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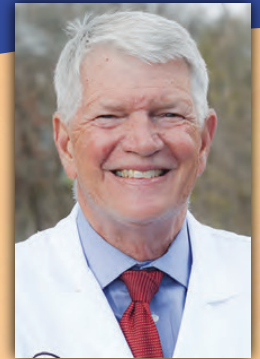
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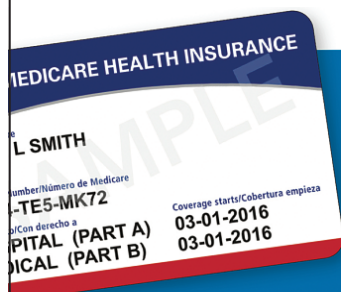
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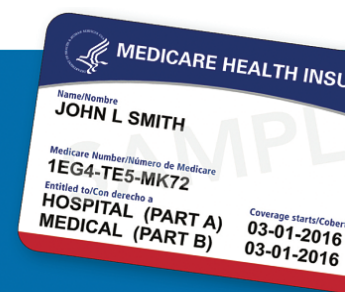
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Better hearing leads to a better life!

BY TAMMY CHILDRESS

ABINGDON, VA- Taking an American Sign Language Class as a foreign language in high school was the spark that ignited a passion in Doctor of Audiology Lauren Esposito, Au.D. CCC-A, and owner of Abingdon Falls Plaza Hearing Center, to work with the deaf and hearing-impaired community.

"I initially wanted a career working as a teacher at a school for the deaf," Esposito said from behind her desk at Falls Plaza Hearing Center, "But when I took an introductory audiology course as an under-grad, I knew that I wanted to work in hearing health care."

She went on to say that being able to hear conversations is linked to mental and emotional health and those with hearing loss can lose their ability to communicate clearly, which can lead to people isolating themselves and feeling lonely.

"Communication is such a large part of relationship building," she said. "And when the ability to hear is waning people lose that vital part of staying connected to their families and friends. Having the ability to see people communicate again and no longer isolate themselves is a large part of why I wanted to become an audiologist."

Esposito also said there is a very strong connection between hearing loss, memory loss and dementia.

According to the National Institute on Deafness

and Other Communication Disorders [NIDCD] approximately 37.5 million adults in the United State report some degree of hearing loss.

And according to research by Johns Hopkins and the National Institute on Aging, seniors with untreated hearing loss are more likely to experience dementia.

"It depends on the amount of hearing loss someone has," Esposito said. "People don't always know that they are experiencing hearing loss, so it's important for most people to have initial test so we have a baseline to start with. If we catch the hearing loss early enough there is a possibility that the use of hearing aids can help with memory retention, which in turn can slow the progression of dementia."

She also said not everyone who has a slight hearing loss needs a hearing aid. But if hearing health is monitored then hearing loss can be detected early. "Early detection is key," she said. "And there are so many types of hearing aids with different functions if hearing loss is detected early on it gives us a better idea of what type of hearing aids will work for the patient."

According to Esposito not all hearing aids are created equal.

"Most hearing aides now come with the ability to connect with Bluetooth and to different smartphones and the patient can choose whether to use the technology or not," she said. "And whether a patient uses or not doesn't affect the quality of the hearing aids. It simply gives the patient more choices."

She added that some patients choose to not use the technology because they simply don't

like smartphones, while others like the idea of being able to stream their phone calls directly into their hearing aids.

"You can stream music, YouTube, and FaceTime directly into your ears if you choose to use the technology," Esposito said. "And for many of our patients that's a huge plus."

An initial hearing evaluation can take up to two hours if done properly, according to Esposito.

"We actually use hearing inserts when performing a hearing exam," she said. "They give a more accurate test result than exams using earphones because they sit in the ear canal. We also review the results of the hearing test with the patient before they leave. It's important for them to understand the health of their hearing and we don't want them to leave the office without that information."

She also recommended that those who think they might have hearing loss bring someone with them for the initial exam.

"It usually helps the patient to have someone with them," she said. "That way the other person can take notes and ask questions."

Abingdon Falls Plaza Hearing Center accepts most insurance.

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Simple strategies to combat stress

Just about everyone experiences stressful situations. Sometimes a measure of stress can provide motivation to do one's best or strive for an especially lofty goal. However, when stress becomes a chronic condition, it can adversely affect individuals' quality of life and even their overall health.

Harvard Medical School says stress can manifest itself in myriad ways. Stress can cause tension headaches, indigestion, aches and pains, or even heart palpitations, and it may affect the mind by making it hard to concentrate or make decisions. Many people experience stress through emotional or psychological symptoms, such as irritability or feeling down. Learning how to effectively manage stress is essential for individuals' overall well-being.

Exercise regularly

Exercise serves many functions, including acting as a

potent stress relief strategy. The Cleveland Clinic says aerobic exercise releases endorphins, which are natural substances that help a person feel better and maintain a positive attitude. Movement activities like yoga or Tai Chi also can relax the mind and body and promote physical health.

Take media breaks

Overwhelming oneself with a barrage of negative news stories or constant information can increase stress levels. Individuals can strive to remain informed and still build breaks into their schedules. Shut off news programs, turn over the newspaper or tune out of social media from time to time. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that individuals who are stressed out by world events reduce the number of times they read the news or check the headlines each day.

Meditate or perform breathing exercises

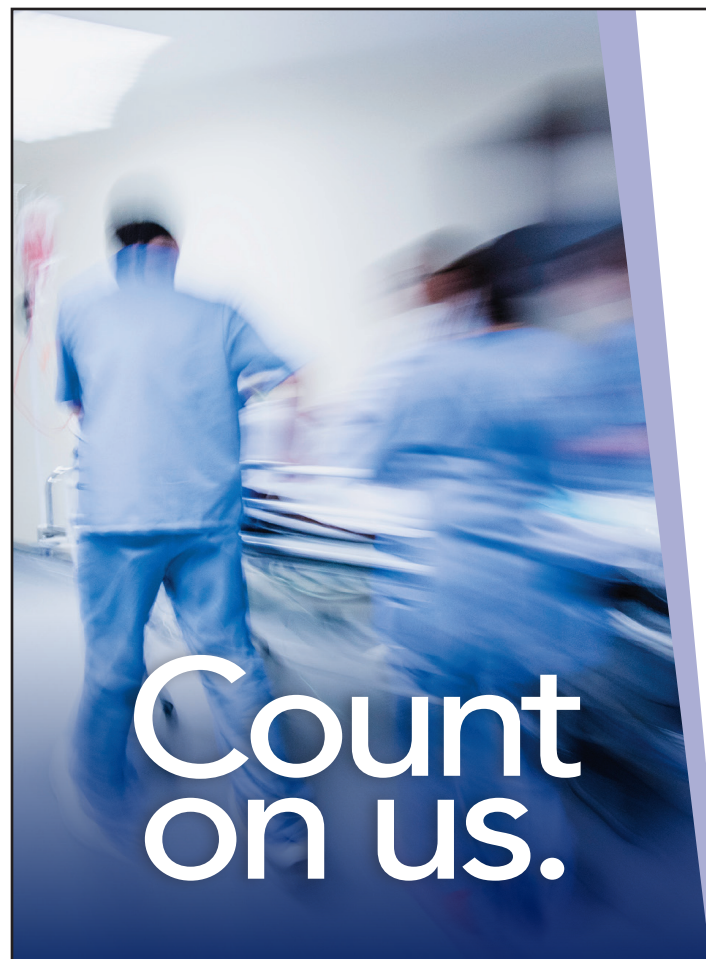
Breathing and meditation can help alleviate stress, according to the American Heart Association. A quick meditation can provide some perspective. If a situation is stressful, go for a walk or take a few slow, deep breaths until the body relaxes. Harvard Medical School also says meditation can induce a relaxation response, which is an antidote to stress.

Change negatives to positives

Negative self-talk may increase stress, but positive

self-talk can help a person calm down. Individuals should practice positive self-talk every day. Instead of saying, "I hate when this happens," say, "I know how to deal with this, I've done it before."

A small amount of periodic stress can be a good thing. However, chronic stress poses a significant threat to individuals' long-term health. ♦



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Personalized Guidance Through Medicare's Myriad Plans and Options

Every day, an estimated 10,000 men and women turn 65 in the United States, adding to the 56 million baby boomers and members of the Silent Generation already on Medicare or who are Medicare-eligible.

It's no wonder then that the number of robocalls for Medicare options have soared in recent months.

The good news is there is plenty of information and guidance to help you evaluate the plans and options offered before and during Medicare enrollment periods. But not so fast!

A 2021 study of the digital search behavior of seniors found that while men and women 65 or older have no problem shopping online, including shopping for other forms of insurance, they're not comfortable shopping online for Medicare plans or other health-related programs and services. The issue? Trust.

"That's been a real opportunity for us to bring people back home and shop for the plans with professionals who know the market and the features and benefits that are most important to them," said Dirk Crandell, managing partner of Insurance Solutions Group, a personal and trusted resource for Medicare beneficiaries living in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee.

"When you turn 65, you have some critical decisions to make regarding eligibility," he said. "In some instances, you have a window of time when preexisting medical conditions can be waived. But once you surpass that time frame, you lose that privilege."

More demand for more personalized attention. Speaking with a Medicare representative might sound more reassuring, but Crandell pointed out their limitations, too.

"With Medicare, typically what happens is that they're knowledgeable. However, they are reactive, not proactive," Crandell said. "They will answer your



questions, but unless you know the right questions to ask, you won't get answers to what you want."

Take, for example, asking about the window of time when, during the initial enrollment period, seniors can acquire a Medicare supplement with no medical underwriting.

"If you get on the outside of that initial enrollment period, insurance companies are allowed to underwrite you and either accept or deny your application," said Crandell. The reasons for denial may not be obvious, but applicants with myriad chronic health conditions often appear too risky for insurers to take on as clients.

Turn to the experts

Making major decisions about medical insurance is not an easy feat. The professionals at Insurance Solutions Group are ready to assist you and can walk you through the process step-by-step to ensure that you feel confident in your choices and have a positive, stress-free Medicare experience.

"We're local, we're personalized and we're readily available to serve you," he said.

For more information, visit inssolutionsgrp.com or call Dirk Crandell at 276.444.4471 or call Jim Tench at 276.447.8241.



The rise of telehealth services

Getting sick once meant traveling to a physician's office only to sit in a waiting room with fellow under-the-weather individuals. Few if any people like leaving home when they're feeling ill, and thanks to technology, many no longer need to do so.

Telehealth services, which the Massachusetts Medical Society defines as the delivery and facilitation of health and health-related services including medical care, provider and patient education, health information services, and self-care via telecommunications and digital communication technologies, are revolutionizing the healthcare industry. In many instances, patients need not leave the comfort of their beds or sofas to be diagnosed and treated. The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology says telehealth, which is a broader scope of remote healthcare services than telemedicine, can utilize everything from videoconferencing, the internet, store-and-forward imaging, streaming media, and terrestrial and wireless phone communications.

Many providers and insurance companies

now offer some method of telehealth services. Consider some of these statistics.

- ▶ The American Telemedicine Association says more than one-half of all hospitals in the United States have a telehealth program.
- ▶ Forty-eight states require payers to cover telehealth, says the Center for Connected Health Policy.
- ▶ BBC Research indicates that telehealth makes up roughly one-quarter of the healthcare-related technology market.
- ▶ The American Medical Association says nearly 75 percent of all doctor, urgent care and emergency room visits could be handled safely and effectively over the phone or via video.
- ▶ Beckers Hospital Review says 82 percent of millennial patients surveyed would rather have a telemedicine visit than an in-person consultation.
- ▶ Around seven million people use telehealth services across the globe, according to eVisit.

Telehealth can connect rural providers and their patients to services at other

sites and promote patient-centered health care. With a shortage of some medical specialties in rural areas, telehealth can play an important role in ensuring all patients get access to care they need. But the benefits do not only extend to rural patients. Individuals who are elderly and/or those who have mobility issues and cannot travel easily can benefit from telehealth services. Furthermore, any patient with a rare condition may no longer have to travel long distances to consult with specialists in that field.

Telehealth applications and programs on smartphones, tablets or laptops can make it easy for people to monitor their health. These apps can enable patients to do things like track health measurements, share information with clinicians, manage chronic illnesses, and set medication or appointment reminders. Patients also can communicate with providers to get health information through patient portals or to refill prescriptions effortlessly.

Telehealth is changing the face of medicine and utilizing technology in unique ways. ♦



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Amazing benefits to seniors having pets

Pets bring much joy to the lives they touch. So it should come as no surprise that the 2019-2020 National Pet Owners Survey, which was conducted by the American Pet Products Association, found that about 85 million families in the United States own a pet. In Canada, 7.5 million households

are home to companion animals, states the PetBacker blog.

Pets offer companionship and unconditional love. While they are fitting for any family, seniors may find that having a pet is especially beneficial. The organization A Place for Mom,

which helps match families with senior living residences, says pets provide a comfort system that produces measurable health results. Caring for pets and being around them can produce a chemical chain reaction in the brain that may help to lower stress hormones while also increasing production

of the feel-good hormone serotonin.

This is not the only health benefit pets may provide. A recent study from the Mayo Clinic, which looked at 1,800 people between the ages of 25 and 64 who had healthy hearts, found that almost half owned a

dog. Having a dog was likely to spur heart-healthy behaviors, like exercising with the pet, eating well and having ideal blood sugar levels.

Pets also provide emotional support and companionship that can help seniors — including those who may be divorced or widowed — feel more secure and happy. The National Poll on Healthy Aging found that, among respondents who had pets, 88 percent said their pets helped them enjoy life, and 86 percent said their pets made them feel loved.

Seniors considering getting a pet can explore the many benefits to doing so.

► **Reduce pain:** A 2012 study published in *Pain Magazine* found therapy dogs provided “significant reduction in pain and emotional distress for chronic pain patients.”

► **Feeling of purpose:** Caring for an animal not only stimulates physical activity, but it also can give seniors a reason to get up and go, which equates to a feeling of purpose.

► **Altered focus:** Having a pet can help seniors focus on something other than physical or mental health issues and preoccupations about loss or aging, according to New York-based psychologist Penny B. Donnenfeld.

► **Increased physical activity:** Pets require care, and that interaction can get seniors moving more than if they didn’t have a



pet.

► **Improved health:** Ongoing research from Harvard Medical School has found dog owners have lower blood pressure, healthier cholesterol levels and lower risk of heart disease than those who don’t own a dog.

► **Stick to routine:** Caring for pets helps seniors maintain a routine. Having structure after retirement can be important to ward off risk of depression. Staying on top of feeding, grooming and other pet needs also can help prevent cognitive decline.

Pets bring many benefits to their owners’ lives, and they may be the perfect remedy for seniors looking for a friend and purpose. ♦



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The many ways walking benefits your body



Life changed dramatically in 2020. When the World Health Organization declared a COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, hundreds of millions of people across the globe were forced to change how they go about their daily lives, including how they exercise.

Health-conscious adults accustomed to exercising at local gyms had to find new ways to exercise in the wake of the pandemic. Many gyms were forced to close in areas hit hard by COVID-19, and that left many people without access to fitness equipment like weights and cardiovascular machines. Resilient men and women soon found ways to exercise, and many of them embraced walking.

Though walking might not provide the same level of intensity that fitness enthusiasts are accustomed to, the Arthritis Foundation® notes the various ways walking benefits the body.

► Walking protects against heart disease and stroke. Walking strengthens the heart and protects it against heart disease. The AF also notes that walking lowers blood pressure. In fact, post-menopausal women

who walk just one to two miles per day can lower their blood pressure by nearly 11 points in 24 weeks, while women who walk for 30 minutes a day can reduce their risk of stroke by 20 percent.



► Walking strengthens the bones. New York-based Plancher Orthopedics and Sports Medicine notes that walking can stop the loss of bone mass for people with osteoporosis. In addition, post-menopausal women who incorporate 30 minutes of walking into their daily fitness

regimens can reduce their risk of hip fractures by 40 percent.

► Walking can extend your life. The AF notes that one study linked walking to longer life expectancy, finding that people who exercise regularly in their fifties and sixties were 35 percent less likely to die over the next eight years than people who never walked.

► Walking can improve mood. One study from researchers at California State University, Long Beach, found that the more steps people taking during the day, the better their moods were.

► Walking can lower risk for cognitive decline. Walking also has been linked to a lower risk for age-related cognitive decline. A study from the University of Virginia Health System found that men between the ages of 71 and 93 who walked more than a quarter of a mile per day had half the incidence of dementia and Alzheimer's disease compared to men who walked

less. In addition, a study from researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, found that age-related memory decline was lower among women ages 65 and older who walked 2.5 miles per day than it was among women who walked less than half a mile per week.

Foot traffic increased as people were forced to find new ways to exercise during the COVID-19 pandemic. Walking is a great way to stay in shape and even provides some lesser known benefits for people who walk each day. ♦



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5 ways to ensure a greater work & family balance

Individuals have to juggle many different responsibilities on a daily basis. Those with full- or part-time jobs, children, spouses or partners, or aging family members that require assistance, will often find they are pulled in different directions. In many cases, work takes priority over family time because people rely on their jobs for the income that funds their lifestyles. Rather than jeopardizing that income, certain individuals will make time concessions that favor employment over personal relationships and family time.

Recent data indicates that many people are trapped in unhealthy work-life balances and can't find the time to unwind and enjoy themselves. The e-commerce company Groupon asked 2,000 Americans about stress at work

and 60 percent indicated that pressures and responsibilities of the workplace and home life do not have boundaries. Learning to balance work and life better may come from following these tips.

1. Find more time. While there's no way to add extra hours to the day, you can add extra hours to your schedule. One way to do so is to wake up earlier or stay up later than the household. Some people prefer the quiet time to get things done while others are asleep. If you can afford to shave an hour from your sleeping schedule (provided you already are getting enough), this approach can make a significant difference.

2. Limit distractions as much as possible. Distractions pull attention away from tasks and that can make it harder to complete jobs on time.

Schedule tasks that require your utmost concentration when others are not around. Perhaps this means coming into the office during off-peak hours or waiting until a spouse or the kids go to their respective places of work or school before you start on things that require greater concentration.

3. Figure out your home priorities. Schedule your home priorities just as you would work meetings and other responsibilities. While you may not be able to attend every sports practice or game, make it a point to get to as many events as possible. Put it in the calendar or planner as a must-do.

4. Maximize your PTO. Chances are you are entitled to a certain number of days off. Do not squander the opportunity to use these days. It will not make you a hero if

you give up on time off. Map out priorities for the next couple of months and see where your time away from work will be needed. Then utilize PTO for these events as well as vacations.

5. End work at a certain time. There is a saying that "work expands to fill the time allotted." It's easy to let work infiltrate home time especially for those who are remote workers. Set a distinct end time for the job and reinforce it by turning off your computer or other devices, or physically lock the door to your office. Schedule tasks directly after work that are important to you, so you won't be tempted to continue working.

Finding work-life balance can take time and require breaking established habits, but it is one way to reduce stress and feel more personally satisfied. ♦



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Strength training for seniors



A balanced diet and exercise, which includes a combination of aerobic activities and strength training, is necessary to maintain long-term health.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regular physical activity is one of the most important things older adults can do to protect their overall health. Exercise helps to delay or prevent many of the conditions that come with age. Adults ages 65 and older should aim for the recommended 150 minutes a week of moderate-intensity activity, such as brisk walking, and at least two days of activities that strengthen muscles.

When it comes to muscle strengthening, seniors can follow these safety guidelines as they embark on their strength-training journeys.

- **Speak with a healthcare provider first.** Get the green light to proceed with an exercise regimen before beginning by having a discussion with your general practitioner about your fitness goals. Your doctor can recommend strategies that are safe and point out any exercises that may compromise your overall health.

- **Master basic exercises first.** Anyone new to strength training, which is sometimes known as resistance training, can start out slowly, even using just body

weight, to provide resistance. Resistance exercises can include squats, crunches, modified pushups, planks, and lunges.

- **Graduate to resistance bands.** When you're ready to move on to something else, consider resistance bands as an alternative to free weights. The bands can help you develop good form before introducing weight. Good form is key to avoiding injury.

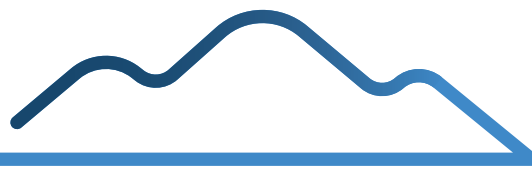
- **Work with a trainer.** Working with a certified personal trainer can help you learn how to use free weights and strength-training machines correctly. A trainer also can create a routine that includes the right number of sets and repetitions to gradually build and maintain muscle mass. If you decide against hiring a trainer, gym staff

members may guide you through equipment and demonstrate proper form.

- **Exercise with a friend.** Strength training with a friend or family member can provide motivation and keep you on target to meet your goals.

- **Build up gradually.** Your first strength session should only last 10 to 15 minutes, according to Tiffany Chag, C.S.C.S., a strength coach at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York. This enables you to gauge soreness. Wait until soreness abates before beginning your next session if you are new to strength training.

Strength exercises are a vital part of maintaining health as a senior. Such exercises help maintain muscle mass and also improve balance and bone health. ♦



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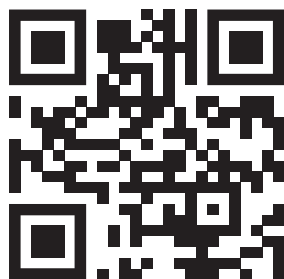
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Signs kids could be hard of hearing

Hearing loss is often associated with aging, and understandably so. Individuals from all walks of life undoubtedly have an aging friend or relative who has experienced some degree of hearing loss, and millions of seniors across the globe would admit to having some difficulty with their hearing. But hearing loss also can affect children and, if undiagnosed, it can have an adverse affect on nearly all aspects of their lives.

The World Health Organization estimates that, as of 2021, approximately 34 million children present with hearing loss that requires rehabilitation. Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that hearing loss in children can be present at birth or develop later in childhood. Hearing loss that develops later in childhood is known as acquired hearing loss, and parents can look for various signs that kids could be losing their hearing. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association notes that the signs of hearing loss in children may include:

- ▶ Delayed speech and/or language development
- ▶ Speech sound disorder: The ASHA

notes that speech sound disorders include any difficulty or combination of difficulties with perception, motor production, or phonological representation of speech sounds and speech segments

- ▶ Difficulty in following or understanding instructions
- ▶ Frequent requests for repetition
- ▶ Use of increased volume on devices, including televisions, personal music players and tablets
- ▶ Difficulty effectively expressing themselves: Children can exhibit difficulty expressing themselves verbally and/or via written language
- ▶ Frustration with communication breakdowns
- ▶ Feeling of exhaustion at the end of a school day
- ▶ Difficulties at school: Children with hearing loss may experience academic, behavioral, or social difficulties in the classroom and on campus

What causes acquired hearing loss in children?

The causes of hearing loss in children can be as simple as cerumen (ear wax) or as complex as damage to middle or inner structures after suffering trauma to the head. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta notes that over-the-counter ear wax removal drops can effectively clean ears and restore kids' hearing, though such drops may need to be part of routine preventive health care measures. Ear infections, encephalitis, excessive noise exposure, meningitis, the presence of a foreign body in the ear, and viral infections like measles or mumps also can contribute to hearing loss in kids. Physicians can direct treatment of hearing loss based on the cause of kids' hearing loss, but it's worth noting that some hearing loss may require long-term use of hearing aids, surgery or medication.

Though often seen as a byproduct of aging, hearing loss affects millions of children as well. More information about children and hearing loss can be found at asha.org. ♦

Treating Hearing Loss Through Dedication

Bluestone Hearing & Tinnitus Care opened its doors in June of this year. Owner and Doctor of Audiology, Jennifer Lowe, started Bluestone with a vision to serve residents of Southwest Virginia and East Tennessee. In speaking to residents in Southwest Virginia, Dr. Lowe, a native herself, discovered that a void existed between the cost of hearing aids and optimal hearing

coverage for hearing aids, including Medicare Advantage plans. At Bluestone Hearing Care we take all third-party plans for hearing aids. We want people to be able to use their insurance benefits without having to travel long distances.”

“In the past 7 years compelling research has strongly correlated untreated hearing loss with memory loss



healthcare. “In many cases proper follow-up care is non-existent in hearing healthcare in Southwest Virginia as well as industry standard best practices for hearing aid prescriptive methods. Our goal is to provide optimal hearing healthcare at an affordable rate. We want to raise the bar for hearing healthcare in Southwest Virginia.”

She indicated that cost can play a significant factor in why persons with hearing loss choose not to treat their hearing loss.

“I want to give people options to treat their hearing loss. I find that most patients are unaware of insurance

and dementia. Treating hearing loss is no longer an option, it’s a neurological exigency.”

Bluestone Hearing & Tinnitus Care also brings new services to the area including treatment options for tinnitus or “ringing in the ears.” The American Tinnitus Association estimates that nearly 15% of people, or more than 50 million Americans, experience tinnitus. Dr. Lowe brings forth tinnitus assessment/management options to our region. Additionally, Bluestone provides real ear measures for prescription accuracy, and candidacy/programming for cochlear implants and bone-anchored hearing aids.

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The health benefits of hobbies

Maintaining physical and mental health often requires a multi-faceted approach. Eating well, exercising and reducing stress are part of a healthy regimen, but those are not the only components of a healthy lifestyle.

Hobbies can have a positive effect on overall health. Hobbies can seem like ways to simply pass the time or alleviate boredom. But a deeper exploration could shed light on just how healthy hobbies can be. In fact, it is essential to carve out time for hobbies because they can be so beneficial.

According to a study published in *Aging Clinical and Experimental Research*, participation in leisure activities positively influences self-perceived well-being and depressive symptoms. “The blue zone” refers to the areas of the world that have the longest-living people on the planet, which include Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; and Ikaria, Greece, among others. Participation in activities that bring out a creative side leads to an increased sense of well-being that is good for long-term health. They also can reduce cortisol levels. Cortisol is known as the stress hormone,

and it can negatively affect energy, mood and sleep.

While most leisure activities regularly engaged in can have positive effects on health, those that focus on a combination of physical and mental stimulation are most beneficial. Women looking to change their daily routines may want to focus on these health-boosting hobbies.

► **Dancing:** Laugh, sweat and learn some footwork in a dance class. It can make exercise fun for those who find traditional exercise does not keep their attention.

► **Kayaking:** There's something serene about being on the water away from the hustle of life on land. Kayaking strengthens the body, but the calm of taking in the water and scenery nourishes the mind. Experts agree that outdoor hobbies add another benefit since sunlight helps the body release neuroreceptors that trigger more positive thoughts.

► **Gardening:** Gardening is physical, requires planning, involves spending time outdoors, and yields tangible results through thriving plants. These are all factors that promote good health.

► **Fostering animals:** Fostering animals offers them an opportunity to spend time in domestic settings before being adopted by permanent owners. For the foster person, having a dog involves going out on walks and play sessions in the backyard. A sense of purpose comes from helping out needy animals, and this hobby also taps into physical



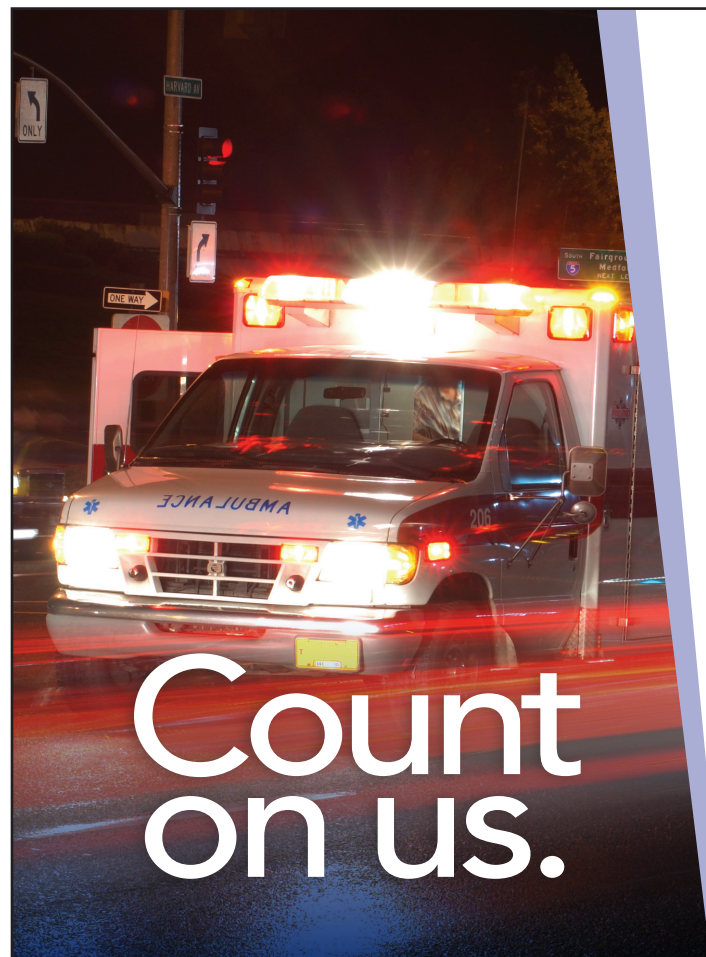
wellness.

► **Volunteering:** Being a presence in your community can foster social engagement

and boost emotional health. It also can keep you physically active.

Various hobbies can be

good for the mind and body, which makes it worth anyone's effort to make more time for recreation and leisure. ♦



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7 warning signs for diabetes



Diabetes is a chronic metabolic disease characterized by elevated levels of blood glucose. Diabetes can cause serious damage to the eyes, kidneys, nerves, heart, and blood vessels over time. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body becomes resistant to insulin or doesn't make enough insulin. The World Health Organization says about 422 million people worldwide have diabetes, and 1.5 million deaths are directly attributed to diabetes each year.

Catching diabetes at its earliest can help individuals avoid long-term damage to the body and improve their overall health. This means recognizing signs that suggest the presence of diabetes and its precursor, prediabetes.

According to OSF Healthcare, an integrated health care network serving individuals across Illinois and Michigan, the following are seven potential warning signs of diabetes.

1. Frequent urination: This is one of the key indicators of diabetes. When diabetes is present, the kidneys work harder to rid the body of excess sugar, producing more urine.



2. Dry mouth and excessive thirst: This goes in conjunction with frequent urination, as the body is trying to increase fluid to alleviate excess sugar.

3. Dry skin: Dry skin, especially around the feet, can be a symptom of diabetes.

4. Slow-healing wounds: A higher blood sugar level can interfere with the body's ability to heal wounds.

5. Blurry vision: Some people notice vision changes that do not seem to be tied to an eye illness or another condition. This may be a result of diabetes.

6. Weight loss: Sudden weight loss without trying to lose weight is often an indication that something isn't quite right. Diabetes could be the culprit.

7. Yeast infections and UTIs: Women may experience more frequent vaginal yeast infections and urinary tract infections if they have diabetes.

If a person is experiencing any of these conditions, he or she should schedule an appointment with a health care provider to determine if diabetes is to blame. ♦

ETSU Health brings expertise, convenience to patient experience

ETSU Health continues to increase access to healthcare across primary and specialty care for our region. Rooted in East Tennessee State University's five health science colleges, ETSU Health's providers teach the brightest minds of tomorrow to become future healthcare professionals. They also serve in 30 clinics that provide a wide variety of primary and specialty care services to the region.

Primary care opportunities are plentiful. ETSU Health Family Medicine clinics are accepting new patients in Bristol, Kingsport and Johnson City. Pediatrics clinics in Johnson City and Elizabethton also welcome new families. Providers accepting patients at Internal Medicine clinics include Dr. T.J. Mitchell in Johnson City and Dr. Krishna Pulivarthi in Kingsport.

"Whatever your family's health needs, from family medicine to specialized care such as endocrinology or surgical care, our providers bring up-to-date knowledge, expertise, and sincere compassion to the care

that they provide for our neighbors throughout the Appalachian Highlands," said Keith Morrow, chief executive officer for ETSU Health.

The healthcare opportunities that the organization provides extend beyond basic primary care to many value-added services that are embedded directly in these same locations. All ETSU Health's physician-based primary care clinics have behavioral health providers who are often available to meet with patients the same day as their appointment with their doctor. That means a patient who is struggling with issues such as pain, trouble sleeping, or stress could have the opportunity to meet with a behavioral health consultant the same day they have a check-up with their provider.

The organization also provides the region's only pediatric rheumatologist, the region's only prenatal lactation clinic, and a genetics clinic that is one of only three in the state.



In addition, ETSU Health powers Niswonger Children's Hospital with specialists ranging from neonatologists, gastroenterologists and pulmonologists to world-class pediatric surgeons and more. ETSU Health oncologists also serve within Johnson City's St. Jude's affiliate clinic.

ETSU Health is here to help the community thrive. For more information about the expert primary and specialty care services ETSU Health offers, visit: ETSUHealth.org

A Tradition in Caring for Our Community

Our physicians have a passion for caring for our patients of all ages. We are dedicated to providing expert advice and quality care with compassion. From primary care providers to an array of specialty care, ETSU Health is here to guide you through every step of your journey.

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Vitamins and Supplements Women Need

A balanced diet does more than provide sustenance and fuel for daily life. Eating an array of healthy foods gives people the best opportunity to naturally obtain the vitamins and minerals needed for optimal health. But certain nutrients may be lacking even when a diet includes an assortment of colorful produce and a careful mix of proteins, carbohydrates and fats.

The right supplements can help overcome such deficits, and women often need different supplementation than their male counterparts. Vitamins geared toward women are not just a marketing ploy; most contain formulations that cater to women's unique needs at various stages in life.

The Office on Women's Health and WebMD recommends these vitamins for women to maintain good health. Vitamin D The Cleveland Clinic reports that 42 percent of Americans are vitamin D deficient. Vitamin D comes from diet but also is produced in the skin when the body is exposed to sunlight. Vitamin D helps the body absorb and maintain adequate levels of calcium and phosphate, which are essential to bone health.

Rush University Medical Center says recent research suggests vitamin D may help guard against severe COVID-19 infections. Some populations have higher levels of vitamin D deficiency, particularly people of color, those with inflammatory bowel diseases and postmenopausal women. Folic acid Folic acid or folate (also known as vitamin B9) helps the body make blood cells and the DNA for new cells. This B vitamin also is key to preventing birth defects like spina bifida. According to the March of Dimes, one in two pregnancies are unplanned, and adequate folic acid is required at the early stages of gestation to help the fetus develop healthfully.

All women who are sexually active are advised to take a multivitamin that contains folic acid in concentrations of 400-800 mcg. In addition, folate can be found in dark, green, leafy vegetables, nuts, beans, and cereals with added folic acid. Vitamin B12 Vitamin B12 comes mostly from animal products. Therefore, anyone who follows a vegetarian or vegan diet may need supplementation to ensure they are getting enough B12. Pregnant women will find B12 is important for baby's development. Without



it, the infant may have low birth weight or other health problems, advises the OWH. Vitamin B12 also helps produce healthy red blood cells, may support bone health, could reduce risk of macular degeneration, and may reduce symptoms of depression. After age 50, women's bodies cannot absorb vitamin B12 as readily, so supplementing or eating fortified foods can help.

Calcium Growing girls need 1,300 mg of calcium each day to develop strong bones for

adulthood. After menopause, women may need nearly the same dosage (1,200 mg) to help slow the bone loss that comes with aging. Calcium is found in low-fat dairy products and foods with calcium added. Healthy eating may be a goal, but the U.S. Food and Drug Administration notes that 99 out of 100 Americans don't meet even minimum standards of a balanced diet. Supplementation can help meet those standards and ensure a long, healthy life. ♦





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Choosing a Primary Care Provider

Did you know that 1 in 4 Americans do not have a primary care provider (PCP)? That is nearly 83 million people without a health partner who can serve as the first contact for all their health needs, both in times of illness or injury and in times of good health. Having a trusted health partner by your side through all life's challenges is important to your overall health and well-being.

Below are some tips on where to start and what to look for.

1. Check insurance coverage and weigh costs

When researching options for a PCP, check with your insurance for a list of "in-network" providers you can choose from. This will help you maximize your health care dollars and ensure you can take advantage of all your covered preventative services like an annual physical, mammogram, or colonoscopy. You can also call Holston Medical Group (HMG) to confirm participation with your insurance and help you weigh the costs of certain procedures and diagnostics by providing an estimate beforehand so you know what to expect.

2. Decide what is most important to you

Whether it is a convenient location, a male or female provider, quality and cost of care, or the availability of other specialties and services within the primary care provider's group, you decide what is most important. Having access to medical specialties and outpatient services within the same organization as your PCP can greatly impact the overall quality and cost of your care. Decide what is most important to you.

3. Weigh access and convenience

Convenient access to your care team when needed is important to staying well and out of high-cost care settings (i.e., the hospital or the emergency room). When looking for a primary care provider, look for one that offers:

- Extended/After-hours access or walk-in availability
- A provider on-call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- Online patient portal provides 24/7 access to your records and secure communication with your care team.

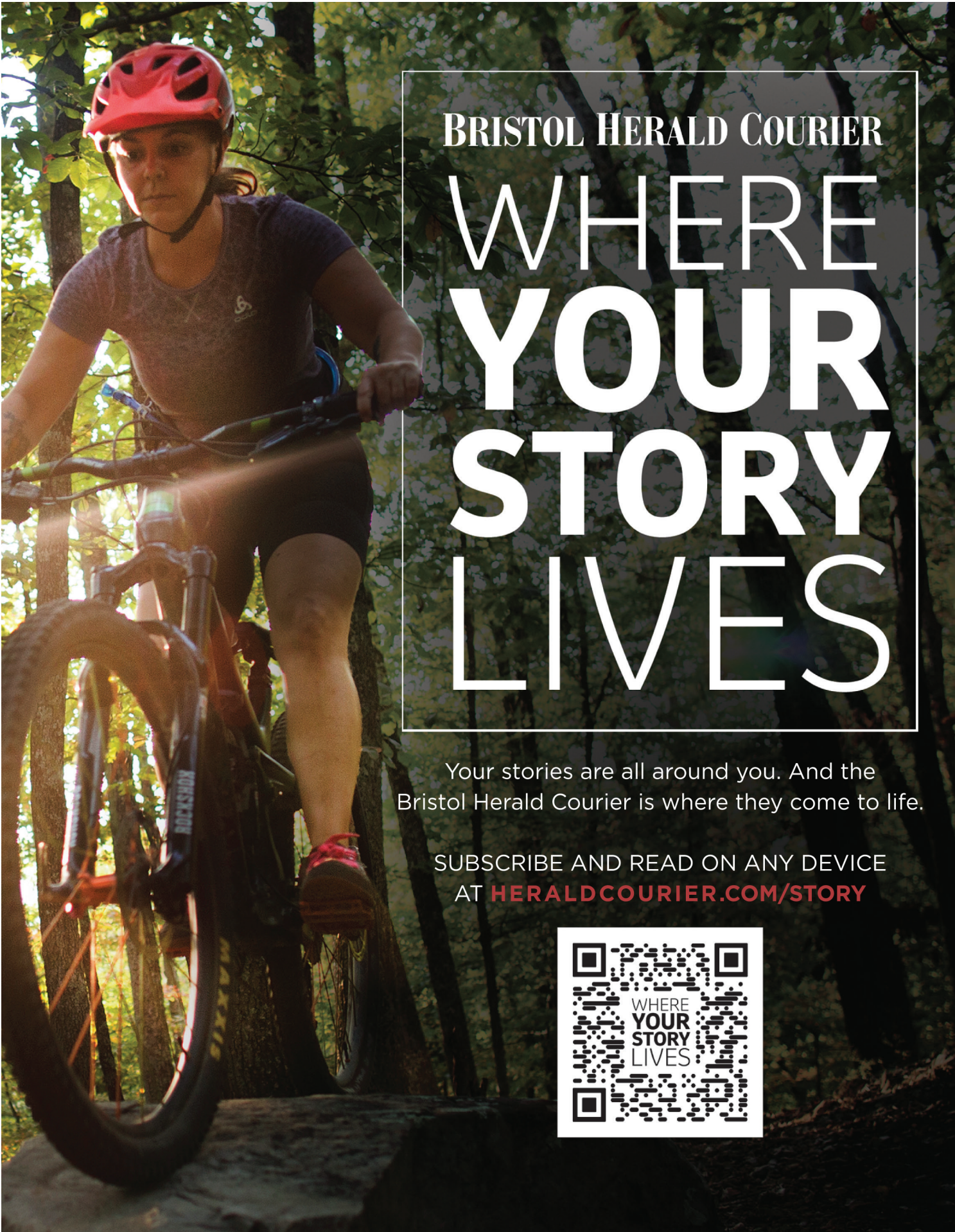
4. Ask friends and family

Ask friends and family about healthcare providers they trust and recommend. Recognize that your health needs and preferences are unique, and a provider that fits someone else's needs may not be the right fit for you.

When you choose a Holston Medical Group primary care provider, you are choosing a health partner for life you can trust. You are choosing peace of mind and preferred access to over a dozen medical specialties and high-quality, lower-cost outpatient centers, all within the HMG Family of Care.

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Venous disease is complex and progressive

Are you one of the 21 million people in the United States that suffer from lower leg swelling?

As we age, our bodies change. We tend to accept slowing down, more aches and pains and many other changes to our body as part of the normal aging process. Some changes are expected; yet other changes are not part of the normal aging process. One specific occurrence is swelling in the lower legs. A small amount of swelling in the lower legs in the elderly population may be considered normal. However, significant swelling in the lower legs is not typical. Consistent swelling in the lower legs can also be a sign of a more complicated disorder and range from feet and ankle swelling at the end of the day, to taking your socks off and having the fabric imprint remain for an extended period, to pitting edema (if pressing on your skin with a finger causes an indentation, you have pitting edema) or constant swelling of your lower legs.

Edema/swelling is when you have an abnormal excess accumulation of fluid in connective tissue. Chronic edema or swelling of the lower legs can cause pain, heaviness, weakness, discomfort, and limitations in mobility and flexibility.

Lower leg swelling has multiple possible causes. Venous disease is the number one cause of lower leg swelling. Swelling associated with venous disease affects many individuals, including those with a family history of vein disease or varicose veins, obesity, multiple pregnancies, older age, history of leg injury or surgery, sedentary lifestyles, history of deep venous thrombosis (blood clot in the vein), and occupations that require long hours of standing. At The Vein Company, our experienced medical staff have years of

experience in treating and diagnosing all stages of venous disease including all associated disorders.

Swelling is typically your body's way of telling you something else is occurring.



Any of the following conditions may be a possible cause of lower leg swelling:

- venous disease
- heart, liver or kidney failure
- radiation
- infection
- Trauma
- or certain medications.

What is the treatment?

First, any underlying causes need to be identified and treated. By not treating the underlying cause, you are only addressing the symptoms and the swelling will not only return but it will continue to get worse.

Next, any remaining swelling needs to be addressed and treated. It is important to address and treat swelling quickly to avoid permanent tissue damage. Compression therapy is the gold standard for the treatment of swelling. Each person is unique and should be treated with an individualized treatment plan. Many times, that treatment plan may include several steps to resolve the swelling. The treatment options may include one, some or all of the following treatment modalities.

- Manual lymph drainage, which is a gentle limb massage that pushes the fluid to the competent (working) lymphatic zones.
- Exercise programs and short-stretch compression bandaging, ensuring low pressures in the leg while resting and high pressures as soon as the calf muscle contraction begins.
- Finally, because this may be a long-term issue, pneumatic intermittent compression may be added to your treatment for an extended period of time. Pneumatic intermittent compression is a device that uses

an air pump to inflate and deflate an airtight garment placed around the legs, which mimics the rhythmic calf muscle contractions and promotes improved venous flow and lymphatic drainage allowing the fluid to move out of the tissues and back into the blood circulation. These devices are customized for each individual leg size and are used at home as prescribed by your provider. The use of a pneumatic intermittent compression device can maintain the healthy flow of fluids out of the tissues and into the vascular circulation in the comfort and convenience of your own home.

- All treatment options are covered by Medicare and most insurance payers.

In addition, adherence to a good skin care and hydration plan should be implemented to prevent infections and frequent movement/walking throughout the day to avoid pressure sores.

At The Vein Company, our specialized



team of providers are committed to the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of venous disease and its many associated conditions, including swelling. Our company provides specialized treatments tailored to the unique needs of each patient. The majority of our treatments are covered by Medicare and most major insurance payers. With 6 locations throughout Tennessee and Virginia, we are here to serve our patients with compassion and care. ♦

70-90% OF LOWER LEG ULCERS ARE VENOUS ULCERS



Venous disease is a progressive medical condition. If left untreated, it may worsen over time and develop into a more serious form of venous disease called chronic venous insufficiency (CVI). This is an underlying cause of venous ulcers.

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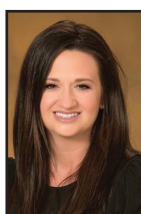
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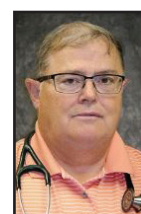
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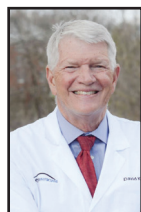


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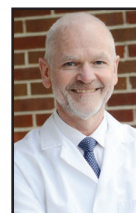
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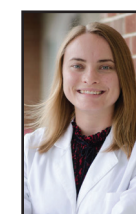
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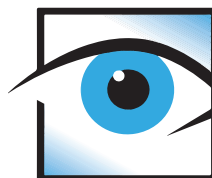
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