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WINTER 2023

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Publisher
JONATHAN KEY

Marketing Director
KARL MILLER
828.452.0661

Editor
BECKY JOHNSON
828.452.0661

Advertising Executives:

JAN GEORGE
828.452.0661

JENNIFER WORLEY
828.646.0785

LORI GILBERT
828.713.7473

Art + Production

JACK SNYDER
Design & Layout

AMANDA ADAMS
Design & Layout

KYLIE FRAZIER
Design & Layout

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Winter got you down? Strategies to overcome seasonal disorder

We've all heard of the winter blues — a general gloom and melancholy that seems to go hand-in-hand with gray skies, the dull landscape and shorter days.

Research has shown there is actually science behind the winter blues, and it affects some more than others. The phenomenon is known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. SAD is a legitimate concern for millions of people across the globe, affecting about 5% of the population.

What is seasonal affective disorder?

SAD is a type of depression that has been linked to a biochemical imbalance in the brain that's prompted by shorter daylight hours and less sunlight in winter. As the seasons change, a shift in a person's biological internal clock or circadian rhythm can lead to them being



out of step with their normal routines.

That can contribute to various symptoms, including:

- Feeling sad or depressed
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Changes in appetite, usually

eating more and craving carbohydrates

- Loss of energy or increased fatigue despite increased sleep hours
- Increase slowed movements or speech that may be noticed by others
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Difficulty thinking, concentrat-

ing or making decisions

- Thoughts of death or suicide

Overcoming SAD

The weather can't be changed, but people can speak with their physicians about the following strategies to overcome SAD.

- **Light therapy:** Sit in front of a light therapy box for 30 minutes each morning. The special type of light mimics sunlight and tricks your brain into releasing serotonin.

- **Medication:** Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors are a type of antidepressant sometimes prescribed to treat SAD.

- **Spending time outdoors:** Make a concerted effort to spend time outdoors in winter even if it's cold.

Working with a physician to overcome SAD can help people successfully transition to days with fewer hours of sunlight.



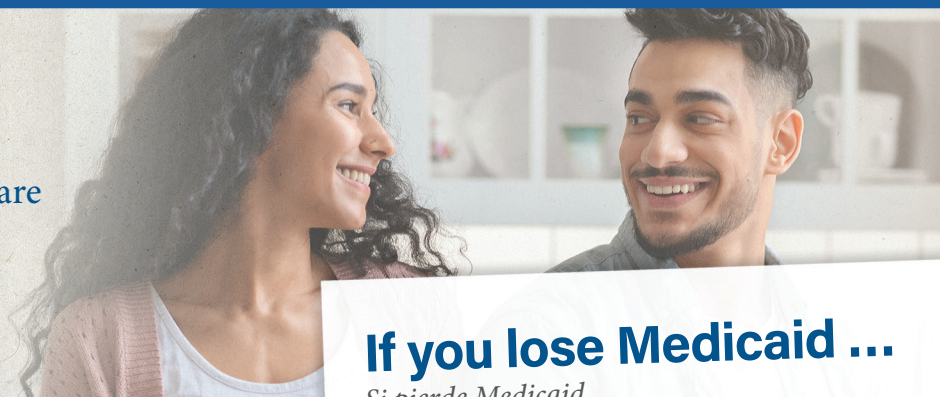
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Marilyn Tollie, 828.586.2345 ext. 3, or 828.550.3686

This project is supported by the Haywood Healthcare Foundation, Kate B Reynolds Charitable Trust and Dogwood Health Trust

6 lifestyle choices to reduce cancer risk

To date there is no definitive cure for cancer, nor any one preventative treatment. But there are plenty of lifestyle modifications that can go a long way toward reducing cancer risk.

Between 30% and 50% of all cancer cases are preventable, and cancer prevention strategies are often rooted in taking simple, daily steps to safeguard overall health. Here's a deeper look at some of the more effective.

Exercise regularly

Physical activity can lower estrogen levels, reduce levels of insulin in the blood, help a person lose weight, and reduce inflammation — all factors that contribute to the formation of cancer. Experts recommend 150 minutes of moderate-intensity

or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise a week.

Eat healthy foods

Certain minerals, vitamins and phytochemicals can produce anti-cancer effects. Many foods, namely fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, can boost health and contribute to lower cancer risk. Meanwhile, ultra-processed foods appear to increase the risk of developing and dying from a variety of cancers.

Grill wisely

Various studies have suggested there's a link between well-done grilled meat and cancer. High intake of well-done meat increases exposure to heterocyclic amines, a type of carcinogen that forms in cooked red meat.

Avoid excessive alcohol consumption

Drinking alcohol regularly increases the risk of cancers to the mouth, voice box and throat. Alcohol consumption is also a primary risk factor for liver cancer.

Apply sunscreen

Protect the skin from exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun and tanning beds, as skin cancer is the most common form of the disease in the United States. Simply reducing exposure can help prevent skin cancers and other damage. This includes wearing wide-brimmed hats, applying sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, avoiding the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and wearing sun-protective clothing.



Get enough sleep

The importance of sleep to overall health is easily overlooked. While there is no specific data for sleep on cancer prevention, sleep deprivation can lead to harmful behaviors, such as overeating, drinking too much alcohol or being too tired to exercise, each of which increases cancer risk.

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DENTAL ISSUES THAT COMMONLY AFFECT SENIORS

As a senior, dental care is critical for maintaining not just your oral health, but your overall well-being. After all, problems with your teeth and gums can be painful and debilitating. They can affect your appearance, nutritional intake, communication abilities, and much more.

Getting older raises the odds of developing a wide range of oral health issues. Among the older population, dental problems can include:

Dry mouth

Age frequently brings a drop in saliva production. This allows acids and sugars to build up in the mouth, making seniors more prone to cavities.

Dry mouth is a common side effect of hundreds of different medications, and can also be caused by medical conditions like anemia, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and Sjogren's disease.



To alleviate dry mouth, drink water frequently, use a humidifier to add moisture to the air, and stay away from soft drinks, coffee, and alcohol. Chewing sugar-free gum may also be helpful, since chewing stimulates saliva production.

Yellowing teeth

As we get older, the teeth become more mineralized, just like our bones.

That gives the teeth a darker appearance. In addition, many years of smoking, chewing tobacco, or drinking tea, coffee, or colas can stain the teeth. If you're concerned, ask your dentist about whitening treatments, tooth bonding or porcelain veneers.

Gum disease

Also known as periodontal disease or periodontitis, gum disease is

caused by a buildup of plaque. First, the gums become red and swollen and bleed easily (a condition called gingivitis). Left untreated, pockets form between the gums and the teeth and infection sets in as plaque begins to grow below the gum line.

Eventually, the bone and connective tissues supporting the teeth can become affected and tooth loss may occur. In fact, gum disease is the number one cause of tooth loss in adults. Gum disease can be aggravated by smoking and poor diet.

Treatment may involve scaling, root planing, or a course of antibiotics. In more advanced cases, bone or tissue grafts may be required. The best way to prevent gum disease is to follow a healthy diet, brush with a fluoride toothpaste twice a day, floss daily, and get regular professional cleanings.

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THE CAUSES OF ADULT HEARING LOSS

Hearing loss is quite common and can impact people's lives in profound ways. Hearing loss can be caused by different factors.

Conductive hearing loss

Conductive hearing loss refers to problems with the ear canal, ear drum or middle ear and its bones. Causes include:

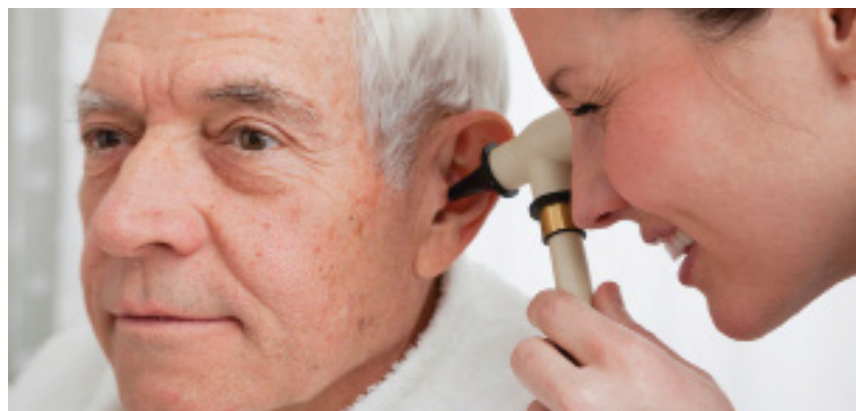
- Otitis media is an infection of the middle ear in which fluid accumulation can interfere with the movement of the eardrum and ossicles.
- Impacted earwax also can cause hearing problems.
- Fluid in the middle ear may obstruct hearing.
- Otosclerosis, which is a middle ear disease, can make it difficult for the tiny bones in the middle ear to move. Surgery can correct the problem.
- Malformation of the outer ear, ear

canal or middle ear structure can impact hearing as well.

Sensorineural hearing loss

Sensorineural hearing loss, also known as nerve-related hearing loss, occurs due to problems of the inner ear. Causes include:

- Aging is a common cause of hearing loss, marked by muffled or unclear speech. Treatment with assistive hearing devices can help improve hearing.
- Trauma to the ear or head may impact hearing. Wearing protective gear during sports or other activities can protect against neurological damage that may cause hearing loss.
- Damage to the inner ear can result from prolonged exposure to loud noises, causing wear and tear on the hairs or nerve cells in the cochlea that send sound signals to the brain.



When these hairs or nerve cells are damaged or missing, electrical signals aren't transmitted as efficiently, and hearing loss occurs.

- Ménière's disease is an inner ear problem of unknown origins. It usually starts in people between the ages of 30 and 50. Dizziness and ringing of the ear are common, and hearing

loss comes and goes. Some loss can become permanent.

- Viruses and diseases as well as family history also may play a role.

In some instances, hearing loss may be the result of a combination of factors. Anyone finding their hearing has become less acute should visit with an audiologist.

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When remaining at home no longer makes sense

Many aging adults reach a point in their lives when they can no longer care for themselves without some help. Some may just need a little help around the house, while others with more extensive needs may choose to relocate to skilled nursing facilities.

Luckily, families have a variety of options. The two of the most common are skilled nursing facilities and assisted living facilities.

In the United States, there are around 1.25 million people living in skilled nursing facilities and 1 million in assisted living facilities.

Assisted living

Assisted living facilities provide help and assistance for those who can no longer manage living alone. The range of assistance varies between residents, including bathing or dressing, medication manage-



ment, supervision, meals, laundry and housekeeping.

When failing physical or mental health affects one's ability to be independent and live safely at home, moving into an assisted living facil-

ity may be the next step.

Assisted living may fill a void currently, but it's often not a permanent situation for all, and eventually certain residents may have to move on to skilled care facilities.

Skilled nursing

Skilled nursing facilities can help aging adults navigate daily life when they can no longer take care of themselves. Skilled nursing care is administered by licensed nurses and therapists. Once commonly known as nursing homes, they are designed to tend to the needs of residents who require a level of medical care that goes beyond what assisted living facilities can provide.

Medical attention is available around the clock. That often provides residents' relatives substantial peace of mind, as they know licensed professionals will be on hand to address their loved ones' needs at all hours of the day and night.



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Make the dentist a fun experience for kids

Parents should begin to acclimate children to the dentist at a young age to make the experience fun and even enjoyable. Here's how to keep your kids from being hesitant or afraid of going to the dentist.

Lead by example

Children who witness their parents putting off going to the dentist or being

apprehensive about visiting the dentist may develop their own fears. Always paint the dentist in a positive light.

Focus on the good aspects

Talk up all the benefits of going to the dentist, such as having a squeaky clean and fresh mouth. Many hygienists will hand out small toys after a successful visit, or at the least a great new

toothbrush or swag bag of other fun products to try.

Get a tour of the office

Ask the staff if your child can get a special tour of the office with explanations of all the tools and equipment. Understanding what to expect the next time around in a no-pressure situation can make the process much easier for everyone involved.

The dentist may be able to also give a test ride on the exam chair, moving it up and down, as well as showing off the water fountain and oral irrigator.

Avoid giving false hope

Do not tell a child that "everything will be OK" at the dentist's office. If a child needs treatment that may be uncomfortable, he or she may not trust you the next time a dental visit is scheduled.

Avoid words like "shots," "pain,"



"hurt," or even "cavities." Dentists, particularly pediatric dentists, may have their own vocabulary that can assuage fears and seem less alarming to kids.

Over time, dental visits can become an easy routine with children, setting them up for a lifetime of healthy mouths and teeth.



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Love is good for us

By Kathy Foster

The heart is the hardest working and most important muscle in the body. It beats 100,000 times and pumps 2,000 gallons of blood per day on average.

When we experience the feeling of love — be it the pitter-patter of our heart beating faster or simply a warm and fuzzy feeling — we are exercising the heart.

Our blood pressure responds well to the good feelings that love triggers, and the dopamine and oxytocin released in our bodies makes our heart beat stronger.

The connection between the physical heart and the “heart of love” is explored by Dr. Sandeep Jauhar in his book *Heart: A History*.

“The metaphorical heart is the way that we thought of the heart before science came along,” said Jauhar. “And what I have observed as a car-

diologist is that the heart that is associated with love, that metaphorical heart, directly impacts on our biological heart. People who have healthy, loving relationships have better heart health.”

Lucky for us, there are myriad ways to feel love throughout the day, in our relationships and our activities. We can exercise our heart from sun up to sun down, and at various levels, just like on a treadmill. As you go through your day, think of all the times your heart beats with love for a being in your life, whether it be human, canine, feline, equine or any other creature that happens to give you the warm and fuzzies.

Upon awakening, it might be that first touch from your spouse, or a good morning hug from your child, or hearing the voice of a friend. If you don't have someone at home, be the one who calls a friend, visits a neigh-



bor, compliment a coworker. Take in a glorious sunrise or a mesmerizing sunset and love the moment. Pick up a favorite photo and love the memory.

Do not skip the physical exercise that is good for your heart, and be

sure to keep love on your things to do list as well, as it's not only good for your heart but all the hearts around you, too.

Kathy Foster is the director of marketing at Deerfield Episcopal Retirement Community.



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Four easy ways to show your heart some love

By Dr. Michael Miller, MD

We often associate the month of February with hearts because of Valentine's Day. However, there is another reason we should think of hearts in February — it's American Heart Month.

One person dies every 34 seconds from heart disease, making this disease the leading cause of death for both men and women of most racial and ethnic groups in the U.S.

Your heart is one of the hardest working muscles in your body and it beats around the clock, only getting a break when you relax or sleep. With so much riding on this essential muscle, it's important to ensure you're doing all you can to keep it in good shape.



Dr. Michael Miller, MD,
Cardiologist with
Haywood Regional
Medical Center

Maintain a healthy diet

Drinking plenty of water and eating a diet of lower-calorie, nutrient-rich foods can help you control your weight, cholesterol levels and blood pressure, which helps lower your risk of heart disease.

Signs and symptoms of heart attacks

Some heart attacks are very sudden and intense, leaving little time to respond to signs or symptoms. Other heart attacks, however, start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. Don't hesitate to call 9-1-1 if you or someone you're with experiences any of the following:

- Discomfort in the center of your chest that comes and goes or lasts more

than a few minutes. It can feel like uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain.

- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body, including pain or discomfort in one or both arms, your back, neck, jaw or stomach.

- Shortness of breath. Other possible signs, including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

Stay up-to-date on your numbers

A key part of staying on top of your heart health is being aware of your cholesterol and blood pressure numbers. Be sure to get your levels checked regularly and talk to your primary care provider about what you can do to keep them within a healthy range.

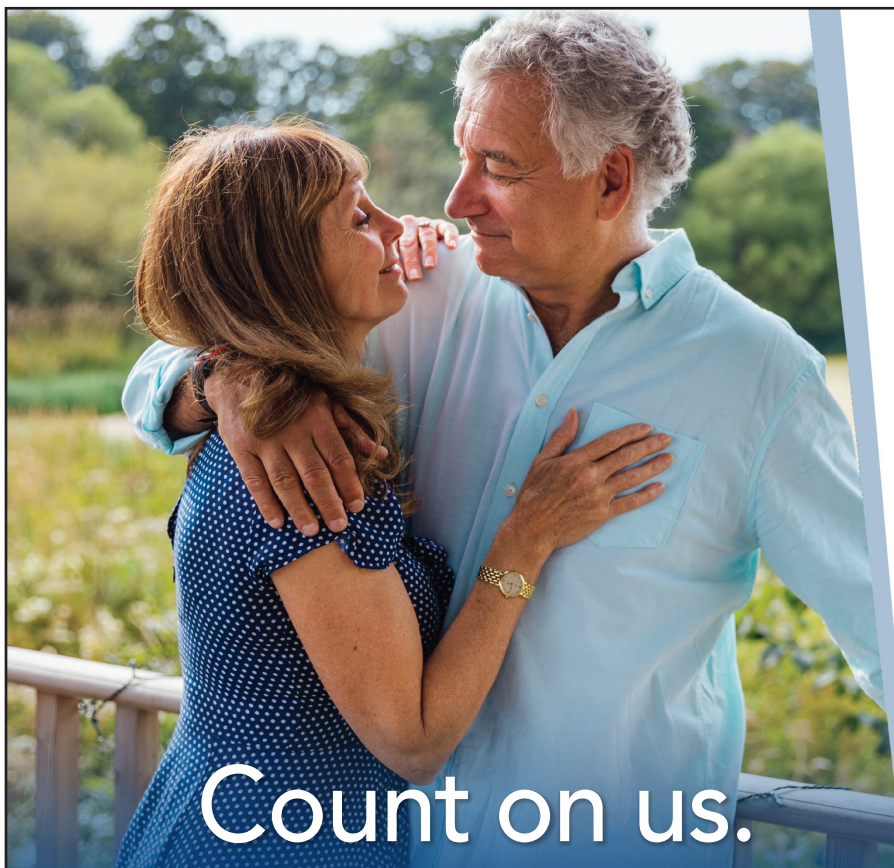
Know your family heart health history

Risk factors for heart disease can also be genetic, so knowing your family's heart health history can help mea-



sure your risk for heart issues now or down the road. Family history helps your provider identify where you may be at higher risk for certain conditions and work to reduce those risks through lifestyle changes.

If you would like to speak to a provider about your heart health, Haywood Regional Medical Center can help. Call 828-452-0331 or visit the 'Find a Provider' tab at MyHaywoodRegional.com.



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WHAT IS RED LIGHT THERAPY? AND IS IT RIGHT FOR ME?

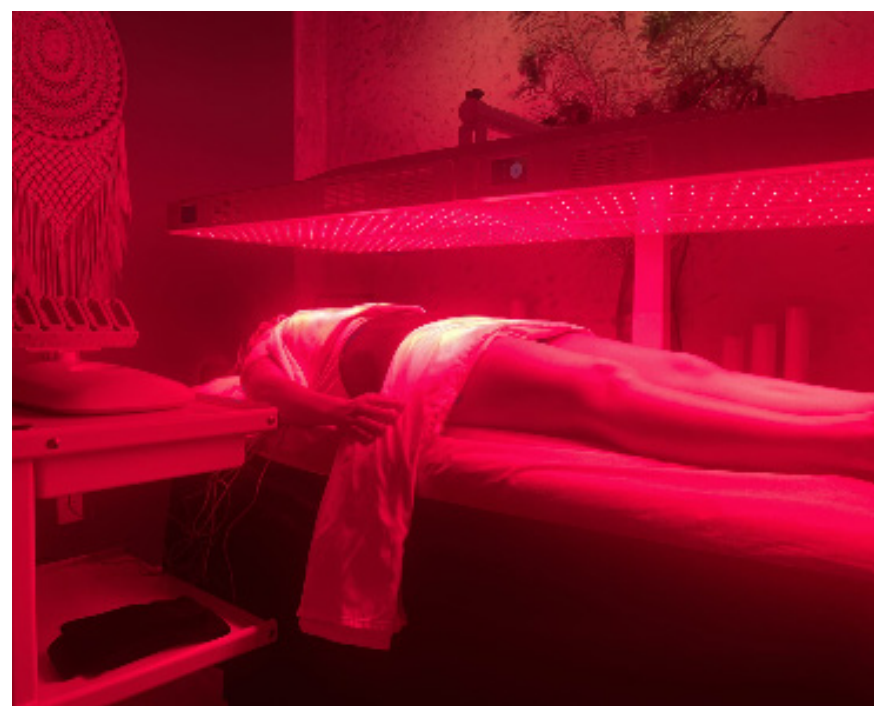
Those who keep up with the latest in alternative wellness have probably heard about red light therapy (RLT) and its extraordinary skin care and anti-aging properties.

Also known as photobiomodulation or low-level laser therapy, RLT has grown widely in popularity, credited to promotions by notable doctors, celebrities and professional athletes. Even with the profusion of accolades in recent years, many still do not fully understand the emerging treatment and may shy away from it for this reason. But with dozens of documented health and esthetic benefits — a list that's growing daily — it's becoming increasingly difficult to ignore.

Before jumping on the newest Instagram bandwagon, it's essential to first parse the hype from reality, and look at how RLT affects the body, the benefits to expect and how to get the most for your money while reducing potential risks.

The science

Pioneered in the 1980s, RLT was initially developed by NASA to grow plants in space. By accident, astronauts noted improve-



ments in healing when exposed to red light. Back on earth, research had begun to investigate the benefits of red light exposure, finding dramatic increases in cellular metabolism, replication, and overall vitality.

The basis for these improvements relates to an increase in mitochondrial function. When exposed to RLT, cells are provided the energy needed to improve their specific functions.

Since RLT targets the body at the cellular level, it doesn't matter what cell type is being treated. Studies show improvements in cellular function to be ubiquitous: skin cells create more collagen and fill wrinkles, fat cells metabolize faster, hair follicles brought out of dormancy, etc.

The benefits

Because of its universal nature, RLT benefits extend far beyond aesthetics. On a macro level, RLT has been shown to promote circulation, reduce inflammation, inhibit viral replication, stabilize hormones and neurotransmitters, and detoxify the body, to name a few.

For these reasons, RLT is quickly gaining traction as a practical preventative measure for dysfunctions such as certain heart conditions, skin disorders, inflammatory illnesses, and even viruses. A 2021 study found that RLT can reduce one's risk of exposure to Covid, inhibit the virus's ability to replicate, minimize respiratory distress, and

improve chronic "long-Covid" symptoms.

And given that research has yet to uncover virtually any side effects, RLT is quickly becoming a new standard in alternative health and wellness.

Know the facts

But unfortunately, as research on RLT expands, so do deceptive practices surrounding the treatment. Due to its growing popularity and the simplicity of its design, manufacturers worldwide have begun producing red light therapy devices, flooding social media and online sales channels with often ineffective or defective products.

Some products have a light output that is too weak to provide a therapeutic dose, leaving users with the impression that it is not working. In other instances, the wavelength used may not be fully bioactive, meaning that the light spectrum may not be helpful to the condition being treated.

Unfortunately, these problems extend beyond off-brand online RLT sales. Many businesses now tout red light therapy treatments using tanning beds converted into therapy devices, using weak lighting with limited to no biological effects.

For these reasons, it is crucial first to research the manufacturer or red light business when looking to pursue RLT treatment. Any reputable company will fully disclose the type of devices they use, the power output provided, and the mix of therapeutic wavelengths they use in their treatment.

Being well-informed before beginning RLT may mean the difference between an effective, therapeutic treatment or a complete waste of money.



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Getting hospice care in a skilled nursing facility

Whenever someone mentions hospice, chances are the image of this specialized care is far from accurate. Most people think of hospice care as nurses and other trained staff who come in when someone is imminently dying — within hours or days.

The truth is Medicare defines hospice care for those who have a serious or terminal illness, with a medical prognosis of six months or less if the illness runs its normal course.

But hospice care can be extended beyond six months by a physician.

“In many cases, our patients are re-certified after six months for continued hospice care at home or in a nursing facility,” said Andrea Rodgers-Ray, Executive Director of Haywood Hospice & Palliative

Care.

Medicare pays 100% of hospice comfort care, whether in the home or in a skilled nursing facility. Hospice staff provide comfort care for pain relief and symptom management instead of care to cure the patient’s illness.

“Many people are very confused about whether their loved one can have hospice care in a skilled nursing facility. As long as they are not under rehabilitation services through Medicare and they meet guidelines for hospice care, they can have that added layer of support,” added Rodgers-Ray.

Here are some key facts you should know about skilled nursing care and hospice:

- Medicare covers hospice at a skilled nursing facility only if

the facility has a contract with a Medicare-certified hospice to provide care. Haywood Hospice has contracts with all skilled nursing facilities in Haywood County.

- The hospice benefit will not pay for room and board at the skilled nursing facility, so the patient will be responsible for that cost unless they have Medicaid as a secondary insurance.

- Hospice care in a nursing home provides an extra layer of support during difficult times. Hospice care includes expert management of pain and other symptoms, spiritual counseling, care planning and grief support.

- A hospice nurse is on call 24/7, and this allows the declining patient to stay in the facility and not return to the hospital.

- You can choose to discon-



tinue rehabilitation and ask for a hospice consultation if you feel your loved one would benefit more with comfort care services.

For more information on hospice services, contact Haywood Hospice at 828-452-5039.

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Receding vision after 40 is common

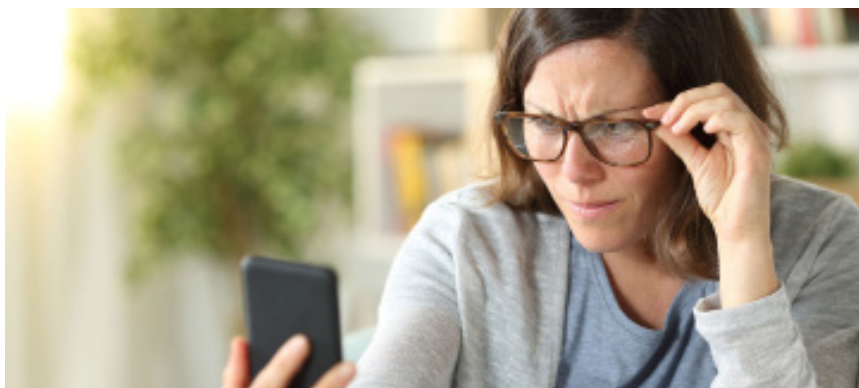
Adults in their early 40s who feel as though their vision has begun to recede should know that slight changes in vision are common at this point in life.

Problems seeing clearly at close distances, such as when reading or working at a computer, are common between the ages of 41 and 60. Known as presbyopia, this problem will progress over time.

How does age-related vision loss affect daily life?

Individuals who are developing presbyopia may need to hold reading materials farther away than normal to see them clearly. Still others might feel the need to remove their eyeglasses so they can see better up close. Words may appear blurred, especially in dimly lit environments like restaurants.

Another way age-related vision



loss affects daily life is driving. Many individuals begin to experience increasing difficulty with glare when driving at night after they turn 40.

Are all adults over 40 equally vulnerable to eye and vision problems?

Individuals with preexisting conditions are at a higher risk of

developing vision problems after 40, such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Those over 40 may also be more vulnerable if they take medications for health conditions related to high cholesterol, thyroid problems, anxiety or depression, and arthritis. A family history of glaucoma and macular degeneration also increas-

es the risk that individuals over 40 will develop problems with their eyes and vision.

Does everyone over 40 have the same experience with receding vision?

The symptoms of age-related vision changes like presbyopia are not the same for everyone. The lack of common symptoms does not necessarily mean your vision isn't receding. That's one reason why the American Optometric Association urges all individuals between the ages of 40 and 64 to schedule eye exams at least every two years.

Glasses, contact lenses and surgical procedures can help individuals with presbyopia overcome the condition. It's important that adults over 40 recognize that the changes sparked by presbyopia typically stop around age 60.

A group of elderly people are sitting at a wooden table in a bright, modern restaurant. In the foreground, an elderly man with a white beard and glasses is smiling broadly and gesturing with his hands. Behind him, a woman is also smiling and giving a thumbs up. The atmosphere is warm and social.

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Know your screenings: early detection is crucial

Preventive care is a crucial component of healthy living.

Health professionals recommend various age-specific screenings and tests, though doctors may advise patients to get more frequent screenings depending on their medical histories. Individuals are urged to speak to their doctors to map out a health screening schedule specific to their needs, but here are some guidelines.

18 to 39 years old

- **Cholesterol:** A cholesterol check should occur around age 20, then every five years until age 35. Afterward it can occur annually.

- **Skin screening:** An annual full body screening will identify any suspicious moles or skin lesions.

- **Cervical cancer:** Women in this age range should receive a Pap

smear every three years.

- **Testicular exam:** Men should conduct self exams for testicular abnormalities. Doctors may examine the testicles during annual physicals as well.

- **Breast screening:** Women in this age range should conduct regular self exams.



40 to 64 years old

- **Zoster (Shingles) vaccine:** Two doses of this vaccine will be administered between two and six months apart starting at age 50 and up.

- **Colorectal screening:** A colonoscopy to detect any colorectal illnesses is recommended beginning at age 50.

- **Prostate screening:** Prostate screenings begin at age 50 unless you are a high-risk individual, in which case screenings begin at age 40.

- **Osteoporosis:** Doctors may recommend a bone density test and osteoporosis screening at age 50 and up if certain risk factors are present.

- **Lung cancer screening:** If you are a past or current smoker, it's wise to have an annual lung



cancer screening. Adults age 55 and up can have this screening covered by health insurance.

- **Mammogram:** Women should begin receiving mammograms at age 40, with frequency of at least every other year once reaching 50.



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Mission invests in nurses, nursing programs across the region



HCA Healthcare opened the Asheville campus of the Galen College of Nursing in December. Galen, along with Mission's partnerships with other area schools, will help in educating future generations of nurses.

Mission Health has a long tradition of recognizing nurses — known as the “most trusted profession” — for their service, innovation and emphasis on improving the health of all people.

“At Mission Health, our registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and advanced practice registered nurses are instrumental in developing best practices based on robust nursing research,” said Melanie Wetmore, Mission Chief Nursing Officer. “Nurses continually collaborate with their team members to provide safe, high-quality care that can be proudly celebrated throughout our community.”

Mission Hospital is keenly aware of the shortage of healthcare workers across the country, however, including the nursing profession.

“As with any problem, creative solutions are needed to help solve it. Mission Hospital is taking steps every day to focus on showing appreciation for our staff while addressing our nursing shortage,” Wetmore said.

Mission recently made a \$20 million investment in pay raises for critical patient care staff.

“Part of having excellent nurses is retention. We believe it is a solid step in retaining and recruiting staff to Mis-

sion Hospital,” Wetmore said of the raises. “Our ultimate goal is to love and care for our caregivers so they can continue to love and care for our patients.”

Mission also has partnerships with multiple nursing programs to help develop future nursing talent in the region. For example, Mission will be funding a full-time instructor position at three nursing schools: Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, Blue Ridge Community College and Western Carolina University. The schools in turn will be able to accept more students.

Mission Hospital was also given accreditation by the State of North Carolina to facilitate a CNA training program at both Mission Hospital and Highlands-Cashiers Hospital. This program allows the participants to be paid while they learn and after passing the final exam, they will have a CNA job at Mission. A CNA certification is almost always a precursor to an RN degree, so this program will also help in adding more nurses to our area.

“Mission is proud of our committed team of caregivers and their courage, strength, and commitment to delivering quality care to the patients we are privileged to serve,” Wetmore said.



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HOW TO MANAGE AND PREVENT NECK PAIN

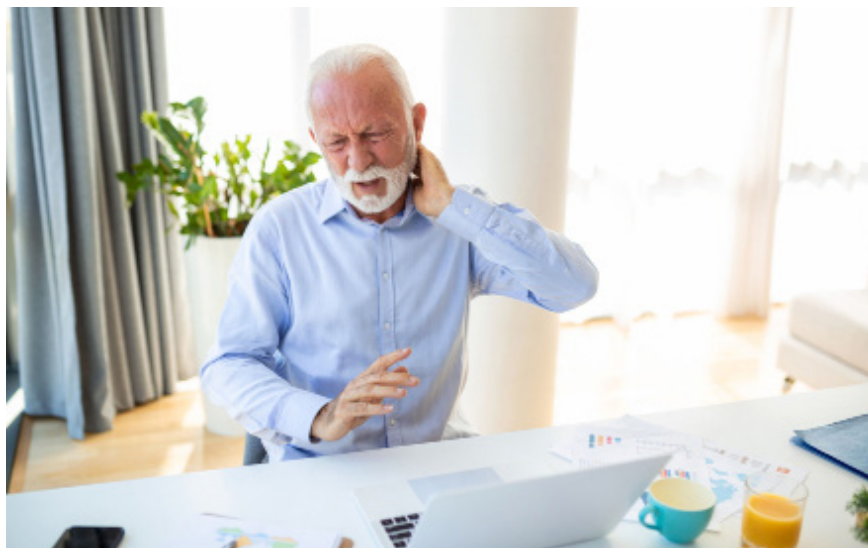
Do you have neck pain, particularly after a long day? You are not alone! A good portion of the American population will suffer from neck pain that interferes with normal daily activities. So what can be done to prevent and manage neck pain?

Stress management

Stress can cause muscle tension in the upper back and neck, leading to pain and potentially headaches. Taking breaks throughout the day from a static position at the computer or desk, decreasing screen time, taking walks/exercising/yoga, and finding time for yourself will all decrease stress.

Practice good posture

Pay attention to your sitting positions throughout the day. Place both feet on the floor, make sure your back is support-



ed by the chairback or place a pillow for support, keep hips aligned higher than your knees, place the computer monitor in the correct position, and decrease looking down at a phone for long periods of time.

Perform postural exercises

There are several exercises that can be performed to decrease or prevent neck pain. A physical therapist (PT) can help guide you through the specifics of these exercises and can identify any deficits in form.

Manual techniques

Soft tissue mobilization/massage and joint mobilizations can be beneficial to decrease pain. Licensed physical therapists are trained to perform these techniques.

Heat/Ice

Moist heat and ice packs can also be used to decrease pain. Therapeutic treatment usually requires a minimum of at least 15 minutes in order to be effective. Use ice with acute injury and heat or ice for more chronic pain.

These are basic tips to help prevent and manage neck pain. If you are having severe neck pain, have had a recent injury, or are having numbness/tingling in arms/hands then you should be evaluated by a physician.

Article provided by Smoky Mountain Sports Medicine & Physical Therapy, offering four locations in WNC, including Waynesville. 828-550-3923 or www.smsmpt.com.



The benefits of physical therapy

Periodic aches and pains can affect anyone — those who are physically active, as well as those who live largely sedentary lifestyles.

Though minor pain from time to time may be somewhat normal, long-term issues like persistent joint pain should not be written off as par for the course. While terms like “tennis elbow” and “runner’s knee” may sound like conditions experienced by athletes, that’s a false impression of joint pain and what causes it.

A lack of exercise can contribute to pain and stiffness in the joints. That’s because exercise strengthens the muscles and tissues that surround the joints, and that added strength puts less stress on the joints.

Consider visiting a physical therapist if you are experiencing aches and pains. Physical therapy isn’t just about recovering from injuries. Physical therapists can help develop an exercise and stretching routine to reduce joint pain.

Physical therapy regimens are completely customized to fit the patient’s schedule, lifestyle and recovery goals to help manage pain, increase range of movement and improve your quality of life.



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New Year's resolutions for seniors

If you skipped the annual tradition of making a New Year's Resolution this year, it's not too late. 2023 is still young, and there's no time like the present.

Seniors in particular can benefit from setting goals and aspirations. People who view life with a sense of purpose have an improved sense of well-being, both physically and cognitively.

Focus on safety

Recognizing that you can't do all of the things you did when you were younger doesn't mean there aren't ways to improve upon those things you can do, especially if you make some safety-minded tweaks. Resolve to improve home safety, such as removing tripping hazards, installing grab bars, checking smoke alarms, and installing a security system.

Find new and enjoyable workouts



The exercise routines you engaged in just a few years ago may no longer suit your physical abilities or interests. Investigate new fitness regimens or methods of movement. Try hiking, yoga, water aerobics or pickle ball.

Organize medical records

Seeing health pictured systematically and clearly can help you stay on top of appointments and wellness measures. There are many different organizing systems to embrace; find one that works for your needs.

Declutter your home

Resolve to get rid of extraneous items that are no longer serving a purpose beyond collecting dust. Having more room to move around can be safer, particularly if you need a cane or another assistive device, and there will be less to clean if you remove some clutter. If you plan to downsize soon, clearing clutter now can make the move easier.

Learn something new

A language, skill, or hobby are all within reach when you map out the steps to achieving your goal.

Make new social connections

Socially-active older adults have better cognition and lower risks for depression than those who do not consistently reach out to friends. Aspire to make some new companions, either through church, clubs, volunteering or getting involved at your senior center.

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Fix your feet for weight loss success

Many of the estimated 70 million obese Americans are trapped in a life-threatening vicious cycle: obesity aggravates foot problems, like heel pain and flat feet; sore feet make it hard to exercise and lose weight; and without exercise, obesity worsens and exacerbates the progression of health threats.

Luckily, those experiencing chronic, activity-limiting foot and ankle pain can get treatment to foster compliance with physician-directed exercise programs.

"It's unfortunate obese adults get caught up in the vicious cycle of avoiding physical activity due to foot or ankle pain, thereby permitting cardiovascular disease and other life-threatening conditions to worsen as a result," says Dr. William Banks, a foot and ankle surgeon with Smoky Mountain Foot Ankle Clinic. "For

example, in many cases, chronic heel pain occurs from carrying too much weight. Left untreated, it becomes an impediment to physical activity and meaningful weight loss."

Banks says there's no reason foot or ankle pain should stop obese patients from exercising. The first step toward breaking that vicious cycle is an evaluation by a foot and ankle surgeon.

Many causes of foot pain can be relieved without surgery through stretching exercises, orthotics and athletic shoes with good shock absorption and support. If a bunion, heel pain or other condition requires



surgery, patients can participate during their recovery in non-weight-bearing activities, such as riding a stationary bike, swimming or weight training.

For those moderately to severely overweight, Banks says a thorough physical examination is mandatory before beginning an exercise program.

"Once cleared by your physician to begin exercising, don't try to do too much too soon. Follow a gradual routine until your body adjusts to the stress of regular physical activity," he says. "For example, I counsel overweight patients to avoid working out

on treadmills or elliptical machines to minimize pounding and stress on their joints."

Shedding excess pounds helps diabetic patients control their disease, but Banks notes many who experience foot ulcerations and vascular problems caused by diabetes might think they shouldn't exercise.

"Every diabetes patient needs regular foot exams to check for possible sore spots and assess nerve sensation," says Banks. "And with proper diabetic foot care and the right footwear, most patients can follow an exercise regimen that is safe and appropriate for them."

Smoky Mountain Foot Clinic is accepting new patients for any foot or ankle conditions. They also specialize in diabetic foot care. Call 828-452-4343 or visit them online at smokymountain-footclinic.com.

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5 COMMON FITNESS MISTAKES TO AVOID

Whether you are just beginning your fitness journey or already exercise regularly, staying on track is essential. Here's five things to avoid that could derail your fitness goals.

1. Skipping warm-up

Warm-ups are vital before a workout. They help muscles in the body become acclimated to exercise by gradually building up heart rate and muscle flexibility and endurance. A warm-up can include walking or light repetitions of gentle exercises.

2. The "I'm busy" excuse

While life is hectic, try not to fall into the trap of thinking you are too busy to exercise. There is no such thing as being too busy to exercise. Making exercise part of a daily routine requires find-



ing time for fitness.

It may mean squeezing in exercise in the early morning before work or school. If exercise seems to be getting in the way of family time, engage in a group workout with the kids or your spouse.

3. Pushing too hard

Many people exercise under the assumption that "more is

more." Injuries can occur when you push too far in a workout, particularly if you are lifting more weight than your body can handle.

It is essential to give the body some time off to recuperate. Rest helps to prevent injuries.

4. Making vague goals

Establishing fitness goals

helps people reach markers that make it easy for them to gauge their success. Statements like "I want to lose weight" or "I want to get stronger" make it hard to measure progress, as they lack specificity.

It is much better to make firm goals, such as specific pounds to lose or being able to lift a certain amount of weight by a predetermined date.

5. Hopping from program to program

It's tempting to try everything the gym or the fitness world has to offer. It is better to learn the basics and stick with a program for some time before moving on to another one. Otherwise, you may never have enough time to master any routine.

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The science and benefits of chiropractic alignment



If you are living with neck pain, back pain, stiffness, pain with sleeping, hip pain, arm pain or leg pain, you may be out of alignment.

Misalignment causes an altered frequency in your movement patterns, leading to musculo-skeletal joint dysfunction. Abnormal joint dysfunction over time contributes to pain, altered sensations, tingling/numbness, degenerative joint/disc disease and stenosis.

When the spine is misaligned, it creates a ripple effect — your body compensates, which then contributes to pain often occurring in other areas of the body. You can have a neck misalignment that is the cause of your foot pain, yet have no neck pain.

But why is this?

Your body has a natural reflexive response called the “righting reflex,” where the body adjusts to keep your eyes parallel to the horizon. The righting reflex corrects the orientation of the body when it is taken out of its normal upright position.

When your body shifts out of

alignment, your head adjusts reflexively to maintain level eyes, often causing increases in pressure on the shoulders, hips and lower extremities. This may lead to numbness in hands or feet. Hand numbness is particularly common at night with shoulder tightness compensations.

Dizziness and vertigo is another example of the cause-and-effect of the righting reflex, and how alignment can correct the issue. Over the years, Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center in Waynesville has had excellent results with dizziness and vertigo when aligning the upper cervical vertebrae.

In children, misalignment can even manifest as ear infection, stomach issues, and aggravation of ADHD. Much of which can be improved with spinal alignment.

For more information about how proper alignment can make a difference in your quality of life, contact Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center in Waynesville at 828-246-9555 or www.bluemntchiro.com.

Why posture matters

Posture is a contributing factor to many of the aches and pains we experience, from minor issues to chronic conditions. Shoulder tightness, back stiffness and neck pain can all be greatly reduced by improving your posture.

But is there anything you can do about your posture?

Many individuals are of the belief that they have bad posture. Yet the truth is posture is malleable — it isn't set in stone.

Michael Hogan, owner of Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center in Waynesville, is trained and certified as a Posture Expert by the American Posture Institute.

“I went through this educational process because so many of our clients had recurring problems with their body,” Hogan said. “Yet, I also have seen many individuals make long-term improvements in their pain and health outcomes.”

Posture can be improved with a steady awareness and commitment to improve yourself over time.

“Let's face it, all great things happen over time. If you desire a transformation in your posture, it's possible, but don't get caught in the information trap,” Hogan said.

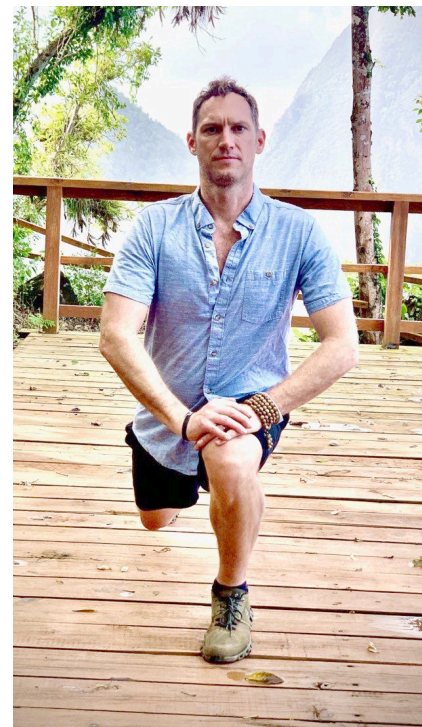
Hogan said to avoid too much Googling.

“It leads to information overload, incorrect self diagnosing, and getting stuck,” Hogan said. “So often we get a fixed mindset that traps us in behaviors that reinforce our problems.”

ABCs of posture

The first step to improving posture is posture awareness.

“If improving your posture a little bit through basic daily exercises prevents chronic pain and surgery, would you be willing to change your lifestyle a bit?” Hogan posed.



Dr. Michael Hogan,
Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center

Hogan suggests these ABCs of posture from the American Posture Institute as a way of reframing the way you think about posture.

- The A of posture is alignment. Alignment means that your forehead, chin, sternum, and mid-section form a straight line between your feet. From a side view, your shoulders are ideally in line with your hips and your eyes are straight forward.

- B stands for balance, which requires practice through standing on one leg, slow lunges, and walking backward.

- C stands for core control, which is activated through iso-metric holding type exercises, power postures and breathework.

- Finally S stands for stretching and strengthening. It's amazing what 30 seconds of posture exercise every 30 minutes can do for you. That's a total of four minutes a day. Can you make time for that?

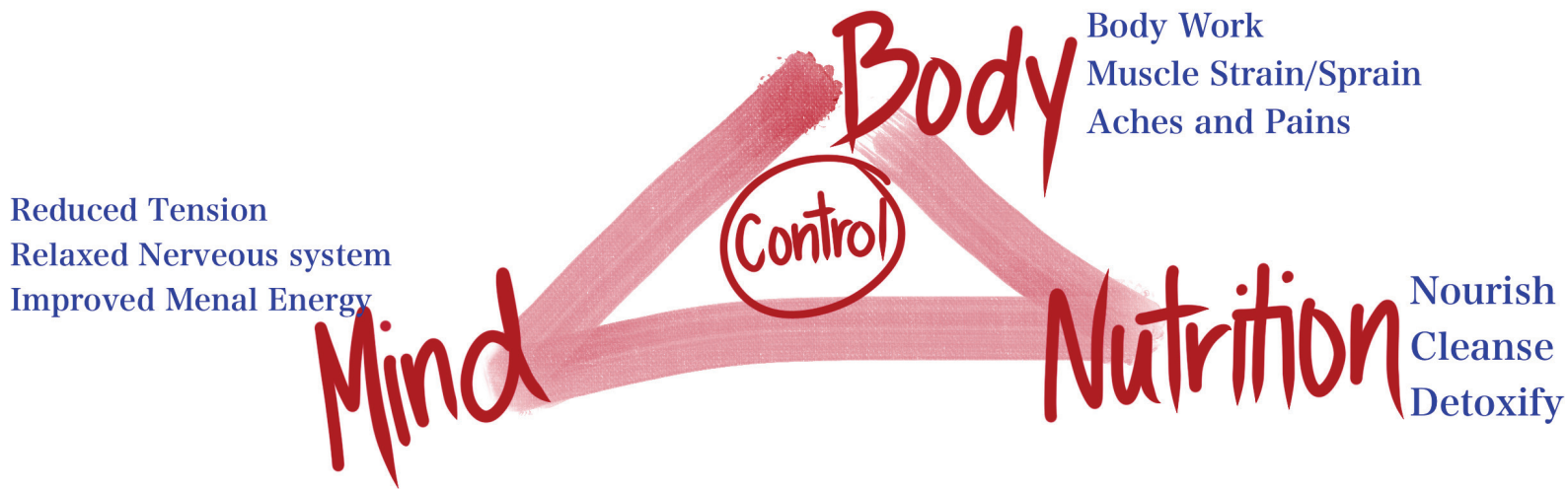
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