment, visit [UFHealth.org/Central-Florida-Care](https://UFHealth.org/Central-Florida-Care) or call 352-323-5665.

Same-day and Next-day appointments available.

## It's A Wonderful Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

**E**very year around this time the old classic Christmas movies start coming on television. It is easy to start a conversation at work by simply asking, "So, what's your favorite Christmas movie?" Mine is Frank Capra's *It's A Wonderful Life*.

Some of you might be able to relate to George Bailey this holiday season—lost, confused, stressed out, or at the end of your rope. Perhaps you are even thinking that it would be much easier to die than to go on living as you are.

Perhaps for you life isn't a joy right now. Maybe the debts are high and funds are low. It might even be difficult for you to even enjoy your family as you know you should. You may be wondering, "Is it really possible to live a wonderful life?"

I think the idea of a wonderful life is not that you can attain a wonderful life, but that it is an attitude that results from having certain issues settled in your life.

Truthfully, no one's life is wonderful—even Christ's life was filled with pain, hurt, loneliness, rejection, and sorrow. It is your attitude that determines how you "feel" about your life. You are the one responsible for settling the issues in your life and having an attitude of wonderment. So, what are the issues that need to be settled?

The first issue is to determine **what you are going to love**. To have a wonderful life, you start by having an attitude of love toward God and others. I say this first because where you choose to direct your love is going to affect every other area of your life. Love is a decision we make to place a high value on someone or something.

God loved us so much that He sent His Son Jesus to die for us. Jesus died to prove how much He loved us. God desires more than anything else to have a loving relationship with His creation. We were created to love God and other people. Maybe this Christmas it would be good for you to find a person or family in need and help them by buying some food or gifts. If you want to feel loved... start by loving others.

The second issue to settle is... **how am I going to live?** To have a wonderful life, you need an attitude of joy. This attitude deals with how you look at life. Are you a positive person or a negative person? If you are a person with joy, it simply means that you are cheerful. Over 350 times the Bible talks about us having a spirit of joy or rejoicing.

Joy isn't a feeling that is produced only when good things happen. Joy is the attitude by which we look at the things that happen to us and then respond in a way that lets everyone know we are trusting in God's grace in spite of our circumstances. Remember the disciples in the Bible... they had many negative things happen to them, yet in spite of it all, they had joy.

I've heard it said that you don't feel your way into an action but rather act your way into a feeling. If you want to be a joyful person... start acting joyful around others and you will most likely begin to genuinely feel joyful.



The third issue to settle is...**who are you going to help?** If you want to have a wonderful life, you've got to get beyond serving yourself, and start serving others. Isn't that the lesson that George Bailey learned? His life was wonderful because of all the people he was able to help in his lifetime.

When Clarence showed him what life would have been like had he never been born he realized that he really was making a difference in the world! His life did have purpose! Mr. Potter only cared about making money. Violet only cared about pleasure. But George understood a greater truth: life is better when you are working to make other people's lives better.

Understanding these things can make all the difference in the world. You are not here to fall in love with money and things—you're here to love God. You're not here to point out all the things that are wrong with the world—you're here to spread the joy that God has placed in your heart. You're not here to serve yourself—you're here to serve God and others—thus making a huge difference in the world.

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