

CENTRAL FLORIDA'S

Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

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FREE 

DISCOVER EXOMIND[™]

Advanced
Brain Therapy
for Emotional
Wellness at
Chandra
Wellness
Center

UNDERSTANDING THE HIDDEN RISK FACTOR

How Lipoprotein(A)
Impacts Stroke and
Heart Disease

PROMISING TRENDS IN CANCER CARE

TRANSFORM YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION INTO LASTING RESULTS

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HEARING LOSS AND MENTAL WELLNESS





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Ali Zarezadeh, MD

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A NEW CHAPTER IN DERMATOLOGY EXCELLENCE

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Michael J. Freeman, MD
Dermatologist

Introducing Lumen Dermatology

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

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DISCOVER EXOMIND™: ADVANCED BRAIN THERAPY FOR EMOTIONAL WELLNESS AT CHANDRA WELLNESS CENTER

By Dr. Tina Chandra

At Chandra Wellness Center, we believe that true beauty and wellness extend far beyond what meets the eye. While we're dedicated to helping you look your best, we're equally committed to supporting your mental and emotional health. That's why we're excited to introduce EXOMIND™, a groundbreaking drug-free therapy that's transforming how we approach mood enhancement, emotional regulation, and cognitive clarity.

What Is EXOMIND™?

EXOMIND™ represents the cutting edge of neuroscience-based therapy. This FDA-cleared treatment harnesses the power of magnetic pulses to gently stimulate specific regions of the brain responsible for mood regulation and cognitive function. Unlike traditional pharmaceutical approaches, EXOMIND™ offers a non-invasive, medication-free pathway to better mental health and emotional balance.

The Science Behind the Innovation

The foundation of EXOMIND™ lies in neuroplasticity—the brain's remarkable ability to reorganize and form new neural connections throughout life. By delivering targeted magnetic stimulation, EXOMIND™ activates underperforming areas of the brain, encouraging the development of healthier neural pathways. This process helps restore the natural balance of brain activity that's often disrupted by stress, anxiety, depression, and other emotional challenges.

The therapy works by sending precise magnetic pulses through the skull to reach deep brain structures without any surgery or discomfort. These pulses encourage neurons to fire in patterns that promote improved mood regulation, sharper thinking, and greater emotional resilience.

Benefits You Can Experience

Patients undergoing EXOMIND™ therapy often report significant improvements across multiple areas. Many experience enhanced mood stability, finding it easier to navigate daily stressors with calm and composure. Emotional regulation becomes more manageable, reducing mood swings and negative thought patterns.

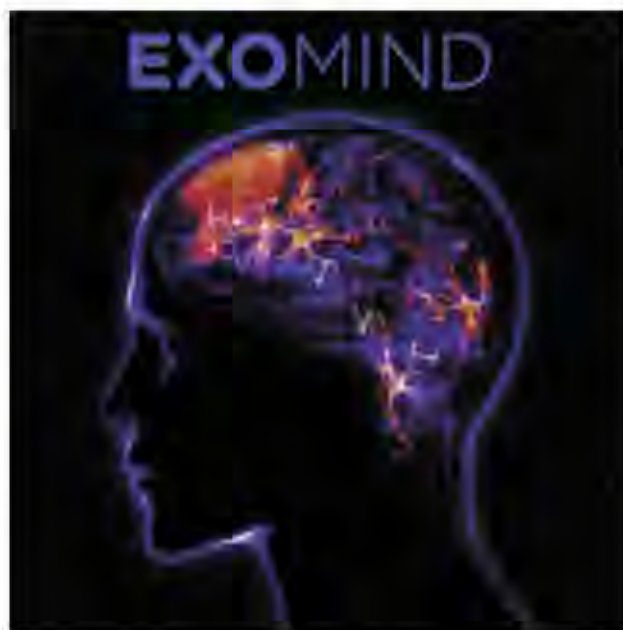
Cognitive benefits are equally impressive. Users frequently notice improved mental clarity, sharper focus, and enhanced decision-making. The therapy helps lift the mental fog that often accompanies chronic stress or depression.



A Holistic Approach to Wellness

What sets Chandra Wellness Center apart is our truly comprehensive approach to health. We understand that wellness isn't compartmentalized—your mental health affects your physical appearance, your emotional state influences your confidence, and your cognitive function impacts your quality of life. By offering EXOMIND™ alongside our aesthetic services, we provide a truly integrated wellness experience.

This therapy is particularly valuable for those seeking alternatives to medication or wanting to enhance existing treatment plans. With FDA clearance backing its safety and efficacy, EXOMIND™ offers peace of mind along with transformative results.



Your Journey to Better Mental Health

If you're ready to experience the proven benefits of advanced brain therapy, the team at Chandra Wellness Center is here to guide you. EXOMIND™ represents our commitment to supporting your total well-being—helping you feel as good as you look, from the inside out.

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.



With over 30 years of experience and serving his patients with above standard and excellence in surgical care, Dr. Ravi Chandra is excited to branch out and offer wellness treatments to help his vascular patients with incontinence problems. He and his team are committed to bringing health and wellness back into your life.



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PROMISING TRENDS IN CANCER CARE

The outlook for people diagnosed with cancer is becoming brighter all the time, thanks to a variety of ongoing advancements.

There are nearly 19 million cancer survivors living in the U.S. today. Increasingly, many of the nearly 2 million Americans who will be diagnosed with cancer this year will experience cancer more like a chronic disease than a dim prognosis.

Cancer Basics

Cancer starts when normal, healthy cells become changed or altered and begin to grow out of control. Cancer can develop anywhere in the body. The two main categories are cancers of the blood cells, known as hematologic cancers, and solid tumor cancers, which are cancers of any of the other body organs or tissues.

There is no one single cause, and many factors alone or together can produce cancer. These include genetics or family history, environmental exposures, and lifestyle choices.

Screenings Save Lives

It cannot be overstated: Early diagnosis and treatment are a substantial factor in surviving cancer.

Effective screening tests can detect many cancers before symptoms appear, making them easier to treat and saving lives. Screening recommendations vary by age, family history, and lifestyle, so talk with your doctor—and don't skip or delay your recommended tests.

The Power of Genetics

Genetic screening and testing help oncologists diagnose cancers more accurately and tailor treatments to a patient's unique genetic makeup.

Genetic mutations inherited from our parents can put us at increased risk of developing certain cancers. Knowing personal risk factors for hereditary cancers early can be life-saving. Screening starts with a review of your personal and family cancer history, which genetics specialists use to determine whether further testing is recommended.

Clinical testing known as Next Generation Sequencing (NGS) is an advanced form of genetic testing that can detect mutations in hundreds of different genes derived from tumor cells simultaneously. NGS testing provides a more precise understanding of each patient's individual diagnosis. When oncologists know the specific genetic alteration a patient has, they may be able to identify a therapy that actually targets that exact mutation. The results also help to identify clinical trials the patient may be eligible for based on their molecular profile.

Immunotherapies

Chemotherapy and radiation have been widely used for decades to directly target cancer cells. While effective, these treatments can also destroy healthy blood cells and harm the body's production of new cells.

Immunotherapies boost the body's natural immune defenses to better target and fight cancer. They can be given through an IV, taken as pills, or applied as a topical cream.



Immunotherapy may be used alone or combined with chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery. Side effects can occur, but they are often less severe than those seen with traditional treatments.

In the last few decades, immunotherapy has been approved for the treatment of many cancers, including bladder, cervical, breast, colorectal, lymphoma, and melanoma, among others. Patients may receive immunotherapy in a doctor's office, an oncology clinic or, in some cases, in a hospital setting.

Clinical Research Drives Cancer Treatment Advancements

Every drug or therapy that is in place today to treat cancer had its start in a clinical trial.

After promising results are seen in the laboratory, medical breakthroughs then require careful research through closely monitored studies conducted in humans, called clinical trials. These studies deserve credit for new treatments of cancers that were previously considered incurable.

Studies of new cancer drugs or medical procedures are not a last resort, but rather an opportunity to expand an individual's treatment to include early access to the most effective and promising options.

More Hope on the Horizon

Scientists worldwide are rapidly advancing cancer research, including efforts to improve immunotherapy by uncovering how cancer cells evade the immune system. This knowledge can help create new drugs that block those escape mechanisms and reduce treatment side effects, ultimately making immunotherapy more effective.

Cancer vaccines are a type of immunotherapy. While many vaccines effectively prevent diseases caused by bacteria and viruses, developing vaccines for cancer is far more complex. The FDA has approved two vaccines that help prevent cancer—HPV and hepatitis B—and several therapeutic vaccines for treating cancers such as prostate, bladder, and melanoma.

Exciting new advancements are leading to the development of truly targeted cancer therapies. Patients with cancer and their health care teams now have more treatment options than ever—with many more on the horizon.

WORLD-CLASS CANCER TREATMENT, CLOSE TO HOME

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

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

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

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Staying On Your Feet: Navigating Pickleball's Popularity for the New Year

By Cedric Tankson, MD - Orthopaedic Surgeon

As courts across America fill with enthusiasts embracing the nation's fastest-growing sport, pickleball continues to capture the hearts of millions—from retirees to young athletes looking for a new challenge. With its accessible learning curve and social appeal, the sport's surge in popularity has brought a corresponding rise in sport-specific injuries, particularly to the foot and ankle.

THE PICKLEBALL PHENOMENON

Pickleball's meteoric rise is no accident. The sport combines elements of tennis, badminton, and table tennis, played on a smaller court with a plastic ball and paddle. Its appeal spans generations, with over 4.8 million players nationwide enjoying its blend of strategy, skill, and social connection.

"What makes pickleball unique is its accessibility for all ages and fitness levels," explains Dr. Cedric Tankson, Orthopaedic Surgeon at UF Health Orthopaedics. "However, this accessibility sometimes leads players to underestimate the physical demands and proper preparation required."

COMMON FOOT AND ANKLE INJURIES IN PICKLEBALL

The quick starts, stops, and lateral movements characteristic of pickleball create particular stress on the lower extremities. According to UF Health Sports Medicine data, the most common pickleball-related foot and ankle injuries include:

- **Achilles tendinitis:** Repetitive strain on the tendon connecting the calf muscles to the heel
- **Plantar fasciitis:** Inflammation of the thick band of tissue running across the bottom of the foot
- **Ankle sprains:** Stretching or tearing of the ligaments, often from quick directional changes
- **Stress fractures:** Tiny cracks in bones from repetitive force, particularly in the metatarsals

"Many players don't realize that pickleball, despite its friendly appearance, involves movements that can put significant stress on the foot and ankle complex," notes Dr. Tankson. "The sport's frequent direction changes and quick pivots challenge stability and strength in ways newcomers might not anticipate."

PREVENTION STRATEGIES FOR FOOT AND ANKLE INJURIES

UF Health Sports Medicine specialists recommend several strategies to maintain foot and ankle health while enjoying pickleball:

1. Proper Footwear Selection

"Court-specific shoes are essential," emphasizes Dr. Thompson. "Unlike running shoes designed for forward motion, court shoes provide lateral support and appropriate traction for multi-directional movements."

Look for shoes with:

- Good lateral support
- Cushioning for impact absorption
- Non-marking soles designed for court surfaces
- Proper fit with adequate toe room

2. Progressive Training and Conditioning

"Many pickleball injuries occur when players jump into competitive play without building foundational strength and flexibility," says Dr. Thompson.

A balanced conditioning program should include:

- Ankle strengthening exercises
- Balance and proprioception training
- Flexibility work, especially for the Achilles tendon and calf muscles
- Core stability exercises to improve overall movement efficiency

3. Proper Warm-Up and Cool-Down Routines

Before hitting the court, spend 5-10 minutes on dynamic warm-ups like ankle circles, heel walks, and gentle side-to-side movements. After play, static stretching helps maintain flexibility and aids recovery.

4. Playing Surface Awareness

"Different court surfaces present unique challenges to foot and ankle stability," Dr. Thompson explains. "Players should adjust their movement patterns accordingly and be particularly cautious on slippery or uneven surfaces."

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

While minor soreness is normal after activity, certain symptoms warrant professional evaluation:

- Pain that persists more than a few days
- Swelling that doesn't improve with rest and ice
- Inability to bear weight
- Visible deformity or bruising
- Recurring pain that interferes with daily activities

THE BENEFITS BEYOND THE COURT

Despite potential injury risks, the benefits of pickleball far outweigh the concerns when played with proper preparation.



"Regular pickleball play improves cardiovascular health, enhances balance and coordination, strengthens lower body muscles, and provides valuable social connections," says Dr. Tankson. "These benefits contribute significantly to overall health and quality of life, particularly as we age."

UF Health Orthopaedics reminds enthusiasts that with proper preparation, equipment, and awareness, players can enjoy the game while minimizing injury risk. By following these guidelines, pickleball can remain a source of fitness, fun, and friendship for years to come.

About Cedric Tankson, MD



Cedric J. Tankson, M.D., earned his medical degree from The University of South Florida College of Medicine in Tampa, Florida. He completed his orthopaedic residency training at Louisiana State University in New Orleans and completed a foot and ankle fellowship at The Institute for Foot and

Ankle Reconstruction at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. Tankson joined the UF Health-Villages orthopaedics staff in January 2020 and is board certified by the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery. His clinical area of interests include arthritis, fracture management, joint restoration, sporting injuries and tendinitis.

Dr. Tankson has been published in several publications and has experience researching many topics including foot and ankle disorders, pediatric acute hematogenous osteomyelitis, cubital tunnel syndrome and infectious diseases.

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The Connection Between Hearing Loss and Mental Wellness:

Prioritizing Hearing Health for Mental Wellness Month

by AudioNova

January is Mental Wellness Month, a time to focus on the health of our minds and emotions as we begin a new year. While many people recognize the importance of mental health, the role of hearing health in maintaining overall well-being is often overlooked. Untreated hearing loss can have a significant impact on mental wellness, contributing to social isolation, anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline. As we turn our attention to mental wellness this January, it's essential to understand how addressing hearing loss can support overall mental health.

The Mental Toll of Hearing Loss

Hearing loss affects how we interact with the world. For many, it leads to frustration, loneliness, and stress. Conversations become harder to follow, especially in noisy environments or group settings, and individuals with hearing loss may start to avoid social situations. What may start as an inconvenience can quickly become a source of emotional strain.

Untreated hearing loss can lead to social isolation, which is closely linked to mental health challenges. When individuals feel disconnected from others, they are more likely to experience depression and anxiety. The effort to follow conversations, combined with the fear of miscommunication, can also lead to self-consciousness and withdrawal from social settings. Over time, this isolation can have a significant impact on mental well-being.

Research shows that people with untreated hearing loss are at a greater risk of developing depression. A study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* found that individuals with hearing loss are more likely to experience depressive symptoms than those with normal hearing. Older adults with hearing loss are especially vulnerable to mental health challenges, as hearing impairment can deepen feelings of loneliness.

Cognitive Decline and Hearing Loss

Another major concern is the link between hearing loss and cognitive decline. When hearing is impaired, the brain must work harder to process sound, using mental resources that are typically dedicated to other cognitive functions, such as memory and thinking. This extra strain can lead to mental fatigue and contribute to cognitive decline over time. Research shows that untreated hearing loss is associated with an increased risk of dementia and other cognitive disorders.

A Johns Hopkins University study found that individuals with mild hearing loss were twice as likely to develop dementia as those with normal hearing. For those with moderate to severe hearing loss, the risk was even higher. These findings emphasize the importance of treating hearing loss early, not only to preserve hearing but also to protect cognitive health.

Treating hearing loss helps alleviate cognitive strain, allowing the brain to focus on important tasks without working overtime to process sounds.

Emotional Well-Being and Hearing Loss

Untreated hearing loss can also take a toll on emotional well-being. Struggling to hear clearly can lead to frustration for both the individual and their loved ones. Misunderstandings and frequent repetition can strain relationships, leading to stress and emotional distress.

For many, untreated hearing loss can cause a loss of confidence. The anxiety of missing key details or struggling to communicate effectively can make social gatherings uncomfortable. Over time, individuals may avoid social situations, missing out on meaningful connections and experiences.

By addressing hearing loss, people can regain confidence, reduce anxiety, and feel more comfortable in social settings. Improved communication leads to less stress and enhances emotional resilience.

Supporting Mental Wellness by Treating Hearing Loss

Treating hearing loss can significantly improve mental and emotional well-being. Hearing aids and other treatments make communication easier, allowing individuals to stay engaged in conversations and social interactions. Improved hearing reduces mental fatigue, strengthens cognitive function, and promotes emotional well-being.

By staying connected with family, friends, and the community, individuals with hearing aids can reduce the isolation that often accompanies hearing loss. Social engagement is vital for maintaining a healthy mind, particularly in older adults, where the effects of isolation are more pronounced.

Today's hearing aids are designed to be discreet, comfortable, and highly effective. They offer a range of features, such as speech enhancement and background noise reduction, making it easier to hear in



various environments. Many modern hearing aids also connect to smartphones and other devices, providing a seamless experience.

A New Year Focus on Mental Wellness

As we observe Mental Wellness Month, now is the perfect time to consider how hearing health affects your mental well-being. If you or a loved one is experiencing hearing loss—such as frequently asking people to repeat themselves or struggling to follow conversations—this is a great time to take action. A hearing evaluation is quick, simple, and effective in assessing hearing ability.

At AudioNova, we are committed to supporting both your hearing and mental health. Our licensed audiologists offer complimentary comprehensive hearing evaluations and personalized treatment plans to ensure you receive the care you need. By addressing hearing loss, you're not only improving your hearing but also investing in your long-term mental well-being.

This January, take the first step toward better mental and emotional health by addressing your hearing loss. Contact us today to schedule a hearing evaluation and discover how improved hearing can support a happier, healthier you to the people and the moments that matter most.

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UNDERSTANDING THE HIDDEN RISK FACTOR: HOW LIPOPROTEIN(A) IMPACTS STROKE AND HEART DISEASE

Stroke remains one of the leading causes of death and disability worldwide, affecting millions of people each year. While most people are familiar with traditional risk factors like high blood pressure, diabetes, and smoking, there's a lesser-known but equally important factor that could be silently increasing your cardiovascular risk: Lipoprotein(a), commonly referred to as Lp(a).

What is Lipoprotein(a)?

Lipoprotein(a) is a unique type of cholesterol-carrying particle that circulates in your blood. Unlike other cholesterol markers that can be influenced by diet and lifestyle, Lp(a) levels are primarily determined by genetics. This means that if you have elevated Lp(a), you likely inherited this trait from your parents, and traditional approaches like dietary changes or standard cholesterol medications may have limited impact on reducing these levels.

The structure of Lp(a) makes it particularly problematic for cardiovascular health. It combines the cholesterol-carrying properties of LDL (bad cholesterol) with additional inflammatory and clot-promoting characteristics. This dual nature makes Lp(a) a potent contributor to atherosclerosis – the buildup of plaque in arteries that can lead to heart attacks and strokes.

The Connection Between Lp(a) and Stroke Risk

Research has consistently shown that elevated Lp(a) levels significantly increase the risk of cardiovascular events, including stroke. People with high Lp(a) levels face up to a 70% increased risk of heart disease and stroke compared to those with normal levels. This elevated risk occurs through several mechanisms.

First, Lp(a) promotes the formation of arterial plaque more aggressively than regular LDL cholesterol. The unique protein component of Lp(a) can directly bind to arterial walls, accelerating the atherosclerotic process. Second, Lp(a) interferes with the body's natural clot-dissolving mechanisms, making dangerous blood clots more likely to form and persist.

For stroke prevention, this means that individuals with elevated Lp(a) may remain at high risk even when their other cholesterol levels appear well-controlled through conventional treatments. This hidden risk factor could explain why some people experience cardiovascular events despite seemingly optimal management of traditional risk factors.



Beyond Stroke: Comprehensive Cardiovascular Impact

While stroke prevention is crucial, elevated Lp(a) also increases the risk of other serious cardiovascular conditions. Peripheral artery disease, which affects blood flow to the legs and arms, is more common in people with high Lp(a) levels. Additionally, heart disease risk remains elevated, with some studies suggesting that Lp(a) contributes to more aggressive forms of coronary artery disease that may be harder to treat with standard interventions.

The implications extend beyond individual health outcomes. Family members of people with elevated Lp(a) should consider testing, as this genetic trait can run in families. Early identification allows for more aggressive management of other modifiable risk factors and closer cardiovascular monitoring.

Hope on the Horizon: Advancing Treatment Options

The recognition of Lp(a) as a significant cardiovascular risk factor has sparked intensive research into targeted treatments. Currently enrolling clinical trials are evaluating innovative investigational medications specifically designed to lower Lp(a) levels in the blood. These studies represent a promising frontier in cardiovascular medicine, offering hope for millions of people who carry this genetic risk factor.

These clinical trials are investigating whether effectively lowering Lp(a) levels can translate into reduced rates of heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular events. The medications being studied work through novel mechanisms that specifically target Lp(a) production, potentially offering solutions where traditional treatments have fallen short.

Participation in clinical research not only provides access to cutting-edge treatments but also contributes to advancing medical knowledge that could benefit future generations. For individuals with elevated Lp(a) levels, these studies may represent an opportunity to take proactive steps toward reducing their cardiovascular risk.

Understanding and addressing Lp(a) represents a crucial step forward in comprehensive stroke and heart disease prevention, offering new hope for protecting cardiovascular health.

Leading the Way in Cardiovascular Research

Renstar Medical Research is at the forefront of advancing cardiovascular health through innovative clinical trials, including studies focused on Lipoprotein(a) reduction. Our dedicated research team is committed to bringing cutting-edge treatments to patients while contributing to the global understanding of cardiovascular disease prevention. For those interested in learning more about current clinical trial opportunities or how Lp(a) testing and research might benefit their cardiovascular health, Renstar Medical Research provides expert guidance and access to the latest developments in heart disease and stroke prevention.

OPEN YOUR HEART TO NEW POSSIBILITIES

Explore Lp(a) clinical trials for people who are at risk for heart disease, stroke, or peripheral artery disease.

Lipoprotein(a), or Lp(a), carries cholesterol in the blood. If you have a high level of Lp(a), you may have a higher risk of heart disease, stroke, or peripheral artery disease. Learn more about currently enrolling clinical trials evaluating the ability of investigational study medications to lower the levels of Lp(a) in the blood.

Qualified Participants May:

- See a study doctor at no cost
- Have access to study medications
- Receive compensation for time and travel

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*"Seeking tomorrow's answers
to the health questions of today."*

TOP TIPS FOR FIRST-TIME CONTACT LENS WEARERS: WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO ADJUST

If you're new to contact lenses, get ready for an exciting journey to clearer vision and newfound freedom. Whether you're looking to enhance your style, enjoy the convenience of lens wear, or simply experience life without glasses, you're in for a treat. As you embark on this adventure, remember that it's perfectly normal to have questions and need a little time to adjust. With a bit of practice and the right tips, you'll soon be navigating your daily routine with confidence. Let's get started on making your contact lens experience as comfortable and enjoyable as possible.

FIRST-TIME CONTACT LENS TIPS

Here are some common sense, practical contact lens tips to help you transition into the world of contact lenses:

- **Practice Good Hygiene** – Always wash your hands thoroughly with mild, fragrance-free soap and dry them using a lint-free towel before handling your contact lenses. Good hygiene can help prevent eye infection and irritation from germs, bacteria and debris.

- **Create the Right Environment** – Practice in a well-lit space in front of a mirror until you develop muscle memory for the procedure. If needed, use a magnifying mirror so you can see what you're doing. Make sure to avoid air conditioning vents, fans, or open windows, as the moving air could dry out your lenses.

- **Master the Insertion and Removal Technique** – The art of inserting and removing contact lenses takes practice, so be patient with yourself. For many, the process is frustrating at first, so take breaks when you need them. Once you get into the groove, it will get quicker and easier. Here are some tips for success:

1. Start with the same eye each time to avoid mix-ups.
2. Place the lens on the tip of your index fingertip and make sure it's not inside-out.
3. Add a drop of saline solution to the lens before insertion to help it adhere more easily.
4. Use what's called the "monkey grip" technique: Reach over your head with the opposite hand and lift your upper eyelid as high as it will comfortably go, and use your other hand to pull down your lower lid.
5. Look up or to the side as you insert the lens, rather than staring directly at the lens. This can help reduce the reflex to blink. Some people are "clenchers," meaning they have a predisposition to

react to things touching their eyes. With practice, this tendency will lessen over time.

6. Place the lens on the white part of your eye first, then let it slide into place over your iris. Blink gently to center the lens.

7. To remove the lens, look upward and use your clean fingertip to slide the lens down toward the white of your eye before carefully pinching it out.

- **Allow an Adjustment Period** – In the beginning, it's normal to experience some mild discomfort or awareness of your lenses. Your eyes may water, look red or feel slightly irritated. You may find your eyes feel a little dry, or you blink more often than normal. Your vision may blur occasionally. This typically improves within 1-2 weeks of consistent wear. To help you adjust, take a gradual approach:

1. Start by wearing your lenses for 2-4 hours on the first day.
2. Gradually increase wear time by 1-2 hours each day.
3. Most people can comfortably wear lenses for a full day (8-12 hours) within 1-2 weeks, though if it takes you longer, that's perfectly okay. Go at your own pace.
4. Soft lenses are usually quicker to adapt to than rigid gas permeable lenses.

Remember, it's normal for inserting contact lenses to feel challenging at first. If you talk to others who wear contact lenses, most will tell you it took them some adjustment. But, with consistent practice and patience, most people find it becomes much easier over time. Longtime users will likely tell you that it's second nature to them now.

ADJUSTING TO THE FEELING OF CONTACT LENSES

For some, having a foreign object in the eye can create some discomfort. If this applies to you, these tips may help:

- **Stay Hydrated** – Drinking plenty of water may help ease eye dryness and irritation.
- **Use Lubricating Eye Drops** – Not all eye drops are compatible with all contact lenses or eye conditions. Ask your eye doctor about which lubricating drops are best for your eye health and lenses.
- **Blink More Often** – It may be surprising to know that people often forget to blink enough, especially if they're staring at phone, computer or tablet screens. Make it a habit to blink often, especially while using digital devices, watching TV, reading, etc.
- **Take Breaks** – If your eyes feel tired or strained, remove your lenses and wear glasses for a while to give your eyes a breather.

SOME FINAL CONTACT LENS TIPS

- **Don't Overdo Wear Times** – Always follow the contact lens wearing schedule recommended by your eye doctor. Don't be tempted to sleep in your lenses or keep using them past their life cycle, as this can be a recipe for eye infection, abrasion or ulceration.

- **Never Use Water on Your Lenses** – Tap water is full of contaminants and should never be used to clean, moisturize or store lenses. Always use the contact lens solution recommended by your eye care professional.

- **Store Your Lenses in Their Case** – Always store your clean lenses inside a clean lens case. Rinse the case with sterile contact solution every night, and fill it with enough fresh solution to submerge your lenses. Gently secure the lids. Replace your lens case every three months or sooner if it becomes dirty or damaged.

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR EYE DOCTOR

The eye doctors of Lake Eye (a US Eye company) are here to help you make a safe, smooth transition into the wonderful world of contact lens clarity and convenience. If, after two weeks, you continue to experience discomfort, irritation or vision issues, your lenses may need to be adjusted for fit or changed to a different type of lens. Any signs of eye infection, such as discharge, undue redness, or swelling, require immediate attention. We are here to help throughout your adjustment.

Count on the vision care specialists of Lake Eye to help you decide which type of contact lens will best suit your unique eyes and lifestyle needs – from soft, rigid gas-permeable and hybrid, to Rose-K and scleral for people with keratoconus and other corneal issues. We provide comprehensive eye exams, vision exams, contact lens fittings, and a full range of contact lenses, for complete, one-stop service.



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TRANSFORM YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION INTO LASTING RESULTS

By Gene Turner, MD, FAARFM

Every January, millions of people commit to the same resolution: losing weight and getting fit. Yet by February, most have abandoned their goals, discouraged by slow progress and unsustainable approaches. This year can be different. At Mid-Florida Age Management, we understand that successful, lasting transformation requires more than willpower—it demands the right support, science-backed strategies, and innovative treatments that work with your body, not against it.

Beyond Traditional Dieting

The fitness industry has long perpetuated the myth that weight loss is simply about eating less and exercising more. While nutrition and movement are essential components, sustainable weight management is far more complex. Hormonal balance, metabolism, body composition, and individual health factors all play crucial roles in your success. Our comprehensive Weight Management Programs address these underlying factors, creating personalized plans designed for your unique physiology and lifestyle.

Rather than prescribing generic meal plans or one-size-fits-all workout routines, we begin with thorough assessments to understand your metabolic health, hormonal status, and specific challenges. This allows us to develop targeted strategies that produce real, measurable results—not just temporary weight loss that rebounds within months.

Revolutionary Body Sculpting Technology

Even with dedicated effort, certain areas of stubborn fat and muscle definition can seem impossible to address through diet and exercise alone. This is where cutting-edge technology makes a transformative difference. EmSculpt Neo represents a breakthrough in body contouring, combining radiofrequency heating and high-intensity electromagnetic energy in a single treatment.

This FDA-cleared device simultaneously reduces fat by up to 30% while building muscle mass by approximately 25% in treated areas. During each 30-minute session, EmSculpt Neo induces thousands of powerful muscle contractions—the equivalent of performing thousands of crunches or squats—while the radiofrequency energy permanently destroys fat cells. The result? A more sculpted, toned physique that enhances your weight loss efforts and helps you achieve the body composition you've been working toward.

EMSCULPT^{neo}



Unlike invasive procedures, EmSculpt Neo requires no downtime, no incisions, and no anesthesia. Many patients describe the treatment as an intensive workout sensation, and most see visible improvements after just four sessions scheduled over two weeks.

A Comprehensive Approach to Wellness

At Mid-Florida Age Management, we believe true transformation extends beyond the scale. Our integrated approach combines medical expertise, nutritional guidance, lifestyle coaching, and advanced treatments to support your entire wellness journey. Whether you're looking to lose significant weight, tone specific areas, boost your energy, or simply feel more confident in your body, our team provides the tools, accountability, and expertise to help you succeed.

This New Year, don't settle for another failed resolution. Invest in a proven, personalized approach that delivers lasting results. Your transformation starts with a single step—and we're here to guide you through every milestone along the way.

Contact Mid-Florida Age Management today to schedule your consultation and discover how our Weight Management Programs and EmSculpt Neo treatments can help you achieve your 2026 health and fitness goals.

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.

Schedule your personal treatment plan today!



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ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WOUND CARE AND NAIL CARE: EXPERT ADVICE FROM OCALA PODIATRY

By Dr. Andrew Franklin, DPM, PH.D

Taking care of your feet goes far beyond simply keeping them clean. Proper wound care and nail care are critical components of foot health that can prevent serious complications, particularly for individuals with diabetes, circulation issues, or compromised immune systems. At Ocala Podiatry, we understand that many foot problems can be prevented with the right knowledge and consistent care practices.

Understanding Foot Wound Care

Foot wounds require immediate attention and proper care to prevent infection and promote healing. Even minor cuts, blisters, or abrasions on the feet can become serious problems if left untreated. The feet are particularly vulnerable because they bear our body weight, are enclosed in shoes for most of the day, and may have reduced blood flow compared to other parts of the body.

When you discover a wound on your foot, the first step is to clean it thoroughly with mild soap and water. Gently pat the area dry and apply an antibiotic ointment to prevent infection. Cover the wound with a sterile bandage, changing it daily or whenever it becomes wet or dirty. Monitor the wound carefully for signs of infection, including increased redness, warmth, swelling, pus, or red streaks extending from the wound. If any of these symptoms appear, or if the wound doesn't show signs of healing within a few days, contact our office immediately.

For individuals with diabetes, wound care becomes even more critical. Diabetic foot wounds can develop into serious ulcers that are slow to heal and prone to infection. If you have diabetes and notice any break in the skin on your feet, no matter how small, schedule an appointment with us right away. Never attempt to treat diabetic foot wounds on your own, as professional medical intervention is essential to prevent complications that could lead to more serious outcomes.

The Importance of Proper Nail Care

Toenail care is another fundamental aspect of foot health that many people overlook until problems arise. Improper nail trimming is one of the leading causes of ingrown toenails, which can be painful and lead to infection. The correct technique for trimming toenails is to cut them straight across, avoiding rounded edges that can encourage the nail to grow into the surrounding skin. Leave the nails

slightly longer than the tip of your toe, and use proper nail clippers designed specifically for toenails rather than fingernail clippers.

Ingrown toenails occur when the edge of the nail grows into the soft tissue of the toe, causing pain, redness, and swelling. While mild cases might be managed at home with warm soaks and proper footwear, persistent or infected ingrown toenails require professional treatment. At Ocala Podiatry, we can safely remove the problematic portion of the nail and provide treatment to prevent recurrence.

Fungal nail infections are another common concern that requires professional attention. These infections cause nails to become thick, discolored, brittle, and sometimes malodorous. Over-the-counter treatments are rarely effective for fungal nail infections, and the condition won't resolve on its own. We offer several treatment options, including prescription antifungal medications and advanced therapies that can effectively eliminate the infection and restore healthy nail growth.

When to Seek Professional Help

While basic wound and nail care can be performed at home, certain situations warrant immediate professional attention. Contact Ocala Podiatry if you experience persistent pain, signs of infection, wounds that won't heal, recurring ingrown toenails, suspected fungal infections, or any foot problem that interferes with your daily activities.

Preventive care is always preferable to treating problems after they develop. Regular foot examinations, particularly for high-risk patients, can identify potential issues before they become serious. Wearing properly fitted shoes, maintaining good hygiene, keeping feet moisturized but not between the toes, and inspecting your feet daily are all simple practices that can prevent many common foot problems.

Your feet carry you through life, and they deserve proper care and attention. Whether you're dealing with a current wound or nail problem or simply want to ensure you're taking the best possible care of your feet, the team at Ocala Podiatry is here to help. Don't wait until small problems become big ones—schedule an appointment today and take the first step toward healthier feet.



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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Understanding Squamous Cell Carcinoma

EXPERT CARE AND TREATMENT

By David Kosiorek, PA-C

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

What is Squamous Cell Carcinoma?

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

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

Recognizing the Warning Signs

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

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

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



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

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

Prevention and Ongoing Care

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

Your Partner in Skin Health

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

Expert Dermatology Care for Your Skin

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

Book Your Appointment

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

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


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Health & Wellness MAGAZINE

Healthy new year

2026

As we welcome 2026, we want to express our heartfelt
gratitude to our incredible readers. Your commitment
to living healthier, more vibrant lives inspires
everything we do.

Thank you for making us Florida's most trusted source for
health and wellness information. Here's to another year of
better health, wellness, and vitality together!

Wishing you and your loved ones a happy, healthy, and
prosperous New Year!

— The Health & Wellness Magazine Team

BREAKTHROUGH IN NEUROPATHY TREATMENT:

HOW SUMMUS LASER THERAPY OFFERS HOPE FOR NERVE PAIN SUFFERERS

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

Understanding Neuropathy: A Complex Challenge

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

The Summus Laser: A Technological Marvel in Pain Management

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

Key Mechanisms of Summus Laser Therapy

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

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

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

Clinical Evidence and Patient Outcomes

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



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

Treatment Process and Expectations

A typical Summus Laser treatment protocol involves:

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

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

Advantages Over Traditional Neuropathy Treatments

The Summus Laser offers several distinct advantages:

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

Who Can Benefit?

Summus Laser therapy is particularly beneficial for patients with:

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

Future of Neuropathy Treatment

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

Conclusion

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

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

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An Easy New Year's Resolution: CREATE YOUR ADVANCE DIRECTIVE

Submitted by Hospice of Marion County

Each year, many people make New Year's resolutions; some include making healthier decisions about their diet, while others are about exercising, traveling and more. Some are kept and some not so much. There's one resolution that's easy to keep – deciding to have a talk with your loved ones about your healthcare decisions and wishes at end of life.

Making your healthcare decisions and relationships a priority is wise any time of the year. It's never too early to have those conversations with your loved ones – better to have the discussion sooner than later when it may be too late.

However, many find procrastination is all too easy, especially when it comes to talking about something unpleasant as the end of life. It's one of those topics most people would rather not discuss, but there's no guarantee on how long we'll live. Just as preparing a will is optimal when we are of sound mind and body, so is preparing for future healthcare needs. Having to make decisions for others is complicated, especially when that person – someone beloved – can no longer speak for themselves.

Advance directives are legal documents that include a living will or a durable power of attorney for healthcare, also known as a healthcare proxy. Either document allows you to give directions about your future medical care. It's your right to accept or refuse medical care. Advance directives can protect this right if you ever become mentally or physically unable to choose or communicate your wishes due to an injury or illness. By law, the decision belongs to the patient, so make your wishes known to your family, providers and caregivers.

An advance directive can be as simple as a two-page *Living Will* or as lengthy as the *Five Wishes*, a detailed-yet-user-friendly booklet. In Florida, an advance directive requires neither an attorney nor a notary—just the writer's signature and that of two witnesses. Despite the simplicity of these documents, only about a third of all Americans have completed one according to the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization.

Advance Directives can:

- Protect your rights to make medical choices that can affect your life



- Let families avoid the responsibility and stress of making difficult decisions
- Assist physicians by providing guidelines for your care
- Protect people who may be unable to communicate
- Limit life-prolonging measures when there's little or no chance of recovery

Enable patients to make their wishes known about:

- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
- Intravenous (IV) therapy
- Feeding tubes
- Ventilators (respirators)
- Dialysis

Regardless of age or health status, we owe it to those we love to discuss our wishes and follow through with a written advance directive, which is revocable at any time.

Advance directives are available to download at no charge on our website at HospiceofMarion.org all year long. Visit our website to learn more and check this New Year's resolution off your list.

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START THE NEW YEAR FLU-FREE: Your Guide to Staying Healthy

As we welcome the new year, flu season is in full swing, and protecting yourself and your loved ones should be a top priority. At Quick Care Med Walk-In Clinic & Urgent Care, we're committed to helping our community stay healthy through education and accessible healthcare services.

The influenza virus spreads rapidly during winter months, causing fever, body aches, fatigue, and respiratory symptoms that can sideline you for weeks. However, with the right preventive measures, you can significantly reduce your risk of getting sick and enjoy a healthier start to the year.

Get Your Flu Shot

The single most effective way to prevent the flu is through vaccination. If you haven't received your flu shot yet, it's not too late. The vaccine takes about two weeks to provide full protection, and flu season typically peaks between December and February, often extending into March. Our walk-in clinic offers convenient flu vaccinations without an appointment, making it easy to protect yourself and your family. The flu vaccine is updated annually to match circulating strains, so even if you received one last year, you need a new vaccination for continued protection.

Practice Good Hygiene

Frequent handwashing remains one of your best defenses against illness. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating, after using the restroom, and after being in public spaces. When soap isn't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol. Pay special attention to washing your hands after touching common surfaces like shopping carts, ATM buttons, and gas pump handles.

Avoid Touching Your Face

The flu virus enters your body through your eyes, nose, and mouth. Make a conscious effort to keep your hands away from your face throughout the day, particularly when you're out in public or haven't recently washed your hands. This simple habit can dramatically reduce your exposure to flu and other respiratory viruses.

Strengthen Your Immune System

Support your body's natural defenses by getting adequate sleep—aim for seven to nine hours per night. Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits and vegetables that



provide essential vitamins and minerals, particularly vitamin C, vitamin D, and zinc. Stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water throughout the day. Managing stress through meditation, deep breathing exercises, or enjoyable activities also plays a crucial role in maintaining immune function. Regular exercise helps boost immune function and overall health, but remember to avoid overexertion, which can temporarily weaken your defenses.

Maintain Social Distance When Possible

During peak flu season, consider limiting close contact with people who are sick. If someone in your household is ill, try to designate a separate room and bathroom for them if possible. If you're feeling unwell, do others a favor by staying home until you've been fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication. When you must be around others while sick, wear a mask to reduce transmission.

Keep Your Environment Clean

Regularly disinfect frequently touched surfaces like doorknobs, light switches, phones, keyboards, remote controls, and countertops. The flu virus can survive on hard surfaces for up to 48 hours, making surface cleaning an important preventive measure. In shared workspaces, wipe down your desk area daily during flu season.

When to Seek Care

If you do develop flu symptoms, Quick Care Med Walk-In Clinic & Urgent Care is here for you. Early treatment with antiviral medications can shorten the duration of illness and prevent complications, especially if started within 48 hours of symptom onset. Visit us if you experience severe symptoms like difficulty breathing, chest pain, persistent high fever, confusion, or if you have underlying health conditions that put you at higher risk for complications.

Start your new year strong by taking these preventive steps today. Your health is worth protecting, and we're here to help every step of the way.

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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The Power of Physical Therapy: Maximizing Recovery Through Proactive Care

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Physical & Occupational Therapy Benefits

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

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

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

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New Year, New Optimized U

For many individuals, the weight loss journey can feel impossible—an endless cycle of effort, frustration, and disappointment. If you have tried every fad diet, cleanse, or program only to watch the scale fluctuate without lasting success, you are far from alone. Millions of people share this experience, and the common thread is not a lack of willpower or discipline. The issue is far more complex.

Traditional weight loss strategies often rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. While these programs may produce short-term results for some, they frequently fail in the long run. This predictable failure leads to frustration, self-blame, and confusion. At Optimize U, we take a fundamentally different approach—one rooted in individualized medicine and long-term metabolic health.

Weight Gain Is Not Simple—And Neither Is Weight Loss

Weight gain is not a singular problem with a universal solution. It is influenced by a complex interplay of age, gender, genetics, lifestyle, metabolic rate, and hormone balance. Each individual has a unique physiological makeup, which means effective weight optimization must be personalized.

Some individuals may need to lose 10 pounds, while others may need to lose 50 or even 100 pounds. Metabolism varies widely, and some people lose weight more easily than others due to genetic and hormonal factors. Expecting identical outcomes from identical plans ignores biological reality—and sets people up for failure.

Lifestyle Still Matters—But It Must Be Realistic

Lifestyle modification remains a foundational component of any successful weight optimization plan. However, modern life is busy, demanding, and often overwhelming. Long work hours, family responsibilities, and chronic stress frequently lead to poor food choices and inconsistent exercise habits.

Education is a powerful tool. Small, sustainable changes can have a meaningful impact when implemented correctly. For example, learning to prepare a quick protein shake, keeping fruit readily available, or planning balanced meals ahead of time can help replace fast food and processed snacks. Similarly, integrating short bursts of movement throughout the day—rather than relying solely on lengthy workouts—can significantly improve metabolic health, especially for those with limited time.



Hormones and Metabolism: A Critical Connection

While lifestyle changes are essential, they are not always sufficient—particularly as we age. Hormones play a central role in metabolism, body composition, and energy regulation.

In men, declining testosterone levels are associated with increased fat mass, reduced muscle mass, and slower metabolism. In women, the menopausal transition brings a loss of estrogen that often results in weight gain, especially around the midsection. These hormonal shifts are not cosmetic issues; they are physiological changes that directly affect metabolic balance.

When clinically appropriate, restoring hormone levels to optimal ranges can be a necessary component of achieving sustainable weight loss. This is not about excess or enhancement—it is about correcting deficiencies that impair the body's ability to function efficiently.

Comprehensive Evaluation Comes First

Before beginning any weight optimization program, a thorough health evaluation is essential. Conditions such as hypothyroidism, insulin resistance, and other metabolic or endocrine disorders can contribute to weight gain, fatigue, and difficulty losing weight.

While thyroid medication is not prescribed for weight loss, untreated hypothyroidism can significantly hinder metabolic function and energy levels. Identifying and addressing these underlying issues allows for safer, more effective outcomes and prevents unnecessary frustration.

When Medication Is Appropriate

For some individuals, additional support may be necessary while lifestyle factors and hormonal balance are being optimized. In these cases, prescription medications may be considered as part of a comprehensive, medically supervised plan.

One commonly used class of medications includes GLP-1 receptor agonists, which are typically administered via subcutaneous injection once weekly. These medications can help regulate appetite, improve insulin sensitivity, and support weight loss when used appropriately. All patients undergo thorough screening, education, and ongoing monitoring to ensure safety, manage side effects, and identify contraindications.

Medication is never a shortcut or a standalone solution—it is a tool, used strategically, in the context of a structured and individualized program.

The Optimize U Difference

Optimize U offers personalized weight optimization programs designed to address the full spectrum of metabolic health. Each program is guided by a licensed nurse practitioner and nutritionist, ensuring both medical oversight and practical, sustainable guidance. Patients receive comprehensive laboratory testing, individualized nutrition and exercise plans, and weekly evaluations to track progress and make data-driven adjustments. When appropriate, medications and hormone optimization are incorporated to support long-term success—not quick fixes.

A New Year, A New Approach

This year, weight loss does not have to mean restriction, guilt, or another failed attempt. It can mean clarity, personalization, and sustainable progress rooted in science and medical expertise.

At Optimize U, we believe weight optimization is not about perfection—it is about restoring balance, improving health, and empowering patients with the tools they need to succeed for life.

A new year is an opportunity for a new approach—and a more Optimized U.



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A JOURNEY TOWARD INNER & OUTER STRENGTH WITH PILATES

Self-love is more than just a buzzword—it's vital to living a balanced and fulfilling life. It's about honoring and appreciating your body, mind, and emotions. In the hustle of modern life, self-love often takes a back seat as we prioritize work, family, and social obligations while neglecting our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. One powerful way to practice self-love is through the mindful movement of Pilates, which fosters a deeper mind-body connection and creates space to cultivate genuine self-appreciation.

At its core, self-love is an ongoing practice involving actions that support one's mental, emotional, and physical health. It includes setting boundaries, engaging in enjoyable activities, and recognizing strengths without judgment. Pilates embodies these principles through mindful movement that encourages practitioners to be present with their bodies, listen to their needs, and treat themselves with kindness and patience. It's more than just a workout—it's an opportunity to connect deeply with oneself and build strength from the inside out.

Self-awareness, a cornerstone of self-love, helps us tune into our thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations. In the rush of daily life, losing touch with ourselves is easy, but Pilates helps close that gap. Each exercise requires focused attention on every movement, breath, and muscle engagement, sharpening your awareness of how your body moves and reacts. This mindfulness carries into daily life, helping you notice how stress affects your posture or where you hold tension, allowing you to make intentional choices that support your well-being.



Acceptance lies at the heart of self-love—embracing where you are without judgment. Pilates encourages this mindset by meeting you exactly where you are, whether you're a seasoned athlete or just beginning your fitness journey. Rather than focusing on limitations, Pilates encourages appreciation for what your body can do. This shift fosters self-compassion as you learn to celebrate progress, no matter how small, instead of comparing yourself to others or striving for unrealistic perfection.

While Pilates is well-known for strengthening the core, improving posture, and enhancing flexibility, its benefits extend far beyond physical fitness. The deliberate, controlled movements promote mindfulness, helping reduce stress and anxiety by anchoring you in the present moment. As you progress, you build both physical and mental resilience, learning to overcome challenges and reinforcing confidence in your capabilities.

Pilates emphasizes balance—between strength and flexibility, effort and ease, mind and body. This balanced approach mirrors self-love principles, which involve finding harmony within ourselves. The practice offers structured yet flexible sessions that fit even the busiest schedules, making it an accessible form of self-care that can influence other life areas.

Through consistent practice, Pilates helps you cultivate gratitude for your body's unique abilities. Instead of focusing on flaws, you learn to honor your body's strength, flexibility, and resilience. This appreciation extends beyond the studio, helping you approach life with greater compassion toward yourself. Ultimately, Pilates is more than a fitness routine—it's a practice of self-love that nurtures mind, body, and emotional well-being while strengthening your relationship with yourself.

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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Protecting Your Spine:

Essential Strategies for Lifelong Back Health

By Ali Zarezadeh, MD - Orthopaedics

Your spine is the literal backbone of your health and mobility. This remarkable structure of bones, discs, muscles, and nerves supports your body, enables movement, and protects your spinal cord. Yet many of us don't think about spine health until pain or injury occurs. According to specialists at UF Health, proactive spine care is essential for maintaining quality of life and preventing debilitating conditions that affect millions of Americans each year.

Understanding Your Spine's Needs

The spine consists of 33 vertebrae stacked in a gentle S-curve, cushioned by shock-absorbing discs and supported by muscles and ligaments. This complex system requires proper care to function optimally throughout life. UF Health experts emphasize that spine health influences overall wellness, affecting everything from physical mobility to sleep quality and even mood.

"Many spine problems develop gradually over years of accumulated stress and poor habits," explains UF Health Orthopaedic Surgeon, Dr. Zarezadeh. "What's encouraging is that many of these issues can be prevented through consistent, thoughtful daily practices."

ESSENTIAL STRATEGIES FOR SPINE PROTECTION

1. Maintain Proper Posture

Poor posture places excessive stress on your spine. UF Health recommends being mindful of your alignment throughout the day:

- When sitting, keep your feet flat on the floor with knees at hip level
- Maintain a small gap between the back of your knees and your chair
- Position your computer monitor at eye level to avoid neck strain
- Take regular "posture breaks" to reset your alignment if sitting for extended periods

2. Practice Spine-Friendly Movement

Regular movement nourishes spinal discs and strengthens supporting muscles. UF Health suggests:

- Engage in low-impact exercises like walking, swimming, or cycling
- Incorporate core-strengthening exercises that support the spine
- Practice gentle stretching to maintain flexibility
- Avoid high-impact activities that jar the spine if you have existing back issues



3. Lift and Carry Correctly

"Improper lifting technique is one of the most common causes of acute back injuries," note UF Health experts. Follow these guidelines:

- Bend at the knees, not the waist
- Keep objects close to your body when lifting
- Avoid twisting while lifting
- Ask for assistance with heavy items
- Use mechanical aids when available

4. Create Spine-Supportive Environments

Your daily surroundings significantly impact spine health:

- Invest in a quality mattress that maintains proper spinal alignment
- Use ergonomically designed chairs and workstations
- Wear supportive footwear that promotes good posture
- Consider a standing desk option if you work at a computer

5. Maintain Healthy Weight

Excess weight, particularly around the midsection, increases strain on the lower back. UF Health research shows that even modest weight loss can significantly reduce back pain for many patients.

6. Stay Hydrated and Nourished

Spinal discs are approximately 80% water and require proper hydration to maintain their shock-absorbing properties. Additionally, calcium, vitamin D, and magnesium are essential nutrients for bone health.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL CARE

While prevention is ideal, being proactive about seeking care is equally important. UF Health recommends consulting a spine specialist if you experience:

- Pain that radiates down your arms or legs
- Numbness or tingling in extremities
- Back pain accompanied by fever
- Pain that persists despite rest
- Any back pain following trauma

THE LONG-TERM VIEW

"Spine health is a lifelong journey, not a one-time fix," emphasize UF Health spine specialists. "The habits you establish today can determine your mobility and comfort decades from now."

By implementing these evidence-based strategies recommended by UF Health experts, you can protect your spine and enjoy greater mobility, comfort, and overall wellness throughout your life. Remember that small, consistent actions typically yield better results than dramatic but short-lived changes to your routine.

About Ali Zarezadeh, MD



Dr. Ali Zarezadeh is a highly skilled spine surgeon with extensive expertise in treating both common and complex spine conditions. Specializing in chronic and degenerative spine disorders, spinal deformities, trauma, fractures, and spinal tumors, he offers comprehensive care for a wide range of issues.

Expertly trained and focused on delivering advanced, motion-preserving treatments, Dr. Zarezadeh is dedicated to restoring function and improving his patients' quality of life, providing personalized care to meet their unique needs.

When he is not caring for patients, Dr. Zarezadeh enjoys spending time outdoors, often hiking with his family. He is also an avid sports fan, attending football games and playing tennis.

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A NEW YEAR, A NEW YOU! BE PAIN FREE IN 2026!

By Dr. Chad Rose, DC

Are you one of the millions of Americans suffering from the burning, tingling, and debilitating pain of neuropathy? As we step into 2026, Rose Wellness Clinic is revolutionizing neuropathy treatment with cutting-edge technologies that offer hope and healing to those struggling with this challenging condition.

Understanding Neuropathy's Impact

Peripheral neuropathy affects more than 20 million Americans, impacting every aspect of daily life. From difficulty sleeping to challenges with basic mobility, neuropathy's effects can be devastating. Traditional treatments often fall short, leaving many patients frustrated and seeking better solutions.

Breakthrough Technologies at Rose Wellness Clinic

At Rose Wellness Clinic, we're proud to introduce a comprehensive suite of innovative therapies that are changing lives. Our multi-faceted approach combines the latest medical advancements with personalized care plans designed for optimal results.

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Our state-of-the-art Electronic Neural Stimulation (ENS) technology delivers precise, targeted electrical impulses to affected nerve pathways. This groundbreaking treatment helps reduce pain signals while promoting natural healing processes. Patients report significant improvement in symptoms after just a few sessions, with many experiencing up to 80% reduction in discomfort.

Laser Light Therapy

Our advanced Class IV laser therapy penetrates deep into affected tissues, stimulating cellular repair and reducing inflammation. This non-invasive treatment accelerates healing at the molecular level, providing lasting relief without medication or surgery.

Regenerative Medicine

Rose Wellness Clinic leads the field in regenerative medicine applications for neuropathy. Our cutting-edge treatments help restore damaged nerve tissue, offering hope for long-term recovery rather than just symptom management.



Personalized Treatment Plans

Every patient's neuropathy journey is unique. Our expert medical team develops customized treatment plans that may include:

- Targeted nutritional therapy
- Advanced diagnostic testing
- Specialized physical therapy protocols
- Breakthrough medication management
- Lifestyle modification coaching

Real Results, Real People

"After years of suffering, I had almost given up hope," shares Maria Rodriguez, a patient at Rose Wellness Clinic. "The innovative treatments here have given me my life back. I'm now able to sleep through the night and enjoy activities with my grandchildren again."

Why Choose Rose Wellness Clinic?

Our commitment to excellence shows in every aspect of patient care:

- Board-certified specialists in neuropathy treatment
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- Comprehensive treatment approaches
- Proven success rates
- Convenient scheduling options
- Insurance-friendly policies

Make 2026 Your Year of Recovery

Don't let another year pass while living with neuropathy pain. Rose Wellness Clinic's innovative treatments offer real hope for recovery and renewed quality of life. Our expert team is ready to help you start your journey to becoming pain-free.

TAKE THE FIRST STEP TOWARD A PAIN-FREE 2026

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Rose Wellness Clinic: Where Innovation Meets Compassionate Care.

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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Slowing the Pace of Your Life

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

Remember the old merry-go-rounds on the playground when you were a kid? You would spin in circles until you felt like you were going to fly off. That's how life can feel if you don't make some necessary changes.

You live a much faster lifestyle than your parents did. Your children will live an even faster lifestyle than you did. As we enter a new year, perhaps it is a good time to evaluate the pace of your life and make some necessary adjustments. The Psalmist tells us:

²In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves. Psalm 127:2

If you are getting up early and staying up late but still don't feel like you can get everything done... you are probably trying to do too much.

Living at a hectic pace comes at a price. You end up feeling more stressed because you are trying to cram too many things into your day. You end up having no margin in your life. As the margins get tighter the stress goes higher.

You have to take time to recharge your batteries. Here's a lesson I learned years ago: You have just enough time to do the will of God. If you can't get everything done on your "to do" list, maybe there are things on the list you shouldn't be doing.

I want to share with you two simple strategies to help you slow down the pace of your life so that you can enjoy life.

The first strategy is to learn to be content. If you're serious about slowing down, you don't start with your schedule—you start with your heart.

The Apostle Paul said this about contentment. *¹¹I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹²I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.*

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.¹³ I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:11-13

If you're going to slow down your life, you have to learn contentment. Paul also said this about contentment: *⁶ But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.* 1 Tim. 6:6-7

What he is saying in these passages is that we need to understand that life isn't about things. **Contentment means this:** I don't need more in order to be happy.

I'm not waiting for *more* in order to be happy. I'm happy right now. I have dreams and I have goals but I don't need *more* in order to be happy. That's contentment.

Contentment will come easier when you realize two things: life is not a competition with other people and having *more* will not make you happier. This is not the message promoted by our culture, but it is true.

Jesus said it like this, *¹⁵ Then he said to them, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* Luke 12:15

If you find yourself making statements like this:

- **My life is a rat race.**
- **I don't know how I'm going to get it all done.**
- **I am just so exhausted.**
- **I don't know how much more of this I can take.**
- **I just want to escape.**



These phrases are all warning signs that you are on the road to burn out. You need to slow down the pace. Perhaps as we begin this new year, taking an honest evaluation of your life and determine if some changes are necessary. Are you content in your life right now?

As the merry-go-round spins faster it is only a matter of time before you either get sick, or fall off. Or, better yet, just slow down, be content, and enjoy the ride.

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