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Health & Wellness[®] MAGAZINE

March 2026

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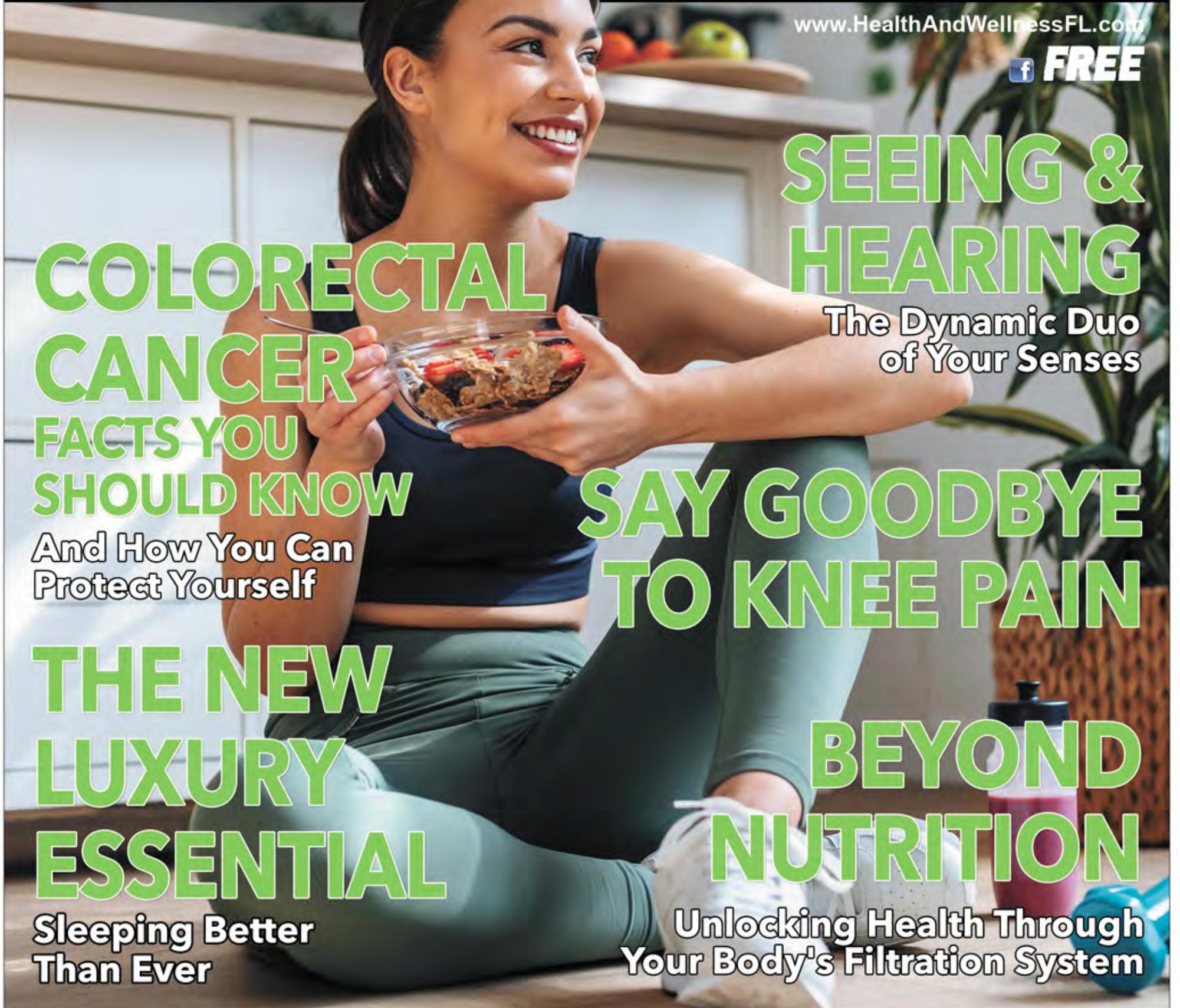
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CONTACT US

Owner
Cristan Gensing
cristan@gwhizmarketing.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Sonny Gensing
sonnygensing@yahoo.com



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cristan@gwhizmarketing.com

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Say NO to Incontinence and Take Back Control of Your Bladder

By Dr. Tina Chandra

Urinary incontinence is a common occurrence in women. It can be caused by vaginal childbirth, changes due to menopause, or even by being overweight. There are two types of urinary incontinence.

Stress urinary incontinence is when urine escapes due to physical activities such as running or jumping, or it can be provoked by a sneeze or a cough. It is caused by weak pelvic muscles that may be a result of obesity, childbirth, or repeated strains such as lifting heavy objects or high-impact exercise. Urge incontinence is different in that it is an unusually frequent urge to urinate. The cause is unknown, but one possible contributor could be diabetes.

When a patient suffers from both of these conditions, it is known as mixed urinary incontinence. All three types are quite common, especially in older women.

No matter which type of urinary incontinence presents itself, it has been shown to increase with any or all of the following factors: age, menopause, a persistent cough, weight gain, and vaginal childbirth, among others. For some women, the increase is gradual while other women might experience a loss of control immediately after childbirth.

Is there a solution for urinary incontinence or do I just buy stock in pads and diapers?

In the past, the primary method for dealing with urinary incontinence has been surgery or therapies that can be both difficult and embarrassing. Today the solution is primarily physical therapy with a urinary incontinence specialist showing the patient how to do vaginal exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. This has proved itself to be an effective treatment, however, many women avoid it because of its intimate nature.

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

Emsella has been jokingly referred to as the "Kegel throne" because each 30-minute treatment is equivalent to doing more than 10,000 Kegals. It contracts

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the muscles by emitting HIFEM to stimulate the muscles of the pelvic floor that have become too weak to control urination. Even with physical therapy and being very disciplined in doing Kegel exercises, it would be humanly impossible to mimic this type of treatment and its results.

What type of results can be expected from using Emsella?

According to the company's website, btaesthetics.com, Emsella patients report a 95% improvement in their quality of life and a 75% reduction in the use of pads.

Patients often see results after just one 30-minute session. For maximum results, a minimum of 6 sessions are recommended with a minimum of 2 days between each session. Results will, of course, vary by patient and by the severity of muscle weakness.

What can I expect in an Emsella session?

First of all, it is important to note that patients remain fully clothed during their session. That is usually a relief to most patients. Secondly, there is no work involved on the patient's part, nor on the service provider once the device has started. The patient simply sits on the "throne" for 30 minutes while HIFEM technology contracts her (or his) muscles 10-11,000 times. Most patients report nothing more than a tingling sensation.

Can MEN benefit from Emsella also?

According to the Massachusetts Male Aging Study, about 40% of men are affected by erectile dysfunction at age 40 and 70% of men are affected at age 70. Enter Emsella for men.

Emsella has been approved for men suffering with incontinence and erectile dysfunction because of weakening pelvic floor muscles. These muscles support all of the pelvic organs and when weakened, they can result in incontinence, premature ejaculation, and erectile dysfunction.

Men will be pleased with the many benefits Emsella affords. The same 30 minute session as the women are sitting through will give them increased bladder control, increased penile rigidity and hardness, increased control over erection, increased time until ejaculation, reduced stress and anxiety and restored confidence.

If you are interested in learning more about Emsella from trusted professionals with years of experience, contact Chandra Wellness Center Today.



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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.

COLORECTAL CANCER FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW — AND HOW YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF

Overall, in the U.S., 1 in 23 men (4.3%) and 1 in 25 women (4%) are at risk of developing colorectal cancer in their lifetimes. It is the third most common form of the disease (excluding skin cancer) and the second leading cause of cancer death in the nation for women and men combined.

Colorectal cancer refers to cancers of the colon and rectum, the lower parts of the digestive system. These organs help process food, absorb water, and move waste out of the body. (Colorectal cancer does not include cancer of the anus, which is a separate condition.)

The colon, or large bowel, is a major part of the large intestine and is about five feet long. The rectum and anal canal make up the final section of the large intestine, with the rectum about six inches long and the anal canal one to two inches long.

Colorectal cancer occurs when cells in these areas grow out of control. These abnormal growths, called polyps, can sometimes become cancerous over time.

Few Early Warning Signs

Colorectal polyps and cancer often cause no symptoms, which makes regular screening so important. As a tumor grows, it may bleed or partially block the intestine. The most common warning signs include blood in the stool or toilet after a bowel movement, dark or black stools, or bleeding from the rectum. Any of these symptoms should be reported to your primary care provider promptly.

Early Screening Tests Matter

Screening tests can detect polyps at an early stage, so they can be removed before turning into cancer. According to the Colon Cancer Coalition, when detected in its early stages, colon cancer is more likely to be cured; treatment is less extensive, and recovery is much faster. If colon cancer is caught early, the long-term survival rate is very high — around 90%.

Know Your Screening Options

The risk of colorectal cancer increases with age, and most cases occur in adults 50 and older. On average, colon cancer is diagnosed at age 68 for men and 72 for women, while rectal cancer is usually diagnosed around age 63 for both men and women. In recent years there has been a notable rise in colon cancer among people in their 20s, 30s and 40s, although the causes are not clearly understood.



The American Cancer Society recommends that people at average risk begin regular screening at age 45. Screening can detect cancer early, when treatment is most effective, and can also identify precancerous polyps that can be removed before they develop into cancer.

Screening is done on different schedules. People with higher-than-average risk due to family history, certain genetic conditions or other factors may need to start screening earlier or follow a different screening schedule.

The main colorectal cancer screening tests include visual exams, like colonoscopy or CT scans, which look directly inside the colon for polyps or cancer, and stool-based tests, which check for blood or abnormal DNA. While many stool-based tests can be done at home, they are intended for people at average risk and may not work well for everyone.

Your doctor can help you choose the test and schedule that's right for you.

Know Your Risks and How to Reduce Them

Certain health conditions, like Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, or a family history of colorectal polyps or cancer, can raise your risk. Previous radiation to the abdomen or pelvis may also increase risk.

Lifestyle factors matter too: Lack of exercise, being overweight, a diet high in fat and low in fruits and vegetables, tobacco use, and alcohol can all contribute.

Colorectal cancer facts can sound alarming, but there's reason for hope. Early screening works, and small lifestyle changes can go a long way in reducing risk.

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Seeing and Hearing: The Dynamic Duo of Your Senses

March is Save Your Vision Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of eye health. While most people recognize how crucial vision is to daily life, fewer realize how closely our ability to see and hear are connected. As a Doctor of Audiology, I often remind patients that their ears and eyes work as a team to help them navigate the world, maintain balance, and communicate effectively.

If one sense begins to decline, the other has to compensate. When people experience hearing loss, they unknowingly start relying more on their vision—watching lip movements, facial expressions, and body language to fill in the gaps. Similarly, those with vision impairment lean on their hearing to identify their surroundings. But what happens when both begin to fade?

The Eyes and Ears: A Perfect Team

Your brain is constantly integrating information from both hearing and vision, making sense of your environment in real-time. Think about the last time you had a conversation in a noisy restaurant—your ears were processing speech while your eyes helped you focus on the speaker's lips and expressions to piece together the words.

This connection is so strong that research shows vision can even alter what we hear. The **McGurk Effect**, for example, is a fascinating auditory illusion where your brain changes what you hear based on what your eyes see. If a person says “ba” but their lips form the shape of “fa,” you might hear “fa” instead of “ba” (McGurk & MacDonald, 1976).

But when either hearing or vision is impaired, this natural teamwork is disrupted—making everyday activities like conversation, walking, and driving more challenging.

The Brain's Role: Why Dual Sensory Loss Matters

Hearing and vision aren't just passive senses; they're deeply linked to cognition and brain function. When one declines, the brain has to work harder to compensate, leading to:

- **Cognitive Overload**—Straining to hear or see pulls mental energy away from memory and focus.
- **Increased Fall Risk**—The inner ear plays a crucial role in balance, and vision is essential for spatial awareness. Older adults with hearing and vision loss are at a significantly higher risk of falls (Lin et al., 2012).



- **Greater Dementia Risk**—Studies show that untreated hearing loss is linked to an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia, and when combined with vision impairment, the impact on brain health is even greater (Gurgel et al., 2014).

The takeaway? Hearing and vision should never be treated in isolation. They work together, and when one is neglected, it puts more strain on the other.

Why People Prioritize Vision Over Hearing

When vision changes, most people rush to the eye doctor to get glasses or contacts. But when hearing starts to fade, many ignore the signs—even though hearing loss is just as impactful on quality of life.

Some common reasons people delay hearing care include:

- **They assume hearing loss is normal with age.** (So is vision loss, but that doesn't stop anyone from getting glasses!)
- **They don't realize how much they're missing.** Hearing loss happens gradually, so people adapt without noticing the slow decline.
- **They think hearing aids won't help.** Today's hearing technology is more advanced and discreet than ever, dramatically improving communication and cognitive health.

How to Protect Both Your Vision and Hearing

Since your eyes and ears work together, maintaining both is crucial for overall well-being. Here's how you can protect these vital senses:

1. **Schedule Regular Eye Exams**—Vision changes can be gradual, so regular checkups ensure early detection of conditions like cataracts or macular degeneration.

2. **Get Your Hearing Checked**—A simple baseline hearing test can help identify early signs of hearing loss before it impacts your daily life.

3. **Protect Your Ears from Noise**—Long-term exposure to loud sounds is a leading cause of hearing loss. Wear hearing protection in noisy environments and keep headphone volumes at safe levels.

4. **Exercise Regularly**—Physical activity supports healthy circulation, which benefits both your eyes and ears.

5. **Limit Screen Time**—Digital eye strain is real! Follow the **20-20-20 rule**: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds to reduce eye fatigue.

The Bottom Line: Prioritize Your Hearing Health

This Save Your Vision Month, let's take a more comprehensive approach to wellness. Seeing clearly is essential—but so is hearing clearly. Vision and hearing work together, and when we neglect one, we may be unknowingly putting extra strain on our brain and body.

At AudioNova, we believe that hearing health is a crucial part of overall well-being. That's why we offer complimentary hearing evaluations to help you stay proactive about your health.

If you've noticed any changes in your hearing—or even if you haven't—it's time to establish a baseline. **Call us today to schedule your free hearing test and keep your brain, balance, and communication at their best!**

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Vascular and Thoracic Surgery at UF Health: SPECIALIZED CARE FOR COMPLEX CONDITIONS

By Adrian Finol, MD - Medical Director of Lung Health and Cancer Center

When it comes to treating diseases of the chest and vascular system, patients deserve access to the most advanced surgical expertise available. UF Health offers comprehensive vascular and thoracic surgery programs that bring together highly trained surgeons, leading-edge technology and a multidisciplinary approach to deliver exceptional outcomes for patients facing some of the most complex medical conditions.

Thoracic surgery at UF Health encompasses the specialized treatment of diseases affecting the chest, including conditions of the lungs, esophagus and heart. From early-stage lung cancer to advanced esophageal disorders, the thoracic surgery team is equipped to handle a wide spectrum of diagnoses. Surgeons at UF Health are experienced in performing minimally invasive procedures such as video-assisted thoracoscopic surgery and robotic-assisted thoracic surgery, which offer patients smaller incisions, reduced pain and faster recovery times compared with traditional open surgery. These techniques are used to treat lung nodules, pleural diseases, mediastinal tumors and other thoracic conditions with precision and care.

Lung cancer remains one of the most common and serious conditions treated by the thoracic surgery division. UF Health's approach integrates screening, diagnosis and treatment into a seamless care pathway, ensuring patients receive timely intervention. Surgeons work closely with pulmonologists, oncologists, radiation therapists and pathologists to develop individualized treatment plans. Whether a patient requires a lobectomy, segmentectomy or pneumonectomy, the surgical team leverages the latest evidence-based practices to optimize outcomes.

Esophageal conditions, including gastroesophageal reflux disease, Barrett's esophagus and esophageal cancer, also fall under the scope of thoracic surgery at UF Health. Complex esophageal surgeries such as esophagectomy demand a high level of surgical skill, and UF Health's surgeons bring years of specialized training and experience to every case. Patients benefit from a coordinated care model that addresses both the surgical and long-term management needs of these conditions.



On the vascular side, UF Health provides expert care for diseases affecting the body's network of arteries and veins. Vascular surgery covers a broad range of conditions, including peripheral artery disease, aortic aneurysms, carotid artery disease, deep vein thrombosis and varicose veins. These conditions can significantly impact a patient's quality of life and, in some cases, pose life-threatening risks if left untreated.

UF Health's vascular surgeons are skilled in both open surgical techniques and endovascular procedures, which use catheters and imaging guidance to treat vascular problems from within the blood vessels. Endovascular approaches such as angioplasty, stenting and endovascular aneurysm repair, or EVAR, represent significant advances in vascular care, allowing many patients to avoid the risks and lengthy recovery associated with traditional surgery. Aortic disease is an area of particular focus for the vascular surgery team. Whether treating abdominal aortic aneurysms or thoracic aortic conditions, UF Health surgeons employ state-of-the-art imaging and surgical techniques to provide safe and effective treatment. The program also addresses critical limb ischemia, a severe form of peripheral artery disease that can lead to amputation if not managed promptly, through limb salvage procedures designed to restore blood flow and preserve mobility.

What sets UF Health apart is its commitment to a patient-centered, multidisciplinary model of care. Vascular and thoracic surgeons collaborate with specialists across cardiology, radiology, anesthesiology and critical care to ensure comprehensive treatment planning. Additionally, as an academic health center, UF Health is actively involved in clinical research and surgical innovation, giving patients access to emerging therapies and clinical trials that may not be available elsewhere.

For patients navigating complex vascular and thoracic conditions, UF Health stands as a trusted destination for specialized surgical care, combining clinical excellence with compassion at every step of the treatment journey.

About Adrian Finol, MD



Adrian Finol, MD, is dedicated to delivering comprehensive, patient-centered care grounded in trust, education and shared decision-making. He takes time to understand each patient and clearly explain what to expect before, during and after surgery so they feel informed, supported and confident in their care. Dr. Finol serves as Medical Director of the Lung Health and Cancer Center and President of the UF Cancer Program. He has a strong professional focus on lung cancer, particularly early diagnosis and improving outcomes, and has collaborated with national leaders including the American College of Surgeons' Commission on Cancer and the American Cancer Society to advance cancer care. Guided by a commitment to educate and heal, he supports patients with compassion and clarity through every stage of their journey.

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

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

What Is Parkinson's Disease?

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

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

Recognizing the Symptoms

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

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

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



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

The Challenge of Living with Parkinson's

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

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

Current Treatment Landscape

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

Hope Through Clinical Research

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

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

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

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

TO BE ELIGIBLE YOU MUST:

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

THOSE THAT QUALIFY MAY:

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

No insurance is required to participate.

For more information, and to see if you qualify, please contact us today!



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

THE LIFE-SAVING POWER OF REGULAR SKIN CANCER SCREENINGS: WHY EARLY DETECTION MATTERS

In a world where health consciousness is on the rise, one critical aspect of preventive care often goes overlooked: regular skin cancer screenings. With skin cancer being one of the most common types of cancer worldwide, the importance of early detection through routine check-ups cannot be overstated. This article delves into why staying vigilant about your skin health, particularly in checking for melanomas, could be a life-saving decision.

Understanding Skin Cancer and Melanoma

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells grow abnormally, often due to damage from UV radiation. While there are several types of skin cancer, melanoma is the most dangerous. Melanoma develops in the melanocytes, the cells responsible for producing skin pigment. Although it's less common than other skin cancers, melanoma is far more likely to spread to other parts of the body if not caught early.

The Power of Early Detection

The key to successfully treating skin cancer, especially melanoma, lies in early detection. When caught in its initial stages, the five-year survival rate for melanoma is an impressive 99%. However, this rate drops dramatically to 27% for melanomas that have spread to distant parts of the body. These statistics underscore the critical importance of regular skin checks and professional screenings.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

While professional screenings are crucial, being aware of your own skin and any changes is equally important. The "ABCDE" rule is a helpful guide for identifying potential melanomas:

Asymmetry: One half of the mole doesn't match the other half.

Border: The edges are irregular, ragged, or blurred.

Color: The color is not uniform and may include shades of brown, black, or tan.

Diameter: Melanomas are usually larger than 6mm (about the size of a pencil eraser).

Evolving: The mole changes in size, shape, or color over time.

Any mole or skin growth exhibiting these characteristics warrants immediate medical attention.

The Screening Process

A professional skin cancer screening is a quick, painless procedure that can be performed by a dermatologist or trained healthcare provider. During the screening, the doctor will thoroughly examine your skin, paying close attention to areas frequently exposed to the sun. They may use a dermatoscope, a special magnifying tool, to get a closer look at suspicious spots.

Who Should Get Screened and How Often?

While everyone should be mindful of their skin health, certain factors increase the risk of skin cancer:

- Fair skin
- History of sunburns or excessive sun exposure
- Multiple or atypical moles
- Family history of skin cancer
- Weakened immune system

For those at average risk, an annual skin check is recommended. However, individuals with higher risk factors may need more frequent screenings. It's best to consult with a healthcare provider to determine the most appropriate screening schedule for your specific situation.

Beyond Professional Screenings: The Importance of Self-Checks

In between professional screenings, monthly self-examinations are crucial. These self-checks allow you to become familiar with your skin's normal appearance and help you spot any changes quickly. Use a full-length mirror and a hand mirror to examine your entire body, including hard-to-see areas like your back, scalp, and between your toes.

Prevention: Your First Line of Defense

While regular screenings are vital, prevention remains the best strategy against skin cancer. Protect your skin by:

- Applying broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 daily
- Wearing protective clothing, including wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses
- Seeking shade, especially during peak sun hours (10 am to 4 pm)
- Avoiding tanning beds and sun lamps

The Broader Impact of Regular Screenings

Regular skin cancer screenings don't just benefit individuals; they have a broader societal impact. Early detection reduces the overall burden on healthcare systems by catching cancers when they're most treatable. It also helps raise awareness about skin cancer, encouraging others to prioritize their skin health.

Conclusion: A Small Step for Significant Peace of Mind

In the grand scheme of health maintenance, skin cancer screenings are a relatively small investment of time that can yield enormous benefits. By making these screenings a regular part of your health routine, you're taking a proactive step in protecting yourself against one of the most prevalent forms of cancer. Remember, your skin is your body's largest organ and its first line of defense against the environment. Treating it with the care and attention it deserves isn't just about aesthetics—it's about preserving your overall health and potentially saving your life.

Don't wait for a problem to arise. Schedule a skin cancer screening today and empower yourself with the knowledge and vigilance needed to keep your skin healthy for years to come. Your future self will thank you for this simple yet powerful act of self-care.



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SAY GOODBYE TO KNEE PAIN

How Genicular Artery Embolization at the Vein Center of North Florida Is Changing Lives

By The Vein Center of North Florida

Chronic knee pain affects millions of Americans, and for many, it becomes a daily battle that limits mobility, disrupts sleep, and diminishes quality of life. For patients who haven't found lasting relief through physical therapy, medications, or injections — and who aren't ready for or don't qualify for knee replacement surgery — there's now a promising minimally invasive option available right here in North Florida. The Vein Center of North Florida is proud to offer Genicular Artery Embolization, or GAE, a cutting-edge procedure that is transforming the way knee osteoarthritis pain is treated.



What Is Genicular Artery Embolization?

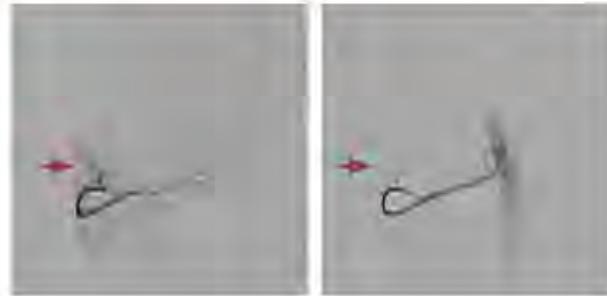
Genicular Artery Embolization is a minimally invasive, image-guided procedure performed by interventional specialists to reduce chronic knee pain caused by osteoarthritis. The genicular arteries are a network of small blood vessels that supply the lining of the knee joint. In patients with knee osteoarthritis, these vessels can become abnormally enlarged, contributing to increased blood flow to inflamed synovial tissue — which in turn fuels pain and swelling.

During a GAE procedure, a physician inserts a tiny catheter through a small nick in the skin, typically at the wrist or groin. Using real-time X-ray imaging, the catheter is guided precisely to the abnormal genicular arteries. Tiny microspheres — smaller than a grain of sand — are then injected to partially block the blood supply to the inflamed tissue. By reducing that abnormal blood flow, GAE decreases inflammation and, with it, pain.

The entire procedure typically takes one to two hours, requires only local anesthesia and mild sedation, and is performed on an outpatient basis. Most patients go home the same day.

Who Is a Good Candidate?

GAE is designed for patients who experience moderate to severe knee pain due to osteoarthritis and have not responded adequately to conservative treatments such as anti-inflammatory



medications, cortisone injections, or physical therapy. Ideal candidates are generally not ready for — or wish to avoid — total knee replacement surgery. Patients with significant joint destruction or other underlying conditions may not be suitable, which is why a thorough consultation with the team at the Vein Center of North Florida is an essential first step.

What to Expect After the Procedure

One of the most appealing aspects of GAE is its recovery profile. Because it is minimally invasive, patients experience significantly less downtime compared to surgical alternatives. Most individuals can resume light activities within a day or two. Clinical studies have shown that many patients begin to notice meaningful pain reduction within weeks of the procedure, with continued improvement over the following months.

Side effects are generally mild and may include temporary soreness or bruising at the catheter insertion site. Serious complications are rare when the procedure is performed by an experienced, board-certified interventional specialist.

Why Choose the Vein Center of North Florida?

At the Vein Center of North Florida, patient-centered care and clinical excellence go hand in hand. Our experienced team of interventional specialists uses the latest imaging technology and evidence-based techniques to deliver safe, effective outcomes. We understand that living with chronic knee pain is more than a physical challenge — it affects your work, relationships, and overall well-being.

If you or a loved one is struggling with knee osteoarthritis pain and seeking alternatives to surgery, Genicular Artery Embolization may be the solution you've been looking for. Contact the Vein Center of North Florida today to schedule a consultation and take the first step toward a more active, pain-free life.



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Patricia D. Hurst, ARNP-BC

In addition to our physician, physician assistants and nurse practitioners, we also have two full-time RVTs (certified vascular techs) to serve you. The Vein Center of North Florida is International Accreditation Commission (IAC) accredited for vascular testing. The IAC develops standards for evaluating quality of care and provides peer review processes. Maintaining IAC accreditation is our way of pursuing the highest level of excellence in patient care.

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INGROWN TOENAILS: CAUSES, SYMPTOMS & EXPERT TREATMENT OPTIONS

By Dr. Andrew Franklin, DPM, Ph.D

An ingrown toenail is one of the most common and painful foot conditions that people of all ages experience. It occurs when the edge of the toenail — most often the big toe — grows into the surrounding skin rather than over it. While it may seem like a minor inconvenience at first, an untreated ingrown toenail can quickly become a serious problem, leading to infection and significant discomfort. At Ocala Podiatry, our experienced foot care specialists are dedicated to providing effective, compassionate treatment to get you back on your feet.

What Causes Ingrown Toenails?

Ingrown toenails can develop for a variety of reasons, and understanding the cause is the first step toward prevention and treatment. One of the most common culprits is improper nail trimming. When toenails are cut too short or at a curved angle instead of straight across, the nail edge can grow into the skin. Tight or ill-fitting footwear is another significant factor. Shoes that crowd the toes — such as narrow dress shoes or tight athletic sneakers — put constant pressure on the nails and surrounding skin, forcing the nail to grow in the wrong direction.

Genetics also play a role. Some individuals are simply born with naturally curved or fan-shaped toenails that are more prone to becoming ingrown. Trauma to the toe, such as stubbing it or dropping something heavy on the foot, can also disrupt normal nail growth. Athletes and individuals who are physically active on their feet are particularly susceptible due to repetitive pressure and minor injuries. Poor foot hygiene or hyperhidrosis — excessive sweating of the feet — can soften the skin around the nail, making it easier for the nail edge to penetrate the tissue.

Recognizing the Symptoms

The symptoms of an ingrown toenail typically begin gradually and worsen over time if left untreated. Early signs include tenderness or pain along the side of the toenail, redness of the surrounding skin, and slight swelling. As the condition progresses, you may notice increased pain when pressure is applied to the toe, such as when walking or wearing shoes. The skin around the nail may begin to harden and feel warm to the touch.

When the nail breaks through the skin, it creates an opening for bacteria to enter, which can lead to infection. Signs of an infected ingrown toenail include



increased swelling, drainage of pus or fluid, a foul odor, and the formation of overgrown tissue or skin folds around the nail edge. If you are diabetic or have circulatory issues, these symptoms demand immediate medical attention, as complications from foot infections can be severe.

When to See a Podiatrist

Many people attempt to treat ingrown toenails at home, but this approach often provides only temporary relief — or makes the problem worse. Home remedies such as digging under the nail edge or cutting a notch in the nail are not recommended, as they can damage the nail bed and increase infection risk. If you notice persistent pain, signs of infection, or if the ingrown toenail keeps returning, it is time to seek professional care.

At Ocala Podiatry, we strongly encourage patients to schedule an appointment at the first signs of an ingrown toenail. Early intervention not only relieves discomfort more quickly but also helps prevent the need for more invasive procedures down the road.

Treatment Options at Ocala Podiatry

Our podiatrists offer a range of treatment options tailored to the severity of your condition. For mild cases, we may gently lift the nail edge and place a small splint or cotton beneath it to guide the nail to grow above the skin. We will also provide guidance on proper nail trimming techniques and appropriate footwear to prevent recurrence.

For moderate to severe cases or recurring ingrown toenails, a minor in-office procedure may be recommended. This involves numbing the toe with a local anesthetic and carefully removing the problematic nail edge. In chronic cases, a small portion of the nail

root may be treated with a chemical solution to prevent that section of the nail from growing back. This quick, minimally invasive procedure has a high success rate and significantly reduces the chance of the ingrown toenail returning.

Prevention Tips

Preventing ingrown toenails is possible with a few simple habits. Always trim your toenails straight across — never curved — and avoid cutting them too short. Choose shoes that have adequate room in the toe box, especially if you are physically active. Keep your feet clean and dry, and inspect them regularly for any early signs of nail problems. If you have diabetes or poor circulation, a routine visit to Ocala Podiatry for nail care is an important part of protecting your foot health.

Contact Ocala Podiatry Today

You do not have to live with the pain of an ingrown toenail. At Ocala Podiatry, our team of skilled foot and ankle specialists is here to help you find lasting relief with personalized, expert care. Whether your condition is mild or severe, we are committed to delivering the highest quality treatment in a comfortable, welcoming environment. Contact us today to schedule your appointment and take the first step toward healthier, pain-free feet.

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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Breaking Through the Pain:

INNOVATIVE SHOCKWAVE THERAPY TRANSFORMS ARTHRITIS TREATMENT

By Gene Turner, MD, FAARFM

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

Understanding the Arthritis Epidemic

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

Shockwave Therapy: A Non-Invasive Revolution

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

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

Targeted Treatment for Multiple Joint Conditions

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

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

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

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

Patient-Centered Benefits

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

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

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

A Timely Focus During Arthritis Awareness Month

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

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

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

About the Author

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

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

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

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CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR HEALTH

Submitted by Hospice of Marion County

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

Health of Caregivers Impacted

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

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

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

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



Resources and Tips Available

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

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

Call Hospice of Marion County for support from these programs:

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

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

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THE NEW LUXURY ESSENTIAL: Sleeping Better Than Ever

By Richard W. Rozensky, DDS, D.ABDSM

In the evolving world of health and wellness, true indulgence is no longer defined by what we add to our days—but by how deeply we rest at night. Sleep, once treated as a biological necessity, has become the ultimate marker of a well-lived life. And at the center of this quiet revolution is an unexpected accessory: the custom dental sleep device.

For many, sleep apnea has long carried a clinical stigma—white labs, blinking monitors, and bulky equipment that feels more hospital-grade than home sanctuary. But today's approach reframes the conversation entirely. Modern dental sleep devices are discreet, elegant, and designed with comfort in mind, aligning seamlessly with a lifestyle that values refinement, restoration, and ease.

Sleep as the Highest Form of Self-Care

Luxury wellness isn't about extremes. It's about optimization—making subtle, intelligent choices that elevate everyday experiences. A dental sleep device does exactly that by working quietly in the background, allowing the body to breathe freely and rest uninterrupted.

Unlike traditional sleep equipment that can dominate a bedroom or disrupt intimacy, these devices are custom-crafted to fit the wearer precisely. There are no hoses, no noise, no visual clutter. Just a small, tailored appliance that supports natural airflow and promotes deeper, more restorative sleep.

The result? Waking up clear-headed, energized, and calm—without feeling like you've "done" anything at all.

A Bespoke Experience for the Modern Sleeper

Customization is the hallmark of luxury, and dental sleep devices are nothing if not bespoke. Each is designed from a simple detailed scan of the patient's bite, ensuring a fit that feels intuitive rather than intrusive.

This personalization transforms the experience from treatment to ritual. Putting the device in at night becomes as effortless as slipping on silk pajamas or dimming the lights. It's a quiet signal to the body: rest is coming.



For those who travel frequently, the appeal is even greater. Lightweight and portable, these devices slip easily into a carry-on—no special adapters, no explanations at airport security, no disruption to routine. Whether at home, in a boutique hotel, or halfway across the globe, restorative sleep travels with you.

The Aesthetic of Effortless Health

There is a growing shift in wellness culture away from performative health and toward understated optimization. The most coveted tools are the ones no one notices—but everyone feels.

Dental sleep devices fit seamlessly into this ethos. There's no outward sign, no nighttime spectacle. Partners sleep undisturbed. Bedrooms remain serene. The benefits unfold privately: fewer nighttime awakenings, smoother breathing, and mornings that begin without fog or fatigue.

This is wellness that doesn't ask for attention. It simply delivers.

Beyond Sleep: The Ripple Effect

When sleep improves, everything else follows. Mornings feel lighter. Focus sharpens. Workouts become more effective. Even mood and skin often reflect the change.

Rather than addressing symptoms one by one—fatigue, irritability, low energy—supporting sleep addresses the foundation. A dental sleep device becomes not a solution to a problem, but an investment in overall vitality.

In this way, it aligns perfectly with the modern wellness mindset: proactive, refined, and deeply personal.

Redefining What It Means to Treat Yourself

Indulgence has evolved. Today, it's less about excess and more about intention. It's choosing experiences that enhance life quietly but profoundly.

A dental sleep device may not sparkle or announce itself, but its impact is unmistakable. Night after night, it creates space for the body to do what it was designed to do—rest, recover, and renew.

In a world that demands so much of our waking hours, the most luxurious thing we can do may be to sleep—fully, deeply, and effortlessly.

And that kind of rest? That's the ultimate upgrade.

Meet Dr. Rozensky

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

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

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

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Getting Back to Being Your Best:

Foot and Ankle Orthopaedics with Dr. Cedric Tankson at UF Health

By Cedric Tankson, MD - Orthopaedic Surgeon

Whether you are an avid runner training for your next marathon, a passionate gardener who spends weekends tending to flower beds, or a grandparent who loves tossing a football in the backyard, an active lifestyle is one of life's greatest rewards. But when foot and ankle pain enters the picture, even the simplest activities can feel out of reach. At UF Health Orthopaedics, Dr. Cedric Tankson is helping patients throughout Lake County reclaim their mobility and get back to doing what they love.

A Specialist You Can Trust

Dr. Cedric Tankson is a board-certified orthopaedic surgeon who specializes in foot and ankle care. He earned his medical degree from the University of South Florida College of Medicine in Tampa and completed his orthopaedic residency training at Louisiana State University in New Orleans. To further sharpen his expertise, Dr. Tankson pursued a prestigious foot and ankle fellowship at The Institute for Foot and Ankle Reconstruction at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland.

A familiar name in Lake County, Dr. Tankson has been serving the community since 2005 and joined the UF Health Orthopaedics team in January 2020. His deep roots in the area and his commitment to delivering a high standard of care have made him a trusted provider for patients of all ages and activity levels.

"I look forward to helping people whose lives have been interrupted by pain," Dr. Tankson has said. "I want them to get back to the activities they enjoy."

Comprehensive Foot and Ankle Care

Foot and ankle conditions affect millions of people each year. From weekend warriors pushing through a pickup basketball game to retirees navigating uneven terrain on a nature trail, injuries and chronic conditions can strike at any stage of life. Dr. Tankson's clinical expertise covers a wide range of these conditions. His areas of interest include arthritis management, fracture care, joint restoration, sporting injuries, and tendinitis. Whether a patient is dealing with a sudden sports injury, chronic pain from arthritis, or long-term wear and tear on the joints, Dr. Tankson brings the skills and experience needed to develop a personalized treatment plan.



What sets Dr. Tankson apart is his ability to treat the full spectrum of foot and ankle problems, from conservative approaches to complex surgical solutions. As a foot and ankle specialist, he performs reconstructive surgery for patients with more involved conditions, including adult acquired flatfoot and other deformities that can significantly impact quality of life. His published research contributions further reflect his dedication to advancing the field, with studies covering topics such as orthopaedic foot and ankle implant detection, surgical approaches to joint fusion procedures, and pediatric bone infections.

The UF Health Advantage

Being part of the UF Health system means Dr. Tankson's patients benefit from access to world-class resources and a multidisciplinary team of specialists. UF Health Orthopaedics offers surgical joint repairs and replacements, post-operative care, and inpatient rehabilitation services — all conveniently located close to home. This continuum of care ensures that patients receive consistent, coordinated treatment from initial evaluation through recovery.

Dr. Tankson practices at UF Health Medical Group Orthopaedics in Leesburg and at UF Health locations in The Villages, giving patients across Central Florida convenient access to expert care without traveling to a major metropolitan center.

"It's an honor for me to be part of the UF Health team," Dr. Tankson has expressed. "UF Health's reputation speaks for itself."

Take the First Step

Foot and ankle problems do not have to sideline you from the life you want to live. Whether your pain is slowing you down on morning walks, keeping you off the tennis court, or making everyday tasks uncomfortable, specialized care can make a meaningful difference. With Dr. Cedric Tankson and the team at UF Health Orthopaedics, you have a partner dedicated to helping you move forward — pain-free and confident.

To learn more or schedule an appointment, contact UF Health Orthopaedics today.

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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BREAKTHROUGH IN NEUROPATHY TREATMENT: HOW SUMMUS LASER THERAPY OFFERS HOPE FOR NERVE PAIN SUFFERERS

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

Understanding Neuropathy: A Complex Challenge

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

The Summus Laser: A Technological Marvel in Pain Management

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

Key Mechanisms of Summus Laser Therapy

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

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

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

Clinical Evidence and Patient Outcomes

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



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

Treatment Process and Expectations

A typical Summus Laser treatment protocol involves:

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

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

Advantages Over Traditional Neuropathy Treatments

The Summus Laser offers several distinct advantages:

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

Who Can Benefit?

Summus Laser therapy is particularly beneficial for patients with:

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

Future of Neuropathy Treatment

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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



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WHY CHOOSE STEM CELL THERAPY?

By Trevor Ferguson, DC

Of the available Non-Surgical Pain Relief Therapy procedures, stem cell therapy is the best-known and most effective. Stem cells exist throughout your body and help to heal damaged tissue. As you age, your stem cell count becomes depleted, which makes it harder for your body to heal. Fortunately, medical advancements have created a safe procedure in which stem cells can be harvested and then used for better healing. Here's a look at five reasons to choose stem cell therapy.

Avoid Surgical Procedures

Even minor surgeries carry risks. Stem cell therapy, however, is a minimally-invasive treatment in which you'll avoid going under the knife. While there are certainly scenarios where surgery is the best option, if your ailment can be otherwise treated, then it's worth exploring treatments that don't carry the risk of surgical complications.

Avoid Pharmaceuticals

Instead of using prescription drugs to mask your symptoms, you can use stem cell therapy to solve the ailment at its source. This will also allow you to avoid any medication side effects, as well as any risk of addiction.

No Need for Anesthesia

Many folks feel great fear about being put under, or simply don't like the associated drowsiness. With stem cell therapy, anesthesia won't be necessary.

Heals Wounds & Incisions

Medical research has shown how stem cell therapy boosts the growth of new skin tissue and replaces scar tissue with newly-grown tissue.

Sports-Related Injuries

Stem cell therapy has become a strong treatment option for common orthopedic injuries that are suffered by athletes.

Get To Know Dr. Ferguson

Founder of The Stem Cell Pro Clinic

My Path: Arizona, Brazil, and Beyond

After graduating from Mountain View High School in Mesa, I spent two years serving a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Brazil. That experience deepened my purpose—to serve others and lead with compassion.



When I returned home, I married my high school sweetheart, Sheree, and moved to Dallas, Texas, to attend chiropractic school at Parker University. Today, Sheree and I are raising four amazing boys here in Arizona—and I'm still passionate about helping people feel better, move better, and live better.

Hi, I'm Dr. Trevor Ferguson. My journey into chiropractic and regenerative medicine began when I was just 10 years old. I told my parents I wanted to become a chiropractor—something most kids probably don't say.

What inspired me? Watching my dad's best friend, a local chiropractor, help people of all ages overcome pain and live healthier lives. His office felt different from a traditional medical practice. There was energy, hope, and healing. Even patients in pain walked out smiling. I knew then: I wanted to help people heal, naturally.

The Turning Point That Changed Everything

After years of practicing chiropractic care, I began noticing that some patients needed more than traditional treatments to truly recover.

Then came a personal turning point: my dad—an active, athletic man—was facing double knee replacement surgery. I asked him to give me three months to try something different: stem cell therapy.

He agreed.

And after just one treatment, his pain disappeared—and he never needed the surgery.

That single experience opened my eyes to the power of regenerative medicine. I had seen good results in the past—but never anything that fast or effective.

Why I Chose Stem Cells Over Everything Else

After seeing what stem cells did for my father, I began offering regenerative medicine to my patients. The results were consistent—and remarkable.

Patients who had tried every other option were finally experiencing real relief. Often, a single stem cell treatment worked better than a year of supplements, labs, and dietary programs.

It was more effective, more affordable, and more convenient.

That's when I made the leap: I phased out functional medicine and built a new practice focused entirely on regenerative care.

But here's what sets us apart:

- **Top-tier cell quality:** We use umbilical cord-derived Wharton's jelly cells from a U.S. biotech lab that holds an FDA Investigational New Drug (IND) license—the gold standard in safety, sterility, and viability
- **Personalized care:** Every patient is unique, and so is their care plan.
- **Real results, not theory:** Our focus is on outcomes, not hype.

Transparent Pricing. Honest Answers. Real Hope.

We don't believe in confusing packages, upsells, or hidden fees. Our pricing is clear and transparent, and we'll never pressure you into care that doesn't feel right.

If you're searching for a safer, science-based way to heal—not just manage symptoms—we're here to guide you.

If you're interested in stem cell therapy, be sure to get in touch with a reputable specialist. For stem cell therapy in The Villages, FL, contact the experts at Stem Cell Pro at 352-689-9540.



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YOUR GUIDE TO STAYING FLU-FREE AND 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.

At Quick Care Med, they understand that illness and injuries can happen outside of the normal 9 to 5. That's why they provide Fast, Easy, and Affordable® urgent care with the convenience of extended hours, including weekends and holidays!

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(Just past Walgreens)

6341 N US 441, Ocala, FL 34475
(Across from John Deer)

2205 N Young Blvd, Chiefland, FL 32626

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BEYOND NUTRITION:

UNLOCKING HEALTH THROUGH YOUR BODY'S FILTRATION SYSTEM

Your Body's Nutritional Aquarium

Ever hear "You are what you eat"? While we often focus on consuming whole foods and avoiding processed options, there's more to optimal health than just eating right. When wellness plateaus occur, the issue may lie not in what you're consuming, but in how your body removes cellular waste.

The lymphatic system—your body's fluid-based waste management network—deserves more attention in health discussions. This system's primary function is eliminating waste to make room for new nutrients. As the Osteopathic principle states: "drainage proceeds supply." For tissue cells to properly absorb nutrients and oxygenated blood, the lymphatic system must first remove cellular waste, toxins, and excess fluid.

Dr. Perry Nickelston offers an illuminating analogy, comparing our bodies to aquariums. You can have the healthiest fish, premium food, and pristine coral, but without proper filtration, the entire ecosystem becomes toxic. Similarly, your lymphatic system serves as your body's filtration system—ensuring circulation remains clean and effective.

Within this system, lymph nodes act like tiny toilets flushing waste. Without proper flushing, cells essentially live in their own waste. This often manifests as persistent skin conditions, unexplainable brain fog, localized swelling, bloating, morning stiffness, chronic pain, stubborn body fat, and autoimmune issues.

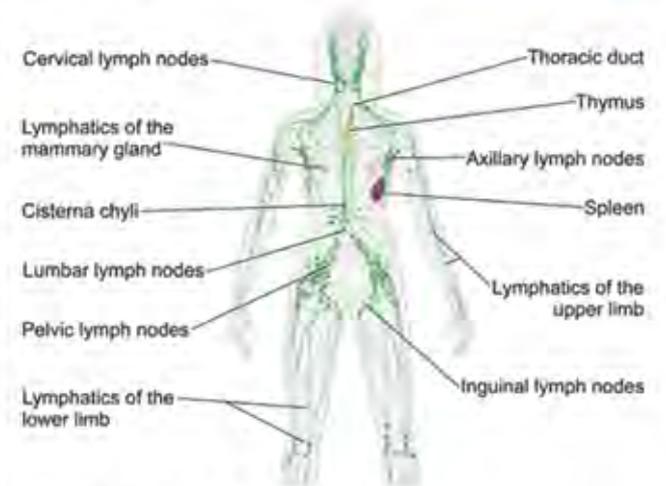
Poor posture significantly impacts lymphatic function. As Jack Ryan, Neuromuscular and Lymphatic Drainage Therapist explains, "If our posture is poor, it can interfere with the flow of lymph through vessels and nodes just like a kink in a garden hose."

Postural issues aren't simply about laziness—they can result from weight changes, footwear choices, stress, injuries, or even emotional states. When you slouch, fluid cannot flow properly through compressed tissues.

Pilates offers simple movements to improve lymphatic flow:

- **Proper Breathing:** Practice three-dimensional diaphragmatic breathing—expanding your ribcage in all directions like a balloon, then exhaling while softening your neck, shoulders, and ribcage. This promotes oxygenation and activates deep support muscles.
- **Shoulder Shrugs:** Inhale while lifting shoulders for five counts, hold for five, then lower. This squeezes lymph nodes and promotes fluid movement.
- **Ankle Pumps:** In a split stance with hands on a wall, lift and lower your back heel rhythmically while maintaining proper alignment.
- **Light Rebounding:** Breathe diaphragmatically while gently bouncing by lifting and lowering heels quickly for 30-second intervals.
- **Rolling Like a Ball:** Sitting with knees pulled toward your chest, roll back to your shoulder blades on inhale, return to sitting on exhale (contraindicated for certain spinal conditions).

An efficient lymphatic system benefits your entire body's "aquarium" and complements any health goal. By addressing your filtration and waste management systems, your internal ecosystem can thrive more easily, maximizing the benefits of your nutritional efforts.



Embracing Whole-Body Wellness

The journey to optimal health extends beyond our plates and into the intricate systems that govern our body's internal environment. By incorporating simple lymphatic-supportive practices into your daily routine, you create a foundation for more effective nutrient absorption and toxin removal. Remember that true wellness emerges from balance—between what we consume and what we eliminate, between movement and rest, between attention to nutrition and attention to our body's cleaning mechanisms. Just as the most beautiful aquariums require both quality inputs and efficient filtration, your body thrives when all systems work in harmony. Make lymphatic health a cornerstone of your wellness practice, and watch how it amplifies every other healthy choice you make.



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Dupuytren's Contracture:

Why Xiaflex Injections Should Be Paired with Occupational Hand Therapy

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

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

Understanding Xiaflex Treatment

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

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

The Critical Role of Hand Therapy

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

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



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

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

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

Evidence Supporting Combined Approach

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

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

Practical Considerations

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

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

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

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

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

Types of Treatment Available with Physical Therapy

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



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Kyphoplasty: A Minimally Invasive Solution for Vertebral Compression Fractures

By Brent Compton, MD

A vertebral compression fracture can be a life-altering event. Whether caused by osteoporosis, trauma, or a related condition, these fractures result in significant pain, reduced mobility, and a diminished quality of life. At the Interventional Pain Institute, Dr. Compton offers kyphoplasty — a state-of-the-art, minimally invasive procedure that can restore vertebral height, stabilize fractured bone, and dramatically reduce pain, often within days of treatment.

What Is a Vertebral Compression Fracture?

The spine is composed of individual bones called vertebrae, which provide structural support for the entire body. A vertebral compression fracture occurs when one or more of these bones collapse or crack, typically in the thoracic (mid-back) or lumbar (lower back) region. Compression fractures are most commonly associated with osteoporosis, a condition that weakens bone density over time and makes bones more susceptible to fracture — sometimes from something as routine as a cough, sneeze, or minor fall.

Symptoms often include sudden onset of sharp back pain, limited spinal flexibility, loss of height over time, and a stooped posture. In severe cases, multiple fractures can compress the spinal cord or nerves, leading to radiating pain, numbness, or weakness. Left untreated, vertebral compression fractures can worsen progressively and lead to chronic disability.

What Is Kyphoplasty?

Kyphoplasty is a minimally invasive surgical procedure designed to treat painful vertebral compression fractures. Unlike traditional open spine surgery, kyphoplasty is performed through small incisions using specialized instruments and real-time imaging guidance, making it safer and allowing for a much faster recovery.

During kyphoplasty, Dr. Compton inserts a hollow needle into the fractured vertebra using fluoroscopic (X-ray) guidance. A small device is then carefully inserted inside the vertebra. This device creates a cavity within the collapsed bone allowing a pathway for bone cement to flow which critically helps stabilize the vertebral fracture thus alleviating pain and risk for future fracture at that level. The bone cement (polymethylmethacrylate or PMMA), which hardens rapidly and stabilizes the fracture. The entire procedure typically takes less than an hour per vertebral level treated.



Benefits of Kyphoplasty

Kyphoplasty offers a range of benefits that make it an attractive option for appropriate candidates. Pain relief is often immediate and significant — many patients report a dramatic reduction in back pain within 24 to 48 hours of the procedure. By restoring the height of the collapsed vertebra, kyphoplasty can also correct spinal deformity, improve posture, and reduce the hunched appearance (kyphosis) that frequently results from untreated compression fractures.

The minimally invasive nature of the procedure means patients typically spend less time in the hospital — often going home the same day or the following morning. Recovery is considerably shorter than traditional surgery, and most patients are able to return to their daily activities within a few days. Improved mobility and reduced pain also allow patients to participate more fully in physical therapy and rehabilitation, which is essential for long-term spinal health.

Who Is a Candidate for Kyphoplasty?

Kyphoplasty is most effective when performed on relatively recent fractures — ideally within several weeks to a few months of the injury. Ideal candidates are patients who have not experienced adequate relief from conservative treatments such as bed rest, pain medications, or bracing. Dr. Compton conducts a thorough evaluation, which may include imaging studies such as MRI, CT scan, or X-rays, to determine the age and severity of the fracture and whether kyphoplasty is the most appropriate intervention.

Patients with osteoporosis-related fractures, cancer-related vertebral fractures, or trauma-induced compression fractures may all be candidates. However, kyphoplasty is not suitable for everyone. Dr. Compton will carefully review each patient's medical history, overall health status, and imaging results to ensure the procedure is both safe and likely to be effective.

Your Care at the Interventional Pain Institute

At the Interventional Pain Institute, Dr. Compton is committed to providing personalized, compassionate care using the most advanced pain management techniques available. From your initial consultation through your recovery, our team will work closely with you to develop a comprehensive treatment plan tailored to your specific needs and goals. We believe that effective pain management is about restoring quality of life — and kyphoplasty is one of the most powerful tools available to achieve that for patients suffering from vertebral compression fractures.

If you or a loved one is experiencing back pain that may be related to a spinal compression fracture, we encourage you to schedule a consultation with Dr. Compton today. Early intervention leads to better outcomes, and you don't have to live in pain.

Contact the Interventional Pain Institute to schedule your appointment and take the first step toward lasting relief.

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

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DARING GREATLY

By Pastor Timothy Neptune

Life with God is a grand adventure. Along the way we may encounter unforgettable moments of joy or unthinkable times of disappointment. Either way, the journey requires faith, trust, and the courage to keep moving forward.

Faith rarely blooms in the safety of the familiar. Comfort zones feel secure, but they often keep us stagnant. Playing it safe—hiding our talents, avoiding risks, or clinging to the known—may feel good in the short term but it won't really grow our faith. Think of it like investing: nothing ventured yields nothing gained. When we step out, we exercise a muscle of trust that builds inner strength and confidence.

A life without faith requires no trust, and without trust, we miss the rewards that come from exploring something new.

Consider the stories of those who have dared greatly. I think of the disciples of Jesus—just ordinary people—fishermen most of them—who encountered a call that pulled them from the routine into something truly extraordinary. They left behind security for uncertainty, and in doing so, witnessed wonders!

Their lives were forever changed because they said yes to the unknown. Think of it, they walked with Jesus, witnessed miracles, and became part of the greatest story ever told. Life was not always easy, in fact most of them were martyred. But here we are, two-thousand years later, talking about their faith and courage.

For this young group of early Christians, the excitement wasn't just in the highs; it was in the deepening trust that carried them through lows.

When we lean into challenges rather than retreat, our faith grows and we discover a resilience we never knew we had.



One of my favorite quotes is from a speech given by President Theodore Roosevelt in the early 1900's. It is known as "The Man in the Arena," and it challenges the listener to step out of the grandstands and onto the playing field. Yes, you may get muddy—or even bloody—but you will not be like the poor timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Life is too short to always play it safe. Sometimes you just need to step out in faith and try something new—or even scary. When was the last time you took a leap of faith? The next time someone invites you to go somewhere new, have the courage to say, "Sure, why not!" The greatest joy of your life might be right around the corner, but you'll never know if you don't take that first step.

Those who step forward often look back in awe at how far they've come. Challenges refine us. They make us better. They push us to deeper levels of trust and commitment. Pain is not always bad... it is often a sign that we've been stretched.

So, my encouragement is to embrace a life of adventure. Take some risks. Try something new. Push yourself a little further today than you did yesterday. Don't quit, give up, or throw in the towel! The most exciting chapter in your story may be around the next bend.



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